

# GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

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## Introduction

University of the Pacific recognizes that providing graduate students with teaching and research assistantships is critical to the success of graduate and undergraduate programs at Pacific. This policy outlines the types of graduate assistantships, the requirements for students becoming graduate assistants, students' responsibilities, their compensation, and the evaluation of their work.

## General

Graduate assistantships are intended to assist students financially during their period of study. They should not interfere with a student's timely and successful progression toward graduation.

Assistantships must support the educational experience of the student and be related to the student's graduate program.

Graduate assistant appointments (singularly or in any combination with other on-campus employment) are for a maximum of 20 hours per week to prevent overload working conditions, which may threaten the student's academic progress and the quality of assigned duties.

Administrative responsibility for graduate assistantships rests within the unit in which the student is employed, in consultation with all other relevant units.

Graduate teaching assistants must reapply for appointment each year, and the assistantship is contingent upon satisfactory progress toward the degree.

## Types of Graduate Assistantships

There are two types of graduate assistantships: Teaching Assistantships and Research Assistantships.

### Teaching Assistantships

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) are funded through the respective School or College. GTAs are considered hourly employees, expected to work as teaching assistants, and are generally awarded tuition waivers. GTAs are typically responsible for directing lab sections, leading discussion sections, holding office hours, preparing course materials, grading, and in some cases, teaching regular classes of courses numbered below 200 under the tutelage and supervision of regular faculty members who are responsible for curriculum and instruction in the University. GTAs may not teach courses numbered 200 or above. However, GTAs may assist with laboratories or discussion sections for 200- and 300-level courses, but may not teach or assist with a course in which they are enrolled.

### Research Assistantships

Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) are responsible for working on research projects in collaboration with or under the direction of a faculty or staff member. Duties assigned to Research Assistants may include gathering, organizing, and analyzing data, grading papers, and assisting faculty or non-academic units on campus. Whatever their responsibilities, duties assigned to GRAs must be relevant to the graduate program and the professional goals of the student. The supervising faculty or staff member determines the students' particular responsibilities and is accountable for monitoring and evaluating their performance. Many GRAs are funded through extramural grants and contracts; therefore, the research is often closely tied to the objectives of the grant proposal.

## Qualifications

All graduate assistants must hold a bachelor's degree or the equivalent and be admitted as students for graduate study. Applicants must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better in all post-secondary coursework or

in the last 60 units of baccalaureate and/or post-baccalaureate work and meet minimum enrollment requirements outlined below. GTAs must maintain good academic standing with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher in all courses listed on the approved Program of Study. Conditionally admitted students are not eligible for assistantships. Each employing departmental unit or university office will review the qualifications of all appointees at the time of appointment to ensure compliance with existing university policies.

## Duties

A fundamental responsibility of all graduate assistants is to work closely with their supervisors in carrying out assigned duties and at the same time making satisfactory progress towards the completion of their degree programs. Duties may include a range of assignments; the exact duties will depend on the needs of the department, the background and qualifications of the graduate assistant, and the professional goals of the student. Work assignments should consider both the needs of the department and the graduate student's obligation to make satisfactory progress in his or her chosen academic program.

## Appointment

Offers of assistantships are contingent upon available funds and admission of the applicant to a graduate program and are made by the head of the unit that will employ the graduate assistant. Graduate assistantship appointments may be made for one or two academic terms, a summer term, or one academic year. The term of an appointment for a graduate assistant may be based on the period of available funding as stated in their initial appointment letter.

Graduate assistants may not work more than an average of 20 hours per week for the university (0.5 FTE). This includes all university appointments and on-campus work positions. The exact days and hours may vary and should be decided upon in coordination with the graduate assistant's supervisor prior to the start of the term.

## International Teaching Assistants

University of the Pacific requires international graduate students whose native language is not English to obtain English proficiency certification before serving as graduate teaching assistants. English proficiency certification can be achieved by submitting official test scores on university-approved English proficiency examinations (see admission section of graduate catalog for minimum scores). This requirement does not apply to a student who has earned a baccalaureate or higher degree from an accredited institution of higher education in the United States, or from an institution in another English-only speaking country.

## Compensation and Benefits

Salary ranges for GTAs are set by the respective School or College. Individual colleges or employing non-academic units may set the exact hourly rate for each assistantship based on the type of degree program and level of academic progression (e.g., pre- vs. post-candidacy for doctoral students), the assigned duties, and other relevant factors.

Graduate assistantships, like other student employee appointments, are considered to be "at will", temporary appointments and do not qualify for vacation, holiday, or seasonal pay. Social Security and Workers' Compensation insurance benefits, however, are provided to all student employees.

## Rights and Responsibilities

A graduate assistant is a student employee performing part-time work related to academic training in an occupational category that requires all incumbents to be students as a condition of employment. Accordingly, the first priority of a graduate assistant should be satisfactory progress in his/her academic program. At the same time, graduate assistants have responsibilities for satisfactory performance of employment duties.

Graduate assistants are responsible for becoming familiar with general academic procedures in the University Catalog, the Faculty Handbook, Tiger Lore, and other university policies. These documents are available on the university's website.

Graduate assistants have a right to exhaust all proper channels in resolving a grievance regarding any aspect of their employment. For graduate assistants, the channels, in order, are: the immediate supervisor, department chair or program director, the College/School Dean, the Graduate Dean, and the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs.

## Enrollment

Any student serving as a graduate assistant must be enrolled for at least three units, but not more than 12 units of graduate coursework during the term in which the work is performed. Note: graduate assistants enrolled in fewer than 4 units (part-time) may be subject to additional payroll taxes. Please contact Payroll for more information. Students serving as a GA during summer I, II, or III must be enrolled in at least one unit of graduate coursework during the term in which they hold a GA appointment. Individual programs/ departments/colleges may have additional credit hour requirements.

Advanced students, who have completed the formal coursework required for their degree and are enrolled in internship, research, seminar, thesis or dissertation courses only, may enroll in fewer than three units of graduate coursework. Individual programs/ departments/colleges may have additional enrollment requirements.

## Orientation and Training

All new GTAs and GRAs will complete University of the Pacific's mandatory online training including Title IX, FERPA, IT Security, and sexual harassment training, any required safety training, and undergo a period of orientation prior to beginning work. This orientation will be conducted by the employing department and include an overview of procedures, facilities, duties and university policies. GTAs must also participate in instructor training.

## Evaluation and Continuation of Employment

Each department is responsible for determining procedures for review and evaluation of graduate assistants and for informing graduate assistants of these procedures. The process of evaluation will vary by department and type of assistantship, and may include written assessment of work by an individual faculty member or supervisor, classroom visitation by designated faculty members, and student evaluations. The results of reviews and evaluations should be discussed with the graduate assistant.

In cases where remedial measures are indicated to improve the graduate assistant's performance, the graduate assistant must be informed of the performance deficiencies and the required changes to resolve the problem. Situations leading to recommendation of dismissal for cause should be described in writing to the graduate assistant, with a copy sent to the college/school dean or appropriate administrator.

Decisions regarding the reappointment of graduate assistants will be based on the needs of the institution and the past performance of the

graduate assistant. To be reappointed, graduate assistants must have demonstrated satisfactory progress in their academic programs and satisfactory performance of their employment duties at the university.

Graduate assistant appointments are "at-will," which means that the university or the graduate assistant may terminate the employment at any time. A graduate assistant's continued employment will be in jeopardy for reasons including, but not limited to, failure to meet requirements, loss of funding, unacceptable performance/conduct, or academic delinquency. All involuntary dismissals must be reviewed by Human Resources prior to implementing a dismissal.