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Graduate Assistant Handbook

The Graduate School 
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY™

Eastern Illinois University
The Graduate School
Handbook of Regulations and Policies
Governing Graduate Assistantships

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assistantships.

Web address: <http://www.eiu.edu/~graduate/>

Phone: 217-581-2220

Fax: 217-581-6020

Mail: The Graduate School, 600 Lincoln Avenue,
Charleston, IL 61920-3099

Graduate Assistantship Manager

The Graduate Assistantship Manager is the first contact for graduate assistant applicants or candidates who have questions regarding regulations or policies that govern graduate assistantships. The Manager is also an appropriate contact to assist with resolution of concerns regarding assistantship eligibility or execution of duties. The Manager can be reached by contacting the Graduate School.

Applications and Initial Eligibility

An online application is available at the Graduate School web site. Completed applications for an academic year should be submitted by February 15 to the program of interest. Programs may establish other deadlines; therefore, students interested in assistantships should contact individual programs for specific details. Applicants interested in spring or summer appointments should contact the sponsoring unit or the Graduate Assistantship Manager.

Applicants may meet initial assistantship eligibility criteria in two ways. The first way to meet the criteria is to provide evidence of having earned a cumulative undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of 2.75 (4.00 scale) on the graded academic course work from the degree-granting institution and have been fully admitted to a graduate degree program. The second way to meet criteria is to provide evidence of having earned a cumulative undergraduate GPA of 2.75 (4.00 scale) on the last 60 semester hours of graded academic course work from the degree granting institution and have been fully admitted to a graduate degree program. Provisional admission does not qualify as full admission, therefore provisional candidates are not eligible. These requirements may not be waived or appealed.

Applicants who do not meet either of the two initial eligibility criteria, may reapply for an assistantship after they complete nine semester hours of graduate course work (courses numbered 4750 or higher) and earn a graduate GPA of 3.00 or higher and are fully admitted to a degree program. Note that applicants who were admitted as provisional graduate candidates must complete 12 semester hours of graduate course work while earning and maintaining a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher and must also complete all of the provisions required by the program to be a fully-admitted degree candidate. Graduate-degree candidacy is a requirement for assistantship eligibility. Note that sponsoring units, particularly academic units, may require additional criteria for eligibility.

Sponsoring Unit

Graduate assistants provide teaching, research or service to the sponsoring unit. A majority of assistants are appointed to the department or school in which a degree program is offered; however many sponsoring units are campus centers or offices that do not offer degree programs. Agencies external to the university, in collaboration

- A Fellowship is offered through the Eastern Illinois University Foundation. Fellowship responsibilities are specified in the Fellowship contract.
- A Summer Research Assistantship is a specialized appointment focusing on support for the research mission of the university.

Contract Term and Length of Appointment

Assistantship contracts may be for an academic year, single term, or a specified time period. Academic year contracts are offered for nine months on an academic calendar that starts on August 16 and ends on May 15. A term contract may be for a Fall, Spring, or Summer Term. A Fall term contract is for 4 months and starts on August 16 and ends on December 15. A Spring Term is for 4 months and starts on January 16 and ends on May 15. The length of a Summer Term appointment is specified in the contract and varies according to program need. Contracts may be offered outside of the definitions of an academic year or term, particularly contracts offered by non-academic units and contracts funded by grants and external agencies. These awards have start and end dates that are specified in the contract. Some contracts may specify an early start date and an extended end date depending on the requirements of the sponsoring unit.

Graduate assistant contracts specify that assistants are required to perform their duties within the dates specified in the contract, including the week of final examinations. Sponsoring units may reduce the stipend by the appropriate pro-rated amount if assistants fail to fulfill the terms of their appointment as specified in the contract. Graduate assistant contracts typically do not require performance of duties during periods when the University observes official holidays or scheduled breaks including Fall Break, Semester Break, and Spring Break. Some sponsoring units may specify; however, that performance of duties during official holidays and/or breaks is required. Performance of duties will be required during holidays and/or breaks only if specified in the contract.

Enrollment Requirements for Maintaining an Assistantship

Fall and spring assistantship appointments require that graduate assistants remain enrolled on campus as degree-seeking students for a minimum of nine semester hours of graduate course work (courses numbered 4750 or above). With prior approval of the Graduate Dean, assistants may substitute undergraduate teacher certification, professional certification, or required prerequisite courses for the graduate courses to remain in compliance with assistantship enrollment requirements; however, the student must remain enrolled on campus as a degree-seeking student for a minimum of nine semester hours. During the Fall and Spring semesters assistants may enroll for a maximum of 16 semester hours. Degree granting programs may require assistants to carry less than the maximum load of 16 semester hours in the Fall or Spring terms. Assistants are advised to consult with degree programs regarding load restrictions.

