Portland State
UNIVERSITY

Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook
Department of English Writing Program
Portland State University
2025-2026

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Welcome to the Portland State University Department of English Writing Program! You have been selected to teach and tutor in our program because we are convinced of your potential to be an excellent teacher. We trust you to make principled decisions in all you do. In turn, we will work to provide the best support system we can to help you in your efforts.

GA-ships here are professional opportunities designed to allow you to learn many facets of teaching writing in a collaborative and supportive writing program. Your GA appointment is a kind of apprenticeship in which you not only practice teaching but also learn about being an academic professional—what it means to be a member of a writing program and an English department. Most GAs will tell you that it's both intellectually challenging and rewarding, but they'll tell you too that it's a lot of hard work.

This handbook will provide you with an overview of who we are, how the program is organized, and what you can expect in your new job. The information, guidelines, and policies that follow are here for your reference. As you begin teaching for us, questions will occur to you about the most appropriate or most effective way to handle any number of instructional or professional challenges and opportunities. We hope you will find useful answers here—or at least a starting point for answers. This handbook seeks to make your experience teaching for PSU as smooth and positive as possible while also ensuring that the classes that undergraduates take from us are the best we can offer.

Special thanks to the University of Minnesota and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst for ideas drawn from their handbooks.

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Overview and Program Information

Mission Statement of the Writing Program

The Writing Program's mission is to enact the English Department's mission of promoting writing in all its forms—professional and technical writing, creative writing, basic literacy—as well as the reading and critical interpretation of texts. Our mission includes explicitly connecting writing with the reading, interpretation, and the production of texts. In making writing, reading, critical thinking, and effective assessment central curricular components of all of our classes and our outreach, we help the University create a democratic citizenry that is fully capable of responding thoughtfully to diversity, conflict, and potentially volatile public issues.

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What's the Writing Program like?

Overall, PSU's English department writing programs and course offerings have expanded to include creative writing in fiction, nonfiction and poetry, in addition to technical writing, publishing and many other kinds of writing. The writing program that you will be working in, however, is focused mainly on academic writing, thus it includes a variety of general and specialized lower and upper division courses in different aspects of academic writing

Our common concern is to provide PSU students with the best instruction in writing that we can. Since writing is the primary means of examination in college, their ability to write will in great part determine if they succeed in school. More importantly, though, we want to give them "portable skills" that they can take with them to other classes, to the workplace, and to their personal lives. Of course, we can't do everything in one tutorial session or in one course, but we can move our students significantly further along in their development as writers.

What's an English GA-ship like?

All assignments officially are set at 12 hours a week, with two of these hours devoted to holding office hours to meet with students. But GAs sometimes work much more, as they juggle their writing program assignments with their own work as graduate students.

You will be doing a variety of assignments, including teaching your own courses and tutoring in a Writing Center. You will also have the opportunity to participate on academic committees and to gain administrative experience by serving as assistant director of writing. In addition to taking English 518, the year-long teaching practicum, you'll be participating in a variety of other supportive activities, including teaching observations, special workshops, and other exchanges of "best practices." Most GAs find that when they reflect after a year or two of all these collaborative activities, they feel equipped to take on any teaching challenge that is thrown their way.

Along with the rewards of working with students, GAs say that close collegial relationships with other GAs, exchanging ideas about scholarly work and teaching, are a highlight of the program. Some former GAs stay in touch for decades after graduate school. You'll no doubt find that the sharing of ideas about your teaching and scholarly work is invaluable.

GA Sessions and Responsibilities

- **Orientation:** All new GAs spend a week getting oriented to the program, to one another, and to teaching writing.
- **English 518:** This course is a year-long seminar (1 credit per term) in teaching writing that includes readings, group activities, practical strategies, informal sessions on current issues and insights in the classroom and tutorial sessions, speakers on teaching strategies, and many other activities. Fall quarter will be devoted to the nuts and bolts of teaching writing—writing processes, responding to writing, ESL issues, classroom management, building syllabi and assignments. Winter and spring quarters are more open-ended. GAs help set the agendas for winter and spring.
- **Writing Center:** Those GAs with Writing Center assignments in a particular quarter will

participate in the meetings, readings, and self-assessments associated with those assignments.

- **Class Observations:** Throughout the year, you may observe other instructors as they teach and tutor, and they may observe you. Most GAs find these observations enormously helpful because you have the opportunity to see other teachers with other styles at work and to get feedback on your own work.

- **Teaching Materials:** During your assistantship, you develop class materials that you can use for a teaching portfolio. These materials will be beneficial if you decide to pursue a teaching career.

- **Assessments of Your Work:** Since so much of the program is based on teaching as reflective practice, you'll be writing self-assessments, getting the assessments of the Director of Composition, your peers and course evaluations completed by your students. All of these will give you different perspectives on your teaching and tutoring.

Teaching Assignments for First Year GAs

First-year GAs typically tutor in the Writing Center for two quarters and teach WR 121Z for one quarter.

Writing Center Tutor: With training and supervision by WC coordinator Dan DeWeese, tutors help students one-to-one with the writing problems they bring into 30- to 60-minute sessions at the Writing Center. Typical problems include getting started writing, organization, revision, and editing. Many students are non-native speakers of English who need help not only with the conventions of using the English language, but also with the conventions of North American academic writing. Throughout the quarter you may also present in classes on various aspects of writing: invention, revision, collaboration, and other topics.

