

Guidelines for selection of candidates for GTA positions

Human Health & Nutritional Sciences (U of G) & Kinesiology (U-G Guelph-Humber)

GTA Selection Committee Members*

Committee Chair

2 Faculty members from different disciplines

Administrative Officer/Grad Program Assistant

*All members must attend an orientation session with DHR at least once during each 3-year cycle.

The selection of candidates for GTA and GSA-1 work assignments will be completed in accordance with existing University Policy, government legislation (e.g., Ontario Human Rights Code) and the provisions of the CUPE 3913, Unit 1 Collective Agreement.

Human Health and Nutritional Sciences is responsible for assigning the GTA's for programs at the University of Guelph (U of G) as well as the Kinesiology program at the University of Guelph-Humber (GH). The process of GTA assignment is similar between the two, where there are differences, they will be noted.

Guiding principles:

- 1) The assignment process for Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA) is primarily determined through consideration of the selection criteria as outlined by the Collective Agreement between the University of Guelph and CUPE Local 3913, Unit 1 including academic and professional qualifications, teaching competence, capabilities, skill and ability and prior relevant experience), the need to fulfil the Department's commitment of GTA support (Job Security Period) to students as outlined in their offer of admission to the graduate program and the operational need of the department including the need to deliver high quality undergraduate programming. We also consider graduate student preferences as expressed in applications submitted each semester.
- 2) Given the above considerations, GTA assignment is a complex process. This process is further complicated by the size of our graduate program and the size of our undergraduate programs. We commonly have more GTA positions than we have graduate students, therefore, it is possible that some graduate students will receive more than 1 GTA, although not in the same semester. Multiple GTA's are usually reserved for PhD students given their advanced experience and time management skills.
- 3) Special attention is paid to the area of study of the graduate students and its alignment with the course material. Human Health and Nutritional Sciences has three areas of focus, or streams, that students' study within 1) Nutrition and Nutraceuticals, 2) Exercise, Metabolism, Physiology 3) Biomechanics and Anatomy.

- 4) There are sometimes different issues when considering GTA assignments for GH. We often have courses in the GH program that need GTAs but get no applicants. When a student has expressed a preference to TA for a GH course, we sometimes give this preference higher priority in guiding our assignment than we might in other assignment decisions.
- 5) On top of the above complexities, the assignment process must comply with the terms of the currently prevailing Collective Agreement between the University of Guelph and CUPE Local 3913, Unit 1.

Consequences of the guiding principles:

- 1) Only students who apply will be considered for a GTA. The information which a graduate student provides as part of the application also informs us about their availability 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 work assignment posting. Duties for a course may include attending lectures, seminars and/or labs, invigilating final exams, grading, etc., and some courses have speciality requirements (i.e., Human Anatomy requires students must have Hepatitis B vaccinations). Students should therefore not apply to TA for a course if they cannot attend all the required seminars/labs and the final exam or fulfill all the special requirements.
- 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. They can select as many preferences as they wish to the application under “consider me for all”.

The application and assignment process:

For University of Guelph GTA work assignments, approximately 2- 3 months prior to the start of the semester, work assignments are posted on the Academic Staff Work Assignments website. Graduate students and faculty within the department are notified by email that the work assignments have been posted. The HHNS U of G GTA work assignments are usually posted about 2-3 weeks ahead of the GH posting. This is to allow those who were not selected or missed the HHNS posting to have another opportunity to apply at GH. However, the initial committee meeting and planning for U of G and GH GTA assignments is done together, and students who are thought to be best suited to GH positions are subsequently encouraged to apply to them.

The principle for the intragroup assignment 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.

Approximately six weeks prior to the start of the semester our GTA selection committee meet to discuss the applications. The committee consists of faculty members from different streams of expertise within HHNS, as well as an Administrative Assistant who assists with collection of data and ensures the Collective Agreement is followed. A spreadsheet prepared by the Administrative Assistant is used as a tool for the committee to review the applicants who have applied to each work assignment as well as tracking rationale for hiring decisions.

Given the number of complexities in GTA assignment as mentioned above, the most reasonable way to proceed in terms of fairness, efficiency and equity is to consider GTA assignment on a course-by-course basis, while being aware of the students, multiple, different course choices.

There is no algorithm for the assignment process, in general the committee considers each course, one-by-one, and assigns applicants to particular courses based on but not limited to, the following sequence:

- I. Pedagogy - needs of the course and the Department.
- II. Job Security Period – students who are still within their Job Security Period will be considered first.
- III. Candidates who have completed their Job Security Period and who are still within their prescribed program will be considered next. Prescribed program is defined as the number of semesters that the University has deemed standard for the program of study.
- IV. Candidates who exceed the prescribed program period for their program of study.
- V. All things considered equal – seniority is used

The committee then considers the GTA preferences and assigns a GTA work assignment as high up their preference listing as possible considering their academic qualifications, their stream of expertise and prior experience (and where deemed to be relatively equal, their seniority). If none of a student's preferences are available, the committee normally assigns a GTA work assignment 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 course is considered in turn, the committee looks at assignments that have already been made and considers whether changing these assignments could result in an overall set of assignments that better maximizes preference-satisfaction. 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 assignment of GTA work assignments.

This selection committee first assigns the HHNS – U of G courses but again the planning for the U of G and GH GTA assignments is done together. Once these work assignments have been offered the committee will then review and assign the GH courses.

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There have been instances where a course does not have any GTA applicants, which more commonly occurs for the GH courses given that students must travel to the GH campus. In cases where there are no GTA applicants for a course the students are reminded of the postings and asked to consider specific courses in their applications. Failing this, students who have previously held a GTA at GH, or who have indicated a willingness to be a GTA at GH are contacted directly about open work assignments and encouraged to apply.

Once GTA assignments are complete, approximately five weeks prior to the start of the semester students will receive an electronically generated offer via email. The student will be given a designated response date. If the offer is not accepted by the response date, the offer will be withdrawn and reoffered to another candidate. Before the teaching assignment starts, course instructors meet with successful applicants to complete the Assignment of Work Agreement (Appendix G in the Collective Agreement). Copies of the signed Work Agreement are forwarded to the ADA office.

Following completion of the hiring process, the Department will make available electronically, in the Department, a summary of the semester work assignment indicating the course and employee(s) assigned to the course. This will be available by the second pay of the semester.

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.

Any questions regarding the above stated processes should be directed to Anne Lovett-Hutchinson, Administrative Officer or Dr. Coral Murrant, Chair, Human Health and Nutritional Sciences.

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