

University Policies Related to Graduate Student Teaching Assistants, Teaching Associates, and Graduate Student Research Assistants - UTDPP1075

Policy Statement

Philosophy

Graduate Departments are designed to provide the opportunity for individuals to make the transition from students to professional scholars and practitioners. The appointment of a student as a Teaching or Research Assistant or Teaching Associate often provides a student with the necessary financial support to facilitate this transformation.

Teaching and Research Assistants and Teaching Associates are enrolled, full-time graduate students taking a minimum of nine approved semester hours each regular (long) semester and must be in academic good standing each semester they are appointed. Assistants and Associates are also employees of the University and are expected to meet specified teaching or research obligations and receive compensation for contributing to the teaching and/or research mission of the University. As employees of the University, Teaching Assistant, Teaching Associate, and Research Assistant appointees, when acting in their capacity as employees, are subject to the provisions of policies and procedures relating to employment, including the provisions and requirements governing intellectual property.

Graduate studies and assistantship responsibilities should reinforce each other. The appointments are intended to allow the student to gain valuable in-service experience in teaching, research, and other activities. Research projects should ideally lead to a thesis or dissertation. Teaching assignments should give greater insight into a student's discipline. In either case, a close relationship between the faculty supervisor and the student is vital to the promotion of the professional growth of the student.

Types of Graduate Assistantships

Three types of assistantships are offered:

1. Full-time (0.5 FTE personnel appointments) Graduate Student Teaching Assistants (TA) are employed a maximum of twenty hours per week to help meet the instructional needs of the university and are paid from faculty salary funds. Appointments and reappointments as Teaching Assistants are

- subject to: the availability of financial support, satisfactory academic progress, and performance review by their academic Department on a semester by semester basis. In consultation with, and under the direction of, an assigned supervisor, the Teaching Assistant will aid in the teaching of one or more courses
2. Full-time (0.5 FTE personnel appointments) Graduate Student Teaching Associates will be appointed, with prior written approval of the Executive Vice President and Provost (Provost), as the primary instructor of record for a course. The Teaching Associate serving as a primary instructor will work closely with an assigned faculty supervisor. To be eligible for appointment as the primary instructor of record for a course, Teaching Associates must be in the last phase of their doctoral program and be unconditionally enrolled in graduate study. Appointments and reappointments as Teaching Associates are subject to: the availability of financial support, satisfactory academic progress, and performance review by their academic Department on a semester by semester basis
 3. Full-time (0.5 FTE personnel appointments) Graduate Student Research Assistants (RA) are employed a maximum of twenty hours per week to assist the research efforts of the faculty in a capacity that relates to the student's educational goals. Research Assistants are paid from individual research awards or from externally funded contracts or grants. Research Assistant appointments and reappointments are subject to: the availability of financial support, satisfactory performance in and progress toward specified research assignments, and performance review on a semester by semester basis. The Principal Investigator or Project Director of the award will designate and supervise the research activities of the Research Assistant. Duties may include library searches, field work, laboratory experiments, and preparation of reports. The duties should provide an opportunity to acquire professional skills that complement his/her graduate Department and must not be for services unrelated to the student's educational Department or be clerical in nature.

Qualifications/Eligibility for Assistantship Appointments

To be eligible for appointment as a full-time graduate Teaching or Research Assistant or Teaching Associate, students must be unconditionally admitted to a graduate Department and be enrolled full-time in a graduate Department at U. T. Dallas. Students appointed as graduate assistants are required to maintain academic good standing as defined in the graduate catalog. Students on academic probation may not be appointed to, or remain on, an assistantship.

Exceptions may be approved by the Graduate Dean upon recommendation of the School Dean.

For teaching appointments, competency in spoken and written English is required. At the time of their initial appointments as Teaching Assistants or Teaching Associates, international students will be required to take an oral screening test designed to establish their English communication skill level. The outcome of the test will establish if the student will be required to enroll in, and subsequently pass, an English as a Second Language course (ESL) designed to prepare them for classroom duties and interactions with students. Students who are not excused from taking the ESL course by the Graduate Dean must pass the ESL course within two semesters of enrollment to qualify for continued appointment as a teaching assistant. Additional information about the screening test and the ESL course may be obtained from the Office of the Graduate Dean

A faculty committee in each School, Department, or Program must screen, rank, and recommend the appointment or reappointment of graduate assistants in that academic unit. Evaluation criteria for entering students must include, but not necessarily be limited to, previous academic record (degree, GPA), TOEFL scores if applicable, standardized examination scores if required by the program (GRE, GMAT), applicable teaching or work experience, letters of recommendation, and the Committee's judgment that the student has the potential for sustained achievement in the chosen field of graduate study.

