Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook

Department of Communication
Georgia State University

Academic Year 2020-2021
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**Meet the Department Leadership and Administrators**

Dr. Greg Lisby, Chair  
Dr. Jaye Atkinson, Associate Chair, Course Scheduler  
Dr. Carrie Freeman, Graduate Director  
Ms. Donna Krache, Associate Graduate Director, Digital Media Strategies  
Ms. Tawanna Tookes, Graduate Programs Administrator  
Mr. Faith LeFebvre, Public Relation Manager, Course Scheduler  
Ms. Marilyn Stigger, Operations Manager  
Ms. Kristen Brown, Digital Media Coordinator

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**Getting Started: General GTA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**Departmental Matters and Guidelines for GTAs**

1. GTAs are required to register for 18 hours (Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters) during every semester they hold an assistantship. Some of these hours may be Directed Research (Comm 8780).

2. GTAs must remain in good academic standing as defined by the College of Arts and Sciences.

3. If a GTA takes an incomplete in a course, the coursework must be completed no later than the timeline stated on the Incomplete Form, signed by the faculty and the Chair. The assistantship could be in jeopardy if the incomplete grade turns into an “F”.

4. The Chair, Graduate Program Administrator or faculty Course Director must approve all absences from GTAs responsibilities, in advance.

5. GTAs must post final grades for all courses taught by the deadline instituted by the university. You must also provide Ms. Marilyn Stiggers a copy of your grade book for future referencing. Failure to meet these important criteria by the deadline could result in assistantship not being renewed for the coming year.
6. GTA appointments are reviewed annually. Failure to meet the appropriate standards of academic and professional performance may result in nonrenewal.

7. You should keep student work for at least a calendar year. Before disposing materials, remove all identifying marks, such as name or Panther IDs. It would be best to shred all documents before disposing.

8. For computer support, please contact the GSU Help Desk at 404-413-4357 to make a request for assistance. Be sure to tell the representative that you are from the Department of Communication. A help ticket will be created. Note: Please be aware that it may take up to 24 hours for your request to be resolved. Note: The department does not have an in-house IT support member. If you need support while in your classroom or having problems with projection or computer, then you should contact GSU’s classroom tech at 404-413-4357.

At the beginning of each semester ...

1. Office Hours
Office hours for each course taught should be included on the Course Syllabi, which is due to Ms. Marilyn Stiggers, Operations Manager by the second week of the semester or the deadline Ms. Stiggers set. This allows staff members to know the best times you will be available during the semester. Allow two hours for each course taught. You must return your office hours to the Ms. Stiggers by the deadline.

2. Course Syllabi
By the second week of each semester, it is mandatory that a syllabus for each course taught be submitted by GTA to Ms. Stiggers. There should be a syllabus for every CRN. The University requires that the syllabus be filed for future reference. The syllabi should include office hours.

3. Class Rolls
Prior to meeting your first class, rolls can be accessed on your GoSOLAR account. Be certain that all students are correctly registered for your class(es). If a student’s name does not appear on the class roll the student should contact the Enrollment & Registration Services Call Center: 404-413-2900. the Registrar’s office

4. Course Authorization & Overflow Guidelines
If the course needs an authorization or overflow, certain guidelines or prerequisites must be in place. Overflows are only given to students with the written consent of the instructor. Special authorizations and overflows should be coordinated with Ms. Faith LeFebvre, Administrative Coordinator. Note: Room and classroom size must be considered and may not exceed the university capacity.
5. Keys
Keys to classrooms may be obtained through key control (through Police Station, One Park Place, enter on Edgewood Avenue) as long as you are the instructor of record. You will need to tell Key Control the course you are teaching as well as the building and room the class will be held. Panther IDs are required and all keys received from key control should be returned directly to them after the semester is over or you will be accessed a $15.00 fee.

6. Access to the Department
You should automatically have 24/7 into the main entrance of the building as well as the floor of your office location. You will have access into the front office on the 8th floor. Swipe access is required before 8:15am and after 5:15pm and all day on weekends.

In the middle of the semester ...

1. Textbook Orders
Textbooks are typically chosen by a faculty course director for the course. If the faculty supervisor gives GTA the permission to order the textbook, please see Ms. Marilyn Stigger.

2. Desk Copy Request
Desk copy request for instructional manuals can only be issued if the text has been adopted as required reading for a course. The publisher requires that the text be adopted through the university bookstore(s). Please see Ms. Marilyn Stiggers about the process of requesting desk copies.

3. Maintenance Request
If there is a need for maintenance works in an office area, notify Marilyn Stiggers as quickly as possible. The appropriate parties will be contacted to resolve the issue.

