

Humanities Program Policies:

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

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GTA-1. GTA Assignments

GTA-1.1. GTA Eligibility

The HUM program follows the Provost Office’s policies on the eligibility requirements of GTAs. A GTA is deemed eligible for work in the program if he/she meets the requirements (found here: https://documents.ku.edu/policies/Graduate_Studies/graduate_teaching_assistant_eligibility.htm).

GTA-1.2. GTA Hiring

GTA positions are advertised in early spring for the following fall semester. Graduate students interested in teaching HUM courses must submit an application, transcripts, and letters of recommendation.

The hiring process is managed by the Associate Director, along with a GTA hiring committee whose members appointed by the Director. Because of the sensitive nature of the application materials, graduate students may not

serve on the GTA hiring committee. Committee members review GTA applications and invite the best qualified candidates to an interview.

After the interviews are concluded, the GTA hiring committee members rank-order the candidates. As many positions as are available are offered promptly by a letter from the Director to candidates at the top of the list. Those offered GTA positions are asked to respond in writing to accept or decline the appointment. Meanwhile, other qualified applicants are notified by a letter from the Director that they are “alternates” for appointments as these become available. Alternates who do not obtain an appointment are encouraged to reapply the following year.

GTA appointments become official at such time as instructor contracts and University personnel and payroll forms are completed and returned to the administrative support staff, usually in July for fall appointments. All appointments and re-appointments are contingent on class enrollment.

All documents related to the hiring process will be archived or shredded by the Associate Director at the conclusion of the interviews.

GTA-1.3. GTA Summer Appointments

A limited number of summer positions will be available. Calls and deadlines for applications for those positions will be announced by memo from the Associate Director.

If the number of applications is greater than the number of summer positions, each of the applicants will be assessed on the following criteria in the order listed below. Applicants who do not meet these requirements will be removed from the pool of applicants unless there are more positions than applicants.

Applicants must meet minimum requirements:

- GPA of 3.5 (3.0 for Law Students)
- No more than 2 outstanding Incompletes on transcript
- Meet the course load requirement for the semester preceding the summer hiring process
- Have had no waivers for any of the above in the past academic year
- Must have taught in HUM at least two years.

The remaining applicants are then placed in this order:

1. those who have not taught any summer in HUM
2. those who have taught only one summer in HUM
3. those who have taught two summers in HUM

If this process still yields more applicants than positions, the Associate Director will prepare for the Director the following information for ranking of eligible applicants:

1. Seniority in semester of appointment, excluding summers
2. GPA in regular semester previous to application
3. Student survey data of regular semester preceding application

This information will be forwarded to the Director, who will use his/her discretion to select GTAs for the summer teaching positions.

If after this there are still more positions than eligible GTAs, those GTAs who have taught at least two semesters will be considered by the same criteria.

If there are still too few applicants, the minimum requirements are waived and additional GTAs are encouraged to apply by a fair and public announcement. This group will be ranked as specified above and each applicant's comprehensive teaching experience and taken into consideration.

This procedure for summer hiring can be overturned in the following manner ONLY: A counter-proposal must be presented in its complete form and receive a majority vote by the GTAs at a business meeting. Following this, it must have Program Committee approval.

GTA-2. GTA Orientation

All HUM GTAs are required to attend a fall orientation program, usually scheduled in the days before the beginning of classes. A portion of the day-long program is generally reserved for new GTAs in the program. Attendance at the orientation is a contractual obligation; absences must be excused by the Associate Director in advance.

GTA-3. GTA Weekly Training

All first-year HUM GTAs enroll in HUM 701: Practicum in Teaching Humanities and Western Civilization for one credit and attend weekly 50-minute training sessions at a time designated by the Associate Director each semester. The teaching of writing will be emphasized in at least four of these sessions. Attendance is a contractual obligation; GTAs who cannot attend a training session should contact the Associate Director as far in advance as possible. Poor attendance could affect merit pay, consideration for program awards and appointments, and consideration for summer teaching positions. Chronic unexcused absences can result in non-reappointment in the year following those absences.

GTA-4. GTA Obligations During the Academic Year

GTA-4.1 General

As instructors in the HUM program, GTAs are expected to fulfill basic professional obligations expected of all instructors. These include:

- Attendance at all assigned class sessions (including lectures and discussions);
- Attendance at all required trainings and meetings;
- Attendance at posted office hours (3 office hours per week during regular sessions);
- Preparation for classes;
- Prompt grading of student work;
- Prompt recording of student grades (individual assignments and final grade);
- Prompt response to student inquiries about classwork;
- Prompt response to University colleagues who ask for (and have signed waivers to obtain) feedback on student progress;
- Reporting academic and other misconduct according to Program and University policy;
- Administration of student course evaluations;
- Scheduling course observations by faculty.

GTA-4.2 Syllabus

All GTAs are required to submit their syllabi electronically to the Associate Director during the first week of classes. All syllabi are maintained electronically by the Associate Director.

