



**University Life Professional Development
University Life Graduate Staff Academy Syllabus
Fall 2024 – Spring 2025**

Graduate Staff Academy Coordinators:

- Amy Snyder, Director of Staff Experience in University Life
 - Email: asnyder@gmu.edu; 703.993.8934
- Meeghan Milette, Associate Director Professional Development
 - Email: mharrin8@gmu.edu;
- Emma Marchant, GPA for University Life, Professional Development
 - Email: emarchan@gmu.edu

GSA Community of Practice Overview

Graduate Professional Assistants (GPAs) and graduate student staff (interns, externs, practicum, coordinators, etc.) work throughout University Life in various offices and units. The diverse experiences UL Graduate Staff members have in their respective roles provides a phenomenal opportunity for graduate staff to network and build communities with peers outside of their offices. Additionally, as graduate staff members are often emerging professionals, there is a great opportunity to provide targeted professional development to this group to build and enhance their professional skillset, regardless of their academic program. This cohort experience will meet monthly, and each session will have a topical focus to support personal and professional development, while providing the space to connect with each other and professional staff from University Life.

Participants are asked to attend the monthly sessions from September 2024 to May 2025. They are expected to engage and participate in conversations and discussions at each session.

UL Graduate Assistant Academy Learning Objectives:

- Participants will identify, at a minimum, one skill they have built upon during their cohort experience.
- Participants will identify at minimum two resources available to them in their graduate staff role.
- Participants will illustrate their experience in this cohort experience through a reflection activity at the conclusion of the experience.
- Participants will identify professional learning goals for the academic year.

NACE Competency

Each session of the Graduate Staff Academy (GSA) is tailored with a National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) competency outcome. These competencies are designed to prepare UL GPAs for success in the workplace and lifelong career management. The NACE Career Readiness Competencies are a set of eight key skills widely recognized by employers as essential for career success.

These include:

- **Career & Self-Development**
- **Communication**
- **Critical Thinking**
- **Equity & Inclusion**
- **Leadership**
- **Professionalism**
- **Teamwork**
- **Technology**

By incorporating these competencies, the GSA ensures that graduate assistants not only excel in their current roles but also build a foundation for long-term professional growth. These competencies align with the demands of modern workplaces, emphasizing adaptability, collaboration, and continuous learning.

For more information on NACE Competencies, visit <https://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/>

GSA Instructional Modality & Communication Format

The cohort experience for Fall 2024 to Spring 2025 will be fully in-person. This transition from virtual to in-person reflects our commitment to fostering a strong sense of community among UL GPAs. We believe that face-to-face interactions provide greater opportunities for collaboration, networking, and relationship building.

Aside from GSA sessions, we have two social events – one at the end of Fall 2024 as a mid-year check in with UL Leadership and at the end of Spring 2025 – to celebrate the achievements and honor the outgoing GPAs who are graduating.

- **MS Teams:**
 - MS Teams will serve as our primary technology platform for the duration of the cohort experience. All GPAs will be added to the designated MS Teams group at the beginning of the program.
 - MS Team Name: UL Graduate Assistant Academy MS Team.
 - Event announcements and updates:
 - All meetings will be scheduled through the MS Teams Meeting Channel
 - Any adjustments made regarding time will be communicated through the MS Team
 - Session Materials:
 - Resources and materials will be provided to cohort participants in advance of the session when possible, depending on the presenter and content.
 - Session presentations will be made available 24 hours in advance to participants.

- All files associated with this cohort will be included in the MS Teams File Section for your access at any time.
- **MS Team Communication**
 - We encourage all participants to check the MS Teams to stay informed about upcoming events or announcements.

Attendance & Participation Expectations

- **Attendance:**
 - You are expected to attend and participate in each cohort session over the upcoming academic year. As a division, we are committed to providing you with ongoing professional development to support your academic and professional experience in University Life. You are expected to attend these cohort sessions unless you have an academic time conflict. Rose Pascarell, Vice President for University Life, has made this experience a requirement of all Graduate Student Staff in the division.
 - Attendance has a direct impact on the activities and reflection we engage in during our sessions. Your presence helps to determine the success of this experience.
 - In the event you have a scheduling conflict or will be out of the office (illness, vacation, etc.) you are expected to communicate the following:
 - Email the GSA Coordinators
 - Email should be sent at least 72 hours prior to the session.
 - This allows the facilitators to plan and respond accordingly in the event multiple participants are out of the office.
- **Participation Expectations:**
 - **Presence:** As previously stated, this is a professional development experience to support your professional and personal growth while working in University Life and your unit. Your presence and perspective are critical to this being a dynamic learning experience.

