

GEU Guide for Returning to Campus

Know Your Rights and Count On Our Union for Support



Portland State University Graduate Employees Union

Last Updated: October 2021

GEU Contacts & Resources

info@pdxgeu.org

You may find after reading through this handbook and the provided links that you still have unanswered questions or are dealing with an unaddressed circumstance. **GEU is here to support you.** Please contact us here to help answer your questions. Additionally, if you notice any errors in this handbook, please contact us here.

grievances@pdxgeu.org

You're working past your FTE¹, you are repeatedly put in unsafe working conditions despite informing your supervisor, you are expected to do work outside of your outlined job duties, your contract is being violated, or you are being mistreated: if you experience any of this while completing your GA (Graduate Assistant) duties, please contact us.

equity@pdxgeu.org

If you're experiencing discrimination or have equity concerns that you want to discuss, email us here. If we're unable to assist you directly, we're happy to help you connect with the appropriate contact in order to address the issue.

membership@pdxgeu.org

Like what you see? GEU supports you because of the volunteer work of graduate employees just like you. **Our membership gives us our power** and the drive for us to continue to gain contract wins like higher minimum wages, cost of living adjustments, workload protections, fairer and safer working conditions, and so on. Support us in supporting you! **Email us here to become a member** (if you're not already), or if you're interested in getting involved in any way (big or small).

[Collective Bargaining Agreement 2018-2021](#) (aka "The Contract"): Every few years, members of GEU bargain with the PSU administration over GA pay, benefits, working conditions, and more. Our volunteers on the bargaining team survey GEU members and fight for the changes you want to see, including living wages and new rights and protections that will make PSU a better place to work. Note that the contract has been updated and revised ([changes listed here](#)), boosting our salaries for 2021-2022 and eliminating nearly all mandatory fees for GAs. **Some of the rights and protections described in this document are a direct result of our bargaining efforts. We'll be bargaining again this year. To learn more about getting involved, contact info@pdxgeu.org.**

¹ **FTE** stands for "full-time equivalency" and refers to the amount of hours you've been hired to work. If your FTE is 0.5, you're a half-time worker (~20 hrs/wk). 0.25 FTE is quarter time (~10 hrs/wk). Your FTE is listed in the Notice of Appointment you were given when you were hired or rehired for your position. If you have any trouble finding your FTE, ask your supervisor or contact info@pdx.edu for help.

Disclaimer

As we progress through this pandemic, these policies may change. Continue to check the PSU COVID Dashboard at <https://www.pdx.edu/covid-19-response/dashboards> for updates, and contact us if you have further questions.

Workload Concerns

A student requests to take your class remotely.

Hybrid teaching can be a lot of work, and GA FTE¹ may not account for this additional labor. **Don't work for free by quietly working over your hours! In this scenario, you may tell the student that you cannot fulfill this request;** you can suggest that the student consider contacting the [DRC](#) to possibly attain an accommodation. Further options are as follows:

- Early in the term, it might be possible for the student to substitute another course. Direct students to work with their [advisor](#) to find another course option.
- If sufficient work has been completed, an Incomplete grade may be appropriate.
- The student may need to drop the course. If it is past the drop deadline, students may need to petition the [Deadline Appeals Committee](#), explaining their mitigating circumstances.

A student has DRC accommodations, but fulfilling these requests will increase your workload beyond the hours you've been hired for (or you project that it will before the end of the month):

Contact your supervisor (this may be your department chair, a course coordinator, etc.) immediately. Accommodations are important, but so is managing your workload below or at your FTE.¹ Your supervisor **MUST** have a meeting with you shortly after you inform them about your workload to help you reduce your workload (for example, by getting you a grader, an exam proctor, etc.), increase your FTE (and therefore your pay), or help make your work more efficient so that it takes less time. You may need to provide your supervisor with a general breakdown of your hours that month, so we strongly advise you to track your hours on an ongoing basis.

Workload protections are part of our union's [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#) with PSU (section 18.4), so in a scenario where you're being asked to work more than the hours you're being paid for, our contract gives you rights and lays out a clear process for

addressing the situation. If you would like any guidance in this process, please feel free to reach out to GEU at info@pdxgeu.org.

Health & Safety Concerns

A student comes to class without a mask on or without properly wearing their mask.

