

# Assistantships

## Graduate Assistants

The Graduate Assistant (GA) fulfills a unique position in the university because they are both a student and an employee. Graduate study and effective service as a Graduate Assistant both require extensive commitment. It is for this reason that limits are placed on the amount of effort (academic credits and teaching/research/service hours) to be spent in each role.

## Selection of Graduate Assistants

Applicants for GA positions must meet the eligibility requirements of the specific appointment and will not be subjected to unlawful discriminatory treatment. University policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, pregnancy, marital or parental status, veteran's status, status, relationship or association with an individual with a disability, relationship or association with a veteran, political belief or affiliation, or any other status protected by law or UND/North Dakota University System/State Board of Higher Education policy. North Dakota state law also prohibits discrimination in employment with regards to participation in lawful activity off University property during non-working hours, which is not in direct conflict with the essential business-related interests of the University.

Interested students may apply for a GA appointment to the graduate department to which they have been admitted or to service units, which may be related to their major field. Applications have deadlines, so check with your department 2-3 months prior to the beginning of the semester. All applicants may request reasonable accommodations related to disability, pregnancy, or religious belief for the application process.

There are three types of assistantships: Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA), Graduate Research Assistants (GRA), and Graduate Service Assistants (GSA). Graduate Teaching Assistants are selected by the department in which the student is pursuing their major field of study and in which the teaching assistant duties are to be performed. Graduate Research Assistants are selected by the faculty research supervisor with the concurrence of the student's major department chairperson. Graduate Service Assistants are selected by the administrator of the service unit.

## Eligibility Requirements

- Students admitted to the School of Graduate Studies and notified that they have been granted an appointment or award before they have actually received a bachelor's degree may neither register nor hold appointment or award until they have received the bachelor's degree and fulfilled all requirements for admission to the School of Graduate Studies as a degree student.
- Only degree seeking students in Approved and Provisional status in good academic standing may hold awards or appointments. Students who do not maintain approved or provisional status become immediately ineligible for and may not continue to hold an appointment or award.
- Students must maintain a 3.00 GPA to be eligible for and retain appointments or awards.
- A student may be removed at any time from an appointment due to unsatisfactory job performance.
- Students who withdraw from or are dismissed from the School of Graduate Studies become immediately ineligible for and may not continue to hold an appointment or award.
- International students must meet specified language proficiency requirements to hold an assistantship.
- Students must be enrolled in 6 credits (fall and spring terms) to hold an assistantship. Continuing Enrollment Credits do not count toward the 6 credit requirement. Students in their last semester may receive a waiver for this requirement. Summer enrollment is not required to hold an assistantship. However, a student enrolled in fewer than 3 credits during the summer term will be subject to FICA.

## Workload

Appointments may be half-time or quarter-time. For many assistantship appointments, the workload will be relatively uniform throughout the semester, but for others, the load will be uneven due to the nature of the duties and these amounts are averages.

- Half-time GAs will be expected to work up to a maximum of 20 hours per week, dependent upon departmental requirements.
- Quarter-time GAs are expected to work up to 10 hours per week.

Graduate assistantship stipends are subject to income tax and tax will be withheld. Rulings as to the actual taxability of any specific stipend are in the hands of the Internal Revenue Service.

## Limitations

### Academic Year

The School of Graduate Studies does not encourage outside employment for Graduate Student Assistants. Failure to make satisfactory progress towards their degree can result in coursework becoming obsolete prior to graduation, triggering the need for the additional work of revalidating obsolete coursework. Moreover, failure to make satisfactory progress may also constitute grounds for dismissal from the School of Graduate Studies.

- During the fall and spring terms, students holding an assistantship may work no more than 20 hours/week on campus during the fall and spring semesters. This includes all assistantships, staff and student positions, or faculty appointments.
- Exceptions:
  - In unusual circumstances, Graduate Assistants can serve as consultants to projects or activities supported with University administered funds provided all of the following criteria are satisfied: (1) The services of the Graduate Student Consultant are outside of the realm of their Graduate Assistant responsibilities, (2) The services provided are limited in scope and do not involve prolonged teaching or research activities, (3) The combined activities, Assistant + Consulting, cannot exceed 23 hours per week (4) The consulting fee is appropriate considering the qualifications of the individual to be utilized, and the nature of the services to be rendered, and (5) the overload must be sanctioned by the Graduate Program Director of the program in which the student is enrolled and approved by the School of Graduate Studies' Dean. Students should submit an assistantship petition form to request an exception.

## Summer Term/Breaks

- During the winter and spring break periods and the summer term, graduate assistants may work up to 100% time (40 hours/week) in any combination of assistantships and other institutional (staff, student, faculty) roles. This is only recommended if the student's course load is below 6 credits.

## Appointments of Graduate Assistants

All GA appointments specify an expected appointment term and a monthly stipend. All pay and benefits are terminated at the end date of the appointment or upon graduation should graduation precede the contract termination date. Reappointment or an additional or new appointment is possible at the end of the given term, but not guaranteed and offered at the discretion of the department and requires satisfactory job performance and at least a 3.00 grade point average.

