

# Where should you sign your DAB form?



# Direct Academic Benefit

What it is, what it means for you, and when to sign it.

**Still not sure?  
Contact us.**  
[union@tugsa.org](mailto:union@tugsa.org)  
 215-587-6785 (office)



*Attached to your contract, you may find an additional form to sign that includes the following declaration:*

**INDIVIDUAL DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC BENEFIT**

I,  have been awarded an assistantship for the Fall and Spring term(s) of the 2018-2019 academic year, pursuant to which I will be performing research services. I understand that any graduate assistant who receives a “direct academic benefit” for performing research services does not fall within the bargaining unit definition agreed to by the Temple University Graduate Students’ Association (TUGSA) and Temple University and, thus, is not a member of the bargaining unit. I further understand that “direct academic benefit” has been defined by TUGSA and Temple University to mean: (a) receipt of “academic credit” (i.e., term hour credit, grade, or satisfaction of a degree requirement); or (b) the use of research provided pursuant to the assistantship as a component of a master’s thesis, master’s project or doctoral dissertation, or otherwise for receipt of academic credit.

## Reading DAB

If you are offered a Research Assistantship at Temple, when you sign your contract, you may be additionally asked to sign an “Individual Declaration of Academic Benefit” (copied above). It is usually framed as compulsory: departments write that “this document *must be signed*” in order to receive your assistantship.

When you sign DAB, you agree with your department that the work that you will perform as an RA is completed in your capacity as a **student**, not as an **employee**. That means that the research that you complete should always benefit you as a student—whether you receive academic credit, or use the research in your future academic projects at Temple, like a thesis or dissertation.

Once you make this declaration, you are no longer an “employee,” per the terms of your assistantship and therefore, no longer a part of the TUGSA bargaining unit (the body of workers we legally represent).

## Why DAB?

DAB is the product of a compromise between TUGSA and the university, which finally led to the university’s recognition of the union in 2001. The compromise set the terms of what both the union and university could recognize as student labor, drawing a boundary between student activity (like coursework) and teaching or research employment.

Graduate Student Unions across the country have answered the question, “what counts as work?” in different ways. In some cases, RAs are completely excluded from the union’s bargaining unit, which covers TAs only. In others, like Columbia or Harvard, however, all TAs and RAs are members of the bargaining unit.

## When does DAB apply to student labor?

According to the terms of our contract, DAB applies only when:

- Data collected is being used **directly** in coursework
- Data collected is being used **directly** in personal dissertation or thesis
- Research is completed in a lab or performed collaboratively with an advisor

## Fair Labor Practice?

At its core, DAB is a concept designed to deny students the right of union representations because of the academic content of their work. When they believe the student may *benefit* from their work, Temple disavows their status as employees. By delineating between student’s academic work and their work as employees, Temple makes an at once arbitrary and strategic distinction that *forces* students to surrender the employment rights for which we continue fought and undermine the strength of our union.

## Issues to Consider

Although it has been in use for nearly twenty years, DAB is inconsistently interpreted and implemented. Use between departments and colleges varies, and **may be in violation of TUGSA’s Collective Bargaining Agreement**. If you are asked to sign a DAB for any research or teaching that falls outside the specific circumstances listed in this pamphlet, please contact a TUGSA representative to discuss your concerns.

## Contact Us

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