Guidelines for hiring Graduate Assistants and Teaching Associates

Overview—Types of Student Employees

There are two different kinds of student employees: *academic* student employees and student assistants. An academic student employee is a student who is hired to do work that is academic in nature; that is, their primary work assignment must be related to a program of study offered in this University. There are three categories of academic student employment: Teaching Associates, Graduate Assistants, and Instructional Student Assistants. All other student employees (besides TAs, GAs, and ISAs) are simply student assistants.

A Teaching Associate is a graduate student hired to teach a course or laboratory in the same department in which they are enrolled in graduate study. (There may be exceptions to this for students in interdisciplinary programs, who may be hired to teach in disciplines related to their graduate studies.) The TA is the instructor of record, and has primary responsibility for the course, including grading. They work under the supervision of a faculty member, but are expected to have the expertise and independence to teach the (introductory-level) course. A TA must be admitted to or enrolled in the graduate program in which they teach.[1]

A Graduate Assistant is a graduate student hired to assist one or more faculty members with professional or technical duties. This may include holding discussion sections related to a faculty member's course(s), holding office hours, providing tutoring, proctoring exams, running laboratory exercises, grading papers, serving as a research or laboratory assistant, and so forth. As with the TA, a GA's work assignment must be related to their graduate studies; however, the requirements of this classification are slightly looser. The GA may work in a department in which he or she is not enrolled in graduate studies, provided that the work they are hired to do is closely related to their own studies. For example, a student who is enrolled in mathematics may work as a GA in physics, and a student studying computer information systems might be hired to assist in a computer graphics course in the Art department. Similarly, a GA may be hired in an interdisciplinary department, even if that department does not offer a graduate degree program. In every case, however, the GA's work assignment should be related to their graduate study, and the GA must be enrolled during every semester in which they work as a GA.

An Instructional Student Assistant is any student (graduate or undergraduate) who is hired to assist in an academic setting; ISA's may be hired to teach (though not to be an instructor of record for a course), grade, tutor, help out in laboratories, mentor other students, and the like. Unlike TAs and GAs, ISAs are not restricted in terms of the subject matter they are studying—that is, <u>any</u> student may be hired as an ISA in any department, provided that their work assignment is academic in nature and they are enrolled in <u>some</u> degree program during the term(s) in which they work as an ISA. For example, a physics major may be hired as an ISA to provide tutoring in the Writing Center, and Art major may be hired as an ISA to assist in a computer lab, and an Economics major

[1] The 'admitted to' simply allows a department to hire an incoming student as a TA on their way into the program. Once hired, a TA is expected to be enrolled in the graduate program during each semester in which they work as a TA.

may be hired as an ISA to grade papers in the philosophy department—provided that in each case the student is qualified to do the work they are hired to do.

For more information on these classifications, see http://www.calstate.edu/HRAdm/Classification/index.shtml. It is important to note that academic student employees are represented by a labor union (the United Auto Workers), and their employment is therefore subject to a Collective Bargaining Agreement. Departments that employ TAs, GAs and ISAs should be familiar with the Collective Bargaining Agreement that governs these employees. It is available online at http://www.calstate.edu/LaborRel/Contracts_HTML/CBA_Contract/index.shtml. See especially Article 2, regarding appointments, posting, and notification and Article 8, regarding evaluations.

If you are unsure whether the work you want a student employee to do qualifies as appropriate academic student employment (or not), apply this simple test: Is the kind of work that the student employee will be doing related to a degree program that is offered at California State University, Los Angeles? If the answer is "no," then the student should not be hired as an academic student employee. So, for example, if the student will primarily be assigned to answer phones, given that we do not offer a degree program in phone-answering, this is an inappropriate work assignment for academic student employment. Similarly, we do not offer degrees in clerical work, so photocopying and creating documents for a department office are not academic student employment. Of course, even academic student employees will sometimes do clerical work (for example, they might photocopy exams for the instructor, or record grades in a spreadsheet)—but the majority of their assignment must be academic in nature for the position to qualify as academic employment.

