

UIS Graduate Assistantship Policy Manual



UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS
SPRINGFIELD

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**GRADUATE
ASSISTANTSHIP
PROGRAM**

Policy Manual

Revised
August 2021

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Assistantships for Graduate Students

General Policy Statement

Assistantships for graduate students provide outstanding students with financial resources to help in degree completion. Assistantships offer varying educational and professional benefits but, in general, one can expect to —

- ◆ Gain further instruction in techniques in a preferred field
- ◆ Hone research skills
- ◆ Acquire pedagogical experience necessary for an academic career
- ◆ Develop professional skills including leadership, interpersonal effectiveness, and performance evaluation
- ◆ Have collegial collaboration with advisors that could result in joint publications

The University of Illinois Springfield awards a number of assistantships to qualified students each year. These awards are intended to help accomplish our educational mission as well as to support the academic and professional pursuits of our graduate students.

Objectives

Assistantships are designed to —

- ◆ Recruit outstanding and promising students to graduate study, with special attention to access and equal opportunity policies
- ◆ Provide graduate-level learning experiences through a supervised assignment
- ◆ Provide support that enables on-time graduate degree completion
- ◆ Provide UIS with limited support services in selected programs and areas

Eligibility for Appointment

To be considered for an assistantship, you must —

- ◆ Possess an earned baccalaureate degree (or its equivalent) by the beginning assignment date. (Unless otherwise specified, this date is August 16th each year for all assistants hired to start during the fall semester.) A final undergraduate transcript documenting the official posting of the baccalaureate degree or, in the case of international students, attested and sealed degree certification documents must be submitted to the UIS Office of Admissions prior to an assistantship contract being issued.
- ◆ Satisfy the selection criteria for assistants established by the graduate program or unit.
- ◆ Be admitted to graduate study, enrolled in a UIS graduate degree program, and, for appointment, be in good academic standing at UIS, maintaining a cumulative graduate grade point average of no less than 3.00 with no incomplete grades assigned (except for thesis or master's project courses).
- ◆ Have at least two full-time semesters of course work remaining (16 hours).
- ◆ Have no more than four (4) prerequisite courses that still need to be completed.
- ◆ First-year graduate students who have earned no graduate-level credit, but have been admitted to a graduate degree program must have a minimum, cumulative undergraduate grade point average of at least 2.50. Students who have earned graduate-level credit before applying to UIS must have a minimum, cumulative GPA of 3.00 for those graduate courses.

- ◆ International students must have F-1 visas and valid Social Security numbers on file with the university before the letter of appointment can be processed. (F-1 visas are not required for students who are Canadian citizens.)

Students who have previously earned a degree at UIS while participating in the Graduate Assistantship(GA) or Graduate Public Service Internship (GPSI) programs are not eligible. Preference will be given to students who have not already obtained a graduate degree at UIS or elsewhere.

Assistantships at UIS involve responsibilities that require assistants to be present on campus. Applicants who have applied to and been accepted by an online graduate degree program at UIS must notify the Graduate Assistantship Office and the Office of Admission and Records, in writing when they submit the assistantship application, of their availability to fulfill on-campus responsibilities if awarded an assistantship.

Application Process

Applicants are strongly encouraged to initiate the application process at least three months prior to the assistantship application deadline.

To be considered for an assistantship, one must apply to and be accepted by a graduate degree program and complete the application process by the applicable deadline.

The application for graduate study and a listing of graduate program application requirements can be found at: www.uis.edu/graduateeducation or by contacting the UIS Office of Admission at 217-206-4847 or at admissions@uis.edu.

The Graduate Assistantship / Graduate Public Service Internship Application can be found at: www.uis.edu/graduateassistantships.

An assistantship application file will be considered complete when the applicant has —

- ◆ Been admitted, either conditionally* or fully, to a UIS graduate degree program.
- ◆ Submitted a complete Graduate Assistantship / Graduate Public Service Internship Application form via the web.
- ◆ Submitted a current resume.
- ◆ Submitted a personal goal statement in the required format.
- ◆ Provided three letters of reference, (it is preferred that two of the letters be from professors or academic advisors familiar with academic performance). Letters must be no more than 18 months old and must be submitted by the writer using the link that is provided in the online GA/GPSI application. Letters of recommendation that may be required by your academic program can also be used for your GA application. If the letter writer encounters any difficulty they can send their recommendations directly to gaprog@uis.edu. Please do not personally send copies of these letters to the GA Office, as we cannot accept letters submitted by candidates.

**Please refer to page 2, Eligibility for Appointment heading, first bullet point for important information regarding conditional admission.*

University of Illinois Nondiscrimination Statement

The commitment of the University of Illinois to the most fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity, and human dignity requires that decisions involving students and employees be based on individual merit and be free from invidious discrimination in all its forms.

