

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY RELATIONS AND APPLIED NUTRITION (FRAN)

GUIDELINES for SELECTION and EVALUATION of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

Updated May 27, 2019

The following guidelines pertain to the recruitment, selection, appointment and evaluation process for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) in accordance with the Unit 1 Collective Agreement between the University and CUPE 3913 (the Collective Agreement).

FRAN's complete guidelines for the selection and evaluation of GTAs include the information outlined in the following documents.

- (1) The Collective Agreement, CUPE 3913 – Unit 1 https://cupe3913.on.ca/assets/uploads/2017/08/UNIT-1_2016-2019.pdf
- (2) “The Assessment of TA Applications” (Appendix I) written by Faculty and Academic Staff Relations (FASR) and referred to as “ATAA” in the below document, and
- (3) “The Graduate Student Job Security Period” (Appendix II) written by FASR and referred to as “JSP” in the below document, and
- (4) “Candidates Deemed Equivalent” (Appendix III) written by FASR, and
- (5) “Guide to Performance Evaluations” (Appendix IV) written by FASR and referred to as “GPE” in the below document, and
- (6) “FRAN Guidelines for GTA Performance Evaluations” (Appendix V) written by the Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition (FRAN), and
- (7) “Guidelines for Selection and Evaluation of GTAs” (this document) as prepared by (FRAN). This document summarizes the salient points outlined in the above documents and includes procedural details as determined by FRAN.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. The selection/allocation process and performance evaluation process comply 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.
2. Graduate Teaching Assistantship allocation is a complex and dynamic process, because of the size of our graduate program, the number of undergraduate courses needing GTA support and the individual requirements of each course. Sometimes the department is not able to offer work to all qualified applicants but will always ensure GTAs in the Job Security Period are assigned if they apply.
3. The FRAN 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, FRAN strives to maximize preference satisfaction of applicants. While every effort is made to match preferences to courses, the department is unable to meet all preference requests.
4. The primary purpose of a performance evaluation is intended to be constructive and developmental in nature. Consequently, instructors are encouraged to complete performance evaluations of GTAs, although they are not mandatory. GTAs may request that their work performance be evaluated once per semester and if requested, an

evaluation must be completed. The performance evaluation will provide an overall rating of “Satisfactory”, “Improvement Required” or “Unsatisfactory” and will not be used for the purpose of denying continuation in the academic program in which the graduate student is currently registered. Performance assessments are based only on the duties outlined in the GTA’s Assignment of Work Agreement which is created by the beginning of the semester of employment.

5. All faculty and GTAs are welcome to contact the Chair of the FRAN department with questions about the selection and evaluation processes.

GUIDANCE TO APPLICANTS:

1. Graduate students need to apply for GTA positions using the TA/Sessional hiring website (https://www.uoguelph.ca/sessional_ta/) . Only students who apply will be considered. Students who are guaranteed a GTA (Level of Consideration 1) for a particular semester are required to apply to at least one posting the applicable semester and identify themselves as Level 1.
2. 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. FRAN requests that applicants submit a cover letter in addition to their CV which clearly highlights how they meet the required and preferred qualifications of each posting. It is recommended that the applicant copies each required and preferred qualification of the posting in their cover letter and full describes how they fulfill these qualifications. This format is recommended rather than a general or generic cover letter.
3. Graduate students should consult their class (and other) schedule, or what they intend to be their schedule, before making their applications. In general, the student is responsible for ensuring that they will be available to TA for the course sections they have applied to.
4. 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.
5. While applicant preference is always a consideration, it is not always possible to assign applicants to their first choice. Preferences are taken into consideration in so far as they do not violate the process described below.

POSTING, SELECTION AND OFFERS OF WORK ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Postings, Selection, and Offers of work assignments follow the Collective Agreement, Unit 1.
2. The Chair of the Department is responsible for establishing the search committee and chairing or assigning a suitable designate to chair the search committee. Normally, the designate will be the Associate Chair.
3. A Selection Committee is required for all work assignments equal to or greater than 0.5.

The Selection Committee will normally be comprised of the Associate Chair of the Department (as designate of the Department Chair) serving as Chair of the committee, 3 faculty members - ideally the FRHD curriculum chair, the AHN curriculum chair and the Academic Program Director of Couple and Family Therapy, and the Academic Administrative Assistant (AAA). If one or more of the faculty members are not available, the Department Chair will call upon or name other faculty from the respective disciplines to fill the role(s).

Faculty on the Selection Committee will share with the committee members their relevant knowledge, experience and expertise with courses and shed light on the competencies required by the GTA. The AAA will bring to the Selection Committee knowledge of the Collective Agreement, hiring process and provide administrative support to the committee

including the preliminary screen described in item 6(b) of this document. The Associate Chair acts on behalf of the Department Chair to ensure operational needs are met.

The committee must include at least one member of an equity seeking group and all members must have attended Diversity and Human Rights training during each 3 year cycle of the Collective Agreement. Please see ATAA (Appendix I) for further details about the committee as noted under, The Selection Committee.

