

Graduate Students' Guidebook to Graduate, Research, and Teaching Assistantships at CU-Boulder



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Compiler's Note

This guidebook was conceptualized and developed as part of the requirements for the Center of Teaching & Learning's (or CTL) Lead Fellowship. CTL Leads serve for a full academic year, helping their graduate peers achieve CTL certifications and engage in reflective pedagogical practice through Video Teacher Consultation (VTC) cycles. The culminating work of CTL Leads is their "Legacy Project," which may take any number of forms and functions. A legacy project may occur at the level of an individual department, college, or the university as a whole. As the name suggests, the primary purpose is to leave behind a process or product that has a positive impact in CU-Boulder's scholarly and student communities as well as advancing CTL's goals for pedagogical excellence and innovation.

Acting on the encouragement of Dr. Preston Cumming, Professional Development Lead from the CTL; Dr. Jill Heydt-Stevenson, Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) from the Department of English; and Dr. Teresa Nugent, Professor from the English Department; I've composed a guidebook for graduate students on how to be successful in possible assistantships: graduate, research, and teaching (hereafter GA/RA/TAships). The meaning of "success" is undeniably idiosyncratic, yet the vision that informs this guidebook is to empower and aid graduate students to find their own initial or continuing success in assistantship placements.

The people who contributed to the guidebook, including myself, are currently enrolled or recently graduated students from the English Department. They have agreed to share their knowledge on how to navigate varying avenues for financial support and develop their skills in research and teaching at CU-Boulder. As first-generation, self-funded, or protected-class students ourselves, we recognize that there is no perfect road map or guide that ensures funding or financial security via assistantships. However, it is our hope that this guidebook is a resource to help you on your own way and to feel confident and capable in whatever assistantship you hold. Utilize, cannibalize, and modify this document as you see fit, and do not forget to lean on the support of your department's faculty and staff. Never stop asking questions, giving voice to your concerns, and asserting the value of your presence.

While I compiled the contents of this guidebook, this document is the result of collaborative labor, encouragement, and shared resources. I especially thank faculty, staff, and graduate peers from my own department (English) and the office staff of other departments in the Humanities and Sciences. This is one great step, among many, for intersectional collaboration.

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Note on Terminology

In order to provide the most clarity when consulting this guidebook, I have included a list of terms, acronyms, and alphabetism used herein. The guidebook does introduce the terms in their entirety with their corresponding acronym/alphabetism as they are initially used. Many department staff, faculty, and graduate students likely know and utilize these terms, but it is important never to presuppose familiarity. Therefore, this “Note on Terminology” provides support to those who are new to CU-Boulder’s academic nomenclature.

BA - Bachelor of Arts

Bloom’s - Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning (pedagogy tool that theorizes and organizes learning by rigor levels)

CCT - Certificate in College Teaching (grad. certificate offered by CTL)

CTL - the Center for Teaching and Learning

CTL GPTI Lead - Center for Teaching and Learning Graduate Part-Time Instructor Lead Fellow (English Dept. PhD student/candidate representative)

CTL Lit. Lead - Center for Teaching and Learning Literature Lead Fellow (English Dept. MA representative)

CTL Mentor - Center for Teaching and Learning Faculty Mentor (faculty member from your home department who helps you with your CTL Legacy Project)

CTL MFA Lead - Center for Teaching and Learning Master of Fine Arts Lead Fellow (English dept. MFA representative)

CV - Curriculum Vitae (academic resume, literal meaning: “course of (one's) life”)

DGS - Director of Graduate Studies (English dept. admin. faculty position)

FFD - Future Faculty Development Certificate (grad. certificate offered by CTL)

GA/GA-ship - Graduate Assistant/Graduate Assistantship

GPF - Graduate Program Facilitator (English dept. staff position)

GPTI - Graduate Part-time Instructor (PhD students/candidate instructors)

GSH - Graduate Student Handbook

GTTC - Graduate Teacher Training Committee (English Dept. faculty committee)

LA - Learning Assistant (undergraduate teacher assistant at CU-Boulder)

MA - Master of Arts

MFO - Manager of Finance and Operations (English Dept. staff position)

RA/RA-ship - Research Assistant/Research Assistantship

TA/TA-ship - Teaching Assistant/Teaching Assistantship

VTC - Video Teacher Consultation (CTL reflective teaching procedure)

Webb’s/DOK - Norman Webb’s Depth of Knowledge Framework (helpful tool of pedagogy that organizes learning by rigor levels)

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Introduction

What's the Need?

It can be a wild, difficult world out there for graduate students seeking to fund their education and cover living expenses while attending graduate school. It's no secret that graduate school tuition in the United States is expensive (and only rising). This guidebook aims to address systemic obstacles. In particular, monetary barriers prevent or dissuade those who are eager to seek an advanced degree even with the availability of student loans, competitive scholarships, grants, and work study opportunities. The hope is that, by contending with financial obstacles, the guidebook can provide space for faculty and department staff to address other key factors that hamper graduate student experiences such as academic isolationism and imposter syndrome (which I don't see as being necessarily mutually exclusive).

Graduate students are experiencing the stressors of the previously mentioned systemic obstacles concurrently with the Humanities' new realities of funding cuts, which contribute to a compounded suffering felt by both individuals and institutions. Funding cuts also affect the number of opportunities for research and pedagogical training. This guidebook is precisely aimed at that compounded suffering and seeks to provide some measure of relief by helping graduate students successfully navigate funding concerns. I must also note that this guidebook is not a "quick fix" that transfers the burden of adaptability and change onto graduate students in lieu of systematic review and change. Those discussions and movements towards change must and should take place. Instead, the motivations for this document-process are to provide support for graduate students now (and likely in the foreseeable future). With these realities in mind, the primary objective of this guidebook is to initiate essential conversations: 1) between graduate students and the faculty they might work with, 2) between graduate students with varying teaching and graduate school experiences, and 3) between faculty and staff at the department level in order to discuss how to support their graduate students. The importance of these conversations is to address difficult topics such as those mentioned above. The objective is based on the understanding that one never has to suffer alone and in silence, and my general faith that collaboration, communication, and support are key aspects that make the academic community great.

The research traditions of different fields and colleges make interdisciplinary conversations difficult when it comes to reaching consensus and actionable collaboration on assistantships and supporting graduate students. A research assistantship for a Biology graduate student may involve considerable laboratory hours, whereas an English student combs special collections or feverishly consults an archive. I must note that this guidebook was initially conceptualized for MA students from the English Department in order to help them secure teaching or research experiences and sources of funding. However, I invite other faculty, administrators, and graduate students across departments and colleges at CU-Boulder to utilize

and modify this guidebook to meet their needs. While it may be too early for those interdisciplinary conversations, I identify this as beneficial future work for any department or CTL Lead hoping to leave a legacy of support for graduate students. The only way to bring about change is to have and maintain conversations such as those promoted by this guidebook.

While the Graduate Student Handbook (GSH) is readily available for consultation, the information available on assistantships is procedural and limited in focus. I don't seek to diminish the GSH or other supports like CTL's TA/Instructor Agreements (link [here](#)). They are well-intended resources and helpful places to start, but the guidance offered does not extend beyond the initial phases of holding an assistantship. Furthermore, it does not reflect a bottom-up perspective from the standpoint of graduate students. In other words, it lacks the voice and presence of graduate students who have much insight to offer in terms of their lived experiences going through their own processes to achieve funding and their own professional development. It is with these gaps in mind that this student-informed guidebook can be a catalyst for further conversations that involve graduate students in university and department policies.

What's the Solution?

The guidebook is organized into research and resources gathered from lived experiences. Firstly, the research component (See: Section #1: "Tips and Expectations") contains survey results gathered from questionnaires targeted at three different audiences: department staff, faculty, and graduate students. In the results, the expectations and tips offered are as varied as they are polyvocal (See below: "Research Methodology"), yet they will give you a sense of the wide range of expectations held by faculty or department offices as well as graduate students' experiences. Following the research component is a trove of documents/templates for the various stages of participating in an assistantship (See below: Section #2: "Documents/Templates"). There are example CVs and cover letters for applying to assistantship openings, lesson plan templates for planning potential hands-on instruction opportunities, and guided questionnaires crafted to initiate collaborative conversations with one's mentor professor. The contents of the guidebook are by no means comprehensive, rather it is the hope that this document will remain a living document, a process that is constantly evolving, growing and shrinking to meet the needs of graduate students who come to CU Boulder to better themselves intellectually and professionally.

Research Methodology

This guidebook reflects a community of diverse experiences and desires, and thus it is necessary to involve this community of department offices, faculty, and graduate students in the guidebook's compilation. Without the community's involvement, it would be a resource that did not directly serve the interests of community members, becoming another top-down resource.

Therefore, the first phase of this CTL Legacy Project has involved research using questionnaires that targeted department offices, faculty, and graduate students. In October 2022, I met with the English Department’s DGS, Dr. Jill Heydt-Stevenson; Graduate Program Coordinator, Rachel Canning; Manager of Finance and Operations (MFO), Holly Woodsome Sroymalai; and my CTL Mentor, Dr. Teresa Nugent as a committee to determine thematic questions that would shed light on the directions needed for the guidebook in order to serve the community such as what documents or resources to include. For example, the survey questions not only inquire about expectations and the hypothetical profile of a successful graduate assistant, but they also allow space for questions, concerns, and comments for improvement by all parties involved (See below: “Tips & Expectations”).

With the committee of individuals referenced above, we then determined that a targeted list of specific department offices, faculty members, and graduate students was warranted rather than a blanket email in order to gather relevant information. The criteria for relevance was based on which non-English department offices had appointed MA graduate students to assistantships between 2020 and 2022, which English and non-English faculty members who had worked with MA graduate students in assistantships between 2020 and 2022, and which graduate students themselves held the assistantships between 2020 and 2022. The ensuing list we developed figured 6 department offices (2 Sciences and 4 Humanities), 14 faculty members (including 5 English faculty), and 10 graduate students (3 graduated and 7 currently enrolled). The surveys were sent out to these targeted audiences via Google Forms, and the respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires from the middle to the end of October 2022. Even after this window ended, I was able to generate a number of responses through follow-up communication in January and February 2023. The response rates for the following targeted audiences were:

Department Offices	50% (3/6)
Faculty Members	50% (7/14)
Graduate Students	60% (6/10)

With the raw survey results in hand, I deliberated with my CTL Mentor on how to best present the information in this guidebook. I played around with word clouds, frequency charts, and keyword graphs. Ultimately, I felt that the results should be unabridged so as to not alter the voice of the community members who have participated or eliminate the valuable contextual information available in the responses themselves. Therefore, the full results you see below in the “Section #1: Tips & Expectations” are available for your reading. You may notice that a number of respondent results were not included for a given question, and this is due to these particular responses not adding valuable information (i.e response of “no,” or “I don’t know”).

This guidebook’s rough draft phase was completed in February 2023, and it underwent a feedback and revision session with department office staff, faculty, and graduate students.

How to Use the Guidebook

What I hope to signal, in my over usage of “conversation” and “dialogue” above, is how this guidebook may be used as an interactive process (rather than simply a product) for graduate students, faculty, and department offices. Below are suggestions for how this guidebook may be deployed in reflective conversation at various levels as well as between them.

