



## Graduate Teaching Assistants Academic Regulations

### Definition

Graduate Teaching Assistants (“GTAs”) at the University of Vermont are graduate students who hold a teaching or teaching-related appointment made in accordance with the University regulations pertaining to GTAs. They receive financial support while gaining invaluable teaching and educational experience under the guidance of faculty mentors. GTAs often assist faculty with teaching classes, such as large lecture classes with recitation or lab sections. GTAs should not be assigned to teach post-baccalaureate or graduate courses. The primary purpose of teaching, from the standpoint of the University and the student, is for students to make steady progress toward an advanced degree, become a valuable member of the academic community, and gain valuable professional experience irrespective of their individual post-degree career aspirations. GTA status is dependent upon being enrolled at the University as a graduate student.

### Appointment Guidelines

The GTA must receive a letter from the department, college/school, or university unit that states the general conditions of the appointment and that specifies the stipend, teaching or other expectations, duration of the appointment, other benefits, and any other pertinent terms. The letter will also include a reference to this Academic Regulation and state that this policy governs the appointment. The letter of appointment should be sent to the student. If the student accepts the appointment, they must return a signed copy to the designated university office or representative.

Students with a full appointment as a GTA should not spend more than 20 hours in any week on average on assistantship activities for which the student is not receiving academic credit. These expectations must allow for in-class time as well as necessary teaching preparation time and grading. Fractional appointments should not exceed the corresponding fraction of the 20-hour effort standard. To make adequate progress toward their degree, students holding a GTA will be committing effort above and beyond the 20 hours /week on average associated with their academic appointment as GTAs.

GTAs who receive appointments in the fall and/or spring terms are expected to complete at least 9 credits or the Continuous Registration option in the terms of appointment; those with fractional appointments are expected to register for at least the following number of credits or the Continuous Registration option: 1/2 appointment, 6 credits; 1/4 appointment, 3 credits.

All appointments are conditioned on students continuing to make satisfactory academic progress towards completing their degree. When a student accepts an appointment in writing, both the student and the program are expected to comply with the terms of the appointment. A department may, during the appointment term, transfer a student, after consultation with the student, from a teaching assignment to a research appointment or to another appropriate appointment that provides for essentially equal financial support and academic and professional training.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act requires the University to verify that a GTA is authorized to receive a stipend in the United States. Each new GTA is required to verify that they are either a U.S. citizen or authorized to receive a stipend in this country. To receive financial support, a GTA is required to produce the necessary documentation to the university.

## **Reappointment Guidelines**

Although GTA appointments may not be made for more than one year, a student may be reappointed. If it is not feasible to offer renewals or other appointments to all qualified GTAs, priority should be given to those with superior academic and teaching qualifications. The same regulations which pertain to original appointments apply to reappointments. The criteria for reappointment include satisfactory academic performance, satisfactory academic progress towards their degree, and the demonstrated quality of the GTA teaching activities necessary to their academic and professional development. Examples of unsatisfactory academic performance would be a GPA below 3.0, completion of fewer than six credits of graduate work per term, or failure to pass preliminary or comprehensive examinations as specified. Specific criteria are contained in departmental or program manuals governing specific degree programs.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Department or Program, College/School, and University**

The department or program should make application and appointment procedures available to all graduate students.

The department, program, college/school, or university unit is responsible for generating the GTA appointment letters based on authorized templates provided by the Graduate College, and for ensuring that the terms are being followed.

Each term, every department or program is expected to provide all appointees with timely notification of specific assignments detailing their teaching or support expectations during the term. A reasonable effort should be made to take into consideration the competencies and preferences of the graduate student as well as their graduate course schedule when assignments are being determined.

To ensure adequate progress and provide additional supports, if necessary, the department or program should provide the GTA with feedback on the quality of their teaching activities necessary to complete their academic and professional training and degree requirements at least once per year; a written record of the feedback is to be shared with the student and archived by the department and program.

A brief written description of each department or program's orientation and training and evaluation and oversight plans for the academic training and professional development of students should be made available by the department, e.g., via the Graduate Program Handbook. It is the responsibility of the Dean's office to assure that specific efforts in training, oversight, evaluation, and orientation of GTAs for the academic training and professional development of students are accomplished in the department each year. The Graduate College will arrange for periodic reviews of practices in various colleges/schools as part of its responsibility for the GTA Academic Regulations

Each department is expected to provide all GTAs with access to preparation space, such as shared master's/ doctoral space.

The ultimate responsibility for all courses taught at the university rests with the faculty. Each department is responsible for providing orientation, training, oversight and evaluation of its graduate students for the academic training and professional development of the students, and for assigning one or more faculty members to work closely with the individual graduate students to assist them in their teaching activities and to facilitate professional development. Prior to assuming their teaching or teaching related responsibilities, new GTAs should receive an orientation at the appropriate local level, typically the program /department or college/school. All new GTAs are also expected to attend the

orientation program sponsored by the Graduate College, with support from the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The departmental or program teaching coordinator or equivalent should meet with each GTA at least three times each term.

