

# **George Mason University**

## **Guidelines for Appointing**

### **Graduate Research & Teaching Assistants**

**for**

**Academic Year 2002 - 2003**

Office of the Provost

Revised August 2002

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# **Guidelines for Appointing Graduate Research & Teaching Assistants**

## **Graduate Council Policy Statement**

As a matter of general principle, teaching by graduate students, whether they are graduate teaching assistants or adjunct faculty, should be at the undergraduate level. In unusual circumstances, graduate students who have completed all coursework and examinations toward the doctorate and who have been advanced to candidacy, may teach a lower level graduate course in any academic program. Graduate students who are GTAs or who are hired as adjunct faculty should not teach graduate courses that enroll students in the same program or programs in which the GTA or adjunct will take courses. (Graduate Council Motion #188.8, adopted March 28, 1990.)

### **Eligibility**

- ◆ Students must be admitted to graduate study at George Mason University. Eligibility may further be limited to students in degree programs.
- ◆ Students hired as teaching assistants to teach a class must have at least 18 hours of graduate work in the field in which he or she is to teach. The student must be under the direct supervision of a faculty member in the discipline, receive regular in-service training and be evaluated regularly. A transcript(s) documenting the required number of graduate hours must accompany the Graduate Assistantship Appointment Form when the student is hired (even if this is the student's second appointment as a TA). Students who conduct labs, grade papers, or perform other teaching support services are not required to have 18 hours of graduate work in the pertinent field.
- ◆ Students must be in good academic standing; that is, the student must have a minimum 3.0 GPA and may not have any recent unsatisfactory grades.
- ◆ International students whose native language is not English must have a TOEFL score of at least 600 (or an equivalent score on the computer based test version) to be hired as a teaching or research assistant. This requirement must be met for every graduate assistant, whether or not the student actually teaches a class. The TOEFL test may be waived if the student has a bachelor's or master's degree from an English speaking institution.
- ◆ If the student's native language is not English and they have **primary** responsibility for a class or lab, they must also pass the "**SPEAK**" test with a minimum score of 230. Arrangements are made with the English Language Institute, 202 Krug Hall (993-3660). Evidence of the "**SPEAK**" test must accompany the Graduate Assistantship Appointment Form.

## **Types of Assistantships**\*

Graduate assistants fulfill a number of different roles at GMU, as described below. All forms of assistantship are intended to contribute to the graduate student's educational experience. Therefore, they may not be assigned to perform secretarial or clerical duties.

- ◆ **Graduate Teaching Assistants** (Codes 01361/2/3/4)

GTAs are GMU graduate students who participate directly in instructional activities under faculty supervision for not more than 20 hours per week. GTAs may not teach more than two lower-division lecture courses, six semester hours of recitation sections, or nine semester hours of laboratory.

- ◆ **Graduate Research Assistants** (Codes 01381/2/3/4)

GRAs are GMU graduate students who participate directly in research or research support activities under faculty supervision for not more than 20 hours per week.

- ◆ **Graduate Information Technology Assistants** (Codes 01391/2/3)

GITAs are graduate students with specialized technical qualifications who participate in specialized teaching or research.

## **How Students Apply for Assistantships**

Persons applying for admission to graduate programs at GMU may indicate their interest in being considered for a graduate assistantship by checking the appropriate box on their Graduate Admissions Application.

Continuing graduate students may apply for assistantships by following the procedures outlined by the colleges, schools or institutes.

## **The Hiring Process**

Graduate Assistants must be selected from the available applicant pool of all students who have requested consideration. Each department or program establishes procedures to ensure that students are selected fairly and in accordance with university hiring guidelines.

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\* All appointments for assistantships are made on Graduate Assistantship Appointment Forms.