Departments

At the department level, the guidebook’s research component can be used by department office staff, directors of graduate study, or pedagogy-based faculty committees in order to discuss assistantship appointment and pedagogical support. Consider your own questionnaire that could address questions from faculty and graduate students. Alternatively, what are current official spaces/committees that could review the guidebook? For example, I know in the English Department we have the Graduate Teacher Training Committee (GTTC) that meets to discuss the pedagogical development of graduate instructors and TAs. What this exactly entails is as varied as the number of individuals in the room. However, the sort of discussions promoted by the guidebook make individual stances more transparent in order to work towards reaching constructive consensus. Furthermore, departments that routinely run their own informal pedagogy seminar could incorporate the guidebook into a workshop session or use the questionnaires strategically at the seminar’s beginning or end. The guidebook can be used as a supplementary resource alongside existing supports such as the GSH, pedagogy community Canvas pages, CTL’s TA/Instructor Agreements (link [here](#)) or teaching resources page (link [here](#)). Also, consider how this guidebook may be embedded into existing structures. For instance, it could be used during Fall Orientation or it can be available on a department website for current faculty and graduate students. This would also provide aid to incoming graduate students with pedagogy or assistantship questions. Even more directly, this guidebook can be sent to faculty when they find out their assistantship appointments. Since this document is living and community-based, it will be necessary for department staff, graduate students, or future CTL Leads to update it every few years, adding new examples of student documents and peer-generated resources (see “Update Log”).

Faculty

At the faculty level, this guidebook serves as an on-going tool when working with a graduate student in an assistantship. Faculty will be able to utilize the research component to consider their own stance on expectations as well as understand concerns and questions from the perspective of graduate students going into assistantship work. Ideally, faculty members would be familiar with the resources (i.e. first-meeting questionnaire, assessment calibration,

mid-semester questionnaire, etc) and encourage their use by GA/RA/TAs. For faculty who teach a pedagogy-specific course, consider using this guidebook as a tool or topic of conversation.

Graduate Students

At the graduate student level, this guidebook is your sandbox. Consult the research sections in order to learn from previous graduate students as well as see what faculty and department office staff are looking for in assistantships. Use the documents and template as provided by printing them out or directly typing into them. Alternatively, modify them or only use what meets your own needs. Most importantly, I suggest that you let your mentor professor know about the guidebook and have conversations about what guidance, support, and challenges you hope to receive. The legacy of this document also lives on in you. Recommend it to your peers if you find it helpful, especially to your first-year graduate student peers.

Future CTL Leads

I wanted to provide space and a few words to directly address future CTL Leads in the English Department because this project was just the start of possible future work. Since this is a community document, it requires renewal in order to remain relevant for future cohorts. Therefore, if you do not have a particular project you are interested in, consider retracing the steps here and do them much better. I wish I would have involved our faculty on the GTTC with this process because it would have made for a collaborative project between faculty and graduate students. I think a fruitful next step entails bringing this guidebook into established structures such as Fall Orientation, the informal English pedagogy seminar in the fall, and English teaching graduate course in the spring. Perhaps there are better and more timely questions to consider now compared to those in the questionnaires.

Alternatively, this is a reminder that future CTL Leads are not required to take up the work involved with the guidebook. Follow what emboldens or excites you. I hope that this guidebook serves as a helpful resource that you can share with your peers.

Section #1: Tips & Expectation from Questionnaires

Graduate Students

These tips and expectations come from a targeted Google Form survey sent in Fall semester of 2022. This form was sent to MA graduate students who have served in a GA/RA/TA-ship in humanities and sciences departments at CU-Boulder between 2020 and 2022. The responses to the questionnaire are below.

If you have worked as a GA/RA/TA, could you explain what department/program you worked in? What were your duties?
<p>Student #1 I have worked as a TA in the English department for Shakespeare (SP21) and Comics (FA21, SUM22) and worked as a GA for Advertising (et. al) department (SP22). Each of these positions required me to moderate discussions, grade student responses, follow along in the readings, and meet regularly with the course instructors. For the TAships, I also attended classes, held weekly office hours, and collaborated with the professors in class planning. My SP21 Shakespeare TA position was the only one in which I led recitations (two per week), but in the FA22 Comics course I regularly moderated small group discussions and ran the Comics Lab.</p>
<p>Student #2 I worked within ENGL 2006 - Americans Comics and Graphic Novels. Most class meetings, each TA and LA led small group discussion sessions for 15-25 minutes. We TAs were also responsible for grading all student work, and we had grade calibration meetings with the professor. TAs and LAs met with the professor weekly to discuss strategies and plan for the upcoming week.</p>
<p>Student #3 WGST, grading, lecture when I want to</p>
<p>Student #4 During my time at CU Boulder I served as a TA in fall 2020 and fall 2021 in the English course "American Comics and Graphic Novels," facilitated an online offering of the same course in summer 2021, and worked as an RA doing course and textbook development in spring 2022. My duties included reading the course materials along with students, facilitating in-class discussion (in fall of 2020 as a recitation leader, in summer 2021 in online discussion boards, and in fall of 2021 in small-group discussions during lecture), grading and providing feedback on assignments (both written and creative), and holding regular office hours. As I continued to work with the course instructor, I was increasingly involved in syllabus and assignment design, and as an RA I worked both on the course textbook (editing, organization, reviewing other scholarly work on the subject) and on a Massive Open Online Course (laying out organization, establishing learning objectives, editing video transcripts).</p>

Student #5

English Department. My duties included grading student work, leading class, and holding office/student hours once a week.

Student #6

I have had 3:

HIST + CEES 1623 (Spring 2022)

-Primarily Graded Essays and Held Office Hours

ENGL 2006 (Fall 2022)

-Graded frequently, posted comments on student's work, designed and presented lectures to 88 student class

HIST 1012 (Spring 2023)

-Primarily Graded Essays and Held Office Hours

How did you make the case for yourself as an effective GA/RA/TA candidate either in- or out-of-department?

Student #1

My Shakespeare TAship I got just by applying for consideration, but I think it helped that they knew I needed to cover out-of-state tuition. I followed up with the Graduate Assistant and asked lots of questions, which probably helped her to keep me in mind when they were extending offers. For comics I was actually requested as a secondary TA at the last minute because of class size, and again in the summer because the usual TA had a conflict with the course schedule. I had taken a class with the comics professor before and did very well, so I'm sure that helped my chances.

For the GAship I reached out to the instructor after receiving a job announcement from the Graduate Assistant. I was hired for a few reasons: 1) I used my application email as an abbreviated cover letter, introducing myself, my relevant experience, and my interest/investment in the subject. I also preliminarily indicated my schedule/availability in this email so that the instructor could evaluate me more quickly; 2) Being an English major scores you major points with feedback-focused GAships; 3) I was only taking one other class in addition to thesis hours, so I had more time flexibility; 4) I had prior grading experience. In hindsight, it probably also helped that I was hired in the first week of the semester, so they were in a bit of a bind and didn't have many options. Some of these factors are chance, some are qualification, some are how you market yourself.

Student #2

Does this question refer to my application to be a TA? If so, I explained my background in English education (undergraduate major, practicum, etc.) and made a strong case for the transfer of that skillset to this environment. I believe I described my teaching philosophy in brief, being one of student-centeredness that emphasizes connection among their various knowledges to build greater understanding for all.

Student #3

I did an interview, but I had done grading before which is what they were looking for

Student #4

I actually got my first TA assignment by chance - the TA position I'd been offered in the Humanities Department as a part of my funding package fell through and the English department offered me the recitation leader position as a substitute. In my subsequent appointments, I indicated my prior experience in the biannual TA/RA application and I believe the course instructor requested my reappointment when the course was offered again. For the RA position, the faculty member and I worked together to establish the necessity, duties, and goals of my position to present it for funding to the English department.

Student #5

I completed the form provided by the grad program coordinator. Apparently, some went above that and included a letter of application. I only did the CV and general listing of skills.

Student #6

In the English department, I simply filled out the Google Form and listed my experience guest teaching and research interest.

As for the History department, I networked with a former English student who had gotten TA appointments in the History department and made an introduction with the coordinator for the department. (For HIST it took a lot more persistence on my part to ensure I had those two positions.)

If you have been a GA/RA/TA, how have you managed the workload and your studies? Alternatively, if you're new as a GA/RA/TA, what concerns or questions do you have about time management in this regard?

Student #1

It can be tough. I would generally do all of my grading over the weekend and try to keep it from invading the workweek. This is partially because you have to crunch the turnaround time for your reading and don't want any residual drains on your time, and it's also because you need to set very strict boundaries for your grading time. Ideally, if you know you have very limited time, you won't spend as long grading each essay. Also, it's really important to communicate both your workload and your progress with the instructor so that, if necessary, they can adjust students' expectations for grading timelines as well as their own.

Your studies are your priority, but how you do your assistantship can also affect the work of a lot of other people, so you can't be too disproportionate in your attentions to either.

Student #2

The class time obligation is not bad with a 6 grad hour semester, and I don't think it would be terrible with 9 hours. I don't spend more than an hour planning for teaching sessions during the week. Grading exams and other assignments takes quite a while, as we had just shy of 30 students each. That takes upwards of 20 hours across about two weeks. So far, operating on the basis that I will work from 8-5, I have had no trouble balancing my work and life.

Student #3

My instructor is great! But with grading I do bunches of 10 every night until it's done. If I'm lecturing, I prepare at least a week in advance so I have time to revisit and get comfortable with the material.

Student #4

It was definitely a struggle to balance my TA responsibilities with my own coursework. While I got into a good rhythm of weekly course preparation (especially aided by weekly teaching team meetings in fall 2021), grading often entailed a large volume of work over a short span of time. I worked with the course instructor on efficient and equitable grading strategies and did my best to schedule coursework and research deadlines (e.g. presentations, papers) around TA exams and essay due dates, when I could anticipate a heavy grading workload.

Student #5

Managing my TA responsibilities and studies was not that difficult. A lot of it was just making a schedule after the first week or so of the semester and being sincere with how much time things would take and being committed to sticking to my routines and habits.

Student #6

Making an outline of my weeks has helped me. I try to compartmentalize days where my focus is entirely on my studies, as well as days that are entirely focused on TA duties. Additionally, I make ongoing To-Do lists that break up my responsibilities, often in three sections: Work, School, Personal. This helps me to prioritize and get everything I need to complete visibly down on paper which, personally, makes me feel more in control of everything I need to complete.

What effective strategies/experiences/skills have you gained as a result of working as a GA/RA/TA? Please list your specific experiences in your position(s) such as: instances of plagiarism, guest lecturing, creating assessments, feelings of being overworked, leading discussions, grading student papers and providing feedback, etc. Please highlight what is positive and negative for graduate students going into these positions.

Student #1

I had to learn a few things about lecturing for both Shakespeare and Comics. For the former, I had to lesson plan for recitations that we held over Zoom, so I had to figure out how to keep students engaged and get them to participate without in-person advantages or even subject expertise. The Learning Assistants helped a lot with this, and we mostly found that distanced learning provides lots of options for simultaneous cooperation between several individuals (e.g., I would have one take attendance, another set up break out rooms, another create shared forms and documents) as well as easier access to shared resources. We used the chat function to take notes as a group, count participation, comment on the discussion, etc. We also used Zoom to watch film adaptations with optional movie nights and conduct close reading practice with weekly reading groups. These were easier to conduct and manage on a digital platform. For Comics, I presented a minilecture on the creative project, for which I had to evaluate what the students generally needed to know from what I had seen in both their class performance

and their coursework. This allowed me to bring some of my own expertise to the course under the guidance of a pre-structured context. Lecturing has a lot more to do with conversational skill and public speaking skill, I would say, in that you aren't as one-sidedly trying to get your audience to meet you where you are at, but you constantly evaluate verbal and non-verbal feedback and frequently need to adapt or improvise your lecture. However, the interactive element can also make it easier.

