

Department of Molecular Biosciences Policy on the Number of Semesters a Doctoral Student can Serve as a GTA

I. Motivation

A graduate student in the Department of Molecular Biosciences (MB) will often hold a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) position. Serving as a GTA assists graduate students in developing a range of instructional skills, and generally enhances their professional development. The caveat is that serving as a GTA inevitably takes time away from developing, conducting and interpreting research projects.

It is the position of the department that our principal goal is to train scientists, and thus we should typically seek to limit the number of GTAs a graduate student is able to hold throughout their graduate career.

II. Institutional GTA Limits

KU outlines institutional limits on the number of GTAs a graduate student may hold (see the Graduate Studies Policy document [Term Limits for Appointments of Graduate Teaching Assistants](#)). Only with regard to students pursuing a doctoral degree in MB (see "III. MB-specific GTA Limits") does MB policy take precedence over KU policy. Otherwise, the KU policy should be followed.

III. MB-specific GTA Limits

A student admitted to pursue a doctoral degree in MB is eligible for up to a total of ten (10) semesters as a GTA during the regular academic year (i.e., Fall and Spring.) GTAs held during the Summer semester do not count against this limit. If a student requires additional GTA support beyond the 10 allowed, they may petition the department (see "IV. Petition Process for Additional GTAs".)

IV. Petition Process for Additional GTAs

In circumstances when it is in the best academic interest of the graduate student to extend the number of GTAs held, the graduate student and their mentor may petition the department to allow additional semesters of GTA support.

To petition for an additional GTA the questions below should be answered, the final document signed by both the student and the primary faculty mentor, and submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies via email by July 1 (for a Fall GTA) or December 1 (for a Spring GTA). The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) will review the petition, discuss with the MB Chair, and provide a response to the student/mentor in due course.

Note that if the DGS is in conflict (e.g., is the student's primary mentor) the petition should be provided directly to the MB Chair. And in cases where the MB Chair is in conflict, the DGS will discuss the petition with the MB Associate Chair.

To petition for an additional GTA, prepare a document that addresses all six questions below:

- 1. Student name**
- 2. Mentor name**
- 3. Number of academic semester GTAs held** - Only count Spring / Fall semester GTAs
- 4. Progress to date** - Outline the student's past / current progress in research, highlighting internal / external presentations and publications.
- 5. Challenges** - Provide information on any challenges that have impacted the student's progress.
- 6. Research goals for the requested additional GTA semester** - Outline research milestones and a specific timeline for the semester. Note specifically how these goals move the student towards a dissertation defense. State how the student, mentor and committee will coordinate to ensure the student remains on track.

At the end of your document paste in the following statement:

The undersigned collaborated in crafting this document, agree that an additional GTA is required, agree that the goals outlined above are reasonable and feasible, and have the support of the student's graduate advisory committee in this request.

Finally, both the student and mentor should sign and date the document to confirm they agree with this statement.

Written by Stuart J Macdonald. Policy approved by Department of Molecular Biosciences on April 17, 2019 (see MB Faculty Meeting minutes).

Petition questions approved by Department of Molecular Biosciences on October 23, 2019 (see MB Faculty Meeting minutes).

Document made accessible by Stuart J. Macdonald on July 30, 2021.