Notes about Award Offer Letters for Domestic Students:

All awards that originate from graduate school general funds — University Graduate Awards (GAS, UGA and/or GIA) — require that the student receiving the award be provided an offer letter each academic year the student receives the award (whether the student is new or returning).

This guide is tailored to domestic student letters. This guide is meant to assist you in drafting award offer letters.

Your department must meet the guidelines outlined here. Your department is free to use these templates the Graduate School has provided, which meet all guidelines. However, you may provide your own letter offering acceptance to new students to your graduate program as you see fit or you may add additional information, requirements or restrictions beyond those imposed by the graduate school. You may only need one of the following letters, depending on the kinds of awards your unit dispenses. We do not dictate letters for awards dispensed from funds originating from your own college or unit.

Prior to sending any offer letters to students, you should email Virginia Dennis, (Virginia.dennis@uc.edu) to notify her as to whether you are using the provided templates in their entirety or to provide her a copy of the modified template you will be using for each award type your department will be offering.

*** Note: Do not combine letters for tuition awards with letters for stipend awards, as this doing so may cause the tuition award to be seen by the IRS as taxable income to the student. ***

Items or Notes that Must be Included in the Admissions Offer Letter for Domestic Students:

1. You must identify the specific degree level (Masters or Doctoral) and field of study. Just stating the name of your program is not sufficient.
2. Please include the combined total worth of all awards provided by the university. The combined total worth will need to be in exact dollar amounts.
3. The student must be informed of the need to provide final, official transcripts sent to the Graduate School before classes begin (or ASAP after) and any required orientations or tests necessary for admission.

Guidelines for the Three Awards Types:

University Graduate Assistantship Appointment (UGA) Letter

1. The language to be used in the offer letter for a University Graduate Assistantship (UGA) needs to be "stipend" for clarity and accountability, as this is the term used by the State of Ohio. However, you may equate this term with a more suitable descriptor in the letter. In addition, for international students, you must identify the specific degree level (Masters or Doctoral) and field of study. Just stating the name of your program is not sufficient.
2. In describing the amount of the award, you must explicitly state the total worth of the stipend for the whole academic year in exact dollar amounts, with the per semester amount following this in
parentheses. You must also note that it will be paid in bi-weekly increments throughout the semester. Then you should give the amount the student will receive each bi-weekly pay period. **University Graduate Assistants must receive an award that equates to a minimum hourly rate of $14.93 per hour.** If you have questions about how to ensure this rate is met with the stipend amount, contact your College’s Business Office.

3. Assistantship responsibilities need to be detailed. There is a new sentence that clarifies the position is part-time and thus comes with no additional benefits (sick leave, vacation or retirement benefit).

4. A graduate assistant (teaching, research or administrative) receives a stipend that obligates the awardee to no more than 20 hours per week of services (50% FTE). If the award is less than 50% FTE, the awardee obligation is prorated (i.e. 10 hours for 25% FTE). Domestic students cannot work more than 24 hours/week while school is in session.

5. Continuation of the award is based on the awardee maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or above. Graduate Assistants are required to enroll for a minimum of 12 graduate credit hours.

6. **You should also inform them about mandatory assistantship orientations they must attend.**

7. Language in fifth paragraph in the template **about the IRS needs to remain as written in the template.**

8. Reminder – Students who have attempted 174 semester hours (or 140 if holding a master’s degree from another institution) are not eligible for a university award enrollment beginning with the semester in which said student will reach the 174 (or 140) attempted hours.

9. Last paragraph – “Please indicate your acceptance of this offer of support …”. Per **Council of Graduate School resolution**, your deadline for response should not be sooner than **April 15** for Fall applicants. The returned signed letter is the student’s acceptance.

10. The returned letters do not need to be sent to the Graduate School for review.

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**Graduate Assistant Scholarship (GAS) Appointment Letter**

1. A Graduate Assistant Scholarship (GAS) is only for students who are graduate assistants (with a UGA). The award covers all or part of a graduate assistant’s tuition and general fees.

2. **You must identify the specific degree level (Masters or Doctoral) and field of study.** Just stating the name of your program is not sufficient.

3. In addition, **include the exact worth of the scholarship in actual dollar amounts (including any fees that are covered) and expressly state any fees that are not covered and the cost of the fees that must be paid by the student.**

4. Programs should detail what the tuition scholarship does (credit hour range and general fees) and does not cover (i.e. ITIE fee, student health insurance, program fees). **Please note the tuition award can cover any fees other than the ITIE fee. The colleges have the option to cover no fees, all fees (except ITIE), or some of the fees.**

5. Continuation of the GAS award is based on the awardee maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or above. The program may stipulate higher GPA requirements.

6. Because the students are graduate assistants, and therefore receiving a University Graduate Assistantship, they are required to enroll for a minimum of 12 graduate credit hours. **NOTE:** Students funded by outside grants (the funding is not provided by the Graduate School or the University) do not need 12 credit hours.

7. Reminder – Students who have attempted 174 semester hours (or 140 if holding a master’s degree from another institution) are not eligible for a university award enrollment beginning with the semester in which said student will reach the 174 (or 140) attempted hours.
Guidelines for Award Offer Letters for Domestic Graduate Students

8. Last paragraph – “Please indicate your acceptance of this offer of support ...”. Per Council of Graduate School resolution, your deadline for response should not be sooner than April 15 for Fall applicants. The returned signed letter is the student’s acceptance.

9. The returned letters do not need to be sent to the Graduate School for review.

University Graduate Incentive Award (GIA) Letter

1. A University Graduate Incentive Award (GIA) is for students who are not graduate assistants. You must identify the specific degree level (Masters or Doctoral) and field of study. Just stating the name of your program is not sufficient.

2. Additionally, because the award is for students who are not graduate assistants, no service is required in return for the award.

3. The award covers all or part of a graduate assistant’s tuition and general fees. Programs should detail what the tuition scholarship does (credit hour range and general fees) and does not cover (i.e. ITIE fee, student health insurance, program fees). Please note the tuition award can cover any fees other than the ITIE fee. The colleges have the option to cover no fees, all fees (except ITIE), or some of the fees. Include the exact worth of the scholarship in actual dollar amounts (including any fees that are covered) and expressly state any fees that are not covered and the cost of the fees that must be paid by the student.

4. Continuation of the GIA award is based on the awardee maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or above. The program may stipulate higher GPA requirements.

5. Domestic students receiving Graduate Incentive Awards are required to enroll for a minimum of 1 graduate credit hour in the term of the award.

6. Reminder – Students who have attempted 174 semester hours (or 140 if holding a master’s degree from another institution) are not eligible for a university award enrollment beginning with the semester in which said student will reach the 174 (or 140) attempted hours.

7. Last paragraph – “Please indicate your acceptance of this offer of support ...”. Per Council of Graduate School resolution, your deadline for response should not be sooner than April 15 for Fall applicants. The returned signed letter is the student’s acceptance.

8. The returned letters do not need to be sent to the Graduate School for review.