

The Graduate School

How to Hire a Graduate Assistant



Graduate students appointed as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA), Graduate Research Assistant (GRA), or Graduate Assistant (GA) are a distinct class of University employees. Not only are assistantship appointments governed by policies outlined in the [University Catalog](#), but they are also subject to compliance with many state and federal laws. This guide will help you through the process of hiring a graduate assistant. As you navigate this process, please direct any questions you may have to the Graduate School or the Office of Human Resources.

As is the case for all University employees, a graduate student appointed as a GTA/GRA/GA must not be permitted or required to work prior to final approval of the Personnel Action Form and completion of all necessary hiring paperwork with the Office of Human Resources.

1. Determine whether you have the funding and authority to hire a graduate assistant.

A graduate student should never be offered a graduate assistantship unless you have both the funding source established and the authorization to make such an offer.

An “assistantship” contains two parts: a stipend and a tuition/fee waiver.

Stipends

The University has set minimum stipend levels depending on the degree level of the graduate student you want to hire. For a master’s-level assistantship, you must be able to pay an academic year stipend of \$9,500 (or \$950 per month for 10 months). For a doctoral-level assistantship, you must be able to pay an academic year stipend of \$15,000 (or \$1,500 per month for 10 months).

Stipend amounts may exceed these minimum levels if funding is available and approved.

The minimum stipend levels above were made effective by the University in 2015-2016 (for the doctoral level) and 2016-2017 (for the master’s level). The only instances in which approval of a stipend level below these University minimums will be approved are for grants awarded with budgets created prior to these effective dates.

Tuition/Fee Waivers

The cost of the tuition/fee waiver is determined each academic year. Contact the Graduate School for the most current figures.

In instances approved by the Dean of the Graduate School, a tuition/fee-waiver-only assistantship (with no stipend) may be considered. Such appointments are limited to 10 service hours per week and all eligibility and enrollment requirements set forth in the University Catalog for graduate assistants (available [here](#)) must be met.

You are encouraged to discuss with your supervisor, the Graduate Coordinator for the graduate program in which you teach, and/or SPFAC (if a researcher with a grant project) to determine whether you have both the funds and the authority to hire a graduate assistant.

NOTE: If hiring a graduate student during the academic year with only a stipend (or hourly wage, non-college work-study) and no tuition waiver, please contact the Office of Human Resources for procedures for hiring a “Student Worker.”

2. Determine the type of graduate assistant you want to hire and the duties to be performed.

Graduate assistants are now hired/appointed in one of the following categories:

Graduate Teaching Assistants are salaried student employees (as determined by Human Resources) who receive a tuition waiver and whose job duties consist primarily of direct involvement in classroom or laboratory instruction. The duties are performed under the supervision of faculty. The University also requires that a GTA's teaching assignment be in his/her own field of study or one that is closely related. Out-of-field appointments require consultation with the student's graduate program and the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School.

Graduate Research Assistants are salaried student employees (as determined by Human Resources) who receive a tuition waiver and whose job duties consist of performing research that is in their fields (or a closely related field) of study and is integral to the student's education. The duties performed are under the direct supervision of faculty or research professionals. The primary duties do not involve classroom instruction. Beyond approval of the Dean of the Graduate School, GRA appointments must be approved by Sponsored Programs Finance Administration and Compliance (for all research/sponsored-program-funded positions) or the Office of Finance and Administration (for state- or foundation/endowment-funded positions).

Graduate Assistants are salaried student employees (as determined by Human Resources) who receive a tuition waiver and hold a position that furthers the professional and/or academic development of the student. The duties performed are professional in nature (primary duties must be the performance of work requiring advanced knowledge, defined as work that is predominantly intellectual in character and that includes work requiring the consistent exercise of discretion and judgment) and they are performed under the direct supervision of faculty, academic professionals, or administrators. The primary duties do not involve classroom instruction or research integral to the student's academic degree program, thesis, or dissertation. [Note: Graduate Assistant positions are a distinct category of graduate student support. This category does not include Graduate Research Assistants or Graduate Teaching Assistants.]

