

Graduate Assistant Handbook

This handbook was updated by the School of Graduate Studies
at the University of North Dakota

January 2016

CHAPTER I GENERAL INFORMATION

This handbook is produced to provide information about the policies and procedures affecting Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA), Graduate Research Assistants (GRA), and Graduate Service Assistants (GSA) at the University of North Dakota. If you have questions, please contact your faculty advisor, your department chairperson, or the School of Graduate Studies' office (325 Montgomery Hall, phone 701-777-2948).

The Graduate Assistant (GA) fulfills a unique position in the university because he/she is both a student and an employee. Graduate study and effective service as a Graduate Assistant both require extensive commitment. It is for this reason that limits are placed on the amount of effort (academic credits and teaching/research/service hours) to be spent in each role. Graduate Assistants are normally appointed as half-time assistants, but some may be appointed as quarter-time assistants.

Policy on Outside Employment for Graduate Assistants

The School of Graduate Studies does not encourage outside employment for Graduate Student Assistants. Such employment may limit the ability of the student to make satisfactory progress towards his/her degree. Failure to make satisfactory progress towards their degree can constitute grounds for dismissal.

Graduate assistants are expected to meet the terms of their appointment in areas of teaching, research and/or service. These appointments should not exceed 100%. The Graduate School defines 100% effort for assistants as 50% employment and 50% coursework (1/2 time assistant) or 25% employment and 75% coursework (1/4 time assistant). In unusual circumstances, Graduate Assistants can serve as consultants to projects or activities supported with University administered funds provided all of the following criteria are satisfied: (1) The services of the Graduate Student Consultant are outside of the realm of their Graduate Assistant responsibilities, (2) The services provided are limited in scope and do not involve prolonged teaching or research activities, (3) The combined activities, Assistant + Consulting, cannot exceed 120% effort, (4) The consulting fee is appropriate considering the qualifications of the individual to be utilized, and the nature of the services to be rendered. The hourly rate should be no less than minimum wage, and (5) the overload must be sanctioned by the Graduate Program Director of the program in which the student is enrolled and approved by the School of Graduate Studies' Dean. Notice of appointment forms are administered by the School of Graduate Studies.

Selection of Graduate Assistants

Applicants for GA positions must meet the eligibility requirements of the specific appointment and will not be subjected to unlawful discriminatory treatment. University educational employment policy states that there shall be no discrimination against persons

because of race, religion, age, creed, color, sex, disability, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, veterans' status, or political belief or affiliation. North Dakota state law also prohibits discrimination in employment with regards to

participation in lawful activity off University property during non-working hours, which is not in direct conflict with the essential business- related interests of the University.

Interested students may apply for a GA appointment to the graduate department to which they have been admitted or to service units, which may be related to their major field.

Applications have deadlines, so check with your department 2-3 months prior to the beginning of the semester.

Graduate Teaching Assistants are selected by the department in which the student is pursuing his/her major field of study and in which the teaching assistant duties are to be performed. Graduate Research Assistants are selected by the faculty research supervisor with the concurrence of the student's major department chairperson. Graduate Service Assistants are selected by the administrator of the service unit.

The following general eligibility requirements are applicable to the award of and continued holding of any Graduate Assistantship at UND:

- Students admitted to the School of Graduate Studies and notified that they have been granted an appointment or award before they have actually received a bachelor's degree may neither register nor hold an appointment or award until they have received the bachelor's degree and fulfilled all requirements for admission to the School of Graduate Studies as a degree student.
- Only degree seeking students in Approved and Qualified Status may hold awards or appointments.
- Assistantship appointments will not exceed one-half time in all combinations.
- Students must maintain the credit load requirements defined in the appointment letter to retain appointments or awards.
- Students must maintain a 3.00 GPA to retain awards or appointments.
- A student may be removed from an appointment due to unsatisfactory job performance.
- Students in good academic standing (i.e., a GPA of 3.00 or higher; 2.75 for Master of Engineering candidates) and who are performing their assigned duties satisfactorily are eligible for reappointment.
- Students who withdraw from or are dismissed from the School of Graduate Studies become immediately ineligible for and may not continue to hold an appointment or award.
- International students must meet specified language proficiency requirements to hold an assistantship.

