GUIDELINES FOR DBS GRADUATE PART-TIME TEACHING ASSISTANT APPOINTMENTS

(For Graduate Students under Department of Biological Sciences)

Graduate students applying for part-time teaching assistant (PTTA) appointments with the Department of Biological Sciences (hereafter also referred as 'DBS' or 'Department') of National University of Singapore (NUS) are to read and understand the following set of guidelines governing the entire participation in the appointments. All information pertaining to the part-time appointments here-mentioned is available at DBS Graduate Studies website. http://www.dbs.nus.edu.sg/education/graduate-students.html

Guidelines

1. Part-Time Teaching Assistants (PTTA) – Compulsory PTTA Hours and NSWS

    a. The policy governing DBS graduate students working as PTTA is in accordance to the Department graduate studies programme requirements, the terms and conditions for Award of NUS Research Scholarship (RO. 424/11, dtd 23rd April 2014), and the Graduate Assistantship Programme for international students (RO.558, dtd 9th September 2015).

    b. All DBS graduate students who matriculated in Academic Year (AY) 2012/2013 and after, and holding a scholarship or fellowship (or equivalent) administered by NUS (regardless of the source of funding) *[please see **Annex A** for the list of scholarships/ fellowships concerned]*, will need to fulfill the stipulated number of '**Compulsory Teaching Hours**' for their candidatures. For PTTA commitments beyond this compulsory obligations, students may make monetary claims for the excess number of working hours under the framework of NUS Student Work Scheme (NSWS). Total hours required to serve for the candidature are listed in **Annex B**. All PTTA commitments are measured and calculated in units of hour, with 0.5 as the lowest denomination. Candidature in this document is assumed to refer to the pursuit of the doctoral degree (i.e. Doctor of Philosophy or PhD).

    c. **Starting from Semester 2 of AY2024/2025, all new graduate students must complete the mandatory TAP-F foundational course offered by CTLT before being eligible to apply for PTTA work.** The Department will collect feedback from the Course Coordinator regarding PTTA and will share this feedback.

    d. Each DBS graduate student is required to commit 36 hours per regular semester (there are two regular semesters per year) during the first half of his/her candidature as PTTA. Fulfillment of this obligation is encouraged before going for Qualifying Examination.

    e. The PTTA obligation can however be cleared throughout the entire candidature independently of the recommended distribution of 36 hours per semester. That is, a graduate student can clear more (or less) than 36 hours in a semester, or

choose to do so during academic Special Term, and all the hours cleared can be claimed towards his/her total PTTA work requirement. International students would need to observe a maximum limit of 16 hours per week of part-time work in general.

f. **Lecture attendance, laboratory preparation, briefings and field or location reconnaissance are not claimable towards Compulsory Teaching Hours.**

g. International students with scholarship or fellowship (or equivalent) administered by NUS (regardless of the source of funding) who are admitted AY2014/2015 and after are required to perform duties under the Graduate Assistantship Programme (GAP). Completion of Department Compulsory Teaching Hours serves as partial fulfillment to this programme. Please see **Annex B** for Department's guidelines to meet this requirement.

h. For PTTA commitments beyond this compulsory obligations, students may make monetary claims for the excess number of working hours under the framework of NSWS with the payment rate at S$50.00 per hour (upon PTTA committee's approval).

i. For non-DBS graduate students teaching DBS Courses, should monetary claim be made, it shall follow the same rate of S$50.00 per hour (upon PTTA committee's approval).

j. **Marking and invigilation hours are not counted for payment**, only direct teaching (e.g. lecture, tutorial, practical).

k. From Sem 2

2. Application and Claim Submission

a. Recruitment email notices from selected undergraduate DBS Courses offering PTT opportunities may be sent out before the start of semesters. Graduate students may also contact Department Full-Time Teaching Assistants for PTTA opportunities (see Section 14).

b. Graduate students can then approach the relevant Course Coordinators/Full-Time Teaching Assistants and seek for mutual agreement on the proposed PTTA appointment details. It is advisable for graduate students to teach Courses of their own research fields.

c. **Please follow the Annex D on the flow of steps from submitting the application and making claim for the PTTA commitments.**

3. Course Coordinator & Problem Resolution

a. For the entire duration of the PTTA appointment, the Course Coordinator will oversee the part-time employment covering aspects inclusive of disseminating teaching information and instructions, mentoring and advices, and performance assessment and recommendation.

b. For any Course with Full-Time Teaching Assistant (FTTA) assigned, the Course Coordinator may dedicate a portion of his/her role, authority, and responsibility to the FTTA. The same dedication may also be made to any NUS full-time staff appointed by the Course Coordinator with equivalent role to FTTA.

c. When encounter problem or issue, the graduate student should first approach the Course Coordinator and/or FTTA.

d. In the case of an unresolved issue between the graduate student and Course Coordinator, the case should then be presented to the DBS Graduate Studies Committee.

