

Guiding Language for Graduate Student Offer and Assistantship Letters

Graduate Administrators' Council

Spring 2017

LETTER 1 FOR OFFERING ACCEPTANCE ONLY AT FIRST POST-DECISION CONTACT

OPENING:

- Congratulatory and other welcome comments.

NEXT STEPS:

- Give information about what follows this letter via funding decisions, class schedules, orientations, etc.; getting an ODU ID, email address; reading program handbooks.
- The University's English proficiency requirement (<http://www.odu.edu/content/odu/admission/proficiency.html>) must be satisfied for admission.
- If funding is not being given (e.g., for MS students) then no language on funding is required (unless the student requested information, the department ran out of funding and knows already who is being funded, and that notice can be given, etc.).
- If funding decisions are still being made, give students a timetable for when they will hear about their funded status.
- If funding is known at this juncture, department can segue to contractual language and combine funding offer with acceptance into one letter (funding letter template for assistantship is below).
- Other next steps to consider adding into an acceptance only letter:
 - For non-native English-speaking students who are receiving a teaching assistantship at admission or will eventually be offered one, English proficiency must be demonstrated prior to appointment to and work in that assistantship. Proficiency is demonstrated by a variety of test score options detailed at <http://www.odu.edu/content/odu/admission/proficiency.html>.
 - Additionally, non-native English speakers must also satisfy the University's English-speaking proficiency requirement prior to a teaching assistantship appointment. Students can satisfy the English-speaking proficiency requirement by passing the SPEAK Test or scoring a 26 or higher on the speaking portion of the TOEFL iBT. The SPEAK Test and schedule are detailed at <https://www.odu.edu/cepd/esl/speak-toefl>. A passing score is at least 50 out of 60 points. Students who score 45, but not 50, are eligible for the Retake Presentation.
 - All teaching assistants must attend and complete the Graduate Teaching Assistant Institute (GTAI).

THEN CHOOSE ONE OPTION BELOW:

Closing:

- If this letter is only for acceptance, and no funding will be given - or not given at this point in time - close letter.
- If no funding will be given at all, have place for student to sign this letter at bottom as intending to accept offer, and return by due date.
- If funding decision to be made later, the department may hold off on student signature until that second contact.
- Department signs and sends.

OR

Transition:

- If funding is known and to be awarded, department can transition to details in LETTER 2 for Offering Funding. Merge information above with below into a combined letter.
- The more detail a student can have at any contact is better.

- Performance requirements to remain funded (e.g., progress on milestones, research activity, writing ability, class performance).
- Consequences of withdrawing from program on tuition pay-backs.
- Limits of tuition funding (e.g., departments may only pay in-state tuition rates, leaving balance to student if the student is out-of-state).
- Acceptance of master's degree from other universities (or evaluation), and other such screenings of previous credentials.
- Notes about Intellectual Property (IP) policies as relevant.
- Full-time assistantships (20 hours/week) prohibit pursuit of additional on-campus employment. Pursuit of outside-university additional employment is usually discouraged, and if undertaken the GPD should be consulted. The VISA office should be consulted before international students pursue outside-assistantship employment. Academic progress must not be adversely affected. See the Graduate Catalog for more details