Appointment of Graduate Assistants

All new graduate student employees are required to complete the E-Verify procedure prior to beginning work. All GA appointments specify a beginning date and a monthly stipend. The employee must sign the E-Verify form before the appointment effectively begins. Appointments end when the department sends a Job Data Change or Separation form to Human Resources with the "Termination" section filled out. All pay and benefits are terminated as of that date or upon graduation should graduation precede the contract termination date. Reappointment is possible, but not guaranteed, and requires satisfactory job performance and at least a 3.00 grade point average.

All GA appointments are initiated by the department using the: (1) Job Data Hire Form; (2) Position Funding Form. GTA appointments are initiated by the major department chairperson and require the approval of the Dean of the college/school in which the instruction occurs and of the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. GRA appointments are initiated by the research supervisor and require the approval of the major department chairperson and the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. GSA appointments are initiated by the service unit administrator and require the approval of the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. All appointments will indicate the person to whom the student is responsible for the performance of the GA duties.

Tuition waivers are awarded by the Department and approved by both the College and the School of Graduate Studies. Students will get a letter by mail informing them of their tuition waiver award.

Formal appointment of all GAs is by virtue of a university contract issued by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. **The student must sign to accept their contract.** Students must have accepted the appointment in order for the paperwork to be further processed by the School of Graduate Studies and forwarded to Payroll.

- All GTA, GRA and GSA appointment forms must be received by the School of Graduate Studies by August 1st for the Fall term, December 1st for the Spring term and May 1st for the Summer term classes. No appointments will be accepted after this date without an Admissions & Assistance Petition with all required signatures.

The Job Data Change or Separation form is used to make changes to appointments and must come to the School of Graduate Studies for processing. The School of Graduate Studies will forward this paperwork to the Payroll Office. Terminations are processed through Human Resources.

* E-Verify electronically compares information from new employee I-9 forms with records contained in SSA and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to verify identity and employment eligibility of new employees. Employees may not begin work without a completed I-9 form. See the Payroll website for more information about E-Verify.

Graduate Assistants Rights and Responsibilities

“All GAs are responsible for abiding by all policies as outlined in the *Code of Student Life*. Additionally, they are subject to the ethical precepts and code of their academic profession, through the laws of the State of North Dakota regarding its employees, and through the University of North Dakota policies, which govern their institutional obligations. Violation of these constitutes a basis for disciplinary action in accordance with the procedures set forth herein.” (Section 1-9, *Code of Student Life* - <http://und.edu/student-affairs/code-of-student-life/>)

GAs are first and foremost graduate students, and must meet the demands of that role. GA appointments may not exceed 20 hours per week.

In their role as teachers, GTAs are members of the academic staff (but not faculty) of the University, and are accorded the rights and responsibilities of academic freedom as set forth in the “Regulations on Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Due Process” (see the *ND State Board of Higher Education Policy Manual*, section 605.1-
<http://www.ndus.edu/makers/procedures/sbhe/default.asp?PID=53&SID=7&printable=1>)

International Student Graduate Assistants

International students whose native language is not English normally will not be appointed as a GA until the completion of one year of graduate study at UND in order to provide the department an opportunity to assess the student’s ability in the use of the English language.

International Graduate Assistants who are non-native speakers of English are required to take the TSE (Test of Spoken English) and achieve a score of 50 before an assistantship may be offered if either lecture or laboratory assistance is involved. Students who have taken the Internet based TOEFL test and achieved a spoken score of 26/30 are eligible for assistantships. If the appointee has not taken the TSE or ibt TOEFL, he/she must take the SPEAK test (offered at UND) and achieve a score of 50. For further information on the SPEAK test, contact the Counseling Center at (701) 777-4157.