Teaching WR 121Z College Writing: Typically, these courses feature three writing assignments and a process-oriented approach using peer workshops, student-teacher conferences, and writing portfolios. For your first term teaching, you will be given a syllabus to work from, which you can then adapt in subsequent terms. We will spend time together working on learning outcomes, course design, syllabi, and possible class activities during the week-long fall workshop. During the term, English 518 Teaching College Writing is the main place where you will cover the many topics involved in teaching writing, from encouraging revision to managing the classroom.

Teaching Assignments for Second Year GAs

Second-year GAs will indicate teaching preferences to the Director of Composition from the following possibilities:

- WR 222 Writing Research Papers (4)
- WR 227 Introduction to Technical Writing (4)
- WR 212 Introduction to Fiction Writing
- WR 213 Introduction to Poetry Writing
- WR 214 Introduction to Nonfiction Writing

Ideally, each GA will get at least one of their preferences, and each GA will teach each quarter.

However, enrollments and needs can be unpredictable, leading to cancellations and changes. This unpredictability means that you may not necessarily get your preferences and may teach a section of a different course instead.

The Writing Program's Support System

During the one or two years you spend in the writing program, you will engage in supportive activities designed to help you develop as a teacher. The terms that best describe the program are "teachers' collaborative" and "teaching as reflective practice." That is, the writing program is a place:

- where teaching is seen as intellectually challenging work.
- to learn and share strategies for teaching.
- to reflect on and develop your individual strengths as a teacher.
- to contribute your ideas and energies to building and sustaining our writing program.

There are many resources that contribute to these practices, especially the PSU English GA Resources website: sites.google.com/a/pdx.edu/pdx-ga-writing-resources/.

However, keep in mind that the people you're surrounded with in the program are also terrific resources. Come talk to any of us, any time; that's why we're here.

The Writing Center

Knowledgeable and friendly tutors offer help with all phases of writing for all students, which includes you! Students can call 503-725-3570, stop by Cramer Hall 188F for an appointment, or visit the website at pdx.edu/writing-center/.

Campus Resources

- Portland State University Intensive English Language Program (IELP) for multilingual/English Language-Learning speakers and writers pdx.edu/esl/ielp-learning-center

- Disability Resource Center (DRC): pdx.edu/drc/

- Learning Disability & ADHD Assessments and Testing Services via Student Health & Counseling (SHAC): pdx.edu/shac/testing-services

Our Students

PSU students are a rewarding group to work with—open, friendly, appreciative, and willing to tackle whatever challenges we devise for them.

PSU is an urban school, and as such, serves a wide variety of needs in the Portland community and surrounding cities. Of its twenty-two thousand undergraduates, many are first-generation college students. Many transfer to PSU from other schools or take courses concurrently with a different school. Other students start out at PSU, with the intent to transfer out later on. While many students are of 'traditional' college age, many others are older: they may be returning to take new coursework, earn an advanced degree, or participate in PSU's senior auditor program.

One unique aspect of PSU's student population is the large number of non-native English speakers. Some of these are international students who emigrated to study for a short period of time. Some have recently immigrated here from other countries. Others have spoken English for years but originally studied in one or more other languages.

Many students juggle other demands outside of school, including part-time or full-time work, parenting, or other personal obligations.

You will find varied writing needs and abilities in the students. Because students primarily choose their own classes rather than being placed in them, your students will have a broad range of experience and techniques: some may write better than you, while others may still need help with the basics. Most fall somewhere in between, but all offer challenges and opportunities in your classroom.

Writing Requirements at PSU

The writing requirement at PSU is unlike that of many other schools. Instead of a particular first-year and upper division writing combination, students follow one of several different paths:

- Students who begin their post-secondary studies at PSU typically take a series of University Studies (UNST) courses, which are four-year interdisciplinary classes that integrate writing, critical thinking, technical literacy, and numerical literacy using theme-based curricula. Successful completion of a UNST track fulfills the PSU writing requirement.

- Many students you'll be teaching did not start the UNST program—they are often transfer students, international students, or non-traditional/returning students. For these reasons (or others), these students will take WR 121Z and an upper-level writing course to satisfy their requirement.

- Finally, students can augment their writing studies by taking Writing-Intensive Courses (WICs),which are discipline-specific courses with a writing-intensive assessment model.

The paths to fulfilling a writing requirement for undergraduate students are often labyrinthine. New students, especially, can have difficulty navigating their responsibilities. Fortunately, there are resources in the University your students can consult if they have questions you don't feel comfortable answering.

Goals and Strategies

To fulfill our mission, we give students transferable skills that they adapt to any writing situations.

Classes are student-centered with much active learning and opportunity to write formally and informally; instructor lectures are likely to be "mini-lectures" with more energy going to facilitating active learning and writing. Other courses are more specialized in focus. We start from the premise of respect for our students and a willingness to work with them in order to help them grow as writers, readers, and literate citizens of our community.

The following moves characterize all our writing courses:

1. Focus attention on the rhetorical situation (context, audience, purpose, etc.)

2. Emphasize process through activities supporting invention, drafting, revision, and editing.

3. Use collaborative work to hone rhetorical awareness and practical writing strategies.

4. Provide written and oral feedback on student writing from the teacher, other students, and the writer themself at the various stages of the process.

5. Provide opportunities to write in a variety of genres for different rhetorical situations, with attention to appropriate textual conventions.