The University of Illinois will not engage in discrimination or harassment against any person because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, order of protection status, genetic information, marital status, disability, sexual orientation including gender identity, unfavorable discharge from the military or status as a protected veteran and will comply with all federal and state nondiscriminations, equal opportunity and affirmative action laws, orders and regulations. This nondiscrimination policy applies to admissions, employment, access to and treatment in the University programs and activities.

University complaint and grievance procedures provide employees and students with the means for the resolution of complaints that allege a violation of this Statement. For assistance, please contact the Associate Vice Chancellor for Access and Equal Opportunity (Title IX, ADA, and 504 Coordinator), HRB 52, One University Plaza, MS HRB 52, Springfield, IL 62703-5407, 217-206-6222, titleix@uis.edu.

Types of Assistantships

Each assistantship at UIS is categorized into one of four types: graduate teaching assistantships (TAs), graduate research assistantships (RAs), graduate assistantships (GAs), and pre-professional graduate assistantships (PGAs).

The duties of a **graduate teaching assistant** are to conduct or support instruction. Assistants whose primary (i.e. greater than 50%) duties consist of the following types of activities will be categorized as teaching assistants:

- ◆ Teaching classes
(not the instructor of record)
- ◆ Leading lab or discussion groups in a course setting
- ◆ Developing academic instructional materials
- ◆ Accompanying/coaching student musical or vocal performances
- ◆ Grading student assignments
- ◆ Providing artistic instruction
- ◆ Proctoring exams
- ◆ Overseeing/coordinating the work of other TAs
- ◆ Maintaining office hours to provide instructional support
- ◆ Tutoring

The duties of a **graduate research assistant** are to research concepts, practices, or methods of scholarship. Assistants whose primary (i.e. greater than 50%) duties consist of the following types of activities will be categorized as graduate research assistants:

- ◆ Conducting experiments
- ◆ Organizing or analyzing data
- ◆ Presenting findings in a publication or dissertation
- ◆ Overseeing work of other RAs
- ◆ Collaborating with faculty in preparing publications
- ◆ Other research activities

The duties of a **graduate assistant** are to support administrative functions. Assistants with primary (i.e., greater than 50%) duties consisting of the following types of activities will be classified as graduate assistants:

Administrative Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Copying course materials◆ General office work/clerical/receptionist◆ Correspondence◆ Supervising reading room
Technical/Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Website management/assisting faculty with web pages◆ Network administration/end user support◆ Equipment management◆ Monitoring instructional and service labs (computer, video, etc.)◆ Translation◆ Routine support for publications (record keeping, writing copy for university or department newsletters or non-research publications, correspondence, etc.)
Advising	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Providing curricular and academic advice to students◆ Providing support to advisers
Outreach Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Recruiting students◆ Publicizing programs and activities to campus and public constituencies◆ Working with/assisting with event management

Pre-professional graduate assistants are appointed to positions in which their duties are directly connected to their fields of study and in which they gain experience, practice, or guidance directly related to their career preparation. At UIS students who are (1) enrolled in the following areas of study, and are (2) appointed in the unit listed below will be considered pre-professional graduate assistants.

Area of Study

Counseling fields
Human Service fields

Appointing Unit

UIS Counseling Center
Career Development Center

Terms & Conditions of Assistantship Awards

Notice of Appointment

All newly appointed and re-appointed assistants receive a letter of appointment specifying the appointment title, stipend amount, effective dates of appointment, the assistantship supervisor, and the full time equivalent (FTE) of the appointment.

Letters of appointment for reappointed assistants (i.e., assistants who have served at least one semester and will be returning as an assistant during the following academic year) will be issued by the end of the spring semester (which is defined by the academic calendar). Letters of appointment for newly-selected assistants will be issued as soon as practicable.

Verification of Employment Eligibility

Newly hired assistants must complete a Form I-9 by the first day of work noted on the letter of appointment; an assistant's appointment cannot be processed without it. For more information about completing the Form I-9, contact the Graduate Assistantship Office at 217-206-6544.

International students must have F-1 visas and valid social security numbers on file with the university before the letter of appointment can be processed. (F-1 visas are not required for students who are Canadian citizens.)

Orientation & Training

The campus and the programs/units that appoint assistants share responsibility for providing orientation and training programs for the assistants. All newly-appointed and re-appointed assistants are required to attend a mandatory campus-wide orientation session at the beginning of the first semester of each annual contract period. The mandatory orientation may either be offered in-person and/or online.

Attendance at mandatory orientation and training activities is required for continuation of an assistantship and must be completed within the first three working days of the assigned contract period. The two hours allotted for orientation and training will be counted toward the assistant's required hours for the first week of work.

Employing units are expected to conduct unit-level orientation/training for their assistants. Unit-level orientation/training should focus on departmental information, policies and procedures, including duties and responsibilities of the assistantship.

