Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistantships are essential to the success of the graduate programs at Georgia Southern University. The assistantship not only enables the student to complete the program of study in a timely fashion, but also affords the opportunity to be involved in full-time study at the University. Graduate assistants enliven the academic environment of the university by adding to the community of scholars within the institution. A graduate assistant is a graduate student who is appointed to a Teaching Assistantship, Research Assistantship, Graduate Assistantship, or Doctoral Fellowship and receives a stipend and a tuition waiver.

Definition

A graduate assistant is a graduate student employee appointed to the position title of Teaching Assistant (TA1 or TA2), Research Assistant (RA) or Graduate Assistant (GA). These are defined according to the emphasis placed on the student employee’s teaching, research, or general experience. Appointments and initial stipend are determined on the basis of academic background, prior experience, scholarship, and general potential. All graduate assistants receive a tuition waiver of the standard in-state and out-of-state tuition but must pay a reduced matriculation fee of $25 per semester along with all assessed university fees. Some programs are approved to charge a premium tuition rate that is not covered by the standard tuition waiver.

Financial Aid and Veteran Benefits

To qualify as a full-time graduate student for financial aid and veteran benefits, a student must be enrolled in the required number of credit hours set by regulations governing financial aid or veteran benefits. Students should contact the Financial Aid Office or the Office of Veterans Affairs in the Office of the Registrar for information about minimum enrollment requirements.

Work Study

Graduate students may qualify for work-study. Applicants must submit the application for work-study to the Office of Financial Aid.

Graduate Teaching Assistant (TA1)

A Graduate Teaching Assistant (TA1) is a graduate student who works under the direct supervision of regular faculty members and may be assigned only to duties related to instruction. A TA1 may not have primary responsibility for a course or serve as the instructor of record, but may assist in the instructional process by serving as a discussion leader in breakout sections, grade papers, proctor exams, or assist the primary instructor of record in other ways. The department chair and graduate program director shall determine that the credentials of a student assigned as TA1 qualify the individual to assist in instruction activities.

Graduate Teaching Assistant (TA2)

A Graduate Teaching Assistant (TA2) is an advanced graduate student who is given primary responsibility for teaching courses and may have autonomy for assigning grades and providing laboratory instruction/ setup as part of a regularly schedule course. A TA2 must be under the supervision of a Georgia Southern faculty member that teaches in the discipline, but the student may be listed as instructor of record. A TA2 must complete 18 credit hours of graduate course credit hour in the discipline and must have completed training, which consists of centralized training offered by the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) or decentralized training within the academic program. Decentralized training must have prior approval from COGS, CTE and the Office of the Provost. TA2s may also be required to participate in additional in-service training within their College or Department, as determined by their Program. The department chair and graduate program director shall determine that the credentials of a student assigned as TA2 qualify the individual to undertake the assignment of instruction and must submit all required documentation to the Office of the Provost.

Graduate Research Assistant (RA)

Graduate Research Assistant (RA) is a graduate student whose responsibilities are other than teaching. An RA position is one that allows a graduate student to conduct research of a scholarly nature, normally under faculty supervision. Services provided by a research assistant may include, but is not limited to, the production and analysis of data, the development of theoretical analyses and models, the production or publication of scholarly journals and research reports to develop his or her own research agenda and for the benefit of the University, faculty or academic staff supervisor, or granting agency.

Graduate Assistant (GA)

A Graduate Assistant (GA) is a graduate student who provides general administrative support to academic and administrative units within the University. The assigned duties to the GA should be relevant to the graduate program and the professional goals of the student whenever possible.

Graduate assistants, regardless of their functional classification as TAs, RAs or GAs, are to work under the supervision of faculty who are experienced and knowledgeable in their field. Supervision of graduate assistants includes providing appropriate training prior to and during the assistants’ assumption of responsibility for assigned tasks. Academic and non-academic units of the University may employ graduate assistants. Funding for the graduate assistantship may come from allocated funds (provided to the unit from the College of Graduate Studies for the purpose of assistantship support) or from unallocated funds (provided separately by the department or other budgetary unit).

Doctoral Fellowships (Assistantship)

A limited number of Doctoral Graduate Assistantships may be awarded by the respective colleges/department that house doctoral programs. Doctoral Graduate Assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis by the college/department and may include an annual appointment as determined by the college.

