

## **Guidelines for Selection of Candidates for GTA Work Assignments**

Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology  
College of Biological Science

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.

### **Guiding principles:**

- 1) The assignment 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 in applications submitted 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 assignment 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 assignment 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) Graduate students must apply for GTA work assignments. 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 the work assignments 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. 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. Applicants must clearly highlight how they meet the specific requirements for each work assignment they apply to.
- 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 application.

### **The application and assignment process:**

Approximately ten weeks prior to the start of the semester, work assignments are posted on the Academic Staff Work Assignments website. Graduate students within the department are notified by email that the work assignments have been posted.

Approximately six weeks prior to the start of the semester a departmental sub-committee, typically consisting of the Laboratory Coordinators, Course Instructors, Grad Program Assistant and the Administrative Officer, meet to discuss the applications received. Following this meeting, a selection committee consisting of the Department Chair, Administrative Officer and Grad Program Assistant prepares a final rank of applicants using, but not limited to, the following sequence:

- I. Job Security Period – students who are still within their Job Security Period will be considered first.
- II. 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.
- III. Candidates who exceed the prescribed program period for their program of study.

The selection committee seeks to maximize total preference satisfaction for the groupings (i.e. I through III as indicated above). There is no algorithm for doing this, but there is an assignment rubric in place. In general, the committee considers the members of the group one by one, listed according to their Level of Consideration, and assigns them a GTA work assignment 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 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. 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.

The principle for the sequence of consideration as indicated above (i.e. I-III) 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 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 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.

If you have any questions about the GTA assignment process, please contact the MCB Administrative Officer or Chair.

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.

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