Please instruct the student to (properly) put their mask on. If they refuse to wear a mask, ask the student to leave. If the student refuses to leave, the instructor can suspend or cancel the in-person class. Contact the Dean of Student Life to report the situation as a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and fill out the [PSU Mask Policy Violation Report](#).

NOTE: if you do not feel safe engaging with the student in this way, you do not need to. You may suspend/cancel the class at any stage in this process.

Further, if you feel that your personal health and safety is in jeopardy due to non-compliance with university-mandated COVID-19 protocols in your workplace, you may leave your workplace without penalty (secure your workplace as needed first). Be sure to communicate with your supervisor should either situation arise.

Our union's [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#) provides GAs with health and safety protections (section 13.4). GEU has confirmed with PSU that these protections would allow a GA to cancel in class in the instance described above.

[More information from PSU on mask policy](#)

A student comes to class sick with symptoms that indicate the student could have COVID.

While maintaining a safe distance, please ask the student to leave the class immediately and instruct them to call [SHAC](#) (Student Health & Counseling) at 503-725-2800 to schedule a COVID test. Ask them to inform SHAC that they are currently experiencing symptoms in order to expedite the test. Instruct your student to follow the directions from SHAC about when to return to class and to communicate with you via email in order to continue to make progress with the classwork. The health and safety of you and your students is important; if you believe you or the class has been

exposed to COVID, you may suspend class and inform students to closely monitor their symptoms and to get tested for free at SHAC if they develop any symptoms.

[More COVID information from PSU SHAC](#)

You are sick.

Contact your supervisor. Depending on how you feel, you may be able to teach your class remotely. It is not your job to find a substitute for your class, should you not be feeling well enough to remotely teach, but you may do so, if you want. Depending on your situation, you may want to call SHAC to get a COVID test, and follow the instructions you are given, while communicating this to your supervisor.

You have access to sick leave as well as COVID-19 sick leave. Graduate Assistants accrue 1 hour sick leave per 30 hours worked. Should you need additional time, PSU is providing COVID-19 leave (due to expire December 31st 2021), which will include a maximum of two weeks of accrued leave. The leave is paid at the employee's regular rate of pay.

[More information from PSU on getting a COVID-19 test at SHAC](#)

[More information from PSU on Sick Leave](#)

[More information from PSU on COVID-19 Sick Leave](#)

You need to take time off for childcare due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

You may use sick leave for this reason. You have access to sick leave as well as COVID-19 sick leave. Graduate Assistants accrue 1 hour sick leave per 30 hours worked. Should you need additional time, PSU is providing COVID-19 leave (due to expire December 31st 2021) which will include a maximum of two weeks of accrued leave. The leave is paid at the employee's regular rate of pay.

Contact the PSU Human Resources Leaves and Accommodations (leaves@pdx.edu) Team to make your request for leave.

[More information from PSU on Sick Leave](#)

[More information from PSU on COVID-19 Sick Leave](#)

[More information on from PSU Employee Leave](#)

Remote Work Requests

You have in-person office hours/meetings and would like to have remote office hours/meetings.

There is no university-wide policy that requires office hours or teaching related meetings to be in person; this decision is departmental, and is therefore to the discretion of your department chair. Contact your department chair expressing why you are making this request (do you live with or care for people vulnerable to COVID, are you vulnerable to COVID, do you need to care for children, etc.). **Should your department chair decline your request, you may contact the [Dean of Student Life](#) with the same request, and feel free to contact info@pdxgeu.org as well. GEU can act as an advocate in this situation, though it doesn't have the authority to change departmental decisions.**

GEU encourages you to contact your peers to see if they feel similarly, as any request is more powerful when made by a group over an individual.

You would like to switch to remote work or continue to work remotely.

Contact your supervisor expressing why you are making this request (do you live with or care for people vulnerable to COVID, are you vulnerable to COVID, do you need to care for children, etc.). **Should your department chair decline your request, you may contact [Employee Relations](mailto:hremployeerelations@pdx.edu) (hremployeerelations@pdx.edu) the [Dean of Student Life](#) with the same request, and feel free to contact info@pdxgeu.org as well. GEU can act as an advocate in this situation, though it doesn't have the authority to change departmental decisions.**

GEU encourages you to contact your peers to see if they feel similarly, as any request is more powerful when made by a group over an individual.

[More information on from PSU Employee Leave
PSU Human Resources](#)