

POLICIES & PROCEDURES GOVERNING

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS at UT MARTIN (10/12/06)

A. CATEGORIES OF APPOINTMENT

Graduate Assistantships

In accordance with the THEC guidelines, there are four possible types of assistantship at the graduate level:

1. **Graduate (Service) Assistants (GAs)**
GAs are appointed to perform various duties other than those directly related to teaching or research. Most commonly, these duties relate to supervisory or administrative functions of the university. These duties should be relevant to the graduate program and professional goals of the student.
2. **Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)**
GTAs work under the direct supervision of a regular faculty member in activities such as helping to prepare lectures, teaching discussion sections, conducting laboratory exercises, grading papers, and keeping class records. The GTA works to gain teaching skills and an increased understanding of the discipline.
3. **Graduate Teaching Associates (GTAsociates)**
Exceptionally experienced graduate students may be assigned primary responsibility for teaching undergraduate courses, including the assignment of final grades. Requires at least 18 graduate semester hours in their teaching field (SACS Criterion 4.8.4).
4. **Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs)**
GRAs are generally financed through a gift, grant, or contract. Ideally GRAs will be assigned a range of duties, such as library searches, field work, laboratory experiments, and preparation of reports, so as to gain professional skills to complement their graduate programs. The student's work should be closely supervised by a mentor.

Fellowships may also be available.

5. **Graduate Fellowships**
Fellowships are based on academic ability, plus any special requirements for a specific fellowship. Graduate fellows perform no duties. The expectation is that the recipients will be full-time students (9 semester hours or more) who devote all their efforts to the completion of the degree requirements.

B. QUALIFICATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT

1. Applicants for graduate assistantships or fellowships must meet the following qualifications:
 - A. **Undergraduate Degree:** Applicants for a graduate assistantship or fellowship must possess an undergraduate degree.
 - B. **Admission Status:** Applicants must meet all requirements for unconditional or conditional admission to their desired degree program.
 - C. **Course Load:** Applicants must enroll in two graduate-level courses required for their degree program unless they are in their final semester (full-time status required for fellowship recipients).
 - D. **Academic Standing and Continuation of Appointment:** Applicants should have achieved, and should continue to maintain, an excellent academic record. Failure to maintain good academic standing (minimum cumulative gpa of 3.00) will result in one semester of probationary status for that student's appointment as a GA. Failure to achieve good academic standing at the end of the probationary semester will result in immediate termination of the GA appointment. A student may only receive one semester of probationary status as a GA at UT Martin. Applicants must make satisfactory progress toward degree completion.
 - E. **Appointment Area:** Applicants for graduate assistantships should be studying for an advanced degree in the same field to which they will be appointed as a GA or in a closely related field in which they have substantial background.
 - F. **Teaching Requirements:** Graduate Teaching Associates must also have completed at least 18 graduate semester hours in their teaching field (SACS Criterion 4.8.4).
2. **International students** may not apply for an assistantship until they have completed at least one term of full time work at UT Martin. Their knowledge of the specific field in which they may work, and their command of the English language, must be evaluated thoroughly by faculty supervisors before an award is made.

C. APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES

1. **Graduate Assistantships**
The official appointment of all graduate assistants will be through the Dean of Graduate Studies upon the recommendation of the supervisor of the responsible account. The letter shall provide full information (provided by the supervisor of the responsible account) about the terms of the assistantship, including:
 - (a) title, percent time, and length of appointment;

- (b) total hours during each semester and information regarding proration of work over semester if work must be scheduled when classes are not in session;
- (c) stipend level and remission of fees, where appropriate;
- (d) minimum course load of 6 graduate-level hours per semester applicable toward the degree;
- (e) maximum course load per semester;*
- (f) description of duties;
- (g) name and position of immediate supervisor;
- (h) evaluation procedures;
- (i) resources available, including equipment, supplies, and office space;
- (j) procedure, qualifications, and timing for reappointment; and
- (k) deadline for acceptance.**

The supervisor of the responsible account will prepare a PIF upon notification by the Graduate Studies Office of the student's acceptance. The PIF will be forwarded to the Graduate Studies Office after it is signed by the Dean.

2. Fellowships

The Dean of Graduate Studies will award all graduate fellowships after consultation with the appropriate Graduate Coordinator. The Dean shall send the student the offer of appointment in an official letter. The letter shall provide full information on the terms of the fellowship, including;

- (a) title and length of appointment;
- (b) stipend level and remission of fees, where appropriate;
- (c) minimum student course load (nine hours);
- (d) resources available, including equipment, supplies, and office space;
- (e) procedure, qualifications and timing for reappointment; and
- (f) deadline for acceptance.**

*University maximum load is 9, 12, & 15 semester hours for .50, .40, & .30 appointments respectively. Overloads, if approved by the GA supervisor and graduate coordinator in consultation with the faculty advisor, are limited to no more than one graduate or undergraduate course per semester.

