

Heller School for Social Policy and Management

Union FAQs

Effective July 1, 2018, a collective bargaining agreement between Brandeis University and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) local 509 governing the terms of employment for graduate assistants has taken effect. As with any new agreement affecting workplace practices, we expect questions to arise as we move forward. Also, it will take time to transition to implementing practices that are part of the collective agreement. With this in mind, we have put together the following FAQs explaining who is eligible to join the union, and providing some information about how you may be impacted. We will periodically update these FAQs as other common questions arise.

We recommend that all students who are eligible for membership read the entire contract, which includes more detailed information than can be presented here.

1. Am I covered by this contract?

Generally, PhD students who are serving as Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows are covered by the collective bargaining agreement. Master's and PhD students who are not serving in one of those capacities are not part of the bargaining unit and therefore not covered by the agreement. PhD students who are paid by the hour, graders and research assistants are also not covered by the agreement. The definition of Teaching Fellow and Teaching Assistant, as specified in the contract, are as follows:

Teaching Assistant. Teaching Assistant duties may include, but are not limited to, assisting the professor with: course preparation before and during the semester; Latte maintenance; grading essays, exams and homework; syllabus design; writing exam questions. Teaching Assistants may be required to attend classes on a regular basis. Teaching Assistants may also be responsible for some instructional duties, including the following: lead discussion sessions, labs and recitations and/or teach an occasional class. They may also be responsible for some student advising and may be required to hold office hours. Teaching Assistants are required to complete Title IX training.

Teaching Fellow. Teaching Fellows, with Program and faculty leadership and oversight, are the Instructor of Record and are responsible for lesson planning and implementation, administration and grading of assessment tools, student advising and holding office hours. Teaching Fellows are required to complete Title IX training.

Please note that many position titles have changed:

Title in most recent appointment letter from Heller	Are you an instructor of record for a non-lab course?	Are you interacting with students, which may include holding office hours, leading discussion sections or labs, occasionally teaching, and student advising?	Are you a PhD student?	New title following the union contract
Teaching Fellow	Yes	Yes	Yes	Teaching Fellow
Teaching Fellow	No	Yes	Yes	Teaching Assistant
Teaching Fellow	No	No	Yes	Grader (non-union)
Course Assistant	No	Yes	Yes	Teaching Assistant
Course Assistant	No	Yes	No	Course Assistant (non-union)
Grader	No	No	Yes	Grader (non-union)
Grader	No	No	No	Grader (non-union)

2. I am a TA this semester, but not next semester. Will I still be covered by the contract even when I have no TA duties?

No. This contract covers you only in the semesters when you are assigned as a TA or TF (see FAQ 1)

3. Is my compensation going to increase?

Adjusted compensation for Teaching Fellows and Teaching Assistants by school and contract year is listed below:

School/Job Title	Pre-agreement	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
GSAS:				
Teaching Assistant	\$3,200.00	\$3,400.00	\$3,550.00	\$3,720.00
Teaching Fellow		\$4,550.00	\$4,800.00	\$5,000.00
IBS – Teaching Assistant	\$3000.00	\$3150.00	\$3465.00	\$3,720.00
Heller –Teaching Assistant	\$2500.00	\$3050.00	\$3390.00	\$3,720.00

4. When does the contract take effect? Will I receive retroactive pay?

The contract is effective as of July 1, 2018. If you are teaching in the Fall 2018 semester and therefore covered by the agreement, you will receive retroactive pay so that your compensation for the entire Fall 2018 semester will be in accordance with the contract.

5. Do I have to join the union if I am eligible?

Unions set rules regarding membership internally. Questions on union eligibility, rights, dues, and other matters should be addressed to your union representative.

6. Do I need to pay union dues?

If you choose to join the union, dues will be required. Those who choose not to join will be charged an agency fee that covers the cost of union representation. Please consult the SEIU Local 509 with questions.

7. Where can I learn more information?

We recommend that all eligible PhD students to review the entire contract. Those who have additional questions can contact their school or union representative