4. The hiring process begins with establishing the requirements of a work assignment, specifically the anticipated duties and responsibilities. This forms the basis upon which all hiring decisions and performance evaluations are done. As information, Fall 2018 and Winter 2019 GTA work assignment requirements were determined through a Qualtrics survey completed by the instructors/faculty/curriculum chairs. FRAN assumes that the GTA work assignment requirements will be similar from year to year for any one course. However, instructors are asked to inform the AAA of relevant changes which will then be brought forth to the Selection Committee and the requirements of the work assignment revised accordingly.

The requirements of the work assignment informs the qualifications to be possessed by the GTA. We consider:

- Qualifications (academic and professional) as divided into 2 categories – Required (that is the minimum requirements an applicant must possess) and Preferred (that is additional qualifications an applicant may possess).
- Teaching competence
- Capability, skill and ability
- Prior relevant experience, and
- Availability

The requirements of the work assignment are the minimum required for the safe, efficient and reliable performance of the required tasks. They must be logically connected to the duties being performed. Please see ATAA (Appendix I) for further details as noted under, Qualifications.

5. The posting of the work assignment is then created by the AAA based exclusively on the requirements of the work assignment and qualifications needed and preferred in the GTA as determined by the 18/19 Qualtrics surveys, the Selection Committee or subsequent revisions as approved by the Selection Committee. The advertisement of the work assignment is posted for at least 10 working days.

6. The Selection Committee develops a hiring rubric for all open competition work assignments before considering applicants. A hiring rubric is not required for a course where there is a candidate who is appointed to a work assignment as part of their Job Security Period guarantee. The Selection Committee may delegate the development of the rubric to the AAA.

(a) The AAA prepares a spreadsheet for each course for which there is a GTA posting. Each column of the spreadsheet corresponds to a qualification noted in the job posting. Additionally, a score for each qualification is determined. The spreadsheet is the assessment rubric for applicants which allows the Selection Committee to evaluate candidates and determine a score for the specific qualifications noted in the job posting. Generally the committee is looking for a minimum score of 60%, although ideally more, in any one required qualification.

(b) Preliminary screening and assessment of applications are done by the AAA as per the pre-determined and posted criteria noted in (a) above, and results are entered on the spreadsheet. Candidates are first considered according to their Level of Consideration (LoC) with candidates in Level 1 being offered work assignments above candidates in Level 2 and so forth. Please see the JSP (Appendix II). The preliminary scoring supports and assists the assessment by the full Selection Committee. Full applications are accessible to all members of the Selection Committee. Please see ATAA (Appendix I) for further details as noted under, Level of Consideration, and The Hiring Rubric.

7. The Selection Committee members review the preliminary scores, discuss, make revisions, shortlist and decide/assign all GTA assignments, based on, the LoCs, rankings and other information on the hiring assessment rubric. All known relevant information about a candidate is to be shared among all committee members. Prior or current relationships with candidates are to be identified to avoid possible conflict of interest. Confidentiality regarding applicants is respected. If the committee determines there is a legitimate reason to share information beyond the membership of the committee, candidates should be informed beforehand.

Assignment decisions are reached by voting. All members have voting privileges, except the Chair of the committee and the AAA. If it is decided by the committee that a member has a significant conflict of interest, that member may be asked not to vote in which case the Chair will vote in their place.

Based upon the selection criteria, where knowledge, skills and ability are relatively equal between candidates, the candidate with most seniority points in that course, or then, in total, shall be appointed. Please see attached Candidates Deemed Equal (Appendix III).

8. Normally, the Selection Committee meeting is called no later than in July for Fall semester, November for Winter semester and March for Summer semester.

Prior to the Selection Committee Meetings:

a) The AAA will arrange necessary meetings. Sometimes discussions and decisions will be made via email.

b) Diversity and Human Rights orientation training will have been completed by all committee members.

c) The AAA will email to all committee members the spreadsheet containing the preliminary screen of applicants and invite committee members to see the full applications as preparation for the Selection Committee meeting (at which the shortlist of candidates and decisions based on applications will be made).

9. The AAA will email all faculty a table summarizing the GTA allocations for that semester prior to sending out offers of work assignments. This is to provide an opportunity for faculty to identify any significant problems and not intended to given an opportunity to veto decisions made by the Selection Committee.

10. Offers of Work Assignments will be made as per the Collective Agreement.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS:

1. Performance Evaluations follow the Collective Agreement Unit 1.

2. Refer to the FASR Guide to Performance Evaluations for GTAs (Appendix IV).

3. Refer to FRAN Guidelines for GTA Performance Evaluations (Appendix V).

SEE NEXT PAGES FOR APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

The Assessment of TA Applications

Postings and Appointments

The University is committed to a fair and equitable process for the assignment of work.

Order for assessment of TA/GSA-1 Applications:

Levels of Consideration

1. LoC #1 : Job Security Period. Also see: [The Graduate Student Job Security Period \(JSP\)](#) [1]. Students must apply to at least one course/posting and indicated they are in Level 1. Allocation of JSP's work assignments based on following considerations (in no particular order):

- Qualifications, competence, capability, skill and ability and prior relevant experience;
- Coverage of all required work assignments;
- Meeting Job Security commitments; Class schedule and availability; and, Stated preference.
- Where considerations above are met and candidates are equal, most senior candidate is appointed.
-

Note: Once JSP appointments are complete, assignments are open to all including those outside the home department.

LoC #2 : Those within their prescribed programme period.