GTA-4.3 Absences

GTAs must report all absences to the Associate Director as soon as possible. When possible, the Associate Director will make a call for substitutes among other GTAs. GTAs who require the assistance of substitutes are likewise expected to volunteer to cover classes for colleagues. GTAs may arrange for their own substitutes if they wish, but the absence must still be reported to the Associate Director. Any absence after two requires the approval of the Director.

GTA-5. GTA Committee Representation and Leadership

GTA-5.1. GTA Executive Committee (GTEX)

The GTA Executive Committee (GTEX) serves two functions (1) it is the primary means of communication between the HUM GTA corps as a whole and the HUM program administration; and (2) it is the main body that advocates for policies related to GTAs. The HUM Director and Associate Director meet regularly with GTEX to ensure consistent communication and to work on policy development.

GTA 5.1.1. GTEX Membership

The GTEX consists of four members. The procedure for selecting GTEX members is determined by the GTAs and is encoded in the HUM GTA Constitution.

GTA 5.2. HUM Program Committee Members

With advice and counsel from GTEX, the new GTEX president will identify the appropriate number of GTEX members to serve as voting members of the HUM Program Committee. In accordance with the University Senate's "20% Rule," students (at least one undergraduate and at least one GTA) will comprise a minimum of 20% of total Program Committee membership.

GTA 5.3 *Ad hoc* Appointments

In the event that the Program Committee seeks greater GTA representation or further representation on standing or *ad hoc* committees, the GTEX president shall, with advice and counsel from GTEX, appoint members accordingly. In all cases, the GTEX president will work with the HUM Director to ensure that the University Senate's "20% Rule" is honored.

GTA-6. GTA Evaluation

Article V, Section 8 of the GTA/University Memorandum of Agreement (5/6/10) reads “Each department or school shall evaluate its GTAs each semester using a method to be determined by the school or department.” Faculty reviews in HUM are designed to build better working relationships between faculty and GTAs and to suggest ways that GTAs can improve their teaching. These reviews of teaching are based on a teaching portfolio that includes multiple sources of information (e.g. syllabi, sample assignments and examinations, samples of graded student work, and a classroom visit).

Beginning in academic year 2012-2013, HUM will use a modified version of the University’s suggested GTA Evaluation Form (see appendix) for its annual evaluations of GTAs. This will be considered a pilot year, and feedback from GTAs and faculty will determine revisions and adaptations for the next year.

At all times, GTAs have the option of responding to an evaluation. Any concerns or criticisms may be addressed orally, or may be included in a written response that will be attached to the original evaluation letter and kept in the personnel file.

Peer Review is a way for GTAs to supplement their Student and Faculty Evaluations or to further explore questions about the effectiveness of their classroom presentation. Peer Review is voluntary and may be undertaken informally by mutual agreement with a GTA colleague. Instructors may have their Peer Review report included in their personnel file. Peer Review is also strongly recommended for tenure-track faculty during their pre-tenure probationary period. *Revised 04/20/2012.*

GTA-7. GTA Merit Raises

Article 6, Section 2 of the University/GTA Memorandum of Agreement (5/6/10) states: “A GTA whose appointment is renewed within the same department in which the GTA taught the previous semester (excluding summer sessions), will be deemed to have performed at a level sufficiently meritorious to entitle the GTA to two-thirds of the authorized average merit salary increase. Any additional merit salary increase will be left to the discretion of the department based upon its evaluation of the GTA’s performance..... ”

The Director will rely on the information on the GTA Evaluation Forms to determine the percentage of raise (if any, as allowed by the University) for each GTA. GTAs will be informed of the percentage increase by letter.

Additional merit salary increases may be denied to graduate instructors who do not meet the responsibilities outlined in this manual. GTAs must teach courses for the HUM Program in both the fall and spring semesters before they can be considered for a merit pay increase. *Revised 04/20/2012.*

GTA-8. GTA Reappointment

GTA appointments are for one academic year, but a GTA may apply for reappointment annually up to the semester limit established by the Provost. Program eligibility does not supersede University limits on funding which may apply.

Summer appointments do not apply against a GTA’s semester limit.

In the weeks prior to the GTA hiring committee meeting(s), the committee will review reappointment packets compiled by the Associate Director, along with each GTA’s personnel file. Each committee member will recommend (a) reappointment; (b) non-reappointment; of (c) further discussion needed. The reappointment status of GTAs flagged in this last category will be discussed at the committee meetings. The Director will make the final decision about reappointment based on the recommendations of the committee.

