



## **PhD Training Opportunities through the RUFORUM Graduate Teaching Assistantship Program**

Over the years, universities in Africa have sought opportunities to send their staff for postgraduate training abroad in a bid to strengthen research and training, at very high costs. The loss of faculty for 4 to 5 years has negatively affected universities. In order to meet the growing demand for Doctoral level scientists in Africa, the Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) programme was initiated by RUFORUM Vice Chancellors<sup>1</sup> to improve the quality of higher education at African Universities by increasing the proportion of academic staff with PhD qualifications, contributing to locally relevant research and reducing the time away from the home institution. The initiative was officially launched by the African Union Commissioner for Human Resource, Science and Technology, H.E. Dr Martial De Paul Ikounga on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2014 at Maputo, Mozambique during the RUFORUM Fourth Biennial Conference.

### **Aim and Specific Objectives of the GTA**

GTA aims at facilitating academic mobility which involves sending a university staff for training in other RUFORUM member Universities and also receiving staff to be trained on behalf of the sending university. Additionally, the initiative aims at strengthening interuniversity collaboration in the field of higher education in Africa. Specifically the GTA will:

1. Improve the quality of higher education and increase the pool of PhD-level trained academic staff in African universities;
2. Provide opportunities for the doctoral research to contribute more directly to African development
3. Strengthen inter- university collaboration in the field of higher education in Africa; and
4. Promote staff mobility among RUFORUM member universities, and across Africa.

### **Steps and Selection Criteria for the GTA:**

- Step 1: Based on the list of available GTA's (See Table 1), identify and apply directly to University for the relevant program of choice to obtain admission into the program.
  - Step 2: Apply to the RUFORUM Secretariat for the GTA.
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The five below criteria must be fulfilled to be admitted under a GTA Programme:

1. Must be a staff member from a RUFORUM Member University who has been nominated for PhD training by his/her university;
2. Should have support letter from the sending University confirming nomination and support for travel, stipend, medical insurance and research funds;
3. Applicant should have a Master degree relevant to the proposed field of PhD study;
4. Applicant should identify, apply and be admitted to the graduate program by the host University;
5. Applicant should complete the RUFORUM GTA application form which should be submitted at the same time that the application form is submitted for PhD admission.

### **Expectations and Responsibilities of the Parties involved in the GTA Implementation**

#### **1. The Sending University**

The sending university which is a RUFORUM Member university that has identified and nominated a staff member for PhD training under the GTA programme will have to:

- Grants the Graduate Teaching Assistant a paid leave for minimum of 3 and maximum of 4 years
- Provides training expenses in accordance with the provisions of the university policy on staff capacity development allocations
- Ensures consistent and timely funds disbursement of money to the Graduate Teaching Assistant
- Provide research Fund to the Graduate Teaching Assistant
- The sending university will normally be expected to assist the host university to arrange for supervision of field work and thesis where the research is to be undertaken in the home/sending country

#### **2. Host University**

The receiving/ host university which is the university that will offer the PhD training programme to staff members of other RUFORUM Member universities will have to:

- Provides a tuition waiver (100%),
- Office space, and
- Accommodation for the students for minimum of 3 years and maximum of 4 years during the Graduate Assistantship Tenure.
- Provide research fund to the Graduate Teaching Assistant where available

### 3. GTA Student

- Each successful GTA will contribute to the host university by participating in teaching during his/her training in the Department hosting the PhD Training programme
- No G.T.A. may be employed by another organization, other than the sending and host university during their time of study.
- Each successful GTA will have to work closely with the Dean of Faculty of Agriculture and the contact person at their sending university to ensure that funds for training are made available on time.