4. Administrative Communication

a. All administrative matters pertaining to the PTTA appointment will be communicated to graduate students via their official NUS email addresses. Students should check their email accounts regularly for such communication, read and respond accordingly. When necessary, students will be reached via the contact numbers as submitted in their applications as well.

b. All teaching matters pertaining to the Course the graduate students are involved in will be communicated to them via channels stipulated by the Course Coordinator. Students should check the communication regularly, take note of all information directed to them and respond accordingly.

5. Teaching Responsibility

a. Graduate students working as PTTAs are to acquire the Course contents through compulsory attendance of briefings, meetings, rehearsals, recce trips, lesson preparations and reading of recommended texts. All teaching materials have to be gone through for understanding, and if in doubt, clarification. Teaching content preparation is to be completed prior the start of every lesson.

b. Punctuality has to be observed at all times for meetings, briefings and lessons. If a graduate student is unable to make it or will be late due to a certain reason, he or she must inform the Course Coordinator/FTTA prior to the session. Absence will be duly noted and will contribute to the teaching evaluation.

c. Graduate students are to be aware of the safety procedures and protocols to be taken in the event of an emergency as dictated by the Course Coordinator/FTTA specific to the lesson settings involved (i.e. laboratory, field trip). The contact

person for emergency has to be clearly identified prior field trips and laboratory sessions.

d. Groups of undergraduates may be assigned to graduate students and proper group management is to be carried out. This includes supervising the groups for the entire period the graduate students are assigned to, keeping the noise level of the groups to a minimum, and keeping to the stipulated schedule in contexts with station rotation system. Leaving the group unattended is not allowed, though taking short breaks (i.e. 5 min each) is possible provided the undergraduates have been notified who to approach in case of emergency.

e. All timelines and deadlines are to be met, especially with regards to marking.

6. Attire

a. Laboratory Sessions (bench-work)

- Lab coat is compulsory;
- The bottom of personal outfit has to be trousers or long skirts. Strictly no shorts/bermudas is allowed;
- Fully-covered footwear.

b. Field-trips (field-work)

- Fully-covered footwear for all contact sessions with students. Special footwear is required in certain contexts (e.g booties for LSM1103 Changi Beach trip) and are to be worn throughout;
- The bottom of personal outfit has to be trousers when entering forests (e.g. LSM3255 MacRitchie Reservoir trip);
- Where there are boardwalk and trails, trousers are not compulsory.

7. Conduct

a. Please be **punctual** for all activities pertaining to PTTA appointment.

b. **Professionalism** has to be maintained at all times in all interactions with students, peers, FTTA and Course Coordinator, especially in the presence of students.

c. **Always teach in English** and please speak clearly, correctly and confidently.

d. **Do not eat/drink in laboratory**.

8. Temporary Replacement

a. If a graduate student is unwell or unable to teach a class due to valid reasons, the Course Coordinator/FTTA has to be informed of the situation as early as possible.

b. Should a graduate student miss a class, he/she has to find a replacement who must be briefed and be familiarized with that session, and all information regarding that class must be forwarded to the replacement. This arrangement has to be approved by the Course Coordinator/FTTA.

c. Valid documents (medical certificate/official excuse letter, etc.) must be provided by the graduate student for justification of his/her absence.

9. Non-compliance

a. In the event of any non-compliance in terms of administrative communication, teaching responsibility, attire, conduct and uninformed absence, the following actions may be taken with respect to the accumulated number of non-compliances incurred from the start of the candidature of the graduate student:

- 1st offence – Verbal warning;
- 2nd offence – Official warning letter issued and on record;
- 3rd offence – On-going PTT appointment with the Course involved to be terminated.

b. On top of the actions stated in Para 11a, Course Coordinator may also execute appropriate penalty (i.e. deduction of hours to be claimed) in response to any non-compliance.

c. **No** hours will be awarded should there be a termination of appointment or failure to complete allocated teaching or other duties for that teaching appointment. Inability to complete a teaching appointment due to illness or compassionate reasons will be considered for penalty waiver on a case-by-case basis.

d. If the PTTA appointment is terminated by the Course Coordinator, the graduate student may appeal to a panel consisting of faculty members from the DBS Graduate Studies Committee.

e. Non-compliance records will be expunged a year after issue if no further complaint is received.

10. The DBS Graduate Studies Committee of NUS reserves the right at any time, from time to time, to make changes to the whole or any part of this set of guidelines as it deems appropriate with respect to either the entire DBS graduate student community or individual cases. This right also includes the authority to amend the PTTA appointment policy of the Department whenever it deems necessary.