Duties and responsibilities of a GTA/GRA/GA are specified by the department, faculty/researcher, or administrative unit to which the student is assigned.

3. Determine who you want to hire and ensure that he/she is eligible to hold a graduate assistantship.

If you are hiring a GRA or GA, you are encouraged to post your graduate assistantship announcement on the "Job Listing Services" provided by the Office of Career Services. You may also want to contact Graduate Coordinators in your search for the right student; the Graduate School can assist you with contacting these faculty members.

To qualify for an assistantship, a graduate student must be admitted in regular admission status to a master's or doctoral graduate degree program. Students admitted solely to a Graduate Certificate program are not eligible.

Students in conditional status or those who have been declared "ineligible" are not qualified for appointment as a GTA/GRA/GA. Exceptions to this rule may be granted through appeal to the Graduate Student Appeals Committee. Go [here](#) for information on how to initiate an appeal to offer an assistantship to a student in conditional status.

Appointment as a GTA requires that the student possess English proficiency. For more information on English proficiency requirements, go [here](#) (see point "E").

4. Prepare an offer letter, make the offer, and get an acceptance from the student.

Students must be provided an official offer letter, informing them of the type of award (i.e., graduate teaching assistantship, graduate research assistantship, graduate assistantship, or fellowship), the offer period, the hours per week expected, and the assistantship duties as well as the amount of the stipend, terms for payment, and/or any other tuition/fee benefits.

All offer letters must be made using the standardized templates provided by the Graduate School, and approved by the Office of Human Resources, available [here](#).

You will submit a copy of this offer letter and the student's acceptance with your Personnel Action Form (PAF).

5. Request appointment by completing the Personnel Action Form and routing it for necessary approvals.

Assistantship appointments are to be made at the outset of each academic year, or semester if not an academic year appointment, using the Office of Human Resources Personnel Action Form (PAF). **Please remember, if appointing a student for the first time as a GTA/GRA/GA, to attach a copy of the offer letter and the student's acceptance.**

To complete the PAF form, refer to the PAF Instruction Sheet available [here](#). Beyond the instructions provided by the Office of Human Resources, below are specific instructions that pertain only to the hiring of graduate assistants.

"CLID/SSN"	Do <u>not</u> put a student's SSN or "pending" in this field. Rather, provide the Student's ULID.
"Birthdate"	If you do not know the student's birthdate, please leave blank with a note for the Graduate School to provide.
"Job Title"	Identify as one of the following: Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA), Graduate Research Assistant (GRA), Graduate Assistant (GA), Doctoral Fellow, or Master's Fellow. <i>NOTE: If you are trying to hire a graduate student during the academic year with an hourly wage (non-college work-study) and no tuition waiver, you are hiring a "Student Worker." Contact the Office of Human Resources for procedures for hiring a "Student Worker" as this kind of hire would not be a GTA/GRA/GA hire.</i>
"Proposed Effective Date"	Unless hiring after the semester has already begun, this date should be the first day of the semester (<u>not</u> the first day of classes). If this is a late appointment, designate a start date that allows ample time for routing and approvals. A GTA/GRA/GA shall never be allowed to start working prior to approval of the PAF. If cancelling the appointment, indicate here the last date that the GTA/GRA/GA worked and/or the last date for which he/she should be paid.
"Supervisor"	If hiring is being done by a graduate program, please identify the Graduate Coordinator as the supervisor. In all other instances, please identify the supervising faculty, researcher, academic professional, or administrator.
"Assigned Department"	This should be the department code where the GTA/GRA/GA is assigned to physically work, not necessarily the budget account being charged.

“New Position”

If “no,” you do not need to identify the GTA/GRA/GA who last held the assistantship.

“Action to be taken”

New Hire/Continue Appointment:

Select “new hire” or “continue appointment” (if the GTA/GRA/GA has been appointed by you in this position in a previous semester).

Next, check the box that corresponds with the appropriate designation/employment type—Graduate Teaching Assistant, Graduate Research Assistant, or Graduate Assistant—as defined above. If being awarded a “tuition-waiver-only assistantship,” select “Tuition Waiver Only” here.