## Original Appointments

1. The department or sponsored project director prepares and sends an Appointment Offer Letter with an Acceptance Form to the student.
2. The student returns the signed acceptance form and reports to the department or sponsored project director to complete the following forms:
  - a. Graduate Assistantship Appointment Form (for data entry purposes only)
  - b. Tax Forms (W-4 and VA-4, D-4 or MW507 as appropriate)
  - c. Direct Deposit Payroll Form
  - d. I-9 Form (The Federal I-9 Form must be **verified in person** and signed by the hiring department or Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS). If the appointment is for an international student, the student **MUST** go the OIPS to verify immigration documents, and to complete the I-9 and prepare tax forms. Students should take their immigration documents, passport and I-94 and other appropriate information to OIPS.
  - e. Commonwealth Alcohol and Drug Policy
  - f. Emergency Contact Information
  - g. Selective Service Compliance Document (To be completed by male employees only).
3. The department forwards completed paperwork to the collegiate dean/institute director for approval. The package should include the following items:
  - a. Appointment Letter
  - b. Signed Acceptance Form
  - c. Graduate Assistantship Appointment Form (For data entry purposes only)
  - d. Direct Deposit Payroll Form
  - e. I-9 Form
  - f. Completed Tax Forms (W-4 and VA-4, D-4, MW507 as appropriate)
  - g. Commonwealth Alcohol and Drug Policy
  - h. Emergency Contact Information
  - i. Selective Service Compliance Document (Male Employees Only)
  - j. Copy of "Speak Test" results, if required by assignment
  - k. Copy of TOEFL score, if required by assignment
  - l. Copies of transcripts, if required by assignment
4. The hiring department will then enter the employee into the Employee Transaction System/Workflow for payroll processing. Please note that FTE must be assigned in the Employee Transaction System/Workflow for GTAs. For assistance with this electronic action, please contact your HR Service Team at 703-993-2600 and/or visit us on-line at <http://hr.gmu.edu>.

5. Hiring Departments are responsible for maintaining complete records, including all of the aforementioned forms, on all graduate assistants hired by them.

### **Reappointments**

The department or sponsored project director prepares and sends an Appointment Offer Letter with an Acceptance Form to the student.

1. The Student returns the signed acceptance form and reports to the department or sponsored project director to complete the Graduate Assistantship Appointment form (all the forms from the original appointment should still be on file).
2. The department forwards all completed paperwork to the collegiate dean/institute director for approval. The package should include the following items:
  - Appointment Letter
  - Acceptance Form
  - Graduate Assistantship Appointment Form
  - Copy of “Speak Test” results, if required by assignment
  - Copy of TOEFL score, if required by assignment
  - Copies of transcripts, if required by assignment
3. The dean/director signs the Graduate Assistantship Appointment Form.
4. The hiring department will then enter the employee into the Employee Transaction System/Workflow for payroll processing. For assistance with this electronic action, please contact your HR Service Team at 703-993-2600 and/or visit us on-line at <http://hr.gmu.edu>.

### **Important Notes About the Hiring Process**

- NOTE 1:** All appointment letters must include the dates of the appointment, the hours of work required of the student, the enrollment requirement, the stipend to be received, and the type of tuition benefit if applicable.
- NOTE 2:** Double-check the Student Information System (SIS) to verify the student's domicile status. You must determine in-state vs. out-of-state tuition before awarding or defining tuition benefits in the offer letter.
- NOTE 3:** All students must provide appropriate documentation **in person** for verification and to complete their I-9.

Students who are American citizens or permanent U.S. residents should report to their academic department to complete the I-9.

International students who have temporary, non-immigrant status **must** report to the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS). Students should bring their immigration document, passport, and I-94 to OIPS to verify and to complete the I-9.

**NOTE 4:** Graduate Assistantships that are funded by the Provost's Office must be initiated by the host academic unit and be approved by the Provost before processing. Examples are High Potential and Interdisciplinary GRAs, as well as Special Fellowships and Scholarships.

**NOTE 5:** Hiring departments should enter GRA/GTA assignments into the HR system no later than September 1<sup>st</sup> to ensure that the first check is received on time. Paychecks will be issued on a semi-monthly basis. The first check will be issued September 16, and the final check on June 1. Check issuance dates for summer appointments should be confirmed with the Payroll Office.