11. Enquiries

a. For enquiries on administrative matters of PTTA, please contact Ms Priscilla Li at dbslxz@nus.edu.sg.

b. For enquiries on teaching matters of PTTA, please contact any of the following Instructors of the relevant fields:

Sylvia Law (dbslsjs@nus.edu.sg) – Molecular and Cell Biology
Low Yi Lian (dbslyl@nus.edu.sg) – Molecular and Cell Biology
Cai Hongxia (dbscaih@nus.edu.sg) – Biodiversity and Ecology
Xu Weiting (dbsxuwt@nus.edu.sg) – Biodiversity and Ecology

- End of Guidelines for DBS Graduate Part-Time Teaching Assistant Appointments -

Annex A

List of Graduate Studies Scholarships/Fellowships administered by NUS

NUS Research Scholarship (NUS RS)
President's Graduate Fellowship (PGF) - international
Dean’s Graduate Fellowship (DGF)
NUS Research Grants
China Scholarship Council (CSC)
National Research Foundation (NRF)
NUS Industry Relevant PhD (IRP)
Other external funds (if applicable)

Annex B

TOTAL PTTA HOURS REQUIRED TO BE COMPLETED DURING GRADUATE STUDIES CANDIDATURE

The Compulsory Teaching Hours required for a DBS graduate student are 144.

International students with NUS Research Studentship who are admitted from AY2014/2015 are required to perform duties under the Graduate Assistantship Programme (GAP) as set out below.

Degree	Total Hours required to serve during candidature
PhD	416
2-year Master's by Research	156

The table below elaborates the number of hours allowed for the different modes of activities required for local and international students. Please read the following Annex C on the recommended pace of completion for GAP.

Mode of Duty	**Local Student (SC/SPR)**	**International Student (Graduate Assistantship Programme)**
Teaching Assistant	104 – 144 hours	140 – 278 hours
Teaching Preparation (automatically recognised by Department)	-	70 – 139 hours (0.5 times hours for Teaching Assistant duty)
Research Assistant, inclusive of research supervision	-	0 – 123 hours
Other developmental assignments	0 – 40 hours	0 – 83 hours
Total Hours	144	416

a) No remuneration will be paid for the hours fulfilled under this programme.
b) The Department guidelines assume international students are on PhD track. Should there be a degree downgrade to the 2-year Master's by Research, completion of the number of teaching hours for local students will fulfill the requirements of this programme.
c) Event duties for functions and events and safety lead may be recognised as other developmental assignments.

Annex C

Guide to completing the Graduate Assistantship Programme (GAP)

To serve the 416 hours of commitments required by GAP, international students should aim to complete this requirement within the first six semesters of candidature.

The Department recommends an average of 104 hours of GAP service each semester:

- About 42 hours of Teaching Assistant Duty
- About 21 hours of Teaching Preparation
- About 41 hours of Research Assistant Duty

To note:

i) **Teaching Assistant Duty** refers to commitments in assisting Course Coordinator to conduct tutorials, laboratory practical sessions, and/or field studies, including the marking of assignments and/or invigilation of assessment exercises.

ii) **Teaching Preparation** is automatically calculated as 0.5 times number of hours for Teaching Assistant Duty.

iii) **Research Assistant Duty** refers to daily research tasks that go beyond the scope of the research project undertaken by the student to fulfil the requirement of the graduate studies programme. These can include:

- **Laboratory Housekeeping**: Manuals and SOPs management; safety and logistics maintenance.
- **Experiment Logistics and Setup**
- **Sample Management**
- **Data Collection**
- **Research Supervision:** For fellow junior graduate students and/or undergraduate students.

Student will aim to fulfil 41 hours each semester for the first three semesters of candidature.

iv) **Safety Lead Duty** – Student who is assigned as the Safety Lead, is able to claim 10 hours – (for the scholarships requirement of 144, e.g. SG, SPR, NRFs.) and 25 hours (for scholarship requirement of 416 hours; e.g. international) under the Other Developmental Assignments category. The claimable hours is for the entire candidature.

v) **Conference / Events** – Students who are assigned to organize, coordinate, or assist with conferences and events may claim developmental hours for their involvement. **The maximum number of developmental hours claimable under this category is 30 hours.**

An example to illustrate:
Student in his/her second semester of PhD candidature performed teaching assistant duty for 42 hours in the practical/tutorial sessions of one undergraduate LSM Course. In addition, the student completes the default 41 hours of RA duty through supervising Honours undergraduate students (12 hours), managing the cell/plant/insect samples (14 hours) and maintaining weekly laboratory safety checks (15 hours). In this one semester, the student would fulfil:
42 Teaching Assistant Duty + 21 Teaching Preparation + 41 Research Assistant Duty = 104 hours

Do keep in mind this is a typical illustration. Individual students may vary the completion for each component each semester but should have a good momentum to complete the GAP.

In addition from observations any teaching assistant duty hours claim by a single student for a single Course in a single semester typically does not exceed 50 hours. Claims that deviate from this may be rejected or inquired for justification by the DBS Graduate Studies Committee.