All other student employees should be hired as Student Assistants. If you want to hire students to perform clerical tasks or other non-academic work (e.g., to assist in moving furniture), you must hire them as student assistants.

This document will focus on the hiring of GAs and TAs. For guidance on hiring ISAs or Student Assistants, please see the separate document that concerns those student employees.

Classification Codes, Salary, and Work Hours

A classification code is a four-digit number that identifies the type of employee within the CMS ("PeopleSoft") system and on the Employee Transaction forms. Most classification codes have defined "classification standards" associated with them—these standards help you to determine whether or not a prospective employee qualifies for employment into this classification. The standards for a GA and a TA are defined by the Chancellor's Office (CO). Those standards can be found on the CO's website under Unit 11 (the bargaining unit for academic student employees). It is highly recommended that you bookmark this page: http://www.calstate.edu/HRAdm/Classification/index.shtml. If you click on the pull-down menu under Unit 11, you will see options for Graduate Assistant and Teaching Associate (as well as Instructional Student Assistant). These classification standards will tell you the minimal qualifications required (e.g., admission to or enrollment in a degree-granting graduate program is required for both GA and TA employees). At the top of each classification standard, there are

several classification codes—these will be the codes that you use to hire employees into these classifications.

Graduate Assistants

The vast majority of Graduate Assistants will be hired into classification code 2355.[2] This classification code has four ranges associated with it; ranges 1 and 2 are appropriate to use on this campus (as they are for use on semester campuses). Range 2 is used for semester appointments; range 1 for Academic Year appointments. Typically, a GA will be hired for a one-semester assignment, so range 2 is usually used.

Additionally, each classification has a salary schedule associated with it. The salary schedule for a given classification can be found via http://www.calstate.edu/HRAdm/SalarySchedule/salary.aspx by typing in the four-digit classification code and hitting enter (or the GO button). What results is a list of possible ranges for the class code. If you click on the code for a given range (e.g., 2355, range 2) you will see the minimum and maximum salary. The salary is shown as a monthly, hourly, and annual rate.

For example, the minimum and maximum salaries for a GA (2355, range 2) are:

Minimum Rate	SSI Max Rate	Maximum Rate
2,116.00 M	.00 M	2,998.00 M
12.21 H	.00 H	17.30 H
10,580.00 A	.00 A	14,990.00 A

GAs are typically hired to do a certain amount of work per week, or per semester. In order to understand how the minimum and maximum rates convert to hours/week, consider the following:

- The monthly rates quoted on the salary schedule assume 40 hour/week employment.
- Most GA assignments will be 20 hours/week or less.[3]

Thus, a 20 hour/week assignment will be half-time (and will earn half the salary shown on the chart above). As a rough guide, here is how the min/max salaries map onto hours/week (the $ amounts shown in each column are the amounts a student would earn *per month* at the hours/week shown, assuming they were hired at the "base rate" in column one):

Monthly Salary for GA @ different weekly time base				
Base Rate/Month	5 hrs/week	10 hrs/week	15 hrs/week	20 hrs/week
$2,116	$264.50	$529.00	$793.50	$1,058.00
$2,454	$306.75	$613.50	$920.25	$1,227.00
$2,870	$358.75	$717.50	$1,076.25	$1,435.00

[2] There is an alternative classification code for a 12-month Graduate Assistant, but this code should be used only in rare cases. If you think that you need to have a 12-month (as opposed to a semester or academic year) Graduate Assistant, please contact the AVPAA—Faculty Affairs office.

[3] While student employees may work more than 0.5 time base, doing so will nullify the student employee tax exemption. Thus, it is in a student employee's interest to remain at/below the 20 hours/week "maximum." In addition, student employees should be considered students first and employees only as the employment fosters their educational goals. It is hard to reconcile heavier workloads with this commitment to their educational goals.

