

Response re: AAEP Chair justification for current dept hourly requirements and AAEP executive committee meeting with Arts Priori
Josh Coy, CGS President
Chair, University Graduate Compensations and Benefits Committee

CGS recently provided the the Chair of Arts Administration, Education, and Policy, Dr. Debbie Smith-Shank, with a report on contractual issues that have arisen within the dept (presumably over the course of years), and asked that the report be distributed, as well as opinions sought back from the Chair. The reports notes serious issues regarding the culture of GTA work usage in the dept, as well as a number of troubling testimonials directly from students. The students remarks were anonymized due to fear of retaliation.

Dr. Smith-Shank responded back later in the week that she would meet with Arts Priori, the local student departmental group, but would not meet with CGS representation or distribute the report from CGS via listserv, with the only justification being that this was a "internal issue." Students do not have access to the listserv, the Program Coordinator acts as gatekeeper, so Arts Priori students sent the report out via direct email to all those faculty and students they could recall. Hard copies were also distributed.

Dr. Smith-Shank, provided a brief document (attached at the very end of this doc) on Monday, Feb 9th in a meeting with officers of Arts Priori that was meant to serve as an example of how other depts have stipulated hourly requirements for their students, and how AAEP has used this as a guideline. Dr. Smith Shank refused to allow the elected Council of Graduate Students delegate to attend this meeting. As CGS is the only student governance body with the charge to negotiate with the University on contractual duties of GTAs, has been researching this issue for over 9 months, and provided the aforementioned report, it would seem that Dr. Smith Shank is actively censoring the student voice and purposefully meeting with students who do not have the expertise or knowledge of Graduate student rules to effectively refute her claims.

As such, I will do so here, in detail.

I will begin with an overview of the meeting, as reported by the AP officers, I will then discuss my appraisal of the situation, followed by my recommendations/requests.

The immediately following outline below was provided to me via notes and emails from the 3 separate student AP officers who were in attendance with the AAEP exec committee on Monday:

-Reports back from students indicate that the beginning of the meeting was primarily focused on trying to get them to admit that they do not support the CGS report. They made clear that they do in fact support CGS' report, and repeatedly indicated that they could not remark on it and that the committee should, in fact, be meeting with CGS if they wanted to discuss the report or the issues being brought forth. Arts Priori students have already previously given full support to CGS representing the dept on this issue.

-Dr. Smith Shank claimed the CGS report attempt at distribution was invalid because of Grad Student Handbook rules, which is incorrect. This appears based on the claim that students were expected to deal with this on a one-to-one basis first, and doubts that more than a few students actually were upset by the 5hr requirement. Had CGS the opportunity to speak to the Chair, it would have been made clear that students *have reported attempts to correct problems with faculty* only to be ignored or situations made worse. In any event, CGS is not required to act as any other student in the dept bringing forth a complaint (even if the current President happens to be a student in AAEP), and as such brought the matter directly to the Chair.

-AP students in attendance pointed to fear of retaliation as the reasoning for not coming forward themselves, but reports back are that this was not taken seriously by the exec committee and, at one point, were told that students sounded like “whiners.”

-The exec committee noted that faculty in AAEP make less than other faculty average of \$60k, so grad students should not complain about their duties or pay. This seems a strange and unnecessary argument to make.

-The exec committee is adamant that students around the University teach two classes. This **remains a misperception** on the part of AAEP faculty leaders that was debunked in the report from CGS, but that they continue claim without any sound supporting data. The fact is that an instructor of record for a GEC writing class, that requires curriculum development, constitutes a 20 hr requirement across the campus. Using the very depts that Dr. Smith-Shank cites as comparison models, and will be shown later, this is clearly the case. (see follow up documents for data directly from the depts)

-When confronted with incidents of our own students teaching two classes at a 75% appointment (currently CGS Delegate Karen Munnelly), the Dr. Smith Shank claimed that this was a mistake, and that she "just found out she was paying Karen too much" and that there would be no more 75% appts. (I question whether or not such a statement and/or action is not direct retaliation toward Karen)

-Dr. Smith-Shank reported that she had been doing students a "favor" by assigning the 5 hr requirement, now Dean Shanda is angry that she has not actually assigned AAEP students more work, and **that the result of this report will likely be that students will actually have to work more** for the dept because Dean Shanda was now mad at her for not assigning more duties to grad students. While I highly doubt this is actually Dean Shanda's position on the matter, **Dr. Smith-Shank's reaction is obvious retaliation, constitutes academic bullying**, and should be noted that is exactly what the students in the dept feared.

