

Guidelines for Faculty on Graduate Research Assistants

DEFINITIONS:

Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA): This award funding is intended to support Graduate Students while performing research on their thesis topic. The dollar value of these awards will vary and is usually noted on the offer of admission. Income from a GRA is NOT considered employment income.

Research Assistantship (RA): students may be employed to work on Professors research projects. Payment for being a Research Assistant is employment and is considered a taxable salary. The terms and conditions of employment for RAs working at UOIT for 24 hours or less per week are governed by the collective agreement between UOIT and the Public Service Alliance of Canada which is located on the UOIT website at www.uoit.ca

GRAs and RAs

The following chart will assist you in deciding whether a student should be hired as a Research Assistant (RA) or funded as a Graduate Research Assistant (GRA).

| | Graduate Research Assistants | Research Assistants |
|---|---|---|
| What is the primary motivation of the professor in appointing the student? | To assist his/her student financially. The student may be assisting directly with the supervisor's research but the GRA is primarily a scholarship to the student to fund his/her program of study. | To hire an individual to assist completing the tasks necessary for the professor's own research and for his/her own academic and professional gain |
| Can the financial commitment be used to satisfy student funding requirements? | Yes | Yes |
| What is the primary motivation for the student in accepting this role? | To assist in his/her training to become an independent researcher; to assist in qualifying for his/her degree; financial assistance to enable the student to focus on his/her graduate program of study. | Financial gain and professional work experience beyond the research required to satisfy degree requirements. |
| What will be the nature of the activities to be performed by the student? | Research will relate to student's own thesis or own academic pursuits (in the case of theses or projects this usually will contribute to the professor's overall research); tasks will include those necessary to learn | Not directly related to their own thesis or graduate studies; tasks may be more basic in nature and not of assistance in developing the student (e.g. data entry, reference checking, photocopying papers, etc. for professor's research). It is possible that the student will |

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| | sufficient research skills and accomplish tasks that are expected for the degree and thesis; thesis-students may be in receipt of GRA funds even when primarily involved in coursework | learn skills that will enhance their development and career. |
| What will be the nature of the interactions between the professor and the student? | More collaborative in nature; professor as academic mentor. Mentor in collaboration with student sets goals and expectations that are required for thesis completion | Student takes direction and instructions from the professor; as an employer/employee |
| What degree of independence will the student have? | As much as can be expected for current level of training of the student | Low - will take instruction from professor and possibly others in the lab/team |
| Will the 10 hour rule be invoked? | Does not apply. The student's activities are for his or her own graduate studies and therefore there should be no expectation of a set number of hours imposed on the student and as such this funding is an award or scholarship and thus is not work | This activity is work on top of the program of study of the student and therefore the 10 hour rule applies. For details on the 10-hr rule, visit the Graduate Studies website: www.gradstudies.uoit.ca/funding |
| What is the status of the person? | Student | Employee |
| What is the source of funds? | Professors research grants (NSERC, CHIR etc.) or contract from industry. | Professors research grants (NSERC, CHIR etc.) or contract from industry |
| What tax treatment will the funds receive? | No Source deductions. T4A will be issued for income tax preparation. | Source deductions. T4 will be issued for income tax preparation. |

Frequently Asked Questions

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How much do I pay my graduate student for thesis work?

A student performing thesis work may be awarded a GRA at the time of admission. The amount of the GRA will vary depending on the minimum funding amount and what other type of funding (if any) is being offered to the graduate student. For further clarification, the Professor must consult with the Faculty Graduate Program Director.

For example, at the Fall 2012 TA/RA hourly rates, a domestic student in a Masters of Applied Bioscience program may be offered a Dean's Scholarship for \$3,000, plus a full TAsip equivalent to \$9,520 which totals \$12,520. Therefore, the GRA would need to be at least \$3,760 to meet the minimum funding amount.

Who do I contact about hiring an RA or offering a GRA?

A Professor interested in hiring an RA or offering a GRA to a graduate student should contact the Office of the Dean of his/her Faculty.

Faculty expectations for students who receive a GRA

Since the appointment of a student under a GRA is not an employer/employee relationship but rather a student/mentor or advisor relationship, there should be no expectation of a set number of hours imposed on the student. However, it is expected that, as mentor, the faculty member will advise the student on what tasks and research the student will be required to accomplish in order to complete a thesis based on the standards of the Faculty or Graduate program or field of study.

Students who receive a GRA to conduct research for their thesis are obliged to follow the UOIT research policies on research integrity, ethics and intellectual property. (See link on UOIT website: <http://uoit.ca/footer/about/governance/uoit-administrative-code.php>)

Can I provide a GRA to a part-time student?

Supervisors are not obligated to provide financial support to part-time students, but providing the research is towards their degree requirements, a GRA may be provided to the student.

Can I offer a GRA to a student before their program begins?

If the financial support is intended for bridging purposes between an undergraduate degree and graduate degree, or for a student who has arrived to campus early, bridge GRA funding may be offered. These situations will need to be clearly noted to the Office of Graduate Studies.

Can I offer a GRA to a visiting student?

If the faculty member has adjunct professor status at the visiting student's home university and is a co-supervisor, the visiting student would be eligible for a GRA.

When do I need to complete the GRA request?

Faculty members should submit their request for a GRA to be created to the responsible individual in their department prior to the start of each academic term to ensure that the student is paid in a timely manner and/or can apply those funds earned towards their tuition.

I submitted the request, but my student says they are not receiving any funds.

It is likely that the student has an outstanding tuition balance and therefore there is a hold on their GRA. Contact GRA@uoit.ca to inquire.

How can I ensure my student applies their GRA to their tuition?

A supervisor cannot obligate the student to apply their GRA to tuition, however, you can encourage them to select the payroll deduction option. They can do this using the [Graduate Student Promissory Note for Deferment of Fees and Tuition Deduction Form](#) available on the Graduate Studies website.

How do I make a change to an existing GRA?

A Professor interested in making a change to an RA contract or payment of a GRA to a graduate student should contact the Office of the Dean of his/her Faculty. A change form will be required and the student may need to sign a Student copy to confirm they are aware of the change.

Can a GRA be reduced if the TA/RA hourly rates increase, or if additional hours are assigned in a particular term?

No. TAs and RAs are employment and GRAs are scholarship, so there is no direct correlation between these types of funding. The only relationship is that both types of income are considered funding toward the minimum funding threshold. Increases in employment rates or hours will result in greater funding to the student above their original funding package commitment.

Can a GRA be reduced if my student receives other scholarships or awards?

Yes. The GS Funding Terms and Conditions document does allow the reduction of GRA funding if the student receives other scholarships and awards after the initial commitment. It is expected that the original GRA commitment will resume when the other scholarship or award expires.