**NOTE 6:** Assistantship stipends are wages and must be disbursed through the Payroll Department, not Accounts Payable. The Accounts Payable Department processes only non-compensatory payments.

### **Determining Appointment Periods and Dates of Service**

Appointment periods must be specified on both the Offer Letter and the Graduate Assistantship Appointment Form. For the 2002-2003 academic year, the following payroll dates should be used:

<b>Fall Semester</b>	8/25/02 to 01/09/03
<b>Spring Semester</b>	01/10/03 to 5/24/03
<b>Summer Sessions</b>	Dates of service are for three months extending from 5/25/03 to 8/24/03

## Determining the Pay Scale

Compensation for Graduate Student Assistants is determined by level of education and skill requirements. The recommended 2002-2003 pay scale for Graduate Assistants is as follows:

<u>GTA</u>	<u>GRA</u>	<u>Level of Education/Skill Requirements</u>
\$7,995	\$9,200	For a first time appointment without a master's degree.
\$8,500	\$9,895	For renewals prior to completion of a master's degree. (Must have previously held an assistantship for two full semesters.)
\$9,130	\$10,860	For initial appointments or renewals with a master's degree. (The stipend remains the same whether it is a first time appointment or a renewal.)

These rates remain unchanged from the 2001-2002 academic year. Should there be an increase announced for Spring 2003, the adjustment for GRAs paid from restricted funds will not be automatic. Sponsored project directors will need to submit an Employee Tracking Document to award the pay increase. This document may be found on the Human Resources, Administrative Information Systems, Employee Tracking System web page. A separate memo will be distributed in the future to reflect this adjustment. This adjustment does not apply to fellowship or scholarship stipends.

**NOTE:** If the student has only one semester of work as a TA or RA, he or she will be entitled to the increase in stipend during the second semester. An Employee Tracking Document indicating a change in stipend must be submitted at that time through the Employee Tracking System.

## Work Expectations

Full-time graduate assistants are expected to work an average of 20 hours per week during the academic year. Work expectations will be established and monitored by the supervising faculty member. The supervising faculty member also has the responsibility to evaluate the graduate assistants.

## **Changes in Status Other than Termination**

If a student with an assistantship has a change in status, such as an increase or decrease in salary, the department must submit a turnaround document reflecting the changes.

## **Prorating GTA/GRA Stipends When an Appointment Ends Early**

Graduate assistants who are terminated early, regardless of reason, should be compensated in direct proportion to the total time worked up to the point of termination, as compared with the time of work expectation for the original appointment period.

## **Enrollment Requirements**

- ◆ With certain exceptions noted below, all full-time (20 hrs/wk) graduate assistants must be enrolled for at least 6 hours of graduate work during the Fall and/or Spring Semesters during which they are employed. Part-time graduate assistants (10 hrs/wk) must enroll for a minimum of 3 hours of graduate coursework during the Fall and/or Spring Semesters during which they are employed. Each academic unit should monitor enrollment at the end of the schedule adjustment/registration period. A graduate assistant not enrolled for the minimum hours of coursework must relinquish his or her assistantship.
- ◆ Exceptions to the 6-hour enrollment required are only considered for students who need fewer than 6 hours to complete their degree and graduate. If the student falls into this category, the student's graduate coordinator must forward a written request to carry a reduced load to the unit by the latest Schedule Adjustment Date. This request should include the student's status in his or her program and the number of remaining hours and specific courses that remain. If all dissertation or thesis hours have been expended, the student must still register for one credit of dissertation or thesis work per semester.

## **Tuition Waiver Benefits**

Tuition benefits are awarded at the discretion of the unit. The awards will vary depending on the amount of tuition dollars allocated to the unit. Receipt of a Teaching or Research Assistantship does not guarantee a tuition waiver. Tuition for summer is not guaranteed to students receiving waivers in the fall and spring semesters. Tuition benefits must not be used as a substitute form of compensation. All compensation must be paid through payroll.