-Dr. Smith-Shank Claimed that the Graduate Handbook states that teaching a class equals 15hrs. This is untrue. The Graduate School Handbook simply lays out that a GTA 50% appointment equals 20hrs. How the 20hrs is justified/used is an internal issue.

-However, AAEP's own departmental graduate handbook (pg 14) is quite clear on what is expected of a 50% appointed GTA:

"Expectations

GTAs are expected to spend 20 hours per week on course time. This includes, but is not limited to: classroom teaching, tutoring students, holding office hours (required and must be given to the course supervisor), proctoring exams, grading student assignments, course preparation, etc. Supervisors may also request that teaching associates participate in curricula development."

<https://aaep.osu.edu/sites/aaep.osu.edu/files/2014AAEPGraduateProgramHandbooka.pdf>

-It seems that the executive committee of AAEP is not aware of the expectations for GTAs laid out in the dept's own handbook.. **There is no mention of parsing out 5hrs for administrative or research duties and, as such, it is the opinion of CGS that the requirement for AAEP GTAs to serve any additional hours outside of teaching is immediately null and void, by their own internal standards.**

-The document provided by Dr. Smith-Shank gives no data on any research the dept itself has done into time it takes to carry out duties, nothing backing up the claims that were being made, and generally appears to be comparing apples to oranges in the cross comparison between depts.

-Still, in the information provided following, the comparison depts in question have clear guidelines for GTA duties, ones that most seem to have taken the time to research and make adjustments for the various permutations of possibilities.

-In the case of Dance/Design, our CGS Dance delegate has provided the handbook rules covering GTA duties, and it clearly states that a GTA teaching as instructor of record for a GEC class of 25-50 students is a 20hr commitment, which is exactly what CGS has claimed ought to be the case for AAEP.

-In the case of Theatre, there are many possibilities, some very practice oriented and others more academic (one reason the comparison with AAEP is difficult to make), but our Delegate from Theatre states that Dr. Smith-Shank's claims that Theatre students teach two classes as instructor of record is "false." (note also that theatre students are preparing to question some of their duties, including owing or banking hours).

-Art makes no allowances for a separate 5hr research commitment, requiring Urban Arts Space work, or the time it takes to teach a course equalling 15hrs, as claimed by Dr. Smith-Shank.

All of this adds up to what seems to be a case of academic bullying on the part of Dr. Smith-Shank (threats to increase work due to whistle blowing, censorship of communication amongst students, and refusal to allow student government to represent students), poor management and oversight of the faculty in this dept (including from the College level), a lack of understanding of the duties of the GTAs in the dept by faculty,

and a lack of knowledge of the very procedures AAEP has set out for themselves per their own handbook.

The continued negative student experiences created by such manipulations have real results in the reputation of the program amongst current students and alumni. In my talks with both groups, many say they would not recommend this dept, or would not have come here, if they truly understood the culture. This perception has the capacity to negatively affect the value of the degree and future enrollment.

There also seems to be a lack of training or accountability by the staff members of the dept, whose responsibility is to know what is required of students and faculty per the various handbooks. They ought to be the first line in helping keep such inappropriate behavior from happening. Fellows contracts and this 5hr requirement have been in direct conflict with handbooks for years and no one spoke up about it? Who ultimately is in charge of training these staff members to properly report up the chain if faculty are violating handbook rules and protect them as whistle blowers?

Ultimately, in terms of recommendations, I fall back on what the CGS report already suggested, which continues to appear to be a very reasonable course of action:

-The 5 hr requirement must cease immediately. This is supported via AAEP handbook. It seems that the proper level of oversight that ought to take such an action is the College of Arts and Sciences, but in meeting with Dean Steffensmeier and Chad Allen, I was told that the Graduate School is responsible for this. It makes no difference to CGS who takes the initiative on ensuring the policies are being properly followed, just that such action be taken asap in order to protect graduate students.

