

UW Academic Affairs: GA Job Descriptions and Time Limits

Active coordination of university-wide teaching capacity must be balanced with available resources. **Growing undergraduate enrollment and elevated costs of graduate positions requires that our institutional GA positions be carefully allocated to effectively insure teaching capacity.** Academic Affairs has asked your Deans to verify within their departments their teaching needs and teaching capacity. This effort will assist us in ensuring that assignments of graduate student support from Academic Affairs effectively addresses teaching needs within courses experiencing large enrollments. This effort is essential to demonstrate effective use of existing resources.

Where needed, we will assign GA teaching support to departments with high teaching need in order to fulfill the University's undergraduate teaching mission. For example, engineering students could be assigned to teach sections of entry-level mathematics or physics. **Note that these guidelines do not apply to other sources of graduate student financial aid, such as research assistantships from external research grants or various scholarship funds, which may be subject to other restrictions.*

Job duties for state-funded GAs

Graduate students inject enthusiasm, imagination, and commitment into university classrooms and simultaneously strengthen their own understanding and confidence. As teaching assistants, they complement research and academic productivity with the ability to inspire undergraduates. Recent efforts at UW (USP and STEM and Science initiatives) target reduced class size to enhance student engagement via active learning. These initiatives increase the opportunity for GAs to contribute to the undergraduate teaching mission. **Every graduate student deserves the opportunity and challenge of sharing new scientific understanding through academic instruction.** Graduate students who receive a full stipend are expected to work 19 hours per week for their stipend. Weekly work hours for graduate students on full Graduate Assistant stipends are an expectation beyond their own research/scholarly activities that contribute to attaining their degree. **As a general principle, the Office of Academic Affairs will not allocate state-funded GA positions for use as full-time de facto research assistants-teaching is an essential component of their job duties.**

We continue to require that *all Section 1 state-funded GA job assignments must include teaching contributions in all semesters of funding:*

Notable contributions to traditional teaching related activities should include a mixture of classroom activities such as lecturing or guiding independent classes or labs or leading discussion sections. These activities may be combined with supportive activities outside the classroom. Supportive activities alone do not provide a sufficient teaching experience. The supportive activities below must be coupled with classroom teaching experiences.

- mentoring students individually or in groups, including holding office hours
- supporting instructional labs
- supplemental instruction sessions
- preparation of course materials such as tests or study guides, laboratory exercises or demonstrations
- assisting or leading field trips

- involvement in assessment
- grading-Although grading is an essential aspect of teaching, this duty should not be the sole responsibility of a state-supported GA. Higher teaching needs certainly exist across the campus. Moreover, a GA whose job consists entirely of grading is not being afforded the opportunity for meaningful face-to-face pedagogical interactions with students. For these reasons, state-supported GAs should spend no more than half-time (9 hours) in grading.
- assisting in development of new courses
- facilitating professional clinics
- support for educational outreach

Departments or programs that have questions regarding the teaching activities of GAs should contact Academic Affairs to ensure there is a clear understanding of the teaching role of their state-supported students.

Research support for individual faculty members by our state-funded graduate students is an important aspect of their education. UW expects that all graduate students will perform original research for their master's thesis or doctoral dissertation in addition to assigned teaching duties.

Time limits for state-funding of GAs

Efficient time to degree is an academic responsibility and is one universal indicator of academic integrity and productivity. UW is committed to encouraging timely completion of graduate degrees to optimize a young scholar's professional growth and contributions. Academic Affairs limits the length of state support to graduate assistants as follows:

- Masters students are allowed up to two (2) years of state-funded support
- Masters students who enroll in a dual-major degree (i.e. ENR/JD) are allowed up to 2.5 years of state-funded support
- Doctoral students who enter a program with a master's degree in hand will be allowed up to three (3) years of state-funded support
- Doctoral students entering a program with a bachelor's degree only will be can be supported for as many as five (5) years on a state-funded GA

Performance evaluations for state-funded GAs

Departments should evaluate the performance of their state-funded GAs at least annually. Students are expected to be making adequate progress towards their degree and fulfilling their teaching duties responsibly. **Teaching roles of all GA's must be documented by designating them as "instructor of record" in the WyoRecords registration. Additionally, teaching activities for all GAs should be reported by departments, directly to the Dean and Academic Affairs each semester.** An assistantship may be terminated if the student does not perform adequately (for example; not teaching, not making sufficient progress or being unable to pass the language requirements for the assistantship). Departments may reassign the remaining portion of the assistantship if another qualified student is available; otherwise the GA reverts to the Dean or Academic Affairs for reallocation.

Implementation

In order for Academic Affairs to coordinate cross-department and college teaching assignments, departments should develop a list of their teaching needs and teaching capacity, to allow coordination of GA assignments with university-wide teaching needs. Departments and programs are encouraged to seek out, in advance, partnerships with other units to coordinate GA instructional capacity—a move certainly appreciated by Academic Affairs. We note that relationships already occur across the campus as Botany, Zoology and Physiology, Ecosystem Science and Management and the Program in Ecology routinely provide instructional support for LIFE. **In the absence of such collaborations, Academic Affairs will reassign base allocations of GA support directly to areas of critical university teaching needs.** We believe there are ample opportunities to address critical university teaching via voluntary collaborations.