Summer assistantship appointments require that graduate assistants remain enrolled on campus as degree-seeking students for a minimum of three semester hours of graduate course work (courses numbered 4750 or above). With prior approval of the Graduate Dean, assistants may substitute undergraduate teacher certification, professional certification, or required prerequisite courses for the graduate courses to remain in compliance with assistantship enrollment



Graduate students who have held standard or Presidential assistantship contracts or Fellowship contracts for at least four months immediately preceding a Summer Term or who have signed a graduate assistant contract for Fall Semester may apply for a summer term tuition waiver scholarship. Summer tuition waiver scholarships require that students remain enrolled for a minimum of three semester hours and a maximum of 13 graduate level course work or approved prerequisites during the summer term. Only one summer tuition waiver scholarship per 9-month graduate assistant contract may be claimed. The summer tuition waiver application can be found on WebCt and the Graduate School web site and must be submitted by the student.

Stipends

University regulations require that stipend payments be made only after completion of assigned duties. Monthly stipends may vary according to the terms specified in the contract. In return for the stipend, the assistant satisfactorily performs the duties assigned by the sponsoring unit.

Student Health Insurance

All graduate assistants under contract with Eastern Illinois University are automatically billed the student insurance fee when they register for any number of on-campus hours. Coverage is effective on the day classes begin as stated in the Academic Calendar.

All graduate assistants under contract with Eastern Illinois University who register for a combination of on-campus and continuing education hours are automatically billed the insurance fee when registered. If graduate assistants drop their on-campus hours and retain only their continuing education hours, the student insurance will remain on their account as long as they remain under contract. If a contract is terminated and the assistant is enrolled only in continuing education hours, the insurance will be credited to the student's account because the student is no longer eligible to purchase coverage.

Payroll Process

Assistantship appointments offered through Eastern Illinois University provide stipends on the last working day of the month except for December when payment will be made on the first working day of January.

- Assistants who hold academic year appointments are issued a stipend in nine equal monthly installments paid September through May.
- Assistants who hold Fall Semester appointments are issued four equal monthly installments paid September through December.
- Assistants who hold Spring Semester appointments are issued four equal monthly installments paid February through May.
- Assistants who hold summer appointments are issued a stipend based on the terms specified in the contract.
- Assistants who hold summer appointments beginning May 16 receive their first installment June 30 for the period of May 16- June 30.

Graduate assistants appointed through the University are required to enroll in the Electronic Funds Transfer program to receive stipend payments. Necessary forms are available through the Graduate School Orientation and are also available in

the Payroll Office.

Assistantship appointments offered through a private agency may be paid according to the time table established by the agency. Assistants should consult with the Graduate Assistant Manager for information on these payroll plans.

Financial Aid

Graduate Assistants may be eligible for other forms of financial aid and applicants should access information regarding additional aid from the Office of Financial Aid. Typical processes for financial aid application require completion of the FAFSA or Federal Student Financial Aid form. Guidelines are specified at the web site and include filing as an independent using the most recent tax return. Any change in enrolled credit hours must be reported to the Office of Financial Aid in order to adjust the benefit of the tuition waiver scholarship appropriately. The *Status Change* form is available on the Financial Aid web site at:

http://www.eiu.edu/~finaid/XHRSF_Fall_Hours_Revision_Status_Change.pdf
http://www.eiu.edu/~finaid/XHRSP_Spring_Hours_Revision_Status_Change.pdf

While graduate assistants must carry a minimum of nine semester hours to retain their assistantship eligibility, other forms of financial aid may require 12 semester hours of enrollment. Assistants are advised to consult with the Office of Financial Aid regarding enrollment requirements for concurrent forms of financial aid and financial aid ineligibilities.

Billing and Payment of Program and Service Fees

Graduate Assistants will be billed all program and service fees. The fees must be paid by the date specified on the account or late charges will be assessed. The tuition waiver benefit will be applied only to tuition charges. Occasionally, assistants may reduce enrollment hours after a tuition waiver benefit has been applied to an account. In these cases, waiver benefits may temporarily exceed billing charges until the waiver benefit is reduced to match the student's actual course enrollment.

Assistants must pay their program and service fees by the date specified on the account because the tuition waiver benefit will be adjusted to match the tuition payments later in the billing cycle. If the fees have not been paid a late fee will be assessed.

Assistants taking only Continuing Education courses will be charged the current per-semester-hour Continuing Education fee and the current per-semester-hour textbook rental fee in place of the standard fees. Those assistants taking only Continuing Education courses who choose to use the University Health Service Clinic will be charged the current health service fee per semester at the time of their first visit.