University policy allows full tuition support (in-state or out-of-state) to graduate students regardless of the source of funds. To be eligible for a tuition waiver, the student must earn a minimum of \$4,000 from

academic related activities during the academic year, be hired as a Graduate Assistant, and take a minimum 6 hours of course work during each of the Fall and Spring semesters (12 hours total). Fellowship monies may not be included or used when determining a student's eligibility for tuition waivers. The value of the tuition waiver must be described in the award letter.

### **Tuition Funded through Restricted Funds**

Graduate assistants may be hired as research or teaching assistants on specific grants or contracts. Wherever possible, the **tuition grant** for graduate assistants paid from restricted funds (formerly Ledger 5 accounts) will be included as a sponsor cost. In cases where sponsor regulations specifically prohibit such expenditures, the academic unit **may** provide the tuition, **if the unit determines it has sufficient funds**. All policies and procedures governing University funded assistantships apply.

Tuition grants for graduate assistants whose tuition is funded through restricted funds should be processed as follows:

- ◆ The "Payment Authorization" form should be completed and sent to the Office of Sponsored Programs MSN 4C6. The form must include the full amount authorized for the student's tuition and must be signed by the individual responsible for the account.
- ◆ At the space for the index number, both the restricted funds index number **and** the tuition subcode assigned to the account should be listed. The Cashier's Office will assign the subcodes and will notify you of them. If you have any questions regarding your subcode, please call the Cashier's Office at 993-2498.
- ◆ Payment Authorization forms must be received by the Financial Aid Office by the payment due date for each applicable semester.
- ◆ Students registering or adding courses after the payment due date have **TWO** business days to submit the payment authorization forms to the Financial Aid Office.

**NOTE:** Documents for graduate assistants on restricted funds must be signed by the Principal Investigator/Project Director, the Collegiate Dean/Institute Director, and the Office of Sponsored Programs.

### **International Students**

The Office of International Programs and Services provides the following information for international students:

1. F-1 and J-1 students are required by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to take a full course load each fall and spring semester (excluding summer term). A full course load for graduate students is 9 credit hours per semester; however, INS has declared that “students who are assigned teaching or research responsibilities pursuant to the terms of a scholarship or fellowship may carry a reduced course load.” For international students with teaching or research assistantships of 20 hours per week, full time is defined as a minimum of 6 credit hours per semester. Students enrolled in summer session are exempt from the 9-credit requirement. Students who require fewer than 9 credits to complete their course requirements or who have completed all coursework and are enrolled in project/thesis/dissertation hours are exempted from the 9 credit hour requirement. F-1 and J-1 students are limited to 20 hours of work per week during semesters, and may work full time during breaks.

F-1 and J-1 students are admitted to the U.S. for “duration of status;” that is, to complete an educational program. However, if a student must remain in an educational program beyond the date originally estimated for completion of the program (as stated on Form I-20 or Form IAP-66), the student must comply with INS procedures for a program extension. Delay caused by academic probation or suspension is not an acceptable reason for a program extension. The Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) projects that the normal amount of time required to complete a master’s degree is 2 ½ years and 5 years to complete a Ph.D. degree.

2. Students may use stipends as proof of financial support for issuance of their I-20/IAP-66. A copy of GRA/GTA offer letters must be sent to OIPS indicating stipend amount and specific tuition benefit. If the student’s financial support is based on a GRA or GTA, it is assumed that the same level of financial support will be renewed in subsequent years. U.S. law requires the Designated School Official to verify source of financial support for all years of study prior to issuing an I-20 or IAP-66. In some cases, the stipend will not cover all of the student's educational and living expenses and may need to be supplemented with personal or family funds or sponsorship by an outside organization. Immigration forms will not be issued until all financial support documents have been submitted and have met estimated expense requirements: tuition (variable), plus living expenses for a calendar year (\$12,600), plus mandatory health insurance fee (approximately \$870).
3. I-9 Forms for all employees in nonimmigrant status must be completed by the Office of International Programs and Services together with the employee. In addition, all employees in nonimmigrant status must complete a Foreign National Information Form and turn it in to the OIPS International Tax Coordinator at the time they are first hired or update it at the time of a subsequent hire (or when any information thereon changes). This form can be obtained from OIPS. F-1 and J-1 students must bring proof of identity and evidence of their eligibility to work at GMU for purposes of completing Form I-9. In addition, J-1 students require written permission from OIPS for all employment.

