

**UW-Whitewater Graduate Assistant Handbook
Academic Year 2017-2018**

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Graduate Assistantships at UW-Whitewater

Preface

When funds are available, various academic and student affairs programs may hire interested graduate students who are enrolled full-time and are academically in "good standing" to work as a graduate assistant.

Graduate students can also be employed as student assistants – hourly employees – but they are not graduate assistants.

Graduate degree programs are designed to transform graduate students into professional scholars. A well-planned and executed graduate assistantship will help facilitate this transformation. The primary goal of a graduate assistantship is to aid in the prompt and successful completion of his or her graduate degree program.

Graduate assistantships enable graduate students to enroll full-time in graduate degree programs, so they may complete their degree more quickly and participate in the benefits of full-time involvement in study and academically-related pursuits at the University. At UW-Whitewater, graduate assistants are often employed in the following areas:

College of Arts & Communication
Communication

College of Business & Economics

Accounting
Economics
Finance
Information Tech. & Supply Chain Manage
Management
Marketing
Safety
On-line MBA

College of Education & Professional

Studies
Dean's Office
Communication Sciences & Disorders
Counselor Education
Special Education

College of Letters & Science

Computer Science
Psychology

Residence Life

Academic Advising & Exploration Center

Academic Advising

Academic Assessment

Adult Student Services

Career Services

Center for Students with Disabilities

First Year Experience

Graduate School

Intercollegiate Athletics

Learning Communities

Multicultural Affairs

Testing Office

Tutorial Services

Undergrad Research

Warhawk Alley

Wheelchair Basketball

Graduate Assistant Salaries and Benefits

If appointed to a graduate assistantship, recipients can be offered a contract for up to 20 hours per week. Graduate assistantship salaries are considered wages and must be reported as taxable income. The University determines the salaries and is required to withhold income taxes. Nonresident graduate assistants qualify for a waiver of nonresident tuition if their contract is for at least 13.4 hours a week.

¹ Nonresident refers to that portion of tuition over and above resident tuition. *All* students are still responsible for paying the resident portion of tuition for which they are billed. This is in addition to all other fees and expenses charge

For 2017-18, the following are approximate academic year graduate assistant salaries based on a base salary of \$21,118. 20 hours/week per semester will be \$10,559.

Contracts may be issued for the fall and/or spring semesters. There is no automatic entitlement to a contract for subsequent term appointments.

If the funding source for an assistantship is an external grant or contract, employment is contingent upon availability of funds to the grant's account.

Fringe benefits are available for graduate assistants who work at least 13.4 hours a week, and include health and dental insurance at minimal cost to the graduate student. Graduate assistants are encouraged to contact the UW-Whitewater Human Resources Office for more information.

Graduate assistants are not eligible for vacation, personal holiday, sick leave (including family leave), or unemployment benefits. Graduate assistants are entitled to the same official holidays as other University academic personnel. If their assistance is required by supervisors during such periods, arrangements should be made to compensate them by reducing hours from duties during slower/less needed times. Work schedules should be arranged at the beginning of each semester so there is no conflict with the graduate assistant's class schedule, but also meets the needs of the department.

Eligibility for Graduate Assistantships Employment

To be eligible for consideration in a graduate assistantship position, a graduate student must first satisfy all requirements listed below. Graduate assistantships are competitive, and financial need is not a consideration in the selection process. To be minimally eligible for consideration, a graduate student must:

- Be admitted in good academic standing in a UW-Whitewater graduate degree program; the graduate degree is conferred by UW-Whitewater.
- Enroll in a minimum of 9 graduate degree credits, maximum of 12, and remain in good academic standing during each term of employment.
- Submit an application for a graduate assistantship every academic year for which he/she is seeking employment.
- Submit a supervisor referral form

Conditions. A graduate assistant is expected to make steady progress toward the completion of his or her graduate degree. A graduate assistant contract may be no more than 20 hours per week.

Graduate assistants are not allowed to teach courses or to enroll in courses for which they are assigned responsibilities. Also, hiring units should not assign responsibilities to a graduate assistant for a course in which they are enrolled. The exception to this is laboratory preparation.

If a graduate assistant or a graduate assistant applicant is on academic probation or is not admitted to a degree program, they are not eligible for a graduate assistantship or for hiring renewal or reappointment.

The specific work schedule is at the discretion of the immediate supervisor. Work schedules should be arranged at the beginning of the semester so there are no conflicts with the graduate assistant's class schedule. If a student is participating in a study abroad experience, hours missed during the study abroad activity may be made up at the discretion of their supervisor.

