Teaching Assistantships in English at UNO

The Department of English solicits applications for Teaching Assistantships once annually, in early February, and the Graduate Faculty makes recommendation of appointments by early March. The deadline for *receipt of all application materials* is usually the second Friday in February. This year, it is Friday, **February 9, 2018**.

Explanation of the Teaching Assistantship and Its Duties

Teaching Assistants are graduate students who are trained and mentored to teach freshman composition and to work as consultants in the University's Writing Center, with occasional additional teaching or research opportunities, as well. During a two-week workshop, usually held in the second and third weeks of August, members of the Department of English provide TAs with a thorough introduction to teaching first-year writing at the university level. TAs also enroll in a 5-credit training seminar during the fall semester that provides theoretical and on-the-job support during the first semester of their appointment.

Length of Appointment

A Teaching Assistantship is awarded for one year and ordinarily renewed for a second year, based on successful performance during the initial appointment. Under rare and special circumstances, and only when it is available, a TA may request a third year of support.

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Teaching Assistants are strongly discouraged by both the English Department and UNO Graduate Studies from holding any additional employment during their appointment since their education and TA duties must take priority. If TAs in the English Department are employed off campus, they must understand and ensure that their duties as a TA (including teaching schedule and Writing Center assignments) take precedence over other employment. If it is determined that outside employment is interfering with a TA's availability and/or duties, the potential exists for either revocation or a non-renewal of the assistantship.

Compensation and Benefits of Teaching Assistantship Appointments

Teaching Assistants are on special appointment by the Graduate Studies Office and receive the following compensation and benefits:

- Approximately $13,000 annual stipend
- Tuition remission
- Office space in the TA offices
- Faculty/Staff parking privileges

Application Requirements

After applicants have completed their initial application to Graduate Study at UNO, the Department of English will receive their post-secondary transcripts and other relevant documents from the Graduate Office directly. The application for a TAship requires the following additional materials, which should all be sent directly to **Dr. Ramón Guerra, Graduate Program Chair, Department of English, 192D ASH, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 6001 Dodge St., Omaha, NE 68182-0175**. Although less ideal, application materials may also be sent as email attachments to <**rguerra@unomaha.edu**>.

- **Application cover sheet** (see below)
- **Statement of purpose** from the applicant, of 500-1000 words, detailing the applicant's ambitions in the graduate program and his or her motivation for pursuing the teaching assistantship. In addition, this statement should convey some sense of the applicant's identity and philosophy of learning.
- ***(continued on next page)***

Application Requirements:

- **Writing sample or samples of Creative Nonfiction and/or academic prose** by the applicant, totaling 10-20 pages. This sample may not be a work of fiction or poetry.
- **Three letters of recommendation** from past teachers or anyone else reasonably able to offer an objective assessment of the applicant's writing, critical reasoning skills, and promise as a teacher. These letters should be sent to the above address directly by the recommenders, along with waiver forms (see below).
- **Either GRE (Graduate Record Examination) or MAT (Miller Analogies Test) scores** sent directly to UNO from the testing entities.

Frequently Asked Questions

1.0 Eligibility and Calendar

1.0.1 Can an already enrolled English graduate student apply for a TAship?

Yes. Any student previously admitted into the graduate program in English and currently in good standing may apply annually for a TAship.

1.0.2 Can a certificate student apply for a TAship?

Yes. The TA selection process is open to Master's degree and certificate students alike.

1.0.3 Can a student who has not yet been admitted to the program be considered for a TAship?

Yes, but only if the student is applying for admission concurrently. Strictly speaking, an applicant cannot be granted a TAship before being offered admission to a UNO certificate or degree program.

1.0.4 Can a graduate student at UNO outside of English apply for a TAship?

Yes. Occasionally, qualified students outside of English have held TAships in English. Preferential consideration is nonetheless given to students in the English program.

1.0.5 Can unclassified (both non-degree and non-certificate) students apply for a TAship?
No. The Graduate Studies Office does not allow unclassified graduate students to be eligible for a TAship.

1.0.6 Can a student apply to begin a TAship in the spring semester?

No. Although this is theoretically allowable by the Graduate Studies Office, our training calendar would make such an appointment untenable.

1.0.7 Can a successful candidate for a TAship defer accepting the award until the following year?

No. But such an applicant would be free to apply again.

1.0.8 Can a TA withdraw from classes to below 6 credit hours and still remain a TA?

Probably not. Although a TA would not likely be removed from teaching in the immediate semester of such an event, the future of the appointment would be jeopardized. Because TAs are required to carry a minimum of 6 hours of graduate credit, withdrawing from classes to below this amount would ordinarily disqualify a TA from reappointment to a second year. It could also result in a reassignment of duties or else a revocation of the current appointment or of a standing offer of renewal.

1.0.9 Are TAs expected to teach in the summer?

No. Under special circumstances, however, a TA may agree to complete part of his or her appointment obligations during the summer. Such an arrangement is nevertheless rare.

