



# Instructions for Completing Standard Graduate Associate Appointment Document

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## Overview

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A graduate student's principal objective at Ohio State is to earn a graduate degree. Appointment as a graduate associate (GA) contributes to that objective by providing an apprenticeship experience along with financial support. This apprenticeship complements formal instruction and gives the student practical, personal experience that can be gained only by performing instructional, research, or administrative activities. GA responsibilities should not interfere with a student's reasonable progress toward completing the graduate degree.

The *Graduate Quality of University Experience (G-QUE) Report*, released in 2001 by the Council of Graduate Students (CGS) and the Graduate School, made a number of recommendations about improving the quality of the graduate student experience at Ohio State. One of the G-QUE recommendations was to "[c]learly articulate the stipend and raise structure as well as appointment policies for Graduate Associates in all units that appoint GAs." The report advised that GAs should receive information about the terms and conditions of their appointments. In addition, the report recommended that the University create a template to facilitate distribution of information about the terms and conditions of GA appointments, designing the template so that local units could incorporate unit-specific information. The G-QUE report is available at <http://www.gradsch.osu.edu/Faculty/GSpubs/GQUE.html>

In 2003-04, the Council on Research and Graduate Studies reinforced the importance of providing all graduate associates with clear, complete, and written information about the terms and conditions of their appointments. Regular, clear communication between graduate associates and their advisors and supervisors is critical to establishing and maintaining a positive and productive environment. Many difficulties can be prevented if the graduate associate receives a clear description of responsibilities and performance expectations as well as regular supervision and evaluation.

To make it easier for appointing units to provide this information to GAs in consistent ways, the Graduate School and the Office of Human Resources have worked with the Council of Graduate Students to develop a standard GA appointment document, which is posted at <http://www.gradsch.osu.edu/Depo/PDF/GA2.pdf>. All GA-appointing units are required to use these templates for new and renewed Graduate Teaching Associate, Graduate Research Associate, and Graduate Administrative Associate appointments.

The document has been designed to accompany, follow, or replace offer letters issued by academic and administrative units. Offer letters are an especially important part of the academic recruitment process, during which graduate programs seek to recruit the most outstanding graduate students to Ohio State. While offer letters should refer to the appointment document(s) that will be issued, offer letters should also reflect the particular culture and values of their units. The offer letter may provide clarification about items that are included in the appointment document or may provide information in addition to the appointment document. Offer letters cannot negate or reduce the provisions of the standard appointment document.

In situations where it is not practical or appropriate to provide completed GA appointment documents concurrently with the offer letter, offer letters must include the elements identified below. In such cases, GAs should receive completed GA appointment documents at the earliest date possible, but, unless there are extenuating circumstances, no later than two weeks before the beginning of the appointment.

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## Required Components of Graduate Associate Offer Letters

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Offer letters sent without a completed GA appointment document must include the following:

- Appointment title (or possible titles, if specific one is unknown at time of offer)
- Period of appointment (i.e., Autumn, Winter, and Spring quarters)
- Service dates (i.e., for Autumn GTA, 9/15-12/15)
- Appointment FTE
- Expected monthly stipend (which may be expressed in terms of a minimum based on the current year's figures)
- Description of expected appointment duties (which may be expressed broadly if precise assignments are not yet finalized)
- Initial contact person
- Reporting date for appointment
- Information about mandatory orientation or training session(s)
- Special appointment requirements (such as English proficiency requirements for GTA appointments)
- Deadline for responding in writing to accept offer
- Date by which additional information about appointment will be sent

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## Key Points about GA Appointment Documents