For grading and creating assignments, you should always ask yourself: What is the purpose/intended outcome of this assignment? Am I clear on what I am asking for? Are my expectations reasonable considering students' demonstrated proficiency at this point in the course? What does this assignment teach them about the topic, and how does it help me to evaluate their work? Thinking about assignments in terms of their utility can help you to be more fair in your grading and will likely help you to keep from giving them too much homework. Remember also that in giving feedback the student will likely get overwhelmed with too much critique, so try to stick to the three most important points of improvement they need to make. Introduce your feedback with affirmation on what the student has done well and conclude with a positive redirection on where they need to direct their efforts. You should also always ask the instructor if they have a rubric, even if you know they don't. Some may steer away from rubrics for their rigidity, but unconsciously still have specific expectations for students. It will save you time in the long run to hash this out with the instructor and it will also spare the students a lot of confusion. Remember that nonmajors especially need some sort of grounding reference for what the field requires from them, so make sure there is a rubric available even if you don't stick to it.

Burnout and overwork are very easy. Especially in positions that work with students, you will be tempted to pour your time and energy into a role where your impact is more obvious. Assistant work is endless but it also feels much more like you are making a difference than just reading books and writing papers. However, it's a blackhole. There's always more you can do to support students, or to prepare for class, or to make course improvements. You need to budget the time you can spend on this, and you need to prioritize your own academic performance. Sometimes this looks like going to bed at a reasonable time and getting grades in later than you planned. Sometimes it means changing around your office hours. In every case, it always means communicating clearly with the instructor regarding your time and energy constraints. If you find yourself burning out you may not always be able to fix it, but very rarely will there be no way to improve the situation.

Also, go to therapy. You get like 20 free CAPS sessions with a TAsip (but only during the semester of the appointment), so use them.

Student #2

Getting to know students helps. My small group started mostly silent, but they have been opening up as the semester progresses. They smile when I wave and say hi, and we close discussions with casual conversation, making the environment comfortable, I think. Grade calibration meetings have been a great idea and helped my confidence in grading tremendously. I have enjoyed learning from the other TAs and LAs and using some of their strategies in my groups; I think every TA should have that opportunity.

The experience of lecturing has been really fun. The students are really engaged and it's so nice to see them connect with material. I haven't felt overworked, honestly it's been a great arrangement so far!

Student #3

The experience of lecturing has been really fun. The students are really engaged and it's so nice to see them connect with material. I haven't felt overworked, honestly it's been a great arrangement so far!

Student #4

This is a very broad question! I think I benefited enormously from my experience as a TA, especially with regard to building confidence in the classroom and testing out what works (e.g. requesting that students prepare a small but concrete deliverable in preparation for the next class, like a written question or a quote to analyze) and what doesn't work as well (e.g. judging the success of a lesson based on whether students arrived at some predetermined "right answer"). One element of teaching that has remained a struggle for me has been assessing student work, in terms of managing my own time and process, in terms of providing effective feedback, and in terms of establishing clear and equitable measures for written and creative assignments. Although this is a skill I think all instructors continue to hone with experience, serving as a TA offers the unique opportunity of discussing assessment strategies and philosophy with an experienced faculty member.

Student #5

I don't think there were any negatives from my TA experience. The positives were collaborating with a professor on pedagogy for guest lecturing and grading student work. My professor was also brilliant at assessing students' writing and thinking through creative assignments that had students make very thoughtful arguments all under the guise of being creative decision makers such as actors or directors.

Student #6

TA appointments are a mixed bag. I've had really rewarding experiences and really challenging experiences.

The rewarding experiences that come to mind are when students attend office hours and clearly show their motivation to succeed in your class. Additionally, when guest lecturing and students are engaged and ask questions. Creating guest lectures can be tricky, but working closely with your professor to make sure your efforts are a seamless extension of their class trajectory is ideal.

Fortunately, I had relatively few negative experiences as a TA. As a general rule, I tried very hard to keep a healthy distance from the students. First, I didn't want to be too available to them (preserving my own sanity), but I did ensure I had scheduled times, that they were aware of, when I could be reached. Additionally, it is very important to remember that the students are responsible for their grades -- not you. It's a balancing act, but my thought is that, as much as you want the students to succeed, they have to put in the effort and earn their grades. At the same time, have grace in giving your students the chance to succeed is important. I try to remember who I was at 18-22 and consider what would have been the most useful form of support.

One specific negative experience I'd be remiss not to mention: When TAing for the ENGL

Comics & Graphic Novels class, I had a student that submitted a final comic project that insensitively dealt with extreme violence, issues of consent, victim blaming, and murder. I was alarmed, alerted the professor (who advised me to respond honestly), and responded with suggestions to edit this piece. To be clear, I am not interested in censoring a student's work, but this was a very specific example that was cause for concern. Unfortunately, the student did not respond well to my suggestions and became very defensive which led to a conversation with the student, myself, and the professor to resolve. The meeting was very challenging and the student dug their heels in and refused to hear any suggestions. Fortunately, after a few days, the student came around and sent a very redemptive email apologizing. This experience taught me to ask more questions. In the future, instead of offering suggestions on a questionable piece or making a judgement call through written comments right away, I will schedule a meeting with the student to ask them about their intent. From there, I will make verbal suggestions to them and let them know how I read the piece. This would have been a more productive approach.

What strategies/practices/tips do you wish you had known at the start of your GA/RA/TA-ship?

Student #1

The students don't see each others' feedback; where applicable, it's okay to copy and paste.

Student #2

I would have liked to know the manner of my in-class responsibility. I had assumed that I was going to have more latitude in teaching style with my own discussions section, so this semester has been far more hands-off and limited than I anticipated. It's not been a bad experience, but different than I anticipated.

Student #3

Take the instructors up on teaching opportunities!

Student #4

In spring of 2021 I took the English Department's "Special Topics in Teaching" practicum course, and there I learned so much that I wish I'd known at the start of the prior semester of teaching. One extremely helpful practice I developed was activity-based lesson planning, with clear and attainable objectives for each class period building into a larger arc for the course as a whole. But perhaps the most important thing I learned was that as an instructor, and especially as a TA, it's not my job to have all the answers, but rather to facilitate students coming to answers of their own.

Student #5

I don't have anything I wish I knew at the start. I felt prepared with the Pedagogy Seminar offered.

Student #6

See above answer with example to specific case.

Otherwise, I wish I used the class "People" tab in Canvas more to put faces to names more

quickly.

Any final tips for prospective or initial GA/RA/TAs? Any questions you would like to ask about GA/RA/TA-ships?

Student #1

Whether or not you end up hitting it off, the instructor you work under is a valuable resource. In my experience, they have been a good source of support, advice, and pedagogical mentorship. Talk with them, get to know how and why their teaching developed the way it did. Also, not all courses are set in stone, so if you see something that doesn't work or that could be more efficient, it might be a good idea to (diplomatically) point it out. You will have to judge whether or not input will be well received, but every one of my appointments resulted in very collaborative course construction.

Student #2

Communication is key; always ensure that you, your professor, and any other TAs are on the same wavelength. Recognize your budding expertise and have confidence in yourself, and recognize that confidence in your knowledge and ability does not preclude being a learner alongside your students. As often as you can, bring genuine excitement and interest into your work.

Student #4

I will say that I believe my TA experience was atypical for CU Boulder's English department, but the piece of advice I would offer to current and prospective TA/RAs is to take full advantage of this opportunity for one-on-one work with a faculty member. Do not hesitate to ask for advice or make suggestions, and if possible set up regular standing meetings with the professor you work with - not only can this enhance your work experience (and potentially lead to future opportunities), but it can also develop into an incredibly meaningful mentoring relationship.

Student #5

Work with your professor! Take notes during class so that you provide a good model for the rest of the students.

Student #6

Only to remember that being a TA is a class in itself and you have a fantastic opportunity to learn how to teach in a safe space. Use your professor, volunteer to do lectures, and get the absolute most you can out of the appointment -- experience like this can't be replaced with theoretical study, so jump into it fully.

Faculty

These tips and expectations come from a targeted Google Form survey sent in Fall semester of 2022. This form was sent to a number of faculty in humanities and sciences departments at CU-Boulder. This list of faculty was based on individuals who worked with English MA students between 2019 and 2021. Below are the answers to the questions on the survey.

What are your expectations when working with a GA/RA/TA (i.e. communication, attendance, assessment, participation/engagement)?

Faculty #1

I expect a lot: shared ownership of the course. I expect engagement: quick communication, attendance, and timely turnaround of graded materials. Teaching is what separates a university from a company's research arm. We need to be engaged teachers.

Faculty #2

My main concern is that the TA/RA/GA is paid and does not exceed the number of hours they are supposed to work. The actual workload is something that I prefer to handle on a case by case basis, which is dependent on the class in question and the person holding the position. This workload is thus negotiated with the actual person rather than being imposed by me. Generally, I would hope that the TA would attend class sessions, run recitations when needed, and grade about half the papers for the class.

Faculty #3

I expect a Grad Assistant to be a role model for undergraduate students in terms of intellectual curiosity and to have some mastery of skills including writing, critical thinking, reading, and articulating complex ideas in class discussion.

Faculty #4

I would hope to work with someone who was reliable and knowledgeable. Reliable simply means someone whom I can count on to come to class, to work hard, and make the class better than it would be if I was on my own. Knowledgeable means being able to contribute to the learning the class should provide students; a TA/GA/RA should make the class better than I would make it on my own.

Faculty #5

I have worked with several graduate students as RAs and from the first step (when I'm applying for departmental funding) I share with the prospective RA the proposal that I'll be submitting to the department. That way, all of the research parameters and tasks are laid out from the outset so the expectations are very clear. I have found the grad student participation and involvement to be uniformly exceptional!

Faculty #6

My hope is that students assigned as TAs are genuinely enthusiastic about teaching and working with undergraduates; they want to learn about teaching practices (this isn't just a job, a means for paying the bills). I also hope TAs will have a strong work ethic and will actively

seek to take on tasks. Good TAs ask lots of questions to ensure that they're doing tasks well. Fabulous TAs suggest ideas for how to improve our teaching practices!

Faculty #7

I expect my TAs to attend all lectures, to run weekly recitation sections, to meet with me for about 1/2 hour weekly, to coordinate with any other TAs about grading rubrics and assignments, to create their own policies for their recitations about attendance, presentations, and credit, and to grade all essays and tests not graded by the professor. I usually tell the TAs that their sections are a "mini-class" where they can experiment with assignments in addition to those I've created, and I usually leave them about 50-80 points worth of credit toward the student's final grade to experiment with.

If you were to describe a profile of an effective GA/RA/TA, what attributes/characteristics/skills would lead to a grad student's success in such a position?

Faculty #1

An honest interest in teaching is all that is required.

Faculty #2

I would not require any particular skills or knowledge. Ideally, the TA would be interested in the topic of the class, but more because that would be more pleasant than not liking the topic of the class. With regard to grading and such, I would not expect a TA to come in and already know how to do that. It would be something I expect to talk about with the TA as the course progresses.

Faculty #3

Good and timely communication skills, agility in online learning formats (Canvas especially), and willingness to have some weeks of the semester to be busier than others. Regarding grading essays and other student assignments, time management is essential.

Faculty #4

Ready to work, interested in the focus of the course, a good speaker, a good reviewer of student work, someone really able to work as a partner for the professor.