Appointing departments or course supervisors are required to explain to their teaching assistants (TA) the nature of any in-service training in which they are required to participate. Throughout their service as teaching assistants, TAs participate in staff meetings with their faculty supervisors and other TAs assigned to the same course. These meetings provide formal and informal opportunities to address with peers and supervisors any problems and concerns, to clarify the department's and supervisor's expectations for TAs, and to develop the TAs' skills as teachers. Through these meetings TAs may request more information or individual attention to address subjects and skills where they feel the need for improvement, and supervisors may identify areas that need improvement and devise means of addressing these areas (e.g., additional discussions of pedagogical strategies and techniques, micro-teaching, class visitation to provide feedback about progress, visiting classes taught by other TAs to observe their teaching).

Work Responsibilities

Assistants will be supervised directly by a faculty or staff member of the appointed program/ unit. The supervisor recommends candidates for appointment, determines the assistantship assignments, and supervises and evaluates the assistants' work. The supervisor should be contacted for details of the assistantship.

Assistantship appointments are half-time appointments (20 hours per week) and are typically for one academic year (9 months). The time allocated to fulfilling work responsibilities should not exceed 20 hours per week. However, under special circumstances, an overload during one week may be balanced by a lighter load during the week before or after the overload. Overload hours should be planned in advance and should be mutually agreed to

by the assistant and supervisor. US Citizen assistants cannot work more than 27 hours per week during weeks that classes are in session. Due to visa status, international students are not allowed to work more than 20 hours per week when classes are in session. All assistants can work a maximum of 37.5 hours per week during weeks when classes are not in session. Assistants do not earn vacation.

According to Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) regulations, graduate assistantships are considered “salaried non-exempt” appointments. Graduate assistants (GAs) are required to record their actual hours worked on a timesheet (<https://hr.uillinois.edu/PolicyCompliance/Toolkit/UniversityForms.cfm>). These sheets should be reviewed and signed by the supervisor on a monthly basis (or more frequently if requested by the supervisor). Supervisors should retain these timesheets.

Pre-professional graduate assistantships, graduate research assistantships, and graduate teaching assistantships are considered “salaried exempt” appointments under FLSA regulations. Pre-professional graduate assistants (PGAs), graduate research assistants (RAs), and graduate teaching assistants (TAs) are not required to submit time sheets, but it is strongly encouraged. They must have prior approval from the supervisor for taking leave time and must report it using a standard Request for Leave form.

For all types of assistantships, if an assistant is sick or otherwise unable to come to work on a scheduled work day, the assistant should contact the supervisor. If work hours are missed, assistants should confer with the supervisor to make up the hours, unless those hours are covered by sick leave.

All assistantship contracts are considered academic appointments. Since assignments vary, the supervisor will monitor work responsibilities. If an assistant is assigned duties during a scheduled holiday, the assistant should be given equal time off at another time. This revised work schedule should be mutually agreed on by the assistant and supervisor.

Assistants are to report to work during the first week of the contractual period. For contracts which begin in the fall this means August 16th. If an appointment begins in the spring rather than the fall, the starting date will be five working days before classes begin or the date when employment begins, whichever is later. Contact the Graduate Assistantship Office with questions regarding the required start date. Except as noted in the Stipend and Benefits section of this manual, assistants are expected to work when the campus is open.

In the performance of university duties, assistants are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is professional, courteous, and conducive to a professional atmosphere. Assistants are expected to comply with all work rules and expectations that are developed in their appointing programs, departments, or units, as well as with applicable university rules and policies. Assistants should not use their personal vehicles to conduct University business. Applicable university policies include, but are not limited to, Sexual Harassment and Human Rights Policies, the University and Student Codes of Conduct, and policies governing research with human subjects and the use of university resources. Assistants are expected to be familiar with these policies. Electronic copies of the policies can be accessed through links available on the Graduate Assistantship Office website under the “Student Information” heading and “Links” sub-heading.

Work Plan

Working with the supervisor, assistants must develop and submit a work schedule that includes the estimated number of hours per week to be spent on each assigned responsibility, and the schedule of days/times the assistant will work each week. 20 hours of work must be reflected on the work schedule.

Hours of work are reflected in the percentage of appointment. Hours of work are separate and distinct from the time required for the assistant's academic course work.

The assistant and supervisor must sign and date the work plan; the signature of the dean/division head is also required. By the end of the second week of the appointment period, the completed work plan must be forwarded to the Graduate Assistantship Office to be reviewed and added to the assistant's file.

In the event an assistant wishes to change the assistantship work schedule based upon adding or dropping a course, the assistant should meet with the supervisor and discuss the impact; the work schedule may be changed by mutual agreement. In the event mutual agreement cannot be reached, the work schedule as agreed to in the initial document shall prevail. The Graduate Assistantship Office should be provided a copy of the revised schedule.

