

Bowling Green State University
GRADUATE COLLEGE STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING¹
IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

STANDARD CONTRACT PERIODS 2023-2024²

Summer 2023:	May 15, 2023 – August 4, 2023
Academic Year 2023-2024:	August 21, 2023 – April 26, 2024
Fall 2023:	August 21, 2023 – December 8, 2023
Spring 2024:	January 8, 2024 – April 26, 2024

Graduate Assistants of Bowling Green State University are expected to support and focus BGSU’s research/creative and instructional activities to serve the public interest and support the university’s commitment to the public good.

Bowling Green State University is a signatory to [the Council of Graduate Schools \(CGS\) Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellows, Trainees and Assistants](#) which states that students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support prior to April 15th. If the Graduate Assistantship contract offer is made prior to April 15th, BGSU requests that the decision to accept or decline the offer as soon as feasible. If contract offers are made after April 15th, BGSU requests that notification regarding acceptance be made to the department within **five (5)** business days. Failure to respond in a timely manner may result in the withdrawal of this contract offer.

Please note that some Graduate Assistants (GA) will be offered only an assistantship contract with a stipend for a GA position, while some graduate students will receive offers for both an assistantship contract and graduate student tuition scholarship (GSTS). Formal GSTS and assistantship notifications are sent separately.

Official final credentials must be submitted to the Graduate Admissions prior to the start of the admit term. Any incomplete credentials identified in a student’s letter of admission, including missing transcripts or missing official test scores for the TOEFL, must be completed prior to beginning the appointment. Students who fail to supply the required documents will have a registration hold placed on their accounts for any subsequent term of enrollment until they are received, and this may affect a student’s ability to qualify for financial aid, graduate assistantship contracts and/or any GSTS offers.

ASSISTANTSHIP ASSIGNMENT

The number of hours graduate assistants will work may be displayed in “full time equivalents” (or FTE) of a 40-hour work week on the contract. This translates to weekly hours according to the following formula:

Hours	FTE	Hours	FTE	Hours	FTE	Hours	FTE	Hours	FTE
1	0.025	5	0.125	9	0.225	13	0.325	17	0.425
2	0.050	6	0.150	10	0.250	14	0.350	18	0.450
3	0.075	7	0.175	11	0.275	15	0.375	19	0.475
4	0.100	8	0.200	12	0.300	16	0.400	20	0.500

¹ Questions should be directed to the Graduate College, (+1) 419.372.2791 or graduateoperatns@bgsu.edu

² Some circumstances require contracts to be written for special time periods. Please check your contract for specific dates.

All Graduate Assistants are expected to be available for work the weeks (class days) outlined in the academic calendar period matching their contract period.

Assistantship assignments may involve instruction (e.g., teaching a class under appropriate faculty supervision or teaching recitation or laboratory sections of lecture classes), instructional support (e.g., grading, preparation of laboratory activities, helping students in computer or writing laboratories, etc.), research (e.g., providing support for faculty research projects), applied research or creative activity, or residence hall supervision. Employing offices will determine specific assignment(s), and are responsible for supplying position descriptions specific to the employing office and supervising graduate assistant work. Position descriptions outlining the expectations of graduate assistant appointments are available on the Graduate College [website](#).

It is expected that Graduate Assistantship work is performed on the BGSU campus assigned (i.e. Main, Firelands, etc.), or the location as outlined by a sponsorship agreement. All GA's working in a location other than a BGSU campus must complete a Telecommute Form as directed on the [Graduate College website](#).

Graduate Assistants must be aware of University rules and regulations relating to their assistantship assignments, what is expected of them, and who is supervising their work. Evaluation is a crucial part of the Graduate Assistantship experience. It should be a supportive, constructive, and on-going process that helps identify strengths and weaknesses. Improvement plans should be developed as needed. The following should occur:

- The student must be provided a job description, given clear information on job expectations at the beginning of the employment period, and informed of how progress will be measured .
- An informal check-in should be conducted three weeks after the student's start date.
- A formal performance appraisal should be conducted at the end of the semester.