1.1.0 Does an applicant have to reapply for a TAship each year if he or she has been denied or wait-listed in the past?

Yes. Applications are not held open from year to year, and so students must re-apply each year if they wish to be considered again for a TAship. Previous applicants may, however, ask for previously submitted materials already in their files to be made part of their current application. A special form for this, "Application Renewal Request," is required in this case and available from the Department of English main office [and also attached below].

2.0 Tuition Remission

2.0.1 Do TAs receive tuition remission for summer courses?
Yes. TAs may take up to 12 credits each summer under the tuition remission policy.

2.0.2 Can a TA receive tuition remission in the summer prior to beginning the initial appointment?

No. In English, TAs are generally only eligible to receive summer tuition remission after holding the appointment for a full academic year. 3

2.0.3 Does a TA's tuition remission extend to a spouse/domestic partner or a member of the family?

No. The tuition remission is limited to the Teaching Assistant.

2.0.4 Does tuition remission apply to courses that a TA withdraws from during the semester?

No. Tuition remission is retroactively revoked for any course from which a student withdraws before the end of the semester. TAs who enroll in a course that they then drop during the semester are responsible for paying the prorated tuition for the course.

2.0.5 Can tuition remission be applied to undergraduate coursework?

Yes, but only if the coursework is identified as a deficiency in the student's letter of admission to graduate study. [NOTE: for a caution about this, see FAQ 3.0.6].

2.0.6 Can a TA enroll in classes on other campuses and still receive tuition remission?

Yes and no. Tuition at other NU campuses (Kearney, Lincoln, UNMC) will be remitted if the student obtains a tuition voucher from the UNO Graduate Studies Office (203 Eppley) before registering for class. Tuition at schools outside the NU system, however, is not covered.

2.0.7 Is there a maximum number of credit hours covered by the tuition remission benefit?

Yes. TAs may not receive more than 12 credit hours of tuition remission in any given semester or summer. On the matter of expected or appropriate courseloads for TAs, see FAQ 3.0.4.

3.0 Workload/Courseload

3.0.1 What is a typical TA assignment?

During the first year, a TA typically teaches one section of English 1150 (the first semester of first-year composition, capped at 18 students) plus 10 weekly hours of Writing Center instruction each semester. In the second year, a TA typically teaches 2 sections of English 1164 (the second semester of first-year composition, capped at 20 students and held in a computer classroom) in each of the fall and spring semesters.

3.0.2 Can a TA hold down another job while serving out his or her appointment?

The UNO Graduate Studies policy discourages the practice of holding additional jobs which may interfere with satisfactory performance of assigned duties. It is officially expected that full-time students serving as TAs will not have sufficient time to hold another job while simultaneously performing their education and teaching responsibilities adequately. If TAs in the English Department are employed off campus, they must understand and ensure that their duties as a TA (including teaching schedule and Writing Center assignments) take precedence over other employment. If it is determined that outside employment is interfering with a TA's availability and/or duties, the potential exists for either revocation or a non-renewal of the assistantship.

3.0.3 What is the University-recognized workload of a Teaching Assistant?

Apart from attending to their own coursework, TAs are expected to spend approximately 20 hours per week in their duties as TAs.

3.0.4 Is there a limit to the number of credit hours a TA can take in a single semester?

Yes. Because of their teaching duties, the Department of English recommends that TAs take no more than 6 credit hours per semester. They may enroll in 9 hours, which would officially give them "full-time" graduate student status, but experience suggests such a load can prove exceptionally demanding. TAs enrolling in 9 credit hours should plan course selection with great care and consult at length with their individual advisors. To enroll in 12 or more hours, TAs need special permission, both from their advisors and from the Dean of Graduate Studies. Furthermore, the tuition remission will not cover more than 12 credit hours in any given semester.

3.0.5 Is there a minimum number of credit hours that a TA must carry in a semester?

Yes. TAs must carry at least 6 credit hours of graduate level coursework per semester [for Federal aid considerations about this minimum, see FAQ 4.0.5]. The only exception is a TA who needs less than 6 credit hours in order to graduate in a given semester; such a student may enroll in only the required 4 amount of graduate (not undergraduate) credits. TAs invoking this exception should also be sure to fill out a Student Social Security Tax Exemption form, available in the Graduate Studies Office, 203 Eppley.

3.0.6 Can undergraduate credits count toward the minimum credit requirement?

No. The minimum credit rule can only be satisfied with graduate-level coursework. Undergraduate courses taken to fulfill a deficiency do not count toward the full-time graduate courseload [for the minimum credit hour rule, see FAQ 3.0.5].

4.0 Other Frequently Asked Questions

4.0.1 How many TAships are available?

Currently, there are 15 TA lines, roughly half of which are awarded to new applicants each year and half of which are offered as renewals.