International Graduate Assistants

International students with an F1 Visa may only work up to 20 hours per week on-campus and must be enrolled full-time. International graduate students holding a graduate assistantship may not accept other on-campus employment in excess of a total of 20 hours per week combined with an assistantship. Off-campus employment is prohibited by INS.

The international graduate assistant contract end date cannot exceed the student's official program end date (contact the Graduate Studies Office for this date). For graduate students whose programs do not have a thesis, clinical paper, or field project option, the completion date is the official course end date (not the commencement date) of the 14-week term, or the 17-week term if the student is required to register for interim. All enrollments must be for coursework required for the graduate. For graduate students with the thesis, clinical paper, or field project option, the completion is considered the date that the student *expects* to submit final copies to the Office of Graduate Studies. International students are required to discuss these dates with the Office of International Education.

Applying for a Graduate Assistantship

The deadline to apply for an assistantship is Feb 15 for the upcoming academic year. However, applications for graduate assistantships are accepted anytime. It is recommended that applications be turned in as early as possible as most available positions are filled by March 15 for the following academic year. Graduate students are required to reapply for an assistantship for each year he/she is seeking employment. The online application is available on the Graduate Studies website.

If an applicant is eligible for consideration for employment, their application is added to a pool of candidates according to field of graduate study. Applications will remain in the pool until the graduate student has received an assistantship or until the end of the academic year. The graduate assistantship pool is available electronically to all hiring units and is not accessible to the general public.

Graduate assistantship applications are reviewed by the hiring units according to job qualifications and criteria such as academic records, experience, time available for work by applicants, relationship of assistantship work to the student's program, special abilities of the student (e.g., foreign language, computer skills, experience in operating research equipment, etc). All applicants who are interviewed should be officially notified of the decision about their hiring/non-hiring as soon as possible after decisions are made.

Developing a Graduate Assistantship Position

The graduate assistant is both a student and an employee. Graduate studies and assistantship responsibilities should complement each other. Assistantships serve graduate students and the University when they are used as an integral part of graduate education. This extensive experience is a valuable part of the professional development of graduate students. Guidelines for determining work assignments for graduate assistants are:

1. Assistantships should not detract nor distract a graduate student from pursuing his or her graduate education.
2. Graduate assistant assignments should enhance the graduate student's education by exposing them to advanced professional activities and concerns of their discipline, involving them in university activities related to their academic and professional interests, and giving them opportunities to work closely with faculty and other university professionals.
3. Receptionist, secretarial, and clerical work are not to be assigned to graduate assistants.
4. Graduate assistants cannot be assigned teaching responsibilities, but they may provide tutorial or lab assistance for a faculty member who is the instructor of record.

Contracting Process

The hiring unit generates a Graduate Assistant Assignment Form and forwards it to the Office of Graduate Studies. After confirming eligibility requirements using information obtained from the student's graduate assistant application, the Office of Graduate Studies will issue a contract.

Graduate School will send a contract letter via USPS to the student. Supervisors will be provided a copy of the contract. Students must submit accepted contract letters to the School of Graduate Studies within ten days of receipt. If contracts are not submitted to School of Graduate Studies by the deadline, the contract will be forfeited.

Acceptance of a contract for a graduate assistantship by a graduate student completes an agreement that both the student and the University expect to honor. The contract letter is sent to the student and supervisor. The Office of Graduate Studies continuously monitors the records of graduate assistants to determine their eligibility for continued employment.

Graduate assistants are usually contracted for the 17-week semester or the 34-week academic year. Graduate assistantships are not available during the summer session. A late hire date of a graduate assistant contract may affect eligibility for certain benefits. Graduate assistants may be employed in multiple assistantships up to a total of 20 hours per week.

Responsibilities of the Hiring Unit

The hiring unit is responsible for reviewing graduate assistantship applications, interviewing qualified applicants, and recommending employment to the Office of Graduate Studies. Graduate assistant appointments should be made as soon as possible so that both the graduate assistant and the hiring unit may plan effectively.

Graduate assistants are to work under the supervision of faculty who are experienced and knowledgeable in their field. Supervision of graduate assistants includes providing appropriate training prior to and during the assistant's assumption of responsibility for assigned tasks. The immediate supervisor for each graduate assistant should be identified as early as possible. If there is more than one supervisor per graduate assistant, the specific tasks to be performed for each and the role each supervisor will play should be identified.

