Graduate Assistantships

Office of Student Financial Planning
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Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to define the types of available graduate assistantships and state the approved academic and financial policies and procedures that govern those assistantships.

DEFINITIONS AND CONDITIONS

The University recognizes student employment as an assistantship only under the definitions, conditions and categories below. Student employment outside these parameters will not be deemed assistantships.

Eligibility

Only students fully admitted to degree seeking status in a graduate program are eligible to receive a graduate assistantship. Such students will remain eligible for an assistantship as long as they maintain a 3.0 grade point average in their graduate programs, are enrolled in the appropriate number of credit hours according to their assistantship contract, and remain a student in good standing at the University. Graduate Assistants who become ineligible will be removed from their assistantships.

Types of Graduate Assistantships

Teaching Assistantship

Teaching Assistantships require the student to participate directly in the teaching of a course or be assigned to specific teaching support or related activities. It is expected that the assistantship will be a learning experience that contributes to completion of degree requirements and helps the student prepare for a professional academic career.

Research Assistantships

Research Assistantships require the student to participate in research as directed by the principal investigator of a research project. It is expected that the appointment is primarily a learning experience in how to conduct research and helps the student prepare for an academic or non-academic career.

Administrative Graduate Assistantships

Administrative Graduate Assistantships require the student to participate in the administration or service activities of the appointing department. It is expected that the appointment is primarily a learning experience and helps the student prepare for a professional career. The administrative graduate assistant should be given the opportunity to learn the functions of the office, as well as educational management procedures. It is not expected that such an appointment be made solely to provide routine student clerical support.
Athletic Graduate Assistantships

Athletic Graduate Assistantships require the student to participate in all athletic activities as directed by the Director of Athletics which may include coaching. It is expected that the appointment is primarily a learning experience and helps the student prepare for an academic or non-academic career in the athletic field.

Athletic Trainer Graduate Assistantships

Athletic Trainer Graduate Assistantships require the student to assist the Alvernia University Sports Medicine team with athletic training room, practice and game coverage for various club and varsity sports. They must be certified athletic trainers or eligible to sit for the BOC exam.

Graduate Assistantship Workload/Course Load/Tuition Remission

- **Workload** – all graduate assistantships are considered full-time and are based on a workload of 20 hours per week for which the student receives an hourly wage.

- **Course Load** - For the duration of this assistantship (except in summer) master’s level graduate students are required to take 9 credit hours each contracted semester, and Ph.D. level graduate students are required to take 6 credit hours each contracted semester. **Also, due to the nature of graduate course work, exceeding the required amount of credit hours is not permitted. Exceptions to taking less credit hours than the required amount will only be made in the student’s last contracted semester before graduation.**

- **Tuition Remission** – 100% tuition remission for graduate assistantships based on the required course load above. All fees (comprehensive fees, technology fees, etc.) and required books must still be paid by the student.

Length of Contract

The length of contract is the period of time during which a graduate assistantship is required to work. Assistantship contracts are per semester and may last for one year from the date of hire depending upon departmental needs.

Directed Study/Independent Study and Courses outside Program Curriculum:

Graduate Assistants may not request a directed study or independent study or take a course outside their program curriculum in order to meet the enrollment requirements of their assistantship contract. Instead, Graduate Assistants are expected to be dutiful in making sure they are taking the appropriate steps to ensure continued enrollment eligibility as defined in their contract.

Administration of the Assistantship

Graduate assistants are under the direct supervision of the department which offers the appointment. The department determines the assignment, supervises work, and recommends reappointment. It is the primary source of information concerning details of the assistantship. Within the department,
the graduate assistant's duties are determined by the immediate supervisor or department chair. Each department is responsible for outlining its own specific criteria for the graduate assistant's duties within the limits of University policy, and is also charged with communicating such criteria to the graduate assistant. In general, satisfactory progress toward degree completion coupled with a dutiful discharge of responsibilities are major considerations when the time comes for evaluating a graduate assistant's performance.

**Other Employment**

Graduate assistants are not permitted to hold another compensated position on campus.

Graduate students are expected to devote all of their time to their assistantship and to their studies. Although it is expected that the combined responsibilities of graduate student and graduate assistant will occupy all the time available to a student during the academic year, the University does not prohibit outside employment by graduate assistants in addition to their University appointment. It is up to the graduate assistant to determine how much time, if any, they may devote to additional activities and still maintain satisfactory progress toward degree completion and satisfactory fulfillment of their obligations as a graduate assistant. However, departments and programs do have the discretionary right to make appointments to students whose commitment suggests that they are most likely to attain their educational goals and maintain assistantship responsibilities in the most effective manner.