Reappointment of students will also require: completion of a required TA orientation training program; a demonstrated high standard of performance in the areas of assigned duties in teaching and research; and satisfactory progress toward the graduate degree.

Appointment Procedures

Appointment of a graduate assistant requires recommendation by the Department Head (if applicable) and the Dean of the School and approval by the Dean of Graduate Studies. Teaching Associate appointments must also be approved by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost. All requests for initial appointment, reappointment, or change of status of graduate assistants must be initiated on the appropriate Human Resources forms, and must include the academic level of the student in the degree program at U. T. Dallas (Master's or Doctoral). For Teaching Assistants, the course or courses for which assistance is to be rendered should be specified on a semester by semester basis. For Research Assistants, the name of the faculty member whose research is to be assisted should be specified. For Teaching Associates, the name of the course and the name of the faculty member who will supervise the Teaching Associate

should be specified. In addition, all TA/RA's must complete, sign, and return to their Program or Department Head a statement confirming the receipt, understanding, and acceptance of the conditions contained in the form entitled "Responsibilities of Graduate Student Teaching Assistants, Teaching Associates and Research Assistants" (a sample is attached). A copy of the completed form must be submitted in the semester of initial appointment and at the beginning of each Fall semester thereafter. These copies should be maintained by the program personnel for an appropriate time period as defined by the records retention policy.

Because the terms of individual awards may vary from program to program, and even within a single program, the Department Head (if applicable) and/or School Dean are responsible for forwarding to each prospective graduate assistant an official letter of appointment specifying complete information on the terms of the assistantship, including:

1. title, fraction of effort, and length of appointment;
2. level of assistantship financial support;
3. minimum student course load;
4. description of duties;
5. name of supervisor;
6. information concerning the required TA orientation program and sessions for teaching appointees; and
7. deadline for acceptance.

If specific information on items 4 and 5 is unavailable at the time of appointment, the information should be furnished in writing no later than the first class day of the semester. Specific program policies, if any, governing graduate assistants should be communicated in writing.

Graduate assistants are normally appointed at 50% of full-time employee status for a total of 20 hours per week. Employment at less than 50% is permissible with a commensurate reduction in salary. Aggregate employment at more than 50% of full-time in a combined appointment is not permitted.

Length and Terms of Appointment and Reappointment to Assistantships

Initial appointments as Teaching or Research Assistants and Teaching Associates starting in the Fall semester may be for an academic year or for a single semester. Initial appointments starting in the Spring or Summer semester will terminate no later than the end of the Summer semester.

Teaching or Research Assistant and Teaching Associate reappointment is not automatic. Teaching or Research Assistants and Teaching Associates may be reappointed if it is determined that reappointment is to the benefit of the institution. Reappointment may be for an academic year or for a single semester. Failure to maintain qualifications for the appointment and/or meet the conditions of service, including performance standards may lead to the termination of an assistantship.

The maximum duration of assistantship support provided to students pursuing master's degrees is normally four semesters, whether regular (long) or summer semester. An additional semester of support may be provided for qualified students in degree options requiring more than 36 semester credits. It is recommended that students confer with their Department Head and/or School Dean to clearly establish/define such limits and other restrictions that may apply.

Subject to the availability of funds and continued reappointment by the Department or School, the maximum period of teaching assistantship support of students enrolled in a doctoral program is 12 semesters, whether regular (long) or summer semester or 100 doctoral level semester hours (whether taken at U. T. Dallas or other public institution in Texas). It is strongly recommended that students confer each semester with their Department Head (if applicable) and/or School Dean to clearly establish/define the status of their appointment, the number of doctoral hours of eligibility remaining for the student, and other restrictions that may apply.

Conditions of Service

As conditions of service (appointment and reappointment) the student must:

- be in good academic standing with the Department and/or School and the University;
- be making satisfactory and timely progress toward the appropriate degree;
- be enrolled on a full-time basis (minimum of 9 credit hour enrollment each regular (long) semester); the required course load in the summer session will be designated by the Dean of the School;
- have been evaluated by supervisor as having performed satisfactorily on assigned tasks in accordance with Department, School and University policies and procedures; and
- have been in compliance with all requirements specified in the form, "Responsibilities of Graduate Student Teaching Assistants, Teaching Associates, and Research Assistants."

