

## AY23-5-C

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## Graduate Assistantships

### A. Overview

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A Graduate Assistant (GA) performs instructional, research, or administrative duties in support of the ongoing activities of the University's academic, research, and service units.

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The awarding of a graduate assistantship is an integral and valuable part of the student's graduate education. It should be viewed as an apprenticeship in teaching, research, or administrative service.

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### B. Categories of Graduate Assistants

- Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)** – performs teaching duties, including the preparation and development of instructional materials, grading, and the teaching of a course, a laboratory section, or other types of support. The University recognizes two levels of graduate teaching assistant responsibilities and activities: GTA-Instructors and GTA-Assistants.
  - GTA-Instructors directly communicate and interact with students in ways that lead to the conveyance of knowledge or skills required to successfully complete the course. Included in this category are graduate students who serve as instructors, laboratory supervisors, recitation leaders, and tutors.
  - GTA-Assistants do not directly instruct students; instead, they serve as graders and/or classroom or laboratory assistants.
- Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)** – performs research or supports research activities conducted by faculty members or administrators. The University recognizes two categories of graduate research assistant responsibilities and activities: GRA-Faculty Assistants and GRA-Project Assistants
  - GRA-Faculty Assistants assist faculty on non-sponsored research activities.
  - GRA-Project Assistants assist faculty on sponsored research projects funded through external grants and contracts managed by the Old Dominion University Research Foundation, or through funds generated by the Educational Foundation or gift accounts.
- Graduate Administrative Assistant (GAA)** – performs duties in support of the a University academic or administrative unit. Such positions must provide graduate students with an academically and/or programmatically appropriate level of intellectual and/or professional experience. The appointment of GAAs in non-academic units is to be made in consultation with the graduate program directors of the pertinent academic units.

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### C. Graduate Teaching Assistant Instructor Institute (GTAI Institute) Requirement

1. All GTA-Instructors will be required to pass the GTAI Institute (The Institute) prior to their semester of appointment. GTA-Assistants are not required to pass the Institute, but they must be approved and supervised by their appropriate faculty instructor.
2. The Institute is offered twice a year during the week before fall and spring classes begin. In addition to the Institute, Departments are encouraged to develop their own on-going programs for training graduate teaching assistants. Such programs should be tailored to the specific needs of the discipline and department policies.
3. International students for whom English is not their first language must pass the SPEAK test prior to attending the Institute. A passing score on the SPEAK test is 50. Students who marginally fail the SPEAK test with a score of 45 will be offered the opportunity to participate in a re-test as a part of the Institute to determine if face-to-face communication is sufficient for holding a teaching assistantship. This requirement may be waived if the student has a score of 26 or better on the speaking portion of the iBT TOEFL exam or a score of 8.0 on the IELTS exam. may be

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#### D. Application

Applications for graduate assistantships paid by the University (GTAs, GRAs, and GAAs) are managed by the graduate program director or the responsible academic/administrative unit. Applications for GRA positions funded through the Old Dominion University Research Foundation are made through the faculty member who is the principal investigator, the department chair, or graduate program director.

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**Deleted:** the Office of Admissions or from the University's web page. The completed form, together with a brief essay by the applicant discussing academic interests and career objectives, must be submitted to the appropriate graduate program director or office making the appointment, as soon as possible for fullest consideration.

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**Deleted:** Students appointed as graduate assistants must be enrolled at least three-quarter time in fall and spring and at least half time in summer with the exception of those doctoral students who have advanced to candidacy or those master's students who are in their final semester of study (see the section in this policy on "Enrollment Requirements;" see also the related Graduate Catalog policy on "Enrollment Status").