NOTE: The box “Student Worker (Hourly)” should never be selected if hiring a GTA/GRA/GA. Contact the Office of Human Resources for procedures for hiring a graduate student as an hourly, non-college work study student worker.

Appointment Period:

If being awarded an assistantship for the academic year, select both Fall Semester and Spring semester. You may also select an individual semester. Appointments for Summer session or any of the break periods must be made with a new PAF.

of hours working per week:

An assistantship appointment is limited to 20 service hours per week or generally the equivalent of teaching two lower-division lecture classes.

A “tuition-waiver-only assistantship” is limited to 10 service hours per week or generally the equivalent of teaching one lower-division lecture course.

For Summer session and/or semester break appointments especially, remember that international students who are appointed as a GTA/GRA/GA must abide by work restrictions and remain in compliance with regulations set by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. For more information, see the policies governing international graduate assistant work [here](#).

Cancellation of Appointment:

If cancelling the assistantship, select “Termination/Agency Transfer Out/Cancel Appointment.” Then select “Cancellation of Appointment.” This action should be done only if a GTA/GRA/GA resigns or is discharged prior to end of the semester identified on the original PAF as the end of the appointment term.

If a graduate student changes assistantships, the first appointment must be cancelled (via the submission of a revised PAF cancelling the appointment by the original hiring authority) and the new appointment must be made (via another PAF making the new hire, accompanied by the new offer letter and acceptance).

Teaching Workload (for GTAs who are the “Instructor of Record” ONLY):

If appointing a GTA who will be the “Instructor of Record,” complete this section by providing the course number(s) and credit hours for the courses being taught (or, in the instance in which you do not know yet what course(s), list the likely course(s) to be taught).

“Comments/Justification”

Indicate here any special instructions or clarification needed including, for example, if there are multiple accounts to which the stipend should be charged

or if this is a tuition-waiver-only assistantship award. Completion of this section is mandatory if providing supplemental pay or changing the pay rate. If appointing a GTA who will be an “Instructor of Record,” please state that intention here.

“Pay Rate”

Indicate a pay rate that meets the University minimum stipend levels above. GTA/GRA/GAs are paid by monthly stipend. Only during the Summer session, with justification provided, will a GTA/GRA/GA appointment be approved with an hourly pay rate.

“Funding Source”

If awarded/funded by the Graduate School, the appropriate Operating Budget Account is 2702 and corresponding Tuition Waiver Account is 2704.

If awarded/funded by the Vice President for Finance and Administration, the appropriate Operating Budget Account is 2703 and corresponding Tuition Waiver Account is 2706.

In all other instances, a Restricted Account number or G Account must be provided indicating the appropriate funding source.

“Tenure Probationary Period” Not applicable to assistantship appointments.

“Educational Degrees”

Not applicable to GRA/GA appointments. Only applicable to GTA appointments if the GTA is the “Instructor of Record” for the course(s). For GTAs who are the “Instructor of Record,” provide the degree, date, university, and major area.

Approvals: Who needs to sign off on my PAF for a GTA/GRA/GA hire?

The answer to that question largely depends on your funding source. See the routing approval chart below. If in doubt about approvals and/or routing, call the Graduate School at 482-6965.

IMPORTANT! Not following the routing/approval process identified below, which may not be the “routing order” on the PAF, will delay approval of your PAF.

If awarded/funded by the Graduate School as an “academic department” assistantship, the PAF must be approved by the following:	If awarded/funded by a R Account or G Account , the PAF must be approved by the following:	If awarded/funded by the Vice President for Administration and Finance as a “non-academic department” assistantship, the PAF must be approved by the following:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The PAF is completed and signed by the Graduate Coordinator or other appropriate individual representing the academic unit to whom the assistantship budget was awarded. If a “new” hire, the offer letter is attached. 2. Department Head (Required for the College of ENGR only.) 3. Dean of the Graduate School 4. Faculty Affairs (Required only for GTA “Instructor of Record” appointments.) Upon approval, Faculty Affairs returns to the Graduate School. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The PAF is completed and signed by the faculty/researcher/PI. If a “new” hire, the offer letter is attached. 2. Department Head/Director 3. Academic Dean 4. Budgetary Authority (SPFAC for R Accounts/VP Administration and Finance for G Accounts) 5. Vice President for Research (Required for Research Centers only.) 6. Dean of the Graduate School (for eligibility/registration clearance and receipt of offer letter only) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The PAF is completed and signed by the appropriate individual representing the non-academic unit to which the assistantship position was awarded. If a “new” hire, the offer letter is attached. 2. Department Head/Director, if applicable 3. Academic Dean, if applicable 4. Vice President (if different from the VP for Administration/Finance) 5. Dean of the Graduate School (for eligibility/registration clearance and receipt of offer letter only)

