

Ratification of the
Graduate Research Assistant
Collective Bargaining Agreement

29 February 2024



Athabasca University
Graduate Students'
Association



Outline

1. Decisions Sought
2. Background – A fusing of realities
3. Bargaining Positions (Initial and Revised)
4. Future Actions
5. Comments, Questions, and Suggestions

Decisions Sought

Request RA feedback on the January 2024 collective employment agreement which covers retroactively from March 1, 2022 to June 30, 2024.

Background—A fusing of realities



Established as a separate entity from the university to advocate for students taking courses with a view of improving education.

Mission.

The Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association provides student services and representation for 4,500 AU graduate students through university and government relations with the mission that graduate-level education at AU is accessible, affordable, and of outstanding quality.



- Post-secondary learning act directed AUGSA creation of an RA employment agreement with AU.
- They never described how they were to be funded or setup.
- The task fell the largely volunteer student association.
- No starting point or resources



GRA

- Negotiations between AU/AUGSA dragged.
- Since we are elected on 1-year terms, negotiations would restart annually which favored AU's bargaining position.
- RA information was withheld by AU.
- Final a draft proposal in January 2024 to cover the period up to June 2024

Pre-

2017

2024

GRA

Independently took on research assistant roles within AU.

Mission.

- Learn skills.
- Valuable time for reasonable pay.
- Be treated fairly and respectfully.
- Receive credit/attribution for work.
- For the 23 current RAs

Initial Bargaining Positions

AUGSA Initial Positions

- Fair wages \$28 - \$30/hr that could support living and tuition.
- Wages comparable to brick & mortar universities.
- Greater commitment to the number of hours for RAs.
- Greater leave options.
- Greater support during grievances.

AU Initial Offers

- No wage increase (0%).
- No room for negotiations.

Result -> Stalemate

- We wanted to have RAs strike.
- No lists, no strike pay/funds.
- In December, AU started waiting us out again – delay favor them -> no raises at all.
- New council -> negotiation restart
- No agreement -> no change.

Needed: Improved Position

AUGSA Revised Position

- Highest wages possible.
- Poor deal -> reduce the duration of the agreement.
- Use inaugural agreement to establish information sharing requirements.
- Build an RA group to oversee agreement.
- Collect dues to support RA activities (e.g. legal, strike).

AU Revised Offers

- Agreement ends June 2024.
- Minor wage increase (2.75%).
- Gains sharing up to another 0.5%.
- Some funds for working from home stipends.
- Greater transparency.
- AUGSA support and participation during grievances.

Dollars to Donuts

Current/Default Agreement

- Minimum Wage:
 - \$18.50 for RA1
 - \$20.50 for RA2

Voting 'No'

January 2024 Agreement

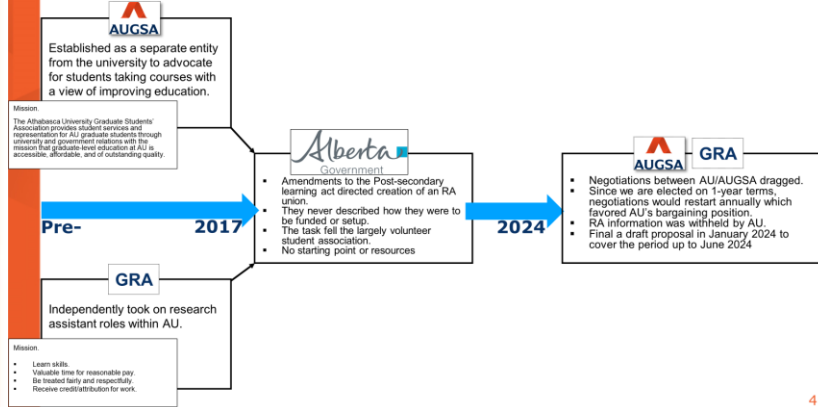
- Minimum Wage:
 - \$19.05 for RA1
 - \$21.07 for RA2
- Alberta Gain Sharing (0.5%)
- Position Transparency
- Work from home subsidy up to \$0.50 per hour.
- Greater leave flexibility
- AUGSA representation during grievance

Vote 'Yes'

Wages are individually negotiable. You can ask for a higher rate

Future–The coupling of realities

Background–A fusing of realities



Countering the stalemate -> Build a foundation so GRA/RAs can act.

- Short agreement -> negotiations start again in fall 2024.
- Information Sharing -> RAs can organize.
- Dues -> Professional Representation or find an affiliation.
- They can no longer wait us out if you have a professional backing.



Graduate Student Council

- Student advocacy to AU and gov't.
- Course and administratively focus.
- General needs of students.

GRA/RA Representation

- Permanent representation (vice annually elected reps).
- Advocate for the specific needs of GRA/RAs within AU.
- Provide GRA/RA assistance during grievances.
- Represent the GRA/RA voice to AUGSA.
- Collectively bargain on behalf of GRA/RAs within AU.

Mission.
The Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association provides student services and representation for AU graduate students through university and government relations with the mission that graduate-level education at AU is accessible, affordable, and of outstanding quality.

The incipient GRA/RA representation is supported by the student council but not constrained by it.

Mission.
To provide permanent and top-quality representation for the GRA/RA within AU.
Or
Whatever the team decides the mission to be.

Why we say "YES" to new proposal?

- New Collective agreement will give AUGSA and our employed student to bargain more
- Short term and provide wage increase
- We start next phase of bargain by June 30,2024
- Give us a foundation to ask more including additional RA opportunities



Contact and Questions

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