The North Dakota State Board of Higher Education policy requires all international students to purchase the health insurance approved by the institution. International students who are GAs at UND must agree to the deduction of the health insurance premium as a payroll deduction. The policy states that students must carry this insurance from the time of their registration at the institution until termination or completion of their studies.

Payroll Facts

Any problems experienced by students, faculty, or departments regarding payroll matters for GAs should be brought to the attention of the School of Graduate Studies for resolution.

GA appointments must be finalized (i.e., the student’s written acceptance and personal data form received) in order for the paperwork to be sent to the Payroll Office. The School of Graduate Studies has deadlines. It is the student’s responsibility to make sure the proper paperwork has been submitted.

The 1986 Tax Reform Act provides that all GA stipends are subject to income tax, and the University will withhold tax. W-2 forms will be issued to GAs in January of each year.

Semester pay periods are August 16 to December 31 and January 1 to May 15 (i.e., 4.5 months each with nine payments). The academic year pay period is August 16 to May 15 (nine months, 18 payments). Paychecks for GAs are sent to the departments on the 15th of the month and the last day of the month (or the last working day preceding those dates if pay day falls on a non-working day).

GAs may arrange for direct deposit of their paycheck to a financial institution.

Graduate Assistant Benefits

GA's are exempt from Social Security participation only if they maintain at least a 5 credit course load for the term of their appointment. GA's are not eligible to participate in the university retirement plans. GA's are covered by Worker's Compensation from the date of the appointment or the date of the acceptance whichever is last.

Half-time GAs are eligible to obtain faculty parking privileges and may be assigned priority for student housing, subject to its availability.

Academic Complaints

Each department has a written procedure for dealing with academic grievances. Graduate Assistants should be aware of the department's policy as well as the University's policies.

You can find them defined and described in the *Code of Student Life* (Section 3-1,-3-5). (<http://und.edu/student-affairs/code-of-student-life/>)

Equal Opportunity Policy Statement

It is the policy of the University of North Dakota that no person in the United States shall be discriminated against because of race, religion, age, color, gender, disability, national origin, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, veteran's status, or political belief or affiliation and the equal opportunity and access to facilities shall be available to all. This policy is particularly applicable in the admission of students in all colleges, and in their academic pursuits. It also is applicable in the University-owned or University-approved housing, food services, extracurricular activities and all other student services. It is a guiding policy in the employment of students either by the University or by outsiders through the University and in the employment of faculty and staff. Concerns regarding Title IX, Title VI, Title VII, ADA, and Section 504 may be addressed to Donna Smith, Director of Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action and Title IX Coordinator at 701-777-4171, und.affirmativeactionoffice@und.edu or the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Dept. of Education, 500 West Madison, Suite 1475, Chicago, IL 60611 or any other federal agency.

CHAPTER II

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT (GTA)

Graduate Teaching Assistantships are university appointments, which provide stipends to students who are providing teaching service in the department in which they are pursuing their academic major. The GTA system is a valuable part of the instructional program of UND in that it serves undergraduate and graduate education. The purposes of the GTA program are:

- To provide financial support for the students enrolled in the graduate degree program.
- To provide an introduction to college teaching and a supervised teaching experience for graduate students, some of whom eventually will become faculty in higher education institutions.
- To assist the university in its instructional program, especially in working with undergraduates in small classes, discussions, or laboratory situations.

Because the major special activity expected of a GTA is related to teaching, the main criterion for the appointment of a GTA is the potential for becoming a capable, concerned, and responsible teacher.

Teaching Responsibilities

The GTA is responsible to the chairperson of the department for the performance of duties. Often this responsibility is delegated to a faculty member who has overall responsibility for the course(s) in which the student may assist. The teaching assignment should be consistent with the GTA's background and experience, and contribute both to the department's needs and the GTA's experience.

GTAs are considered professional academic staff and will not be assigned routine clerical work. However, they may be expected to assist in grading (examinations, term papers, laboratory exercises, problems) or in supporting the teaching program in other roles.