6. Engage mechanics, grammar, and sentence-level work during the editing stage of the process, but not a central focus of the course.

7. Offer samples of student and professional texts as samples (but not models) of approaches to rhetorical situations.

8. Emphasize metacognition through reflective writing.

Within this framework, you are encouraged to develop your own teaching style and materials. Not every instructor has to do the same thing on Tuesday and Thursday, so long as we share the features of this common approach.

Learning Outcomes

All courses should share outcomes, although there are many ways to meet them. Below you'll find the outcomes for WR 121Z, as adapted in January 2015.

WR 121Z College Writing Outcomes*

Bulletin Description: Study and practice of critical writing, with focus on developing rhetorical awareness and productive composition processes. Designed as a foundation for college-level writing.

Department Description: A course designed to help students develop strategies for writing successfully throughout the university and beyond. The course utilizes student writing as well as outside texts (primarily nonfiction) for discussion and examination, but focuses primarily on developing writing processes. Students will write at least 5000 words (including drafts, non-graded writing, and informal papers) some of which may be multimodal in nature. 2000 words of this total are final drafts, which students have rewritten after receiving revision-oriented feedback. Students will participate in peer response groups and conferences with instructors throughout the course.

By the end of WR 121Z, students should be able to:

Processes

- Employ writing processes, including drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading, considering clarity, purpose, audience, and style
- Understand that multiple drafts enhance the final written product.
- Work with other students to provide feedback, critiquing the work of others and revising based on suggestions of others
- Use composing processes and tools as a means to discover and reconsider ideas

Rhetorical Knowledge

- Learn and use key rhetorical frameworks through analyzing and composing a variety of texts
- Read and compose in several genres
- Understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes
- Utilize a variety of rhetorical strategies for expository writing

Critical Practices for Reading and Composing

- Compose and read for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical contexts
- Determine and select effective evidence for writing texts given the genre, audience and purpose
- Evaluate sources and materials based on credibility, suitability, timeliness, perspective and effectiveness
- Use strategies—such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign—to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources

Knowledge of Conventions

- Develop knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling, through practice in composing and revising
- Understand why genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics vary
- Employ common formats and/or design features for different kinds of texts
- Adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities
- Explore the concepts of intellectual property (such as fair use and copyright) that motivate documentation conventions
- Apply citation conventions systematically in their own work to uphold the principles of academic integrity

* Adapted from Writing Program Administrators' Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition

Teaching Policies

<u>Office Hours</u>

If teaching, you must establish office hours immediately, inform your students on your syllabus, and inform the Department of English via email at <u>eng@pdx.edu</u>, so they can post your hours. Plan to hold at least two office hours a week and be available for appointments with students at other times.

Before the quarter begins, please advise the Department Manager or the front desk staff of the best way for students to contact you. This should include on-campus office hours and your current PSU email address. This information will be posted online and on the bulletin boards outside the offices.

<u>Communication with Students</u>

Students should contact you via your PSU email account or meet with you in your office during appointed times. Do not give the Graduate Assistant Office or Department of English office numbers out to students as a way to contact you. Although it is your decision to do so, we advise against providing students your personal email or phone number.

<u>Student Registration in Your Courses</u>

Prior to the beginning of classes, you can find a class list of all your students online through Banweb. However, keep in mind that this list will change frequently before courses begin and often will continue to change throughout the first week of class.

Classes are capped at 20 for WR 121Z. Don't be tempted to allow students over that limit, as you can't always tell whether students will later drop your course. There are always other sections either that term or another term that the student can take. At the other end of the spectrum, each class should have a minimum of 10-12 people or it may be canceled. Cancellations are determined on a class by class basis. If your class is canceled, you will be assigned to the PSU Writing Center for the assigned term.

On the first day of class, the students in your course may not match your class list. You may also be contacted by students who want to add the course although the class is full. What should you do?

> **If a student is on your roster but does not show up for the first day of class,** you may administratively drop them by emailing the student and informing them that they have been withdrawn from the course due to non-attendance. Forward that email and the name and PSU ID number of the student, along with the Subject, Course Section, and CRN of the class they are to be removed from to Chloe Bobar (grdstudy@pdx.edu). Chloe will work with the Registrar's office to have the student withdrawn.

> **If a student is <u>not</u> on your list** but attends the first day asking to add your class, you may add them if you have space in the class. The student will need to bring an add/drop form for you to sign. The student will then take the form to the registrar to register for the class. A student adding your course should attend class as normal even before official registration is completed. **If you have more students who wish to add than you have space in the class, you should follow the official registration waitlist on BanWeb. Please note that once class has started, the BanWeb waitlist is not active – students need to manually add themselves with add/drop forms.**

<u>Course Evaluations</u>

Every course requires a student course evaluation during the last two weeks of the term. Evaluations provide student feedback for consideration in future practice. Student evaluations must be solicited and collected as objectively as possible, and they should have no influence on student grades.

The English Department switched from hard copy to online evaluations. All students will be emailed a link to the evaluation. To improve completion rates, we ask all GAs to remind students to fill out these evaluations. You may also allow time in class for students to complete evaluations (on laptops or phones). If you devote class time to course evaluations, you must not be present during that time. We recommend that you announce that you will be leaving the room ten minutes prior to the end of class and ask that they use that time to fill out the evaluations. All evaluations are confidential.

