

BGSU Graduate College
Graduate Assistant Guidelines 2023-2024

Graduate assistantships provide students with education and training opportunities that align with the educational mission of their degree programs. The appointment as a Graduate Assistant (GA) contributes to the graduate student's principal objective, which is to develop academically and earn a degree, while also providing financial support to assist in the completion of the academic program. The US Department of Labor defines the Graduate Assistant role as one that is primarily an *educational relationship and not an employment relationship with the school or with a grantor*. Graduate Assistantships include Research Assistant I (RAI), Research Assistant II (RAII), Teaching Associate (TI), Teaching Assistant (TA), or Housing Assistant (HA). See the end of this document for categorical position descriptions of the Graduate Assistantships.

Academic Standards for the Granting of Graduate Assistantship Positions

1. Students must have earned **regular admission** status in a graduate degree program to receive a Graduate Assistant (GA) position. A student who has been conditionally admitted is not eligible for a graduate assistantship or graduate student tuition scholarship (GSTS) until regular status has been achieved, unless an exception has been requested by the academic program and approved by the Graduate College.
2. Students awarded a GA position of 11 – 20 hours must be enrolled **full-time** during the academic year (minimum of 8 credit hours per term).
3. Students awarded a GA position of 1 – 10 hours must be enrolled at least **half-time** during the academic year (minimum of 4 credits hours per term**).
4. Approved exceptions to #2 and #3 above may permit:
 - a. a **master's degree student** to fall to less than full-time status (<8 credits) and be eligible for a GA position for 11 – 20 hours after completing one year of full time enrollment (or 16 credit hours) of the degree program*
 - b. a **doctoral student** to fall to less than full-time status and be eligible for a GA position for 11 – 20 hours after completing two years of full time enrollment (or 32 credit hours) of the degree program.*
5. Students awarded a graduate assistantship in the **summer** must register for a minimum of 4 credit hours during the summer term.**
6. Students may lose their graduate assistantship and/or GSTS if they do not maintain good academic standing as defined by the Graduate College and their academic program.

**Note: Exceptions to these guidelines must be approved by the Line Associate Dean and Dean of the Graduate College (or Dean's designate).*

***Possible implications exist for [OPERS](#) and [financial aid loans](#) (See Enrollment/Academic Status) when falling below 4 credit hours.*

Communication with Students

Communicating with students during the offer process is vital.

- Programs are expected to use the [Initial Offer](#) funding template and send it to first time funded students as an offer before submitting the contract. These templates should be saved in the department in case there is any confusion about the offer from the student.
- Students should be informed regarding expectations for reappointment (i.e., future funding).
 - Time limits of funding should be determined (i.e., one semester, one year)
 - Policies regarding student eligibility for reappointment should be provided. (i.e., [Academic Progress](#))
 - A student's funding is limited to the annual contractual agreement.
 - Reappointment is regulated by policies and resources.
- Programs are expected to provide a job description to the student by the first day of their assistantship. These should contain tasks that are more specific than the generic job descriptions provided at the end of this document.

After a contract expires, reappointment may be available. Reappointment is contingent upon time limit of support, satisfactory progress toward completion of the degree, available resources and satisfactory performance of duties. If a graduate assistant is not to be reappointed, they will be given written notice about the non-reappointment and of the reasons (see previous sentence) therefore. Notices of non-reappointment and of reappointment will be given to students no later than the last day of the semester in which the current contract is active.

Graduate Assistant Compensation and Graduate Student Tuition Scholarship (GSTS) Definitions and Policies

1. **Assistantship Stipend:** A stipend is the remuneration given to a Graduate Assistant for service provided in that position.
2. **Scholarship/GSTS:** GSTS are given for instructional fees and/or for non-resident fees.
 - Instructional Fee Scholarship may only be used to pay for instructional fees.
 - Non-Resident Fee Scholarship may only be used to pay for non-resident fees. You can see if you were awarded a non-resident fee scholarship in the financial aid section of MyBGSU.

A GSTS is awarded separately from any assistantship position, and may never be used as compensation for services

- GSTS funds can only be used towards graduate credit hours that satisfy requirements for a degree.
 - A GSTS may be awarded for up to 12 credit hours per semester. Students may take between 12 and 18 credit hours at the 12 credit hour rate. See the [Cost of Attendance webpage](#) for additional information.
 - GSTS funds cannot be used for repeated course(s) due to academic progress or grade replacement.
3. **Non-Resident Assistance:** Depending on GSTS availability within individual programs, students who are not Ohio residents are eligible for one year of GSTS assistance to cover non-resident fees. Students will see this denoted as Non-Resident Fee in the financial aid section of MyBGSU. However, Graduate College allocation budgets may not be used to pay

for out-of-state tuition beyond one year (except for international students and at the discretion of the program). It is the **student's responsibility** to follow all state policies for residency requirements. See [Ohio Residency Application Instructions](#).

4. **General Fees:** A GSTS does not cover any student fees. If the terms of a grant or cost-sharing agreement require the inclusion of fees within the scholarship, this must be pre-approved, in writing, with the signature of the line/reporting dean.
5. **Time Limits of Support:** The degree program awards financial assistance in the form of GSTS and/or assistantship annually. Renewal is not guaranteed, and financial support contains duration limits based on the degree type.
 - Master's students are limited to two years (24 consecutive months) unless the student is working on a Graduate College approved dual masters. For approved dual master's, or a second master's degree, the financial support maximum is 3 years (36 consecutive months). Exception requests must be provided in writing by the program coordinator with support from department chair/school director, and approval required by the line/reporting dean and a Graduate College designate.
 - Doctoral students may be awarded financial assistance in the form of GSTS and/or assistantship for no more than four years. Exception requests must be provided in writing by the program coordinator with support from department chair/school director, and approval required by the line/reporting dean and a Graduate College designate.
6. **CGS GA Resolution:** Prospective Graduate Assistants are subject to the Council of Graduate Schools Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellows, Trainees, and Assistants. BGSU is a member institution supporting [this resolution](#).