Two copies of the final reappointment packet are assembled by the Associate Director: one copy is maintained

in the applicant's personnel file; the other is sent to Human Resources. The following items are required in a reappointment portfolio:

- Request for Reappointment email (sent by the Associate Director in early January);
- ARTS form, updated through the time of application
- Satisfactory Progress and Out-of-Field Appointment verification (both obtained in April by the Associate Director from the GTA's advisor, graduate director, or chair);
- Observation Form (fall and spring semester for new GTAs, fall only for returning GTAs)
- Letter or email indicating reappointment decision from GTA Hiring Committee (pending satisfactory completion of all requirements)

In addition to satisfactory results on the above forms, GTAs seeking reappointment must:

- Demonstrate accountability in all areas of teaching responsibilities, including coverage of the required readings, adherence to the HUM writing assignment guidelines, maintenance of office hours, attendance at GTA training sessions and other meetings as determined by HUM faculty and administrators, and the administration of student evaluations in each class. Repeated and/or undocumented absences from class will disqualify GTAs from reappointment.
- Maintain a G.P.A. of 3.4 in graduate course work (except for GTAs in the KU Law School, who must maintain a 3.0 G.P.A.); and the completion of at least 9 hours of graduate course work (including courses which satisfy the FLORS requirement) in the academic year previous to the application for reappointment (but not including summer course work). The GTA may not have more than two outstanding Incompletes in graduate courses.

Conditions for non-reappointment include failure to meet any of the requirements for reappointment stated above. In addition, proof of dishonesty or moral turpitude (e.g., sexual harassment), or failure to abide by Program policies may result in immediate dismissal of the GTA.

GTAs whose sole difficulty with meeting requirements for reappointment is the 3.4 G.P.A. standard may make a one-time request to the Director to permit reappointment for one academic year, during which the GTA must bring the G.P.A. up to the Program standard. No second request for reappointment on this basis will be considered, nor can the one-time request be considered if there are other requirements for reappointment which the GTA fails to meet.

GTAs whose sole difficulty with meeting requirements for reappointment is having more than two outstanding Incompletes may make a one-time, short-term request to the Director, describing unusual circumstances, such as illness, which caused the excessive number of Incompletes, and stating the date by which the GTA can again meet regular reappointment standards. No second request for reappointment on this basis will be considered, nor can the one-time request be considered if there are other requirements for reappointment which the GTA fails to meet.

Any employment contract issued by Humanities and Western Civilization to graduate teaching assistants will be contingent upon the GTA's continued satisfactory performance of the requirements listed above.

GTA-9. GTA Leave of Absence

Circumstances may arise in which an instructor will wish to take a leave of absence from the Humanities Program: for example, GTAs who have received fellowships or research grants, or who wish to teach in another department for a limited period of time, or who are having difficulties meeting the Program's academic eligibility requirements and need time to "catch up" or for personal reasons. Requests for a leave of absence should be submitted in writing to the Director a minimum of two months before the beginning of the semester from which a leave is desired. The Director will decide whether circumstances warrant granting of the requested leave.

The maximum duration for leaves of absence may not total more than two years.

If a leave of absence is granted, a GTA may expect to return to the Program if the following conditions are met:

- The GTA meets all academic eligibility guidelines for reappointment as specified above.
- The GTA applies for reappointment prior to the application deadline for new GTA applicants (usually mid-February for the fall semester).

Since contracts are normally valid for a full academic year, if a GTA is applying for reappointment for a spring semester that GTA may only be reappointed in spring if a teaching slot has become available (i.e., because someone else has left the Program, or because additional funds have been received to create a new GTA position). For this reason a GTA on leave should not count on re-entering the Program in a spring semester.

Return from a leave of absence is entirely contingent on vacancies being available. If a GTA requests to return, and is unable to do so due to a lack of vacancies, his/her extended absence from the Program will not apply toward the two-year leave of absence limit.

GTA-10. GTA Termination

The HUM program follows the termination policies established in the Memorandum of Agreement signed between GTAs and the University (found here: http://www.hreo.ku.edu/files/documents/gta_moa.pdf).

GTA-Appendix

The GTA Evaluation form is on the following page.

**University of Kansas Humanities Program
GTA Course Observation Form**

Instructor: _____

Class: _____

Observer: _____

Date: _____

Rating Scale:

5 – Strongly Agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree

Assessment of Class Session:

The GTA actively engages students with the course material(s) and subject matter.

5 4 3 2 1

The GTA uses whole class, group, and/or individual activities effectively.

5 4 3 2 1

The GTA asks questions or makes comments that generate a high level of critical thinking.

5 4 3 2 1

The GTA interacts well with students and addresses students' needs and questions.

5 4 3 2 1

The GTA is knowledgeable in key terms, concepts, ideas, and theories and conveys them in a manner that is understandable to the average student.

5 4 3 2 1

The GTA is professional, appropriately dressed, punctual, and prepared for class.

5 4 3 2 1

The GTA makes appropriate use of *technology/instruments/texts/readings*.

5 4 3 2 1

Overall assessment of instruction during the observed class:

Outstanding Exceeds Expectations Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

Comments about instruction observed during class:

Instructor's Signature/Date

Observer's Signature/Date

Provide one copy to the GTA. Retain original in departmental files. New GTAs should be observed a minimum of once a semester, and continuing GTAs once a year.