



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

University Policy 7170

Graduate Assistantships

Effective Date

July 1978

Last Revision Date

August 02, 2024

Responsible Party

Dean of the Graduate College, (208) 426-3647

Scope and Audience

This policy applies to all graduate assistantships.

Additional Authority

- CFR, Title 8, Aliens and Nationality, 214.2(f) Students in colleges, universities,
- IRS 3121(b)(10) Student FICA Exception
- NCAA Bylaws, Article 11, Conduct and Employment of Athletics Personnel
- State Board of Education Policy, Section II.D. (Categories of Employees)
- State Board of Education Policy, Section II.F. (Policies Regarding Nonclassified Employees)
- State Board of Education Policy, Section III.P. (Students)
- State Board of Education Policy, Section V.T. (Fee Waivers)
- University Policy 1110 (Conflict of Interest and Commitment)
- University Policy 4200 (Procedures and Guidelines for Approval of Special Course and Program Fees)
- University Policy 7000 (Position Definitions)
- University Policy 7005 (Background Investigations)

- University Policy 7470 (Student Employment)
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1. Policy Purpose

To establish the guiding principles, basic terms, and administrative authority for graduate assistantships.

2. Policy Statement

Graduate assistantships should be utilized for the purpose of recruitment of graduate students and are to provide financial assistance and enhanced educational and developmental opportunities for graduate students while supporting the University in its teaching, research, and service missions. This policy explains the guiding principles, states the basic terms, and establishes the administrative authority for all graduate assistantships.

3. Definitions

The following definitions are used for purposes of this policy.

3.1 Appointment

Appointment of a student to a graduate assistantship is the process by which a student is offered and accepts a graduate assistantship.

3.2 Exempt/Exempt Employee

An employee who meets Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requirements to be exempt from overtime pay and occupies an executive, administrative, or professional position, as defined under the FLSA. Non-instructional Exempt Employees are compensated at a minimum salary which meets the requirements set under Idaho Code and the FLSA.

3.3 Full-Time Graduate Student

A graduate student is a Full-Time Graduate Student in a given semester or Session if and only if the student is registered for 9 or more credits in that semester or Session.

3.4 Graduate Degree Program

An academic program that results in the award of a master's, education specialist, or doctoral degree upon successful completion.

3.5 Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)

A graduate assistant engaged primarily in research activities. GRAs may be either Exempt or Non-Exempt Employees.

3.6 Graduate Service Assistant (GSA)

A graduate assistant whose primary duties are service activities. GSAs may be either Exempt or Non-Exempt Employees.

3.7 Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)

A graduate assistant engaged primarily in instructional activities. GTAs are Exempt from overtime pay under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

3.8 Intent to Enroll

The subsequent semester enrollment status of a student employee during the summer Session or Interim. A student employee is said to demonstrate Intent to Enroll during the summer session if the student is registered for the subsequent fall semester, and to demonstrate Intent to Enroll during the interim if the student is registered for the subsequent spring semester. New students demonstrate Intent to Enroll during the summer or Interim if they are admitted to a degree program to start in the subsequent semester.

3.9 Interim

The period between fall and spring semesters.

3.10 International Graduate Student

A graduate student who holds an F1 or J1 student visa.

3.11 Non-Exempt/Non-Exempt Employee

An employee who does not meet the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requirements to be Exempt from overtime pay and who is paid for all overtime hours worked in any work week.

3.12 Salary

The total taxable compensation that a graduate assistant is to receive from the University over the contract period of a graduate assistantship. The Salary payment method may be either hourly or Salary, depending on the Exempt or Non-Exempt classification of the graduate assistantship. Payment or waiver of tuition and fees are not included in the Salary.

3.13 Semester or Session

Any of the three basic academic intervals defined by the University: fall semester, spring semester, or summer session.

3.14 Student Account

The university billing statement assigned to a student and maintained by student financial services.