LoC #3 : Those outside of their prescribed programme period.

- Masters - 6 semesters;
- PhD – 9 semesters

LoC #4: Level 2 and 3 candidates who have already been assigned work assignment(s) equaling 140 hours and are applying within their home unit for another work assignment. See: [Can we assign a TA a work assignment of more than 140 hours?](#) [2]

LoC #5: Candidates from other units who have already been assigned work assignment(s) equaling 140 hours and are applying to work assignments in your unit are considered under LoC 2 and 3.

2. Qualifications. Qualifications must be met. The successful applicant will be the most qualified applicant based on the application package submitted relative to the criteria listed in the posting.
3. Seniority Points. When candidates in the same LOC are equally qualified, the candidate with the most seniority points will be the successful applicant.
4. Preference is not a required consideration. However, it does allow hiring committees to understand the applicant's preference. We accommodate this if feasible AND appropriate.
5. No Qualified Applicants, Consider Me for All. After the applicant pool for an assignment has been exhausted and no one is considered qualified, hiring committees should consider the applicants who selected consider me for all other positions in the department and repeat the above steps.
6. No Qualified Applicants. See art.11.04(c) access any applications which are currently on file in the department for a suitable candidate. If none, or no one accepts, you may then assign the work to another person deemed suitable.

The Selection Committee

As per 11.06(c), a selection committee must be struck for work assignments of 0.5 or greater and must include:

- At least 2 people with relevant knowledge, experience and expertise
- At least one member of an equity seeking group (women, LGBTQ, Aboriginal, racialized, persons with disabilities).

Selection committee members also require DHR orientation (same as UGFA).

The Hiring Rubric ^[3]

As per 11.06(c), a selection rubric must be established before considering applicants (for all positions of 0.5 or greater). A hiring rubric is not required where a candidate is appointed to a work assignment as part of their Job Security Period guarantee (Level of Consideration 1)^[1] or where the position is less than .5 of a full work assignment.

General Considerations

A hiring rubric must be completed for short-listed candidates. Academic units are free to design their own rubric. The sample rubric (attached) could be used in individual competitions. Units may also use a spreadsheet that tracks

- multiple competitions. The hiring system website has additional resources. Rubrics developed by academic units must include:

Candidate name;

Academic unit;

- Course code and section number;
 - Level of consideration and number of seniority points;
 - Candidate's score; and,
 - For the successful candidate, a rationale.

Required and preferred qualifications must match those identified in the work assignment posting.

- Evaluate in each category based on the requirements of each individual work assignment. This evaluation is based on
- the materials provided by the candidate in their application and other relevant considerations.

- The weight for each qualification must be determined before the work assignment is posted. The sample rubric gives
- candidates a score out of 100. Academic units are free to use their own method of determining the weight of particular qualifications. Departments may use prior student evaluations or performance evaluations in making hiring decisions provided they have been made available to the candidate (i.e., student evaluations must have been made available to the teaching assistant before they can inform future hiring decisions). A student's academic performance
 - may not be used in hiring decisions.

- When two applicants are demonstrably equal^[2], the candidate with more seniority points is awarded the work
- assignment.

Interviews may be held for Teaching Assistant positions at the discretion of the Academic unit. If an interview occurs, notes must be attached to the hiring assessment form.

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APPENDIX II

The Graduate Student Job Security Period (JSP)

11.02 Job Security Period & Offer of Admission

Notwithstanding 3.02 and subject to 1.04 (k) and Article 12, the University agrees to fulfill the terms and conditions of any guaranteed Job Security Period. An employee's Job Security Period is as defined in 1.04 (m). Acceptance of the University's Offer of Admission will be construed as an acceptance of the indicated terms and conditions."

Once per cohort year, the Union shall be provided with the names of all members with a Job Security period in that year, the Department issuing the Job Security guarantee, and the number and level of appointments included in that guarantee.

Interpretation

Academic units must be transparent about their funding commitments and ensure consistency among the:

1. Student Offer of Admission (OGPS Funding Form)
2. JSP List for CUPE (per 11.02) (download [Template](#) [1]; save with your Department Name; email fasrjobs@uoguelph.ca [2] in early September)
3. Offer of Appointment (select 'This offer is made as per Article 11.02 and 11.06(b)(1) as part of your job security.')



How are JSP work assignments processed? There are several components to processing a JSP work assignment:

1. The Posting. All work assignments must be posted (even those with JSP). Indicate in the Job Posting details that "This Work Assignment(s) may be assigned to fulfill the terms and conditions of a guaranteed Job Security Period (Art. 11.02)". Indicating 'some' gives academic units the most latitude in assigning work.
2. The Application. When submitting an application, a TA with JSP must identify as Level 1 (point them to this FAQ: [What is a Job Security Period \(JSP\)?](#) [3])
3. Assessing Applications. When reviewing the TA Applications Submitted, click the red "Applicants who self-declared as 'Level-1'" button in the bottom right of the screen. Allocation of JSP's work assignments is based on the following considerations, in no particular order:
 - Qualifications, competence, capability, skill and ability and prior relevant experience;
 - Coverage of all required work assignments;
 - Meeting job Security commitments; Class
 - Schedule and availability;
 - and, Stated preference.