### 4. RUFORUM Secretariat

Upon nomination by the sending/ home university, the RUFORUM Secretariat will;

1. Facilitate the placement of nominated candidates to appropriate universities,
2. Facilitate contract signing i) between successful applicant and the host university, and ii) between the sending university and host university
3. Follow up on training at host/sending university, and report to home/sending university,
4. Link the GTA beneficiaries to other RUFORUM graduate students and opportunities

### **Implementation Status of the GTA Programme**

1. Application procedures available online for each year, the current application procedure can be found on <https://blog.ruforum.org/2017/03/23/phd-training-opportunities-under-the-ruforum-graduate-teaching-assistantship-program-2/> and Frequently Asked Questions to the GTA programme available at <http://ruforum.org/frequently-asked-questions-training>, and a template for tripartite contract.
2. As of March 2020, **82 out of 126** member universities had endorsed the MoU for implementation of student/staff mobility initiative
3. To date, 133 GTAs have been placed in 25 host universities from 37 sending universities across the RUFORUM network. This represents an average of 22 GTAs per academic year (as per summary table 1) which is less than 46 per year in order to meet the target of 325 by 2022.

Table 1: Summary of current GTAs placed to be trained across RUFORUM Network Universities: 2015-2019

<b>Country</b>	<b>Sending</b>		<b>Hosting</b>	
	<i>Number of Universities Sending</i>	<i>Total Number of Staff Sent</i>	<i>Number of Host Universities</i>	<i>Total Number of Staff Hosted</i>
DRC	2	16	0	0
Ethiopia	1	1	0	0
Ghana	1	4	1	4
Kenya	5	11	7	49
Liberia	1	7	0	0
Malawi	4	19	1	13
Namibia	1	2	0	0
Nigeria	3	8	1	7
Rwanda	1	7	1	2
Lesotho	1	1	0	0
South Sudan	1	4	0	0
Sudan	2	7	0	0
Uganda	8	35	7	38
Zimbabwe	2	2	0	0
Botswana	1	3	0	0
Sierra Leone	1	4	0	0
Swaziland	1	1	0	0
Benin	0	0	1	3
Mozambique	0	0	1	3
Tanzania	0	0	1	3
South Africa	0	0	3	9
Zambia	1	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>133</b>

4. Since its inception in 2015, only Five (5) of the 133 placed GTAs (*Dr. Joyful Rugare* (from University of Zimbabwe, studied at Stellenbosch University), *Dr. Ahadi Bwihangane Birindwa* (from Université Evangelique en Afrique studied at University of Nairobi), Dr Anthony Mwije (from Makerere University, studied at Stellenbosch University), Dr Elias Chirwa (from Mzuzu University, studied at Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources) and Dr Paul Wanjala Muyoma ( from Moi University, studied at Port Harcourt University) have completed their studies. *Dr. Joyful Rugare* and *Dr. Ahadi Bwihangane Birindwa* are pursuing their post-doctoral fellowships. The remaining 128 GTAs are at various stages of research, thesis preparation and defense.
5. Of the 133 GTAs placed; of these 40 are female, while 93 are male. In total, 37% and 29% have been hosted in Kenyan and Ugandan universities respectively.
6. Since 2015, a total of 454 nominations have been received from member universities
7. A total of 289 staffs are still awaiting placement in appropriate host universities, an indication that the capacity of the universities to absorb the nominees is low. This can be attributed to few universities accepting to host GTAs compared to the number of sending universities. In general, Uganda has the highest number of nominees awaiting placement standing at 28%. In terms of gender distribution, 72 of the nominees are female, while 217 are male.

Table 2: Summary of GTA nominees awaiting placement across RUFORUM network Universities

Country	Sending		Gender	
	Number of Universities Sending	Total Number of Staff to be Sent	Number of Male Staff	Number of Female Staff
DRC	2	26	22	4
Ethiopia	0	0	0	0
Ghana	1	6	5	1
Kenya	3	32	25	7
Liberia	1	21	18	3
Malawi	4	25	19	6
Namibia	1	11	9	2
Nigeria	3	17	11	6
Rwanda	1	2	1	1
Lesotho	0	0	0	0

Sudan	3	9	8	1
Uganda	8	81	51	30
Zimbabwe	1	6	4	2
Benin	1	1	0	1
Mozambique	3	28	24	4
Tanzania	1	4	3	1
South Africa	0	0	0	0
Botswana	1	4	3	1
Sierra Leone	1	16	14	2
Zambia	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>72</b>