3.15 Termination Date

The last day that the terms of the graduate assistantship are in effect if a graduate assistantship is terminated prior to the last day of the contract period.

4. Responsibilities and Procedures

4.1 Description

A graduate assistantship provides financial assistance to a degree-seeking graduate student through a mentored University employment experience. The general nature of a graduate assistantship is best described as an apprenticeship that consists of a work obligation with educational and developmental activities, contributing to professional development or building of identified skill sets.

4.2 Guidance

Every graduate assistant (GA) must be under the guidance of a supervisor and an advisor.

- a. The supervisor is an employee of the University with responsibility for assignment, direction, and evaluation of the work for which the GA receives compensation.
- b. The advisor is a member of the graduate faculty with responsibility for advising the student on academic matters.
- c. The primary mentors for the GA are the supervisor and the advisor. Under the mentoring of the supervisor and advisor, a GA gains experience and learns scholarly, professional, and ethical behaviors appropriate to a field of study.
- d. The supervisor and advisor may be different people or the same person. If the supervisor and advisor are different people, it is essential that they work together to provide consistent guidance to the GA.

4.3 Total Effort

The total effort of a GA consists of a work obligation and educational and developmental activities.

4.3.1 Work Obligation

The work obligation is work for the University that is assigned by the supervisor and for which the GA receives compensation in the form of a Salary. The work done by the GA under the work obligation may be any combination of teaching (GTA), research (GRA), and service (GSA) duties; this combination of duties may vary over the contract period.

4.3.2 Outside of the Work Obligation

Many educational and developmental activities exist outside of the work obligation, and are non-compensated activities. Such activities involve any form of course work, learning, study, instruction, training, research, creation, scholarship, or professional practice, and are integrated with the graduate degree program of the student. They may vary from GA to GA in a given program, and may or may not earn academic credit.

4.3.3 Limits

The University places limits on the number of hours assigned by the supervisor to the GA to satisfy the work obligation (see Section 4.4.6). The University places no limits on the time spent by the GA on educational and developmental activities outside of the work obligation. The supervisor and advisor must ensure that the combined demands of the work obligation and the educational and developmental activities are reasonable and do not impede progress by the student toward the degree.

4.4 Basic Terms of an Appointment to a Graduate Assistantship

4.4.1 University Employee

All GAs are University employees and subject to all University employment and other applicable policies.

4.4.2 Contract Period

Each contract period of a graduate assistantship must include at least one full semester but cannot exceed 12 months in duration (see section 4.4.12 for multi-year GA offers).

4.4.3 Admission

A GA must be admitted to a graduate degree program prior to the start of the contract period and must remain in an admitted status to a graduate degree program during the contract period.

4.4.4 Funding Source(s)

The source or sources used to fund a graduate assistantship must be under the control of the University and judged by the University to be appropriate for assistantship support.

4.4.5 Budgeted Components

The budgeted components of a graduate assistantship must include a Salary and related fringe costs, payment of tuition and fees, and health insurance during the contracted period only.

4.4.5A Salary

The salary provides the total taxable compensation to the GA for the work assigned by the supervisor and must meet or exceed minimum Salary requirements set by the University. If the graduate assistantship is classified by the University as Exempt, then the salary is paid in uniform biweekly payments. If the graduate assistantship is classified by the University as Non-Exempt, then the Salary is paid biweekly through hourly reporting to the University time and labor system.

4.4.5B Payment of Tuition and Fees

The payment of tuition and fees is a scholarship that completely offsets all of the following costs charged to the Student Account during the contract period of the assistantship:

- a. Total Resident Student Tuition and Fees as per the Schedule of Tuition and Fees. Additional fees are the responsibility of the student but may be paid by the department.
- b. If the GA is classified by the University as a non-resident of Idaho, the total amount of all Non-resident Tuition (as per the Schedule of Tuition and Fees) is waived by the University as a scholarship.
- c. Tuition and fees for self-support courses if allowed by the funding source(s) as described in section 4.4.4.