<u>Canceling Class</u>

Your contract for teaching includes an expectation that you will attend all course sessions during the term. However, occasionally, you may need to cancel a class. If you know that you must miss a day or two for professional reasons (e.g., giving a paper at a conference), you should notify the Director of Composition by providing a written statement of the reason for the cancellation, and the day you will miss. GAs often substitute for one another in cases like these.

If an absence is due to an emergency or illness, you must notify the Director of Composition and the Department of English main office with as much notice as possible. Please communicate to your class about the cancellation and replacement activities via D2L notification and email.

<u>Sick Time</u>

In the event that you or a qualifying family member are ill or injured and you are unable to report to work you may use any sick time you have accrued. For every 30 hours you work you will accrue 1 hour of sick time. You can accrue up to 40 hours per year, and transfer up to 40 hours into year 2 (for a max of 80 hours).

Hours worked is based on your full-time equivalency (FTE). Graduate Assistants at .3FTE earn .4 hours of sick time per week.

To use sick time, notify eng@pdx.edu and the Director of Rhetoric and Composition. If you will miss a class you must state in the email the class you will miss, the day and time. Do not attempt to find a replacement instructor for your class.

At the end of each month, you will get an email asking if you used any sick time. If you would like to use any of your accrued hours you must respond to the email with your director copied and let me know how many hours/day you used.

<u>Papers, Records, and Confidentiality</u>

All employees of PSU must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). According to University policy, student papers cannot be left outside of a secure area. Please have all students hand in papers either directly to you, or arrange a box or envelope for them in the office in Fariborz Maseeh Hall, Room 310. The same applies to the return of papers once graded. If you use the office to house graded student papers for pickup, please provide a box or folder to contain them and advise students of a deadline to retrieve them. When the deadline passes, you will need to either

put them in the recycling/shredder or retain them. Under recordkeeping guidelines, you are required to keep your grades and any grading notes for a period of two years, but not the actual student work.

Student records and papers are confidential, and students have a right to see their records upon request. Student records include retained papers, grading notes that were shared with other faculty or academic committees, and any and all correspondence regarding the student or student performance. Your personal grading notes that were not shared with any other party are not considered official records and do not need to be shared at the student's request.

FERPA provides guidance for the disclosure of student information. As most student information is confidential, and the student has the right to request that no information of any kind be released without their specific authorization, it is best to refer all third party or parental requests for information to the Dean of Student Life Office (503-725-4422) rather than provide information yourself. For more information, see pdx.edu/registration/student-records-privacy-policy.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment violates PSU policies for its faculty, staff, and students. The university defines sexual harassment as "the use of power or authority by one person to pressure another into accepting unwelcome verbal, physical, or sexual conduct." It is conduct "that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic or work performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile educational or working environment" or "where it is understood explicitly or implicitly that submission to such conduct is a condition of one's grade, participation in an educational or employment activity, or employment decision."

Be aware that sexual harassment is a very serious offense. An instructor should not sexually harass a student; furthermore, they must take care not to behave in a way that a student might misconstrue as sexual harassment. If you find yourself sexually harassed by a student, or if a student complains that they are being harassed by another student, these too are violations of the Student Conduct Code. Notify your supervisor, the Director of Composition, as soon as possible to resolve the problem.

Safety and Security Issues

Emergencies

FOR MEDICAL, CRIMINAL AND OTHER EMERGENCIES: CALL 9-1-1

For situations that do not require 9-1-1 but are of immediate concern, call the Campus Public Safety Office emergency 503-725-4404 (5-4404 if you are calling from a campus phone).

Non-Emergencies

Some of you will be on campus evenings and weekends. Keep in mind you can call Campus Security (5-4407) if you need non-emergency assistance such as a locked classroom door, escort service, sudden power outage, etc. The office is located in the Campus Public Safety building at Montgomery and Broadway, across the street from Cramer Hall.

If you observe a non-student (this can sometimes be hard to tell) who seems to be hanging around the hallways, or someone who causes you concern, contact the Campus Public Safety Office. If you are not sure whether or not you should be concerned, call anyway.

Grading

Final grades are entered online using Banweb. Grades are due the Tuesday after finals week by 5 P.M. If you are unable to enter your grades, or need help submitting them (preferably well before the deadline), contact the English Department. Full instructions for grading, submitting a change or late grade may be found on the following website: pdx.edu/registration/online_grading.html

Please be aware of the PSU policies on giving Incompletes or X-grades. As a GA, providing an Incomplete instead of a grade is not recommended due to the brief length of your appointment and the department's inability to fairly provide a grade in your absence. Incompletes should only be given if a contract is written and agreed upon by both the instructor and the student. Please read the PSU policies on giving Incompletes (pdx.edu/registration/grading-system), and contact the Director of Writing before you issue an Incomplete. (X-grades are a complicated sort of Incomplete that are very rarely necessary. For more information, ask a fellow GA or the Director of Composition.)

Keep track of student attendance throughout the term. You will be required to enter a "Last Date of Attendance" for any student who earns a non-passing grade.

Academic Honesty

The PSU Student Code of Conduct prohibits all forms of academic cheating, fraud, and dishonesty. These acts include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, buying and selling of course assignments and research papers, performing academic assignments (including testing and examinations) for other persons, unauthorized disclosure and receipt of academic information, and other practices commonly understood to be academically dishonest.