The formal performance appraisal process involves the student and the supervisor discussing a written evaluation. The appraisal should be constructive to help the student grow as a professional. Questions or problems concerning assignments should be resolved within the employing office whenever possible. Performance appraisals should be retained in the employing department for 5 (five) years in compliance with BGSU retention schedule [GS PER 02-2018](#)

A graduate assistant may be terminated for cause which may include, but not limited to:

- Failure to maintain good academic standing.
- Neglect of duties,
- Constant refusal to follow supervisor's advice/counsel,
- Failure to comply with assistantship obligations as set forth by department/program rules/sponsored research agreements,
- Personal conduct that violates code of conduct policy,
- Suspension or dismissal of a graduate student from the University due to disciplinary reasons.

If graduate assistant wages are disbursed in excess of the amount earned due to termination or contract error, students are responsible for returning the amount overpaid. BGSU Payroll will determine any amount due the University and lead communication(s) with the current or former graduate assistant.

Graduate Assistants may seek to appeal assistantship related concerns in coordination with the policy and procedures outlined in the [Graduate Appeal Policy](#).

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENT

The policy for [Enrollment and Registration](#) is the primary guidance for Graduate Assistant and graduate scholarship requirements. As is stated by the Graduate Assistant Guidelines of the Graduate College, graduate students who receive a GA stipend are expected to be registered as full time students during the terms of their appointment. Registration in undergraduate courses or classes graded as audit cannot be used to meet the minimum registration requirement. In the event there is a problem in meeting these registration requirements, students should contact the Graduate Coordinator of their academic program regarding potential exceptions. The Line College Associate Dean and the Graduate College Dean must approve all exceptions in writing.

Failure to register for classes at least 15 days prior to the first day of classes and maintain the minimum registration requirement throughout the semester could place the student in jeopardy of losing GA and/or GSTS awards, potentially inaccurate bursar bills and/or student health insurance enrollment.

DEGREE PROGRESS AND ACADEMIC STANDING

Graduate students must make satisfactory degree progress and maintain good academic standing as stated as defined by the [Academic Progress](#) policy. Failure to do so may result in the termination of a funding contract(s) by the Program, Line College or Dean of the Graduate College. Each term the graduate funding is contracted, the student must actively participate in their academic responsibilities pursuant to the educational mission of their degree program.

GRADUATE STUDENT ORIENTATION

Bowling Green State University's Graduate Student Orientation program is designed to acclimate new graduate students to campus resources in order to foster community engagement and ensure student success. Graduate Student Orientation provides initial professional development for students to ensure compliance with institutional policies as well as a successful start to their academic career. We typically offer the orientation experience both virtually and through on-campus experiences. All new graduate students are encouraged to participate.

All graduate assistants are expected to participate in Graduate Student Orientation. Notification of how to access the content and participate in Graduate Student Orientation will be sent via BGSU email.

ON-BOARDING PROCESS, BACKGROUND CHECK AND PAY SCHEDULE

All graduate assistantship contracts will be paid bi-weekly (every two weeks) based on the BGSU Payroll Office Payroll Schedule. Please reference the Graduate Assistant Pay Schedule available at <http://www.bgsu.edu/graduate/graduate-assistantships/graduate-assistant-and-tuition-scholarship-information.html>

The first paycheck may be delayed if the Graduate College does not receive the signed contract at least three weeks prior to the first day the assistantship is contracted to begin. Payroll processing cannot be done until Student Employment Services (SES) has received the following on-boarding paperwork:

- state and federal tax withholding forms,
- valid I-9 form (electronic) including the required documentation,
- SSA 1945 form,
- Ohio Fraud Notice and
- Student Employee Retirement form.

If a student does not have a Social Security Number, information will be available on how to apply for one. International students will be able to apply for a Social Security number 10 days after their arrival in the U.S.