-Instructors of record for GEC classes that currently have a (self imposed?) cap of 25 in class students should not have any additional requirements outside of teaching, but are open to more student enrollment in their classes.

-GTAs acting as graders could be used also as GRAs/GAAs, but contracts need to be written out clearly and with well defined duties. Consideration needs to be taken for the total number of students in the classes they are grading.

-I want to reiterate that both of these previous two suggestions amount to **more work** by graduate students, in areas that are more appropriate for their own study and supportive of faculty research and departmental needs. At no time have we actually advocated for less work, but rather for adherence to current guidelines and better oversight.

-Further training is needed for faculty and staff, including studying the various grad handbooks. At this point, it seems best that such training take place by someone outside the dept and at the College level.

-I continue to be concerned by the negative, misleading, and intimidating response from Dr. Smith-Shank, and ask that the College investigate this situation. I was directed that

any grievances brought forth would be an “HR issue” and not appropriate for the College to deal with, which seems a very strange stance for the managerial branch to take regarding the faculty they oversee. I would ask that Arts and Sciences take a larger role in addressing her leadership issues.

-I am also concerned that the pointing out of the appropriate expectations noted in the AAEP guidebook could be cause for the Chair to simply rewrite expectations in her current vision without valid supporting data. I request that this be monitored going forward to not allow such retaliatory action, and CGS will continue to monitor, as well.

I thank both Arts and Sciences leadership and the Graduate School for their support and time spent on this matter.

The following pages contained the supportive material discussed above. Theatre, Dance, Art, and then Dr. Smith-Shank’s own documented claims.

(It should be noted that CGS has been working with the Dept of Art for some time regarding their contractual duties. There have been complaints that they are being misused, as well. Students have to date been unwilling to individually come forward to anyone but their delegate, for fear of retaliation, in a very similar manner at the AAEP issue. We continue to work with them and will bring forward any concerns as we are able.)

Response from the Dept of Theatre CGS Delegate re: GTA duties

Hello Josh,

Thank you for your hard work on that report. We have actually encountered a similar, though less egregious, issue in our department this semester.

First, an overview of GTA appointments in our department. We are split among three areas: Design/Tech, Acting/Directing, and History, Literature, and Criticism (HLC). Appointments depend strongly on which area grad students fall into.

Design/Tech: These GTAs serve as supervisors to undergraduate students in the costume, scenic, and lighting studios for 20 hours/week. Their hours are carefully documented, similar to clocking in to an hourly job.

Theatre 2100 (Introduction to Theatre): This is the largest course taught in our department, with student enrollment ranging from 400-700 students per semester. It is taught in a lecture/recitation structure, with anywhere from 4-8 GTAs assigned to the course. GTAs assigned to this course, who come from either HLC or Acting/Directing, are responsible for recitation sections of 35 students maximum that meet twice a week. Although the syllabus is created by the course instructor/supervisor, GTAs are responsible for planning lessons and activities and writing quizzes for their own recitations, so quite a bit of prep is involved. GTAs are also responsible for all grading of their sections. So the duties for this assignment involve lesson planning, teaching

approximately 6 hours per week, attending the lecture (given by the supervisor) 2 hours per week, attending an administrative meeting .5 hours per week, and grading, which can vary from 3 to 8 hours per week depending on which assignments are due. A full time (50% FTE) appointment to teach this course involves three recitations (approximately 100-105 students total) per semester.

Theatre 2100 Online: This course, while covering the same material as the in-person section, is structured a bit differently. The primary duties for GTAs assigned to this course are grading assignments, moderating discussion posts, and leading live chat sessions. Typically, a full time appointment for this course involves responsibility for 60 students (4 sections of 15).

Theatre 2811 (Craft of Acting): This is the introductory acting class, usually taught by Acting/Directing GTAs. While there is a standard syllabus, GTAs are responsible for lesson planning within that structure. A full time appointment for this course usually involves teaching 2 sections with a maximum enrollment of 18 students.