***NOTE: OIPS must verify, in person, the immigration documents of any GRA/GTA who has a temporary, nonimmigrant visa. OIPS must receive copies of the offer letter and signed acceptance form. OIPS will complete the I-9 and necessary tax forms with the student.***

## **Library Privileges**

### **Eligibility to Use GMU Libraries**

All graduate students are eligible to use the libraries for the semester in which they are enrolled. Enrollment is a minimum of one credit hour semester during the regular academic year. Graduate students have library privileges over the summer provided that they were enrolled for at least one credit during the preceding spring semester or they have pre-registered for the coming fall semester. During the regular academic year (fall and spring semesters), students not enrolled for any credits may enroll in a zero-credit Special Registration (SREG 810) which indicates they are in active status; however, to obtain library borrowing privileges, payment of a fee would be required at the prevailing rate.

### **Using the Libraries for Research**

The mission of the Libraries is to support students' study and research needs. Services available include:

#### *Circulation Privileges:*

A current valid GMU ID card serves as the library card. Circulation Desks at Fenwick Library (3-2240), Johnson Center Library (3-9060), or Prince William Campus Library (3-8349) can provide details.

Graduate students may check out books and certain other library materials for six (6) weeks.

#### *Periodical & Microforms Photocopying:*

Teaching and Research Assistants may charge a departmental account for microforms and photocopying. Each department will need a letter on file with the Periodicals/Microforms department at Fenwick Library authorizing specific individuals to incur these expenses on behalf of the departments. Call 3-2202 for more details, or contact the Serials Librarian at Fenwick Library.

The Periodicals/Microforms department is located in Fenwick Library, first floor.

#### *Document Acquisition & Delivery (Interlibrary Loan):*

The services of the Document Acquisition and Delivery department are available to all graduate students. This office can obtain library materials that are not part of the GMU Libraries' collections from other libraries. Turnaround times vary for acquiring these materials; every effort is made to obtain requested items through the fastest channels possible. The Articles on Demand service offers copies of articles not available locally free of charge.

Interlibrary loan forms are available at reference desks in all the libraries at the Document Acquisition & Delivery Office or via the Libraries' Web page at: <http://library.gmu.edu/requests/requests.html>. For more information about interlibrary loan, call 993-2228.

The Document Acquisition & Delivery department is located in Fenwick Library, floor 2B.

### **Using the Libraries to Support a Class**

#### *Reserve Desk:*

Many classes require supplementary readings from related books and journal articles. To place library books or personal items on reserve, pick up and complete a reserve form at the Reserve Desk in the Johnson Center Library lobby, first floor. Complete instructions are included. Students may search for reserve items by faculty name or course number in the Libraries' online catalog. Submit course reserve lists and reserve items early to ensure prompt availability of the materials for your students. For more information, call the Reserves coordinator at 3-9048.

Printed reserve items for courses offered at the Prince William or Arlington campuses are available in the libraries at those campuses.

A growing electronic reserves system is now available, providing access to digitized (online) journal articles assigned for courses. Articles chosen for use in this system must follow the Electronic Reserves and Copyright Guidelines developed by the Libraries and the University Copyright Assistance Office located on the first floor of the Johnson Center. For more information about electronic reserves, please review the Libraries' web page describing the service at <http://ers2000.gmu.edu>.

