

**TEACHING ASSISTANTS,
RESEARCH ASSISTANTS,
AND INVIGILATORS**

**THIS YEAR, WE'RE PROTECTING
OUR RIGHTS TOGETHER**

ON TRAC TOGETHER



**RESULTS OF THE WORKLOAD
FORM SURVEY - OCTOBER 2018**

VISIT TRAC-UNION.CA/ON-TRAC-TOGETHER



ON TRAC TOGETHER

PROTECTING OUR RIGHTS TOGETHER

Labour unions negotiate Collective Agreements, but did you know our Collective Agreement is more than just legal document that determines how much we get paid? It's also a mechanism to protect our rights, to ensure we work in safe and healthy environments, to promote our collective empowerment and improve our living conditions.

In October, as part of our #OnTRACTogether campaign, **the Union of Teaching and Research Assistants at Concordia (TRAC)** launched a survey to help us know more about the allocation of hours in contracts for Teaching Assistants (TAs) in our ongoing effort to address unpaid work, 120 TRAC members completed a survey on Workload Forms at Concordia. This document summarises the findings of this survey.

Overall, the findings indicate that many TAs are working beyond the hours for which they had agreed to, especially in regards to class preparation and grading. Moreover, standard procedures for signing contracts and Workload Forms are not always respected. Such issues can lead to much confusion, sense of disempowerment, and negative consequences for school-work-life balance among our members. Based on this survey, the Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science seems to be the most problematic faculty in these regards.

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the survey and who shared their concerns with us! Your input has been invaluable for this study and will help us move forward. Please contact us if you have any questions or additional information at info@trac-union.ca.

TOGETHER, WE CAN PROTECT OUR RIGHTS!

**Jeremy Tessier,
President of TRAC**

**TO SEE THE REST OF THE CAMPAIGN, VISIT
[TRAC-UNION.CA/ON-TRAC-TOGETHER/](https://trac-union.ca/on-trac-together/)**

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SIGNING PROCESS

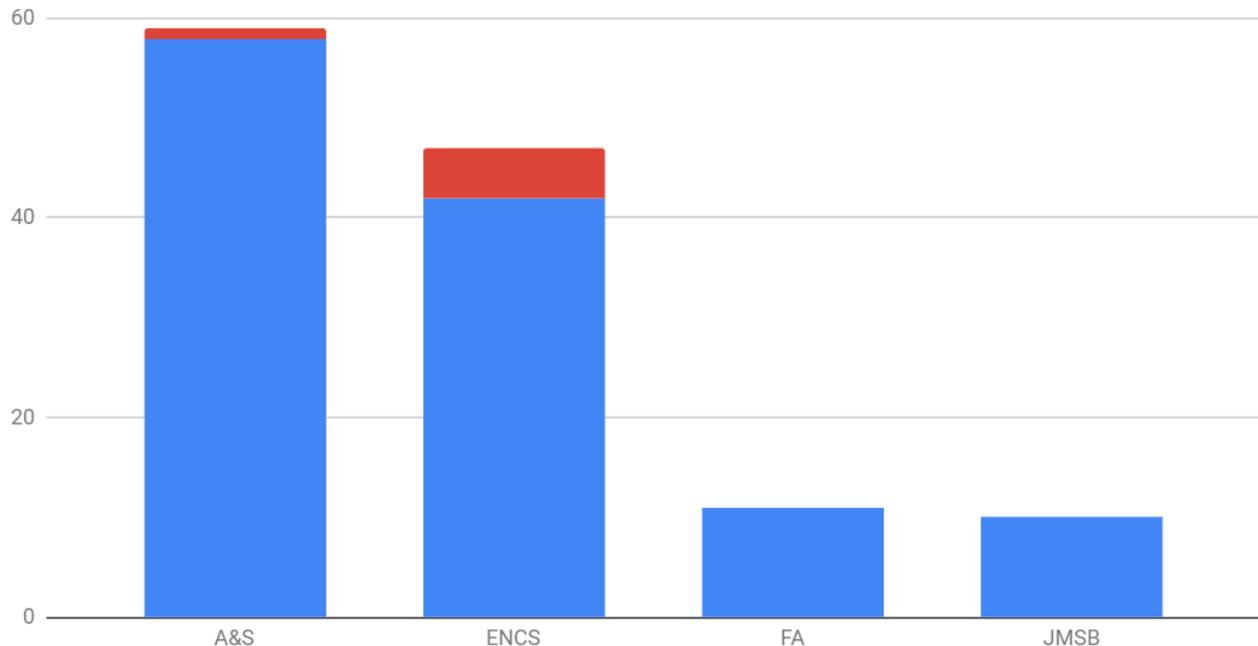
1. HAVE YOU SIGNED A WORKLOAD FORM?