4. Office Supplies
Office Supplies are maintained and monitored by Marilyn Stiggers. To request supplies, please see Ms. Stiggers.

5. Scanning and Scoring
Please refer to the University Scanning and Scoring sections for more details on the process. The front office staff can answer any questions about delivery/pick-up from testing center. Online: http://counselingcenter.gsu.edu/testing/scanning-scoring/. Students must purchase their own scantrons. The department no longer supply them.

At the end of the semester ...

1. **Turn in Grades via GoSOLAR/PAWS** *(iCollege is not enough)*

Turning in grades officially to the university requires that you enter the final letter grades into the CRN for each course within GoSOLAR/PAWS. Grades **MUST** be turned in by 5pm Thursday, December 17 for the fall 2020 semester and by 5pm May 6 for the spring semester 2021. Failure to do so could result in consequences, such as losing the opportunity to teach in the summer, losing travel money, or losing an assistantship entirely. **Please Note:** Incompletes – GTAs are ineligible to give an “I” (Incomplete) as a grade; this is due to the transient nature of the GTA.

2. **Submit Copies of Gradebook to Administrator**

Submit a copy of your gradebook (e.g., excel spreadsheet, iCollege spreadsheet) to Ms. Marilyn Stiggers. This must be detailed enough that she can answer questions a student may have about what their assigned grade was on any assignment and how their final grade was calculated. This is critical in helping departmental staff be able to answer questions when a GTA becomes unavailable for any reason.

3. **Review Student Evaluations of the Instructor**

Part of your growth as a teacher should include reviewing student evaluations and incorporating the constructive criticism into the next semester's preparation. Student evaluations are available after grades have been posted via GoSOLAR. These evaluations will also be used to review your assistantship performance every year.

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**GSU Portals**

**Two Major Online Systems:**

1. **GoSOLAR**
   a. Essential Tasks: verify roll by the deadline; enter final grades
   b. View class roll
   c. Email students via their GSU email accounts
   d. View course and schedule information
   e. Login with CampusID and Password

   **Note:** This is where grades are officially "turned in"

2. **iCollege**
   a. Online learning management software system
   b. Provide information to students, such as syllabus, calendar, PowerPoint Slides, grades, etc.
   c. Post announcements
   d. Email students within iCollege system
   e. Login with CampusID and Password: [https://gastate.view.usg.edu/](https://gastate.view.usg.edu/)

   **Note:** This is where students can track their grades as the semester progresses.
Academic and Teaching Schedules

Academic Calendars – available [https://registrar.gsu.edu/document/academic-year-2020-2021/?wpdmdl=35861&refresh=5ede4389cf0771591624585](https://registrar.gsu.edu/document/academic-year-2020-2021/?wpdmdl=35861&refresh=5ede4389cf0771591624585)

Final Exam Calendars - available [https://registrar.gsu.edu/document/academic-year-2020-2021/?wpdmdl=35861&refresh=5ede4389cf0771591624585](https://registrar.gsu.edu/document/academic-year-2020-2021/?wpdmdl=35861&refresh=5ede4389cf0771591624585)

Teaching Schedule – Dr. Jaye Atkinson, Associate Chair, and Ms. Faith LeFevre, Senior Administrative Coordinator and Scheduler, will assign courses to all GTAs. Your input will be requested, but the final assignments are made based on the needs of the department, students’ course schedule, seniority, areas of expertise, and past student evaluations. GTA teaching schedules could change prior to the beginning of a new semester.
Important Things to Know, Places to Go
And Teaching Resources

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act):  
http://registrar.gsu.edu/academic-records/records-management/ferpa/

Basic Premise needed for instructors:  
No, you cannot discuss grades (or any other school information) with anyone other than the student unless the student authorizes that discussion in writing. A form can be found online.

GSU’s Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) cie.gsu.edu  
- Center for Instructional Innovation Website: cii.gsu.edu
  
The Center's primary means of communication with Graduate Teaching Assistants is the CETL listserv: Visit cie.gsu.edu to sign up. GTAs who are not already subscribed to this listserv may join. You can also unsubscribe at any time if you do not wish to receive further communications.