Satisfactory Academic Performance

Successful timely completion of a master's degree is the paramount goal of the assistantship program. The responsibility for monitoring assistants' mid-year and year-end academic progress rests with the Graduate Assistantship Office. As necessary, the Graduate Assistantship Office will cooperate with academic advisors, deans, administrators and supervisors in making these evaluations.

Assistants placed on academic probation must meet with their academic advisors to develop a plan for remediation and must submit a *Documentation of Academic Plan for Next Semester* petition, with all required signatures, to the Graduate Assistantship Office.

Assistants on academic probation who fail to raise their cumulative grade point average to the minimum required level of 3.0 during their next semester of enrollment risk losing their assistantship placement. If the assistant is placed on academic suspension, the assistant must wait two consecutive terms before petitioning for readmission to UIS. As a consequence, the student will no longer be eligible for appointment, and the assistantship appointment will be terminated. (Students who petition for readmission to UIS may reapply to the assistantship program; academic eligibility for reapplication will be reevaluated by the Graduate Assistantship Office at that time.) In extraordinary situations, students may successfully appeal their academic suspension and be allowed to enroll for one semester under a conditional probation status. Please note that continuing appointment as an assistant is not automatic under these circumstances. Another completed *Documentation of Academic Plan for Next Semester* petition must be submitted to the Graduate Assistantship Office for consideration.

Resignation

If an assistant cannot complete the period of appointment, a letter of resignation should be submitted to the supervisor, with copies to the dean/division head and the Graduate Assistantship Office. The letter must clearly state the effective date of resignation. The letter should be filed with the dean/division head and the Graduate

Assistantship Office at least 10 working days before the effective date of the resignation unless the assistant and supervisor mutually agree that the departure date may be sooner. If an assistant wishes to resign in order to accept a different assistantship position, a written release from the appointing program or department is required.

If an assistant resigns before serving 61 calendar days from the first day of the fall or spring semester start date, but continues as a graduate student at UIS, tuition will be assessed for the term. Tuition payment is not required if the assistant officially withdraws from UIS at the time of resignation; however, the assistant is required to pay UIS fees and any withdrawal surcharges.

Satisfactory Work Performance and Notice of Deficiency in Performance

Assistants are expected to meet responsibilities specified in the work plan and to adhere to the agreed-upon work schedule. For most problems with performance, the supervisor will first attempt to correct performance deficiencies through work-related counseling, instruction, or training. Assistants are encouraged to work cooperatively with their supervisors to resolve performance problems informally.

Deficiencies in performance that are not resolved informally through work-related counseling, instruction, or training may result in formal discipline and dismissal. Progressive discipline may include oral warning, written notice of deficiency in performance, suspension, and, in extreme cases, reduction of assistant duties with a corresponding reduction in appointment percentage and pay. Discipline might not be progressive if the offense is sufficiently serious. A recommendation to terminate an assistantship may occur if a very severe problem in performance exists or due to failure to make specified improvements in performance within an established time period.

Discipline and dismissal may result from failing to attend mandatory orientation or other sessions; engaging in misconduct in the performance of university duties or academic activities; neglecting or refusing to perform assigned duties; demonstrating unsatisfactory performance; violating university regulations or policies; violating university regulations or policies related to discrimination and harassment; acting outside the appropriate exercise of university responsibilities so as willfully to physically harm, threaten physical harm to, harass, or intimidate a visitor or a member of the university community; and damaging, destroying, or misappropriating property owned by the university or any property used in connection with a university function or approved activity. Discipline and dismissal may result from an accumulation of minor infractions as well as from a serious infraction.

A supervisor alerted to the possibility of misconduct by an assistant will attempt to clarify the facts directly with the assistant. Discipline will be issued in a private manner so as not to cause embarrassment to the assistant.

In cases of a disciplinary oral warning, the supervisor will inform the assistant that an oral warning is being issued and will give the assistant the reason(s) for the warning. A pre-disciplinary meeting will be held if discipline other than an oral warning or written notice of deficiency in performance is contemplated. The assistant will be notified, in writing, at least two days in advance of the purpose of the pre-disciplinary meeting and the contemplated disciplinary action. The assistant will be given the opportunity to rebut the reasons for the contemplated discipline. Anonymous documents shall not be used to justify disciplinary action unless the university reasonably deems it necessary.

Termination

If work performance is not satisfactory and improvements are not made in areas specified in the notice of deficiency by the time performance is re-evaluated, the supervisor, dean/director, or the division head may recommend to the Graduate Assistantship Office that the contract be terminated or not renewed for the next year.