Accommodations

- Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this educational experience, please first visit <https://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474
- **Mason Supports Success in the Workplace.** The university provides accommodation to individuals with disabilities in order to ensure equal access and opportunity to Mason employees.
 - **Employee rights include:**
 - Access to all university offers, including courses, programs, services, activities, employment and facilities.
 - Information reasonably available in accessible formats.

- An equal opportunity to employment.
 - Receive reasonable accommodations, which may include auxiliary aids and services.
 - Confidentiality of all information regarding his/her disability.
- Contact Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator to request an accommodation. Additional information can be found at <https://diversity.gmu.edu/ada/employee-accommodations>

GSA Curriculum Outline

The curriculum outline below includes slated topics, facilitators, and dates for sessions.

Graduate Staff Academy 2024 - 2025 Curriculum Outline

Topic	Date	Session Learning Outcomes	NACE Competency	Target Group	Session Facilitators	Meeting Location
New to UL Welcome	Sep 5 (Thu) 11:00 – 12:30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome to UL 		All New GPAs	New to UL committee	Johnson Center, Room C
Creating Community	Sep 9 (Mon) 1:00 – 3:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will explore 2-3 intrapersonal identities Participants will engage in reflection and conversation focused on systemic patterns Participants will meet and connect with other GPAs in UL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity & Inclusion Communication 	All GPAs	Dr. Tamara Thomas, Center for Leadership and Inclusive Engagement	Johnson Center, Room E
Individualized Development Plan (IDP)	Sep 23 (Mon) 1:00 – 3:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will identify professional development goals and specific strategies and timelines for action steps to achieve those goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career & Self Development 	First Year GPAs Optional for Returning GPAs	Dr. Julie Choe Kim, Graduate Student Life	Johnson Center, Room E
Conflict Management, Discourse + Dialogue	Oct 21 (Mon) 1:00 – 3:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will learn the fundamentals of navigating conflict management as a professional Participants will identify at minimum of one strategy to manage discourse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teamwork Communication 	All GPAs	Dr. Nick Lennon, Center for Leadership and Inclusive Engagement	Merten 1201
Intercultural Communication	Nov 4 (Mon) 1:00 – 3:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will be able to articulate awareness of their personal cultural identity Participants will identify at minimum 2 strategies to engage in intercultural communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity & Inclusion Critical Thinking Communication 	All GPAs	Yali Pan, Office of International Programs and Services	Johnson Center, Room E

Coffee with University Life leadership	Dec 2 (Mon) 1:00 – 3:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will engage in a conversation with divisional leadership in University Life Participant will interact with peers in a conversational environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication 	All GPAs	Rose Pascarell, VP of University Life UL Cabinet Members GSA Coordinators	Johnson Center, George's
Lessons Learned from Fall 2024 and Strategies for Success for Spring 2025	Jan 27 (Mon) 1:00 – 3:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will identify at least a minimum of 1 area to enhance productivity, efficiency, and work-life balance. Participants will identify at minimum 2 strategies and/or tools to help manage administrative time more effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professionalism Career & Self Development 	All GPAs	Dr. Sheldon Tate, Mason Recreation	Johnson Center, Room E
Allyship & Advocacy	Feb 10 (Mon) 1:00 – 3:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will identify at minimum of one resource to support allyship at GMU Participants will identify one action they can implement into their work to support allyship/advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity & Inclusion 	All GPAs	Josh Kinchen, LGBTQ+ Resources Center	Merten 1201
Resume Ready + Career Preparation with University Career Services	Mar 3 (Mon) 1:00 – 3:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will identify at minimum 1 strategy to support their job search process Participants will explore the use of AI in preparation of their job search/candidacy process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career & Self Development 	Second year GPAS Optional for First Year GPAs	Saskia Campbell, University Career Services	SUB 1, 3B
Challenging Conversations: Effective Communication in the Workplace	Mar 24 (Mon) 1:00 – 3:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will identify at minimum 1 strategy to communicate needs effectively Participants will explore the techniques to navigate conversations with different stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career & Self Development Communication 	First Year GPAs Optional for Returning GPAs	Jennifer Beck Wilson, Organizational Development and Learning (ODL)	SUB 1, 3B

Change Management Conversation	Apr 7 (Mon) 1:00 – 3:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participants will identify at minimum 1 technology tool to support them in their work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Communication	All GPAs	Jamie Kizer, Human Resources	SUB-1 Room 3B
End of Year Celebration for 2024 - 2025 AY	May 5 (Mon) 1:00 – 3:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participants will gather and celebrate the end of the program and all outgoing GPAs		All GPAs	GSA Coordinators	Johnson Center, George's