Whenever possible, each hiring unit should provide an orientation and in-service training for graduate assistants. Supervisors should assist graduate assistants in securing access to applicable resources and facilities. The hiring unit must also follow all health and safety laws and regulations and educate the graduate assistant about them.

The hiring unit is responsible for ensuring that the assigned workload is academically appropriate. **Academic credit may not be given for graduate assistantship assignments or any work or service performed as part of the assigned duties.** Graduate assistants should not be assigned responsibilities for courses in which they are enrolled, with the exception of laboratory preparation.

Study Abroad

Graduate assistants enrolled in study abroad courses are not entitled to salary during study abroad activity. Exceptions include 1) students who join a study abroad activity as a faculty research assistant, but do not register for the coursework, and 2) students who register for the course and make up for the missed time within the dates of the contract period, and at the discretion of the supervisor.

Hiring units will provide information about responsibilities, expectations, workspace, and support services, etc. **Graduate assistants should be aware that their position may be terminated prior to expiration of the contracted period if the terms of the appointment are not met.**

Responsibilities of the Graduate Assistant

Graduate assistants are responsible for knowing applicable departmental, college, and institutional regulations and for following them consistently. Regardless of the work assignment, graduate assistants are obligated to maintain standards of academic and employee honesty and integrity and to report violations of these to their supervisor. As with all types of employment, positions are competitive and subject to funding. Graduate students are not automatically entitled to a graduate assistantship position.

Graduate assistants are employees of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, and the following standards were established to advise graduate assistants and supervisors, but not to restrict the rights of the employee. The following are the Office of Graduate Studies' expectations for acceptable personal conduct; academic departments may have additional expectations based on the needs of the position.

1. Graduate assistants are expected to carry out their instructions, duties, and responsibilities as directed by those with authority to assign the work.
2. Graduate assistants are expected to conduct personal business unrelated to their positions on their own time.
3. Graduate assistants are expected to respect university property and equipment, and to use it only for appropriate university purposes.
4. Graduate assistants are expected to use care in guarding university keys and not to lend, borrow, duplicate, or use them for inappropriate purposes. University keys are required to be returned at the end of the contract period.
5. Graduate assistants are expected to perform their duties without impairment or the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Enrollment requirements are a minimum of 9 graduate credits, maximum of 12 graduate credits, during the 17-week semester. All coursework must be within the parameters of their graduate degree program. Any waiver of credit requirements must be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies for approval.

Thesis, clinical paper, or field project credits may be included in the above totals for the initial term of registration.

Graduate assistants are **required** to meet all of the following expectations. Failure to meet **one** of the following will result in termination of the graduate assistantship.

1. Maintain good academic standing in their UW-Whitewater graduate degree program (a minimum cumulative graduate grade point average of 3.0).
2. Show satisfactory progress toward degree completion, as defined by the graduate program.
3. Register for a minimum of 9 graduate degree credits (maximum of 12 graduate degree credits) during each term of employment.
4. Perform graduate assistantship duties satisfactorily, as defined by the immediate supervisor or department and position description.
5. Come to work as scheduled, and abide the requirements of the work schedule.
6. Maintain appropriate standards of academic conduct.
7. Honor the terms of the contract agreement.

Joint Responsibilities of the Graduate Assistant and the Hiring Unit

The first priority of all graduate assistants must be satisfactory progress in their graduate program. At the same time, acceptance of an assistantship is predicated on the belief that satisfactory progress can be concurrently achieved in work assignments and graduate programs. Collaborative efforts between graduate assistants and their supervisors should be focused on the goal of satisfactory performance in both of these areas.

After accepting a UW-Whitewater graduate assistantship offer (i.e. the contract as been signed), students are required to obtain a written release from the hiring unit before accepting a different UW-Whitewater offer. The responsibility for compliance with this resolution rests with the hiring units offering the graduate assistantship and the graduate students accepting them.

Treatment of the Graduate Assistant

The graduate assistant deserves the courtesy of being treated as a professional in his/her chosen field of study and should be extended the following privileges:

- The graduate assistant should be notified in writing of all decisions pertaining to or affecting the status of his/her assistantship.
- The graduate assistant has the right to respond to complaints and to present evidence in his/her defense.
- The graduate assistant should be informed of a formal grievance procedure, and then have the right to

- initiate a grievance or to appeal a decision through the channels specified.
- The graduate assistant should receive sufficient advance notice of reappointment procedures.

Change in Appointment

The Office of Graduate Studies should be informed in writing of any change in appointment, e.g., changes in hours, FTE, salary, termination, etc. The Graduate Studies Office will review the change, and update their records before forwarding it to Human Resources.

