8.04 / Graduate Assistantships

A Graduate Assistantship is an appointment to a graduate student who serves in a support role (assistantship) at Wichita State University. Graduate Assistantships are not considered employment because the work performed is primarily academic in nature. However, the general expectations of all Graduate Assistants with respect to conduct and performance are consistent with those of employees. This policy covers four types of graduate assistantship appointments. Those types are defined below and include Direct and Assisting Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA), Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA), and Graduate Staff Assistantships (GSA).

I. TYPES OF GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA):
The primary function of a graduate teaching assistant (GTA) is either to provide direct instruction or to assist with instruction. Both functions require GTAs to have the latitude to make independent decisions, use judgment and exercise discretion when dealing with student matters. GTAs providing direct instruction have responsibility for specific courses, sections, or laboratories. Direct GTAs are the instructors of record for courses to which they are assigned, whereas Assisting GTAs support faculty members who are the instructors of record for the courses. In either case, the main purpose and responsibility of GTAs is to impart knowledge or training to students at Wichita State University.

GTAs who provide direct instruction are expected to follow departmental teaching guidelines, lesson plans, or syllabi. Responsibilities may include literature review; preparation of course lectures, laboratory/computer assignments, and/or course materials; monitoring of attendance; and preparing, administering and grading of daily assignments, examinations; and clinical supervision.

Assisting GTAs who support the instructor may help prepare lectures, course materials, quizzes and tests, and supervise or coordinate recitations, problem solving sessions or laboratory sections. The student may monitor classroom examinations written by the instructor. If assigned to grade test papers, or other types of examination, this must be included as a part of the overall GTA assisting position and cannot be the only duty assigned. Note that only direct GTAs may enter final grades into the university’s student information system (Banner). While assisting GTAs can enter grades into the university’s learning management system, only the instructor of record can enter final grades.
Graduate Research Assistants (GRA):
The primary function of a graduate research assistant (GRA) is to assist faculty members in their scholarly and/or creative activities. Duties may include basic scientific research using laboratory facilities, computer programming or operation, data collection, correlation and preliminary interpretation of data, statistical analysis of data and writing preliminary reports, bibliographical work, or assisting musicians or artists in their creative endeavors. GRAs have the latitude to make decisions involving judgment and/or discretionary choices when collecting data, performing experiments, operating equipment, or assisting in studios or laboratories. When appropriate, GRAs may order supplies and equipment, maintain inventories, or trouble-shoot equipment and experiments. GRAs are obliged to follow department research guidelines or experimental protocols established by the faculty member in charge of the scholarly activity. GRAs may assist with experiments at field locations.

Graduate Staff Assistants (GSA):
The primary function of a graduate staff assistant (GSA) is to assist in non-teaching and non-research activities. Specific duties of the GSA vary widely, depending on the administrative or academic unit to which they are assigned, but should be at a level to make use of their education and abilities. GSAs may assist in various offices if their assignment is to perform more than clerical duties. Computer data entry, record maintenance, reports and survey preparation, correlating data, and answering specific questions are some of the duties GSAs will typically perform. Some GSAs may have musical performance as their principal assignment. GSAs’ responsibilities may also include interacting with students, faculty, administrators, alumni, and visitors to the University. For this reason GSAs have the latitude to make decisions involving judgment and/or discretionary choices in accomplishing these duties.

II. LEVELS OF ASSISTANTSHIPS

Assistantship levels are based on the approximate number of hours per week needed to complete the assignment and are expressed as percentages of a full-time equivalent (FTE), where 1.0 FTE is equivalent to 40 hours per week. Eligibility for certain benefits is based on the assistantship level.

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<th>Approved Assistantship Levels</th>
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<td><strong>FTE</strong></td>
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<td>.25</td>
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III. BENEFITS

Stipends:
The actual dollar amount of an assistant stipend varies according to the length of the appointment, the number of hours per week required by the appointment, and the funding base within each program area. Each program shall define typical ranges and provide justification to the Graduate School when stipend levels are out of the established range.

**Payroll Period:**
Payment is issued biweekly according to the University payroll cycle for the appointment period. Actual beginning date of the graduate assistant appointment may not coincide with the actual date of reporting.

**Nonresident to Resident Tuition – Academic Year:**
Non-resident graduate assistants (GTA, GRA, and GSA) who have an appointment of .40 FTE (approximately 16 hours per week assignment) or greater, are eligible, pursuant to regulations promulgated by the Kansas Board of Regents, for waiver of non-resident tuition to resident tuition. This tuition waiver is for the actual semester of appointment and does not include a waiver of student fees. Graduate assistants must provide service from the 20th day of the semester through the remainder of the semester to be eligible for the non-resident to resident tuition waiver.