Other Courses, Solo-Taught: The majority of other teaching assignments are courses for which the GTA is the instructor of record, and is solely responsible for syllabus creation, lesson planning, grading, and exam creation. These include Theatre 2110 (Script Analysis), Theatre 2831 (Movement and Voice), Theatre 2367.01 (America on Stage), Theatre 3111 (Directing), Theatre 3597 (Censorship and Performance), and Theatre 3921S (InterAct). A full time appointment in any of these courses involves teaching ONE section of the course. Enrollment varies from course to course, with acting-based classes having a lower enrollment maximum.

There are some assignments which do not fall into any of these categories, which may or may not be appointed any given semester. But there are several administrative assignments that are "standing" in our department, such as one working with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Typically, students assigned this appointment are split, 10 hr/wk with that and 10 hr/wk teaching, for example, one section of Craft of Acting, when the full time appointment for that course is usually two sections. Also, usually this assignment is given to a grad student with interest in Shakespeare and education, so it aligns with their research interests. Assignments are sometimes split in other ways. For example, my first semester I taught two recitations of Theatre 2100 live on campus and graded one online section of the same course.

[emphasis added]

However, based on my knowledge, I would say that the AAEP Chair's claim about theatre GTAs ("Semester One: GTA teaches newly assigned course. Semester Two: GTA teaches two courses.") is false. I have not known of any GTAs being responsible for two solo-taught courses, or being instructor of record for two separate courses (not counting GTAs teaching multiple sections of the same course).

Second, since it may help in your discussion with AAEP, and is related to the descriptions I gave above, there's been some miscommunication between our faculty and the graduate student body about GTA assignments this academic year. Prior to the Fall 2014 semester, we were informed of a change in our responsibilities. Anyone with a full time administrative or practical assignment, or anyone teaching a solo-taught course (Censorship, Directing, etc.) which they had previously taught would also be responsible for grading one section (15 students) of Theatre 2100 Online. Anyone teaching a solo-taught course for the first time was not assigned additional students. The faculty implied that the justification for this change was to ensure that all GTAs in all areas were actually putting in 20 hrs/wk, since the Design/Tech GTAs have their hours documented, but no one else does.

While that reasoning is logical, the decision was communicated to graduate students in June of 2014, after contracts had been signed for the 14-15 school year. The administration implied that assessment of this new structure would be made after the Fall 2014 semester; to my knowledge no such evaluation has begun.

That change remained in place for the Spring 2015 semester. However, the assignments did not follow the information given to us in June 2014. For example, two GTAs teaching solo-taught courses which they have taught before were assigned 30 Theatre 2100 online students, rather than 15. One GTA who taught a solo-taught class for the first time in both Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters was assigned online students, despite this contradicting the department's communicated policy. Additionally, one GTA is teaching a solo-taught class for the first time this semester, AND is responsible for grading a separate (in person) section of Theatre 2100 with approximately 60 students. This is the first occurrence of this assignment. Not only does it exceed the 20 hr/wk commitment, but it certainly does not equalize assignments in any way.

The Graduate Theatre Syndicate, our student organization, is in the process of composing a letter to our faculty to indicate our frustration at the lack of communication about changes in this policy, as well as the need for evaluation (which was promised) before any further changes are made.

I apologize for the length of this email, but I hope this information is helpful to you. If there is anything else I can do, please let me know.

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follow up email:

I would also add that in Spring 2014 semester, I had an experience with "holding hours back." I had been assigned a half-time Theatre 2100 assignment and a half-time administrative assignment which involved completing a department assessment for accreditation. Due to extenuating circumstances involving a sudden change in department leadership, I was unable to work on this project. About half way through the semester, I was informed that my assignment had changed to be administrative help to the new department chair (which involved creating spreadsheets and making copies, and nothing directly related to my own research) AND that I "owed" the hours which had not been completed earlier in the semester through no fault of my own. I have never been under contract as a GAA, only as a GTA. This experience also seems like it might be relevant to this discussion.

We are still drafting the letter, and about to circulate it to our student body before sending it to the faculty. At that point, we may look to CGS for some support as well.

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Response from the Dept of Dance CGS delegate re: GTA duties
(note that instructors of record for a GEC class = 20hrs per the chart)

Department of Dance ~ Graduate Associate Handbook

Assignments, Responsibilities, and Duties

All GAs in the Department of Dance are required to participate in the Department TA Workshop prior to the beginning of Autumn Semester (typically the Thursday and Friday before the first week of classes). All graduate students are required to participate two of the three years of the graduate program; for example, you are a Fellow the first year and so will attend the second and third years or is a GA all three years but need only attend the first and second years.