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- 1. Every student who holds a GA appointment must receive a completed appointment document from his/her appointing unit.** A new appointment document should be issued at the beginning of each new appointment period (i.e., annually for 12-month appointments; at the beginning of each new academic year for nine-month appointments; or at another appropriate time for appointment periods of different lengths). The appointment document should be revised and reissued sooner if there are major changes in duties, a change in title, a change in remuneration, or other significant changes.
- 2. The document must give details about the GA's appointment(s).** Each student's appointment document should reflect his/her specific appointment. Unit-specific policies and procedures should be attached as an addendum or posted on a web site referenced in the document.
- 3. Timing of document issuance.** For continuing students, a completed GA appointment document should be sent with or in place of the appointment offer. If some appointment details are unknown at the time of the offer, recipients should be informed about when a follow-up communication with that information will be sent. For prospective students, it may not be appropriate or practical to send a completed GA appointment document at the same time as the offer letter. In such cases, offer letters must include certain required elements (see above), and units must provide GAs with completed appointment documents at the earliest date possible, but, unless there are extenuating circumstances, no later than two weeks before the beginning of the appointment.
- 4. Process for document issuance.** Each associate should receive two copies signed by the person(s) within the appointing unit authorized to make associateship offers. One copy is to be retained for the GA's records. The second copy is to be returned to the address given for the appointing unit after the student has signed to accept the appointment. Units may handle the entire process electronically if they have mechanisms in place to incorporate the required signature(s) and ensure the integrity of the document(s).
- 5. Step-by-step instructions.** See the following pages.



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## Questions

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Questions about GA appointments may be directed to Shari Breckenridge, Director of Registration Services, Graduate School ([breckenridge.2@osu.edu](mailto:breckenridge.2@osu.edu), 247-7257) or Lamar Murphy, Senior Assistant Dean, Graduate School ([murphy.651@osu.edu](mailto:murphy.651@osu.edu), 247-7268). Questions about human resources policies may be directed to OHR Consulting Services at 292-2800.

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## Step-by-Step Instructions

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**Name:** Insert name (last, first, middle) of student who is being offered the appointment.

**Academic Unit (Graduate Program):** Insert name of student's graduate program.

**Appointing Unit:** Insert name of appointing unit.

**Address of Appointing Unit:** Insert address, using address to which signed document should be returned.

**Faculty/Administrative Contact Person in Appointing Unit (whichever is applicable):** Insert name of appropriate person.

**Faculty/Administrative Contact Person's E-mail Address and Telephone Number:** Insert appropriate information.

**Appointment Title:** Check appropriate box to indicate whether GTA, GRA, or GAA. Note that new international students for whom English is not the first language must certify their proficiency in spoken English before assuming GTA duties involving direct student contact.

**Average Load (Hours/Week):** Insert the appropriate load associated with the appointment FTE, with 50% equivalent to an average load of 20 hours per week over the duration of the appointment. "Load" refers to the activities and services for which the stipend is provided.

**Percent FTE:** Insert the appropriate percent time, with 50% equivalent to an average load of 20 hours per week over the duration of the appointment.

**Note about International Students on F-1/J-1 Visas:** International students on F-1/J-1 Visas may work up to 20 hours per week when classes are in session, and over 20 hours per week during quarter breaks and during the student's annual vacation quarter. Work off-campus must be authorized by the Office of International Education. Contact an OIE advisor for further details.

**Note about Graduate Research Associate (GRA) Appointments:** Graduate Research Associate (GRA) appointments fall into two broad categories:

- a. GRAs on 50 percent appointments should spend approximately 20 hours per week on their appointment duties when they are supporting faculty research that is not directly related to their dissertations or theses.
- b. For many GRAs, their appointment duties overlap with research for their own dissertations or master's theses. In these cases, it is difficult to separate the number of hours devoted specifically to the associateship. It is the responsibility of the supervising faculty member to clarify expectations, including policies related to publication and intellectual ownership.

**Monthly Stipend:** Insert the monthly stipend for the appointment, the number of months in the appointment, and the total stipend expected.

**Tuition and Fees:** A general statement about tuition and fees is included, along with a statement about the university subsidy of student health insurance.

**Fees Covered for This Appointment, if any, in Addition to Fee Authorization for Tuition and Fees:** There is considerable variation in the fees covered by appointing units. This item should designate whether additional fees (such as college/technology fees, COTA bus pass fee, student activity fee, or the recreational facility fee) will be covered.

**Appointment Period/Service Dates:** Insert the beginning and ending dates for the appointment. Most appointments are made for the academic year (nine months) or calendar year (twelve months). A GA may not be appointed for less than one quarter unless approved in advance by the Graduate School. It is also important to state clearly the expected service dates. For instance, a GTA might be expected to provide service in Autumn from approximately 9/15 through 12/15, getting the quarter break period off. A GAA or GRA appointed for the same term might be expected to work over the quarter break.

**Appointment Period/Pay Dates:** Provide the dates that the first and last paychecks will be issued for the appointment.