Reappointment. Reappointment to a graduate assistantship is not automatic. The potential, conditions, and procedures for reappointment should be made clear to the graduate assistants at the time the offer of an assistantship is made. Considerations for reappointment include the academic standing of the graduate assistant, his/her progress in a graduate program, and past performance.

Priority for reappointment/rehiring is given to graduate assistants making progress toward completion of the degree and who perform their assistantship duties well. Criteria for reappointment include maintaining all eligibility requirements and expectations, as well as the following expectations:

1. Do not have any "In Progress" (IP) grades for three semesters or more (summer not included)
2. No more than two "Incomplete" (I) grades on their transcript
3. Are within the length of time to degree for their program

Reappointment is not automatic even if graduate assistants meet the minimum criteria. Final decisions should be based on the graduate assistant's skills and qualifications, department needs, financial resources, equal opportunity/affirmative action, and the effort to provide as many graduate students as possible with assistantship opportunities.

The graduate assistant should receive sufficient advance notice of reappointment or non-renewal, and be informed of necessary procedures to respond in either case.

Resigning a graduate assistantship. If a graduate student resigns from his or her graduate assistantship before the end of the contract period, he/she should provide sufficient notice in writing to the hiring unit (two weeks or more is preferred). The graduate student should submit a letter of resignation to the hiring unit with a copy to the Office of Graduate Studies. The letter should include the date of the graduate assistant's last day of work. Be aware that resigning from a graduate assistantship may affect continuation of an out-of-state fee waiver and/or fringe benefits.

Termination by the Office of Graduate Studies. A graduate assistantship is automatically terminated by the Office of Graduate Studies when the student is placed on academic probation, suspended from the University, or is found guilty of academic misconduct. Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to the following:

- Cheating on an exam
- Plagiarism
- Fabricating data in any academic area
- Falsifying or forging documents
- Assisting another student(s) in these acts

Termination by the hiring unit. Before termination for unsatisfactory performance, graduate assistants must receive from their immediate supervisor a notice of specific deficiencies in performance, as well as detailed suggestions for improvement. Graduate assistants should receive at least two warnings with adequate opportunity in between to improve performance. If unacceptable performance continues, and a decision is made to proceed with termination of the assistantship, then the hiring unit must give the graduate assistant a pre-termination hearing. The hearing should consist of oral or written notice of the charges against the graduate assistant, an explanation forming the basis for the dismissal, and an opportunity to present reasons, either in person or in writing, why the termination should not take place. After these proceedings, the hiring unit should notify the Office of Graduate Studies of the outcome.

If the hiring unit terminates the assistantship before the end of the contract period, the graduate student must be notified by the supervisor of the termination and grievance procedures available at the department and College levels, as well as the Graduate Assistantship Grievance Procedure. Appeals arising from suspension or dismissal

for disciplinary reasons will be processed under the UW System disciplinary code and UW-Whitewater provisions. Appeals for a sexual harassment complaint will be processed according to the appeal procedures specified in the UW-Whitewater Sexual Harassment Policy. Please see section two of this handbook for a list of policies.

Principles and Procedures for Termination of a Graduate Assistant

A graduate assistant may be terminated by the hiring unit for failure to follow these principles and procedures.

1. Failure to report for work on the reporting date specified in the offering letter or contract constitutes grounds for immediate termination of the assistantship, with no remuneration, at the discretion of the supervisor. Notification of such termination is to be sent immediately to the Office of Graduate Studies.
2. Absence from duties for one week or more without cause shall constitute grounds for immediate termination of the assistantship as of the date of the start of the unexcused absence.
3. A graduate assistant can be removed from a work assignment without notice if, in the opinion of the supervisor, continuation of the graduate assistant in that assignment poses a threat to the safety or well-being of the graduate assistant or of others. In such a case, the graduate assistant may be reassigned to other duties if another appropriate assignment exists within the hiring unit, or if not, may be given notice of termination.
4. A graduate assistant whose work performance is deemed to be unsatisfactory, but does not warrant change of assignment as in (3) above; and has been advised by his or her supervisor as to the nature of the deficiencies in performance and the expectations of improvement.

If, in the judgment of the supervisor, the graduate assistant fails to show sufficient improvement in work performance over the period allowed for remediation, the supervisor may give the graduate assistant and the Office of Graduate Studies notice of termination. This notification must be in writing (UW-Whitewater email is acceptable), should indicate the reason(s) for termination, and must be submitted in duplicate simultaneously to the graduate assistant and to the Office of Graduate Studies. The notice must indicate the effective date of the termination, which may not be more than 14 calendar days from the date upon which the notice is emailed to the graduate assistant's UW-Whitewater email address or mailed to his/her current local address on file in the Human Resources Office.