While signing Workload Forms is supposed to be standard procedure when signing contracts (see Appendix C, page 22 of the [Collective Agreement](#)), it seems that there are still issues in the faculties of Arts & Science, and more seriously in ENCS.

This is troubling because Engineering departments have TA coordinators and full-time employees charged with administering TA/Marker workloads; these university employees should fully understand the proper processes.

Tip: Always fill out a workload form, it can protect you from exploitation.

Workload Form Completed



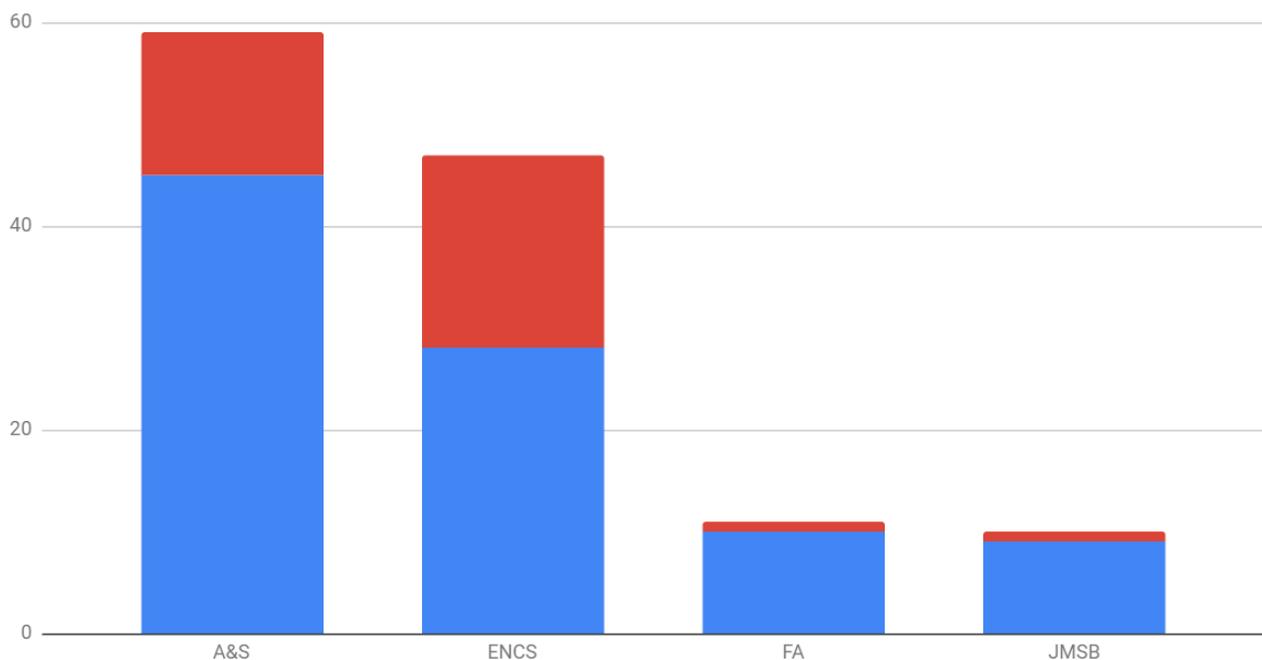
2. HAVE YOU SIGNED A WORKLOAD FORM WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR?

Of the members who did sign a Workload Form, **24% in Arts & Science** and **45% in ENCS** did not fill out the Workload Form with the Course Supervisor. The purpose of the Workload Form is to **come to an agreement on the distribution of tasks between the TA and Course Supervisor**, and it should be a discussion between the two parties. TAs should reflect on how best to balance these tasks with the requirements of their own academic progress.

The University has reaffirmed on countless occasions that the main objective of a student should be their own academic success, therefore we encourage our members to plan ahead so that their TA duties do not negatively affect their studies.

Tip: Bring the course outlines of the classes you are enrolled in and cross-reference them with the Workload Form to make sure you aren't overworked on your important examination dates.