Acts of academic dishonesty may result in one or more of the following sanctions: a failing grade on the exam or assignment for which the dishonesty occurred, disciplinary reprimand, disciplinary probation, loss of privileges, required community service, suspension from the University for a period of up to five years, and/or dismissal from the University.

Helping Students Avoid Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism

- Use process to prevent student plagiarism. If students are brainstorming topics and doing invention and revision, it is harder for them to plagiarize.
- Spend plenty of time teaching students how and why to cite secondary sources. Have them practice the difference between paraphrase and word rearranging.
- Have students turn in copies of the parts of secondary materials they use or an annotated bibliography.
- Explain what plagiarism is, how seriously you and PSU take it, and how serious the penalties are. Try to clear up student misperceptions about it.
- Make students aware that it is easy for you to spot stylistic differences in writing and that you have access to "paper mill" sites, as well as plagiarism checkers.
- Give special attention to explaining the cultural implications of plagiarism, since for many ESL students, conventions around citing others are very different from American conventions.
- Explain the special problems that material pulled from the web poses. Students often need special help citing and evaluating web sources. Provide examples of how to cite electronic sources.

What to Do if You Suspect a Student of Plagiarism

If you suspect a student has plagiarized, it is important not to accuse the student outright of plagiarism. Indeed, most incidents of plagiarism are unintentional. Ask to meet with the student, and work through a part of the paper to discuss paraphrasing, quotation, and citation. This kind of one-on-one work focused on rhetorical issues in writing can often solve the problem. Ask the student to correct the issues and submit a new draft. If the paper in question has no secondary sources and you suspect it is a "canned" paper, ask not only for the process work, but also insist on major revision, so that the student must change the paper.

These strategies can be particularly helpful with "naïve plagiarism," where students are genuinely confused about it and need to be walked through the process. They can also help with cases of "intentional plagiarism" when you don't have sufficient proof to show plagiarism.

If these efforts do not work (i.e., the student resubmits another plagiarized draft, and you have evidence to support your claim), then you and the Director of Composition will report the case. PSU policy allows you to fail the paper. If the grade is lowered because of plagiarism, the case must be reported to the Dean of Student Life to explain the changed grade and to give the student the right to appeal. Be sure to consult the Director of Composition at any time in a plagiarism problem, but especially when the initial approach described above does not work. Academic dishonesty is a serious accusation and must be handled carefully for the protection of everyone involved.

Working with Students

<u>Student Attendance</u>

Since so much time in our writing classes is spent on participatory activities, students simply must attend class regularly in order to maximize potential for all students. Students should be on time and prepared for every class meeting and remain for the duration of each lesson.

Students should be allowed some absences in case of illness or emergency. The instructor of each class determines their specific absence policy which should be clearly stated in the course syllabus. However, there are some general guidelines we like to follow. After more than one week's worth of absences, however, a student's grade <u>may</u> be lowered; with over two week's worth of absences, they <u>may</u> fail the course. Students are responsible for completing missed assignments and should contact you, preferably in advance, to rearrange deadlines if an absence is unavoidable.

This is the program guideline, but note that the operative word for penalties is "may." It's up to you to decide what is fair in each individual case. Keep in mind that you will almost certainly have to make some judgment calls that are exceptions to/interpretations of the absence rules. Try to use your best judgment and consider 'fairness' to yourself and the other students in the class. Feel free to consult with the Director of Composition if you are uncertain about how to deal with a specific case.

Athletes, musicians, and other students may participate in school-sponsored events for which they may miss classes. These absences are *not* automatically "excused." If students will miss class because of school activities, they should meet with you early in the term to arrange completion of their work. Options may include turning work in early and/or turning in additional assignments. If you find that students will miss more than 20 percent of the course or consistently miss important dates, such as

workshops, you may tell them either to enroll in a different section or to enroll during another quarter in which their attendance will not be a problem.

If a student tells you they must miss class to participate in a religious observance, grant permission and confer on how to rearrange deadlines. Students must still complete any work for you or their colleagues.

Students with Disabilities

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the office at PSU that assists students with disabilities and their instructors. Providing an effective learning environment for students with special needs can mean a number of things, including altered deadlines, a designated note-taker in the classroom, or advanced distribution assignments and materials. If a student in your class is registered with the DRC, you will be contacted with specific information on the necessary accommodations or modifications. Keep in mind that any information regarding a student's disability is confidential.

All PSU syllabi must include a statement regarding the DRC in order to ensure student success. We recommend you include the following section in your syllabus.

> **Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities**
>
> PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, usable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment.
>
> If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu, [pdx.edu/drc](pdx.edu/drc).
>
> - If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and discuss your accommodations.
> - Students who need accommodations for tests and quizzes are expected to schedule their tests to overlap with the time the class is taking the test.
> - For information about emergency preparedness, please go to the Fire and Life Safety webpage (pdx.edu/environmental-health-safety/fire-and-life-safety) for information.

Contact the DRC with questions or concerns by phone (503-725-4150) or email (drc@pdx.edu).

Student Classroom Conduct

It is important to set a tone of collegial respect with students and to expect the same toward you and other students. PSU's Policy Statement on Rights, Freedoms, and Responsibilities of Students states, "A student who enrolls in a course has a responsibility to observe the standards of academic performance defined by the instructor and the standards of conduct established by the instructor so as to ensure the freedom of the instructor to teach and the freedom of the other students to learn." This means that a student's disruptive behavior is not acceptable and it is your responsibility to maintain order. If a student becomes disruptive, try first to deal with the problem as discreetly as

possible. If the problem persists or gets worse, you should ask the student to either cease the behavior or leave the class.