<p>5. The Graduate School notifies Business Services of tuition waivers.</p> <p>6. Human Resources will route the approved PAF to Payroll and the individual who submitted the PAF. All original PAFs are returned to the Graduate School.</p>	<p>7. The Graduate School notifies Business Services of tuition waiver.</p> <p>8. Human Resources will route approved PAF to Payroll and the individual who submitted the PAF. All original PAFs are returned to the Graduate School.</p>	<p>6. The Graduate School notifies Business Services of tuition waiver.</p> <p>6. Vice President for Administration and Finance</p> <p>7. Human Resources will route approved PAF to the VP Administration/Finance Office, Payroll and the individual who submitted the PAF. All original PAFs are returned to the Graduate School.</p>
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What does the Graduate School review before approving a PAF for a GTA/GRA/GA?

The Graduate School checks the budget and pay rate if the assistantship is being funded by a Graduate School funding source. For all PAFs, the Graduate School ensures only that the stipend offered meets the University minimum stipend levels.

Beyond the budget, the Graduate School also ensures that the student being appointed has been accepted by either a master’s or doctoral degree program in “regular admission status,” if he/she is still in good standing (i.e., has not become ineligible to continue due to grades of C, D, or F or has dropped below a 3.0 GPA), and if he/she is registered as a full-time student with at least 9 hours (or 6 hours in the Summer session) applicable to the graduate degree sought.

Although assistantships are generally awarded for the academic year and the PAF may appoint a GTA/GRA/GA for both the Fall and Spring semesters, these appointments are reviewed at the beginning and end of each semester by the Graduate School to confirm that eligibility and enrollment requirements are being satisfied.

Finally, the Graduate School (along with Payroll) checks to ensure that a graduate student has not already been hired in another capacity on campus. Any graduate student appointed as a GTA/GRA/GA may not receive payment for other on-campus employment without proper approvals. Should an exception be granted to this rule, the totality of this employment cannot exceed 25 hours per week during the academic year.

What tends to hold up approval of a PAF for a GTA/GRA/GA hire?

The following list offers the most common reasons for delay in the approval of PAFs for a GTA/GRA/GA appointment.

- If the student being appointed has not been accepted as a graduate student, the PAF will not be approved.
- If the student being appointed is in conditional status or has been declared academically ineligible, the PAF cannot be approved until an appeal is submitted to the Graduate Student Appeals Committee and the committee has granted the appeal.
- If the student being appointed is not registered as a full-time student in at least 9 hours (or 6 hours in the Summer session) applicable toward the degree being sought, the PAF will be held by the Graduate School until this registration requirement is met.
- If the PAF isn’t properly routed for all required approvals, there will be delay.
- If the PAF does not include a copy of the offer letter and student’s acceptance, there will be delay.

If you are still unsure why you have not received the approved PAF, inquire with the Graduate School by calling 482-6965 or emailing GradSchool@Louisiana.edu. At the very least, we can tell you if the PAF has made it to the Graduate School.

6. Get final approval and get the GTA/GRA/GA started!

Upon approval by the Dean of the Graduate School (or the Vice President for Administration and Finance for non-academic department assistantships), the PAF is forwarded to the Office of Human Resources for distribution. You—along with Business Services and Payroll—will receive notification that the PAF has been approved. Original PAFs are returned to the Graduate School.

If the student has completed all Human Resources hiring paperwork (generally completed at the Graduate School Orientation), he/she may begin working as a GTA/GRA/GA at that time.