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#### E. Eligibility

1. Only students admitted to graduate degree programs on the basis of complete and fully evaluated credentials and in good academic standing are eligible for appointment to a graduate assistantship. Additional criteria apply for appointment as a GTA. See sections B and C.
2. All students appointed to a graduate assistantship are required to verify their identity and employment eligibility and complete an I-9 Form, according to University procedures, prior to commencing their duties. This requirement is established in order to comply with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Students are also required to complete the Child Support Disclosure and Authorization Form, the Commonwealth of Virginia's Policy on Alcohol and Other Drugs Form, ODU Use of Electronic Communications and Social Media Form, the Commonwealth of Virginia Selective Service Form, and the Employee Payroll Direct Deposit Authorization Form.
3. Students must be in good academic standing (i.e., a GPA at or above 3.0) to be appointed to an assistantship. An existing assistantship appointment will be terminated for any student whose GPA falls below 3.0 and whose status subsequently moves to probationary at the end of a given semester. An exception may be granted for one semester by the dean of the Graduate School or designee provided that 1) a remedial plan of study with set benchmarks is developed and confirmed in writing with the student, the student's advisor, and if pertinent, the student's supervisor, and 2) a justification is submitted by the graduate program director and approved by the dean of the college or dean's designee. An

extension for a second semester may be granted only if the student has shown significant improvement toward the benchmarks and by using the same process.

4. Students may not hold full-time employment and be appointed to an assistantship. See section I below.
5. Normally, students will perform their assistantship duties in person and on-campus. Students enrolled full time in an online program, who are also U.S citizens or legal-permanent residents residing in Virginia during the degree program, may be appointed to an assistantship only with the express permission of the GPD, the dean or designee, and the graduate dean or designee. U.S. citizens or legal residents living outside of Virginia and international students who are fully online must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the graduate school in consultation with the appropriate office of campus prior to being hired as a GA. Further, no student regardless of citizenship status may be hired as a GA if they reside outside of the United States.

## F. Enrollment Requirements

1. Only students enrolled full-time are eligible to hold an assistantship, unless the student meets an exception to the full-time enrollment requirement as permitted by this Policy. GAs are required to be enrolled during the semester of their appointment, but their registration requirements may differ based on their funding sources, duties, and/or residency status. Undergraduate or non-credit registrations do not count toward this requirement. Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Administrative Assistants
  - a. GAs, including both GTA-Instructors and GTA-Assistants, and GAAs who are paid from non-restrictive Commonwealth funds must register for and complete a minimum of nine (9) hours of graduate coursework per fall and spring semesters and three (3) hours of graduate coursework per summer semester. GTAs and GAAs who are paid from restrictive Commonwealth (S5) funds must register for and complete a minimum of nine (9) hours of graduate coursework per fall and spring semesters and six (6) hours of graduate coursework per summer semester.
2. **Graduate Research Assistants**
  - a. GRAs, including GRA-Project Assistants and GRA-Faculty Assistants, have additional conditions that may affect their registration requirements. GRA-Project Assistants are paid only from external funds managed by the Old Dominion University Research Foundation or the Educational Foundation or from funds generated from gift accounts. They must register for and complete a minimum of six (6) hours of graduate coursework per fall and spring semesters and three (3) hours of graduate coursework per summer semester. GRA-Faculty Assistants are paid from Commonwealth funds. Those who are paid from non-restrictive Commonwealth funds must register for and complete a minimum of nine (9) hours of graduate coursework per fall and spring semesters and three (3) hours of graduate coursework per summer semester. Those who are paid from restrictive Commonwealth (S5) funds must register for and complete a minimum of nine (9) hours of graduate coursework per fall and spring semesters and six (6) hours of graduate coursework per summer semester.

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International students must comply with any regulations or conditions associated with their visa status, in addition to the requirements of this enrollment policy. For international students taking fewer than **nine (9)** hours of graduate coursework in either the fall or spring semester, a Reduced Course Load Request Form (RCL) must be filed with the Office of Visa and Immigration Service Advising (VISA). International students beginning a new academic program during the summer semester must register for and complete a minimum of **six (6)** credits, regardless of their funding source.

Exceptions to **full-time** enrollment requirements:

1. Doctoral students who have successfully advanced to candidacy must register for and complete at least **one (1)** hour of graduate credit every semester until graduation (see Continuous Enrollment Policy). Such students may be appointed as **GAs** even while registered for a reduced course load. They are eligible for full tuition exemption and are considered to be full-time for financial aid purposes. The graduate form, Doctoral Candidates 1-Hour Full-Time Notification, must be completed and forwarded to **the designated recipients**. Such students shall not be paid from restrictive Commonwealth (S5) funds.
2. Master's students appointed as **GAs** in their final semester of study may register for a reduced course load, although they will not be considered full-time for financial aid purposes. The graduate form, Master's Student Full-Time Status Notification, must be completed and forwarded to **the designated recipients**. For F-1 and J-1 visa holders, the Reduced Course Load Request Form (RCL) must also be filed with **the Office of Visa and Immigration Service Advising**. Master's students appointed as **GAs** Assistants may register for a reduced course load for no more than one semester. Such students shall not be paid from restrictive Commonwealth (S5) funds.
3. Except in certain professional programs, **GAs** normally may not enroll for more than **nine (9)** credit hours per semester. Enrollment above **nine (9)** credit hours requires the approval of the appropriate graduate program director.
4. The Board of Visitors has authorized the president or his or her designee to consider waivers related to the minimum enrollment requirements specified above.

**Deleted:** Students are required to complete all of the credit hours as listed in the individual program sections necessary for the degree. Undergraduate prerequisite courses and courses taken for audit are not normally counted toward the enrollment requirement, except upon the recommendation of the graduate program director, the department/school chair, and the dean of the appropriate academic college. International students must comply with any regulations or conditions associated with their visa status, in addition to the requirements of this enrollment policy.

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## G. Appointment Process

GA appointments should be submitted to the dean's office of the college or the appropriate administrative unit at least 30 days before the start of the semester of employment in order to assure adequate time for processing.

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Information on appointment guidelines that are specific to international students may be obtained from the VISA Office, in the Center for Global Engagement.

### 1. Assistantships in Departments/Schools

The dean or other appropriate administrators notifies the individual departments/schools or units of their allocation of assistantships for the coming year.

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- a. The department/school recommends candidates for the assistantships to the appropriate academic dean. Candidates should be interviewed before final recommendations are made for appointment. Particular care should be taken in the consideration of applicants to determine the adequacy of academic preparation and language skills. A completed E-1SG form/EPAF form (if the student is supported on University or restrictive Commonwealth funds) or EPAS form (if the student is supported on sponsored funding through the Old Dominion University Research Foundation) Form will accompany the candidate's appointment to the dean or appropriate administrator. All completed E-1SG/EPAF forms, along with award letters and acceptance forms, are to be sent to the Office of EIS Processing for processing. EPAS forms are submitted electronically to the Research Foundation. Prior to submission of a nomination, the department/school should determine whether the student has been nominated for or accepted another graduate assistantship.
- b. Appointments are reviewed and approved by the dean of the academic college or their designee to ensure that applicants meet the eligibility criteria for appointment, such as admission to a degree program, English language proficiency requirements, good academic standing, and enrollment, and that the appointment is in compliance with applicable University and college policies.
- c. Applicants for GTA appointments must demonstrate written and oral fluency in the English language. International students must meet SPEAK test requirements (see Section C3 above).

## 2. Assistantships in Non-Academic Units

- a. Positions in non-academic units must provide a programmatically appropriate level of intellectual and professional activity. The student's department chair and graduate program director will coordinate with the non-academic unit in the selection of academically qualified and highly ranked students from their current or to-be recruited graduate students. The appointment of the GAA or GRA is made jointly by the academic department and the non-academic unit, with the latter responsible for the stipend and tuition waiver, if applicable.
- b. Each semester, the GAA's or GRA's immediate, non-academic unit supervisor will evaluate the performance of the student and make recommendations for continuance or termination. This written evaluation will be reviewed by the graduate student and their GPD or academic advisor and a final set of recommendations made regarding continued awarding of the assistantship.

## H. Appointment Workload

Graduate assistantships require up to 20 hours per week of service and are generally made for a period of one academic year with a nine-month performance period. For a GTA, the workload should include no more than six hours of classroom teaching or nine contact hours of laboratory supervision per semester, plus normal preparation time.

A graduate assistant funded through a grant or contract may be appointed for shorter periods if required by the conditions of the grant or contract.

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An assistantship workload during the academic year (fall and spring) is up to 20 hours per week. These hours may be divided between areas of service (teaching, research, and/or administrative). No special approval is required if the student is being funded under a single position number under the same budget code. In instances where a student's time is divided between budget codes and under more than one position number, an even ten-hour split (e.g., ten hours University-funded and ten hours Research Foundation-funded) may be granted without special permission. Further division of GA responsibilities, so long as the twenty-hour threshold is met, may be made in extraordinary circumstances and must be approved by both the dean or designee of the appropriate academic college and the dean or designee of the Graduate School.