CETL Resources for GTAs

- CETL Assessment of Instruction https://cetl.gsu.edu/services/instructional-support/assessment-of-instruction/
- CETL Pedagogical Consulting https://cetl.gsu.edu/services/instructional-support/pedagogical-consulting/
- CETL Group Instructional Feedback Technique (GIFT) https://cetl.gsu.edu/services/instructional-support/group-instructional-feedback-technique-gift/
- Certificate of Excellence in Teaching & Learning https://cetl.gsu.edu/services/graduate-student-services/certificate-excellence-teaching-learning/
College of Arts & Sciences Student Policies:  
http://casservice.gsu.edu/policies-forms/undergraduate-student-policies/  
*Includes PDFs for*
  Academic Dishonesty Notice  
  Academic Honesty Policy  
  Cross Registration Form  
  University FERPA Records Access Policy  
  Policy Procedures for Student Complaints, Petitions for Policy Waivers and Variances, and Appeals  
  Undergraduate Directed Readings (4999) Application Form

**Disability Services Office**  
http://disability.gsu.edu/  
The Director of Disability Services coordinates services and provides resources which allow students with temporary or permanent disabilities to function as independently as possible. These services offer the disabled student the opportunity to obtain a higher education and to experience those things which are common to all college students. Accommodations will be listed on a form provided by the student and signed by the instructor. Direct questions to your faculty mentors and the Disability Services Office.

**Final Exams** – required for all classes unless you have received departmental approval beforehand.

**Faculty Handbook (Important Instructor Information)**  
University Policies, Procedures, and Services – Faculty Handbook [https://faculty.gsu.edu/faculty-handbook/](https://faculty.gsu.edu/faculty-handbook/)

**SECTION 400**  
ACADEMIC INSTRUCTIONAL INFORMATION

- **401 Class Organization**
  - 401.01 Course Syllabus  
  - 401.02 Class Rolls  
  - 401.03 Student Attendance  
  - 401.04 Veteran Attendance  
  - 401.05 Withdrawal from Class  
  - 401.06 Textbooks  
  - 401.07 Access to Student Records
- 401.08 Disruptive Student Behavior Policy
- 401.09 Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

- **402 Examinations**
  - 402.01 Final Examinations
  - 402.02 Regents' Examination
  - 402.03 Legislative Requirements

- **403 Grading Policy**
  - 403.01 Grading System
  - 403.02 Reporting of Grades
  - 403.03 Policy on Grades of Incomplete ("I")
  - 403.04 Change of Grade

- **404 Academic Standing**

- **405 Academic Recognition on University Diplomas**

- **406 Policy on Courses Listed in University Catalogs**

- **407 Cross Registration**

- **408 Assignment and Use of Facilities**
  - 408.01 Assignment of Instructional Facility

- **409 Policy on Academic Honesty**
  - 409.01 Introduction
  - 409.02 Definitions and Examples
  - 409.03 Evidence and Burden of Proof
  - 409.04 Procedures for Resolving Matters of Academic Dishonesty

- **410 Sources of Academic Support for Students**
  - 410.01 Undergraduate Studies
  - 410.02 Writing Studio
  - 410.03 Mathematics Assistance Complex
  - 410.04 Computer Facilities
  - 410.05 Student Support Services Program
• 410.06 Disability Services Office
• 410.07 Cooperative Education and Internship Program
• 410.08 African American Student Services and Programs

• 411 University Safety/Emergency Procedures
  • 411.01 Discovery or Suspicion of Fire
  • 411.02 Building Evacuation Alarm
Syllabus Checklist

___ 1. complete course title and number; name of professor; term, year; CRN;

___ 2. statement of faculty member's accessibility to students outside of class (e.g., office hours, telephone number);

___ 3. prerequisites (if any) for the course;

___ 4. course objectives that specify measurable and/or observable student learning outcomes. These learning outcomes should state course objectives in language that makes explicit the knowledge and skills students should have after completing the course. Consequently, these objectives may be quantitative or qualitative, as appropriate for the learning outcomes. The learning outcomes for general education courses are available at www.gsu.edu/~wwwfhb/goals.doc as approved by the GSU Senate 2/13/04.

___ 5. course assignments (e.g., required readings and activities) and due dates;

___ 6. specific course requirements (e.g., written and oral tests and reports, research papers; performances);

___ 7. grading policy: how the final grade is to be determined with respect to the weights assigned to various course requirements;

___ 8. attendance policy (see current University general Catalog for University guidelines). Syllabi should state specific requirements for attendance including requirements for the frequency and kind of participation by designated channels;

___ 9. list of text(s) or other required course materials;

___ 10. make-up examination policy;

___ 11. all syllabi should include the following statement: "The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary;

___ 12. all syllabi should refer to the Policy on Academic Honesty (Section 409); University policy should be attached; discipline-specific policy should also be attached;
13. All syllabi should include the following statement: "Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State. Upon completing the course, please take time to fill out the online course evaluation."

14. All syllabi should include the following statement: "Students who wish to request accommodation for a disability may do so by registering with the Office of Disability Services. Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by the Office of Disability Services of a signed Accommodation Plan and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all classes in which accommodations are sought."
Grading, Grading, and More Grading Details

How to enter grades:

At the close of each semester, faculty must use the PAWS web portal to submit grades.