#### *Media Center:*

GTAs may place personal copies of videotapes on reserve or use the library's collection of videotapes, audiotapes, compact disks, records, and slides. Faculty and teaching assistants may check out the material for classroom use. Library staff can help find films held by other WRLC (consortium) libraries through the Media Share program. For more information about the media collection, call 3-9058.

#### *Liaison Librarians:*

All the Libraries are staffed with professional librarians assigned as liaisons to specific departments or units. They develop collections, teach classes for GMU students on library and Internet research, and consult on research projects. They are excellent contacts for learning about information resources in each discipline. Comprehensive online searches are also available for a fee.

The Associate University Librarian for Public Services at 993-3716 can provide the name of the appropriate liaison librarian.

## Graduate Assistantship Appointment Form

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	MID INIT	SSN	DATE OF BIRTH	SEX	RACE
ADDRESS			CITY	STATE	ZIP	
COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	NATIVE LANGUAGE	TOEFL SCORE	HOME DEPARTMENT	MSN	FORM SUBMITTED BY	DATE

### TYPE OF APPOINTMENT (check all boxes that apply to this appointment)

FULL ACADEMIC YEAR	<input type="checkbox"/>	FALL SEMESTER ONLY	<input type="checkbox"/>	SPRING SEMEST. ONLY	<input type="checkbox"/>	SUMMER GTA	<input type="checkbox"/>	SUMMER GRA	<input type="checkbox"/>
GTA – TEACHING ASST	<input type="checkbox"/>	GRA – RESEARCH ASST	<input type="checkbox"/>			GITA	<input type="checkbox"/>	HIGH POTENTIAL	<input type="checkbox"/>
INTERDISCIPLINARY	<input type="checkbox"/>					1 <sup>ST</sup> TIME APPOINTMENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	RENEWAL	<input type="checkbox"/>
20 HOURS / WEEK	<input type="checkbox"/>	10 HOURS / WEEK	<input type="checkbox"/>	OTHER HOURS / WEEK	<input type="checkbox"/>				
MASTER’S STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	DOC. / MFA STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	HOLDS MASTERS DEG.	<input type="checkbox"/>	WILL TEACH A CLASS	<input type="checkbox"/>	WILL TEACH A LAB	<input type="checkbox"/>
TUITION WAIVED	<input type="checkbox"/>	STUDENT PAYS TUITION	<input type="checkbox"/>	TUITION IN GRANT	<input type="checkbox"/>	IN STATE TUITION	<input type="checkbox"/>	OUT OF STATE TUITION	<input type="checkbox"/>

### ACCOUNT AND SALARY INFORMATION

ORG/FUND TITLE	INDEX NUMBER	FTE	BEGIN DATE	END DATE	SALARY
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

### STUDENT CONTRACT INFORMATION

- \*\*\* I hereby accept the graduate assistantship offered me in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_ for the appointment period of \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ and agree to adhere to the regulations governing the award.
- \*\*\* I understand that my graduate admission application will be the primary source of information in the consideration for my assistantship application.
- \*\*\* Upon request, I will furnish any additional information. If my native language is not English, I must have a minimum TOEFL score of 600 and I must take the SPEAK test (with a minimum score of 230) to have primary responsibility for a class or lab.
- \*\*\* I understand that it is recommended that I be employed for a maximum of 30/hours week (including assistantship), but that I may not work more than 45 hour/week (including assistantship).
- \*\*\* I understand I must be registered for a minimum of 6 credit hours per semester to be eligible for tuition waiver, unless I need fewer than 6 hours to complete my degree and graduate. I realize that I must earn at least \$4000 from GMU from academic related activities in the fiscal year to be eligible for a tuition waiver.
- \*\*\* I understand my enrollment will be monitored on the last schedule day and that my stipend will not be issued unless I am enrolled for the minimum number of credit hours required.

STUDENT SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

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**APPROVALS**

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR      DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DEPARTMENT HEAD      DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DEAN      DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
SPONSORED PROGRAMS      DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
OTHER NEEDED SIGNATURES      DATE