Completed with Supervisor



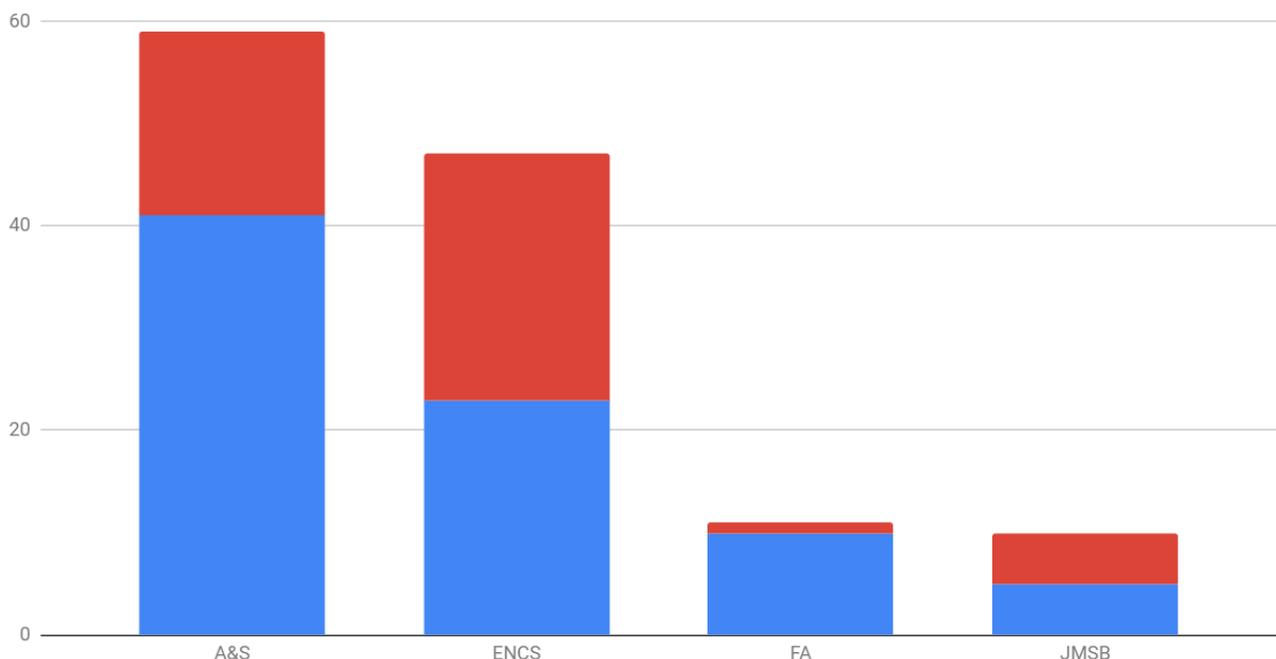
UNPAID HOURS

3. HAVE YOU WORKED BEYOND YOUR CONTRACT HOURS?

TAs and Markers are doing more work than they sign up for. Workload Forms and Contracts are legally-binding agreements between Employees and Employers, and each party has obligations to fulfill. The course is designed by the Course Supervisor, and they are responsible for the educational outcomes of the students enrolled.

If the Workload Form is not calibrated with the course outline, **it is the duty of the Employer to make adjustments and do the work required to ensure satisfactory educational outcomes.** The extra work resulting from inefficient course structure is the responsibility of the Course Supervisor, as they have designed the course. **Problems arising should be fixed and not be downloaded onto the TAs and Markers, in the form of unpaid overtime.**

Worked Beyond Contract Hours



TRAC members are protected under the TA Collective Agreement (Appendix C, page 22), which states “If revisions are required, the Course Supervisor and Teaching Assistant shall meet within 2 weeks of mid-term to review the objectives and make appropriate revisions”.

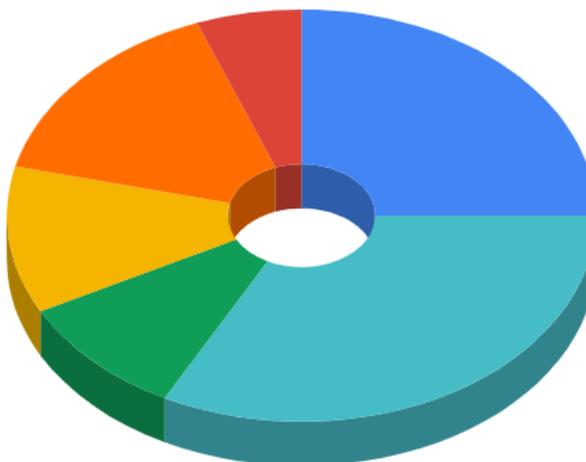
Tip: Track your hours with a spreadsheet on your computer (eg. Excel) or through a smartphone app (eg. [Work Log App](#)). Communicate with the Course Supervisor to discuss your progress and if changes to your Workload Form need to be made.

