

## **Graduate Assistant Policies**

*(Approved by Graduate Council, April 19, 1990)*

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The University provides a limited number of graduate assistantships, graduate teaching assistantships, and graduate research assistantships for qualified graduate students. Stipends vary according to assignment and educational level of the applicant. Information regarding appointment procedures and remuneration is also located in the *Graduate Catalog* and the "Graduate Council Policy Manual."

Graduate programs are designed to enhance the student's scholarly and professional development. An assistantship should serve as an instrument to facilitate this development. A graduate assistant is both a student and a faculty member. As a student, the assistant is expected to maintain high academic standards to retain the assistantship. As a faculty member, the assistant is expected to complete teaching and research responsibilities in a timely and efficient manner. For the graduate teaching assistant, the teaching assignment should provide opportunity for obtaining depth of knowledge within the academic discipline. For the graduate research assistant, the research project should ideally result in a professional paper, thesis, or dissertation.

### **Types of Graduate Assistantships**

The University recognizes three types of graduate assistants:

1. A graduate teaching assistant will be employed as the teacher of record. As the teacher of record, the graduate teaching assistant is responsible for assigning final grades. Work units are determined in the same way as for a regular faculty member. The graduate teaching assistant is assigned undergraduate courses to teach. Exceptions to this policy are made only with the approval of the Dean of Graduate School. The assistant is required to document all the student contact hours.
2. A graduate assistant will not be considered to be the "Teacher of Record." The graduate assistant will be paid from Instructional Funds. The graduate assistant will work in direct support of instruction and will assist students on a daily basis. The primary purpose of the graduate assistant should not be to do filing and clerical work.

Graduate assistants will be subject to all other policies concerning graduate assistants.

3. A graduate research assistant is employed in conjunction with the research of a faculty member in a capacity that enhances the student's career and educational development. Duties vary depending on the type of research project and may include laboratory experiments, library searches, data entry, preparation of reports, and other relevant assignments.

### **Criteria for Appointment**

General criteria for all graduate assistants:

1. The student must be admitted to graduate school.
2. The student must be in good academic standing at TWU. A student who is on scholastic probation may not hold a graduate assistantship.
3. A student who is employed full-time in any position cannot be appointed as a full-time graduate teaching assistant. A student who holds a full-time position may hold a graduate research assistantship.
4. A student is not permitted to hold a graduate assistantship at TWU concurrently with an assistantship at any other college or university or with a student assistantship at TWU.

Special criteria for graduate teaching assistants assigned primary responsibility for teaching a course for credit and assigning final grades include the following:

1. The student should have earned at least 18 semester hours of graduate credit in the teaching field.
2. Preferably the student will have had teaching experience in the specialty area.
3. The student whose primary language is not English should have demonstrated proficiency in English as described in the *Graduate Catalog* and as mandated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

### **Appointment Procedures**

[Application for Graduate Assistantship:](#)

Applications for assistantships are available in both the Graduate School and the department in which the applicant will study. The completed application and supporting documents, including official transcripts, verification of graduate status, and letters of reference must be filed with the head of the academic component (chair or dean) for review and recommendation. The applications are kept on file in the academic component's office.

#### Departmental Contract Letter:

Each department/component will issue a contract letter to each applicant they wish to employ.

#### Personnel Transaction Form:

The head of the academic component will then process a Personnel Transaction Form, to be approved and signed by the Dean of the College or School and forwarded to the Dean of the Graduate School, who will approve and send it to the Office of Academic Financial Services for approval. Graduate School personnel will verify the applicant's admission status, salary level, workload, and dates of employment. Students must have been admitted to a graduate program and must enroll for 6 hours during the fall and spring semesters. As is the case for all faculty, graduate assistants for the summer will be hired for the period of 6/1 through 8/31. Since the employment period is from 6/1 to 8/31, students may perform their GA duties during any of the summer academic terms. For a 0.50 FTE summer appointment (6/1-8/31), GA's must enroll in at least six semester hours at some time during the period (May Mini-mester, Summer I, Summer II, and/or Summer III terms). For less than a 0.50 GTE summer appointment (6/1-8/31), GA's must enroll in at least three semester hours during the 6/1-8/31 period. The recommended course load for a student who holds a graduate assistantship is 9 semester hours. An exception to this rule has been approved for those doctoral-level graduate assistants who have been admitted to candidacy--they may enroll for as few as 3 hours without any special approval. Graduate assistants lacking only their final project may enroll for the minimum course load of 3 hours of professional paper, recital, thesis, or dissertation.