Behaviors that may result in the termination of an assistantship without oral warning or notice of deficiency in performance include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ failing to maintain academic eligibility because of unsatisfactory academic progress;
- ◆ engaging in unethical conduct (see University Code of Ethics); or
- ◆ abandoning job duties (i.e., absence without approved leave for three working days or more)

The Graduate Assistantship Office will review all recommendations for suspension, reduction in appointment and pay, non-renewal, and dismissal and make the decision on whether to terminate the appointment. Should the decision be made to suspend, reduce the appointment and pay, or terminate an appointment, the assistant will be given 14 calendar days' notice of termination. During the 14-day period, the assistant has the right to appeal this decision to the Provost.

Graduate assistants and teaching assistants may wish to consult the collective bargaining agreement, posted electronically on the Human Resources website www.uis.edu/humanresources/labor.

Renewal for Subsequent Academic Year

Reappointments to assistantship positions are not automatic. Assistants must apply for reappointment through the Graduate Assistantship Office by completing an *Assistant's Request for Reappointment* form. Additionally, the supervisor must submit an *Assistantship Supervisor's Reappointment Endorsement* form. Application materials, academic records, performance evaluations, and length of time in the assistantship position will be considered when reappointment is requested. Graduate students who are not reappointed will be notified in writing by the Graduate Assistantship Office and the reason for non-reappointment will be provided.

Academic eligibility for reappointment requires that an assistant is in good standing at UIS, has completed at least 16 semester hours of credit during the academic year, is making satisfactory progress toward completion of a degree, and has no incomplete grades. Incomplete course work must be completed before an assistant can be reappointed.

Assistantships are normally limited to a maximum of four semesters. Assistants typically will not be considered for assistant appointments that exceed four semesters (alone or in combination with other comparable fellowships and graduate internships). Exceptions to this policy can be considered under extraordinary circumstances. To request this exception, assistants must submit a completed *Waiver for Maximum Term of Appointment* form to the Graduate Assistantship Office for review and approval. The *Waiver for Maximum Term of Appointment* form is available on the Graduate Assistantship Office website (www.uis.edu/graduateassistantships, select the "Student Information" link).

In the event an assistant is not renewed due in no part to the assistant's academic performance or work-related issues, the assistant should contact the Graduate Assistantship Office.

Other Employment

Assistants understand that their primary responsibility is first and foremost as a student and assistant at the university. Assistants cannot hold regular employment with UIS while holding an assistantship appointment. Assistants are allowed to work at UIS in limited employment (activities such as survey research polling, parking cars) for a maximum of 7 hours of work per week as permitted by state and federal rules and regulations.

Any additional employment outside of UIS shall be considered secondary and shall not interfere with responsibilities assigned in the assistant's position or academic program in which the assistant is enrolled at the university.

Due to their visa status, international students are not allowed to work more than the 20 hours per week required for their assistantship while classes are in session. International students may be eligible to work full-time in other positions while classes are not in session — please contact the Office of International Student Services and/or the Graduate Assistantship Office for more information.

Use of University Resources

Assistants will be provided with access to work space, telephones, computers, internet, email, mail, supplies, and equipment as necessary to fulfill their work responsibilities. Assistants are not permitted to use University of Illinois course materials, curricula, facilities, resources, or other materials in non-university employment or activities.

Stipend and Benefits

Stipend

Assistantships provide monthly stipends during the contract period. The stipend rate depends on whether an assistant is in the first year or the second year of appointment. An assistant is considered a second-year assistant if they held an assistantship position during the previous academic year; this includes assistants who were appointed in the spring semester of the previous year.

In accordance with Internal Revenue Code 127, stipends associated with assistantships classified as graduate assistantships (GA) or pre-professional graduate assistantships (PGA) are subject to federal tax withholding due to the tuition and service fee waiver awarded. Current tax law exempts teaching assistants (TAs) and research assistants (RAs) from having to pay taxes on tuition and service fee waivers associated with these appointments.

See the *Taxability of Stipends, Tuition and Fee Waivers* section of this manual, refer to the taxability link on the GA website, contact University Payroll at paying@uillinois.edu and/or consult the Internal Revenue Service for specific tax information.

For information regarding current stipend amounts, please review the UPI Association of Graduate Employees collective bargaining agreement located at: www.uis.edu/humanresources/labor.

Sick Leave

Assistants on standard appointments (9 months/50% FTE) receive 6.5 eight-hour sick days (52 hours) per academic year. Assistants appointed to one-semester assistantships receive 3.25 eight-hour days (26 hours) of sick leave. For graduate assistants (GAs), sick time leave is based on the actual number of hours missed due to sickness. For example, if an assistant calls in sick on a day the assistant was scheduled to work three hours, sick leave time will be decreased by three hours. Pre-professional graduate assistants (PGAs), graduate research assistants (RAs), and graduate teaching assistants (TAs) must report absences in half-day increments.

In the event an assistant will be absent from work, the assistant should promptly notify the supervisor or department head so that arrangements for coverage of duties can be made and the leave usage recorded. Assistants are subject to university policies concerning use of sick leave which are subject to modification from time to time.

