

# Best Practices for TA and RA Appointments

## TA Assignments

TA assignments may include grading, leading discussion sections or laboratory sections, preparing instructional materials, or teaching courses. Before making assignments that diverge from this principle, DEOs should check with the CLAS Associate Dean for Graduate Education.

If your department commonly uses part of your TA allocation for graders, please note that graders should be assigned to tenured or tenure-track faculty and, as the allocation allows, to lecturers and visitors with uncommonly large lecture courses.

TAs serve as primary instructors in lower-division courses with small enrollments in which students are expected to do extensive writing or recitation. TAs typically are not assigned as primary instructor of a course with an enrollment over 40 students or as primary instructor of a course at the 3000-level or above. *Written permission from the CLAS Associate Dean for Graduate Education is required in order to assign a TA as primary instructor of a class at the 3000-level or above.* If you wish to obtain approval from the CLAS Associate Dean for Graduate Education, please use the template located in the forms section below.

## CLAS Priorities in Making Graduate Awards

Graduate Assistantships in CLAS are to be awarded only to students enrolled in CLAS degree programs. Requests for exceptions should be directed to the CLAS Associate Dean for Graduate Education. CLAS expects departments to prioritize support for doctoral students and master's students earning terminal or professional degrees in the field (such as the MFA, MSW, etc.). PhD students should be recruited with the expectation of being supported at 50% for at least 5 years unless the time to degree in the discipline is characteristically shorter. Likewise, students earning the DMA, MFA, MSW, or other similar terminal and professional degrees should be recruited with the expectation of being supported at 25% to 50% for the number of years typically required to complete the program. MA students should not be offered teaching assistantships while doctoral students in the unit go unsupported or are poorly supported.

PhD students in good standing who seek and receive prestigious external fellowships to support their research should not be penalized by forfeiting support at the conclusion of the external award.

## Assignments

- If you are considering hiring an undergraduate student, please refer to both of the memos regarding Undergraduates as Instructional Aides, located at <https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/undergraduate-teaching-assistants>.
- The total work assignment for a TA (1 HTE) is an average of 20 hours per week. Appointments of less than 1 HTE should bear assignments in which total hours per week are proportionate to the reduction from 1HTE.
- The standard percentages for appointments are as follows: 25%, 33%, 37.5%, 50%, 62.5%, 66.7% and 75%. Approval from Dean Getz is not needed for appointing a graduate employee to a percentage other than standard if the appointment is below

50%. Any appointment that, alone or combined with an appointment in another department, causes a graduate employee to have a standard percent of appointment greater than 50% needs prior approval from both Dean Getz and Dean Campo in the Graduate College. Most international graduate students have visas that do not permit them to hold any appointment over 50%. Requests to make appointments greater than 50% are made by the DGS or DEO, and **must** address the following:

1. the potential academic benefit to the student from the additional appointment
  2. the student's current progress toward degree completion
  3. the effect of the additional appointment on the student's future progress
- If you wish to appoint a graduate student enrolled in a degree program in another department or school, please contact the DGS of the department or school in which the student is enrolled BEFORE making the appointment to ascertain whether the graduate student already has an appointment. The combined appointments of a graduate student are limited to 50% unless permission for an overload is granted in advance by Deans Getz and Campo.
  - Teaching assistantships from this allocation are for the academic year only; appointment forms covering summer will not be processed unless you have obtained advance authorization to appoint TAs for the Summer Session via CLAS.

### **Commitments by TAs**

The Graduate College asks departments to conform to the Council of Graduate Schools' Resolution regarding commitments by prospective or enrolled graduate students to accept financial support. This Resolution emphasizes that graduate students "are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support prior to April 15; earlier deadlines for acceptance of such offers violate the intent of this Resolution." Departments are to enclose a copy of the revised Resolution with each scholarship, fellowship, traineeship, or assistantship offer. The Graduate College will provide copies. The resolution is available online at <http://cgsnet.org/april-15-resolution>.