Where considerations above are met and candidates are equal, most senior candidate is appointed.
4. **Making the Offer of Appointment.** After confirming the TA is in Level 1, assign any course to and create an offer for a TA within their JSP (make a note of the Job ID to be able to complete the offer). Clearly indicate those work assignments that have been extended as part of Job Security (Select 'This offer is made as per Article 11.02 and 11.06(b)(1) as part of your job security.'). This provides clarity to students as to when the University has met our JSP obligation.



APPENDIX III

Candidates Deemed Equivalent - The 10% Rule

The Collective Agreement states "where applicants are demonstrably equal, the senior applicant shall be awarded the work assignment" (Article 11.03). Aside from equal scoring in a hiring assessment, there are other factors that contribute to candidates being "demonstrably equal".

The 10% Rule

Although not explicitly included in the Collective Agreement, it is an established labour law principle that a bargaining unit member is deemed to be a relatively equal candidate to all those who score within the next 10% above that member.

For example,

- Joan and Bob are the top two scoring applicants on the hiring assessment template.
- Bob scores 70 out of 100 and has 2 seniority points.
- Joan is within 10% of Bob's score; therefore, they are deemed to be relatively equal candidates. As Joan has more seniority points, she is awarded the work assignment.



OFFICE *of* THE PROVOST AND
VICE-PRESIDENT (ACADEMIC)
FACULTY AND ACADEMIC STAFF RELATIONS

Guide to Performance Evaluations

TEACHING ASSISTANTS AND GRADUATE SERVICE
ASSISTANTS (CUPE 3913, UNIT 1)

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INTRODUCTION

Performance evaluations provide a valuable opportunity for supervisors to discuss an employee’s work performance in a constructive manner and to guide the employee’s professional development.

The purpose of the performance evaluation process is threefold:

- to emphasize areas of strength in the employee’s work performance;
- to provide formative feedback to improve areas of weakness and future work performance; and,
- to determine whether work performance is satisfactory.

At the University of Guelph, performance evaluations of Teaching Assistants and Graduate Service Assistants¹ (TAs & GSAs) are especially important because these employees are also our students. The University sees these opportunities as integral to their development as scholars and professionals. Formative feedback during their employment is a vital part of this overall development.

COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT PROVISIONS

TAs & GSAs are covered by the Collective Agreement between the University of Guelph and the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3913 (Unit 1). The full text of the relevant article is found in Appendix B. In short, the Agreement outlines the following regulations governing performance evaluations for this group:

- A strong performance evaluation process starts by outlining the TA/GSA's duties in the 'Assignment of Work Agreement' as agreed to by the employee and the supervisor *at the beginning of the semester*.
- The TA/GSA must be given at least five (5) days' notice that a performance evaluation will be conducted and the evaluation needs to take place at a mutually agreeable time. Prior to the performance evaluation, the TA/GSA may submit documentation they feel is relevant to their evaluation. Self-evaluation cannot be used to discipline or deny work to an employee.
- Evaluations provide the TA/GSA with an overall rating of either "Satisfactory", "Improvement Required" or "Unsatisfactory". Where an evaluation is not conducted, it is understood that performance has been "Satisfactory".
- Student evaluations cannot be the sole consideration for issuing a rating of "Improvement Required" or "Unsatisfactory". Unsigned student evaluations will not be used unless agreed to by the TA/GSA.
- If the TA/GSA is given an overall rating of "Improvement Required" or "Unsatisfactory", constructive feedback will be provided for correcting the concerns. A timeline for improvement will also be provided.
- The TA/GSA's work performance is separate and distinct from their academic pursuits as a student and will not be included in the academic file.

Although our TAs & GSAs are students, their academic and employee records are separate. Performance as an employee cannot be used in academic decision making and vice versa.

FREQUENCY OF EVALUATIONS

It is important to provide regular *informal* feedback to TAs & GSAs about performance during each of their work assignments. Departments should also establish a regular schedule for *formal* performance evaluations. While the frequency of *formal* performance evaluations is at the discretion of individual Departments, the University encourages faculty and staff supervising TAs & GSAs to conduct a written performance evaluation following the first work assignment greater than or equal to 0.5 (70 hours). Subsequent performance evaluations are at the discretion of the Department.

¹ This guide applies only to Graduate Service Assistant 1s who are members of CUPE 3913 (GSAs whose work is primarily in support of the academic enterprise).

In all cases where a TA/GSA has received a rating of less than “Satisfactory”, performance evaluations should be sustained successful performance is established. performed for each subsequent work assignment held until evidence of

TAs & GSAs can submit a self-evaluation of their performance. This is their opportunity to put performance into context – especially if they are unable to meet in person.

TIMING OF EVALUATIONS

Performance evaluations may be conducted at any time during or shortly after a work assignment ends. It is common for a performance evaluation to occur following the end of the semester, once student evaluations are available.

Holding the performance evaluation after the end of the semester may mean that the TA/GSA is not able to participate in person.

This is

acceptable provided the TA/GSA is given reasonable

opportunity to submit documentation and comment on the evaluation before it is finalized.