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An assistantship workload may increase to 40 hours per week during the summer with the same requirements present for dividing appointed hours.

A graduate assistant appointment may be renewed upon nomination, review of qualifications, and satisfactory previous performance.

Part-time graduate assistantships (i.e., less than twenty hours) may ordinarily only be awarded during the summer term. Exceptions may be sought by approval from the academic dean or designee.

## **I. Additional Employment**

The acceptance of a graduate assistantship requires a serious commitment of time and effort on the part of a graduate student.

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Students who are employed full-time at positions outside the University may not be appointed to a graduate assistantship. Moreover, the holding of part-time positions outside the University is discouraged and may be pursued only after consulting with the graduate program director and academic advisor. Such part-time outside employment should in no way adversely affect academic performance or assistantship duties and responsibilities. Students who are employed full- or part-time at the University, including adjunct teaching or hourly positions, also may not be appointed to a graduate assistantship. Exceptions may only be made under unusual circumstances and only with the approval of the GPD and academic advisor, the dean or designee of the appropriate college or equivalent administrator or designee upon the written recommendation of the graduate program director and the department/school chair. Other exceptions may be made if there is a MOU on file between an employer and ODU. Further, students hired as graduate assistants shall immediately report changes to their additional employment status (i.e., considering outside employment) to their graduate program director.

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Information on employment guidelines that are specific to international students may be obtained from the VISA Office. in the Center for Global Engagement.

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## J. Evaluation and Monitoring

All graduate assistants shall be provided with a written job description of their responsibilities and be evaluated at least once by their supervisor(s) during the period of the award, preferably before the end of the first semester of service is completed. The evaluation shall be discussed with the GA and a copy forwarded to the appropriate graduate program director or chair.

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## K. Minimum Stipend Levels

Master's-level GAs shall receive a minimum stipend of \$7,500 per semester for the fall and spring semesters and \$2,500 during the summer.

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Doctoral-level GAs shall receive a minimum stipend of \$10,000 per semester for the fall and spring semesters and \$2,500 during the summer.

Exceptions to these minimum stipend amounts must be approved by the dean or designee of the appropriate college and the dean or designee of the graduate school. Supplements to these minimum stipend amounts may be made based upon the availability of funds and upon approval of the dean or designee of the appropriate academic college.

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For graduate assistants appointed in summer to work more than 20 hours per week, the minimum stipend must be proportionally increased according to the established rates.

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## L. Termination

A graduate assistantship normally ends when the period of appointment is concluded and the terms of the assistantship agreement are fulfilled. Otherwise, a graduate assistant may be terminated for the following reasons:

1. Resignation by the student. Resignation shall be in writing to the supervisor with a copy to the appropriate department chair, program director, and academic dean or equivalent administrator.
2. Failure of the student to perform his or her assigned duties adequately. Termination must be recommended by the student's supervisor and approved by the department chair, graduate program director, and the appropriate academic dean or equivalent administrator.
3. Failure of the student to remain in good academic standing in accordance with the graduate continuance regulations.
4. Failure of the student to maintain enrollment in the requisite number of graduate credits.
5. Expiration of a grant or contract that funds the student's stipend.

Any overpayment must be reimbursed to the University by the student as soon as possible after termination. Failure to repay the amount owed may result in legal action against the student for recovery.

If a student resigns from an assistantship or is terminated for reasons other than the completion of the appointment or expiration of the funding contract, the department chair or graduate program director should notify the appropriate academic dean or administrator as soon as possible and nominate a replacement if necessary.

A student who believes that he or she may have been unjustly terminated may appeal the decision. First, the student should meet with the supervisor, graduate program director, and department chair in an effort to resolve the situation. If this effort fails, the student may make an appeal in writing to the dean or administrator of the appropriate academic college. If the matter is not resolved, it will be referred to The Graduate School and then be automatically refer the matter to the Graduate Appeals Committee for review. The decision of the Appeals Committee is final.