GTAs who are assigned responsibility for a class or laboratory group are expected to perform their duties as responsible professionals representing the university. This includes meeting all scheduled classes, being prepared for each day's class, knowing the background of knowledge which students bring to the class, and becoming aware of the students' special interests and capabilities.

The GTA is simultaneously pursuing an academic program leading to a graduate degree and performing an instructional function, the combination of the two being a full-time endeavor.

GTAs are first and foremost graduate students, and they must meet the demand of that role. In their role as teachers, they are members of the academic staff (but not faculty) of the University, and are accorded the rights and responsibilities of academic freedom as set forth in the "*Regulations on Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Due Process*" (see *ND State Board of*

Higher Education Policy Manual, section 605.1 -
<http://www.ndus.edu/makers/procedures/sbhe/default.asp?PID=53&SID=7&printable=1>.)

Appointment Conditions

The start date of the appointment and monthly stipend will be specified in the written contract issued by the School of Graduate Studies. GTAs are classified by level as follows:

Level I Master's candidates

Level II Doctoral candidates holding a master's degree or equivalent

The normal GTA appointment is for half-time service. Some appointments may be for quarter-time.

Half-time GTAs will be expected to work 15-20 hours per week, dependent upon departmental requirements. Quarter-time GTAs are expected to work 8-10 hours per week. For many GTAs the workload will be relatively uniform throughout the semester, but for others, the load will be uneven due to the nature of the duties.

Both half-time and quarter-time GTAs must carry an academic load of a minimum of six and a maximum of nine credits during the semester. Summer session half-time and quarter-time GTA appointments require three to six credits.

As a member of the academic staff of the University, and the recipient of a contract for services, a GTA appointment goes until the department terminates through Human Resources. Contracts may be renewed at the discretion of the institution. This and other portions of the "*Regulations on Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Due Process*" (Faculty Handbook) provide protection to a GTA, provided that the GTA remains academically qualified to continue as an assistant.

CHAPTER III

THE GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT (GRA)

Graduate Research Assistantships are appointments, which provide stipends to students who are assisting in a research project undertaken by the department in which they are pursuing their academic major. Graduate Research Assistantships provide financial assistance to students enrolled in the graduate degree program, and an opportunity for a student to participate in an ongoing research project under the supervision of an experienced investigator, and thereby learn the methods and skills of research in the discipline.

GRAs normally will be responsible to the faculty member who is the principal investigator on the research project, and that person will assign the GRA duties. Students will be selected for available GRA positions by the principal investigators with the concurrence of the department chairperson and the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. Criteria in the selection of GRAs include a strong academic record, course work related to the field of research, successful graduate study in the department, and an interest in the research topic.

Many GRA appointments also provide the student an opportunity to use the research project as the topic for a thesis or dissertation. In such instances, the research supervisor must be the student's thesis/dissertation advisor and the chairperson of the student's Faculty Advisory Committee.

Appointment Conditions

The start date of the appointment and monthly stipend will be specified in the written contract issued by the School of Graduate Studies. New graduate student employees must have completed the E-Verify procedures before beginning work.

The normal GRA appointment is for half-time service. Half-time GRAs will be expected to work 15-20 hours per week, dependent upon departmental requirements. Quarter-time GTAs are expected to work 8-10 hours per week.

Half-time and quarter-time GRAs must carry an academic load of a minimum of six and a maximum of nine credits during the semester. Summer session half-time and quarter-time GRA appointments require three to six credits.

CHAPTER IV

THE GRADUATE SERVICE ASSISTANT (GSA)

Graduate Service Assistantships provide stipends to students who are assisting in a service unit whose mission and function is closely related to the student's area of academic study and interest.

GSAs will be responsible to a professional member of the service unit who will supervise and train the student in the service role. Students will be selected for a GSA appointment by the service unit supervisor. Criteria for selection include the academic record, course work related to the field, successful graduate study in the major department, and an interest in the service field.

Appointment Conditions

The start date of the appointment and monthly stipend will be specified in the written contract issued by the School of Graduate Studies. New graduate student employees must have complete the E-Verify procedures before beginning work.