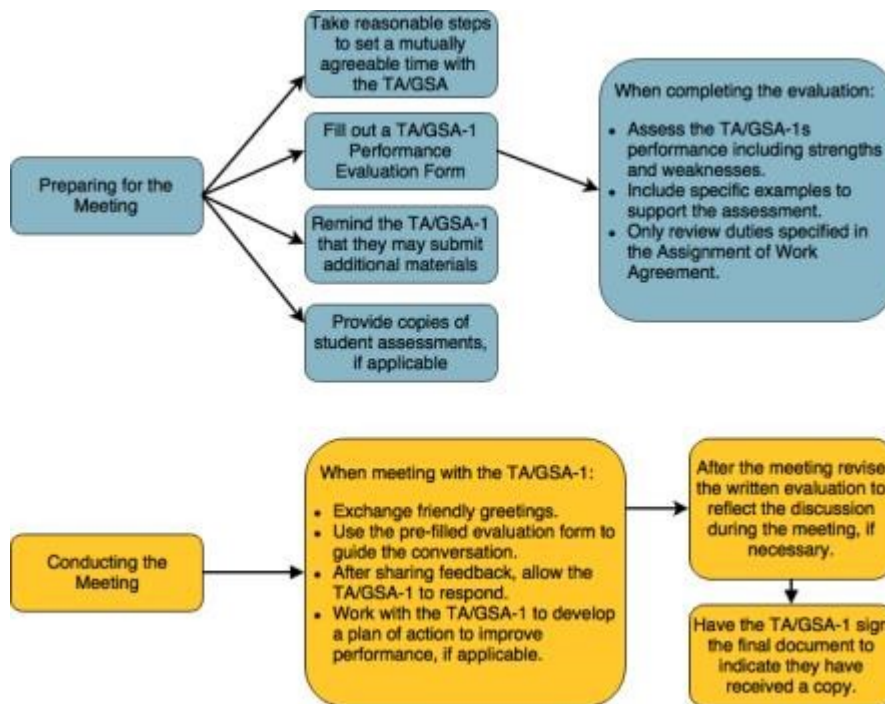
FEELING SAFE

Performance evaluations, particularly where the supervisor and employee disagree on outcomes, can result in conflict. These conflicts should be handled in a respectful manner. However, either party has the right to adjourn the meeting if they begin to feel unsafe.

Employees are entitled to bring a support person (a friend, colleague or union representative) to performance evaluation meetings. The support person is an observer and should not interfere with the process.

If you require immediate assistance on campus, call x2000 or 519-840-5000 or 911.

CONDUCTING THE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION



Preparing for the Meeting

Before the meeting, review the ‘Assignment of Work Agreement’ completed at the beginning of the semester, take time to reflect on the employee’s overall performance, and begin filling out the TA/GSA Performance Evaluation template (see Appendix C) or other similar form approved by your Academic Unit. This form will guide the discussion with the TA/GSA. It is important to ensure that you:

- Review only the duties specified in the Assignment of Work Agreement. If a duty is not specified, then mark it as ‘N/A’ on the evaluation.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in each area of assigned duties.
- Include specific examples of observed behaviour to support your assessment.
- Remind the TA/GSA that they may submit additional materials to inform the evaluation.
- Schedule sufficient time after the meeting to write summary notes and complete the performance evaluation.

Conducting the Meeting

- Create an open atmosphere:
 - Exchange friendly greetings.
 - Frame the evaluation as *conversation* about the TA/GSA’s performance over the course of the semester.

Performance evaluations should *empower* and *encourage*. Focus on the positive and acknowledge where the TA/GSA is meeting or exceeding your expectations.

- Take notes.

- Provide the TA/GSA an opportunity to assess their performance from their perspective before making your observations and giving feedback.
- Don’t interrupt while the TA/GSA, other than to ask questions for clarification. Rephrase and summarize to ensure you understand.
- Provide constructive feedback focusing on the TA/GSA’s specific behaviours (strengths & weaknesses) as evidence of performance.
- Provide the TA/GSA an opportunity to respond or ask questions.
- Use key phrases such as “*Is this your understanding as well?*”

- Develop a plan of action (and timelines, as necessary) to address any areas requiring improvement. This could include professional development opportunities (such as those offered by OpenEd).
- Summarize the discussion and outcome (rating) of the evaluation:
 - Reiterate the purpose of the evaluation as a professional development opportunity.
 - Review the plan of action discussed during the meeting.
 - Thank the TA/GSA for their participation and explain the next steps

The TA/GSA does not need to agree with the outcome of the assessment. Signing the form signifies that the TA/GSA has received a copy of the evaluation.

The goal is for the TA/GSA to understand how the final rating was determined and what, if anything, they should focus on improving for the future.

After the Meeting

- Provided a copy of the evaluation to the TA/GSA within ten (10) days of the evaluation.
- The TA/GSA should sign the finalized document to confirm that they have received a copy of the evaluation. An email confirming receipt is also acceptable. *Signing the evaluation does not mean that the employee agrees with the assessment.*
- Performance evaluations must not be kept in the student's academic file.

Contact **Faculty and Academic Staff Relations** if you have any questions or concerns about next steps related to a TA/GSA's performance.

TIPS AND TRICKS

The remainder of this guide includes general tips and tricks for Supervisors on how to improve active listening skills, giving effective feedback and communicating effectively. Learning and Professional Development in Human Resources also provides regular training in each of these areas. For more information, please visit

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/staff-faculty/learning-andprofessional-development>.

