

Policies and Guidelines

for Graduate and Teaching Assistant
Appointments
(GAs and TAs)

Faculty of Graduate Studies
Orientation Workshop for new GAs and TAs
September 6, 2023



Collective Agreement for GA and TA appointments

- GAs and TAs are students employed to assist with “teaching or related duties” (Article 1)
 - ✓ sample list of duties in article 14:03
- Unionized – CUPE 4580 collective agreement sets requirements and provisions for GA and TA employment
 - ✓ know your collective agreement - full text available from HR’s website:
<https://www.uwindsor.ca/humanresources/526/collective-agreements>



What is the difference between a GA and a TA?

- **GA** (Graduate Assistant)= fulltime graduate student (Master's or Doctoral) employed as assistant
- **TA** (Teaching Assistant)= undergraduate student employed as assistant

➤ Three TA sub-categories:

TA I : 1st and 2nd year in program

TA II : 3rd and 4th year in program

➤ If no qualified TA I and II applicants then TA III:

TA III (i): GAs who are not appointed for that term

TA III (ii): undergrad. students who have another undergrad. degree

TA III (iii): non-student

(Article 1)



GA & TA = employment

Your unique position: both *student* and *employee*

- ✓ *Student*: registration requirements, must be in good standing in academic program, etc.
- ✓ *Employee*: must meet all legal requirements for employment; must complete mandatory training required for Employees; limit on total hours of University employment, etc.



TA employees

Undergraduate students offered a teaching assistantship (TA) contract:

- ✓ must meet all legal employment requirements
- ✓ must be registered student & **must remain registered throughout the term employed as TA:**
 - domestic TAs can be **full-time or part-time**
 - international TAs must be **full-time** students and be legally eligible to work in Canada (e.g. per IRCC regulations must be in Canada, have a valid study permit and Social Insurance Number).
- ✓ must be in good standing (not on acad. probation)



GA employees

Fulltime graduate students who have been offered a Graduate Assistantship (GA) contract:

- ✓ must meet all legal employment requirements
- ✓ must be registered full-time grad. student & **must remain registered full-time throughout the term employed as GAs**
- ✓ must be in good standing (not on academic probation)
- ✓ must be within the degree program limits for

Funding Eligibility:

- first **12 terms full-time of PhD** program
- first **6 terms full-time of Master's** program



I have been offered a GA/TA appointment –what do I do next?

- Read and sign contract (“Notice of Appointment to Assistantship”) and return to your department.
- Follow your department’s instructions about next steps e.g. first-time University employees must visit uwindsor.ca/hr - “Links for Student Employees” to submit ALL required documents to Human Resources (HR), etc.
- The University will review your contract to ensure that all legal requirements for employment are met.

You will receive an email from HR to notify you that your contract has been approved by the University
(see next slide)



GAs and TAs must not start working until receipt of HR's email entitled "Authorization to commence GA/TA duties"

- Your department is responsible for ensuring your immediate GA/TA employment supervisor (e.g. course instructor) does not start assigning duties until receipt of HR's authorization email
- Contact your dept./program office if you have not received HR's authorization email before the start date on your contract
- Contact your program office for guidance or for any concerns

(Article 12:05)



What are my duties and work schedule?

You are expected to be available to work **throughout the duration of your GA or TA employment (from-to dates on contract)**

- no vacation time (vac. pay included in each pay cheque)
- must be available and report to work for **all** assigned TA/ GA duties - **both in-person/on campus or any remote duties as needed.**



Duties and work schedule (cont.)

Your unique position: both *student* and *employee*

! you may be required to work when students are normally off
e.g. GAs and TAs often hold office hrs. during reading week;
mark papers after last day of exams; proctor exams after your
own class exams are done, etc.

- ✓ identify peak times (e.g. around exam time, marking, etc.) & ensure no conflict with your own classes/exams.
- ✓ Complete “Form 1” (see next slide) and discuss with instructor any scheduling concerns as soon as possible.