Graduate Assistant Position Contracting Policies and Procedures: (Stipends)

A Graduate Assistant may have one of the following designations per contract: Research (I or II), Teaching Assistant, Teaching Associate, or Housing. Students may have multiple GA contracts with different designations. Students with the same designation, within the same program, and at the same degree (masters or doctorate) will be paid in the same assistantship compensation level. Students funded by an external agency may be compensated at a different rate than the program stipend level as agreed upon in writing by said agency and BGSU. Some departments may choose to award assistantships at *reduced hours* (e.g., 15 or 10 hours per week). Students on multiple contracts may not work for more than a total of 20 hours per week on their GA assignments. Students and their supervisors should also read the [Statement of Understanding](#) using the link that accompanies the GA contract for all guidelines and procedures affiliated with a GA stipend contract. Program coordinators should share this information with any GA supervisor employed in a different department or external agency.

1. **Position Description:** All students must be provided with a position description for each assistantship prior to work.
2. **Contract Hours:** All Graduate Assistants are expected to be available for work the weeks (class days) outlined in the academic calendar period matching their contract period. Exceptions to this must be

agreed upon between supervisor and GA in advance of the schedule modification. No student will be contracted for more than 20 hours per week.¹

3. **Background Checks:** Students being offered a graduate assistantship must undergo a background check prior to hire. For more information, see <https://www.bgsu.edu/graduate/graduate-assistantships/background-checks.html>.
4. **Cleared to Work:** Students MUST have a signed contract and be authorized (cleared) to work by *Student Employment Services* before beginning work.
5. **Graduate Assistantship Performance Appraisal:**
 - a. 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 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](#)

6. **Maintenance of Graduate Assistantship:**

Students who resign from their GA position or who are removed from the graduate assistantship for cause or lack of academic progress be subject to having their stipends and/or GSTS cancelled under the direction of either the graduate program or Graduate College.

Termination of an assistantship:

A student may be terminated for cause, including, but not limited to:

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

Note: Contrary to Graduate Assistants, *Graduate Student Employees* (GSE) perform duties on campus that are not necessarily directly aligned with the educational mission of their degree. As employees, these students are hired through the Office of Student Employment Services and are subject to policies outlined in the

¹ Graduate Student Senate elected officials who receive an extra stipend for their service may be compensated for up to 24 hours per week. International GSS elected officials must maintain a maximum of 20 hours per week per Department of Homeland Security regulations.

Student Employment Handbook. Offices hiring these student employees may not use Graduate College allocations for these positions.

Graduate Assistant Categorical Position Descriptions

All Graduate Assistant positions will fall under one of the following categories. Depending on the type of assistantship, students may also receive a more detailed position description, specific to the nature of the individual position.

Research Assistant I

Research Assistants I (RAI) perform research that is related to the student's field of study. Some portion of the hours spent on research is attributable as university work, but those research responsibilities are related to their academic program. The research responsibilities performed are under the direct supervision of and collaboration with faculty. Depending on the discipline or field, the research experience could take place in: laboratories, field based settings, clinical locations, or other academic environments necessary to the research methodology. Duties vary by discipline and program, but generally include: experimentation; data collection, entry and analysis; literature searches; manuscript assistance; attendance at conferences to present results; and training and supervising less experienced research personnel.

Research Assistant II

Research Assistants II (RAII) participate in applied research and creative activities that are related to the student's field of study. The hours spent on applied conceptualization of their field is attributable as university work, but still related to their academic program. This applied experience is performed under the direct supervision of either faculty or university professionals working in the student's field of interest. Depending on the discipline or field, the professional experience could take place in: laboratories, field based settings, clinical locations, or other university environments necessary to the application of the field of interest. Duties vary by discipline and program, but could include: field based learning derived from interactions with clients, professionals, students, and other participants; data organization; and training and supervising less experienced personnel.

Teaching Assistant (TA)

Teaching Assistants are assigned to one or more faculty to assist them with instructional responsibilities for a course that is related to their field of study. The faculty for whom they are assisting provide oversight of the course and take on a supervisory role. Teaching Assistant responsibilities vary by discipline and program, but normally include one or all of the following: grading assignments and examinations; administering/proctoring tests or exams; maintaining the online class management system (e.g., Canvas); and collecting and organizing class records and data.

Teaching Associate (TI)

The primary responsibility of a Teaching Associate is that of an instructor (thus the "I" in TI). The form of instruction may include any of the following: the sole instructor of record for a section of a class; leader of discussion or recitation section of a course; or supervisor of instruction and tutoring in a lab. Without these individuals, the course, discussion group, or lab could not be held. While Teaching Associates are supervised by a faculty member or academic administrator, their primary responsibility is to carry out their own teaching,

guidance, and tutoring with students and not assist faculty with their teaching. Teaching assignments must be in or closely aligned with the TI's field of study.

Housing Associate (HA)

Housing Associates are live-in staff members for the Office of Residence Life who assist in the daily operation of an undergraduate residence hall. Specific duties include but are not limited to: the hiring, supervising, advising, training, and evaluating of Resident Advisor (RA) staff. They also co-supervise the Student Desk Manager. Housing Associates are generally responsible for developing a well-rounded community within the residence facility, focused on academic success, safety and security, inclusivity, personal growth, and engagement. Within this position, they counsel students and respond to crisis situations that may occur in the residence hall; conduct meetings with students who have violated the Code of Student Conduct; and assign sanction or refer to the university-level conduct system.