
This document provides the description and criteria for these evaluations.

Your assistantship is part of your education, and we want you to get the best education we can possibly offer. We hope you see your position as an opportunity to learn and develop new skills. Being a Graduate Assistant (GA), you have the opportunity to gain valuable experience in the research process. Therefore, we expect you to treat your assistantship with as much dedication as you treat your classes and/or thesis. Your assistantship provides vital professional socialization, while also providing state funded support for their teaching and research. Thus all tasks from taking attendance, going to the library, administering surveys, entering in data, transcribing interviews, photocopying, and similar duties, are critical to the success of our programs. Your assistantship and the way you perform it is critical to our success, and the department takes this success seriously. The reality is that we have more students who request funding than is available. Assistantships are, therefore, a scarce commodity and highly competitive.

The Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology’s Graduate Committee has implemented a bi-annual review of GAs. This memo provides an explanation of what we are looking for in GAs as well as expectations for performance. It is a guide to help everyone do a better job, and to make sure everyone—including students, faculty, and staff—are on the same page.

Our evaluative discussion during review cycles will focus on four key dimensions of being a GA. These dimensions are summarized as CAPP (competence, availability, punctuality, and professionalism). Each semester, we will evaluate all GAs on these dimensions.

I. Competence: The ability to do perform a task or function successfully. There are three sub-dimensions to competence.

A. GAs should be able to work independently. If your supervisor gives you a task and a deadline to complete that task, you should be able to meet that deadline without a tremendous amount of assistance. Much of what distinguishes successful from unsuccessful academics and professionals is time management. For example, while there are not deadlines for submitting a paper for publication, at the end of the year universities expect faculty to have submitted and had accepted peer-reviewed articles. You should ensure you adequately budget your time to get your work accomplished. While we also expect GAs to work independently we recognize that experience and skill level evolve and encourage you to seek help if you need it.

B. You should be able to solve problems. If you cannot find an answer right away, keep looking. As scholars, you should not necessarily be satisfied with “easy solutions.” As they say, graduate school is 10 percent inspiration and 90 percent perspiration. Do not be afraid to work to find solutions.

Again, meeting this dimension of “competence” does not mean you should overstep your role as a Graduate Assistant. If there is a problem, be sure to discuss it with your supervisor. Your supervisor needs to know about any problems. The solution she or he has for addressing the issue may not be the one that you first consider.
C. The most obvious part of the “competence” dimension is having the knowledge and skills to complete the task correctly. Learning this knowledge and developing these skills are why you are here. It is all right to not know how to do something correctly the first time you are asked to do it. If you do not know how to accomplish the assigned task, ask for assistance. Faculty members are willing to help you figure out how to do what they want you to do, and they are willing to spend some time teaching you how to do it. However, we also expect you to engage in independent skill building. For example, if your supervisor asks you to input data into SPSS and you do not know how to do this, you should:

1) First, get an SPSS manual and read it.

2) Second, if you cannot figure it out, ask for help.

Similarly, if your supervisor asks you to do a literature review and provide her or him with an annotated bibliography and you have never written an annotated bibliography, you should

1) Get a book that discusses how to conduct a literature review and read it.

2) Write two entries within a day of getting the assignment and bring these to your supervisor to review. Get her or his feedback, and then go write the rest.

It is all right to not know everything. You are students, but we do expect you to put the effort into doing your job. Achieving this may require you to spend some extra time learning how to accomplish these tasks.

II. Availability: Being accessible and approachable.

Within reason, you should be available when your supervisor wants you to be available. Other than the times you are to be attending class, your assistantship duties should take precedence. Valid excuses for being late, not showing up, or leaving early for an assistantship duty may be required by your supervisor.

Of course, all of this applies to you “within reason.” First, your availability only applies to “regular business hours,” which for academics is 8:00 am – until the end of evening classes. Faculty should not routinely telephone you at night or over the weekend, nor should they expect you to be in the office at 11:35 pm or 4:50 am. Second, accidents, illnesses, and emergencies happen. Everyone needs to be reasonable about these unfortunate events; however, should the need arise for you to be late, miss an appointment, or leave early, it is your responsibility to contact your supervisor and let him or her know your situation. If you cannot contact your supervisor directly, be sure to contact the main office (see Section IV. below). In addition, if you are missing some event that someone else could manage (e.g. proctoring an exam); you should contact another GA to see if she or he could fill in for you. Finally, your supervisor is more likely to be sympathetic to your situation if you do not have “a situation” every week or two.

To make sure you are available, in conjunction with your supervisor set up and keep regular hours. If you are working for a supervisor for 10 hours per week, set a two-to-four hour period of time a few days a week when you will regularly be in the office. This is a great way to make sure your supervisor knows when and where she or he can find you. Additionally, even though you are assigned a particular faculty member as a GA you are employed and work for the department. You should share these available times with the main office and be available for work assignments if needed.

III. Punctuality: being able to complete a required task or fulfill an obligation before or at a previously designated time.
Punctuality entails showing up when and where you are supposed to show up. Punctuality reflects both competence and professionalism. Having your assigned tasks completed on time is extremely important. Punctuality is especially important when grading examinations, but it applies to all GA tasks. Again, if you are going to be late with or to anything, make sure you let your supervisor know.

**IV. Professionalism: having the qualities of a professional.**

There are two general ideas behind professionalism: respect and ethics. Be respectful to faculty members, office staff, other graduate students, undergraduate students, and random people walking on the street. Civility is a necessity for social life.

With regard to ethics, here are some good rules to follow:

a. If you think it is unethical, it probably is;

b. If you think you can get in trouble for doing it, you probably can;

c. If you think someone doing it to you would make you feel angry, sad, hurt, harmed, etc., then it is probably unethical to do it to someone else;

d. Do not say anything about someone that you would not say in front of that person;

e. Do not say anything about someone that should only be said to that person.

**Continued Funding**

If you follow these guides, you will perform your GA responsibilities in a “satisfactory” manner. You should know, however, “unsatisfactory” performance on ANY of the CAPP dimensions can jeopardize your assistantship. In order to continue receiving an assistantship, you must be in good standing academically AND adequately perform your duties as a GA. (see Graduate Program Director’s Handbook, pg. 87).