If the GTA is instructing a laboratory, recitation section, or course for the first time, the teaching coordinator or faculty director should arrange to observe the instruction, either directly or by means of video recording, at least twice. Experienced GTAs should be observed at least once. Each individual is to be informed in writing of the conclusions resulting from the evaluation and they should be given appropriate suggestions for improvement for their academic training and professional development.

Each term teaching surveys should be distributed to the students in the GTA's class for the purpose of improving their teaching. These survey results should be made available to the GTA and the program coordinator or director, who should help contextualize student feedback for the GTA.

### **Students**

Graduate students holding GTA appointments are required to meet the expectations of their appointments and participate in departmental orientation and training programs. GTAs must participate in departmental deliberations concerning their courses. All GTAs are expected to meet academic enrollment requirements and to maintain satisfactory academic performance.

Graduate students are not permitted to hold more than the equivalent of one full Academic Appointment within the University at a time. In rare circumstances, graduate students may seek additional appointments, but they must be approved by the departmental chairperson and the Academic dean. As a rule, such additional appointments should be clearly time-limited, short-term, fractional (guidance is up to 6-8 hours/week), and integral to the student's professional development.

Due to federal immigration regulations, graduate students on J-1 or F-1 visas may not be engaged in their academic appointment for more than 20 hours per week on campus when school is in session during the fall and spring terms, and thus those on regular appointments are not eligible for additional appointments during these terms. Given the intensive and time-consuming nature of graduate studies and training, graduate students holding GTA appointments are discouraged from employment outside of the university.

### **Stipend**

Minimum stipend rates are set annually by the university. Each year the stipend amount will be considered, and adjustments made when possible. Stipends below the adopted minimum are not permitted.

### **Tuition Scholarship**

In recognition of academic merit, the University offers GTAs a tuition scholarship. The tuition scholarship that will be provided in Fall and Spring terms is as follows:

Full-time appointment	9 credits
1/2 appointment	6 credits
1/4 appointment	3 credits

Summer tuition scholarships are provided as follows:

- 5 credits for students on 12-month, full-time academic appointments

- 5 credits for students on full-time, 3-month summer academic appointments from June 1 – August 31

### **Health Insurance Coverage**

GTA's who receive full-time or fractional appointments are eligible to enroll in the Student Health Insurance Plan. Full-time academic appointees do not pay insurance premiums associated with the plan; half-time academic appointees receive scholarship aid to cover 50% of their insurance premiums.

Students with 9- or 12-month appointments receive 12 months of individual health insurance coverage. Students on semester-long (4.5 months) appointments receive such coverage for 5 months (fall-term appointments) and 7 months (spring-term appointments), respectively.

### **Accommodations**

In the event a GTA needs an adjustment to the expectations of their appointment due to a serious illness or physical incapacitation, the GTA involved should receive their stipend and tuition for the remainder of the semester during which the event occurred.

Students seeking disability-related accommodations in their GTA appointments should contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) as soon as possible to verify their disability and determine reasonable accommodations as appropriate.

Graduate Academic Appointment accommodations are assessed separately from academic accommodations.

For students who are new parents, please see the Academic Regulations on [Graduate Student Parental Accommodation](#).

### **Grievance Situations**

*Unfair Treatment:* The University of Vermont strives to create and sustain a positive and healthy learning and training environment. Reporting concerns and understanding UVM's response to concerns is critical to this process. Any graduate student who believes that they have been treated unfairly is encouraged, but not required, to first discuss the situation with their program director, research advisor, or office of student services in their college or school and/or with the independent [Ombudsperson for Graduate Students](#).

Students are also encouraged to report any unfair treatment, bias or discrimination via the University's [Bias, Discrimination, & Harassment Reporting Form](#).

*Termination or Suspension of Appointment:* In rare cases, a GTA may have their appointment terminated before its previously scheduled end date. Early termination or an interim suspension may only be initiated if the GTA has received an appropriate prior written warning or has been alleged, or found, to have violated a major canon of institutional responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to, the Code of Conduct, Code of Academic Integrity, Misconduct of Research, or Office of Equal Opportunity policies designed to prevent discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct. The GTA must be informed in writing by the department chair (or their equivalent) of the reasons for termination or interim suspension. Appeals procedure (see below) must be referenced in that notification.

*Appeals Procedure:* A GTA may appeal, in writing, within ten business days after receipt of notice of interim suspension or termination of appointment, to the Academic Unit Dean. The Dean or their designee(s) will review the matter and make a finding of resolution on behalf of the college or school. In the event the Dean was consulted as part of the termination or suspension process, the appeal shall be forwarded to the Dean of the Graduate College and they or their designee(s) shall review the matter and make a final determination as to the resolution of the appeal.

**Related Links to Policies and Resources**

[Graduate Student Parental Accommodation Policy](#)

[Ombudsperson for Graduate Students](#)

[Intellectual Property Policy](#)

[Code of Academic Integrity](#)

[Misconduct in Research Policy](#)

[Amorous Relationships with Students Policy](#)

[Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)

[Student Accessibility Services](#)

[Office of Equal Opportunity](#)