4.4.5C Benefits and Fringe Costs

- a. A GA is not a benefit-eligible employee. Fringe costs for a graduate assistantship are therefore the non-benefit-eligible fringe costs for student employees as determined by the University.
- b. Full coverage under the student health insurance plan provided for GAs.

4.4.6 Maximum Average Weekly Time Commitment

The number of standard hours assigned by the supervisor as the work obligation of the GA (.5FTE) cannot exceed a maximum set by the University as follows:

- Fall or spring semester: 20 hours per week on average (except for spring break)
- Spring break and interim: 40 hours per week on average
- Summer session: 40 hours per week on average

4.4.7 Registration

A GA is required to register for enough credit during the contract period to ensure satisfactory degree progress and meet applicable state and federal regulations as interpreted by the University.

4.4.7A Fall or Spring Semester

The following registration requirements apply to any fall or spring semester that is included completely or partially in the contract period of the graduate assistantship.

- a. International Graduate Student: A GA who is also an International Graduate Student must register as a Full-Time Graduate Student (at least nine (9) credits), regardless of the funding source(s) supporting the graduate assistantship, unless authorized to be less than full time by International Student Services. If the graduate assistantship is partially or completely funded by state appropriations, full-time tuition and fees are charged to the Student Account regardless of the number of registered credits (by policy of the Idaho State Board of Education).

- b. All Other Graduate Students: A GA who is not an international Graduate Student must register for at least five (5) credits, except that a GA who will complete all degree requirements by the end of the semester need only register for the credits required to graduate (but not fewer than 1 credit). If the graduate assistantship is partially or completely funded by state appropriations, full-time tuition and fees are charged to the Student Account regardless of the number of registered credits (by policy of the Idaho State Board of Education).

4.4.7B Summer Session and Interim

The following registration requirements apply to any summer Session or Interim that is included at least partially in the contract period of the graduate assistantship.

- a. Meets Intent to Enroll Criteria: A GA who meets intent to enroll criteria is not required to register unless compelled to do so by a requirement set by their Graduate Degree Program or by an applicable regulation of the University.
- b. Does Not Meet Intent to Enroll Criteria: If a graduate student does not meet intent to enroll criteria, the registration requirements are the same as for fall or spring Semester (see section 4.4.7A).

4.4.7C Composition of Credits

Registration requirements can be met by any combination of undergraduate and/or graduate courses that are offered by the University, subject to the following provisions:

- a. The courses are approved for the GA by the supervisor and advisor.
- b. The courses are not subject to restrictions imposed by the University or state or federal regulations that preclude enrollment by the GA.

4.4.7D Registration Compliance

The Graduate College monitors and reviews the registration of GA for compliance with registration requirements, and has the authority to grant exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

4.4.8 Health Insurance

Every GA must be covered by the University GA health insurance plan throughout the contract period. GAs may elect to waive the coverage provided through the health plan if they can show proof of equivalent coverage in another qualifying medical plan.

4.4.9 Worker's Compensation

Every GA must be covered by appropriate insurance for work-related illness or injury in accordance with University procedures.

4.4.10 Other Employment within the University

A GA cannot work for the University under any compensable arrangement other than the graduate assistantship during the contract period, unless approved by the Dean of the Graduate College.

4.4.11 Other Employment Outside the University

- a. Graduate students are expected to devote their time to their studies and to their assistantship. This means that in most cases, a GA should not be employed off-campus unless the GA holds a partial graduate assistantship (see section 4.4.14).
- b. Although the University does not prohibit outside employment by GAs in addition to their University Appointment, acceptance of outside employment should be guided by the need to avoid any infringement on the student's academic duties or interference with their GA commitment.
- c. A GA holding outside employment must avoid any conflict of interest in all business relationships, research activities, sponsored project requirements, intellectual property, university resources, university trademarks, materials, and activities.
- d. A GA interested in being employed off campus should first speak to their research advisor and supervisor about the nature of the proposed work. The advisor and supervisor must be assured that the work will not compromise the time that the student is expected to devote to their studies and assistantship responsibilities, and that the outside work does not infringe upon patent or intellectual property rights related to the student's University scholarship. The student also must ensure that the outside work does not violate any program or departmental policy.
- e. Departments and programs have the discretionary right to make appointments to students whose commitment suggests that they are most likely to attain their educational goals and maintain assistantship responsibilities in the most effective manner.