Parental Leave

Eligible assistants are entitled to up to six weeks of parental leave without loss of pay immediately following the birth of a child, or upon either the initial placement or the legal adoption of a child under 18 years of age. Eligible assistants are those who hold an active appointment at the time the parental leave is taken. The requirement that academic staff members must have six months of service to receive this benefit does not apply to graduate employees. Parental leave will be counted as part of the twelve-week entitlement accorded by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for FMLA-eligible individuals and may be used in conjunction with other paid or unpaid leaves for which the individual is eligible.

Jury Duty

Assistants are eligible for a leave of absence without loss of pay for the duration of jury duty on the day or days when the assistant would have otherwise been performing assistant duties. An assistant may also retain funds paid in compensation for jury duty in keeping with university policy.

An assistant summoned as a juror shall immediately inform the assistantship supervisor of the absence. Assistants who are called for jury duty shall discuss with their supervisors whether jury service will conflict with their duties and if so, whether requesting a deferral from jury duty is appropriate. An assistant who reports for jury duty and is dismissed shall resume normal duties as soon as possible.

Military Leave

Military leave shall be in accordance with applicable state and federal law, and university policy. The University of Illinois Springfield Office of Human Resources determines the eligibility of graduate assistants called to active military service to continue to receive the graduate assistant stipend.

Bereavement Leave

Assistants are eligible to receive up to five days of paid leave due to the death of a member of the assistant's immediate family or household and one working day due to the death of a relative outside of the assistant's

immediate family or household. Immediate family in this instance includes an assistant's spouse, domestic partner, mother, father, children, brother, sister, mother/father-in-law, daughter/son-in-law, sister/brother-in-law, grandparents and grandchildren. Relatives outside the immediate family or household are defined as an aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, and first-degree cousin.

Coverage Responsibility

If an assistant must be absent from work, it is the assistant's responsibility to inform the supervisor in advance to explain the reason for the absence, secure approval of the absence, and to follow the employing unit's policies concerning arranging for substitutes to perform the assistant's duties. It is generally the responsibility of the supervisor or the department to secure any temporary replacement coverage.

Personal Leave of Absence

An assistant may be granted an unpaid leave of absence during the term of the assistant's appointment, upon request and at the sole discretion of the university and subject to such terms and conditions as the university may establish. Contact the Graduate Assistantship Office to discuss requirements for this request.

Holidays

Assistants are expected to work when the campus is open, with the exception of the days designated as Thanksgiving Recess in the fall semester, the week designated as Spring Recess in the spring semester, and Winter Break. Winter Break is defined as Christmas Eve Day through New Year's Day. Additional holidays on which the campus is closed during the standard period of appointment include Martin Luther King, Jr., Day and Labor Day. Assistants also receive two four-hour "floating" holidays, which can be taken at any time during the academic year with prior approval from the supervisor. Floating holidays cannot be carried over from one academic year to the next.

Assistants are not required to make up the hours that normally would have been worked on a day that is designated as a holiday. For example, if a holiday falls on a Monday, and an assistant normally works three hours on Mondays, the assistant would not be expected to make up those three hours. Holidays cannot be carried over or accumulated from one semester to the next, or from one academic year to the next.

Inclement Weather

The UIS campus does not close due to inclement weather except under the most extraordinary conditions. In the event the campus Liberal Leave Policy is implemented and the employing unit makes the determination to close the entire department, the employing unit is responsible for either making alternative arrangements for the assistant to work the regularly scheduled hours or grant release time to the assistant. Supervisors are responsible for notifying the assistants by email of the alternative arrangements. In the event no prior arrangements have been made and release time is granted, the assistant is not (expected nor required) to make up the hours. Assistants hired into units that are designated as "essential services" shall not be designated as essential personnel, and therefore may not be required to work once the Liberal Leave Policy is in effect. The Liberal Leave Policy can be found on the UIS Office of Human Resources website at: www.uis.edu/humanresources/policies/policies.

Course Load and Tuition Waivers

Assistants are eligible to receive a tuition waiver for up to 12 credit hours in the fall and spring semesters. They will also receive a service fee waiver (which includes the activity fee, the intercollegiate athletic fee, the Career Center fee, and the Health Services fee) for a maximum of 8 credit hours for fall and spring semesters and a maximum of 4 credit hours for the summer semester. General fees and course fees are not waived. The waivers are only applicable to qualifying course work. Undergraduate course work will not be paid for with an assistantship tuition/service fee waiver unless formally specified as a degree requirement by the graduate program. If an assistant served as an assistant during a semester preceding a summer session, that assistant is eligible for a tuition waiver for a maximum of 6 hours during that summer session. It is important to note that assistants are entitled to a maximum of 30 credit hours of tuition waived during the academic year (fall, spring, summer). Assistants will be billed for any course taken beyond 30 hours and charged the in-state tuition rate.