If the behavior becomes a chronic issue or the student has to leave, speak with the Director of Composition to strategize or mediate the problem with the student themself. In the extremely rare worst-case event that a student becomes verbally or physically threatening to you or to another student, you should immediately dismiss the class and notify Campus Security. Be certain to also contact the Director of Composition.

Emotionally Distressed Students

Students signal distress in a variety of ways—depression, hostility, disruptive behavior, withdrawal, sudden absences for a prolonged period of time. Because we have such small classes, know students by name, and simply have more opportunities to interact, writing instructors are likely to notice problems. If you have a distressed student, talk to him or her privately and express your concern and willingness to listen. If the problem seems more serious, refer the student to Student Health and Counseling (SHAC) at 503-725-2800. If the student is exhibiting extreme behavior, contact Campus Security at 503-725-4404 for immediate help.

Occasionally, a student may bring an issue to you that may cause you some concern. The CARE Team is a group of PSU staff in various departments (Student Life, SHAC, etc) that coordinate to address issues of student wellbeing. Collaborating with the CARE Team and submitting a CARE team report can help you connect the student to other resources at PSU that could be beneficial to them, while also minimizing the strain on you as you continue to fulfill your role as an instructor to your entire class of students.

If you believe that a student is in crisis, it is not an emergency situation, and calling campus security is not appropriate or prudent, Contact the C.A.R.E. Team Coordinator (503-725-4422). Please advise the Directors, who may also contact the Dean of Student Life Office (Smith Memorial Student Union 433; 503-725-4422; askdoslife@pdx.edu). They can provide resources, information, and assistance to students and faculty in a confidential manner that protects the student's right to privacy under FERPA.

Student Complaints

Occasionally, you may have a student who has a complaint about you. Grades, policies, and teaching style are often the source of the problem. In accordance with the English Department's policy on student complaints, a student who comes to the Director of Composition is always asked first if they have spoken to the instructor. Generally, the Director of Composition will listen to the problem and offer advice on how to negotiate with you. At that point, you may hear from the student. Keep in mind that when a student has a complaint, often they are inexperienced at negotiation. Your encounter is in itself a "teachable moment" for you to help them learn about professional diplomacy. Most cases end here; however, if the problem still isn't resolved, the Director of Composition will step in to mediate the problem more directly. In the rare cases in which the student wishes to pursue a formal grievance, they are advised to consult with the Office of Student Affairs.

Department of English Terms of Employment

As a Graduate Assistant, your direct supervisor is the Director of Composition. If you have any student issues, questions about policy or procedure, anything at all related to your work please feel free to approach the Director of Composition or the Department Manager. The following section provides information on your responsibilities as a GA, the conditions and processes of employment for the University, and general policies and procedures for your position.

Your Commitment to Teach

When you agree to work for us, we assume you will continue through your entire 9-month contract. If, for some reason during this time, you cannot continue, you need to notify the Director of Composition at least five weeks into the term previous to the term for which you will leave (i.e. if you have to leave spring term, give notification five weeks into winter term). Of course, exceptions are made for serious illness or emergency.

Terms of Employment

As an instructor and student in the program, you need to fulfill these obligations each year:

- First-year GAs will attend the fall workshop and complete ENG 518.
- All GAs will register for and satisfactorily complete (A through B- grades) a minimum of 9 graduate credits each term the assistantship is in effect (except summer), with term and cumulative GPAs of 3.00 or higher, and show satisfactory academic progress in fulfilling the requirements of the degree program.
- All GAs will be responsible for checking their PSU email account on a regular basis.
- Each quarter that you instruct a class, you will have your students complete the standard course evaluation form.
- Each quarter that you instruct a class, the Director of Composition will review a copy of your syllabus, a copy of your grades, and a copy of the aforementioned course evaluations.
- Finally, you will fulfill your teaching and tutoring assignments responsibly.

Terms of Reappointment

GAs are appointed for one academic year at a time and reappointment is not automatic. To be reappointed after your first year, you need to participate in all activities and fulfill all obligations to the program as outlined above. The department does not make a contractual promise to offer students assistantships for any particular number of years. In general, students making good academic progress through the program and demonstrating acceptable performance in their assistantship duties will continue to receive assistantships for the second year of their program.

Termination of Appointment

An appointment may be terminated at any time because of unsatisfactory performance, including but not limited to: academic probation; failure to register for and complete a minimum of 9 graduate credits per term; unsatisfactory completion of GA responsibilities as evaluated by the terms outlined above. A graduate assistant who has been terminated by the Department may petition the Dean of the appropriate School/College for review of the termination action. After review, the Dean of the appropriate School/College will confirm the termination or reinstate the appointment. Termination of the appointment is not subject to the administrative rules of the Oregon State Board of Higher

Education and Portland State University.

Summer Employment

Although there are no Graduate Assistantships offered through the Department of English during the summer, we offer a limited number of positions in the Writing Center.

Salary for Your Appointment

As a GA, you will be provided a monthly stipend for your teaching and tutoring. Although you are expected to work approximately 12 hours/week (.3 FTE), your pay is not hourly and will not fluctuate based on actual time working.