4.0.2 Is there a difference between a Graduate Assistantship and a Teaching Assistantship?

No. The Graduate Studies Office uses the term “Graduate Assistantship” as a catch-all term to refer to Research Assistants and Teaching Assistants. The Graduate Studies language about Graduate Assistants applies directly to Teaching Assistants in the Department of English.

4.0.3 Is there a difference between a Research Assistant and a Teaching Assistant?

Yes. A Research Assistant works with individual faculty members to facilitate their research projects. The Department of English does not ordinarily award Graduate Research Assistantships, but other departments at UNO do. Despite differences in their duties, Research Assistants and Teaching Assistants supported by the Graduate Studies Office receive identical benefits and compensation.

4.0.4 What could cause a TAship to be revoked?

A TAship may be revoked if the TA loses the status of “good-standing” in the graduate program. Actionable offenses or University-identified malfeasance may also trigger revocation of the appointment.

4.0.5 Does the Federal Government recognize a TAship plus 6 credit hours as satisfying a student’s full-time status?

No. For some deferred student loans, a student must enroll in 9 credit hours of graduate study to satisfy the federal requirements that a student be considered full-time. Because federal rules change, often annually, the Financial Aid Office should be consulted for clarification about this.

TEACHING ASSISTANT APPLICATION COVER SHEET

Employer's Statement. The University of Nebraska at Omaha adheres to the equal employment opportunity guidelines set forth by state and federal laws. The information contained on this form is sought in good faith and will not be used in any way to discriminate against any applicant on the basis of race, creed, national origin, age, disability, sex, or sexual orientation.

Applicant: Please complete the following information.

Last Name	**First Name**	**Middle Initital | Suffix**

YOUR CURRENT CONTACT INFORMATION

Street City State ZIP	Land Line Cell No. or Alternative	Email address

YOUR PERMANENT CONTACT INFORMATION (if different from above)

Street City State ZIP	Land Line Cell No. or Alternative	Email address

REFERENCES

Please supply a list of the three references you have asked to write on your behalf, with contact information for them (phone or email preferred):

Name	**Contact**

PROFESSIONAL WORK HISTORY:

Employer	City & State	Date From	Date To	Nature of Duties

Recommendation Access Waiver Form

To the Applicant

Please supply this signed form to each of those who have agreed to write letters of recommendation for your candidacy for a Teaching Assistantship in English at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. While not required, a waiver of legal access to confidential letters of recommendation greatly enhances the credibility of the recommender's assessment during the Graduate Program Committee's deliberations about your candidacy. Check the appropriate box below and sign and date before giving this form to each of your recommenders.

Check one box:

□ I hereby **waive** any legal right to access this letter of recommendation from my student file at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

□ I hereby **do not waive** any legal right to access this letter of recommendation from my student file at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Signature of Applicant:_____ Date:_____

Name (please print):_____

To the Recommender

Please attach a letter to this form indicating your assessment of the applicant's suitability to enter training as a graduate student teacher at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. If successful, the applicant will be responsible for designing and teaching courses in freshman composition while undergoing graduate study and instruction. For this reason, we ask that you address the applicant's writing ability, critical reasoning and analytical skills, and suitability or promise as a future teacher of first-year college-level writing. In addition, please indicate how long and in what capacity you have known the applicant along with some indication of the basis for your judgment.

Please sign and date this form and send it with your letter directly to the Graduate Program Chair, Department of English, 192 ASH, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 6001 Dodge St, Omaha, NE 68182-0175. **The letter must be received in our office by the second Friday in February in order to be considered.**

We thank you for your candid assessment.

Signature of Recommender:_____ Date: _____

Name (please print): _____ Title: _____

Application Renewal Request Form

This form should be used **no earlier than January 1** to announce your intention to re-open a previous application for a Teaching Assistantship with the Department of English at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Please fill out the information below and indicate what parts of the previous application you wish to be retrieved from your file for the new selection process.

Name of Applicant: _____

Address of Applicant: _____

_____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Year of previous application: _____ Signature: _____

In the space below, please provide a brief description of your current status in graduate studies at UNO, including your expected date of graduation and your current degree and/or certificate program(s).

Please check off those items you want retrieved from your student file for inclusion in this year's Teaching Assistantship selection.

- □ Previous GRE or MAT scores
- □ Writing Sample (supply the title): _____
- □ Letter of Recommendation #1 (recommender's name): _____
- □ Letter of Recommendation #2 (recommender's name): _____
- □ Letter of Recommendation #3 (recommender's name): _____
- □ Statement of Purpose (*please note that we encourage you to update this statement and/or send a new letter of interest explaining your updated circumstances and continued interest in a Teaching Assistantship in our program*).

This form plus any new application materials should be sent, **no earlier than Jan. 1**, to the Graduate Program Chair, Dept. of English, 192 ASH, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 6001 Dodge St., Omaha, NE 68182-0175.