Late Appointments to Assistantships

Fall Semester: If the appointment is a replacement or a late appointment which begins before September 15, the assistant will receive a full tuition/service fee waiver. If the appointment begins between September 15 and October 14, one-half of the tuition/service fees will be waived. If the appointment begins after October 14, tuition/service fees will not be waived for the fall semester.

Spring Semester: If the appointment is a replacement or a late appointment for the spring semester, please contact the Graduate Assistantship Office for questions related to the determination of tuition/ service fee eligibility.

Assistants must consult with their academic advisors prior to registering each semester; decisions about course load and course selection need to be informed by assistantship guidelines and applicable financial assistance policies. The following assistantship guidelines are among those that should be considered before registering for courses:

Minimum/Maximum Course Load

Assistants must enroll and remain enrolled throughout a regular semester for a minimum of 8 to a maximum of 12 credit hours. During each regular semester, assistants will receive a tuition waiver for a minimum of 8 semester hours to a maximum of 12 semester hours. If the course load is going to exceed the maximum or is less than the minimum in a semester, a petition to obtain prior approval for the overload/underload must be completed and approved by the Graduate Assistantship Office. (Petitions are provided on the Graduate Assistantship Office website at the "Student Information" link under the "GA Forms" heading.)

Assistants who register for more than 12 hours during a regular semester without an approved student petition for overload will not receive a tuition waiver for hours in excess of the allowed 12 hours and will be billed for the full amount of their tuition in excess of 12 hours. Registration changes must be completed by the deadline for partial withdrawal to avoid possible loss of the tuition waiver.

Audited Courses

Courses taken on an audit basis do not count toward meeting the minimum course load and are not eligible for a tuition waiver. If an assistant decides to audit a course, it is the assistant's responsibility to inform the Graduate Assistantship Office before changing the status of the course with UIS Records and Registration to ensure that

tuition/service fee waiver funds are adjusted accordingly. If funds are applied because the Graduate Assistantship Office is not notified and the matter is not discovered until the end of the semester when final grades are posted, the tuition/service fee waiver will be adjusted at that time and the balance will become the assistant's responsibility.

Credit/No Credit Courses

The assistant's academic program determines whether courses taken on a credit/no credit basis may be counted toward the degree and, therefore, counted toward meeting the minimum course load. Courses taken on a credit/no credit basis that are counted toward the degree will be eligible for a tuition waiver. Assistants must contact the Graduate Assistantship Office in advance to have eligible credit/no credit courses covered by the tuition waiver, and to see if any petitions are required.

Concurrent Registration at Another UI Campus

Assistants planning to enroll for courses on more than one University of Illinois campus must contact UIS Registration, 217-206-6174, to obtain information and complete the necessary application forms regarding concurrent registration. Assistants should contact the UIS Office of Financial Assistance, 217-206-6724, regarding eligibility for concurrent registration. A course taken on another UI campus may be eligible for tuition waiver under the UIS assistantship program if:

- ◆ the course is not offered at UIS;
- ◆ the assistant's UIS graduate degree program verifies the course will reduce the hours needed for degree completion;
- ◆ the total number of credit hours of registration, when combined for the two campuses during the semester of concurrent registration, is within the minimum/maximum credit hour limit established by the UIS assistantship policy;
- ◆ the maximum tuition waiver of 30 credit hours is not exceeded for the academic year;
- ◆ the necessary concurrent registration paperwork has been completed and filed in advance with UIS Registration and with the Graduate Assistantship Office.

Assistants must submit a completed *Request for Concurrent Registration Tuition Waiver* form to the Graduate Assistantship Office for prior approval. Assistants should be aware that participating in concurrent registration at another UI campus may be associated with a change in the tuition and fee range charged to their accounts, and that they are responsible for any additional charges that may be assessed.

Other Financial Assistance Considerations

There are additional considerations when any graduate student receiving financial aid plans to (a) register for less than 12 credit hours in a given semester, (b) register for undergraduate-level courses, and/or (c) register for graduate-level courses that will not count toward the degree. In such cases, graduate students are advised to consult with the Office of Financial Assistance before registering so that unexpected tuition or fee charges are not incurred.

Taxability of Stipends, Tuition and Fee Waivers

Assistant stipends are subject to federal and state taxes. Current tax law exempts teaching assistants (TAs) and research assistants (RAs) from having to pay taxes on tuition and service fee waivers associated with these appointments.

Effective January 1, 2003, the University adopted an Educational Assistant Plan, complying with Internal Revenue Code 127, which excludes from taxable income \$5,250 per calendar year in tuition and service fee waivers associated with graduate assistant (GA) and/or pre-professional graduate assistant (PGA) appointments.

Assistants receiving waivers associated with GA or PGA appointments will receive information from the University Payroll Office to assist in determining what portion of the waiver should be considered taxable income and whether or not it will be necessary to withhold additional taxes from these assistants' paychecks. Please contact the University Payroll Office at payingq@uillinois.edu with any questions.