Active Listening

A successful performance evaluation requires active engagement of both parties. Active listening on the part of the Supervisor is key to active engagement. Active listening demonstrates genuine interest in, and concern for, the TA/GSA's point of view.

Tips for effective active listening:

- Location: Choose a location that is quiet with few distractions (e.g., a private office or a meeting room).
- Eye contact: Keep your focus on the TA/GSA and try to avoid letting your attention wander. Make regular eye contact with the TA/GSA to show that you are paying attention.
- Body language: Show the TA/GSA that you are being attentive by sitting upright, smiling, nodding at relevant points. Keep fidgeting and unnecessary movement to a minimum.
- Responding: Keep your emotional reactions in check. Avoid interrupting or focusing too much on what you want to say next. Ask follow-up questions.

Giving Effective Formative Feedback

- Plan your feedback in advance of the meeting.
- Provide the TA/GSA the opportunity to reflect on their own performance. Individuals are more likely to accept constructive criticism when they are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses.
- Focus on behaviours and the specific responsibilities and duties as outlined in the TA Work Agreement.
- Avoid bias, personal perceptions or judgements of the TA/GSA's personality.

- Remember that individuals react to criticism in different ways. Anticipate possible reactions and to be prepared to diffuse situations that may arise.
- Focus on the future. Talk about ways to improve areas of lesser strength and/or weaker performance. Let the TA/GSA know that you think they are capable of improvement.
- Criticism should be specific and should include examples of what the TA/GSA has previously said or done.
- Highlight the effect of the TA/GSA's actions on others (colleagues, students, the department). Impacts can be both positive and negative. Positive impacts are just as, if not more, important to note and encourage.
- Try the 'sandwich' technique where feedback that could be perceived as negative is 'sandwiched' between positive feedback:
 1. *Identify what worked well.*
 2. *Focus on what could have been done differently (constructive criticism) and suggest ways to improve.*
 3. *Give a reminder of the positive (or another positive).*

Navigating Difficult Conversations Defensiveness

- Describe the situation as a problem to be solved and from the perspective of curiosity rather than criticizing the employee for poor performance (e.g., "Help me understand ..."). People are less likely to feel personally attacked when they are engaged in a joint problem-solving discussion.
- Ask open-ended questions and allow the employee to explain their point of view.
- Utilize active listening. Paraphrase their comments to ensure understanding.
- Stay calm, keep emotions in check, and maintain an appropriate level of eye contact.
- Let the individual 'vent' emotions (within reason).
- Be empathetic and ensure you have fully understood the situation by asking the employee about their reasons for disagreeing. Unresponsiveness/Withdrawal/Apathy
- Refrain from pressuring the TA/GSA into answering. Be patient and allow them time to give a response.
- Remind them of the value of the conversation as a tool for professional development.

Formative Feedback Examples

The way in which formative feedback is presented will impact how it is received.

- Provide *specific* examples to ensure the TA/GSA understands how you have come to your assessment.
- Use "I" statements, rather than "you" statements.
- Avoid words like "always" and "never".
- Express the belief that the TA/GSA is capable of improvement, as needed.
- Focus on specific strategies and action plans to improve performance, as needed.

For example:

Instead of saying/writing:	Say/write:
<p>Re: Grading (Timeliness)</p> <p>You always submitted your portion of the grading late and never seem to complete your tasks within the deadlines.</p>	<p>It caused significant frustration among your students when you returned their midterms 3 days late, and after the other students had already received their grades. What time management strategies might be effective on the go-forward?</p>

<p>Re: Punctuality</p> <p>You were constantly late.</p>	<p>You were 25 minutes late for our introductory meeting on September 4, and arrived after the midterm started on Oct 15. Students reported that you were late for seminars in units 4 and 6.</p> <p>On the go forward, [plan of action, provide a timeline].</p>
<p>Re: Communication (Written)</p>	<p>I found spelling and grammar mistakes in your weekly discussion posts when</p>
<p>Instead of saying/writing:</p>	<p>Say/write:</p>
<p>Your writing skills are poor.</p>	<p>responding to students. Taking time to review your work prior to posting would provide a better example for our students.</p>
<p>You did a good job.</p>	<p>The feedback you provided students on the final project was excellent and demonstrated your understanding of the material.</p> <p>You consistently uploaded grades before the deadline. This demonstrates how effective you are at time management.</p>

APPENDIX A - DEFINITIONS

CUPE 3913: Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3913, the union that represents Sessional Lecturers, Teaching Assistants and Graduate Service Assistant-1s at the University.

Department: An Academic Department, School, or Interdepartmental Program at the University of Guelph and Program at the University of Guelph-Humber.

Employee: A Teaching Assistant or Graduate Service Assistant-1 employed by the University who is a member of CUPE 3913, Unit 1.

Faculty and Academic Staff Relations (FASR): Reporting to the Provost and Vice President (Academic), FASR is responsible for advising members of the University community on the terms and conditions of employment for faculty and academic staff, including members of CUPE 3913.

Graduate Service Assistant-1 (GSA-1): A graduate student employed in work *related to the academic enterprise* that is not a Teaching Assistant and is paid from regular University funding.

Invigilator: An employee whose sole duty is to monitor/proctor students while they write examinations.