All GAs are to be available and on duty through finals week of each semester. There are no exceptions to this policy unless approved by the Chair (see the Application for Leave Forms section and policy).

The Department Chair in consultation with the GTA Faculty Mentor and Academic

Program Coordinator makes GA assignments depending on Department needs. All GAs with teaching assignments are under the direction of the GTA Faculty Mentor. GAs with administrative or research assignments are under the direction of the area supervisor or the Department Chair. GAs are responsible for scheduling regular meetings with the supervisor at which time ongoing responsibilities and duties are clearly defined.

Since OSU transitioned from quarters to semesters in Autumn 2012, the Department of Dance must keep in mind the availability of studio and classroom space, timing of courses, and course crediting when determining workloads for faculty and GAs. Elective studio classes are typically credited at two semester units per student. Contact hours (including preparation and conclusion for the student) are three to four hours a week. Two to three additional hours per week required for “outside work”, thus implicating the work effort for instructor.

When assigning workloads, the Department Chair is considerate of keeping the “hats” of various GA duties to a minimum to assist students with time management as well as being focused and effective in performance of their duties. Based on student feedback about the time-intensiveness and density of their graduate studies, the Department Chair and others continually assess and request feedback on workload assignments for GAs remaining fair to the individual and equitable between individuals. The Department of Dance desires graduate students to work deeply in their coursework, their projects, and in their GA assignments. Any steps the Department can take to supply the student with the conditions to be successful, focused, professional, deep, and reflective are welcomed.

Rubric For Assigning GA Duties

Assign all GA jobs a value of 5, 10, 15, or 20 hours a week:

Hours Allocated	Duties	Notes
10	Instructor of record for any 2x or 3x week studio course in the Elective or Major program that meets 160-240 minutes	Report to GTA Faculty Mentor; homework assignments, final assessment, office hours, studio maintenance; peer and faculty observation and mentoring required.
15	Instructor of record for any 2x or 3x week studio course in the Elective or Major program that meets 250-300 minutes	Report to GTA Faculty Mentor; homework assignments, final assessment, office hours, studio maintenance; peer and faculty observation and mentoring required.
5	Instructor of record for any studio course that is the same “prep” as another	e.g. if someone has two sections of Contemporary I, that would be total of 15, not 20

Hours Allocated	Duties	Notes
20	Instructor of record for any GE course	Report to GTA Faculty Mentor; enrollment cap at 25; with a TA can be up to 50. Homework assignments, final assessment, office hours; peer and faculty observation and mentoring required.
10	TA (assist instructor of record) for any GE course	Report to instructor of record and GTA Faculty Mentor; enrollment cap at 25; with a TA can be up to 50.
10	Publicity/Communication Support	Report to Chair, work with External Relations Coordinator; maintain blog, social networks, poster and postcard distributions, liaison for student productions; make video "commercials" etc.
5-20	Production Support	Report to Chair, work with Production Manager(s); Autumn 10 hours, Spring 20 hours; depending on anticipated productions
5-20	Faculty Research Support	Report to faculty supervisor; Untenured faculty allocated 5 hours per week per semester during first four years; other faculty can request and receive based on merit, funding, and available GAs
5-10	Chair Support	Report to Chair, may also work with External Relations Coordinator; administrative support, e.g. project planning, fund raising, grant writing, document preparation
5-10	Undergraduate Studies Support	Primarily a service position; report to Academic Program Coordinator and External Relations Coordinator; assist with Recruitment, Auditions, College Days
5-10	Technology and Media support	Report to instructor of record and GTA Faculty Mentor; teaching modules in major's "technology" components of courses; coordinate lab and media needs with Media Manager

Graduate Teaching Associates

GTAs may be an instructor of record for Elective and/or Major studio class(es) or General Education (GE) lecture classes, may assist the instructor of a GE or Major lecture class, and/or may be assigned additional administrative duties in the Department to complete their 20-hour a week workload.