Assistantship Performance Evaluations

Assistants and supervisors together will formally evaluate assistant performance at mid-year and at the end of the academic year. Evaluations are typically due to deans or unit administrators two weeks before the last day of classes in the semester, and are due in the Graduate Assistantship Office at least one week before the last day of the semester. Please refer to the *Key Dates* calendar provided during orientation for exact due dates.

Mid-Year Formative Evaluation

The written mid-year performance evaluation will be formative in nature and must be submitted to the Graduate Assistantship Office no later than the end of fall semester. This evaluation is intended to identify both progress and areas of concern related to the accomplishment of the assistant's work plan. The mid-year performance review should be completed from a formative perspective by the supervisor, in consultation with the assistant. The review must be completed by the deadline, using the standard *Mid-Year Evaluation* form to indicate areas of satisfactory performance and/or concern in relation to work assignments. In situations where the assistantship involves working with several faculty or staff members, the supervisor may solicit and consider feedback before preparing the evaluation. The evaluation form should be completed by the supervisor and reviewed with the assistant before signatures are obtained.

End-of-Year Evaluation

A written summative year-end evaluation must be completed by the assistant and supervisor. The results are to be forwarded for review and approval by the dean/unit head and the Graduate Assistantship Office. The year-end evaluation must include the following:

- ◆ Assistant's written self-evaluation.
- ◆ Your supervisor's written observations and evaluations.
- ◆ Solicited comments from program or unit faculty and staff (if applicable)

Both the assistant and supervisor should follow the general outline below. Examples of projects (i.e., brochures, publications) or other documentation may be attached.

- ◆ **Learning:** Specific skills learned, application of theoretical knowledge, personal development.
- ◆ **Service:** Projects accomplished, benefits to the program, benefits to the campus.
- ◆ **Expectations and outcomes:** Assistant's view of the relation between the anticipated and actual experiences. Supervisor's examination of achievements compared to the work plan.

- ◆ **Summary:** The value of the assistantship experience. How the assistant experience could have been more valuable.

Both the self-evaluation completed by the assistant and the supervisor's written observations and evaluations should be reviewed by both the assistant and the supervisor before signatures are provided, and then forwarded for additional departmental reviews and signatures.

Exit Survey

Assistants are required to complete a UIS Graduate Assistantship Exit Survey at the end of their final semester of appointment or at the time of resignation and submit it to the Graduate Assistantship Office. All responses to the survey will be kept confidential. Survey results will be summarized and interpreted at aggregate levels as part of ongoing efforts to assess and ensure the quality of the UIS Assistantship Program for future students.

Other Useful Information

Informal Problem Solving

Assistants and supervisors are encouraged to make every effort to resolve assistantship-related problems informally. If there are problems involving your assistantship, meet with the supervisor and attempt to resolve the matter. An informal conference, when conducted in good faith by both parties, leads to a fair and prompt resolution of most problems. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, an assistant may file a formal grievance with the dean/director.

Formal Grievance Procedures

All assistants have access to a formal grievance procedure, which may be used when attempts to resolve a problem informally have been unsuccessful. A formal grievance must be in written form, and grievance procedures have specific steps and time limits that apply to filing a grievance and appealing decisions. The procedures must be followed for the grievance to be considered.

If informal problem-solving is not successful, the assistant may elect to file a formal grievance. For all assistants, the basic steps for filing a formal grievance are as follows:

1. If an assistant wishes to file a grievance related to suspension, reduction in appointment and pay, or dismissal during the term of appointment, a written grievance may be submitted to the college dean/director, or designee, within fifteen (15) calendar days following notice of the suspension, reduction, or dismissal.

All other written grievances may be filed with the college dean/director, or designee, within twenty (20) calendar days following the date of the act or omission giving rise to the grievance.

2. The dean/director, or designee, will, within twenty (20) calendar days of the filing of the grievance, arrange a formal conference between the appropriate campus representative(s) and the grievant. If the conference

results in resolution of the grievance, the grievance will not be processed further. The dean/director, or designee, will notify the grievant of any resolution reached as a result of the conference.

3. A grievance may be withdrawn at any time by the grievant.
4. If the grievance is not settled at step two, or if the grievant wishes to appeal the grievance decision, the grievant may file a written request to the Provost, or designee, in the Office of the Provost within fourteen (14) calendar days after the step two decision is received or due. Upon receipt of an appeal, the Provost, or designee, will make a complete and thorough review of the written record of the dean/director, or designee, and will issue a written decision on the grievance within twenty (20) calendar days from the date of the receipt of the appeal.

GAs and TAs may wish to consult the collective bargaining agreement, located on the Human Resources website (www.uis.edu/humanresources/labor).



Graduate Assistantship Program

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