Sessional Lecturer: An individual who is employed by the University on a per-course basis to teach a degree-credit course. Sessional Lecturers are members of CUPE 3913, Unit 2.

Supervisor: The person directly responsible for the assignment and direction of an employee's work (usually the course instructor).

Teaching Assistant (TA, GTA or UTA): A graduate or undergraduate student who is employed by the University to perform duties such as conducting labs/seminars, grading, student consultation, invigilation and supervising field trips.

APPENDIX B ARTICLE 13 (PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS)

Excerpt from University of Guelph-CUPE 3913, Unit 1 Collective Agreement. For the full text of the agreement, visit our website: uoguelph.ca/vpacademic/facultyrelations/agreements.php.

13.01

- (a) The performance evaluation of any employee shall be conducted in accordance with established University Policy and treated as confidential information between the employee and the University unless the employee chooses to share it with the Union. The results of such an evaluation shall not be used for the purpose of denying continuation in the academic program in which they are currently registered. Employees shall be provided with a copy of the evaluation within ten (10) days of such evaluation. The performance evaluation shall not be included in the employee's academic file. Where no evaluation has been carried out it shall be understood that the performance has been satisfactory.
- (b) An employee's work performance shall not be applied in any form against their academic pursuits at the University except with the written request of that employee. An employee's academic record shall not impact upon an employee's employment at the University except how such record may affect any decision under 11.04 (c).

13.02

- (a) A performance evaluation shall not be included in an employee's academic record.
- (b) Evaluations will provide the employee with an overall rating of either "Satisfactory",

“Improvement Required” or “Unsatisfactory”.

- (c) Once per semester an employee may request that their work performance be evaluated in accordance with this Article.
- (d) Prior to the performance evaluation, an employee may submit documentation they feel is relevant to their evaluation.
- (e) Self-evaluation cannot be used to discipline or deny work to an employee.
- (f) The primary purpose of evaluations is intended to be constructive and developmental in nature.
- (g) Student evaluations will not be the sole consideration for issuing an overall rating of “Improvement Required” or “Unsatisfactory”.

13.03 There shall be no electronic monitoring of employees by any member of the University, for any purpose, without the written consent of the employee. Such consent may be withdrawn at any time in writing.

13.04 Employees shall be given at least five (5) days’ notice that a performance evaluation is to be conducted. Such evaluation shall take place at a mutually agreeable time.

13.05 All evaluations shall be in writing and based solely on the performance of those duties specified in the ‘Assignment of Work Agreement’ (Appendix C) as completed and signed by the employee and the supervisor. Evaluations will state whether the employee has performed satisfactorily in the duties associated with their work assignment. Where an employee is given an overall rating of “Improvement Required” or “Unsatisfactory”, constructive feedback will be provided for correcting the concerns. A timeline for correcting the concerns will also be provided. Should the employee fail to improve their performance within the timeline provided to the employee, the University may choose to initiate constructive actions and/or a disciplinary process.

13.06

- (a) Student evaluations of Teaching Assistants may form only one part of the information considered in the evaluation of employee performance.
- (b) In the event that student evaluations do form part of an employee evaluation, those student evaluations will not be the sole purpose for denying a work assignment to an employee.
- (c) Unsigned comments from student evaluations will not be used unless agreed to by the employee.
- (d) Student response rate in the evaluation of teaching will be an important consideration in the employee evaluation process.

13.07 Where an employee challenges their performance evaluation, through the grievance procedure, the employee and/or Union, prior to the first meeting as specified in the Grievance Procedure, may request in writing (and shall receive within five (5) days of such request), any records and/or documentation that were used as a basis for the evaluation.

APPENDIX C SAMPLE TA/GSA PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The following is a sample template Departments can use to evaluate the performance of TAs/GSA-1s. Departments are also free to design their own templates. This template is also available in fillable formats on the TA/SL hiring website.



TEACHING ASSISTANT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

BASIC INFORMATION				
Date:		Employee Name:		
Academic Unit:		Supervisor/Instructor:		
Course:		Semester:		
Type:		GTA	UTA	GSA-1
INSTRUCTIONS				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance assessments are based on the duties outlined in the TA's Assignment of Work Agreement. • The listed skills and duties are <i>examples</i> and should be amended to reflect the duties as outlined in the work agreement and the skills required for the specific position. • Evaluations are conducted in accordance with University policy and treated as confidential information between the employee and the University. • Student evaluations or other correspondence that support the assessment should be attached. • A rating of "Improvement required" or "Unsatisfactory" requires constructive feedback and a timeline for correcting the concerns. 				
EVALUATION				
Assessment Criteria	N/A	Satisfactory	Improvement Required	Unsatisfactory
Preparation:				
Attending Lectures:				
Conducting Labs/Seminars:				
Grading (punctuality):				
Grading (accuracy):				
Attending Lectures:				
Student Consultation:				
Invigilating Exams:				
Supervising Field Trips:				
Other Duties (Specify):				
Demonstrates Required Theoretical Skills and Knowledge:				

Demonstrates Required Applied (e.g., lab) Skills and Knowledge:				
Competence as a discussion leader or laboratory instructor:				
Punctual (meetings, tutorials labs, etc.):				
Communication Skills (spoken):				
Communication Skills (written):				
Ability to take direction:				
Time Management:				

