

# Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) Hiring Process

## Department of Plant Agriculture

---

### Guiding principles

- The allocation process complies with the currently prevailing Collective Agreement between the University of Guelph and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 3913, Unit 1. In the event of a discrepancy between this document and the Collective Agreement, the Collective Agreement shall be considered the final authority.
- Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) allocation is a complex and dynamic process, primarily due to the relatively large size of our graduate program. The most reasonable way to proceed (in terms of both fairness and efficiency) is to organize the applicant pool into a principled hierarchy of groups and then work through these groups in order.
- The Department strives to ensure the best fit between GTA qualifications and the pedagogical needs of the course and/or operational needs of the Department. At the same time, the Department strives to maximize preference-satisfaction of applicants.

### Consequences of guiding principles

- Graduate students need to apply for GTA positions using the TA/Sessional hiring website ([www.uoguelph.ca/sessional\\_ta](http://www.uoguelph.ca/sessional_ta)). Only students who apply will be considered. Complete applications inform the selection committee about the times the student is available and the student's preferences and ensure students are not missed by mistake.
- Students who are guaranteed a GTA (Level of Consideration 1) for a particular semester are required to apply to at least one posting in the applicable semester AND to identify themselves as Level 1.
- In order for the selection committee to make the best assessment of fit between qualifications and requirements, applicants must clearly highlight in their application how they meet the specific requirements of each posting to which they apply. Applicants can also customize each application to ensure they have highlighted how they meet the specific requirements of each posting.
- Graduate students should consult their class (and other) schedules, or what they intend to be their schedule, before making their applications. In general, the student is responsible

for ensuring they will be available to TA for the course sections listed in their preferences. GTA duties for a course typically include attending class lectures and invigilating final exams, as well as giving tutorials, grading, etc.; students should therefore not apply to TA for a course if they cannot attend the scheduled lectures and final exam for that course.

- Graduate students should make multiple selections in their GTA applications. The selection committee needs as much information as possible about applicant qualifications, preferences, and availability.
- Students are encouraged to append as many preferences as they wish to the standard Application Form.
- While applicant preference is always a consideration, it is not always possible to assign applicants to their first choice.

## **Assignment process**

The assignment of Graduate Teaching Assistantships is primarily according to the Levels of Consideration described below. Work is assigned to students at each level before moving to subsequent levels.

- **Level 1**

- Work is assigned to Plant Agriculture students within their Job Security Period (guaranteed as part of the Offer of Admission).
- Once Job Security Period appointments are complete, assignments are open to all, including those outside the home department. Unless otherwise stated, Plant Agriculture students are given priority over applicants from other departments.

*Note: If a student has secured external funding for a semester and that funding suffices to satisfy the level of funding which they were guaranteed, then that student is not considered within their Job Security Period for the purpose of GTA assignment. Such a student is in Level 2 for the purpose of GTA assignment.*

- **Level 2**

- Work is assigned to Plant Agriculture students who are within their prescribed program period (6 semesters for Masters, 12 semesters for PhD) to a maximum of 140 hours per semester.

- **Level 3**
  - Work is assigned to Plant Agriculture students who are outside their prescribed program period to a maximum of 140 hours per semester.
  
- **Level 4**
  - Work is assigned to Plant Agriculture students who have already been assigned 140 hours in a semester (students selected “consider me for more than one assignment” when applying to qualify).
  
- **Level 5**
  - Work is assigned to students outside of Plant Agriculture.

The primary goal of the assignment process is to ensure the best fit between applicant qualifications and pedagogical needs of the course and/or operational needs of the Department. To achieve this, the Department considers the following within each level of consideration:

- Qualifications, competence, capability, skill and prior experience;
- Coverage of all available work assignments;
- Class schedule and availability;
- Applicant preferences expressed during the application process each semester, and
- Seniority (when all else is equal).

### **Assignment of Work in Level of Consideration 1**

In completing Level of Consideration 1 work assignments, the selection committee considers the specifics of each Offer of Admission containing a Job Security Period along with the considerations listed above (i.e.: qualifications, competence, capability, etc.).

Normally, the selection committee considers each applicant one by one and assigns them a GTA position as high up their preference list as possible. In the event none of a student’s preferences are available to be assigned, the committee normally assigns a GTA position that is as close as possible to one of those in that student’s preference list, in terms of schedule and content. As each student is considered in turn, the committee looks at assignments that have already been made within the group and considers whether changing these assignments could

result in an overall set of assignments that better maximizes preference satisfaction. The committee must also ensure effective delivery of all courses with attention to providing a high-quality experience for our undergraduate students. This may, on occasion, affect the assignment of GTA positions.

### **Assignment of Work in Levels of Consideration 2–5**

Once work assignments are completed for students in Level of Consideration 1, any remaining work assignments are subject to open competition. For each remaining work assignment, applicants are considered by Level of Consideration (candidates in Level 2 are considered, then Level 3 and so forth). A rubric is used to evaluate applicant qualifications against the posted criteria. The principle of preference-maximization is central in the selection committee's deliberations. Where applicants are demonstrably equal, the applicant with more seniority points is awarded the work assignment.

### **Composition of GTA Assignment Selection Committee**

The Department of Plant Agriculture's GTA Assignment Selection Committee is composed of the Department Chair, the Graduate Program Assistant, and the course instructor/coordinator.

*This written statement of the process governing the assignment of GTAs is provided for all graduate students entering the program and is publicly available on the Department's website. All faculty and GTAs are encouraged to contact the Department Chair with any questions about this process.*