Personnel Transaction Forms not approved will be returned to the component for appropriate action. All approved Personnel Transaction Forms will be forwarded to the Office of Academic Financial Services. Graduate assistants are paid monthly on the first working day of the

month following the month worked. Graduate Assistants who have summer appointments are paid in three monthly installments.

For a graduate assistant to receive a paycheck, the Personnel Transaction Form must be approved and in the Office of Academic Financial Services by the published payroll deadline. Payroll deadlines vary each month; schedules are available in the Payroll Office. Graduate assistants are required to complete certain forms in the Office of Human Resources by the payroll deadline before receiving the first paycheck. Therefore, graduate assistants should go to the Human Resources Office as soon as their applications are approved to complete the necessary forms and to provide proof of citizenship, usually by means of a driver's license and Social Security Card or a passport.

Applications should be processed through the academic components by June 1 for an assistantship for the succeeding academic year, by November 1 for an assistantship for the spring semester, and by April 1 for an assistantship for the succeeding summer session.

Appointments for assistantships are issued for a semester, an academic year, or a summer session. Appointment dates follow the fiscal calendar and are from September 1 to January 15, or from January 16 to May 31, or from September 1 to May 31, or from June 1 to August 31, depending upon the period of appointment. A graduate assistant is entitled to official university holidays and the same work period as the faculty unless exceptions have been agreed upon in writing in advance by the graduate assistant and supervisor.

Reappointment to an assistantship is contingent upon prior performance, departmental research and teaching needs, and available funds. The number of years a student may hold a graduate assistantship depends upon the level of the degree program of the student. For a student at the master's level, the maximum number of years will be three. For a student at the doctoral level, the maximum number of years will be four. For a student who obtains both a master's degree and a doctoral degree from TWU, the maximum number of years will be six. For a student working toward a doctoral degree and who has no master's degree nor intention of earning a master's degree, the maximum number of years will be six. Exceptions to these limitations as recommended by the head of the academic component must have the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School.

## **Remuneration**

Typically, a graduate teaching assistant is paid from the Faculty Salaries category of the University budget, a graduate assistant is paid from Instructional Funds (not the wages category), and a research assistant is paid from Institutional Grants awarded to certain faculty members and from outside university and faculty research contracts.

The categories for graduate assistant appointments include master's-level and doctoral-level students. A student working directly toward a doctor's degree without earning a master's degree will be considered the same as a master's degree student until the student has earned 30 graduate semester hours. Mid-year adjustments in a graduate assistant's salary will not be made.

For the academic year, a full-time graduate assistant is appointed for .50 FTE, which is defined as either six work units or 20 contact hours a week in direct support of instruction. For the summer session, a full-time graduate assistant is appointed for .50 FTE, which is defined as either three work units or 20 contact hours a week in direct support of instruction. Employment less than .50 FTE is possible with appropriate reduction in hours worked and pay received.

## **Out-of-State Fee Waiver**

A graduate assistant is entitled to register by paying the tuition fees and other fees or charges required for Texas residents without regard to the length of time the assistant has resided in Texas if the assistant is employed at least one-half time (.50 FTE) and is working in a position which relates to his/her degree program. The student should complete the [Request for In-State Tuition](#) form, have it signed by the chair of the department, and send to the Graduate School. Graduate School personnel will approve and forward it to the Registrar.

## **Group Insurance**

Graduate assistants who meet the following criteria will be eligible for health insurance benefits:

1. Graduate assistants who work at least 20 hours a week
2. Who have an appointment of 4-1/2 months or greater

3. Who are not permitted to be members of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas solely because it is a condition of their employment that they be enrolled in graduate courses.

4. Graduate assistants who meet the criteria for eligibility for health insurance and wish to enroll in a health plan should contact the Office of Human Resources within 30 days of their employment start date in order to enroll in insurance coverage. Health Benefits for a new employee do not begin for 90 days.

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

A graduate teaching assistant has the right of access to all course outlines, support teaching aids, and professional guidelines (accreditation) applicable to the teaching assignment. It is the responsibility of a graduate teaching assistant to maintain accurate daily records of attendance, grades, and correspondence pertaining to students within the class.

