

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP

A graduate assistant is defined as any graduate student appointed to provide the department with teaching, research, technical, or administrative assistance.

Application Procedures

The graduate student who wishes to be considered for a graduate assistantship in the department should complete the required department application form. All applications are considered for available assistantships. Applicants must have all required enrollment documents submitted by the deadline to be considered for available assistantships.

Appointment Procedures

At some time in the middle of February, the graduate faculty of the department begins to consider the completed applicant files for assistantships. The faculty ranks applicants in order of preference, and the Departmental Chairperson immediately attempts to secure informal commitments from applicants chosen. When the Departmental Chairperson notifies applicants of their appointment in writing, he or she will include an informal contract that the applicant should sign and return to the Chairperson. This contract is not legally binding; it is a letter intended to make a moral commitment between the applicant and the department. The official letter offer of any position must come from the Office of the President.

All first-time GTAs must attend a teaching assistant orientation in August. This orientation is sponsored by the University of Oklahoma Instructional Development Program and is called the All-TA Orientation Program. International GTAs must attend a program called the International TA Orientation Program. Call (405) 325-2323 for more information about these programs.

Stipends For Graduate Assistants

Salaries are paid to graduate assistants in monthly checks, to which standard deductions apply. Graduate assistants with a 0.50 FTE who are classified as out-of-state will be awarded a nonresident fee waiver for up to nine hours. Seven hours of resident tuition will also be waived for resident and nonresident graduate assistants during the fall and spring semesters. Non-resident spring and summer graduate assistants will be eligible for up to 4 hours of nonresident tuition waived for summer. There is no resident tuition waiver for summer. **The graduate assistant must be enrolled in a minimum of six hours to receive these waivers. The graduate assistant is responsible for all fees.** Graduate assistants with summer appointments are not required to enroll for the summer. Arrangements for medical insurance, social security, income tax deductions, and any other available benefits should be made in the University of Oklahoma's Human Resource division.

Workload For Graduate Assistants

As one of the primary purposes of becoming a graduate assistant is to aid the student in the successful completion of a graduate program, graduate assistants may not be appointed for more than one-half (0.5 FTE) employment without special permission of the Graduate Dean. The department must submit written justification for all appointments greater than 0.5 FTE. In most cases, graduate assistants in the Department of Communication are assigned to teach two sections of a lower-division course in communication.

A 0.5 FTE graduate teaching assistantship normally involves 20 hours per week. This includes time spent in the classroom, preparations, and office hours. In general, it is expected that three office hours per week be scheduled for each course taught. Thus, 0.5 FTE GTAs will generally hold six office hours per week.

A syllabus covering the content of certain courses is issued to all instructors at the beginning of the semester. The director of the large section courses (COMM 1113 & COMM 2613) also holds regular meetings to facilitate coordination and quality control of the course. Any GTA assigned to teach a course will be under the supervision of a faculty member. That faculty member must approve syllabi and selection of texts.

Other duties may be assigned in lieu of teaching. Research assistants' nonteaching duties should occupy approximately 20 hours per week for a 0.5 FTE nonteaching assistantship. Note that *the Department of Communication will not adjust to a schedule of convenience for the student whose outside commitments conflict with university and department schedules.*

The primary responsibility of the GTA is to the University of Oklahoma Department of Communication. If anything interferes with this primary responsibility, his or her assistantship can be terminated. ***Any outside employment is strongly discouraged.*** If performance issues arise, then a person's assistantship will not be renewed.

Enrollment Load For Assistants

The graduate assistant's academic course load for each term should ensure that he or she is making satisfactory progress toward the degree. However, the minimum enrollment for fall and spring semesters is six hours. Exceptions to this regulation are very rare and must be approved by the Graduate College Dean.

Termination of Graduate Assistants

Graduate students can have no more than 3 incompletes (or 9 hours of "I") in order to retain a graduate teaching assistantship and to attain a satisfactory annual performance rating. Once a student has a 3rd incomplete, they have one semester to remove this incomplete or else jeopardize their annual performance rating and graduate teaching assistantship.

If the performance of duties by the graduate assistant does not meet the requirements of the assignment, the Departmental Chairperson, course coordinator, or project director will advise the assistant both orally and in writing. An attempt to work with the graduate assistant in improving his or her performance will be made before the department begins action toward termination. When grounds for termination exist prior to the end of the contract period, notice will be given in writing to the graduate assistant, and a copy of the notice will be sent to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, the Dean of the Graduate School, and the Provost. Procedures for termination are outlined in the university's *Graduate Student Handbook*.

Maximum Number of Appointments to Assistantship

A graduate assistant working toward a Master's degree may not be appointed to an assistantship for more than the number of semesters required to complete the degree, up to, but not to exceed, two years. Students working toward the Ph.D. may not be appointed to an assistantship in the department for more than the number of semesters required to complete the degree, up to, but not to exceed, four years. A graduate student completing both the Master's and Ph.D. degrees in the department is limited to five years of appointment.

English Proficiency For International Graduate Assistants

International students for whom English is a second language must demonstrate oral and written English proficiency before they can be awarded an assistantship involving instruction. This is both a university and state of Oklahoma requirement. Assessment is provided through the Center for English as a Second Language. To qualify for a teaching assistantship, the student must pass a three-part testing sequence at the "instructor" level. Fees for the written exam and the "Speak Test" are charged. **If this affects you, please contact Kristi at 325-3112.** All fees should be paid at OCCE Central Registration.