Faculty #5

I would say good time management skills; the ability to organize disparate materials effectively; and the flexibility to shift focus if the professor's research needs change (as has been the case for me at times).

Faculty #6

Strong communication skills, both in person and in writing, with me, the students, and any other TAs in the course. Proactively looking for work that needs to be completed, and trying to anticipate questions or challenges that students are likely to encounter with upcoming assignments. Fairness and compassion. Willingness to take advice and learn from others. Detail-oriented and never afraid to ask questions or point out an inaccuracy. Willing to try new things, risk feeling awkward, and have a great sense of humor when lessons don't go exactly as

planned.

Faculty #7

A sincere interest in teaching, and in developing their own teaching skills and styles -- this is a must, since the job is demanding. Their reward is in having an environment to explore on their own how they want to teach. I'd say also they need to have respect for their students as already-knowledgeable learners, and a sense of the limits of what they can expect from students. Perhaps also a sense of humility-- the TA is not there to show off their knowledge, but to help guide their students to a greater understanding of the course material.

What strengths or weaknesses do English dept. MA graduate students bring to a GA/RA/TA-ship? To your department (if not English dept.)?

Faculty #1

I am in English. The TAs are very strong. I've not had a poor performance in 15 years here.

Faculty #2

Excellent writing skills, which are important in all of the Humanities.

Faculty #3

Most MA grad students do not have much, if any, experience in being at the front of the class. If an appointment is for an MA student's first time as a teacher, the student needs to be able to pick up what to do and say very quickly.

Faculty #4

This really depends upon the individual, but I'm usually looking for someone who is familiar with the basic search engines that we use in the discipline (e.g. the MLA International Bibliography etc.). This enables me to ask the RA, for example, to do a search on x or y without worrying about their training or preparation. In other words, I expect that they will know how to utilize basic online sources (e.g. JSTOR) and in the past this has always been the case.

Faculty #5

MAs can provide undergrads with useful models for literary analysis. They know how to succeed in English classes, and they can share that knowledge with students, even if they are not experts in the subject matter of a particular course.

Faculty #6

TAs often are closer in age/life experiences to undergrads than the faculty are, and that can be an advantage and a disadvantage. Figuring out how to navigate the pros and cons are part of the professionalization learning curve for working in education.

Faculty #7

The greatest strength our MAs bring is a desire to learn how to become an effective teacher. The greatest weakness is a need to prove themselves smarter than their students-- usually stemming from their own insecurity.

What questions do you have on how best to support, guide, or manage GA/RA/TAs that you work with?

Faculty #1

I would encourage, and I do encourage, my TAs to take risks and to ask for help.

Faculty #2

Some students need more help with leadership in the classroom than others - it would be great to have some training in the week before semester starts for grad students to learn about facilitating class discussions. I usually offer Grad Assistants the option to give a class lecture if they want to practice those skills.

Faculty #3

What teaching experience do you have, if any? What do you admire in the teachers you've had? What concerns/worries do you have? How comfortable do you think you will be in front of a class?

Faculty #4

How much anxiety does TA work cause MA students? Most of the TAs I've worked with are very good at hiding their insecurities. Would it be better to ask questions and get TAs to voice their concerns or to wait and let them decide what they want to discuss?

Faculty #5

What questions would you like faculty supervisors to ask you? What info would you like to get as soon as possible? What kinds of experiences would you like to have as part of the TA position?

Faculty #6

For former TAs: what were the best and worst parts of the TA experience?

Faculty #7

I'd like to see them get paid more! I'd like to know what the present and past TAs think about how they could have been better supported, by me and/or the department.

Any final tips for TA/GA/RAs from your own experience?

Faculty #1

Try to set up weekly check-ins with your supervisors and be sure to let them know if there are skills or issues that you want to work on.

Faculty #3

Allow mistakes. Watch or recall teachers you admire--what are/were they doing that impressed you. Ask lots of questions!

Faculty #4

I love it when grad students bring enthusiasm to the job, and when they spearhead tasks that they know will help me to complete a certain research project. I had one RA who helped me assemble so many articles for a course that I put her name on the syllabus because I wanted to recognize her labor. When an RA-ship works well, it has the potential to be a truly collaborative experience!

Faculty #5

Look for opportunities to teach, not just grade. Ask your faculty supervisor if you can help run discussions, develop a study session or supplemental activity to support the students' learning, or present a lecture or mini lecture during the term. Not all faculty will welcome this, but many will (they may not realize TAs want to do these tasks).

Faculty #6

When you do grade, ask for faculty guidance, ask for a rubric or design one and show it to the professor. This will help you learn how to assess student work effectively and (relatively) efficiently.

Faculty #7

If you get behind, or can foresee that you're going to be overloaded with work at specific times during the semester, let your faculty supervisor know and ask for their guidance on how to manage the work.

Department Staff

These tips and expectations come from a targeted Google Form survey sent in Fall semester of 2022. This form was sent to departments who appointed MA graduate students from the English Department for a GA/RA/TA-ship between 2020 and 2022. Their responses to the questionnaire are as follows.

Generally, what leads to a graduate student's selection for a GA/RA/TA appointment?
<p>Department #1 TA-dept teaching needs. RA-faculty having a funded project to hire an RA-usually their advisee.</p>
<p>Department #2 We try to give everyone the opportunity to have a TA/GA/RA-ship at least once during the program. Participating in the pedagogy workshop, taking the Teaching English class, and a desire to complete the CTL certificate all help with selection as a TA. GAs (front desk) are generally selected on their experience in customer service and any technical office skills.</p>
<p>Department #3 A desire for funding as well as a desire to gain teaching/professional experience</p>
<p>Department #4 Some of it is timing and need for departments. If an English TA lands a position in an outside department, I would recommend letting your GPA and GPA's in other departments know early. It also helps to have an informative introduction about yourself with some reflections on your interests and what you could contribute to the role.</p>
If you were to describe a profile of an effective GA/RA/TA, what attributes/characteristics/skills would lead to a grad student's success in such a position?
<p>Department #1 TA-basic knowledge in teaching area that we need. RA-N/A-usually faculty member's advisee</p>
<p>Department #2 Reliability and responsiveness are important to get things established. I can't fully speak for the professors, but I think flexibility around what they need for each course is helpful.</p>
<p>Department #3 For TAs, a willingness to learn from the faculty, work with the faculty, and actively engage students. For office GAs, the ability to help with anything is desirable.</p>
<p>Department #4 Good interpersonal skills, curiosity and patience, empathy</p>

What do you like to see in a cover letter or CV/resumé?

Department #1

Generally we don't need as they are our students. from outside dept- generally need to see how this person would be a good fit in a geography course that we need a TA to cover

Department #2

I think it's helpful if candidates build connections in their cover letter about how their other academic work or experience will fit into the role or with the department.

Department #3

Both teaching experience and goals, as well as office/customer service skills.

Department #4

For a TA position- prior teaching or instructional experience helps, but certainly isn't required. This just helps us better assign them to a class/faculty member that's a good fit for them. For GAs - customer service experience helps. We also consider those who are working towards the Teaching Certificate and try and make sure everyone who's pursuing that gets an opportunity to TA, so it's helpful if they mention that as one of their goals.

What are common mistakes that applicants make when applying that might immediately disqualify or discourage their success in being awarded a GA/RA/TA appointment?

Department #1

We do not accept applicants - we have very few TA positions that we hire from outside the dept. Almost all TAs are matched in classes in their area of research or with their advisor. We ask certain depts to email their own students if we need an outside TA-generally this happens in human geog classes so we ask Anthropology & Sociology first if anyone is looking for a TA. RAs always come from faculty with a grant- they hires their advisee specifically

Department #2

I haven't seen this before here, but I would imagine any unprofessional behavior might deter a department from hiring.

Department #3

I encourage everyone to be open to the possibility of all kinds of positions (TA/GA/RA).

Department #4

It's hard to imagine a scenario where we would disqualify someone, but if they don't provide much detail that could definitely hurt their chances. The more information they're able to share with us about their backgrounds, the better. Even if they don't think it's relevant, they should include it! We're looking to get a full picture of who they are and what their goals are so we can assign them to something that will serve them well. It's more that our English assistantships are usually so limited, so it can be quite competitive to receive a departmental assistantship.

What elements in an English dept. MA graduate student's application for a GA/RA/TA position might be particularly appealing and persuasive to the committee (i.e. teaching experience, organizational experience in previous jobs, etc)?

Department #1

teaching experience, basic/general knowledge of the geography class material

Department #2

Teaching experience, editing skills, or demonstrations of how well-organized or responsible the candidates are could be persuasive. Any indications of interest or relevant experience with the target department could be convincing as well.

Department #3

Participating in the pedagogy workshop, taking the Teaching English class, and a desire to complete the CTL certificate all help with selection as a TA. GAs (front desk) are generally selected on their experience in customer service and any technical office skills.

Department #4

teaching experience helps. Customer service roles tell us that someone is probably friendly and personable, so they'd be good in a variety of settings from a classroom to the front desk. A well-organized CV shows good organization skills, so we like to see that too.

Section #2: Documents/Templates

Example Cover Letters/Emails of Introduction

Cover letter writing is its own genre and has certain compositional and informational expectations. In the simplest sense, your cover letter should convey: who you are, why you want the position you are applying for, and what you can offer in this position compared to other candidates. However, the evaluation of your cover letter is often idiosyncratic and dependent upon what the evaluator(s) needs or desires in a candidate. In other words, there is no tried and true method. At CU-Boulder, the various departments demand different formality and expectations for your application's cover letter. A number of them may not require a cover letter at all. Instead, they may ask for a more informal email of introduction, but even this email would follow the simple format mentioned above.

Additionally, you may need to provide a letter of recommendation for your application. This can come from the current DGS or, ideally, a professor you have previously worked with in an assistantship. It is professional courtesy to ask your recommender well in advance in order to give them enough time. In other words, politely ask as soon as possible. Below is an example of one such letter of rec.

Below are “successful” student examples of cover letters, emails of introduction, or Google form submissions from different application situations. I use “successful” to denote examples that lead to the appointment.

Previously-Held Assistantship Cover Letter

Sent via email with other application materials (i.e. CV and transcripts).

—
November 16, 2022

Dear Dr. Hilary Kalisman, Dr. Rebecca Wartell, and Program in Jewish Studies Faculty,

I am re-applying for the program's graduate assistantship, as I am eager to work again with Dr. Rebecca Wartell in her upcoming JWST/IAFS/GSLL 3600: Contemporary Jewish Societies course this Spring of 2023. My selection to this position would make for my third semester working with Dr. Wartell, and this cover letter will demonstrate the benefits of my continued appointment by highlighting my prior experiences serving as a GA with Dr. Wartell and the program and my pedagogical foundation and its continued development at CU-Boulder. I will also mention my gratitude as a first-generation student for this financial security opportunity.

As I mentioned, I have worked with Dr. Wartell for two semesters, and we have established an effective professional relationship. While this will be my first experience with the proposed course, I have the advantage of familiarity with Dr. Wartell's pedagogical style and expectations, which would save time normally spent orienting a new graduate student in an assistantship. Furthermore, it's been both humbling and enjoyable to have Dr. Wartell's trust, as she encourages my natural desire to engage with students in the form of guest lecturing, leading discussions, co-constructing assignments, and advising students both during and outside of office hours. She recognizes my understanding that this GA-ship is meaningful to me as a learning opportunity for my pedagogical development. It's been (dare I say) easy to become an effective teaching duo because we have established effective and professional lines of communication. For instance, we meet on a regular basis in order to plan/adjust the course as well as to engage in ethical pedagogical practices such as assessment calibration. My current approach to this GA-ship and working with Dr. Wartell is informed by previous experiences as a TA in my home department, working with Dr. Laura Winkiel, Dr. Teresa Nugent, and Dr. John Stevenson in upper-, middle-, and lower-division courses, respectfully. I'm confident that they would endorse and validate my fit for this appointment in a similar manner to my recommender, Dr. Jill Heydt-Stevenson, the Director of Graduate Studies for the English Department.