**Date by Which Unit Expects to Make Reappointment Decisions:** Many academic programs guarantee multiple years of funding to their own students as long as they make satisfactory progress toward their degrees and remain in good standing. There are also a substantial number of GAs who operate without this certainty; units should indicate the date by which they expect to make reappointment decisions.

**Primary Duties:** Using the list on the last page of these instructions as a guide, insert the primary duties of the position. Essential duties should be included in the list. It is usually wise to include a phrase such as “and other duties as assigned” to reflect the likelihood that additional, related tasks or duties will be required.

**More Information Posted at <URL> or Attached:** Check the appropriate box to indicate whether unit-specific policies and procedures are posted on a Web site (and give the URL) or are attached. If unit-specific policies are not attached and are not posted on a Web site, do not check either box.

**Supervisor’s Name, if Applicable:** Insert appropriate information.

**Supervisor’s Telephone Number and E-mail Address:** Insert appropriate information.

**Deadline for Contacting Supervisor, if Applicable:** Provide date by which the supervisor is to be contacted initially, if applicable.

**Temporary Supervisor:** Check this box if the supervisor is a temporary supervisor. Also enclose information about the process and timeline for assigning a permanent supervisor or refer students to a specific URL for the information.

**Required Orientation/Training for Appointment:** Check boxes as appropriate to indicate the campus and/or OIE reporting date(s) [including the specific date(s)], if applicable and whether information about required orientation/training is attached or posted on a specified Web site. If there is no required orientation or training for the appointment, check the appropriate box.



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## Acceptance of Terms

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**Deadline for Returning Signed Copy of GA Appointment Document to Accept Offer:**

Fill in appropriate date.

**Acceptance Line:** Leave blank.

**Declination Line:** Leave blank.

**Student's Signature and Date:** Leave blank.

**Appointing Unit's Authorized Signature(s) and Date(s):** Two copies of the document should be signed by the individual(s) in the appointing unit authorized to make offers. This could be one or more of the following individuals: dean; vice president; department head; director; unit fiscal or human resources officer; graduate studies chair; and so forth. Note that the appropriate principal investigator(s) must also sign if the student is being appointed to an external research grant.

## **Duties of Graduate Associates**

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Specific responsibilities of graduate associates are determined by the appointing units. This list is intended as an aid to units in completing appointment documents and is not exhaustive.

### **Graduate Teaching Associates (GTAs)**

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GTAs primarily support instruction. Where possible, their appointment documents should identify the course(s) (rubric and course number) for which the GTA is providing support.

Typical duties include:

- Teaching classes
- Grading student assignments
- Leading lab or discussion groups in a course setting
- Developing academic instructional materials
- Accompanying/Coaching musical or vocal performances
- Providing artistic instruction
- Proctoring exams
- Mentoring/Coordinating the work of other GTAs
- Holding office hours
- Tutoring students
- Other related duties as assigned

### **Graduate Research Associates (GRAs)**

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GRAs primarily provide support in applying and mastering research concepts, practices, or methods of scholarship. Appointment documents should identify the research project for which the GRA is providing support. GRAs whose appointment activities overlap with research for their own dissertations or theses should receive information from their supervisors in a timely manner about publication, intellectual ownership, and any other relevant policies.

Typical duties include:

- Conducting experiments
- Organizing or analyzing data
- Presenting findings in a publication or dissertation
- Collaborating with faculty in preparing publications
- Mentoring/Coordinating work of other GRAs
- Other research activities (specify)
- Other related duties as assigned

### **Graduate Administrative Associates (GAAs)**

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GAAs primarily support administrative functions in academic and administrative units.

Typical duties include:

- Administrative support, such as copying course materials, handling general office or reception duties, producing correspondence, supervising a reading room, and similar activities
- Technical/Support services, such as acting as a Webmaster and/or assisting with Web pages, providing network administration/end user support, managing equipment, monitoring instructional and service labs (computer, video, etc.), translating documents, providing routine support for publications (record keeping, writing copy for university or department newsletters or non-research publications, correspondence, etc.), advising (providing curricular and academic advice to students, giving support to advisors, etc.), and similar activities
- Outreach activities, such as recruiting, publicizing programs and activities to campus and public constituencies, working with/assisting with event management, and similar activities
- Preprofessional activities, which offer experience, practice, or guidance that is significantly connected to the GAA's field of study and career preparation