



Document History

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Graduate Assistantships

Policy Statement

Southeastern employs graduate assistants (GAs) to provide financial assistance and enhanced educational and developmental opportunities for graduate students while supporting the University in its teaching, research, and service missions. Graduate assistantships are utilized for recruiting graduate students and for facilitating progress toward the earning of a graduate degree.

Purpose of Policy

This policy describes the requirements, procedures and guidelines for graduate assistantships.

Applicability

This policy applies to all Southeastern graduate assistants.

Policy Procedure

Graduate Assistantships - Categories of Appointment

Graduate assistants shall be designated in one of the following categories, according to the type of duties they primarily perform. A GA assisting in laboratory sections 60 percent of the time and conducting research 40 percent of the time will be designated as a teaching assistant.

Graduate Teaching Fellows (GTF)

Graduate teaching fellows teach a course(s) and have full responsibility for the course(s). GTFs are Instructors of Record for the course(s). GTFs are exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act and do not clock.

Teaching Assistant (TA)

Teaching assistants assist faculty members in teaching and delivery of course content, which may include taking roll, grading papers, conducting help sessions or serving an apprenticeship under the supervision of a faculty member. A faculty member has primary responsibility for determining all aspects of course content and delivery and is the Instructor of Record while TAs are Secondary Instructors of Record. TAs are exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act and do not clock.

Research Assistant (RA)

Research assistants perform research assignments for a faculty member. RAs work with the faculty member in conducting a research project. RAs are exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act and do not clock.

Professional Service Assistant (PSA)

Professional service assistants perform tasks directly related to their graduate training program or discipline. PSAs are not exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act and must clock.

Administrative Assistant (AA)

Administrative assistants perform assignments primarily of a clerical or supervisory nature. AAs are not exempt from the Fair Labor Standards act and must clock.

Terms of Appointment

All graduate assistants hold their appointments at the pleasure or will of the University.

1. The employment term of graduate assistants follows the University's academic calendar from the first week of freshman orientation through the week of final examinations for the fall, summer, and spring semesters.
2. Some budget units may require graduate assistants to work prior to or beyond the defined academic calendar. These will be clearly documented prior to the students' acceptance of the assistantships
3. All graduate assistants shall work an average of twenty (20) hours per week (Sunday through Saturday) for a total of 320 hours per semester in the Fall and Spring and 160 hour in the Summer. Days the University is closed for holidays are not used when determining total hours a Graduate Assistant will work in the semester. Therefore, these hours do not need to be made up. However, if a Graduate Assistant is sick, out for personal reasons or the university is closed (other than scheduled holiday) these hours will need to be made up. Graduate Assistants are not eligible for leave and will not be paid special leave for University closures.
4. Graduate assistants are employed on a semester-by-semester basis. The University does not employ graduate assistants for longer than one semester and budget units should make no commitments of employment lasting longer than one semester.
5. Graduate assistants whose appointments begin after the first week of freshman orientation will have their salary prorated.
6. Federal regulations prohibit non-resident aliens from working more than twenty (20) hours per week during semesters or more than forty (40) hours per week during breaks.
7. Graduate assistants may not hold any other employment in the University.
8. All new graduate assistants must attend the graduate assistant orientation session held at the beginning of the semester of their employment.
9. A graduate assistant who resigns or who will not be employed as a graduate assistant for the following semester must complete the Exit Check-Out Procedure Form (see budget unit head). Graduate assistants who work in the spring semester and who will be employed as graduate assistants in the fall but will not work during the summer are not required to complete an exit form. Failure to complete the Exit Check-Out Form may result in checks and/or transcripts held until the check-out form is completed.

Graduate Teaching Fellows

1. Graduate teaching fellows must undergo regular in-service training and supervision.
2. Graduate teaching fellows:
 - a. May teach a maximum of six (6) semester hours per semester or its equivalent.
 - b. Must have satisfactorily completed at least eighteen (18) graduate hours in the teaching discipline, remain under the direct continuous supervision of a degree-qualified faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, and be regularly supervised.
 - c. May only teach undergraduate courses in the discipline in which they hold the above qualifications.
 - d. Graduate teaching fellows for whom English is a second language must demonstrate proficiency in oral and written communication in English prior to their appointment.
 - e. Graduate teaching fellows must undergo planned and periodic evaluations.

Academic Requirements

1. All graduate assistants must be admitted into a graduate degree program at Southeastern prior to beginning employment.
2. Graduate assistants in master degree status will be eligible for a maximum of 24 consecutive months of employment while pursuing their current degree. Those in doctoral degree status will be eligible for a maximum of 48 consecutive months of employment. Students in the counselor education master degree program are

- eligible for 36 consecutive months of employment. All timeframes are based on the start date of the initially awarded assistantship.
3. Extensions of graduate assistantships beyond the timeframes noted above may be granted by their academic dean when a detailed explanation and justification for the requested extension is provided.
 4. Graduate assistants must carry a minimum of six (6) hours of graduate course work and/or undergraduate prerequisites during the fall and spring semesters, and a minimum of three (3) hours during the summer semester. To maintain "full-time-status" for financial aid and insurance purposes and for all International students), graduate assistants must carry a minimum of nine (9) hours of graduate coursework during the fall and spring semesters and three (3) hours during the summer. During the last semester prior to graduating, graduate assistants carry only the number of hours required to graduate.
 5. Graduate assistants may carry a maximum of twelve (12) hours of graduate course work during the fall and spring semesters and nine (9) hours during the summer.
 6. Graduate assistants seeking waivers of the minimum or maximum course loads must secure the approval of their academic dean prior to registering for classes.

Appointment, Evaluation, and Continuation

1. All budget units hiring graduate assistants who have not been previously employed at Southeastern must complete the Telephone Verification of Personal References form and submit the completed form to the Human Resources Office.
2. Graduate assistant employment for new graduate assistants will not be processed until all employment materials (Application for Employment, Background Check Authorization, Hiring Proposal, Telephone Verification of Personal Reference; Form W-4, Form L-4, and copies of citizen student's driver's license and Social Security card) have been completed and received by the Human Resources Office.
3. All appointments of graduate assistants are for one semester only and carry no assurances of reappointment.
4. All appointments and re-appointments of graduate assistants are made by their academic dean upon the recommendation of the appropriate budget unit head. These appointments are made with the understanding that the employment of the individual shall terminate unconditionally on the ending date of the semester for which they were appointed.
5. Supervisors may make written performance evaluations of their graduate assistants and shall discuss these with them each semester.
6. Causes for discharge of graduate assistants include conduct seriously prejudicial to the employing budget unit or to the University, such as infraction of the law or of commonly accepted standards of morality, failure to follow instructions, violation of institutional or system rules and regulations, willful neglect of duty, inefficiency, incompetence, or consistent or excessive tardiness or absenteeism. The foregoing enumeration of causes for discharge shall not be deemed exclusive.
7. Graduate assistants with grievances shall follow the [University Grievance Procedure for Unclassified Staff](#).

End of policy.