**Nonresident to Resident Tuition – Summer:**
Nonresident graduate students who were granted a waiver of non-resident tuition to resident tuition in the preceding fall and spring semesters also receive this benefit in the summer, whether or not they hold a summer appointment.

In order to be eligible for a waiver of non-resident tuition to resident tuition in the summer, graduate assistants who were not granted this waiver in the preceding fall and spring semesters must hold an appointment for at least four weeks spanning any of the summer instructional periods.

**Waiver of In-State Tuition:**
Graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) are eligible for full or partial waiver of in-state tuition (for courses numbered 500 and above), according to the following table, pursuant to budget instructions from the Kansas Board of Regents:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>FTE</th>
<th>APPROX. HOURS PER WEEK</th>
<th>IN-STATE TUITION WAIVED</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Direct GTA instruction</td>
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<td>.50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>.40</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
* Non-resident GTAs holding appointments which total less than .40 EFT are responsible for the balance of their tuition assessed at the non-resident rate, since they do not qualify for the waiver of non-resident tuition to resident tuition.

This waiver is granted for the actual semester of appointment and does not include a waiver of student fees. Graduate teaching assistants must begin before the 20th day of the semester through the remainder of the semester to be eligible for in-state tuition waiver.

To be eligible for an in-state tuition waiver during the summer, graduate teaching assistants must hold an appointment for at least four weeks during the summer months.

**University Sponsored Health Insurance:**
The University will contribute toward the cost of the University-sponsored health insurance plan for eligible graduate assistants (GTA, GRA, or GSA). Eligibility is determined on a semester basis. To be eligible for University contributions, graduate assistants must hold an appointment, or a combination of appointments, totaling .50 FTE, for the specific semester (fall, spring or summer). The appointment must begin no later than the 20th day of the semester (fall or spring) or the 10th day for the summer and conclude at the end of the semester. Brochures outlining the costs and benefits of the University-sponsored health plans are available in the Student Health Center, Office of Human Resources, Office of Student Engagement and the Graduate School Office. Information concerning the cost and benefits of these plans is available online at [www.uhcsr.com/wichita](http://www.uhcsr.com/wichita).

**Bookstore Discount:**
Graduate assistants are currently eligible for a 10% discount on textbooks at the University Bookstore. Presentation of a Shocker Card and a paid fee receipt or appointment notice are required at the time of purchase to receive the discount, meaning it cannot be claimed retroactively.

**Social Security:**
Graduate assistants are exempt from social security deductions while enrolled. Social security will be deducted when an assistantship is held during the summer, but the graduate student is not enrolled in classes. Questions regarding deductions should be directed to the Payroll Office, Jardine Hall 201.

**Workers Compensation:**
The University provides coverage through state workers compensation self-insurance fund. Questions regarding this coverage should be directed to the Office of Human Resources.
IV. ELIGIBILITY AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Academic Requirements for Graduate Assistantships - Academic Year:
To be eligible for a graduate assistantship during the academic year, graduate students must:

- be admitted to, or enrolled in, a Graduate School degree program, and
- enroll as a full-time student (nine credit hours in fall or spring) during each semester of appointment. The chair or graduate coordinator of the department may grant an exception to allow graduate assistant to be enrolled in 6-8 hours in fall or spring.

Academic Requirements for Graduate Assistantships - Summer:
To be eligible for graduate assistantship during the summer, graduate students must:

- be admitted to, or have current status in, the Graduate School in a degree program, and
- be enrolled in at least three credit hours during the summer. (Enrollment may be waived if the graduate student held an appointment as a graduate assistant during the preceding spring semester.)

Noncompliance:
Failure to maintain enrollment or to comply with academic requirements will result in termination. The appointing department is responsible for monitoring the student's compliance with enrollment and academic requirements and must terminate the appointment at the end of the payroll period in which it becomes known enrollment or academic requirements have not been maintained.

Professional Conduct:
Graduate Assistants are expected to abide by all University policies related to sexual misconduct, discrimination, and research integrity. Graduate Assistants determined to have violated these policies could face termination from their assistantship and academic program. Relevant policies include:

3.02 Notice of Nondiscrimination
3.06 Sexual Misconduct, Sexual Harassment, Relationship Violence and Stalking Policy for Employees and Visitors
3.19 Prohibition of Retaliation
3.47 Discrimination Review Procedures
8.05 Student Code of Conduct
8.16 Sexual Misconduct, Relationship Violence, and Stalking Policy for Students
9.13 Misconduct in Research policies for more information

Maximum Hours of Work - Academic Year:
Domestic students and international students on F-1 and J-1 visas may work no more than 20 hours per week while classes are in session and no more than a total of 40 hours per week during finals week and break periods. The total of 20 hours per week consists of any combination of campus work including assistantships, work-study, hourly student employment, cooperative education, curricular practical training and internships. The purpose of this restriction is based on
the fact that Graduate Assistants are primarily students, and limiting the number of hours of work per week helps ensure that they have sufficient time to be academically successful. This restriction is predicated purely on academic principles; however, additional restrictions may also apply (i.e., immigration status).

