FAQ’S

1. When are the offer letters due?
   a. Offer letters for Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 are due April 22, 2016
   b. Offer letters for Summer 2016 are due March 31, 2016
   c. The due dates can be found on the HR website under critical dates:
      https://www.hr.msu.edu/hiring/studentemployment/gradasst/index.htm

2. What are the consequences of not getting the offer letters to the students by the due date?
   a. Under the GEU contract if a TA does not receive their offer letter within the specified time limits, the TA can notify the Union. Once the Union is notified then the Union will reach out to the Dean of the Graduate School and of the Office of Employee Relations letting both know that the unit had failed to comply with Article 11 III A. Re-employment notification. Once the notification has been sent out to the employing unit the unit will have three working days to issue the letter to the Teaching Assistant. If the TA does not receive an offer letter within three days than 2 weeks’ pay will be issued to the TA from the employing unit.
   b. If the graduate assistant is an RA or TE then the consequences will be determined by the Graduate School.

3. Who provides the templates for the offer letters?
   a. MSU Central Human Resources and the Graduate School provide the offer letter for Research Assistants and Teaching Excluded. The Teaching Assistant offer letter is determined by the Graduate Employees Union.

4. Where can I find the offer letter templates?
   a. The offer letter templates can be found on the Graduate School website.
      i. Teaching Exclusive:
         http://grad.msu.edu/forms/docs/Teaching%20Exclusion%20Offer%20Letter.docx
      ii. Research Assistant:
          http://grad.msu.edu/forms/docs/Research%20Assistant%20Offer%20Letter.docx
      iii. Summer Non-Fringe Research Assistant:
           http://grad.msu.edu/forms/docs/Summer%20Non%20Fringe%20Research%20Assistant%20Offer%20Letter.docx
      iv. Teaching Assistant:
           http://grad.msu.edu/forms/docs/Teaching%20Assistant%20Offer%20Letter.docx

5. Is there a difference between the Research Assistant/Teaching Excluded and Teaching Assistant offer letters?
   a. There is a difference between the RA/TE offer letters and the TA offer letters. The TA offer letter template is agreed upon by MSU and the GEU. The RA/TE offer letter is developed by the Graduate School together with HR.

6. Can the RA/TE offer letter include language regarding the GEU?
   a. No, research assistants and teaching excluded assistants are not represented by the Graduate Employees Union and should not contain any language or links to the GEU.
7. Does all the information in the template need to be present in the offer letter?
   a. Yes.

8. Can the unit alter the Teaching Assistant offer letter?
   a. No. The Teaching Assistant offer letters cannot be altered in any way. All paragraphs must remain in the offer letter and extra information may not be added.

9. What information can be added to the RA or TE offer letters?
   a. The RA/TE offer letters can have any information that is relevant to the specific duties of the assistantship added to the letter.

10. Who needs to sign the offer letter?
    a. The Department Chair, Program or School Director
    b. The Graduate Assistant

11. Can the signature be electronic?
    a. Yes.

12. Can the graduate assistant accept the offer via e-mail?
    a. The Graduate Assistant can accept the offer letter via e-mail but the offer letter must be in letter format and not in e-mail format.

13. If the information in the original offer letter has changed do I need to provide a new offer letter?
    a. If any information pertaining to the assistantship changes than a new offer letter must be presented to the Graduate Assistant.
       i. Level change, employment percentage, job title, dates of employment or stipend.

14. Is an e-mail addendum still acceptable?
    a. No, we no longer accept an e-mail addendum for the offer letter.

15. Can I put an approximate for the stipend?
    a. No, the stipend must be exactly the same as it appears on the hiring form.

16. Can I put the year total stipend instead of the bi-weekly stipend?
    a. No, the stipend needs to reflect the exact bi-weekly amount.

17. Is it possible to put Fall/Spring/Summer Semester instead of the date range?
    a. The exact date range needs to be reflected in the offer letter. The offer letter can state what semester along with the exact dates.

18. What if I don’t know the level for the Graduate Assistant that I am appointing? Can I put a guess in the offer letter?
    a. No, the exact level needs to be reflected in the offer letter. If unsure of what level the graduate assistant will be performing at then contact Sarah Powell in Central Human Resources.

19. What if I don’t know the faculty member that the GA is going to be working with?
    a. If the supervisor is unknown at the time of sending out the offer letters than it is sufficient to state a faculty member in X Department of College will serve as your supervisor and will be determined at a later date.

20. We do not require a minimum GPA in order to continue the Graduate Assistantship in the RA/TE offer letter, can that paragraph be removed?
    a. No, you will need to put the University minimum if your program does not require a minimum GPA.

21. The assistantship is a reappointment, is it necessary to include all the information again?
    a. Yes.

22. Our Graduate Assistant handbook is out of date, do we need to put the link in the offer letter?
    a. Graduate Assistant handbook links must be provided in all offer letters.

23. Can we write a yearlong offer letter?
a. Yes, the offer letter can be written for fall 2016, spring 2017 and summer 2017. If any information in the offer letter is changing from each semester then a new offer letter will need to be submitted.

24. I have an international graduate assistant that has recently completed a background check with Homeland Security. Does the graduate assistant have to repeat a background check with Michigan State University?
   a. No, a background check does not need to be processed through Michigan State University. If a background check will not be processed through MSU then the department will need to indicate this in the note section of the hiring form.