Please make written offers and require written acceptances of all teaching assistantship offers, not only to prospective graduate students, but also to continuing graduate students in your program. ***Offers to new TAs should stipulate that continuation of support into the second semester is subject to positive evaluations of oral communication competence and teaching proficiency skills, and that negative evaluation can result in reduction of responsibilities and stipend, or even in cancellation of the commitment for support (mostly appropriate in the case of teaching assistants from the graduate program of a different department than your own).*** Only if you include such language in the offer letter will the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Graduate College be able to cover problems that arise due to failure to meet these requirements by a teaching assistant. Furthermore, **all** offers to second-year teaching assistants **must** be contingent upon B certification from the English as a Second Language (ESL) office **unless** they are teaching assistants in a science-related department and are in charge of a lab section. In the latter case a C certification must be obtained by the second year. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences will not approve any appointment forms for second-year teaching assistants who have not met this criterion.

## **Oral Communication Competence**

You are responsible in any case to assure yourself of the oral communication competence skills of prospective TAs before making an offer. In cases where letters of recommendation do not clearly attest to such skills, you should interview the individual by telephone, if not in person. The policy applies to all individuals who will provide instruction, not just those whose first language is not English. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences recommends that teaching assistantships not be offered to incoming graduate students whose first language is not English unless their score on the speaking component of the Internet Based TOEFL (iBT) is 26 or higher.

## **Verification of Oral Communication Skills for New TAs**

Before offering a teaching assistantship, the DEO is responsible for verifying the oral communication skills of the candidate, whether or not the candidate's first language is English. This verification may take place through letters of recommendation, a telephone interview, or an interview in person. For new graduate students whose first language is not English, the College recommends that teaching assistantships be offered only to those whose scores on the speaking component of the Internet Based TOEFL (iBT) are 26 or higher. For more information, view the "Language Competency Flowchart" describing the process at <http://clas.uiowa.edu/deos/administrative-manual-graduate-appointments>.

## **Underrepresented Minorities**

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences will continue to sponsor a program to encourage the recruitment of underrepresented minority teaching assistants by providing a supplement of up to \$2,500 for the first new HTE minority TA and \$1,000 for each subsequent new HTE minority TA in the same year. The supplement is prorated for appointments of less than 50%. These funds are available for expenses designed to further the recruitment of underrepresented minorities--defined as US citizens and permanent residents who are Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino/a, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders, women in science and mathematics (including computer science), and individuals with disabilities (defined as an individual with "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities" in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as Amended <https://www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm>)--as graduate students in your department and teaching assistants in the College. Departments should write to Dean Getz with a specific proposal for expenditure. Departments should use grant/program number 5-2575000 and organizational account number 600 in the MFK when coding expenses related to minority supplements (see administrative help pages at <http://clas.uiowa.edu/deos/administrative-manual-recruitment-minority-teaching-assistants>). A limited number of such requests can be considered in order to help with new recruiting initiatives that might affect a 2022-2023 appointment. Any funds unused by the department to which they are awarded will be available for recruitment efforts of other departments.

## **Other Best Practices**

Doctoral students in good standing who are currently unfunded and have not yet taken the

comprehensive exams should be placed on appropriate funding before offers are made to prospective students.

In those larger units in which the TA allocation is subdivided according to degree programs, sub-tracks, or specializations, the practices listed above should be uniformly applied within the respective degree program, sub-track, or specialization.

A link to the webpage on Graduate Funding can be found here:

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/research/graduate-funding>.

### **Offer Letter**

The templates are available at <http://clas.uiowa.edu/deos/administrative-manual-graduate-appointments>. The templates should be used as a guideline when preparing your offer letters to teaching assistants for appointments in academic year 2021-22. The templates are located under "Forms." Please note that teaching assistants should be made aware of the health/dental insurance options available to them See <https://www.grad.uiowa.edu/graduate-assistant-employment>. Any additional health/dental insurance information can be obtained from the University Benefits Office.

### **Forms**

Request to assign TA as primary instructor for 3000-level+ class – turn into a workflow form?