As will become clear when reviewing my CV, teaching has and continues to be central to my identity and experience. Before coming to CU-Boulder, I have worked as an Iowan public educator for three years, and this has tempered and refined my grasp of effective teaching through practical experience. At CU-Boulder, I continue to foster my intellectual commitment to teaching by applying my skills and techniques at the collegiate level and by serving as our department's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) Literature Lead. This service position places me in a student leadership position where I help develop the pedagogical skills of my

peers. What I hope this makes clear is that I know how to teach effectively at the group or individual level, and this will certainly be an asset to the undergraduate students in your program.

By Spring of 2023, I will be entering my final semester at CU-Boulder as an MA in Literature graduate student. My academic commitments will consist of a single graduate course and thesis hours where I will develop my thesis with Dr. Laura Winkiel. Compared to a typical full course load of three graduate courses, I will be more available to ensure that I am up to par with the demands of learning new course material of a middle-division undergraduate course.

Lastly, I come to the moment I most dread as a first-generation university student when applying for anything. It feels like a confession or a performance, but like many first-gens, I don't have a choice. It is necessary for me to demonstrate how this appointment is crucial for me financially. I come from a working-class family, who supports my work and position as a graduate student, but, ultimately, I am on my own financially. Like many first-gens, I must reach, claw, and hustle for every and any opportunity that will let me pay my way through graduate school. However, for me, this position isn't just any opportunity; it's highly desirable in its offer to continue my professional relationship with Dr. Wartell who I have come to see as a mentor.

Please forgive the *faux pas* of my two-page cover letter, but it is both indicative of my desire and necessary to explain my qualifications for this assistantship. Thank you for considering my candidacy for the Program in Jewish Studies GA position this Spring of 2023, and I look forward to hearing from you about the result of your deliberations.

With the utmost sincerity,

Mitchell Christensen

Initial Assistantship Cover Letter

Sent via email with CV.

—
November 17, 2021

Dear Rhonda McCuan and Dr. Ernesto Acevedo-Munoz,

Please allow me to introduce myself and express my interest in obtaining the TA position for CINE 3042 course in the semester of spring 2022. My name is Mitchell Christensen, and I am a first-year MA student in the Department of English at CU-Boulder. I learned about this opening from our Graduate Program Assistant in the Department of English, Holly Woodsome Sroymalai. While I have not had the pleasure to previously work with the faculty from the Department of Cinema Studies & Moving Image, I would like to demonstrate how my working experience and personal background in the horror genre will make me a viable candidate for this TA position.

Firstly, teaching in general is central to my work experience. My undergraduate degree is in English education. Admittedly, I do not have a lot of formal experience teaching film from a cinema studies background, but I have experience incorporating film as an interdisciplinary approach to understand representations of literature, the advantages and disadvantages of film as a medium in regards to storytelling, and the cinema industry of Hollywood. Currently, I am working as a TA for Prof. John Stevenson in his ENGL 1290: Crime, Police, and Detection course. I have the benefit of John's trust in helping to plan every week on how to engage students with guiding questions and supplementary materials to deepen their understanding of key components of the detective genre in discussion. John has given me the courtesy of teaching portions of class and even the entire lecture. Later this semester, I'm excited to introduce the students to contemporary examples of detective tropes and elements from a multi-media perspective, such as podcasts, tv show episodes, and comic books. My time with John has taught me how to apply my teaching experience to academia and serve in this role efficiently for him and the students, and I look forward to furthering my college teaching experience in this TA position.

From a more personal standpoint, I cannot express enough how exciting this TA opportunity is for me without risking approaching a cliché. Halloween and horror run in my family's veins, and it is more akin to Christmas than actual Christmas for us. Since I was perhaps 10 years old I have worked as a performer, spilled fake guts and blood when designing sets, and even attended horror conventions to gather research, all of this devoted to a horror attraction called Scream Acres near my hometown of Cedar Rapids, IA. My brother and I jokingly consider ourselves connoisseurs of horror films from 'classics' such as *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror*, *The Exorcist*, and *The Thing* (a film that still horrifies me to this day); to more recent

such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* reboots, *Us*, and *Hereditary*; and more ‘obscure’ films like *House Of 1000 Corpses*, *Fair-Haired Child* from the Masters of Horror series, and *Ju-On* and *Ju-On II*. Shameless admittance: I am a ‘fangirl’ or groupie of horror. Shameless full-disclosure: I would absolutely jump at the chance to work with Dr. Ernesto Acevedo-Munoz and learn more about horror films from a scholarly perspective in cinema studies. I have a deep appreciation for horror films as evinced by my amateuristic history, so I argue it is safe to presume that I will be a quick study in regards to helping him with the course. I hope that I will be seen as bringing some value from an interdisciplinary point with my experience of literature from the horror genre and theoretical frameworks.

Thank you for considering my candidacy for the TA position with the CINE 3042 course in the spring semester of 2022, and I hope to hear from you in the near future for an interview.

Sincerely,

Mitchell Christensen
MA in Literature Graduate Student

Email of Introduction

A number of departments don't ask for cover letters. Instead, they ask you to write an email of introduction that explains your interest in the position, qualifying past experiences, and a copy of your CV. In the example below, the [] material indicates commentary from the graduate student as she navigated the chain of emails in this process.

—

[Initially, I did not know how to go about securing a TA appointment. I had a classmate who was graduating and I networked with him in order to see if he could make an introduction with a professor that he had been a TA for in the past. Most grad students are all too familiar with trying to obtain funding opportunities and they will be more than happy to make connections for you. So, this graduating student sent an introductory email on my behalf and cc'd me and the coordinator in the History department. I sent the following email to introduce myself:]

Abigail,

Hello! I received your email address from Grad Student Name regarding open History TA opportunities. I am currently a first year graduate student pursuing my MA in English. I would be very interested in discussing this further with you to hopefully find a placement in the upcoming semester. I've attached a resume from my previous work experience, but please let me know what else I can provide to be considered!

Thank you,

Eilidh Strecker

[...plot twist - she did not respond. So a week later I followed up on the same thread with the following. Note that I do like to continue the same thread so the person knows there is persistence.]

Hello Abigail,

I hope you are having a very good start to the week! I just wanted to send a follow up to see if there were any openings/possible History TA positions where I could throw my hat in the ring. Please let me know if there is anything I can include/send that would be useful!

Thank you,

Eilidh Strecker

Hi Eilidh,

I am so sorry not to respond last week, but yes we have positions and would interested in hiring you. What time periods/global areas are you most familiar with?

Thanks,

Abi

Hi Abi,

No problem at all! Thank you for considering me for a TA position. I am most familiar with American and European History. I have recently taken British Literature and Culture after the 1800s focusing on the literary impacts of the French Revolution, and next semester I will be taking British Literature and Culture before the 1800s focusing on Queer Renaissance. That said, I would be open and very excited to learn about any class that needs a TA.

Thank you,

Eilidh Strecker

[Sent with an attachment of CV]

[To Eilidh,]

That's great. I will be sending out TA assignments this weekend/early next week so I will be in touch shortly.

Abi,

That sounds great! Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Additionally, if there are more openings, I have at least one fellow English MA student who I know is looking for TA opportunities. I would be happy to provide them with your email if there is additional need.

Thank you,

Eilidh Strecker

[I had sent one additional follow up the day before she sent this just asking if there were any updates]

Hi Eilidh –

The History Department is pleased to offer you a 30% TA appointment. This provides a stipend of \$7,039.47 and covers 6 credit hours.

Your course assignment is below. Your official offer letter will be sent out via DocuSign today. The deadline to sign your offer letter is January 3rd. If you have any concerns about TAing for this course or have a schedule conflict please let me know immediately.

Please confirm you would like to accept this position as soon as you can.

Happy Holidays!

Abi

Spring 2022 TA Assignment:

HIST 1623 Introduction to Central and East European History since 1770
Professor Hatch
MW 4:40-5:55

[From this I was able to review the class search tool for CU and read reviews of the professor, obtain the book reading list, and reach out to the professor directly].

Hi Abi,

Thank you so much for your email! Yes, I absolutely accept the offer. This should work perfectly with my schedule and I can't wait to get started.

Additionally, if you need other TA appointments filled, I do have a few fellow MA students still looking that I know would be interested.

Again, thank you so much for this opportunity!

Best,

Eilidh Strecker

[At this point, things became a bit stressful because I did not receive a DocuSign document that day as indicated. I became a bit antsy because I did not hear back from her again until after the holidays. Apparently there was some issue with the system and I didn't end up receiving my DocuSign contract until very close to the start of the semester. That said, I have spoken with friends and colleagues and they have not had this experience so I'm inclined to think it's relatively uncommon. The next two TA appointments were much smoother.]

Google Form Response

The English Department at CU-Boulder handles their GA/TA-ship applications using Google Forms. The form has multiple-choice as well as short-response questions. Include any and all relevant working experiences or skills, even if they are not directly applicable. If you have customer service experience or graphic design proficiency, this helps establish the value of your position. Below is an example of a graduate student's answers to the short response questions.

Q: What is your academic focus?

My academic focus is 18th/19th-Century British Literature, specifically the writings of Dorothy Ann Wordsworth and their effects on Wordsworth and his poetry. I am well versed in Romantic and Victorian British literature, though I wish to further develop my understanding of female Continental writers on topics such as journaling/diary entries, gender, sexuality, and sisterhood.

Q: Have you had a TA-ship or GA-ship with the English Department before? If so, when?

I am a first-year MA student, so I have not had the opportunity to work in a TA-ship or GA-ship. Although, I have had the chance to work as a Learning Assistant multiple times in my undergraduate career at the University of Virginia. In this role, I worked with graduate student instructors to lead discussion and Q & A sessions in large lecture halls for first- and second-semester freshmen. This experience excites me at the possibility of being a TA, as I have gained experience in communicating and collaborating with mentor professors and TAs in this role.

Q: Have you had a TA-ship or GA-ship with any other department at CU Boulder before? If so, which department and when?

No, I have not worked as a TA or GA in any other departments at CU-Boulder. I welcome the opportunity and further information if I am not offered an in-department assistantship.

Q: Is there anything else we should know?

I will be starting an RA-ship with Dr. Jane Garrity this semester. I will need to devote about 3-5 hours a week to this previous commitment.

Example Letter of Recommendation for Assistantship Application



University of Colorado at Boulder

Department of English

Hellems 101
226 UCB
Boulder, Colorado 80309-0226
303-492-7381
Fax: 303-492-8904

Recommendation letter for Brittany Whelan.
To the Program in Jewish Studies.

11-22-22

Dear Colleagues,

Please accept my wholehearted and confident recommendation for Brittany Whelan, who is applying to be a Teaching Assistant [TA] for Professor Wartell's course, Contemporary Jewish Societies. I have only known Ms. Whelan for one semester, but she has consistently impressed me as an extraordinary person and teacher. Last summer, at the last minute, we asked if she would be able to be a TA for our AHUM 1825: Interdisciplinary Data Science for All. The caveat was that she would have to be willing to take a summer training course to receive this position. Although this topic was outside her fields of interest, she immediately agreed, passed the course, and now is doing a brilliant job in her TA position for this class. Her willingness to help us and to learn a new discipline testifies powerfully to her flexibility and intelligence. As evidence of her ability as a team player—always crucial when being a TA or a teacher of record—Brittany has been one of the most active MAs in our department this semester. She has attended and participated in our town-hall meetings, social events, our Works in Progress series, the Department's Center for Teaching and Learning discussions, and has joined the English Graduate Student Council to generate ideas for speakers and other events.

