

Graduate Assistantships Policy

**Revised and adopted by the
UALR Graduate Council on 10/27/10**

The primary purposes of graduate assistantships are (1) to recruit quality graduate students who will provide services in support of the teaching, research, and service missions and administrative functions of UALR, and (2) to enable graduate students to devote full-time attention to their graduate studies.

To be qualified to apply for a graduate assistantship, students must be recommended by their graduate program coordinator, be fully admitted (regular admission) to a degree-granting graduate program, meet the applicable minimum GPA requirement, and carry a minimum course load of nine graduate hours for a full-time assistantship, five graduate hours for a half-time assistantship, or one graduate hour for a summer term assistantship. Audited courses are not counted toward meeting this course-load requirement. No student may be concurrently assigned to more than one full-time assistantship or two half-time assistantships.

Graduate students who are admitted to a graduate degree program with a provisional or conditional status due to academic deficiencies are **not** eligible for graduate assistantships. Graduate students admitted in a graduate certificate program and not in a graduate degree program are **not** eligible for graduate assistantships.

New students in a graduate program typically must have a 3.0 undergraduate GPA; some graduate program requirements may allow for an exception if, for example, a student meets a specified higher GPA over the final 60 hours of their undergraduate program. Continuing students must be in good academic standing for their program. The UALR Graduate School requires students to maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 or higher, although some graduate programs may have higher or additional requirements.

New applicants for a UALR graduate assistantship must submit to the Graduate School a completed Graduate Assistantship Application with a current resume. Continuing graduate students must reapply for assistantships in the same manner at the beginning of each Fall semester thereafter.

Standards of conduct for graduate assistants include performance of University duties in a manner that is professional, courteous, and conducive to a professional atmosphere. Graduate assistants are expected to comply with all work rules and standards in their assistantship employer and with all applicable University rules and policies. Students who are awarded scholarships funded by grants must abide by all specified restrictions, if any, including (but not limited to) restrictions on outside employment during the term of their assistantship. International students must have an appropriate visa, meet all applicable immigration requirements, and abide by all applicable laws and regulations.

Compensation and benefits of graduate assistantships typically include (1) 100% tuition scholarship (full-time assistantships) or 50% tuition scholarship (half-time assistantships) and (2) a monthly stipend based on working 20 hours per week (full-time assistantships) or 10 hours per week (half-time assistantships). The tuition scholarship does not include student fees

or books. Audited courses are not covered by the tuition scholarship. Tuition for undergraduate courses typically is not covered by this scholarship. The dollar amount of the stipend varies depending upon the funding source. While assistantships are generally based on semester, academic year, or calendar year time periods, other time periods may be required by funding sources. Students are eligible for University-observed holidays that occur during their term of service. Other time off may be allowed at the discretion of the student's supervisor or as permitted by the funding agreement.

The term of assignment for graduate assistantships typically follows the calendar for 9-month academic faculty appointments for Fall and Spring semesters. The term of assignment for academic-year assistantships generally is August 16th to May 15th; the term of assignment for half-year assistantships generally is either August 16th to December 31st or January 1st to May 15th. Terms of assignment may differ for some externally-funded assistantships. Although graduate assistantships generally are not available for the summer terms, some externally-funded assistantships may provide for summer term assignments.

Assistantship duties may vary considerably both within and between programs. While it is recognized that clear and distinct boundaries between different types of assistantship sometimes may not be clearly defined, graduate assistantships will come in four basic types (listed below). The type of assistantship given to a student should be that which, in the judgment of the academic unit, most closely reflects the primary activity of the student, based on the following descriptions:

- **Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA)** – Students work primarily on a research project that may potentially lead to a thesis or dissertation or other scholarly output. Typically, these assistantships are externally funded and, in the best case scenario, the work assignment is aligned with or related to the student's own research project, although this may not always be the case.
- **Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA)** – Students work in support of the teaching mission of the University. Their work may involve, but not be limited to, teaching, class or laboratory set-up, grading papers, running tutorial sessions, on-line course support, and other instruction-related activities.
- **Graduate Service Assistantship (GSA)** – Students perform a professional service, in many cases with external funding for an off-campus client that does not involve research in its usual sense of the word. Examples of such services might include, but not be limited to, the College of Education student performing a service project in the K-12 school system, a mass communication student implementing a new program for a radio station, or an MBA student helping a small business develop a business plan.
- **Graduate Administrative Assistantship (GAA)** – Students work on campus in a non-professional administrative capacity providing useful services to administrative (e.g., the Library, Graduate School, Provost's Office, etc.) and/or academic units (e.g., History Department, Business College, etc.). As opposed to the other three graduate assistantship types, which are meant to contribute to a student's professional development, GAA assignments are designed to be support mechanisms in which a

student receives pay for service with no expectation of a professionally enriching experience.

The forfeiture of a graduate assistantship may be initiated by the assistantship employer or the Graduate School. Graduate assistantships may be forfeited when

- The student's graduate course load falls below the prescribed minimum number of hours;
- The student fails to perform the duties of the appointment or to comply with applicable rules, standards, or policies; or
- The student is determined to be engaged in outside employment contrary to the conditions of the appointment;
- The student's cumulative graduate GPA falls below the applicable minimum GPA.

When an assistantship is forfeited during a semester, the student may be required to reimburse the assistantship funding source for the prorated share of their exempted tuition, and is typically responsible for FICA tax payments to the federal government. When an assistantship is forfeited due to failure to maintain the minimum GPA, the student may be reemployed as a graduate assistant in a subsequent semester after the student's cumulative graduate GPA equals or exceeds the applicable minimum GPA. For all other reasons for forfeiture, the student may be ineligible for future employment as a graduate assistant.

The student may appeal the forfeiture of his or her graduate assistantship to the Dean of the Graduate School, whose decisions may in turn be appealed following the prescribed process for appeals as specified in the Student Handbook, depending upon whether the issue is academic, behavioral, or other type.

Graduate assistantship appointments are made through academic departments, graduate programs, the Graduate School, and administrative units of the University. The Graduate School maintains a database of students seeking graduate assistantships but does not hire or appoint GAs for the academic departments or complete hiring forms for the academic departments. Graduate assistants must be provided a letter of appointment that clearly defines the duties, term, and expectations of the graduate assistantship appointment. Funding sources for graduate assistantships include the operating budgets of the UALR Graduate School and other academic or administrative departments (internally-funded assistantships) and grants, gifts, or endowments (externally-funded assistantships).

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

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Graduate assistantships are available through graduate programs or departments and the Graduate School. To be qualified, students must be fully admitted (regular admission) to a degree-granting graduate program with a minimum course load of nine graduate hours and be recommended by the program coordinator. Audited courses will not count toward the nine-hour requirement and are not covered by the tuition credit. Students who drop below the nine-hour requirement by withdrawing from one or more courses are not eligible for graduate assistantships. Graduate Assistants must remain in good academic standing with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above.

Assistantships usually include a tuition scholarship and a stipend of at least \$6,450 (20 hours per week for 2 semesters) or \$3,225 (10 hours per week for 2 semesters). Some programs offer a larger stipend. Assistantships generally are not available for the summer terms.

Duty assignments vary, but most involve either teaching or research responsibilities at UALR and cooperating agencies. Whenever possible, assignments contribute to the student's field of study. For more information, contact the Graduate School at www.gradschool.ualr.edu or the appropriate program coordinator.