Overall Assessment: • Satisfactory • Improvement Required • Unsatisfactory

Provide specific feedback related to the TA's strengths:

Provide specific feedback related to how the TA performance can improve (including timelines as necessary):

Supervisor's Signature:

Employee's Signature:

Date: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX V

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY RELATIONS AND APPLIED NUTRITION

GUIDELINES FOR GTA PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

Updated January 2019

- The Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition (FRAN) encourages all instructors to complete GTA performance evaluations in accordance with Article 13 of CUPE 3913 Unit 1's Collective Agreement once a semester per student, especially if this is the GTA's first work assignment.
- If the GTA requests a performance appraisal, as they can per Article 13.02 (c), an appraisal must be completed.
- A formal performance evaluation does not take the place of regular informal feedback to GTAs about their performance throughout the work assignment.
- A GTA's academic and employee records are separate. Performance as a GTA cannot be used in academic decision making and vice versa.
- Please refer to the [Guide to Performance Appraisals](https://www.uoguelph.ca/sessional_ta/sites/uoguelph.ca/sessional_ta/files/guide_to_ta_and_gsa_performance_evaluations_0.pdf) as prepared by Faculty and Academic Staff Relations (FASR) for detailed information regarding the completion of a GTA evaluation. It can be found here: https://www.uoguelph.ca/sessional_ta/sites/uoguelph.ca/sessional_ta/files/guide_to_ta_and_gsa_performance_evaluations_0.pdf

Below are the steps to complete a GTA evaluation within FRAN.

1. At the initial meeting with the GTA(s), inform them that an evaluation will be taking place or give them the option to request one. When an evaluation is being done, explicitly note this with the time that will be allotted to it in addition to when approximately it will happen in the semester, in the *Meetings* section under Anticipated Duties and Responsibilities of the Assignment of Work Agreement. We expect that normally ½ hour to 1 hour is sufficient.
2. Once completed Assignment of Work Agreements are submitted to the Academic Administrative Assistant (AAA), she will look to see if a performance evaluation is noted with the necessary time information as outlined in item 1 above. If so, the AAA will prepare the "GTA Performance Evaluation" form and email it to the instructor and GTA. The form will be pre-populated by the AAA with the duties and responsibilities posted and agreed to on the Work Agreement. The proposed timeline for emailing the evaluations to the instructor/student is by early October for Fall, early February for Winter and early June for Summer.
3. Based on the Work Agreements which note that a GTA performance evaluation is to be done (as in item 2 above), the AAA will provide a list to the Chair of the Department, the names of GTAs to be evaluated with their instructors and course codes.
4. As early in the semester as possible, the instructor and GTA will mutually agree on a day and time to conduct the evaluation keeping in mind that the GTA must be given at least 5 days notice of the evaluation. The evaluation can be done at any time throughout or at the end of semester.

5. Prior to the evaluation, it is recommended that the instructor refers to the Guide to Performance Appraisals as prepared by Faculty and Academic Staff Relations for detailed information regarding the completion of a GTA evaluation.
6. Prior to the evaluation the GTA may submit documentation they feel is relevant to their evaluation.
7. The GTA is entitled to bring a support person (a friend, colleague or union representative) to performance evaluation meetings. The support person is an observer and should not interfere with the process.
8. All evaluations are to be in writing using the "GTA Performance Evaluation" form and based solely on the performance of the duties and responsibilities specified in the Assignment of Work Agreement.
9. As per Article 13, evaluations will provide the GTA with an overall rating of "Satisfactory", "Improvement Required" or "Unsatisfactory".
10. If a GTA is given an overall rating of "Improvement Required" or "Unsatisfactory" constructive feedback needs to be provided for addressing the concerns with a timeline for improvement provided. If there is still time in the semester and work agreement, completion of another performance appraisal is suggested. Possibly informal feedback to the GTA regarding improvement is more realistic, with plans for completion of another formal evaluation during the next work assignment (outlined in item 14 below).
11. At the time of the evaluation meeting, both the instructor and GTA should sign the finalized form. Signing the form confirms they have each received a copy of the evaluation and NOT that the GTA necessarily agrees with the assessment. There is a box that the GTA has the option to add their own comments.
12. The GTA must be provided with a copy of the evaluation within ten (10) days of the evaluation.
13. A copy of the evaluation with the final rating will be submitted to the AAA at the same time it is copied to the GTA.
14. In the case of "Improvement Required" or "Unsatisfactory" the AAA will provide the Chair of the Department a list of these GTAs. The Chair and the AAA will then follow up with the instructor to determine what specific support and mentorship is recommended for the GTA. The AAA will also email these GTAs to inform them this is happening. In the case of "Unsatisfactory" direction from FASR may be sought.
15. It is possible that by the time GTA evaluations are completed, the assignments and hiring of GTAs for the next semester will already be completed. If a GTA is evaluated as "Improvement Required" or "Unsatisfactory" and has been assigned another GTA work assignment for the next semester, the AAA will inform the Chair and the next semester's instructor so that the Chair can follow up with the instructor and GTA to develop a plan to support the mentorship of the GTA.
16. Where no evaluation has been carried out it is understood that the performance was satisfactory.
17. Contact the AAA if you have any questions or concerns about the steps related to a GTA's performance.