All GA appointments are initiated by the department. All appointments will indicate the person to whom the student is responsible for the performance of the GA duties. Formal appointment of all GAs is by virtue of a university contract issued by the employing department or college. The student must sign to accept their contract. Students must have accepted the appointment in order for the paperwork to be further processed by the School of Graduate Studies and forwarded to Payroll.

- All GTA, GRA and GSA appointment forms must be received by the School of Graduate Studies at least two weeks prior to the start of the appointment to ensure enough processing time. Students may not start

their appointments until Human Resources has completed the final approval.

## Remote Work Agreements for Graduate Assistantships

Students enrolled in an online program may be considered for an on-campus assistantship appointment if they are located within a commutable distance. A student not located within a commutable distance may be considered for an assistantship with a remote workplace agreement with prior approval from the School of Graduate Studies Dean and the Human Resources Office.

## Termination

Graduate assistants may have their assistantship terminated upon recommendation by their supervisor or the School of Graduate Studies, with documentation of cause. Early termination for cause may occur when:

- A student does not abide by the appointment conditions.
- A student fails to perform tasks as assigned.
- A student does not make adequate degree progress.
- A student is placed on Academic Probation.
- A student does not make satisfactory research progress.
- A student fails to maintain minimum registration.
- A student persistently refuses to follow reasonable advice and counsel of faculty in carrying out assistantship obligations.
- A student fails to comply with responsibilities as an employee, department rules and regulations governing assistantships, or the terms of sponsored research agreements that fund the assistantship.
- A student's personal conduct is seriously prejudicial to the university, including violation of the NDSU Code of Student Behavior, state or federal law, and general university regulations.

## Graduate Assistant Rights & Responsibilities

All GAs are responsible for abiding by all policies as outlined in the *Code of Student Life*. Additionally, they are subject to the ethical precepts and code of their academic profession, through the laws of the State of North Dakota regarding its employees, and through the University of North Dakota policies, which govern their institutional obligations. Violation of these constitutes a basis for disciplinary action in accordance with the procedures set forth herein." (Section 1-9, *Code of Student Life*)

GAs are first and foremost graduate students, and must meet the demands of that role. In their role as teachers, GTAs are members of the academic staff (but not faculty) of the University, and are accorded the rights and responsibilities of academic freedom as set forth in the "Regulations on Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Due Process" (see the *ND State Board of Higher Education Policy Manual*, section 605.1) (<https://ndus.edu/>) As employees, GTAs are entitled to reasonable accommodations based on disability, pregnancy, or religious belief. GTAs must also report any consensual romantic, intimate, or sexual relationship in which they have direct or indirect authority over the other to their department chair, in accordance with UND's Consensual Relationship Policy, and report any potential discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct involving students to the Equal Opportunity & Title IX Office.

Graduate assistants have certain rights and privileges specific to the assistantship experience:

- The right to be notified in writing of all decisions that affect their status as a graduate assistant.
- The right to be notified of any complaints received by a supervisor or department chair concerning their performance of duties.
- The right to respond in writing to such complaints.
- The right to balance their assistantship responsibilities with their responsibilities to their academic program so that they can complete their degree in a timely manner.

- The privilege of being treated as a professional in their chosen field of study.

## International Student Graduate Assistants Health Insurance

The North Dakota State Board of Higher Education policy requires all international students to purchase health insurance approved by the institution. International students who are GAs at UND must agree to the deduction of the health insurance premium as a payroll deduction. The policy states that students must carry this insurance from the time of their registration at the institution until termination or completion of their studies.

## Graduate Teaching Roles

Graduate Teaching Assistants must be proficient English language communicators. The roles and responsibilities of students that are hired into a graduate teaching assistant position are varied, and depend on the unit's specific needs. The English language proficiency requirements vary based on these roles. Positions will fall into one of two categories - GTA General or Primarily Instruction or GTA Primarily Grading.

Students in a **GTA General or Primarily Instruction** role have the greatest responsibilities in their positions. An instructor's role is to teach regularly either a full semester lecture or laboratory course and/or lead discussions in sessions associated with existing courses. A general GTA role may vary vastly, but is any role that is not primarily instruction or primarily grading. Students in a GTA General or Primarily Instruction role must

- Be comfortable working with students using the English language. This necessitates a score of at least:
  - 26 on the speaking portion of the TOEFL iBT exam;
  - 6.5 on the IELTS exam; or
  - 120 on the Duolingo exam

Students in a **GTA Primarily Grading** role will have limited expectation to work directly with students and are given tasks to primarily assess student work. These students do not teach in the classroom, although they may have conversations with students on occasion. These students must

- Be moderately comfortable communicating with students using the English language. This necessitates a score of at least:
  - 20 on the speaking portion of the TOEFL iBT exam;
  - 6.0 on the IELTS exam; or
  - 110 on the Duolingo exam

Language proficiency will be established on the basis of the Internet Based TOEFL (iBT) spoken section or on the basis of the IELTS test overall band score as listed above by position type. Departments may have higher minimum score requirements for awarding an assistantship.