Brittany's teaching experience is advanced for a first-year MA student. This arises partly from her TA position this semester with David Glimp and Rachael Simonetta, but also from her position as a "Diamond Peer Teacher" at Temple University, where she held office hours, created and led review and mentoring sessions, and worked with groups of students during class. I further believe that she is intellectually ready not only for another TA position, but also in particular for your class, which, I see, addresses "debates about Jewish people, places and practices of identity and community." Ms. Whelan's graduate and undergraduate training has led her to study borders in American life and literature, the experience of the British body abroad, and sex and sexuality in Judaism. Brittany's education in these classes seems to me to be highly pertinent to the focus on gender, sexuality, food, and the Jewish body in Rebecca Wartell's class. In conversation with her about literature and ideas, you will find that she has a sophisticated grasp of theory and of critical analysis.

If you have the happy experience of meeting Brittany, you will find that she is insightful and fast in her thinking, and yet contemplative as she examines ideas. Although highly articulate and funny—she has a great sense of humor—she is also a careful, attentive, active listener: she honors those she meets and her sense of gratitude for others and for her studies is exceptional. If you have further questions, please let me know through email or phone: I would be delighted to praise Brittany even more!

With all best wishes,

Jill

Professor Jill Heydt-Stevenson
Associate Chair and Director of Graduate Studies
The Department of English
303-718-6538
Jill.heydt@colorado.edu

First-Meeting Questionnaire

Now that you have accepted an offer of appointment, this guidebook strongly advises you to schedule at least 1-2 meetings with your mentor professor either before or at the beginning of your assistantship. This is a must-do task.

This “First-Meeting Questionnaire” is designed to form mutual understanding of graduate assistants and mentor’s roles by making time for introductions, reviewing expectations, and planning for the course. It is necessary to establish clear lines of communication about how to successfully apply yourself to the course. The inverse is also true, as this questionnaire provides a dialogue to give voice to your own commitments, concerns, questions, and ideas. This questionnaire is not an exhaustive list but rather a starting point for you to form your own. Take the time to develop what you want to say before going into these meetings.

GA/TA-ship First-Meeting Questionnaire

Tell me about the course. (i.e. How did you design it? How does it align with your research interests?)

Have you worked with graduate assistants for this course before? (i.e. What did they do that worked well? What needed improvement?)

What are your assessment expectations for this course?

- Are we splitting the grading? Responsible for certain assignments?
- Are there certain busy points of the semester?
- Tell me about the different assignments. Are grading expectations different or consistent?
- Are we meeting during the semester to align how we grade student work?
- If I am behind on grading, how do I respectfully communicate that to you and the students?

What are your attendance expectations for the students and myself? (i.e. If I need to miss a lecture/recitation, how should I communicate that with you and the students?)

What are your collaboration and planning expectations for this course?

- When would be a good date and time for a regular meeting in order to collaborate?
- How do you prefer to communicate (i.e. email, text message, phone call, Zoom meeting, in-person meeting)?
- How should I handle student emails/inquiries about the course or assignment feedback/scores (i.e. cc you on every email, how to direct an inquiry your way, assignment extensions)?
- Can office hours be flexible or completed by Zoom? Will there be opportunities to teach a class, design a lesson, assignment, or contribute in some other way to develop my teaching skills?

My questions about the course are:

My concerns about the course are: (i.e. your course load and assignments this semester, teaching, interacting with students via email, handling student questions, the workload of being familiar with the reading list, providing students clear feedback, missing class because of personal/professional events).

My ideas for the course are:

RA-ship First-Meeting Questionnaire

Tell me about your research project? (i.e. Is it part of your existing or new work?)

Have you worked with graduate assistants for research before? (i.e. What did they do that worked well? What needed improvement?)

What are your participation expectations for me?

- If certain weeks are busy for me or need to be taken off, how should I communicate that with you?
- What introductory/contextual information do I need to start my research work?
- What would you like me to “produce” (i.e. works cited, annotated bibliography, spreadsheet, etc)?
- How do you want me to track my work and progress (e.g timesheet, log)?
- How would you like me to update you on my progress?
- How would you like me to summarize the work at the end of the assistantship for the next person (if applicable)?

What are your collaboration and planning expectations for this research?

- Can we calibrate how we evaluate documents or conduct research by engaging in the same task and comparing notes?
- When would be a good date and time for a regular meeting in order to collaborate and discuss my progress?
- How do you prefer to communicate (i.e. email, text message, phone call, Zoom meeting, in-person meeting)?

My questions about researching are:

My concerns about researching are:

My ideas for the research are:

Lesson Plan Template

Here you can find a very simple lesson plan template if you lead recitations or volunteer to teach part or even the whole class. No lesson plan is perfect, so I would recommend doing some research on various templates available online. Choose one that suits your preferences or create your own. It is important to note that a lesson plan is not a script that you must live by, rather think of it as a tool to keep you and your students organized. Print it out or display it on a monitor as needed.

A key component of any lesson plan is planning for intention using your objectives. Utilize aids like Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning or Webb's Depth of Knowledge Chart.

Bloom: <https://www.teachthought.com/learning/what-is-blooms-taxonomy/>

Webb: <https://www.plymouth.k12.in.us/digital/depths-of-knowledge>

Additionally, please make use of all the wonderful resources that CTL provides. They have a veritable treasure trove of further reading, templates, and teaching resources (link [here](#)). The English graduate students have also put in considerable effort in constructing a canvas website for pedagogy purposes (link [here](#)). You may need to request access from Teresa Nugent (teresa.nugent@colorado.edu) or Hannah Blanning (hannah.blanning@colorado.edu).

Lesson Plan Example

<u>Date:</u> 09-17-2021	<u>Materials Required:</u> Student's discussion answers on Padlet, <i>Strangers on a Train</i> by Hitchcock, and Discussion Handout #1
<u>Objectives:</u> (Typically, only about 1-3 can be achieved in about 50 minutes) (Bloom's Taxonomy or Knowledge or Webb's Depth of Knowledge are helpful in choosing action verbs)	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will identify Bruno's actions, thoughts, and speech as part of his criminal psychological profile. 2. Students will apply historical and biographical information to Hitchcock's portrayal of Bruno. 3. Students will discuss in-groups and analyze why Hitchcock portrays Bruno in such a manner and form opinions about what leads to criminal motivations. 	
<u>Sequence:</u>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read and review student questions/comments made in discussion in the previous seminar on Padlet, 10 minutes. 2. Introduce the "Objectives" of this seminar and explain their purpose in the sequence of this unit, 2 minutes. 3. Read the first two-paragraphs of Ch. 1 and the first paragraph of Ch. 5. Explain the importance of Bruno's progressing characterization through the protagonist, and how these sections are just two, of many, that can reveal to us this progression. Ask students what Bruno's actions, thoughts, or speech tell us about the character, write them on the 	

<p>board, 15 minutes.</p> <p>4. Pass out Discussion Handout #1. Ask students to read about historical and Hitchcock's biographical information. Invite student responses and modify the contributions up on the board based on this information. Theorize Hitchcock's intentions for Bruno's characterization. 20 minutes.</p> <p>5. Explain journal response assignment due for Monday and give reminders about upcoming due dates, 3 minutes.</p>	
<p><u>Key Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does Bruno compare to the criminal in Poe's short story? - Johnson's theory on criminality in 1902 describes the innate, the learned, and the forced; how do we see Bruno's aligning with one or more of these categories? - Why does Hitchcock's Bruno challenge the trope of the deranged female killer, especially its historical understanding as the need for sexual dominance? 	
<p><u>Call to Action/Assignment:</u> Journal Post #3: What does the character Bruno demonstrate as new motivations for criminal behavior compared to the first short stories we read? In your own opinion, which criminal fascinates/terrifies you the most and why? (10-15 sentences)</p>	<p><u>Reminders:</u> Journal Post #3 due by Monday at 11:59 PM Paper #1 is coming up in two weeks, and I will provide a rubric and prompts next week.</p> <p>Talk with Jack after class about his attendance.</p>

Lesson Plan Template #1

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Materials Required:</u>
<u>Objectives:</u> 1. 2. 3.	
<u>Sequence:</u>	
<u>Key Questions:</u> - - -	
<u>Call to Action/Assignment:</u>	<u>Reminders:</u>

Assessment Calibration

One of the most important pedagogical practices when collaborating with any mentor professor as a GA/TA is aligning assessment expectations. This means not only talking about the purpose of an assignment in the student's learning and progression of the course, but it also leads to conversations about why and how we score students' work the way that we do, and it should be discussed for every new type of assignment. In Humanities, this practice is even more relevant due to the frequency by which qualitative-based assessments (i.e. essays and presentations) are employed to measure student learning compared to the correct/incorrect binary of quantitative-based assessments (i.e. tests and quizzes). However, calibrating with your mentor professor on how to give effective feedback is an important strategy, regardless of one's field.

When calibrating how you assess or provide feedback on student work, this guidebook suggests that you choose at least three student assignments. Independently score or provide feedback on the student assignments and compare with your mentor or fellow GA/TAs. Discuss differences and rationale behind scores. As a group, determine the norms of scoring and providing feedback.

For each assignment, ask about its purpose:

- **Diagnostic Assessment**
 - Purpose: 1) Determine what students know before learning OR 2) Stimulate students' questions, ideas, or discussions
 - Examples: beginning-of-the-year surveys, student polls
 - How to score: for/not for credit (i.e. if students complete the assignment, they get all the points)
 - **Lowest stakes** for assessment-performance anxiety
- **Formative Assessment**
 - Purpose: Determine how students are learning or applying their learning
 - Examples: journal responses, thesis/essay proposals, seminar discussions, in-lecture question and answer
 - How to score: for/not for credit or point percentage (i.e. 8/10 points earned possible or 80%)
 - **Low to Medium stakes** for assessment-performance anxiety
- **Summative Assessment**
 - a. Purpose: Determine what students have learned as a result of instruction
 - b. Examples: quizzes, tests, essays, presentations
 - c. How to score: point percentage
 - d. **Highest stakes** for assessment-performance anxiety

Mid-Semester Questionnaire

Just as it is important to ask key questions at the beginning of an assistantship in order to be successful, it is also crucial to discuss and reflect progress in motion. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you schedule a meeting half-way through the semester or your appointment in order to converse with your mentor professor about your performance and additional questions, concerns, ideas, etc.

Again, the intention of this questionnaire is not to be a one-way evaluation (i.e. the professor provides feedback or direction to you), rather it is designed to be a dialogue between all individuals involved. Share your new thoughts, questions, and ideas.

—

Mid-Semester Questionnaire

What am I doing well in this assistantship?

What could I improve upon?

The new questions that I have are: | I need help with:

The new concerns that I have are:

The new ideas that I have are: | How I would like to be challenged is:

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Office Hours/Student Conference Template(s)

Depending on your department or mentor professor, you are expected as a GA/TA to host office hours every week on campus and in-person. A number of faculty may be okay with virtual office hours via Zoom or Google Meet, and it is usual for undergraduate students to prefer meeting in this way. Find time(s) and day(s) that work well for your schedule. I find that office hours before or directly after the course you are working instigates more student engagement with office hours.