Graduate Assistant Salary levels are determined by the University and set annually at the beginning of each fiscal year beginning July 1. You can find the listing of salary rates for the current academic year on the Graduate Studies website pdx.edu/gradschool/graduate-assistantships.

For the 2025-26 academic year, first-year Graduate Assistants in the Department of English are appointed as a GTA for a 9-month contract at .30 FTE for a total amount of $10,200.60. You can expect $1,133.40 per month (before taxes and other deductions) from October through June. Second-year Graduate Assistants will receive a total of $10,559.70 or $1,173.30 per month.

Tuition and Fee Remission & Remaining Costs

As a Graduate Assistant, you qualify for 9 credits of tuition and fee remission per quarter. You must register for 9 credits (one of which will be ENG 518 for first-years) for a letter grade. Once you have registered, your tuition and fees for 9 credits will be automatically changed to in-state amounts and then remitted by the University. If you notice any issues with this process, contact Chloe Bobar (see p 12).

Second-year Graduate Assistants may be eligible to take a reduced course load (5 credits) in their final two terms of study if they are on track to complete their coursework requirements with the reduced credit load. The Graduate Assistant must notify the Academic and Program Coordinator at grdstudy@pdx.edu a term prior to the final term of study in order to qualify for the 5-credit course load and provide a completed Degree Completion Plan. The Graduate Assistant will receive the usual stipend and a 5-credit remission.

You can review the Graduate Assistant Tuition Policy and the current Graduate Tuition and Fee schedule on the Graduate Studies website at pdx.edu/gradschool/graduate-assistantships.

There are several costs which are *not* included in your remission for which you are still responsible.

Who?	What?	How Much (Total)?		PSU Pays		Student Pays	
All students	Matriculation Fee	$475		$0		$475	
Students without external health care	PSU Health Insurance [You can apply to waive PSU's insurance if you have another provider through your employer, parent, spouse, etc. – see pdx.edu/health-counseling/insurance]	$1,189 /term	$3,567 /year	$0/ term	$0/ year	$1,189/ term	$3,567/ year
Students taking online classes	Fees for online classes	$22/credit					
Students taking more than 9 credits	Resident tuition for credits in excess of the 9 required per term	See online tuition schedule at pdx.edu/student -finance/tuition					

Please also be aware of other expenses that may arise, including housing, parking, transportation, and so on.

For more information on tuition/fees and loans, see the document *Student Fee, Health Insurance, and Loan Details* distributed at the GA workshop.

Contracts and Pay

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences will prepare your Electronic Personnel Appointment Form (EPAF), and you will receive an email notification that the Notice of Appointment is ready for your approval. Before your Notice of Appointment can be approved, you will need to go to the office of Human Resources to complete the necessary paperwork to establish identity and employment eligibility. Human Resources is in the Richard and Maurine Neuberger Center, 1600 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 518. For more information, see:
pdx.edu/hr/how-to-accept-a-graduate-appointment and
pdx.edu/hr/new-employee-onboarding.

Throughout the year, each pay period runs from the 16th of the current month through the 15th of the following month. Checks are distributed the last working day of the month, with the first check following the last day of the first pay period. If you have not elected to be paid by electronic deposit,

you must pick up your check at the cashiers office with a picture ID. If you do not get a check, please advise the Department Manager as soon as possible, but you may also have to call HR.

You will also receive one or more Work Assignment Notices (WANs) spelling out the details of your assigned work; if your work assignments change or are updated, you will receive a new WAN outlining your duties.

Getting Started at PSU

Set up your ODIN account

This account allows you to access PSU's computer labs and wireless network, includes a PSU email account, and permits access to electronic storage space on PSU servers. Create your account online by going to oam.pdx.edu and following the instructions on your admission letter. If you have misplaced your letter of admission, or are having other difficulties logging-in, please contact the Office of Information Technology help desk for assistance at 503-725-HELP (or 503-725-4357).

Obtain PSU ID

Upon arriving on campus, you should take some time to stop by the Student Financial Services desk in Fariborz Maseeh Hall to receive your student ID card.

University Email Account

You will receive a PSU email account once your graduate student status is established. After you have acquired your PSU Student ID number, the OIT (Office of Information Technology) located in the basement of Smith, Room 18 will set up an Odin and email account for you. Email can be accessed from any location by going to mail.pdx.edu. Your pdx.edu email will be used for student contact and the communication needs of the department. Please remember to give this email address to the department for student referrals.

Transportation and Parking

All GAs are responsible for their own transportation and parking needs. The University is easily accessible via public transit. The University also has several secure indoor bicycle parking facilities and limited, on-campus car and motorcycle parking. The Transportation and Parking Services office offers public transit passes, campus parking permits, and bicycle facility parking permits. Parking prices vary for full day, evening, or half-day permits. Many lots also have metered parking.

Prices and purchase information can be found at pdx.edu/transportation.

<u>Graduate and Faculty Campus Resources</u>

Library Services

For full privileges, GAs must be entered into the University's database system by the Registrar and Human Resources. This usually takes five to ten business days from the date your contract is signed. Check in at the Circulation Counter on the first floor of the Millar Library to confirm that your borrowing privileges have been updated. To start using Library services, you will need a PSU ID card and an ODIN computer account. This will allow you to access the full range of Library services from the library website at library.pdx.edu.