“Form 1 - Description of Duties and Allocation of Hours”

Meet with the course instructor (your GA/TA supervisor) within 10 days of beginning of appointment:

- ✓ review together "*Form 1 – Description of duties and allocation of hours*” and discuss details of your appointment
- ✓ record all duties on Form 1 & proportion of the total hours assigned to each duty
- ✓ complete mandatory training for new University employees within deadline set by department
- ✓ **mid-term review** of duties with supervisor— record any changes on Form 1



How many hours total will I work?

Your total hours of work are specified in your contract.

! the course instructor **cannot** authorize work over the total hours in your contract

- if you believe that you are likely to go over your total contract hours, **you must notify the course instructor (GA/TA supervisor) in writing** or via email at least 20 hours prior to completion of all hours in your contract
- discuss if/what adjustments to remaining duties may be needed to ensure you do not exceed your total contract hours and record any modifications to breakdown of duties on Form 1 (mid-term review)



Form 1

FORM 1 - DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES AND ALLOCATION FORM

(Description of Duties and Allocation of Hours)

The student will not commence work until they have received an email with the RE: line of "Authorization to commence GA/TA duties".

Student Name:		
Student Number:		
Department:		
Course Number & Title:		
Supervising Professor:		
Duties	Hours per task	
	Initial	Revised
Training:		
Preparation:		
Contact:		
Marking/Grading Estimated Enrolment per GA/TA:		
Other Duties:		
TOTAL HOURS		
<i>(NOTE: Where an assistant believes that they are likely going to exceed their contracted hours in a particular semester, the assistant must inform their supervisor, in writing or via e-mail, at least 20 hours prior to completion of the hours allotted in their contract.)</i>		
Prepared by (Supervisor):	Signature:	Date:
Approved by (Chair/Designated Authority):	Signature:	Date:
Accepted by (Graduate/Teaching Assistant):	Signature:	Date:
MID COURSE REVIEW CHANGES (if no changes, record date of meeting and note no changes)		
Date of Meeting:	Prepared by (Supervisor signature):	
Approved by (Chair/Designated Authority Signature):	Graduate/Teaching Assistant Signature:	



Is there a limit on total # of TA/GA hours?

TAs:

Maximum 100 hrs./term for all TA contracts

- ✓ If holding a TA contract in more than one dept., total combined hours for all TA appointments held in all departments cannot exceed 100 hrs./term

GAs:

- ✓ Maximum is 140hrs/term ("full" GA) but can be prorated from 70 hrs. up to 140 hrs./term
- ✓ GA employment hours count towards the total max. hours per term allowed for University-related employment (see next slide)

Article 14



GA employment considerations:

Maximum hrs. of paid employment for full-time graduate students =

240 hrs. per term

(Fall/Winter/Summer)

total for **all** University employment, including:

- GA appointment
- RA (if paid as salary)
- sessional instructor appointment

! graduate students cannot hold a sessional appointment and a GA in the same term

Guidelines on Employment for FT graduate students posted at:
www.uwindsor.ca/graduate-studies/457/employment-graduate-students



How many terms can I receive a TA/GA appointment?

TA appointments: as needed - no obligation for dept. to offer future TA appointments; TAs assigned based on criteria in article 12:04.

GAs:

Funding commitment per Article 13:01: if a graduate student is offered a GA appointment, the Dept. will offer GAs in future terms to a total of:

Ph.D.: equivalent of 7 full GA terms@140hrs.
(total 980 hrs.)

Master's: equivalent of 3 full GA terms@140hrs.
(total 420 hrs.)

(Subject to provisions in articles 13:05b.&c. -see slide #21)



GA funding commitment - Article 13:01 (cont.)

- The department will post available GA positions each term on the dept. website
- To receive remaining GA terms, the assistant must apply **each term** by the posted application deadline until receiving the required terms of support per Article 13:01 (7 for PhD, 3 for Master's).
 - ✓ check your Dept. website before each term for the posted notice of available GA/TA positions
 - ✓ deadline for applications is at least 4 weeks before term begins and normally even earlier – check with your dept.