Note that "hours/week" is the anticipated *average* over the course of the semester. A GA should expect to put in more hours during exam-grading periods and less in some other weeks. The supervisor (and/or the department chair) responsible for hiring the student employees should provide a realistic estimate of the time required to do the tasks assigned to the GA and appoint them accordingly.

Teaching Associates

Most Teaching Associates will be hired into the 2354 classification code; in this classification, range 1 indicates a TA enrolled in a Masters degree-granting program and range 2 indicates a TA enrolled in a doctorate program. The salary schedule for a TA (2354, range 1) shows the following minimum and maximum salaries:

Minimum Rate	SSI Max Rate	Maximum Rate
2,212.00 M	.00 M	5,200.00 M
12.76 H	.00 H	30.00 H
26,544.00 A	.00 A	62,400.00 A

Teaching Associates will generally be hired for a certain number of Weighted Teaching Units (or WTU), as they are assigned as instructors of record and each course they are assigned will have WTU associated with it. In order to understand the base rates shown in the table above, in terms of WTU, consider the following: the base rates shown in the salary schedule assume a 1.0 time base (or 15 WTU).

Thus, the base rates in the salary schedule convert to WTU as follows:

Monthly Salary for TA @ different time base (in WTU)				
Base Rate/Month	1 WTU	2 WTU	4 WTU	8 WTU
$2,212	$147.47	$294.93	$589.87	$1,179.73
$3,401	$226.73	$453.47	$906.93	$1,813.87
$4,654	$310.27	$620.53	$1,241.07	$2,482.13

Teaching Associates will earn six months' worth of salary per semester appointment, thus, the rate for the course will be six times the monthly amount shown above.

SEMESTER Salary for TA @ different time base (in WTU)				
Base Rate/Month	1 WTU	2 WTU	4 WTU	8 WTU
$2,212	$884.82	$1,769.58	$3,539.22	$7078.38
$3,401	$1,360.38	$2,720.82	$5,441.58	$10,883.22
$4,654	$1,861.62	$3,723.18	$7,446.42	$14,892.78

Supervision and other Regulations

Both TAs and GAs are expected to work under the supervision of a faculty member. The supervisor is responsible for overseeing the work of the student employee (including attention to such issues as whether or not the GA or TA is performing all required duties in a satisfactory manner, as well as

serving as a mentor to the student employee with regards to such matters as appropriate grading standards, classroom management, avoidance of discrimination/bias towards students, etc.). At all times, the supervisor and the student must keep in mind that a student employee is to be a student first and foremost. Appointment as a GA or a TA should further, not hinder, a graduate student's training. For this reason, supervisors should pay attention to whether or not a student's employment is compatible with satisfactory progress in the degree program.

The supervisor of a GA or TA should be identified both on the Employee Transaction Form and in the appointment letter. Prior to beginning work, a GA or TA should be provided guidance from the supervisor on (at a minimum) the following topics:

- Assigned duties and responsibilities (including what is *not* within the student employee's purview).
- An estimated time frame for completing assigned duties (e.g., if grading a set of exams, the GA should understand how much time he or she is expected to spend on this task).
- Proper record-keeping (e.g., with respect to recording of grades).
- Confidentiality and FERPA training.
- Non-discrimination policy and policy prohibiting sexual harassment.
- [especially for TAs] classroom management.

The supervisor should have regular contact with the GA or TA and ensure that GA or TA is both monitored and guided throughout the term of the assignment.

How to Hire Student Employees

All Teaching Associates and Graduate Assistants are hired through the Temporary Faculty Module (in PeopleSoft). Thus, you follow the same procedures that you follow when hiring temporary faculty members: fill out an ETF that specifies the period of appointment, the base salary, and so forth, and send the hiring packet (through the usual "chain of command") to Human Resources. (Note that the hiring packet must include all of the necessary paperwork, including two letters of recommendation, the SU-6 (additional employment) form, and so forth. The only departure from the usual requirements is that CSULA students will not be required to submit official transcripts; in lieu of official transcripts, the hiring department should print verification of current enrollment in a degree-granting graduate program from GET.)