Within GoSOLAR/PAWS:

1. Select Faculty Menu under the GoSOLAR section from the Home Page
2. Select Submit Grades
3. Select Term
4. Select CRN
5. Enter ALL grades on your class roster. **You must enter a grade for each student** listed on your roster.
   - **Note:** Enter a grade even if the student WITHDREW. (The date is on the roster.)
   - Degree-seeking undergraduates who withdrew must be given a grade of PW (Pending Withdrawal). The grade of PW will be changed to either W or WF depending on how many withdrawals the student has used. Graduate students and non-degree-seeking undergraduates who withdrew must be given either a W or a WF.
   - If you assign a grade of “F” to a student, please enter the last date of attendance in the date field on the grade submission page.
6. Submit grades. (**Hint:** Click the submit button often to prevent being timed out.)

**Note:** A grade cannot be recorded for a student who is not on your class roster.

**Do a Final Check:** To ensure that you have submitted grades for all of your courses and all of your students, **click on the “Faculty Grade Summary” link on PAWS:**

- **Select a term.**
- **Select a CRN.** All course information will be displayed along with each student’s name, Panther ID number, credit hours and grade in Academic History.
Please submit all grades on time. Grade deadlines for each term are posted on the Academic Calendar and at the beginning of this document. An “NR” grade – no grade reported – will be entered by the Office of the Registrar for all grades not submitted by the deadline. Your department chair and college dean will be informed of all missing grades, and assistantship funding can and may be impacted.

Grade Change Request (New Process)

After official grading for the term has occurred, grade changes must be submitted by signing on to the secured faculty portal on PAWS/Go SOLAR. The Grade Change Request Information Sheet and the official link can be obtained on the site. Please follow all steps for the grade change request process.

If you miss the deadline and have to submit a late grade (NR grade), you must log in to PAWS and select the Classes tab to access the “Grade Change Request” link.

The new Workflow has automated the grade change process to create more efficient operations and will provide the following benefits:

- Decrease grading time by allowing auto-update in Banner (once all necessary approvals have been received)
- Allow faculty to make grade adjustments significantly faster by initiating requests via PAWS
- Significantly minimize grading errors
- Provide faculty and student instant confirmation once the request has been processed

All grade change requests must be submitted through workflow, with the exception of the following:

- Requests to extend an incomplete grade
- Requests to change withdrawal grades
- Requests to change grades for courses taken prior to Fall 2002

These types of grade change requests must be submitted to Academic Records via email at the new email listed on the Grade Change Request Informational Sheet in PAWS.

Effective Tuesday, October 14, 2014, the former grade adjustment email is no longer an active email.
Again, it is imperative that you save yourself and your department extra work by submitting all grades by the deadline!

OTHER GRADE ISSUES

1) Called to Active Military Duty – This will remain a paper process. If a student is called to active military duty, copies of their orders need to be sent to the Registrar’s Office so that their status code can be changes to “MC”. This code will credit their account. The student should be issued “Ws” for each class that semester. The “MC” code will prevent the system from charging them for the “Ws.”

If the account hold does not automatically go away, contact the Registrar’s Office.

2) NEVER, NEVER LEAVE A GRADE FIELD BLANK If, in spite of all efforts to prevent such circumstance through role verification process, a student still remains on the role at the end of the semester but has never attended class or taken any tests or completed any assignments, A GRADE STILL MUST BE ENTERED FOR THAT STUDENT. The registrar’s office generally recommends an “F” in cases like this. Moreover, on the grade drop down menu, the option of W will not be available. In order to prevent this from happening and the resulting backlash from an upset student, it’s best to go ahead and check rolls periodically through the semester and then withdraw non attending students by the midpoint by sending the request through the registration adjustment process.

A) GP (Grade Pending)
   In the case of “Grade Pending” in which academic dishonesty is usually involved, there seems to be two schools of thought:
   1) Leave the grade field blank and contact Rene Mondy in the Dean’s office (ext 3-5000) and she will enter a grade of GP.

   2) Go ahead and assign whatever grade the instructor believes is applicable according to his/her academic dishonesty policy; for example, assigning one grade lower than what would have been without the Academic dishonesty or assigning an F.

B) Outcomes of either option
   1) Option 1: This is potentially problematic because leaving the grade field blank will result in the course showing up on the “Not Reported Grades” list generated by the Dean’s office. As a result, the department will be under pressure to submit a grade if the GP has not yet been added.