Eligibility

Assistantships may only be awarded to graduate students who have unqualified admission to the College of Graduate Studies under the “Regular” (not Provisional) classification to a degree seeking program. Qualifications to hold a Graduate assistantship include:

- Admission to COGS under the “Regular” degree admission classification,
- Enrolled full-time as defined by the program, and
- A cumulative GSU graduate GPA of at least 3.0 (3.25 for Ed.D. Curriculum Studies or 3.50 for Ed.D. Educational Leadership students) in all coursework.

Students enrolled in certificate or endorsement only programs are not eligible to hold an Assistantship.

ASSISTANTSHIPS FOR FULLY-ONLINE STUDENTS

At the discretion of the dean of the respective college, a limited number of assistantships may be provided to students enrolled in programs or classes that are delivered fully-online AND where the student will be employed as a TA, RA or GA in the home college/department of the graduate program. In cases where the employing unit and the academic
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unit are NOT one and the same, the employing unit MUST seek prior approval from the dean of the academic unit in advance of offering the student an assistantship. To be eligible, fully-online students must be able to meet the same eligibility requirements and are required to fulfill the same on-campus work schedule as a traditional graduate assistant. As such, it is anticipated that fully-online graduate assistants will reside within a reasonable distance to the University.

Students who are enrolled in Georgia On My Line Programs (GOML) are not eligible to hold an Assistantship.

Credit Requirements

Graduate Assistants must be registered for a minimum of 9 credits of course work for Fall or Spring semester, within the program of study throughout the period of the assistantship. The only exceptions are:

- Master of Public Administration students must register for a minimum of 8 credits to be eligible.
- Master of Music students must register for a minimum of 7 credits to be eligible.
- Master of Science in Applied Economics students must register for a minimum of 6 credits to be eligible.
- Master of Science in Computer Science students must register for a minimum of 6 credits to be eligible.
- Doctor of Education, Educational Leadership students must register for a minimum of 6 credits to be eligible.
- Master of Science in Nursing students must register for a minimum of 5 credits to be eligible.
- Doctor of Nursing Practice students must register for a minimum of 5 credits to be eligible.

Graduate assistants may be approved to take less than the minimum required course load (as little as one hour) given that the graduate assistant is in the last semester of coursework, have completed the graduation application, and have a cleared DegreeWorks audit on file. This policy may only be applied once.

International Students working as Graduate Assistants must also have this reduced course load authorized by a DSO in the Office of International Programs & Services. The Authorized Reduced Course Load Form must be completed by the student's advisor and submitted to IPS prior to the beginning of the final term of study.

Summer Assistantships

A student granted an assistantship during the summer semester must be enrolled during the summer to be eligible to hold an assistantship. Summer Term A or Term B require a minimum of 3 credit hours. Summer Long Term or Term A and B together require a minimum of 6 credit hours, except Master of Science and Nursing and Doctor of Nursing Practice which requires a minimum of 5 credit hours.

Graduate Assistantship Appointment

The head of the academic unit makes appointments of graduate assistants. The dean of the college in which the academic unit is located and the Director of Graduate Studies must approve appointments subsequently. The head of the academic unit offering the assistantship is responsible for making the offer of appointment in an official letter. At the time assistantship offers are accepted, the heads of the appointing units should provide recipients with a copy of any applicable departmental policies relating to graduate assistants.

All graduate assistants must be registered for classes prior to the first day of classes for each semester. A graduate assistant who withdraws or drops a course resulting in the registration total to fall below full-time will lose the assistantship, and the student will be required to pay full tuition and fees for the remaining number of enrolled credit hours. Graduate assistants are not permitted to enroll in courses for which they are assigned assistantship responsibilities and may require special permission to enroll in courses that are not part of their program of study.

Workload and Responsibilities

A normal workload for a full time graduate assistant is twenty (20) hours per week. Federal law generally limits the number of hours that international students can work on campus to twenty (20) hours per week in the fall and spring semesters. The Director of Graduate Studies may grant exceptions to this limitation. The standard starting date for a graduate assistant shall be one week before the first day of classes and the standard ending date shall be the last day of final exams. Students on assistantships may not otherwise be employed at Georgia Southern University.