**See Resolution from the Council of Graduate Schools.

D. LENGTH OF APPOINTMENTS/AWARDS

1. Graduate assistantships should be made for an academic year so that both the student and the department can plan effectively. Typically this will be Fall and Spring semester for a 10-month appointment; Fall, Spring, and Summer for a 12-month appointment. Occasionally an appointment may be made for one term only. In such cases, an assistant who has performed well in the short-term appointment should be given priority for reappointment in a subsequent term over an applicant who has not been appointed previously.
2. Graduate assistantships should be available for one additional academic year with a maximum of four semesters for a 10-month position and six semesters for a 12-month position. Reappointments are subject to
 - (a) satisfactory academic performance and progress toward completion of the degree (See Section B.1.) and
 - (b) satisfactory evaluation of performance of the duties in the graduate assistant position.
3. Graduate fellowships are normally for the Fall and Spring semesters. Fellows should be guaranteed either reappointment to a fellowship or appointment to an assistantship for a second year—subject to satisfactory academic performance and progress toward completion of the degree. (See Section B.1.)
4. A student may hold only one assistantship at a time and may not simultaneously hold a fellowship.

E. RESPONSIBILITIES & RIGHTS/PRIVILEGES

1. Responsibilities

Graduate assistants must work closely with the faculty supervisor in carrying out assigned duties, at the same time making good progress toward the completion of their degree program. They are obligated to maintain standards of academic honesty and integrity and to report violations of these to the faculty supervisor. They should keep well informed of department, college, and institutional regulations, and follow them consistently. Placement on disciplinary probation will result in immediate termination of the graduate assistant position.

Graduate assistants should keep appropriate records of work assignments so that progress and problems can be fully documented. Recognizing that the assistantship is a temporary position, they should leave records such that decisions can be traced, results verified, and incomplete work finished after the assistant has left the position.

2. Rights & Privileges

Graduate assistants and fellows must be notified in writing of all decisions that affect their status as assistants/fellows. They should receive sufficient advance notice of reappointment procedures to gather materials and otherwise complete the process of application.

Graduate assistants must receive advance notification of evaluation procedures and a summary of the evaluation. Evaluation should be an ongoing process of communication between the assistant and the supervisor. At least one

formal evaluation must occur annually. It should be a supportive process that helps the assistant identify strengths and weaknesses, and plan for improvement.

Graduate assistants should be assigned space and equipment sufficient to carry out their assignment effectively. They should be provided with textbooks and/or other material needed for the fulfillment of their tasks.

F. STIPENDS & FEE WAIVERS

1. Stipends

Graduate assistants/fellows will receive either 10 or 12 monthly payments depending upon whether their appointment/award includes or excludes the summer term.

The typical appointment will be one-half time, requiring the equivalent of 20 hours of labor per week (or a one-half time teaching load). The minimal appointment must be at 30 percent time.

2. Fee Waivers

Anyone receiving a graduate assistantship (30 percent time, or more) by the first day of class is eligible for a fee waiver during that semester. The recipient is responsible for initiating the necessary paperwork.

The equivalent of a fee waiver will be included in all Graduate Fellowships.

New GA positions may be requested and will require approval from Academic Affairs (for stipend funding) and Finance and Administration (for fee waiver funding).

Council of Graduate Schools

Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellows, Trainees, and Assistants

Acceptance of an offer of financial support (such as a graduate scholarship, fellowship, traineeship, or assistantship) for the next academic year by a prospective or enrolled graduate student completes an agreement that both student and graduate school expect to honor. In that context, the conditions affecting such offers and their acceptance must be defined carefully and understood by all parties.

Students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support prior to April 15; earlier deadlines for acceptance of such offers violate the intent of this Resolution. In those instances in which a student accepts an offer before April 15, and subsequently desires to withdraw that acceptance, the student may submit in writing a resignation of the appointment at any time through April 15. However, an acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student not to accept another offer without first obtaining a written release from the institution to which a commitment has been made. Similarly, an offer by an institution after April 15 is conditional on presentation by the student of the written release from any previously accepted offer. It is further agreed by the institutions and organizations subscribing to the above Resolution that a copy of this resolution should accompany every scholarship, fellowship, traineeship, and assistantship offer.