**Maximum Hours of Work - Summer:**
Summer appointments must not exceed 40 hours per week.

**Spoken English Certification:**
All graduate assistants, whether native or nonnative speakers of English, who have teaching responsibilities, as defined by the Board of Regents, must have their spoken English evaluated by a departmental assessment committee. The committee will be appointed by the department chair or director and will be composed of at least three members: two faculty members and one student. The committee will judge the graduate assistant’s spoken English according to the Spoken English Screening Form (SESF) scale of 1-4. A rating of 1 or 2 indicates competency in spoken English and is required for appointing the candidate.

If one member of the assessment committee rates the candidate’s spoken English at 3 or 4, the candidate shall be required to achieve a minimum score of 23 on the Speaking portion of the internet-based Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or a minimum score of 50 on the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK) or a minimum score of 7.0 on the Speaking portion of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The SPEAK test will only be accepted when administered by officials at Wichita State University. Candidates are responsible for the cost of any of these exams.

Graduate assistants who are nonnative speakers of English, and who have teaching responsibilities as defined by the Board of Regents, that is, “classroom or laboratory instructional responsibilities and/or direct tutorial or advisement contact” must submit a minimum score of 23 on the Speaking portion of the TOEFL or a minimum score of 50 on the SPEAK or a minimum score of 7.0 on the Speaking portion of the IELTS, in addition to the SESF requirement described above. The SPEAK test will only be accepted when administered by officials at Wichita State University.

A report detailing the process for interviewing graduate teaching assistants, whose first language is not English, including the composition of the interview team and scores from the TOEFL or SPEAK for each individual hired will be submitted to the President/CEO of the Board every other year.

**Visas:**
International students on F-2 visas are not eligible for appointment until they receive an F-1 status.

**Orientation Workshop:**
GTAs who have never held a previous GTA appointment at WSU are required to participate in the annual GTA Orientation Workshop sponsored by the Graduate School. This workshop normally takes place before the beginning of classes each semester. The purpose of the
workshop is to prepare graduate students for their role in providing instruction to WSU students. Failure to attend may lead to revocation of appointment.

V. APPOINTING GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

Recruitment:
The Graduate School aims for the population of graduate assistants at WSU to represent the diversity of students in the general population, and encourages conscious and affirmative efforts to recruit and appoint members of the protected classes. When possible and appropriate, vacancies for graduate assistantships should be advertised for a minimum of two weeks. Vacancies should be advertised as broadly as possible to ensure equal access to the assistantship position.

Review of Applications and Selection Criteria:
Graduate assistantship applications are reviewed according to previously established criteria, such as academic records, experience, time available for work by applicants, financial need, relationship of assistantship work to the student's program, special abilities of the student (such as foreign language or computer skills, experience in operating research equipment). Applicants will not be considered if they fail to submit an application letter that addresses their qualifications relative to the appointment qualifications. All applicants should be officially notified in writing of the decision about their application as soon as possible after decisions are made.

Appointment Eligibility Verification:
All offers of appointment must include notification that the appointment is subject to proof of appointment eligibility as required by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. All appointees must have a valid social security number. No one may be added to the payroll until the following documents are on file in Human Resources:

- I-9 (Social security card may not be used as evidence of eligibility for non-citizens. The assistantship appointment may not begin any earlier than the date the I-9 is signed.)
- I-9 Release Consent Form
- Substance Abuse Policy Affirmation Form
- W-4
- Oath (Must be notarized)
- Employee Information Form
- ADA Form (optional)
- New hire report
- Criminal background check (excluding international students that have already undergone United States Citizenship and Immigration Services screening)

Multiple Assistantship Appointment Guidelines:
Multiple assistantship appointments occur when a student is appointed to more than one assignment (e.g., GTA and GRA) during a single semester. Multiple assistantships cannot require a student to work beyond the maximum number of 20 hours per week. In general, the
award of multiple assistantships to a single student must be guided by reasonable academic, ethical, and logical standards of conduct and education.

**Appointment Deadlines:**
Graduate assistants may be appointed at any time based on departmental, unit or project director needs and availability of funding. The date of appointment may affect eligibility for certain benefits.

WSU is a signatory to a national agreement establishing a policy regarding acceptance of assistantship offers. Students who accept an assistantship offer from an institution on or after April 15 must obtain a written release from this institution before accepting a different assistantship offer. For offers extended on or after April 15, students should be advised that the offer is contingent upon release from any existing assistantship commitment. After accepting a WSU assistantship offer, students are required to obtain a written release from the appointing department or unit before accepting a different WSU offer.