**Resignation**

Graduate assistants who must resign during or prior to their period of appointment must notify their direct supervisor and the Student Employment Coordinator in writing. Graduate assistants should give the appointing department as much notice as possible when resigning so that suitable arrangements may be made to find a replacement.

**Termination Before the End of the Appointment:**

Appointment as a graduate assistant is contingent upon and subject to satisfactory performance of assigned duties, as determined by the supervisor of the department. The appointment may be terminated before the expiration of the contract under certain conditions:

1. Termination of appointment for adequate cause:
   a. failure to perform reasonable assignments due to incompetence or neglect of duties;
   b. unethical conduct (e.g., job-related misconduct; moral turpitude);
   c. failure to maintain eligibility for continuing enrollment in an academic program.
2. Voluntary mutual agreement between the graduate assistant, supervisor, and head of the appointing department (resignation by graduate assistant).
3. Failure to report to work as agreed upon by graduate assistant and supervisor.

Before terminating a graduate assistant for unsatisfactory performance of job duties, the immediate supervisor must give the graduate assistant written notice of the specific deficiencies in performance. The deficiencies, as well as suggestions for improvement, should be given to the graduate assistant.
The graduate assistant should be given two written warnings accompanied with adequate opportunities to improve performance. The department head should also be involved in this process. If the unsatisfactory performance is not corrected and a decision is made to proceed with termination, the relevant documentation must accompany the termination form through the appropriate channels.

Graduate Assistants who decide to leave their assistantship before the end of their current contracted semester will be responsible for 100% of the tuition for that semester.

**Graduate Assistant Fringe Benefits**

Graduate Assistants are considered student employees and therefore receive no fringe benefits from the University (i.e., health insurance, vacation and sick time, retirement).

**Additional Financial Assistance**

Other forms of assistance based on financial need are administered by the Office of Student Financial Planning.

**Student Conduct Code**

Alvernia University is dedicated not only to learning, research, and the advancement of knowledge, but also to the development of ethically sensitive and responsible persons. The University seeks to achieve these goals through sound educational programs and policies governing individual conduct that encourage independence and maturity. By accepting membership in this University, an individual joins a community characterized by free expression, free inquiry, intellectual honesty, respect for others, and participation in constructive change. All rights and responsibilities exercised within this academic environment shall be compatible with these principles.

**Non-Discrimination**

Alvernia University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action institution in accordance with Civil Rights legislation and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national origin, sex, age, handicap or other factors prohibited by law in any of its educational programs, activities, admissions or employment practices. As student employees, and thereby agents of the University, graduate assistants, especially teaching assistants, must be careful in all of their dealings with undergraduate students they do not discriminate on any of the bases mentioned. Teaching Assistants must be scrupulously non-discriminatory in all their actions, deeds, and words.

**Sexual Harassment Policy**

Alvernia University is committed to creating and maintaining a community in which students, faculty, and staff can work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Sexual harassment, like harassment on the basis of race or religion, is a form of discrimination expressly prohibited by law. It is a violation of Title VII of the federal 1964 Civil Rights Act and Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972.

In addition to being illegal, sexual harassment runs counter to the objectives of the University. When people feel coerced, threatened, intimidated, or otherwise pressured by others into granting sexual
favors, or are singled out for derision or abuse because of their gender, their academic and work performance is liable to suffer. Such actions violate the dignity of the individual and the integrity of the University as an institution of learning. Academic freedom can exist only when every person is free to pursue ideas in a non-threatening, non-coercive atmosphere of mutual respect. Sexual harassment is harmful not only to the persons involved but also to the entire University community. The University will take whatever action is needed to prevent, stop, correct, or discipline behavior that violates this policy. Disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to, oral or written warnings, demotion, transfer, suspension, or dismissal for cause. The full policy is available from the Human Resource Office.
I, __________________________________________ have read the Graduate Assistantship policy and I understand the conditions and my responsibilities.

GA’s Signature ______________________________________

Date: ___________________  

(Student Employment Coordinator) I have reviewed the guidelines of this policy with the Graduate Assistant.

Signature ______________________________________

Date: ___________________