4.4.12 Reappointment

A student who has successfully completed a graduate assistantship may be appointed to a new graduate assistantship at the sole discretion of the university. Contracts can be renewed based on a yearly evaluation of the student's progress in the program, quality of work in the graduate assistantship position, and based on any other University guidelines and Policies, including at the college and program level.

4.4.13 Multiple-Year Offers

Although a contract period for a graduate assistantship cannot exceed twelve (12) months, a multiple-year graduate assistantship offer can be made to a prospective student with the understanding that the assistantship contract can be renewed annually pending satisfactory performance, adequate degree progress, and the availability of funding.

4.4.14 Partial Graduate Assistantship

Partial assistantships (.25 FTE) can be awarded to graduate students for a work obligation of half the maximum average weekly time commitment (as outlined in section 4.4.6) and must include payment of at least half the minimum Salary, at least half the full-time tuition rate, and full payment of the GA health insurance premium.

4.4.15 Termination of a Graduate Assistantship

A GA is an "at will" employee of the University and may be lawfully released or terminated without cause at any time with the approval of the Dean of the Graduate College.

4.4.15A Automatic Termination

A GA must be terminated by the hiring unit if any of the following circumstances apply: the GA completes the degree; the GA voluntarily withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from the degree program; or the GA resigns the graduate assistantship. Terminations are initiated by the hiring unit through the formal separation request process, managed by the Graduate College.

4.4.15B Effect of Termination on Salary and Tuition and Fee Payments

The Salary is paid through the Termination Date or the last day worked. Health insurance coverage stops on the last day of the month of the last day worked. If the Termination Date is after the first day of class instruction for the Semester, tuition and fee payments and waivers remain credited to the Student Account. If the Termination Date is before the first day of class instruction, tuition and fee payments and waivers do not remain credited for that Semester to the Student Account.

4.5 Administrative Authority

4.5.1 Basic Terms and General Management Procedures

4.5.1A Basic Terms

The Graduate College, the Division of Finance and Operations, and Human Resources and Workforce Strategy have the authority to establish and modify the basic terms for graduate assistantships. All such actions by the Graduate College and the Division of Finance and Operations are subject to review and approval by the Graduate Council.

4.5.1B General Management Procedures

The Graduate College, the Division of Finance and Operations, and Human Resources and Workforce Strategy have the authority to develop and maintain general management procedures for graduate assistantships, such as but not limited to general Appointment procedures, payment of Salary and tuition and fees, performance evaluation and termination.

4.5.2 Local Terms and Management Procedures

4.5.2A Local Considerations

An academic or administrative unit of the University with budgetary and management responsibility for one or more graduate assistantships has the authority to develop local terms and management procedures for these graduate assistantships only. These terms must not violate the minimums set by this policy.

4.5.2B Consistency

Local terms and management procedures must be consistent with the guiding principles, basic terms, and general management procedures that apply to all graduate assistantships. Consistency is judged by the Graduate College in consultation with the Division of Finance and Operations, Human Resources and Workforce Strategy, and the Graduate Council as appropriate.

4.5.3 Exceptions for a Graduate Assistantship Awarded to a Specific Student

The Graduate College, in consultation with the Division of Finance and Operations, Human Resources and Workforce Strategy, and the Graduate Council as appropriate, has the authority

to evaluate and respond to requests for exceptions to one or more elements of this policy for a graduate assistantship that is awarded to a specific student.

Revision History

March 1996; September 2009; October 2014; October 2018; August 02, 2024