4. HOW MANY HOURS HAVE YOU WORKED BEYOND YOUR CONTRACT?

Distribution of reported overtime

Percentages reflect the amount of overtime per contract, as reported in the survey

- 0-10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 51-100%
- Over 100%



The graph above shows the amount of overtime being reported. For some (0-10%), small adjustments to the course outline could ensure that our members are not being asked to work overtime. For others (11-20%), it is likely that larger revisions should be made, and communication and task distribution between the TA and Course Supervisor needs to be improved.

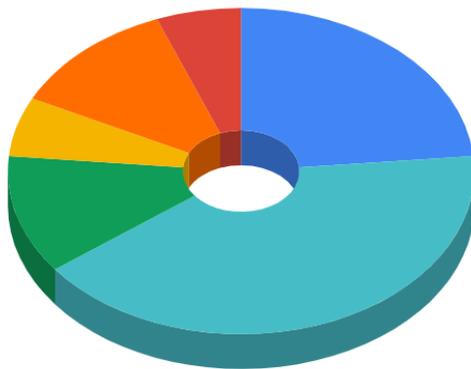
However, it is alarming that our members are being asked to work well over what they have legally agreed to. **This data also correlates with the cases reported where the Workload Form was not filled out with the Course Supervisor.**

Practices in ENCS and Arts & Science are especially troubling, and account for the largest reported issues of unpaid work. We have heard from members that they are uncomfortable or unaware of how to address these issues with the Course Supervisor.

Tip: Go to your union! Email TRAC (info@trac-union.ca), or come to our office and we will address the situation case by case, confidentially.

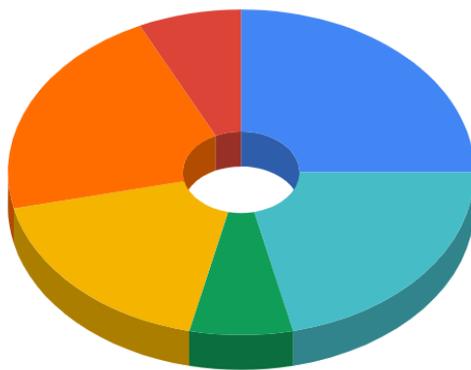
Arts & Science Overtime Percentage

- 0-10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 51-100%
- Over 100%



ENCS Overtime Percentage

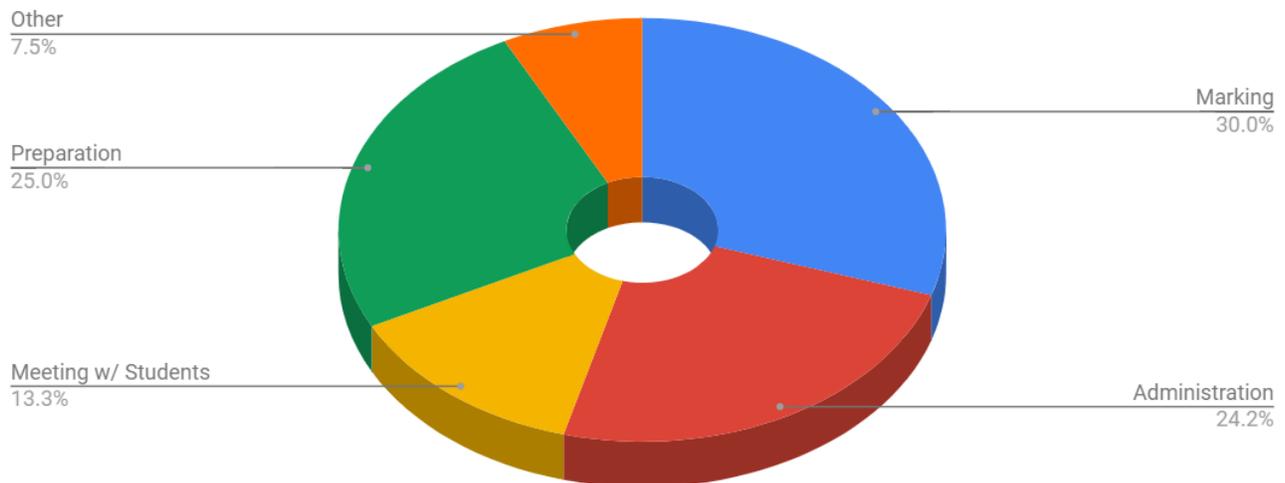
- 0-10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 51-100%
- Over 100%



5. TASKS MOST ASSOCIATED WITH OVERTIME

Most commonly reported issues

Percentages represent the frequency of reported issues



Marking, preparation, and administration (emails, communications, inputting grades) are all underestimated when Workload Forms are completed. The graph above represents which issues were causing overtime, when it was reported.