   2) Option 2: Less problematic because the Dean’s office will be happy that all grades are entered and any changes can be processed by a simply grade change request.
C) Withdrawals
   1) If a student withdraws before the midpoint YOU STILL MUST SUBMIT A GRADE AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER!!! You have the option of assigning a W or WF in this case.
   2) If the student withdrew AFTER the midpoint, the grade field should automatically be populated with a WF. 3) WP WP (withdraw pending) or WF is not an option for students who remain on the roll without having withdrawn.

3) Incompletes – GTAs are ineligible to give an “I” (Incomplete) as a grade; this is due to their transient nature.

GENERAL REMINDERS AND CONSIDERATIONS

1) If a student receives a “W” or “WF”, they are still responsible for paying for the course (unless they have been called to active military duty).
2) A grad of “F” cannot be changed back to an “I”.
3) Effective Fall 2003, no student can graduate with an incomplete on their record.
4) When assisting students, please be clear when describing administrative drops and administrative withdrawals.
International GTAs/GLAs can receive guidance and support in the form of coursework, seminars, and observations/coaching.

1) International GTA/GLA Course

**ESL 7500: Teaching at the University for International GTAs** is a semester-long course designed to improve the classroom communication and general teaching skills of international graduate teaching assistants. The course provides instruction and practice in classroom language and intercultural skills, as well as general teaching techniques. During the semester, students give several short field-specific presentations, which are videotaped, and receive feedback from classmates and the instructor. Students also observe undergraduate courses in their field of study to focus on classroom interactions, lesson presentation, or instructor’s communication with students to confirm understanding.

This 3-credit hour (pass/fail) course is offered during the fall and spring semesters. It can stand alone as a general foundation course for new teachers or serve as a vital supplement to departments’ pedagogy courses often designed for native English speakers.

For class schedule listings, go to GoSolar and search for *English Second Language* or contact Sarah Kegley, ESL Director, Department of Applied Linguistics/ESL, [skegley@gsu.edu](mailto:skegley@gsu.edu) or 404-413-5191.

Prerequisite: If students are recommended to complete ESL 7250 per their ISSS GSTEP evaluation, they must successfully complete that course before registering for ESL 7500. For information about the GSTEP, contact the GSTEP Testing Coordinator at 404-413-5200.

2) Workshops for International GTAs/GLAs

Workshops for international GTA/GLAs are available through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). Topics include effective classroom communication skills, practical teaching suggestions for enhancing the multicultural classroom, and giving effective feedback. Check the CETL events calendar at [cetl.gsu.edu](http://cetl.gsu.edu) or request a specific workshop by contacting us at [cetl@gsu.edu](mailto:cetl@gsu.edu).
3) International GTA/GLAs Teaching Observations

Both new and experienced instructors can benefit from discussing their teaching with colleagues. Faculty trained in second language acquisition/classroom teaching can visit your class or lab and talk with you about your teaching (e.g., classroom communication skills, differing cultural expectations of your students, presentation styles, lesson planning). The observer will meet briefly with you to discuss your needs, visit your class/lab, and offer oral and written feedback and coaching. Observations are confidential.

To request an observation, contact us at cetl@gsu.edu.

4) Tutoring Services—Intensive English Program/English as a Second Language

The IEP & ESL Tutoring Services are available to all GSU students, faculty and staff whose first language is not English. Tutors can assist you in all skill areas include writing, speaking, listening, and reading.

5) TIPS FOR TEACHING: Non-Native English Speaking Students

Today’s GSU students come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and many are non-native English speakers (NNES). Teaching these students can present puzzling challenges. Some students, for example, do well on tests but rarely speak in class; when they do speak, they may be difficult to understand. Others may be vocal and sound native-like but struggle with academic reading and writing tasks.

NNES students at GSU tend to fall into two categories:

(1) international students who completed their secondary education in another country

(2) residents who have U.S. high school degrees but who may speak a language other than English outside the classroom. International students are often more challenged by listening and speaking in English than by writing and reading.

NNES residents are generally comfortable with conversational English but may be challenged by academic tasks. Mastering the language of academia requires time, especially for tasks performed in real-time, such as note-taking, in-class discussions, and writing against time limits. To help NNES students succeed, professors need not revamp their teaching style, but modifications can help. The following suggestions Tips for Teaching Non-Native English Students. https://cetl.gsu.edu/files/2016/11/Tips-for-Teaching-Nonnative-English-Students.pdf are based on observations from teachers in GSU’s ESL Credit Program and the Intensive English Program; from surveys of NNES students at GSU; and from advice compiled from teaching centers of other U.S. universities.

–Margareta Larsson, Lecturer Applied Linguistics and ESL, GSU