The normal GSA appointment is for half-time service. Half-time GSAs will be expected to work 15-20 hours per week dependent upon departmental requirements. Quarter-time GSAs are expected to work 8-10 hours per week.

Both half-time and quarter-time GSAs must carry an academic load of a minimum of six and maximum of nine semester credits during the semester. Summer session half-time and quarter-time GSA appointments require three to six credits.

CHAPTER V

GRADUATE TUITION WAIVERS

Graduate Tuition Waivers may be assigned with or without a Graduate Assistantship.

The amount of tuition waived will appear as a credit on the student's Campus Connection account. This is not a payment to the account but a waiver of tuition charges. Students are responsible for payment of all fees assessed to them. Distance or online tuition are not covered by Graduate Tuition Waivers. Graduate students who have a graduate assistantship appointment may receive tuition waivers for on-line courses.

Tuition Waiver eligibility is determined first by the student's academic department, college, and finally by the School of Graduate Studies' policy with final approval by the School of Graduate Studies.

Students are eligible for tuition waivers under the following conditions:

A student may not receive tuition waivers for more than the number of credits in their approved Program of Study. Students are eligible for waivers up to the amount necessary to complete their approved program of study. New student's eligibility is determined by the School of Graduate Studies. In general, new master's candidates begin their coursework with 24 hours of eligibility, doctoral students with 36.

In any one semester, the maximum dollar value of tuition waived may not exceed the total tuition billed. Students must register for all coursework covered by waivers by the last day to add a full term course or they may forfeit the benefit of the waiver for that period.

Students receiving Graduate Assistantships must enroll in a minimum of 6 credits per semester (Fall and Spring) and/or 3 credits in Summer. Only students in "Approved" or "Qualified" status are eligible for Tuition Waivers. Continuing enrollment (996) fees are used in accordance with School of Graduate Studies policy and applies if a student has already completed his/her program of study. Continuing Enrollment Fees are not covered under the waiver program.

Students receiving a tuition waiver will be notified by mail. If the student declines the tuition waiver he/she must call the School of Graduate Studies at 701-777-2948.

General Information on Residency

1. Residency for a student is established at the time of application. Students are considered residents of the state that they claim on this application. If a student does not declare residency on the application, their residency status is defaulted to Non Resident. If a student is a Minnesota resident, then they are considered Non Resident until such time that reciprocity can be verified or the student has filed and been approved for reciprocity. The Minnesota reciprocity form can be found at <http://www.getreadyforcollege.org/hesod/reciprocity/apply1.cfm>.
2. Students may apply for North Dakota residency by completing the North Dakota Residency form found <http://und.edu/finance-operations/student-account-services/residency.cfm>. Deadlines for updating residency can be found by contacting Student Account Services.
3. Any deviation from the residency status that appears on a student's application is the responsibility of the student to correct with the Business Office and is governed by **North Dakota State Board of Higher Education Policy Manual** Section: 504 Resident Tuition Law and Guidelines can be found on the SBHE website under NDUS Procedures.
4. Student Account Services is the final authority on all residency questions. The School of Graduate Studies defers to Student Account Services in matters pertaining to a student's residency for the levying of tuition.

Helpful Contact Information

The School of Graduate Studies

www.graduateschool.UND.edu

Email: questions@gradschool.UND.edu

Reception 777-2784

Admissions 777-0749

Assistantships 777-2948

Colleges

John D. Odegard School of Aerospace 777-2791

College of Arts & Sciences 777-2749

College of Business & Public Administration 777-2135

College of Education & Human Development 777-2674

College of Engineering & Mines 777-3411

School of Medicine & Health Sciences 777-4221

College of Nursing and Professional Disciplines 777-4174

Units

American Indian Center 777-4291

Student Account Services 777-3911

Disability Support Services 777-3425

International Student Center 777-4231

Multicultural Student Services 777-4259

Student Financial Aid 777-3121 Student

Health Center 777-4500 Testing

Services 777-4157

Veteran's Services 777-3363

Wellness Center 777-6476

Women's Center 777-4300