



RESEARCH ASSISTANTS: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES – AY 2020-2021

The purpose of the guidelines is to ensure that Research Assistants (RAs) are neither overworked nor underutilized and that the RA experience will be productive for both the faculty member and the student. As the first component of the department’s Mentored Teaching Program, the first-year research assistantship is designed to familiarize students with research skills that will be useful for their further work. While RAs are assigned, in part, to help the faculty member with ongoing projects, faculty should also actively mentor students, sharing with them wherever possible the methods and assumptions behind the task they are asked to do. RA hours are limited (see below); if a faculty member requires more assistance, s/he can use research or personal funds to hire an advanced student for the purpose. All logistical inquiries about graduate student payment should be addressed to the Graduate Administrator (GA).

SELECTION

During the summer preceding matriculation, incoming students will be matched with faculty. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or GA will send an email asking faculty if they need an RA for the Fall semester. They will be asked to indicate the nature of the project(s) they have in mind for the RA, as well as the timeframe for the advancement or completion of the work. The DGS and GA will then match students with faculty for that semester. The process will be repeated for the Spring semester. While faculty can ask that they continue with the same RA for two semesters, normally students will be assigned to another faculty member.

WORKLOAD

RAs should be asked to devote, on the average, no more than five hours per week, and they should only work up to the end of the 10th week of the semester. Faculty members should try to distribute the work evenly over the the-week period. RAs should under no circumstances be underutilized for weeks and then suddenly asked to do several weeks’ worth of work at once.

RAs may be asked to do library research, copy editing, fact-checking, or bibliographic work. Although it is appropriate to ask an RA to do some photocopying, this and other clerical tasks should be kept to a minimum.

EVALUATION

The faculty supervisor is required to send a written report (evaluation letter) on the RA’s work to the Graduate Committee at the end of each semester. This report forms part of the material the Graduate Committee reviews to evaluate each student’s progress in the program. Students can report their own experience in their annual self-assessment. Students wanting to report a concern or a grievance should contact the department chair.

By my signature, I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to the policies and procedures outlined in this document.

RA Name: _____ Faculty Member Name: _____

RA Signature: _____ Faculty Member Signature: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____