



## **GTA Hiring Process**

### **Department of Integrative Biology**

#### Guiding principles:

- 1) The allocation process for Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA) is primarily determined through consideration of the selection criteria (i.e. including, academic qualifications, teaching competence, capability, and prior relevant experience) and also consideration of graduate student preferences as expressed on student application forms each semester, and the need to fulfil the Department's commitment of GTA support to students as outlined in their offer of admission to the graduate program.
- 2) GTA allocation is a complex process, primarily because of the size of our graduate program combined with the desire to maximize overall preference satisfaction. Even so, the allocation process must comply with the terms of the currently prevailing Collective Agreement between the University of Guelph and CUPE Local 3913, Unit 1. The most reasonable way to proceed (in terms of fairness, efficiency and equity) is to organize the applicant pool into a principled hierarchy of groups and then work through these groups, trying to maximise preference satisfaction in each group, while adhering to the terms of the Collective Agreement.

#### Consequences of the guiding principles:

- 1) With the exception of students entering their first semester of a graduate program, graduate students must apply for GTA positions. Only students who apply will be considered for a GTA. The information which a graduate student provides as part of the application process also informs us about the days/times the student is available and their preferences, it ensures that students are not missed or negated in error, and it allows the department to fulfil its operational needs by filling positions required. For this reason, even students who are guaranteed a GTA for a particular year and/or semester must provide a completed application for that semester/year.
- 2) Graduate students should consult their class (and other) schedules before stating preferences on their applications. Students are responsible for ensuring that they will be available to TA for the course sections listed in their preferences, for the entire life (dates) of the contract, as noted on the job posting. GTA duties for a course may include attending lectures, seminars and/or labs, invigilating final exams, grading, etc. Students should therefore not apply to TA for a course if they cannot attend all the required seminars/labs and the final exam.

3) It is not always possible to assign graduate students their first choice of GTA assignment. Thus, they are encouraged to apply for multiple course assignments and may append as many preferences as they wish to the standard Application Form.

The allocation process:

Student applications are typically considered in the following sequence:

Graduate Students with a defined "Job Security Period" (i.e. have GTA(s) promised to them in their Offer of Admission, for a particular semester or academic year). These individuals are considered in the first level of consideration, as follows:

Where the GTA under consideration is the graduate student's first work assignment:

- I. First-year PhD students whose guarantee of financial support for the relevant semester/year guarantees them a GTA.
- II. First-year MSc students whose guarantee of financial support for the relevant semester/year guarantees them a GTA.

Where the GTA under consideration is not the first work assignment, but is a GTA guaranteed in the Offer of Admission:

- III. Other PhD students whose guarantee of financial support for the relevant semester/year guarantees them a GTA.
- IV. Other MSc students whose guarantee of financial support for the relevant semester guarantees them a GTA.

The second level of consideration is as follows:

- V. PhD and MSc students who are not guaranteed a GTA for the relevant semester but who are within their programme time (6 semesters for the MSc, 12 semesters for PhD students).

The third level of consideration is as follows:

- VI. PhD and MSc students who are not within their programme time.

The selection committee seeks to maximize total preference satisfaction for the groupings (i.e. I through VI as indicated above). There is no algorithm for doing this, but in general the committee considers the members of the group one by one, listed according to their seniority points, and assigns them a GTA position as high up their preference listing as possible taking into account their academic qualifications and prior experience (and where deemed to be relatively equal, their seniority). In the event that none of a student's preferences are available,

the committee normally assigns a GTA position that is as close as possible to one of those in that student's preference list, in terms of schedule and required qualifications. As each student is considered in turn, the committee looks at assignments that have already been made within the group and considers whether changing these assignments could result in an overall set of assignments that better maximizes preference-satisfaction. In the relatively rare case where two or more overall allocations of GTA contracts result in a comparable degree of preference-maximization and qualifications, the committee considers such factors as graduate student background and seniority in deciding between them. The committee must also take into account the requirement that the courses offered by our Department are delivered effectively and provide a high-quality experience for our undergraduates, and this may on occasion affect the allocation of GTA positions.

The principle for the sequence of consideration as indicated above (i.e. I–IV) is:

- a) That it is fairest to try and give first year students their preference of GTA assignment whenever possible, as they are the most vulnerable constituency: our aim is to give them the most comfortable experience possible in their first one or two GTA assignments.
- b) After applying this principle, we place doctoral students on a higher level of consideration because of their presumed slightly higher qualifications and/or level of experience. This is the Department's interpretation of principle 11.06(c) in the Collective Agreement.

The principle for the intragroup allocation process is that the Department has chosen to aim, in general, for preference-maximization across the group of applicants. In effect, the Department gives graduate students themselves the right and responsibility to decide what GTA contracts will be the best fit with their background, aims, and qualifications. Students must express this decision in their preference list and demonstrate that they have the qualifications required for the GTA assignments they have chosen.

It is acknowledged that where there is a conflict between the department's hiring procedure, as outlined in this document, and the Collective Agreement, the Collective Agreement shall prevail.