A graduate teaching assistant has the right to be notified of complaints made by students to the supervising professor and/or department administrator. The resolution of any complaints would ordinarily follow standard teacher-student channels, i.e., the student initiates the complaint with the teacher; the question moves through channels as needed.

A graduate teaching assistant is expected to participate in graduate teaching assistant meetings and departmental faculty meetings as appropriate. The assistant may be called upon to assist with registration and/or special activities planned by the department. It is expected that the assistant will abide by all university regulations and departmental policies.

### **In-Service Training, Supervision, and Evaluation**

A graduate teaching assistant who is the teacher of record with the primary responsibility of teaching a course for credit should receive regular in-service training, should be under the direct supervision of a faculty member experienced in the teaching field, and should be regularly evaluated. For such a graduate teaching assistant who has no academic training or experience in teaching, in-service training will include a required course in teaching techniques. In addition, this graduate teaching assistant should observe when possible a section of the same course that is being taught by an experienced faculty

member; decisions concerning times for and frequency of observations are to be made within the academic component. The evaluation process should include observation of the graduate teaching assistant in her or his teaching activity, participation in a post-observation conference, participation in the university teacher evaluation program, and formal evaluation by and communication with the head of the component or supervising professor. The academic component in which the graduate teaching assistant is employed will establish appropriate procedures to meet these requirements and will place on file in the Graduate School a description of the procedures.

### **Graduate Assistant Orientation**

The Graduate School provides online, through the Blackboard Training program, a web-based Graduate Assistant Orientation for all newly hired graduate assistants. Informational presentations are made online by the Offices of Human Resources, Environmental Health and Safety, the Library, Information Services, Teaching and Learning with Technology, Student Life, the Graduate School, and by currently employed graduate assistants.

### **Request for In-State Tuition for Graduate Assistants**

[Request for In-State Tuition for Graduate Assistants](#) [Word]

### **SACS Requirements**

Graduate teaching assistants who have primary responsibility for teaching a course for credit and/or for assigning final grades for such a course must have earned at least 18 graduate semester hours in their teaching discipline, be under the direct supervision of a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, receive regular in-service training, and be regularly evaluated.

The above requirements do not apply to graduate teaching assistants who are engaged in assignments such as laboratory assistance, teaching physical education activities, attending or helping prepare lectures, grading papers, keeping class records, and conducting discussion groups.

### **Graduate Research Positions in Addition to the Graduate Research Assistant Category**

In 1992, the Graduate Council, working in conjunction with the staff in the Office of Human Resources, created (in addition to the Graduate Research Assistant positions already in place) additional levels of pay and titles for new categories of graduate student research positions. These titles and categories were added in order to provide more competitive stipends for those research positions that require skills, training, and ability above what would normally be expected for a graduate research assistant. The purpose of these positions is to allow the faculty member whose research project demands a special or advanced level of knowledge or experience the opportunity to employ graduate students possessing these skills and also to facilitate the objectives of the graduate education of students as they apply their special skills and knowledge.

In order for a graduate student to be appointed to one of these higher-level positions, the faculty advisor or chair or dean should:

Prepare a Personnel Transaction Form and send with it the following:

- 1) a position description (if the position is funded by a grant, a copy of the position description in the grant may be sent; otherwise, a description should be written);
- 2) the student's vita; and
- 3) a letter stating the applicant's qualifications and why this person's particular skills are needed for this position.

## **Postdoctoral Positions**

### ***Classification***

Professional-Administrative

### ***Job Summary***

Primarily serves as a researcher in a project specified and directed by faculty or administration. In addition, the researcher may define and design critical aspects of the study.

### ***Organizational Relationship***

May supervise Research Associates and/or Research Assistants. Opportunities for scholarly interaction with faculty researchers who have established research efforts in the areas of interest and related areas.

### ***Principal Duties and Responsibilities***

Directs or assists in research projects. Further research efforts might include preparation and submission of grant proposals. May perform other responsibilities as designated by the supervisor or as necessitated by the research project.

### ***Qualifications***

Education: Doctoral degree or equivalent.

### ***Salary***

Specific salary level will be determined by the director of the relevant research project or by the availability of funding. Salary levels should reflect standards of professional salaries within the discipline of the research project.

### ***Fringe Benefits***

Fringe benefits will be provided.