I include student conferencing in this section because you may or may not be asked to do one-on-one conferences with students per your mentor professor's course structure. In courses with fewer students (approx. < 30), conferences are an effective tool to provide feedback on student progress/work leading up to an assignment and also explaining and providing feedback after an assignment has been graded. Conferencing can still be achieved in larger sections depending upon the number of TAs and undergraduate Learning Assistants (LAs) available to divide the total number of conferences per person. Consider recommending this practice as a low-stakes graded activity to be included in the course's design. The length of student conferences varies between 10-30 minutes. This reflects the reality that conferences can lack direction or preparation, and it takes time to establish the purpose of the meeting. Even in unplanned office hours, a series of grounding questions can help meetings be run with concision through effective and intentional strategizing.

Ways in which to efficiently save time in scheduling Office Hours/Student Conferences:

- *Sign-up time slots (15-30 minutes) via Google Calendar: [Here](#)*
- *Appointment scheduling via Google Calendar (great feature for planned conferences): [Here](#)*
- *Appointment scheduling via Google Forms (also good for planned student conferences): [Here](#)*
- *Pre-office hour/student conference via Google Forms or Google Docs (consider template below): [Here](#)*

Below you will find the following Office Hour/Student Conference template to make meetings with students clear, intentional, and progress/action-based. The basis of the template is simple: 1) Why are we meeting? What is the meeting's purpose?, 2) What questions do you have about this purpose?, and 3) How can the student or I work towards the purpose using actionable steps?

Office Hour/Student Conference Template**Meeting with:****Date & Time:**

What is the purpose of the meeting? (i.e. Provide extended feedback or discuss a student's performance on assignment? Discuss student's ideas for an up-coming assignment?)

-
-
-
-
-

What questions does the student have in regards to the meeting's purpose?

-
-
-
-
-

What is my call-to-action or objective(s) for the student? (i.e. revise XYZ sections of a paper, send a follow-up email about an outline, look at XYZ article/resource, a follow-up meeting)

-
-
-
-
-

CTL VTC Cycle

The CTL utilizes the Video Teacher Consultations (or VTCs) to help graduate students in teaching positions reflect on and evaluate their teaching performance. VTCs are open to anyone and are not just for graduate students who are interested in Certificate in College Teaching (CCT) from CTL. If you are pursuing the CCT, you are required to complete two VTC cycles (see below for more information on CTL graduate certificates). In order to schedule a VTC, reach out to your department's CTL Lead or ask your program coordinator for more information.

The VTC is an excellent resource for improving your pedagogy. It is confidential (doesn't go to the department). It is self-reflective and self-directed rather than evaluative. Instead of a teaching "expert" telling you about what is wrong or could be improved in your lesson, a series of prompts ask you to reflect on a given lesson (e.g. intentionality behind certain strategies or lesson objectives and thoughts on student interactions or performance). For more information on the Certificate in College Teaching (CCT), check out:

<https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/programs/graduate-certificates/certificate-college-teaching>. For more information on the Future Faculty Development (FFD) Certificate, check out:

<https://www.colorado.edu/center/teaching-learning/programs/graduate-certificates/future-faculty-development-certificate>.

Provided below is a copy of the VTC Pre-Consultation Questionnaire should you wish to schedule and complete a VTC or are interested in developing effective reflective practices in regards to your pedagogy.

—

VTC Goals and Objectives:

Pre-Consultation Template: Learning Outcomes and Assessment

- All text in *Italics* will be read aloud to the teacher
- All text in **bold** is a note to the Lead consultant

Consultant: _____ Department _____

Teacher: _____ Title: _____

Date: _____ Date notes returned: _____

Please read to the teacher:

*Before we begin with the format of the VTC, I want to clarify that this is a formative and confidential consultation. It is formative because it aims to improve your teaching, not evaluate it. It is confidential because our discussion will remain between us. If you would like a copy of the video, I can provide it. Otherwise I will erase it after the consultation. When we are finished, I will send a copy of the notes to you and ctl@colorado.edu for our records. **If it is the first VTC you are conducting, you can tell the teacher that it will also go to the***

Professional Development Lead, who will be reading it to assure the process is performed correctly.

This is the Learning Outcomes and Assessment VTC. It is focused on the creation of clear and realistic learning outcomes for students, which poses the most effective way of organizing daily lesson plans and accomplishing larger course objectives. This pre-consultation will outline learning outcomes and assessment techniques for your class; it will facilitate a discussion of the methods you will use; and it will introduce you to leading concepts in the field of college teaching.

Central to this VTC are a few terms: learning outcomes, content, skills, and assessment. Learning outcomes are the goals for students a teacher hopes to accomplish by the end of a course term. Daily lesson plans make these objectives the focus of class time. Learning objectives are commonly found in course syllabi, but daily goals usually are not. Assessment reveals how much students have learned and can be summative or formative. Summative assessment techniques are calculated for a grade, while formative techniques are not.

James R. Davis and Bridget D. Arend (2013) recommend using specified “ways of learning” to accomplish desired outcomes. Two common methods are information acquisition (content) and behavioral learning (skills), and they will be the focus of this consultation. Content involves facts, ideas, terminology, theories, and other information essential to your field. Examples might be soil types, solar phenomena, verb conjugations, or the basic elements of plot. Skills represent procedural acts acquired through practice and instruction. Skills might be data collection, textual analysis, formal writing, or intercultural literacy and communication. By reflecting on the content and skills emphasized during your lesson, we can help you meet your objectives, brainstorm new ideas, and achieve new insights into your teaching.

I. Pre-Consultation Questions for the Teacher: Record the teacher’s answers

1. Now, let’s write your objectives for the upcoming class. For Objectives A and B, use verbs like: “to understand,” “to apply,” “to hone,” “to evaluate,” and “to analyze.” For Objective C, explain what you want students to remember from your class 10 years from now. **See Appendix A for more information on learning objectives.**

Objective A:

Objective B:

Objective C:

2. What **content** (knowledge or information) will be emphasized during your class and how does it fit into the larger design of the course?

3. What **skills** will be practiced during your class and what larger skills are gained or honed throughout the course? How might those skills be applied outside your field?

4. What **activities** will you use to meet those goals during your class and throughout the semester? (lecture, flipped classroom, discussion, worksheets, etc.)

5. How do these objectives fit within the larger goals of the course?

6. How will you assess your learning outcomes? Will you use a formative (non-graded) or summative (graded) method?

—

The full process of the VTC also involves filming a part or whole lesson that you teach. The graduate student then watches portions of their teaching and reflects on what they observe. Then, the final component is a meeting for a post-consultation, which is simply a guided-conversation about improvement for future teaching.

Contact your CTL Lead to schedule a VTC or learn more about graduate certificates and micro-credentials.

CV/Resume Examples

When applying to any assistantship, you can expect a request for your latest curriculum vitae (CV)/resume. Most departments and programs are not strict about which form they require, therefore it is more important to focus on the content of your CV/resume. There are plenty of suggestions and strategies, but there is no perfect method or example. Generally, a “good” CV/resume is a clear, easy-to-read, and concise presentation of your experiences, skills, and interests.

Furthermore, this guidebook provides two tips. Firstly, you know your audience. If you are applying for an assistantship in any department outside your own, you should prioritize information that aligns with the position and field. Your CV/resume is not set in stone. It is a strategic tool that bends and flexes to your demands. Secondly, teach your reader. Items on your CV/resume may be clear to you, but it also may be necessary to provide additional information that explains the significance of a given experience, position, or reward. As you will see in the examples below, supplemental information also demonstrates your ability to be reflective and critical of different points of your development, especially being able to highlight how you have grown as a result.

Below you will find varied examples of CVs and resumes provided by MA graduate students in the English Department.

CV/Resume Example #1

This is a CV example with resume elements.

Addison L. Dewey

(316) 633-1513 - addison.dewey@colorado.edu

Research Interests

Law and Literature, Environmental Literature, Ecocriticism, Ecofeminism

Education

- **MA Candidate in English Literature 2021-2023**
 - University of Colorado - Boulder, Boulder, CO
 - **BA in English Literature and Political Science, Minor in History, *Highest Distinction* 2017-2021**
 - University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR
 - **High School Diploma, Valedictorian 2013-2017**
 - Cheney High School, Cheney, KS
-

Honors and Awards

- Otis and Elsie Purchase Teets Family Scholarship (CU) 2022
 - Summer University Recognition Fellowship (CU) 2022
 - William B. Markward Graduate Scholarship (CU) 2021
 - William Jennings Bryan Scholarship (UARK) 2021
 - Outstanding Political Science student
 - Senior Scholar Award (UARK) 2017-2021
 - 4.0 GPA
 - University of Arkansas Leadership Award 2017
 - Leadership and academic achievement
 - Chancellor's and Dean's List (UARK) 2017-2021
 - 4.0 GPA
-

Work Experience

- **Teaching Assistant for Introduction to Feminist Studies (WGST 2000) Fall 2022**
 - Lead study sessions for 110 students, grade projects and exams, give lectures,

support students through office hours, work closely with instructor to create interactive, approachable class environment.

- **Graduate Assistant in the CU Boulder English Department Fall 2022**
 - Greet visitors, perform various office duties, be available to assist faculty as needed.
- **Staff Support at Colorado University Student Government 2021-2022**
 - Acted as the liaison between the three branches of government. Managed the schedule of other staff members to ensure smooth operations.
- **Faculty Assistant at the University of Arkansas School of Law 2018-2021**
 - Worked in conjunction with law school faculty, admissions office, and Dean's suite on various projects, organized student events, aided in the admissions process, compiled data, assisted professors in class operations, testing, and uploading assignments, liaison between students and professors.
- **Legal Intern at Rabo Diversified Services Summer 2020**
 - Worked on corporate governance projects, filed loan documents, assisted in immigration matters, analyzed and selected COVID-19 legislation that affected business operations.
- **Constituent Services Intern for Governor Laura Kelly's Office Summer 2019**
 - Assisted Kansas constituents in a wide array of issues, worked to establish and maintain relations between the governor's office and the state agencies.
- **Paralegal at Peterson Law, LLC. Summer 2018**
 - Attended depositions, filed documents with the State Court, researched and studied legislation, helped draft legal documents, prepared and organized documents for court, participated in one and a half week trial.
- **Intern at Peterson Law, LLC. 2017**
 - Reviewed witness testimony, proofread legal documents, filed documents with the Federal Court, took dictation, organized documents.

Community Outreach

- **Volunteer: Books and Bites Program, Fayetteville Public Library**
 - Program with two main objectives: literacy/creative expression and combating food insecurity. Went to different summer day programs for low income youth and facilitated artistic opportunities. Students were sent home with fresh produce from a local farm and new books.

Skills

- **Interpersonal:** Comfortable and excited meeting new people and forging connections. Enjoy creating a sense of belonging among groups.
- **Public Speaking:** Capable of presenting an idea or lesson in front of others in a dynamic

manner that encourages interaction and attention.

- **Reading/Writing:** Adept in drafting and analyzing written works. Confident in grammatical knowledge and ability to provide editorial and writing support.
- **Self-Starter:** Personally motivated to seek out new opportunities and learn.
- **Problem-Solver:** Undeterred by difficult situations; will keep calm, assess the problem, and then
- **Attention to Detail:** Able to completely focus on the task at hand so as to perform it properly and efficiently.

CV/Resume Example #2

This is an example of a resume.

