

**Information about transition from GTA to Lecturer  
Department of Sociology  
December 2020**

General Information:

GTA: Graduate Teaching Assistantship award. This award may be offered to you from Paula/Grad Coordinator when you are admitted to the program if you have funded by the department. You must attend GTA training. 12 hours of coursework is covered. You must pay 29% on your tuition (unless the department is paying it for you which we continue to try to do), your health insurance supplement (or you can opt out if you are on someone else's health insurance/use the health care exchange to find another coverage plan), and possibly other fees. See here for more details: <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/graduate-assistantships/#graduateassistantshipawardbenefitstext>

Lecturer: Teach courses independently as an employee of the university. You will receive an offer letter from Paula. 6 hours of coursework is covered. You do not need to pay 29% and you receive health benefits and retirement options. See here for more details: <https://www.hrm.msstate.edu/benefits/>. \*You should be prepared for your paycheck to reflect deductions related to health insurance and retirement benefits.

Typically, students in the department transition from GTA to Lecturer after two years of working as a GTA. Students must have a MS in order to be a Lecturer. New students are typically not hired as Lecturers but start as GTAs, even with prior teaching experience.

For international students, you must be enrolled for 9 hours to maintain visa, so staying in the role of GTA is preferable but might not always be possible. In that case, you should plan to pay tuition for additional 3 hours.

**\*\*In the event that you do not hear from Human Resources when you transition from a GTA to a Lecturer, please contact them. In addition, here is some helpful information for your consideration:**

1. MSU HR has "onboarding" sessions in-person. If you do not get information about this, contact HR and ask when the next session will be held.
2. There are multiple forms that new employees need to complete within 31 days of being hired. New lecturers need to ensure that they've completed all of these. [https://www.hrm.msstate.edu/benefits/new\\_emp/empForms/](https://www.hrm.msstate.edu/benefits/new_emp/empForms/)
3. In addition to filling out the benefit forms, new lecturers should be sure to know their retirement options and spend some time thinking about the financial implications of different decisions. While the department cannot advise you on this matter, here are some points to consider:
  - If you do not receive any retirement forms, you must contact HR within the first 30-day window of employment so that you can choose to be enrolled in either the Mississippi Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) or the Mississippi Optional Retirement Plan (ORP).
  - New lecturers can choose either option, but the choice is irrecoverable and if you do not complete the forms, you're automatically enrolled in PERS. This is something to pay attention

to because ORP plans are 100% vested immediately with the MSU match funds, whereas PERS funds are only vested after 8 years and if you withdraw from PERS (because you did not vest), you do not get to keep the MSU match. This form might be useful for new lecturers in making the choice: [https://www.orp.ms.gov/ORP/Documents/ORP\\_Overview.pdf](https://www.orp.ms.gov/ORP/Documents/ORP_Overview.pdf).