On-boarding forms and instructions are available at https://www.bgsu.edu/student-employment-services/New_Hire_Paperwork.html. **Please bring copies of completed paperwork to the SES office at 225 Bowen Thompson Student Union.** If you have questions, please contact Student Employment Services at 419.372.2865 or graduateoperatns@bgsu.edu

International Students: Following the signing of the assistantship contract, BGSU International Programs & Partnerships (IPP) will mail an I-20 form via standard U.S. mail. All international students must complete the I-9 form and aforementioned on-boarding documents. Students will be notified of date and time of the International Student Orientation by IPP via BGSU email. Arriving students should visit IPP as soon as possible. An unexpired foreign passport, I-20 and I-94 will be required upon arrival to the International Program & Partnerships in 301 University Hall.

Domestic and International Students: Please bring the following documents to Student Employment Services:

I-9 – EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATION

Under the regulations of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, all employees of BGSU must verify employability with the University. *GA's will not be authorized to begin employment until verification is complete.* Completion of the I-9 form can begin prior to the first date of the assistantship by producing the required documents. *According to United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS), this process must be completed in person. Students must produce original documents for examination – faxed or photocopied documents are not acceptable.* A complete list of acceptable documents is available when completing the electronic I9 form.

The following on-boarding documents may be completed online from the [New Hire Paperwork](#) page:

DIRECT DEPOSIT

All Graduate Assistants are required to have their payroll checks directly deposited to their U.S. financial institution. The direct deposit may be made to a checking or savings account at any U.S. bank or credit union. Students new to the Bowling Green area that plan to open an account locally, should do this as soon as possible after arriving in Bowling Green.

FEDERAL, STATE, CITY, AND SCHOOL DISTRICT INCOME TAX

Graduate Assistants must complete Federal and Ohio State Income Tax withholding forms (W4 & IT-4). In addition, a Bowling Green City income tax of 2% is automatically deducted from

paychecks. Depending upon the Public School District of Residence of the documented address, students may also be required to pay a school district income tax.

OHIO PUBLIC EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM (OPERS)

All Graduate Assistants are subject to enrollment in the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS). However, students can choose to be exempt from OPERS on the condition they are enrolled at least half time (four graduate credit hours). If students elect to enroll in OPERS, or they are automatically enrolled because registration falls below four credit hours during any term of employment, BGSU will deduct 10% of a student's gross salary from the payroll check each bi-weekly payroll period. BGSU will contribute an additional 14% as its share towards the students retirement account. On-boarding includes the Student Employee Retirement form which automatically enrolls students in the OPERS system. This initial establishment of a retirement account with the state of Ohio may be changed to an exemption when the student receives an email from Ohio Public Employees Retirement System which will include a link and instruction on how to elect to exempt from membership to OPERS. By electing to exempt, the student agrees they meet the enrollment requirements stated above and are choosing to reject the establishment of a retirement account. Please refer to the on-boarding web page for additional information and links.

If a Graduate Assistant has previously paid into the Ohio State Teachers Retirement System (STRS), they may elect to continue contributions to STRS, *only if* the GA is employed as a BGSU Graduate Teaching Associate or Assistant. This option is only available to Graduate Assistants who have a record of prior contributions to STRS. Please contact the BGSU Payroll Office (payroll@bgsu.edu or 419.372.2201) directly for further information.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Graduate Assistants are required to authorize and pass a background investigation prior to the start of employment. Offers of employment are conditional until a background investigation has been successfully completed and all other pre-employment requirements are satisfied. The University reserves the right to determine and confirm suitability for employment and to end any employment already begun if the background check reveals disqualifying information.

International students whose visa was issued by the U.S. State Department in the Department of Homeland Security, or a student who has already completed a background investigation as part of their program's admissions process (within one year of their first contract start date), will not be required to undergo an additional background investigation.

Domestic and naturalized students signing their first assistantship contract will receive an e-mail notification from PreTrax, Inc. within five business days after signing their contract. PreTrax, Inc. is contracted by BGSU to conduct background investigations. Please complete the information requested and respond to PreTrax **within five business days**. Failure to complete the background investigation process will disqualify students from employment with Bowling Green State University. If a message from PreTrax has not been received within 5 business days, please be sure it was not filtered as junk mail/clutter.