Assessment of the quality of work performance is the sole responsibility of the hiring unit, and is an academic and professional judgment. However, the graduate assistant may dispute any facts or procedures relating to the termination. The graduate assistant may appeal the termination through appropriate departmental and/or College personnel procedures, and the Graduate Assistantship Grievance Procedure.

Graduate Assistant Grievance Procedure

The following grievance procedure is restricted to interpretation or application of established policies and procedures regarding graduate assistantships only. It does not apply to tuition and fee costs, revocation of out-of-state fee waivers, or fringe benefits related to a graduate assistantship.

Prior to filing a grievance, the graduate assistant is encouraged to seek resolution with his/her immediate supervisor using informal discussion, collegial interaction, and existing departmental structures to resolve conflicts and to remedy personal and professional concerns whenever possible. If the immediate supervisor is not a department head, the supervisor shall notify the department head of the grievance and ensuing discussion

If the grievance cannot be settled at the departmental-level, the graduate assistant should consult the College in which the graduate assistant is employed whether there are personnel policies and procedures applicable for grievances by graduate assistants. If there are, the graduate assistant should submit his/her grievance to that review process. The appeal should (a) contain specific objections to the department's procedures and (b) be accompanied by copies of the correspondence exchanged between the two parties. The Office of Graduate Studies should be notified of all grievances and be given copies of all documents pertaining to the issue and the resolution.

If there are no College policies or procedures for graduate assistants, or there are such but the grievance cannot be resolved at the College-level, the graduate assistant may initiate the Graduate Assistant Grievance Procedure. The grievance must be submitted in writing by the graduate assistant to the Dean of Graduate Studies with copies to the supervisor, the department head, the College's Dean, and Human Resources, as applicable. A copy of all

prior correspondence is required. The formal grievance must be filed within thirty (30) calendar days after the date of the College-level review and notification to the graduate student of the decision.

As soon as possible after receipt of the grievance, the Dean of Graduate Studies will convene an ad hoc committee of four Graduate Council members, each member representing one of the four Colleges, and notify the graduate assistant and hiring unit as soon as a meeting time has been set. None of the four Graduate Council Members may be from the hiring unit identified in the grievance. Representation on the Committee from the Graduate Studies Office and Human Resources may be requested.

1. The Committee's meetings will be closed. In addition to the Committee members, the only persons present will be the graduate assistant submitting the appeal, the head of the hiring unit, and no more than one additional person accompanying each of these two to advise, observe, and counsel. This is not a legal proceeding, and there is no requirement that the graduate assistant be represented by legal counsel. However, if the graduate assistant chooses to be accompanied by such counsel, they must notify the Committee in advance, and the representative of the hiring unit may be accompanied by the University's General Counsel. No other persons shall be present.
2. The graduate assistant and the head of the employing unit may each present his or her case orally. The Committee members have the option to ask questions for clarification as necessary. The two parties may also present written supporting documentation, which may include statements from other parties having knowledge relevant to the case. If either contests the facts as stated by the other, the person contesting shall have the opportunity to express the objection(s). Either party may call or question witnesses, and witnesses may be questioned by the Committee. Since the issues involved are academic rather than legal, the Committee will not be bound by strict rules of legal evidence, and may present written statements, affidavits, or other evidence or information pertinent to deciding the issues involved. A recording of the proceedings may be maintained for a minimum of five years at the expense of the University. A duplicate recording will be available upon request by the graduate assistant during the period.
3. If the grievance involves termination of a graduate assistantship, and if the conclusion of the Committee is that the termination should be rescinded, the assistantship will be restored without break from the date of termination. The decision of the Committee is final; there is no further appeal process.
4. A graduate assistant whose assistantship is terminated should expect cancellation of any nonresident tuition waiver and/or fringe benefits.

Summary

Graduate assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis to graduate students who best-meet the requirements set by the Office of Graduate Studies and the employing academic unit. The assistantship should not interfere with the student's educational objectives; rather, the assistantship should aid in the prompt and successful completion of the degree program while supporting the unit for whom he or she works. While the graduate assistant makes progress toward an advanced degree, he/she also receives work experience in a profession under the supervision of a faculty/department mentor. As such, graduate assistantships build confidence and help them become better profession