**Appointment Offer:**
The appointment offer will include all conditions of service listed on the Graduate Teaching/Research/Staff Assistant Appointment Authorization form. All appointment offers must indicate that the offer is contingent upon providing verification for employment eligibility as required by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and approval from the Graduate School. The Graduate Teaching/Research/Staff Assistant Appointment Authorization form is available from Human Resources.

**Graduate Assistant Appointment Notice:**
In order to appoint a graduate assistant, the appointing department must submit a Graduate Teaching/Research/Staff Assistant Employment Authorization form, which is conditional upon available funds. After approval, the Graduate School will send a Graduate Assistant Appointment Notice to the recommended graduate assistant for signature. After approval, Human Resources will distribute a copy of the Appointment Authorization form to the department.

The Graduate School will assure that a person meets all eligibility requirements and is not scheduled to provide service for more than the maximum hours allowed. When the Graduate School determines a person is in violation of requirements, the appointing department will be notified of the need to resolve the problem.

**Reappointment:**
Conditions and procedures for reappointment should be made clear to graduate assistants at the time the offer of a position is made; however, there should be no expectation or indication of reappointment. Graduate assistants should be informed if reapplication is required, and whether the application will be given priority or considered on an equal basis with new applicants. Other considerations for reappointment include the academic standing of the graduate assistant, clearing of conditions of admission, progress toward a graduate degree, the results of formal evaluation of performance, and any performance review documentation that appraised how the assistant discharged his/her duties.
VI. EVALUATION OF GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

Change of Status and Dismissal:
Any changes of status in salary, funding account, or dismissal must be processed through a Change of Status form. If a graduate assistant's appointment is terminated before the completion of the appointment period, the tuition benefits also terminate and the student is responsible for personal payment of the tuition for that semester.

Should it become necessary to consider the dismissal of a graduate assistant prior to the end of the appointment period, any such consideration must be communicated to the person involved as early as possible. The concerns, which form the basis for consideration, should be spelled out in the communication.

The department/unit should describe types of behavior that can lead to dismissal. Should there be reason to dismiss a graduate assistant before the end of the appointment period, the faculty supervisor, Department Chair, and Dean of the Graduate School must approve the dismissal in writing before the graduate assistant is notified.

Performance Expectations:
Departments or units utilizing graduate assistants will provide information about responsibilities, expectations, workspace, support services, etc. Departmental policies and procedures should be described and discussed and matters such as method of payment, remission of tuition (if applicable) and resignation should be addressed. Standards of professional behavior expected in carrying out the terms of the appointment should be made in writing. Graduate assistants should be informed that their assistantship can be terminated prior to expiration of the period of service if the terms of the appointment are not met.

Performance Evaluation:
Departments and other units hiring graduate assistants are responsible for assessment of their performance. Procedures for making such assessments should be clearly spelled out and communicated to graduate assistants in writing. Performance assessment is an ongoing activity throughout the term of the appointment. Should problems with performance arise during the period of the assistantship, the responsible official in the appointing unit should meet with the graduate assistant and any other involved faculty or unit personnel and review the situation with specific directions and conditions issued in writing relative to continuation of the appointment. The extent of the formality of such reviews depends upon the seriousness of the problem. Personnel matters related to a graduate assistant appointment, such as performance assessment, must be done in confidential settings with concern for the individual involved as well as for the appointing unit.

Grievance Procedures:
Graduate assistants will be notified in writing of all decisions that affect their status as assistants, including performance evaluation summaries. Additionally, the graduate assistant will be notified in writing of any complaints received by the faculty supervisor, Department Chair, Academic Dean, or Graduate Dean concerning the graduate assistant's performance of duties. The graduate assistant will be given an opportunity to respond to such complaints.
If discipline or dismissal is recommended, the graduate assistant has the right to initiate an appeal process. The steps of the appeal process are:

1. The graduate assistant should first consult with the faculty supervisor to discuss the decision and determine if a mutually agreeable solution is possible.
2. If a solution is not agreed upon, the graduate assistant should meet with the Department Chairperson, Academic Dean, or resolve through the use of department/programs structures that may exist for this purpose.
3. If the graduate student has exhausted the above steps without coming to an agreed upon solution, the graduate student should schedule a meeting with the Dean of the Graduate School or dean’s designee. A request to meet must be done in writing. The decisions of the dean on such issues are final.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION

This policy shall be included in the WSU Policies and Procedures Manual and shared with appropriate constituencies of the University.

Revision Date:
September 9, 1998
September 13, 2001
March 12, 2003 (effective August 4, 2003)
June 15, 2007
July 14, 2012
November 2, 2016