

Duke | *the Program* *in Literature*

Research (or Graduate) and Teaching Assistantships Duties, Responsibilities, Expectations

| Adopted Fall, 2019 – Revised Spring, 2021 |

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PREFACE

The following guidelines for **Research Assistantships (RAs)** (referred to as **Graduate Assistantships—GAs**) and **Teaching Assistantships (TAs)** were produced by the Graduate Program Review Committee (2017-19) and adopted by the Program in Literature in the Fall of 2019. They were revised during the Spring of 2021 in conversation with the graduate students and faculty of the Program, and in response to the need for further enhancement of Literature's graduate education.

These guidelines are meant to give a broad overview of the duties and responsibilities involved in these two assignments for both the graduate student in an RA or TA position and the mentoring faculty in each case. Specifically, they should serve as a guide for the faculty to consider appropriate tasks to assign, and for students to be able to anticipate expectations regarding mentoring, training, and workload related to these positions.

RESEARCH (GRADUATE) ASSISTANTSHIP

GENERAL INFORMATION

The purpose of the Research Assistantship (or the Graduate Assistantship as per the relevant contract) is to offer students the opportunity to build and refine necessary research skills (e.g., organizational, management, and editorial competence, training in collaborative work, but also intellectual development). This position involves building a good working relationship with a faculty member of the department, ideally someone within the student's specialized, or at least general, area of research interests. However, the Program in Literature expects all students to acquire broad competency across multiple areas in the theoretical humanities, and assumes that *any* placement will further this aim, even in cases where the desideratum of shared research interests cannot be met. In all cases, the faculty member will assume a mentoring role for the student who is placed in an RA assignment with them.

In the first instance, the faculty is responsible for providing a first point of contact for advising the RA student, especially for students in their early years. This could include advising related to the student's coursework (helping with their plans regarding courses to take) and other logistical issues (for instance, which faculty to potentially approach for their committees, scheduling of future exams/defenses, and so on), but also guidance on methodological practices in their area of research interests.

It is expected that the faculty and RA student meet regularly to discuss research assignments (at least once a month), and that they maintain collegial and respectful communication, as per the Program's **Collective Statement on Climate, Values, and Conduct**. The faculty should have reasonable expectations for the turnaround of assigned tasks, also considering the student's other demands related to coursework, exams, and their dissertation. The RA should inform the faculty of progress made on these tasks, as well as of any issues that may prevent their timely execution.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Tasks assigned to the RA student should not include any non-research/scholarly labor and should not exceed a 19.9 hours/week workload. In general, tasks may be related to the faculty's own research project, to the organization of a conference or other relevant events on campus, editorial assistance for written work, grant application or management, course development, or other activities associated with the further formation, analysis, or dissemination of the faculty's academic research.

More specifically, RA duties and responsibilities could include, and must be limited to:

- assistance with the general academic research of the faculty (conducting initial research on a topic and gathering the relevant information, conducting archival research or

interviews if appropriate to the type of research, reviewing primary/secondary literature as needed, etc.)

- assistance with the editing and preparation of manuscripts (proofreading, indexing, obtaining permissions for images, etc.)
- assistance with the preparation of presentations of faculty's research
- assistance with the development of new and current courses and other pedagogical needs
- assistance with supervising undergraduate students working on assigned research projects (for instance, undergraduate theses writers)
- assistance with the coordination/organization of academic events
- assistance with administrative duties related to proposals and applications for the development of curricular or research projects (for example, funding applications)
- assistance with the organization, maintenance, and updating of research website content (if relevant)
- performance of other research-led duties as assigned by the mentoring faculty

TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP

GENERAL INFORMATION

The purpose of the Teaching Assistantship is to offer students the opportunity to gain experience in the classroom and to build and refine their skills as teachers, graders, discussants, and advisors. This position involves building a good working relationship with faculty members of the department, ideally someone within the student's specialized, or at least general, area of research interests. However, the Program in Literature expects all students to acquire broad competency across multiple areas in the theoretical humanities, and assumes that *any* placement will further this aim, even in cases where the desideratum of shared research interests cannot be met.

The faculty should direct the TAship as a mentor pedagogue for the TA, training the student in the skills necessary to become successful teachers. It is expected that the faculty and the TA meet regularly during the term (ideally once per week) to discuss the course and ongoing expectations for the TA in relation to the course and that they maintain collegial and respectful communication, as per the Program's **Collective Statement on Climate, Values, and Conduct**. The faculty should have reasonable expectations for the turnaround of assigned tasks, also considering the student's other demands related to coursework, exams, and their dissertation. The TA should inform the faculty of progress made on these tasks, as well as of any issues that may prevent their timely execution.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Tasks assigned to the TA student should not include any labor unrelated to the relevant course for which they are in a TA position and should not exceed a 19.9 hours/week workload.

More specifically, **faculty duties and responsibilities** include:

- meeting with the assigned TA or TAs at the start of the course to offer clear articulation of their duties and responsibilities
- clear explication of the scope and objectives of the course (to assist TAs in carrying out their assigned advising and grading tasks)
- regular meetings with TAs (ideally once a week; minimally once a month)
- providing pedagogical mentoring to TAs, appropriate to the level of prior training in pedagogy
- encouraging TAs to take an "active" role in the classroom as appropriate to TAs' prior experience and level of comfort (i.e., by asking TAs to teach one or multiple classes or breakout sessions; by encouraging TAs to participate in seminar discussions)

- teaching TAs how to grade assignments and papers, if grading duties are assigned; communicate clear rubrics for grading
- encouraging undergraduate students to meet with TAs on a regular basis
- providing mentorship to TAs about their advising of undergraduates and their classroom performance
- providing feedback on TAs' lectures or other classroom contributions
- maintaining an open line of communication with TAs

TA duties and responsibilities include:

- seeking clarification from instructor whenever necessary
- scheduling regular office hours to meet with undergraduate students (at least one hour per week plus option for meeting by appointment)
- coming prepared to each class meeting by reviewing all assigned materials for the week
- participating actively in the seminar (by teaching class sessions or breakout sessions, by participating in discussions, etc.)
- carrying out assigned grading duties in a timely manner
- consider seeking a teaching certificate (e.g., by taking a course offered through the English Department (*strongly* recommended by the Program in Literature))
- ensuring that their workload is limited to no more than 19.9 hours/week (including time to do assigned reading for course and preparation for classroom participation), and communicating any related problem to the mentoring faculty for the help and support needed