Office of Academic Innovation

OAI collaborates with faculty and educators across campus to promote and support effective student learning. From personal consultations to projects, workshops and events, they help instructors prepare and deliver their best work. For more information,visit pdx.edu/oai/

OAI's Certificate of Innovation in College Teaching that is particularly valuable for GAs: pdx.edu/oai/cict

Classroom Technology

All the of the classrooms you will be using are considered high-tech rooms and are equipped with a pull-down or electric projection screen, a ceiling-mounted digital video projector, wall-mounted speakers, an instructor's podium or desk, a PC, a DVD/VCR player, and, often, a document camera. In order to use the technology in these rooms, you needn't reserve any extra equipment; however, you should be trained on how to use the system. Email av@pdx.edu to schedule training. If you require immediate assistance with a technology classroom please call 503-725- 4357.

Audio Visual Services

Audio Visual Services (AV Services) checks out audiovisual equipment to current PSU faculty, staff, and graduate students for classroom use in addition to providing training on equipment in technology classrooms. To reserve equipment you must have an account with their office. To create an account you must be a current PSU faculty, staff or graduate student and come to the AV office in person to present your PSU photo ID card. Once an account has been created equipment reservations can be made over the phone (503-725- 4357) or in person at the AV office. While AV Services supports the equipment in classrooms, they do not support software installation requests or provide computer software support. For computer support please contact User Support Services (Help Desk) at 503-725-HELP (4357) or help@pdx.edu. For more information please go to the AVS website found at pdx.edu/oit/audio-visual-services.

GA Office

Office Space

GAs have assigned office space in Fariborz Maseeh Hall, Room 304, where you will be sharing your space with several other 1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ year GAs. You'll soon find that your officemates are an invaluable source of teaching information, so expect to share ideas, solve problems, and enjoy one another's company. Most GAs find their colleagues to be among the best aspects of the graduate program. Because this area is shared, please be respectful of others and do not use the space for purposes outside your teaching responsibilities. The office is equipped with several working computers, but there are also computer labs available in other halls on campus. Printing and photocopying are available in the English Department office in Fariborz Maseeh Hall, Room 310. Janitorial service is not performed inside faculty office spaces, so please do not throw food away in the office. There are trash and recycling bins in the hall outside the office. If there are issues with the room, please contact English Department staff, who can notify Maintenance. Finally, do not remove furniture or other elements of the office.

Office Access

Access to the GA office and English Department office and copy room will be by proximity readers linked to your PSU ID card. Once you have received your cards, it will take 2-3 days for your access to be activated. In the event that you are not able to access these spaces, you can call the Campus Public Safety non-emergency line at 503-725-4407.

Office Library

We have an assortment of handy books that you may find useful to consult for your teaching—ideas for teaching of all sorts, sample essays, special books of teaching research writing, argument, literature, creative writing, and others. You are welcome to check out any books. You are also encouraged to contribute to the books; we are happy to get any good material since this enables collaboration and sharing of best practices. These resources are located on the bookshelves in the GA office space.

Telephone/Voice Mail

There is a telephone in the GA office. It does not have voicemail attached to it. If you give out this number, 503-725-3583, for student calls, you can only receive them if you are in the room. It is better to have students contact you through your PSU email account.

Mail Boxes and Mailing

You will have a mailbox in the department office. Please check with the Office Coordinator for the location of your box. There are two outgoing mailboxes, one for on-campus and one for off-campus mail. These are large wooden cubbyholes that are labeled, beside faculty boxes. Campus mail should be sent in campus envelopes (recycled envelopes found in the top drawer of mail station), and marked with campus delivery codes (found in the online Faculty & Staff directory at pdx.edu/directory). Off-campus mail should be stamped if it is personal, or please attach a mail card for all work related mail (found in top drawer).

Office Supplies

There are limited supplies available in the English Department office supply and copy room. If you need something that is not there, see the Office Coordinator.

Printing, Photocopying, Scanning, & Faxing

The copy machine in the English Department office is available for your printing and photocopying needs. The machine has standard functions, but if you need help the front desk person or a work-study student is available during regular office hours. GAs are responsible for all photocopies, scans, etc.

Each student at PSU gets a copy/printing allowance of 500-pages. While assigned to teaching a course, GAs are given access to the English Department's staff and faculty printer, allowing for an additional 500-pages that term.

Conference Rooms

The English Department has two conference rooms, Fariborz Maseeh Hall Rooms 302 and 319, that are reservable for meetings, student conferences, and other similar needs. To reserve a conference room, email eng@pdx.edu.

<u>University Phone Numbers and Websites</u>

Academic Calendar	pdx.edu/registration/academic-calendar
Human Resources	pdx.edu/hr
Office of Information Technologies	pdx.edu/oit
Portland State University Bulletin	pdx.smartcatalogiq.com/en/current/Bulletin
My PSU	my.pdx.edu
Student Health and Counseling	pdx.edu/shac

Note: If you are on campus, you need only dial the last 5 digits.

Main English Department line and front desk	503-725-3521
Kate Comer, Director of Composition	503-725-3568
Elisabeth Ceppi, Department Chair	503-725-3521
Chloe Bobar, Academic and Program Coordinator	503-725-3623
Human Resources	503-725-4926
Campus Security Non-Emergency	503-725-4407
Campus Security Emergency	503-725-5911
ANY EMERGENCY	911/From Campus 5-911