Please note that a past criminal conviction identified during a background check **does not automatically cancel the contract offer**. Candidates will be given the opportunity to provide

additional information, to explain the nature and circumstances of the conviction, and to provide any evidence of rehabilitation. In determining suitability for employment, consideration will be given to these related factors:

- the specific duties of the graduate assistantship position
- the number of offenses and circumstances of each
- date of conviction
- whether the conviction rose out of employment

Students with concerns, or who would like to have a confidential discussion regarding a situation, should contact the Graduate College Office at BGSU (419) 372-2791 and request to speak to the Dean or Associate Dean of the Graduate College.

On-time distribution of a GA's first paycheck is contingent upon the receipt of a signed contract, completion of related on-boarding documents, and notification of a successful required background check.

CONTRACT RENEWAL

Graduate Assistant contracts are funded from a variety of sources within the University as well as grants and external funds. *Contract renewals are not guaranteed.* Renewals are subject to the continuing availability of funds, academic progress requirements, individual department standards, and guidelines regarding the number of years required to complete a degree in your field of study. Graduate Assistants should contact their Graduate Coordinator and/or assistantship supervisor to discuss department standards/guidelines for contract renewal. Graduate Assistant contracts supported by Graduate College funding are limited to two years for a master's degree and four years for a doctoral degree.

CONTRACT CANCELLATIONS/RESIGNATIONS

If for any reason a student must resign from the assistantship contract before its official termination date, it is their responsibility to personally notify the program's Graduate Coordinator and assistantship supervisor as to their final day of work. Late or delayed notifications of contract termination could result in an overpayment and require the student to reimburse the University for incorrect wage distribution.

ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Immigration and Customs Enforcement Service (ICE) limits international students with F-1 and J-1 visas to 20 hours work per week on campus while school is in session. During the break between fall and spring semesters, as well as the summer between spring and fall semesters, students with F-1 and J-1 visas may work up to 28 hours per week [C.F.R. 2(f)(9)(i)].

United States citizens, nationals, and lawful permanent residents of the U.S. are limited to 28 hours of work per week on campus. Student employees (including Graduate Assistants) are responsible for complying with the employment policies of BGSU and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

CLASSROOM TEACHING

Classroom teaching is a critical assistantship assignment. Graduate Assistants are not members of the faculty (as per the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the University and BGSU Faculty Association); thus, they are subject to faculty and/or department supervision in the conduct of their teaching. The following general guidelines are provided to prevent misunderstandings concerning the

role and responsibilities of Graduate Teaching Associates, or Graduate Assistants who are instructors of record. If you teach a course, your responsibilities are to:

- a) Conduct classes or otherwise assist in instruction in accordance with directions from the faculty member (supervisor) in charge of the course. In a multi-section course, adhere to the syllabus that has been established.
- b) Meet all assigned classes at approved or scheduled time, place and delivery mode(s). Secure approval, through your supervisor, for any changes.
- c) Inform the supervisor in advance and, through them, the Department Chair of any inability to meet a class. Emergency absences should be reported as promptly as possible.
- d) Give and grade quizzes, examinations, papers, etc. in a manner which meets with the approval of your supervisor.
- e) Confer with the supervisor concerning grading practices in the department and assign course grades accordingly. Review assigned grades with the supervisor prior to submitting them to the Registrar. Questions or challenges that cannot be resolved between the supervisor and graduate student are to be resolved at the departmental/school level.
- f) Report to the Department Chair, through the supervisor, any incidents involving cheating, intimidation, or other interference with a class.

PRODUCTS FROM RESEARCH STUDY

Pursuant to provisions of Sect. 3345.15 (Ohio Revised Code) and [University Patent Policy](#), all rights to any discovery/invention resulting from research or investigation conducted by Graduate Assistants/fellows shall be the exclusive property of Bowling Green State University. Under the [University Copyright Policy](#), academic works such as student papers, theses, or dissertations are the property of the student author(s).

Last Revised 1-13-23 by the Graduate College