Guidelines for Award Offer Letters for Domestic Graduate Students

Most of the requirements outlined below will be found in the Graduate Handbook.

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).

Your department must meet the guidelines outlined here. Your department is free to use the 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 within your own college or unit.

Prior to sending any offer letters to students, you should email Colleen O’Connell (colleen.oconnell@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 as taxable income to the student. ***

University Graduate Assistantship (UGA) Appointment 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.

2. In describing the amount of the award, you must explicitly state the amount that is paid over each semester and the full year. Then you should give the amount the student will receive each bi-weekly pay period or the hourly rate this equates to. Graduates Assistants must receive an award that equates to a minimum hourly rate of $14.93 per hour.

3. Assistantship responsibilities need to be detailed.

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).

5. Continuation of the award is based on the awardee maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or above.

6. Graduate Assistants are required to enroll for a minimum of 12 graduate credit hours.

7. Language in fourth 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 (…)”. You may include a deadline for response of April 15 or later for Fall applicants (per Council of Graduate School resolution). 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.
Guidelines for Award Offer Letters for Domestic Graduate Students

Graduate Assistant Scholarship (GAS) Appointment Letter

1. A Graduate Assistant Scholarship is only for students who are graduate assistants. 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.
2. 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.
3. Because the students are graduate assistants, and therefore receiving a University Graduate Assistantship (UGA), they are required to enroll for a minimum of 12 graduate credit hours. NOTE: Students funded by outside grants (and the funding is therefore not provided by the Graduate School or the University) do not need 12 credit hours. Be aware of special requirements for international students.
4. 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.
5. Last paragraph – “To accept the offer, please sign and return this letter <<date>>”. You may include a deadline for response of April 15 or later for Fall applicants (per Council of Graduate School resolution). The returned signed letter is the student’s acceptance.
6. 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. 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.
2. Additionally, because the award is for students who are not graduate assistants, no service is required in return for the award.
3. 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.
4. Students receiving Graduate Incentive Awards are required to enroll for a minimum of 10 graduate credit hours.
5. 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.
6. Last paragraph – “To accept the offer, please sign and return this letter <<date>>”. You may include a deadline for response of April 15 or later for Fall applicants (per Council of Graduate School resolution). The returned signed letter is the student’s acceptance.
7. The returned letters do not need to be sent to the Graduate School for review.