

## Tip Sheet for Graduate Assistants

Definition: “Graduate Assistant” (GA) refers to a person who is registered as a graduate student, proceeding with his or her graduate program, and appointed to carry out either teaching or research duties under the graduate assistantship program as approved by the Board of Governors of the University of Alberta for the purposes of this Agreement. *The GA position is viewed as an apprenticeship for further academic or professional careers.* In view of this, graduate assistant functions shall not include routine duties commonly associated with secretarial, clerical, technical, or administrative work not directly related to the GA’s teaching or research duties. – Graduate Students’ Association of U Alberta Collective Agreement.

This tip sheet applies to the supervisor/graduate assistant relationship once the GA contract has been signed. The signed contract reflects the student’s acceptance of the assistantship and the terms that govern it.

1. For department funded assistantships, the contract you sign reflects the name of your supervisor; which term(s) you have been assigned to them; contract start and end dates; the number of hours/week you have been assigned; your monthly salary & award, and, in the case of TAs, which class(es) you have been assigned to.
2. If you have not heard from your supervisor by the term start date, contact them by e-mail to set up an initial meeting with them in the first week of your contract term. Department funded assistantships have the following term start dates: September 1, January 1, May 1.
3. At your initial meeting, you will jointly determine the work plan for the term. Include in your discussion, the kinds of tasks to be covered in the assignment and the expected amount of time to be spent on various aspects of the assignments (grading papers, course preparation, research, etc.) Expected duties must be guided by a reasonable schedule, to be negotiated at this time. *Note:* If in the supervisor’s opinion, the GA needs to acquire specific skills to complete some aspect of their appointment, the required training is considered part of the duties of the appointment.
4. If you know you will be absent at some point during the term, or if you know you have times of heavy academic workload, discuss these at the initial meeting with your supervisor so you can build these consideration into the workplan.
5. At the end of your initial meeting, jointly complete the relevant (RA or TA) Time Use Guideline form for the term. If training is required, please indicate that on the form. Both the supervisor and the GA must sign and date the form. The original of the signed form is submitted to the department HR staff member, and a copy each is provided to the supervisor and the GA.
6. If the supervisor has professional expectations of the GA (eg. Punctuality, calling in when unable to make a meeting/class, meeting deadlines, etc.) make sure they are clearly laid out at the initial meeting with a follow up of the discussion with an e-mail confirming these expectations. If your supervisor does not send the e-mail, you send it to them outlining what you understand these expectations to be, as discussed.
7. GA’s are encouraged to keep in frequent but reasonable touch with their supervisors to ensure the work is being done according to the work plan and, if necessary, to alert the supervisor to any problems or concerns the GA may have.
8. If you have problems or concerns about your assistantship, talk to your assistantship supervisor as soon as possible. If this is not an option, then talk to your academic supervisor or to the Associate Chair (Dr. Buck). If

your problems are related to pay or your contract, talk to the HR staff person (Barbara Gutziet) or to the Assistant Chair (Liz Grieve).

9. It is recommended that all meetings with your supervisor are followed up with a confirmation e-mail to ensure that the meeting discussion points are jointly understood.
10. At the end of each department funded assistantship, you and your supervisor complete and sign an evaluation form on your performance. The completed form is submitted to the Associate Chair (Graduate).
11. For research funded assistantships (salaried or hourly), the supervisor and RA should meet, discuss, and complete the RA Time Use Guidelines form, as above. It is important that the supervisor discuss fully the rate and method of pay as well as the start and end dates of the contract with the potential RA, before the RA is contracted.

Please find below, for ready reference some points derived from clauses in the Collective Agreement: Regulations Governing Academic Employment of Graduate Students (AEGS) between the Graduate Students' Association of the University of Alberta and the Governors of the University of Alberta. For more complete information, please consult the Agreement directly:

[http://www.hrs.ualberta.ca/MyEmployment/~media/hrs/MyEmployment/Agreements/2014-2016\\_AEGS\\_Agreement.pdf](http://www.hrs.ualberta.ca/MyEmployment/~media/hrs/MyEmployment/Agreements/2014-2016_AEGS_Agreement.pdf)

1. Failure to report on the date prescribed may result in termination of the appointment.
2. The GA shall be informed of an indication of the average number of hours/week and the total number of hours/term they are expected to perform. This should be as specific as possible at the time of appointment.
3. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to keep the GA apprised in a timely fashion, normally within two (2) weeks, of any concerns or dissatisfaction with performance.
4. During mid-term exam time and during the final week of term, GA's with teaching responsibilities should be prepared to devote more hours to their assistantship duties.
5. Unless alternate arrangements are agreed in writing by both the GA and the supervisor, work associated with the assistantship must be completed within the term for which payment is being made.

In the event of questions or concerns, please contact the Associate Chair (Graduate) or the Assistant Chair.