Rob Jackson

“One of the only ways to be interesting is to be interested.” – Faith Salie (CBS Sunday Morning) 303-589-6213
 rojack3@gmail.com
 6 Ponderosa Place, Broomfield, CO, 80020

Objective: To serve as a TA in ____ department and develop my college-teaching pedagogy.

Experience as a High School English Teacher:

Princeton High School	Princeton, IL	2012 - 2017
Canon City High School	Cañon City, CO	2017 - 2018
Fossil Ridge High School	Fort Collins, CO	2018 - 2022

High School Classes Taught:

- 9th Grade Literature and Composition (5 years), 10th Grade World Literature (9 years), British Literature (6 years), American Literature (4 years), Public Speaking (5 years)

Career Highlights:

- Partnered with a senior citizen center to arrange interviews between high school students and residents so that students had purpose to write narratives.
- Hosted elected and appointed officials to moderate debates between students on topics ranging from standardized testing to land use to a universal basic income.
- Visited kindergarten and first grade classes with high school students to perform children’s books so that students had purpose for acting and interpreting literature.
- Collaborated with Bishop Thomas Grant and Lambeth Academy, both in London, so that students could have richer conversations about Henrik Ibsen and Shakespeare.
- Invited guest speakers, including young people representing the International Center of Fort Collins, city council members, and former members of the U.S. military, to enhance discussion of themes for 9th and 10th grade students.
- Partnered with businesses to fundraise \$500 for a speech competition at Fossil Ridge High School with a focus on researching and giving back to nonprofits in Fort Collins.
- Mentored by Dr. Diane Mitchell as a teaching assistant for Intro to Shakespeare in Fall 2022. Collaborated on lesson ideas, equity in grading and feedback, and approaches to pedagogy.
- Planned and managed events from prom and school dances to debate tournaments.
- Coached a state champion in Speech and Debate, several finalists, and multiple qualifiers.

CV/Resume Example #3

This is a CV example.

Eilidh Strecker

MA Student, University of Colorado Boulder

eilidh.strecker@gmail.com | 214.478.2129

Education:

University of Colorado Boulder (Boulder, CO)

M.A. English - expected May 2023

Master's Thesis: "Critical Analysis of Three Texts: An Illustration of Complexity and Relevance in Young Adult Literature" (in-progress)

University of Arkansas (Fayetteville, AR)

B.A. English (French minor) - May 2016

Teaching Experience:

At CU Boulder (as teaching assistant)

ENGL 2006: Comics and Graphic Novels, Fall 2022

This course introduces the history of comics and the literary features of graphic novels including close reading practices for multimodal art forms. Responsible for leading small group discussions during each class meeting. Presented lecture to class of 88 students twice over the semester. Provided feedback on students' original work, graded essays and capstone portfolios for 30 students.

HIST/CEES 1623: Central and East European History since 1770, Spring 2022

This course examines major themes and events in East-Central Europe from the late 1700s to the present. Responsible for grading coursework for 66 students.

At CU Boulder (as pedagogy training)

ENGL 5529: Teaching English, Spring 2022

This graduate seminar focused on pedagogy and involved teaching two sections of ENGL 1001: Writing, Reading, Culture, a first-year writing course.

Pedagogy Seminar, Fall 2021

This graduate level seminar was an optional weekly pedagogical training designed to prepare graduate students for teaching assistantships and other teaching opportunities.

At CU Boulder (as guest teacher)

ENGL 2102: Literary Analysis, Fall 2022

I was invited to give a presentation on form vs function of literature and how assumptions about literary and popular art forms indicate ascribed academic merit.

ENGL 1270: Introduction to American Literature by Women, Fall 2021

I gave a lecture covering Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* as part of the larger discussion on graphic novel representations of gender and sexuality.

Additional Academic Work History:

Student Assistant (CU Boulder), Fall 2021 - Present

Responsible for designing and publishing social media for the CU English Department across multiple platforms

Prior Professional Work History:

Mile High Employment Solutions, Denver, CO

Part-Time Advertising, Marketing & Design Associate, August 2021 - Present

Develop, write and design new hire training materials, internal documents, marketing materials, and assist in the weekly writing of job board advertisements and reporting

Marketing Manager, November 2020 - August 2021

Created marketing and advertising for effective recruitment strategies resulting in over 1,200 applications monthly. Built out the strategy, metrics and reporting to track advertising performance.

Fidelity Investments, Denver, CO

Customer Relationship Advocate, June 2020 - November 2020

Customer Service representatives handled inbound phone calls regarding customer accounts.

Foundation for C.H.O.I.C.E., Dallas, TX & Remote

Part-Time Creative Project Manager, December 2019 - August 2020

Created design elements for social media, internal documents, and flyers.

Program Director, July 2018 - December 2019

Managed the one-to-one college prep student mentoring program supporting at-risk, low-income high school students in Dallas ISD and Plano ISD.

Plattr/Native Commerce, Austin, TX**Account Manager**, *January 2018 - July 2018*

Built the backbone of core content for client sites and social media posts to promote clients' reach through keyword selection, using Wordtracker and Market Muse to create high ranking SEO content.

Managing Editor, *January 2017 - January 2018*

Developed freelancer standard operating procedure while building and managing a team of 35+ Freelance Contributors across internal and client blog sites.

Editorial Assistant, *August 2016 - January 2017*

Worked closely with the Director of Content to assist in managing the writing teams and ensured content quality by editing blog posts for grammatical errors.

Awards:

Academic Funding Fellowship (\$2,000), *Fall 2021*

Service:

M.A. Representative: English Graduate Student Council, *2022-2023 Academic Year*

CV/Resume Example #4

This is a CV example.

Curriculum Vitae

KAIGE SELLERS

Phone: (720) 425 - 6322

Email: Kaige.Sellers@Colorado.edu

ABOUT ME

A Master's Student in Literature with over three years of practical pedagogical experience. As a skilled writer and researcher, I am focused, passionate, disciplined, student-focused, and detail-oriented. I am seeking a position that draws upon my writing expertise and my pedagogical experience.

SKILLS

Writing Skills: Creativity; clarity; analysis; argumentation; interpretation; organization; communication; explanation; revision.

Pedagogical Skills: Leadership; adaptability; flexibility; multicultural sensitivity; time management; problem-solving; interpersonal communication; delegation; patience; emotional intelligence.

EDUCATION

Aug 2021 - Present • University of Colorado Boulder Master's in Literature

- Graduate Studies in Literature. Researching the concept of "otherness" in Medieval, Victorian, and Twentieth Century literature.
- Master's thesis: A critical examination of *The Mere Wife*, a modern adaptation of *Beowulf*, from a queer feminist perspective.
- GPA: 3.9

Aug 2019 - May 2021 • University of Colorado Denver BA in Literature

- Graduated with honors and great distinction – Magna Cum Laude. Honors thesis: "The Threat of Sexual Otherness in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*"
- GPA: 3.6

Aug 2017 - May 2019 • Front Range Community College Associates in Literature

- Graduated Cum Laude. GPA: 3.64

EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant - CINE 3042 American Horror Cinema - Professor Ernesto R. Acevedo -Muñoz, PH.D.

University of Colorado Boulder

Jan 2022 - Present

- Monitor classroom activity and effectively lead/facilitate class discussions.
- Grade assignments and provide feedback to help students hone their analytical skills.
- Proctor tests.
- Meet with undergraduate students during office hours to help them plan papers and projects.

Lead Supplemental Instructor - MAT 1340 College Algebra - Jan 2018 - Aug 2020 RITA QUINTANA M.A.

Front Range Community College

- Monitored classroom activity.
- Led lectures and designed activities to help students work through problem sets.
- Met with students during office hours to help them understand course content more thoroughly.
- Trained incoming supplemental instructors.
- Researched and discussed best pedagogical practices.

Instructor

Whimsy Paint and Sip

Aug 2017 - May 2018

- Instructed painting sessions.
- Developed and designed artistic material for upcoming classes.

PEDAGOGY COURSES COMPLETED

- Social Foundations and Cultural Diversity in Urban Education - University of Colorado Denver, 2020
- Responsive Classroom Communities - University of Colorado Denver, 2020
- Pedagogy Seminar - University of Colorado Boulder, 2021
- Teaching English - University of Colorado Boulder, 2022

PEDAGOGY WORKSHOPS COMPLETED

- Recognizing and Mitigating Unconscious Bias
- Working on Work Life Balance

SCHOLARSHIP

- **Richard T. Dillon Scholarship:** Awarded to English majors with an overall GPA of 3.25 or higher.

RA-ship Timesheet

There are official RA-ship timesheets through the CU Resources on the “My Leave” page in order to get paid. Check in with your department for the updated timesheet process. However, it is often helpful to keep track of your own progress (i.e. dates and times worked and tasks completed) because it allows for clearer communication and collaboration with your mentor professor.

Below is an example of a basic timesheet kept by a MA graduate student working with an English faculty member for her upcoming book project. There is also a template below, but this guidebook suggests that you create and modify a timesheet that suits your needs.

RA-ship Timesheet Example

Higashida/Christensen RA-ship Fall 2022 Timesheet & Log

Date	Time	Task
9/9/2022	9:00:00 to 10:00:00 AM	Overview of RAship's focus, expectations, and the position's timeline.
10/31/2022	4:30:00 to 5:30:00 PM	Read introductory materials: Introduction by LeRoy Chatfield 2008; Origins of El Malcriado by Doug Adair & Bill Esher Rampujan 2009 El Malcriado 1965-1966 – Bill Esher, Editor; El Malcriado Texas Edition 1967 – Doug Adair & Alfredo de Avila, Editors; El Malcriado 1966-1967 – Doug Adair & Daniel de los Reyes & Marcia Brooks, Editors; El Malcriado 1968-1970 – David Fishlow, Doug Adair, Mark Day, Editors; El Malcriado 1964-1970 – Analysis; NPS overview articles: "A New Era of Farmworker Organizing", "Workers United: The Delano Grape Strike and Boycott", "Mobilizing Support for La Causa"
11/01/2022	12:04:00 to 2:04:00 PM	Searched and annotated issues 1965 "Don Sotaco to #21". It took a long time to comb issues "Don Sotaco" to #6 since they weren't compatible with the search function and were in Spanish. I had to go through and scan them manually.
11/10/2022	1:00:00 to 2:30:00 PM	Searched and annotated 1965 issues 22-25. I included annotations of mentions of "broadcast" and "loud speakers" as well.
11/11/2022	9:30:00 to 11:30:00 AM	Searched and annotated 1965 issues 26 to 1966 issues 31. I included annotations of mentions of "broadcast", "loud speakers", "bull horns", "song", and "movies" as well.
11/27/2022	12:00:00 to 3:00:00 PM	Searched and annotated 1966 issues 32 to 48. I included a few annotations based on mentions of phone usage by the growers and government officials as a counter-image to two-radio usage.
12/03/2022	5:00:00 to 7:30:00 PM	Searched and annotated 1966 issues 49 to 1967 issues 55. I included a few annotations based on new segments/sections of EM involving women in strike efforts and as part of EM's publication.
12/04/2022	1:30:00 to	Search and annotated 1967 issues 56 to 59. Took a lot longer because

	2:30:00 PM	two of these were not search function compatible.
12/04/2022	6:00:00 to 8:00:00 PM	Searched and annotated 1967 issue 60 to 1968 issue 6. These also took a lot longer because there are a number only in Spanish.
12/10/2022	6:00:00 to 8:30:00 PM	Search and annotated 1968 issues 7 to 20.

RA-ship Timesheet Template

Date	Time	Task