Preparation times vary by department. In some, the ratio is **2:1 (two hours of preparation for one hour in front of the students)**. In others, the ratio is **1:1 or even less**. Furthermore, Lab Demonstrators and Tutorial Leaders often stay after the course to answer students' questions, which is not accounted for. **In ENCS, marking follows a formula of 72 minutes per student.**

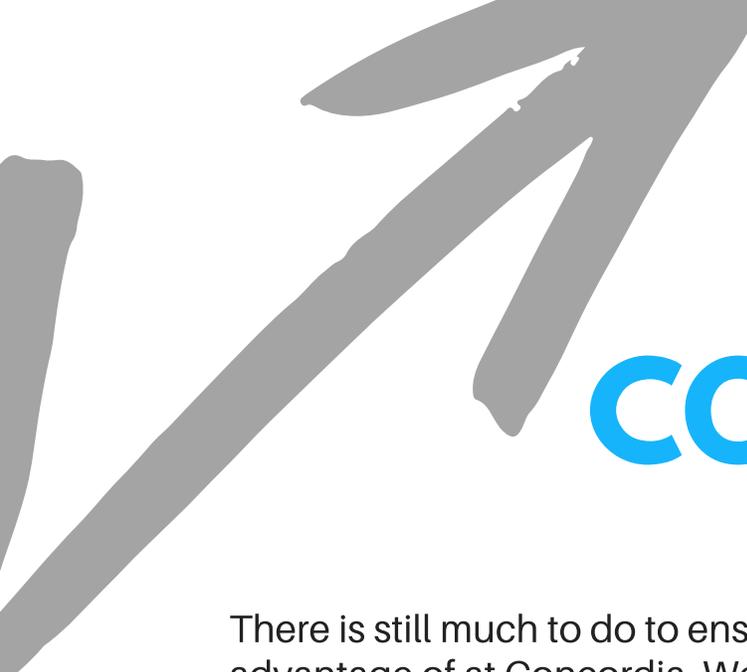
If you are not being paid this amount, contact TRAC immediately. In many courses, **especially online courses**, the amount of time spent answering emails and communicating with students and Course Supervisors is not properly evaluated.

Tip: When you track your hours make sure you cross-reference the tasks with the workload form, so you can make the proper adjustments with the Course Supervisor.

KEEP IN MIND

HERE IS A REMINDER OF HOW TO PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS:

- Remember that it is the employer's obligation to ensure the Workload Form is signed with the Contract, according to Appendix C of our [Collective Agreement](#), and it is best practice for Course Supervisors and TAs to fill out the Workload Form together.
- Always sign a Workload Form before signing your TA contract to ensure that your contract reflects accurately the tasks and associated hours at hand.
- Always meet with your supervisor to agree on the distribution of tasks and hours in your Workload Form.
- At this meeting, bring the course outlines of the classes you are enrolled in and cross-reference them with the Workload Form to make sure you aren't overworked on important examination dates.
- Track your hours with a spreadsheet on your computer (eg. Excel) or through a smartphone app (eg. [Work Log App](#)). Communicate with the Course Supervisor to discuss your progress and if changes to your Workload Form need to be made.
- If you are working overtime, remember that it is your right to readjust the objectives of the Workload Form with your Course Supervisor.
- Contact us if you have any concerns or questions. We offer active listening and confidential support. Get in touch at info@trac-union.ca.



CONCLUSION

There is still much to do to ensure that TRAC members are not taken advantage of at Concordia. We are building webtools, holding events, raising awareness and pushing for policies to change the Workload Form and determine the best practices to keep our members safe, healthy and respected for their contributions to the Concordia community.

Currently, TRAC is studying the trends in allocation of contract hours throughout the past five years. This analysis will help us determine if departments are reducing paid hours to members which could have detrimental effects on our working conditions, particularly if the workload is not adjusted to reflect the reduction of paid hours.

You can contribute by making sure that your department and your Course Supervisor respect the proper procedures for Workload Forms. **Every time a member enforces their rights and inform their union about their concerns, the whole community benefits.**

You can also help by sending us your Workload Forms so we can build an archive for future members to inquire about how many hours their predecessors were paid.

Many thanks to everyone who has participated in this study. To find out more, get in touch at info@trac-union.ca.

In solidarity,

TRAC Executive Committee

TRAC

TEACHING AND RESEARCH
ASSISTANTS AT CONCORDIA

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