

Offer letter template Spring 2024

The purpose of this template is to guide PhD programs in crafting offers to potential students. Because a TA-ship is the most common form of support offered to incoming students, this template only describes parameters relevant to that position. Programs may adapt this letter for students who are being offered a GA-ship, an RA-ship, or a fellowship (whether in the initial year or in subsequent years). The Graduate School will be creating further templates, in time for future recruiting seasons.

The offer letter is supposed to be a recruiting tool. Therefore, programs should endeavor to outline not just the offer for the first year, but the support that a student is promised in later years, as well as any support a student is likely to receive. For example, if all or nearly all students in the program receive TA-ships for some number of years, or are usually supported by research grants, or are eligible for department support such as travel funds, summer support, etc., that should be mentioned (making use of conditional phrasing as appropriate). For the same reason, the template outlines non-monetary support: tuition scholarships and health insurance. It is important to delineate these, separating them from the funds students receive directly.

It is not possible, however, to state in an offer the exact cost of a tuition scholarship or of health insurance, because these amounts are set by the Board of Trustees in June. Therefore, the template makes it clear that current-year amounts must be used. Stipend amounts should, however, correspond to next year's level.

Offer letters should not be used to indicate all the expectations of first-year students, such as curricular or co-curricular requirements, as these will likely overwhelm the applicant and distract from key aspects of the offer. It is sufficient (and recommended) to direct the recipient of the letter to the program's graduate handbook. Please note, however, the mention of professional development opportunities. Students need to know that we are as interested in their success after graduation as we are in their success at UK. Candidates may be more likely to accept your offer if they know about the resources available at the Graduate School and in your program, and know that you consider these an important part of their education.

Programs have two versions of the template to choose from. In the shorter version, technical information about the stipend is moved to an appendix.

Finally, a reminder: the template is not required. However, we in The Graduate School would appreciate knowing about letters that differ significantly, as this will help anticipate any questions that students may bring to the staff. Your comments and questions will also help us improve this template for next year's version.