All GTAs are observed in teaching for faculty feedback (and so writing letters of recommendation) and monitoring program quality. The Academic Program Coordinator will work with the GTA Faculty Mentor to assign faculty observations of both studio and lecture courses, following as closely as possible the process below. **GTA Studio/ Lecture Observation forms** are available on the Department website.

When assigning faculty observers, the Academic Program Coordinator and GTA Faculty Mentor will endeavor to:

- assign one faculty member per GTA, trying to accommodate MFA/PhD committee members when possible.
- distribute faculty observation assignments to faculty and to GTAs.
- remind faculty and GTAs of protocol for scheduling observations:
 - The GTA is responsible to contact his/her assigned faculty observer in order to schedule an observation of teaching
 - The GTA should contact the GTA Faculty Mentor in the case that his/her assigned faculty lead is unable to schedule an observation because of conflicting teaching schedules.
 - Email completed observations to the GTA Faculty Mentor and Academic Program Coordinator by the end of the semester for documentation in the student's file.

Note: some students may attend lecture or studio classes as part of the Program 60 (http://www.ced.osu.edu/CEd_pro60.php). Ohio residents age 60 or older are invited to enrich their lives by experiencing the academic excellence and world-renowned research available at The Ohio State University. Each year, thousands of Ohioans take advantage of this tuition-free, noncredit/non-degree program to connect to the university community. Program 60 students attend undergraduate, graduate-level, and distance learning courses through Program 60 on a space-available basis.

Graduate Administrative or Research Associates

GAAs or GRAs under faculty supervisors may have duties such as researching grants, writing grants, indexing or proofing written work, semiotic analysis, movement analysis, information gathering for a creative project, and video organizing.

Faculty supervisors of GAAs or GRAs are responsible for the following:

- Set up regular weekly meetings to calibrate the amount of work assigned (meeting is part of work hours); work continues through finals week
- Be prepared for creative exploration of tasks and work that assist you and enrich the GA experience
- Request tasks or projects appropriate to the amount of work time and effort
- Monitor the tasks or projects outcome of the GA's effort and give feedback

- Remind the GA to keep track of work hours; **do not ask them to “bank” hours**, e.g. 0 hours one week, 10 hours the next week [emphasis added]
- Support hours continue through finals week
- If you do not have tasks or projects, tell them in advance and remind them to come to the Department Chair for tasks or projects
- If you anticipate the use of car, other modes of travel, or other cost-incurring activities, contact the Administrative Manager first
- Do not ask GAs for personal help with errands, laundry, etc.
- Do work with GAs on things such as researching grants, writing grants, indexing or proofreading work, semiotic analysis, movement analysis, information gathering for a creative project, video organizing, developing teaching materials, etc.
- GAs may use Reception office computer, copier/scanner/fax on your behalf; phone calls should be made from your office phone, not a GA’s personal phone
- Contact the Administrative Manager if personnel-related concerns or issues arise

GAs or GRAs are responsible for the following:

- Meet regularly with your supervisor, including through finals week
- Keep track of your working hours, including meeting times
- You may offer to “bank” hours within reason
- Support hours continue through finals week
- See the Department Chair or Academic Program Coordinator if no work is assigned from your supervisor
- Be proactive in suggesting next steps, researching further, bringing back information/organization/ideas in ways that further assist the supervisor
- Ask if the supervisor has asked, or ask yourself, the Administrative Manager if tasks or projects involve travel, use of your car or phone, or outside costs
- Ask the Administrative Manager or Department Chair if you are asked to do manual or menial labor that does not appear to support creative activity or scholarship
- Contact the Administrative Manager if personnel-related concerns or issues arise

Dept of Art

GTA guidelines per departmental Grad Handbook

<https://art.osu.edu/sites/art.osu.edu/files/2014-2015%20Department%20of%20Art%20Graduate%20MFA%20Handbook.pdf>

“The assignments involve assisting professors in regularly scheduled classes, teaching within Department of Art programs, such as Foundations, and may also include assisting technicians. Associate stipends are based on 50% of full-time (20 hours per week). First, second and third year GTAs are also awarded stipends and fee waivers.”

No mention of the time needed to teach courses, any specific 5hr requirement, or possible required service to the Urban Arts Space as claimed by AAEP.