What if I am not available to work in a particular term? (GAs only)

- “Assistantship exemption” – must request before signing contract & in writing.
- The department will offer the GA in a future term provided the student will be still within the program limits for Funding eligibility i.e. within first 6 terms FT in the Master’s program/ first 12 terms FT for PhD
- PhD: **max. of 2 exemptions**
- Master’s: **max. of 1 exemption**
After maximum exemptions reached - will forfeit the term declined. *(Article 13:01)*



What if I am not available to work in a particular term? (GAs only) – cont.

In addition to exemptions, a GA may decline an appointment without penalty (i.e. department will offer the appointment in a future term) in semesters while on:

1. approved leave of absence per Employee Standards Act:
 - maternity/paternity, parental, & medical leave for entire term
 - other leaves throughout appointment per ESA (e.g. bereavement, personal emergency, etc.)
2. co-op terms

The department will offer the GA in a future term, **provided the student is still within program limits for funding eligibility.** *(Article 13)*

What if I want to work fewer hours in a particular term? (GAs only)

- a GA can request fewer hours than offered
- need approval by the Department
- if the Department agrees to reduce the hours then it counts as a term of support to the number of hours originally offered by the Department
- example: Department offers 140hrs. → GA requests 100 → Dept. agrees to reduce to 100 → counts as 140, i.e. the eliminated 40 hrs. will not be offered/made up in a future semester.

(Article 13:05a)



GA appointments without triggering future GA funding commitment

Articles 13:05 b) and c) provide opportunities for Departments to make GA offers when Dept. has available GA positions but is unable to make a commitment for the future GA terms as required under Article 13:01. Examples:

- shorter/1-year coursework Master's programs with only Fall/Winter classes and no Summer GAs needed;
 - when fewer than 3 terms remain until graduating/completing the program;
 - if a grad. student was not successful in obtaining GA appointment initially and a position opens later;
- etc.

The Department and student may agree on a GA offer without triggering future funding commitment under Article 13:01.



Will I receive feedback about my work?

GA & TA employee evaluations:

- not mandatory
- can be done by course instructor/supervisor as needed at any time throughout appointment or at the end
- assistant is given opportunity to review evaluation and add comments
- useful for improving skills, providing feedback and suggestions for improvement
- useful for future GA/TA appointments (e.g. positive evaluation one of the hiring criteria for GAs and TAs)

(Article 10)



What if there are issues/ concerns with my GA/TA contract?

- **Informal Complaint**

Notify the course instructor/ your GA/TA supervisor and address issue immediately

- **Formal Complaint**

3-step formal grievance process:

Department Head → Dean of Graduate Studies → Executive Director, Academic Labour Relations

- ✓ Contact a union representative for guidance (cupe4580@uwindSOR.ca)

(Article 7)



What kind of information can I find in the CUPE 4580 GA/TA Collective Agreement?

- criteria for assigning GA and TA appointments (Articles 12:03 and 12:04)
- maximum hours of work per term; description of duties (Article 14)
- GAs only: number of terms of support; exemptions; declining terms of support (Article 13)
- GAs only: health benefits (Article 25)
- leaves of absence (Article 16)



What kind of information can I find in the Collective Agreement? (cont.)

- discrimination and harassment issues – definition, protocol for reporting and filing a complaint, etc. (Article 5)
- procedures for informal complaint and formal grievance (Article 7)
- GA/TA evaluations (Article 10)
- procedures for disciplining, suspension, discharge and termination of employment (Articles 11 and 22)



Questions/Contacts

- discuss with your GA/TA supervisor/ your dept.
- contact your union: cupe4580@uwindsor.ca
- refer to the CUPE 4580 Collective Agreement:
<https://www.uwindsor.ca/humanresources/526/collective-agreements>
- Graduate Studies: gradst@uwindsor.ca
- Human Resources: hr@uwindsor.ca
- Academic Labour Relations: acadlr@uwindsor.ca



Have a successful start of the semester!

We hope you have a rewarding experience as an Assistant at the University of Windsor!

Thank you for the work that you do as our ambassadors and role models!