Termination Within Appointment Period

If any of the qualifications for the appointment and/or the conditions of service, including performance standards are NOT satisfied, the Department Head (if applicable) and/or School Dean (in the case of Teaching Assistants or Teaching Associates) or the research supervisor (in the case of Research Assistants) will inform the student that grounds exist for termination of his/her assistantship, the nature of the grounds for termination, an explanation of the evidence to support the grounds, and provide the student with the opportunity to respond to an intent to terminate the assistantship.

If, after providing the student with an opportunity to respond, the Department Head (if applicable) and/or School Dean or research supervisor determines that the termination should proceed, he/she will then make a written request of the School Dean to proceed with the termination of the appointment. Upon review and concurrence, the School Dean will inform the student, in writing, of the decision to terminate the appointment. The termination will take effect on the date specified in the notification to the student from the School Dean.

Appeal of Termination of Assistantship

Any student holding a graduate student appointment at U. T. Dallas has the right to appeal a decision leading to the termination of an assistantship within the appointment period.

The appeal by the student must be made in writing to the Graduate Dean within 10 working days of the date of the notification of the termination of the student's assistantship. The request for reconsideration must be concise. The student is encouraged to attach copies of all relevant statements, documents (written or electronic material) on the matter in support of his/her appeal. The student should also include a clear statement of the student's desired outcome of the appeal process.

The Graduate Dean will convene a review panel consisting of a School Dean and a faculty member from schools other than that of the student and the Graduate Dean. The panel will review all submitted material, will meet with the supervisor who terminated the assistant and the assistant to provide the opportunity for additional clarifications as appropriate. The student will be notified in writing of the outcome of the appeal within 10 working days of the date the student's written appeal is received by the Graduate Dean. The decision of the review panel will be final.

Responsibilities

The graduate assistant is expected to work closely with the faculty supervisor in carrying out assigned teaching/research duties and also to make good progress toward the completion of the degree program. The graduate assistant is obligated to maintain and enforce standards of academic honesty and integrity and to report violations of these to the faculty supervisor. The graduate assistant is expected to keep well informed of Department, School, and institutional regulations and follow them consistently. The graduate assistant is expected to maintain all records pertinent to his or her assignment and to transfer them as and when requested by his or her supervisor.

Evaluation

Evaluation of performance is a critical part of the assistantship experience and should involve ongoing communications between the graduate assistant and faculty supervisor(s). The School, or, if delegated, Department, is responsible for establishing appropriate procedures for a formal annual evaluation which will help the assistant identify strengths and weaknesses. This evaluation will be a part of the assistant's departmental record. This evaluation will also provide an avenue for assistants to assess their assistantships from their own perspectives.

Supervisor's Responsibilities

The supervisor of a graduate assistant is expected to inform and advise the assistant directly in matters which pertain to performance. The supervisor should inform a Teaching Assistant or Teaching Associate specifically of all curricular matters in the course (e.g., content, methods, objectives, and standards) and provide advice in teaching techniques and teacher/student relations. The supervisor of a Research Assistant should establish research goals with the assistant which assure that the assistant has the opportunity to learn proper research procedures and techniques and which contribute to the assistant's growth as a scholar.

The supervisor is responsible for apprising the assistant of the nature of records to be kept in the course of performance of the assigned duties and of the disposition of these records required at the termination of the assignment. For Teaching Assistants and Teaching Associates, such records may include grade sheets, copies of quizzes or examinations, and student reports. For Research Assistants, they may include laboratory notebooks, primary data, and computer runs. These examples are not all-inclusive.

The supervisor is responsible for ongoing communication regarding the quality of the assistant's performance. The supervisor is the primary evaluator of this performance.

[Policy Form: PM76-III.25-4 Responsibilities of UT Dallas Graduate Student Teaching Assistants, Teaching Associates, and Research Assistants](#)

Policy History

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Policy Links

Permalink for this policy: <http://policy.utdallas.edu/utdpp1075>

Link to PDF version: <http://policy.utdallas.edu/pdf/utdpp1075>

Link to printable version: <http://policy.utdallas.edu/print/utdpp1075>