Supplemental Contracts

Graduate assistants may be considered for supplemental non-recurring contracts for an assignment that is related to a specific area of expertise. The combined hours of duties required for the assistantship and the supplemental contract must remain at or below an average of 20 clock hours per week and the supplemental duties may not be part of the assistant's regularly assigned assistantship duties. Supplemental Contract Approval Forms are available at the Graduate Assistantship

web site. To initiate a contract the administrator in the program or office offering a supplemental assistantship contract forwards the contract to the assistant's primary sponsoring unit for approval. The primary sponsoring unit forwards the contract to the Graduate School. Requests for supplemental contracts must be approved with required signatures prior to performance of the duties. Requests for approval and compensation after the assignment is completed will not be approved. Agents or supervisors are responsible for ensuring completion of paperwork prior to completion of duties. Students must meet the following criteria to be eligible for a supplemental contract:

- The assignment is not part of the assistant's assigned duties: Graduate assistants hold contracts for academic terms or academic years and earn a stipend and tuition waiver in compensation for assigned teaching, research, or university service that directly supports the mission of the University. Supplemental contracts compensate assistants for duties that are not part of the assistant's regularly assigned duties. For example, an assistant in the music department may hold an assistantship to provide teaching assistance for several courses in the music department. A supplemental contract may be offered to compensate this assistant to play the piano at a University scheduled event. Providing music is not part of the assistant's regularly assigned duties; therefore, a supplemental contract may be offered.
- The supplemental assignment is related to the assistant's specialized area of expertise: Frequently, graduate assistants have unique expertise that may be needed by a department/unit for a special project. Unique expertise may be related to computer competencies, competencies in the arts, teaching experience, business knowledge, or other specialized skills related to the assistant's professional training and background. Supplemental contracts may be offered to compensate the assistant for an assignment associated with this expertise.
- The assignment is non-recurring: Supplemental assistant contracts are for duties associated with non-recurring demand such as an offer to provide music at campus events or an offer to provide a workshop for technology applications. Supplemental contracts are not approved for general non-specialized weekly duties associated with recurring student employment. Those positions are for students who do not hold assistantships.
- The combined supplemental contract and regular assistantship hours remain at or below 20 per week: Assistantship contracts are normally for 16 to 19 clock hours per week. A student who holds an 18 hour per week assistantship and is offered a supplemental contract to provide 2 four-hour workshops during the 15 week Fall term remains in compliance because the 8 hours averaged over the 15 weeks insures that the assistant's weekly average remains below 20 hours per week.
- The contract is approved prior to completion of the assignment: Supplemental contracting and payment are available only with prior approval. Verbal promises for payment without prior approval will not be honored. University staff who make offers but fail to secure prior approval are responsible for any promises of payment. Supplemental contracts are paid only through payroll.

- The contract is approved by the Primary Sponsoring Unit and the Graduate Dean: Primary sponsoring units must support any supplemental contracts because an assistant's first responsibility is to the primary sponsoring unit. The Graduate Dean will serve as the final authority for determining if the supplemental contract meets the criteria specified for supplemental appointments of graduate assistants.

Development Programs in Technology

The Center for Academic Technology Support (CATS) offers instructional technology-related professional development, training activities, and information seminars to Eastern faculty, staff, and graduate assistants. Technology sessions are offered under the TECnet title. Graduate assistants are encouraged to take advantage of these no-cost training and development opportunities. The current TECnet schedule is available on the Web at <http://cats.eiu.edu/>. For additional information, please contact the CATS office (581-8396) located at 1205 McAfee.

Guidelines for a Successful Appointment

Time management is essential to a successful assistantship. Assistants are expected to maintain their scholarship while simultaneously performing their assistantship duties to the satisfaction of the supervisor in the sponsoring unit. Providing the supervisor with a schedule of time when available to execute duties and providing some flexible time to perform unexpected duties ensures a successful outcome.

Assistants are encouraged to engage in timely resolution of concerns. When a supervisor calls a concern to the assistant's attention, assistants are urged to meet with the supervisor and outline a resolution to the concern with an appropriate time line. In the event that a concern is not satisfactorily resolved with the supervisor, an assistant should seek the assistance of the appropriate Graduate Coordinator. Issues unresolved by the Coordinator should be called to the attention of the Department Chair. The final step in resolution of a concern is to seek the assistance of the Graduate Dean.

The University provides a variety of resources to support all students. Resources include but are not limited to the University Counseling Center, Women's Resource Center, Writing Center, Recreation Center, and Health Center. Assistants are urged to use those resources that will help them successfully manage their assistantship and academic responsibilities.

Completion of Appointment and Assessment Program

Upon completion of the contract, graduate assistants must comply with all required clearance procedures mandated by the sponsoring unit.

Contacts to Resolve Problems or Questions

Please contact:

The Graduate School; for questions regarding graduate admissions, graduate policies and graduation	581-2220
Bursar's Office; for questions regarding your student account	581-6715
Counseling Center	581-3413
Graduate Assistantship Manager; for questions regarding assistantship contracts, regulations and requirements	581-7490
Health Services	581-3014
International Students and Scholars; for international students	581-2321
Office of Civil Rights	581-5020
Office of Financial Aid; for questions regarding loans and aid	581-3711
Office of Student Standards	581-3827
School of Continuing Education for questions regarding courses and workshops	581-5114
Student Insurance	581-5290
Payroll; for questions regarding tax issues and federal payroll requirements	581-5510



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