Compensation

The stipend for a full time graduate assistantship is determined by the department/unit awarding the assistantship, with the minimum amount being determined by the College of Graduate Studies. A graduate student to whom an assistantship is awarded will receive a waiver of standard tuition (in- and out-of-state if student is classified as a non-resident). A graduate assistant is required to pay a $25 matriculation fee each semester of enrollment while holding an assistantship. Graduate assistants are responsible for paying all University Fees including the Institutional Fee, Health Insurance Premium, and the Technology Fee each semester.

To appoint a graduate assistant, the unit must have the necessary funds to cover the assistantship stipend and must meet the qualification to conduct the assistantship activities prescribed by the department.

Tuition Waivers on Sponsored Programs

If funding for an assistantship is derived from an external source (e.g. sponsored programs), a tuition waiver is not granted and either the student or the external agency is responsible for full tuition, including any fees and premium tuition.

In some cases, a tuition waiver for RAs may be provided, and in rare cases TAs, receiving full stipend supported from funding received by the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs. Graduate students supported by sponsored programs must meet and maintain enrollment and eligibility requirements and work only on tasks towards the sponsored program. If modifications to the sponsored program exclude the graduate assistant from working on the project, the principal investigator is responsible for issuing a termination notice for the position.

Graduate Assistant Health Insurance Requirement

All graduate students receiving a tuition waiver as a result of a graduate assistantship or doctoral fellowship are required to have health insurance that is provided through the University System of Georgia Board of Regents approved provider.

Graduate Assistant Appointment Duration

In most cases, assistantship appointments should be made for an academic or fiscal year so that employing units and assistants can plan effectively. In some instances, appointments may be made for one semester only. To be eligible for reappointment, the assistant must have maintained eligibility and must have received acceptable performance evaluations from their immediate supervisor.
Deadline

March 1 is the deadline for the receipt of graduate assistantship applications by the College of Graduate Studies to receive priority consideration for employment during the upcoming fall semester. A student’s acceptance of a graduate assistantship for the next academic year constitutes an agreement, which the College of Graduate Studies expects the student to honor. If the student accepts the offer and subsequently desires to withdraw, the student may submit, in writing, a resignation of the appointment within two weeks after accepting the offer. However, an acceptance given or left in force after this date prevents the student from accepting another offer without first obtaining a written release from the College of Graduate Studies.

Termination and Resignation

A graduate assistant will be ineligible to continue and/or will be terminated if any of the following conditions occur:

- Placed on academic probation.
- The cumulative graduate GPA falls below 3.0 (3.25 for Ed.D. Curriculum Studies students; 3.50 for Ed.D. Educational Leadership students).
- An "I" grade has not been cleared by the end of the next semester after which it was recorded. This includes summer.
- The graduate assistant does not meet the mandatory insurance policy.
- Full-time enrollment is not maintained.
- Assistantship responsibilities are not performed in a satisfactory manner.
- Loss of unit or department funding.

If a graduate assistantship is terminated or resigns, the student loses the assistantship tuition waiver and is assessed the full tuition and fee amount for the term.

All graduate assistants should receive prior written notice of termination, with a minimum expectation of two weeks’ notice. Failure to satisfactorily perform work assignments in particular needs to be documented in writing prior to the dismissal notification. Additionally, the University reserves the right to terminate a graduate assistant if, in the sole discretion of the Director of Graduate Studies, the circumstances of a particular situation warrant such action.

The College of Graduate Studies and the department/unit to which the student is assigned have the joint responsibility to ensure that appropriate procedures are followed before termination of the assistantship. A student choosing to resign or terminate employment must submit a letter of resignation to the Director of Graduate Studies through the Department/Division Chair of the employing unit.

Graduate Assistant Rights

Graduate assistants are granted rights as outlined in the American Association of University Professors’ Statement on Graduate Students. Graduate assistants must be notified in writing of all decisions that affect their status as temporary student employees. They will be given advanced notice of evaluation procedures and must receive notice of reappointment procedures in time to permit preparation of their assistantship applications. All graduate assistants, regardless of classification as RAs, TAs or GAs, have access to appeal and grievance procedures operative to the University. Appeals resulting from academic decisions are usually directed to the unit responsible for the decision. An unfavorable ruling may be appealed to successive levels in the University and ultimately to the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Information on appeals of academic matters may be obtained from the College of Graduate Studies.

Complaints of discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, handicap, or veteran’s status may be heard through the University’s Grievance Procedures. Under these procedures, a grievance panel will also hear complaints that allege deviation from official University policy.