## **M, Grievance Procedure**

Should a graduate assistant believe that their assigned duties and/or the workload required to fulfill these duties do not conform to University Graduate Catalog policies, or if they disagree with a performance evaluation, they should first attempt to reconcile the grievance with their academic/nonacademic immediate supervisor. If the grievance is not resolved, the graduate assistant will ask their graduate program director (GPD) to mediate the grievance between him/her and the immediate supervisor. If the GPD is the student's immediate supervisor, the GPD chair/dean's designee will attempt to mediate. If the chair is the student's supervisor, the GPD shall refer the case directly to the dean or the dean's designee. If this course of action does not resolve the grievance, the GPD/chair/dean's designee will seek mediation with the supervisor of the student's immediate supervisor. If a resolution cannot be achieved, the chair/dean's designee will appoint an ad hoc committee comprised of two senior faculty members from the student's department and one senior faculty member from another department. If the student's assistantship is a non-academic unit, the third member will be a senior level administrator from the nonacademic unit. Should the committee not resolve the grievance, it will be referred to the dean of the student's college for a final decision. For matters involving sexual harassment and/or discrimination, please see the "Student Complaint Procedure" or the "Discrimination Policy" in this catalog.

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## **N, Recognition of Outstanding Performance**

Each academic year, two graduate teaching assistants will be recognized for their outstanding performance as a classroom or laboratory instructor. Recipients of the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Awards will receive a \$1,000 financial award to be used to support their educational expenses. A request for nominations and criteria is distributed by the Graduate School.

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## University Graduate Fellowships

University graduate fellowships are awards granted for scholastic achievement and promise. Their objective is to enable full-time students to pursue graduate studies and research leading to advanced degrees without requiring them to render any service. Part-time and/or nondegree students are not eligible. In some cases, a student may be awarded a fellowship in addition to a graduate assistantship. Other fellowships outside of the University may be available (e.g., NSF, SREB, Virginia Sea Grant).

## Tuition Waivers

Tuition waivers are partial-to-full remittances issued by the Office of Finance to accompany graduate assistantships. Waivers are only applied to graduate-level coursework. The decision to award a waiver, including the number of credits (generally not to exceed nine credit) and the percentage, is made by the chair in consultation with the graduate program director and approved by the dean or designee of the college. Students holding tuition waivers who withdraw from courses may be held personally responsible for repayment of funds utilized. See Tuition Remittance policy for students who receive funding from external awards.

## Tuition Grants

Tuition grants are scholarships disbursed through the Office of Financial Aid that are earmarked specifically for payment of tuition. They may be offered to degree-seeking graduate students who are enrolled full- or part-time. Tuition grants may be combined with other forms of scholarship or fellowship support. The decision to award a grant, including the amount, is made by the graduate program director in consultation with the chair, and the dean or designee of the college.

## Tuition Remittances

Tuition remittances are financial awards made in connection with a fellowship, an assistantship, or hourly position funded through a sponsored grant or contract by the Research Foundation. They may be full or partial in scope. Remittance must be applied prior to the student being

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University fellows are chosen by their graduate programs and are supervised by their colleges.

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Fellowships are awards granted for scholastic achievement and promise. Their objective is to enable full-time students to pursue graduate studies and research leading to advanced degrees without requiring them to render any service. Part-time and/or nondegree students are not eligible. Fellows are responsible for payment of their tuition, in- or out-of-state, as applicable.¶

University fellows are chosen by their graduate programs and are supervised by their colleges. Applicants should indicate their intent to apply for a fellowship when applying for admission. Letters of recommendation, current transcripts, and any additional evidence of scholastic achievement that would assist in an evaluation of the student should be on file in the Admissions Office.¶

**Tuition Grants** ¶

Tuition grants are scholarships disbursed through the Office of Financial Aid and/or the Old Dominion University Research Foundation that are earmarked specifically for payment of tuition. They may be offered to regular or provisional degree-seeking graduate students who are enrolled full- or part-time. Tuition grants may be combined with other forms of scholarship or fellowship support. The decision to award a grant, including the amount, is made by the graduate program director in consultation with the ... [5]

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## Return of Tuition Assistance

A student who completes less than half of the graduate assistantship or fellowship appointment may be required to return their full tuition assistance (i.e., tuition waiver or tuition grant) award to the University or Research Foundation.

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