

Graduate handbook proposal

- I. January 30, 2017
- II. Graduate Student Council
- III. At present time, there is no standardized document that governs the procedures for hiring/retention/termination or job duties of the broadly termed “Graduate Assistant”.
- IV. This new proposal addresses the chief concern of creating a job description for “Graduate Assistants”, as well as creating specific sub-titles that describe more specifically whether the graduate student worker is serving in an administrative, research, or teaching role, and describes the expectations of each sub-title. Additionally, compensation and HR practices on how to deal with graduate assistants are established and standardized. In the future, if the University chooses to increase/retract benefits to graduate assistants, it will be much easier to do so if there is a standard practice rather than allowing each department to set its own individual rules.
- V. Full review

Graduate Assistantships

A. Eligibility

Students seeking employment as a graduate student at Arkansas State University must be fully admitted into the Graduate School, as their respective department of study, and enrolled as an Arkansas State University student. Students admitted under conditional admission or otherwise on probation will not be eligible to receive employment as a graduate assistant under any circumstance. If a student who was formerly on a conditional admission or probation meets the requirements to become fully enrolled, they will then be able to apply for employment as a graduate assistant.

Students in their fifth semester (not including Summer academic terms) will no longer be eligible for employment as a Graduate Assistant.

B. Job Duties and Responsibilities

All graduate students duly employed by Arkansas State University as a “Graduate Assistant” will be classified as any of the following: Graduate Administrative Support Assistant (GSA), Graduate Research Assistant (GRA), or Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA). Regardless of designation, all Graduate Assistants must serve on average twenty (20) hours per week.

Workload may vary on a department to department basis, but will always require no more or less than the equivalent of 20 hours per week average.

Graduate Administrative Support Assistants

Administrative assistants will be assigned by the department of employment to a professor or other administrative task to fulfill their 20 hour average requirement for each week. These tasks may include but not limited to: proctoring tests, grading assignments, answering phones,

monitoring online courses, etc. Each Administrative Assistant will report to the Chair of their department of employment, or the designated department head.

Graduate Research Assistants

Research assistants will be assigned by the department of employment to specific research projects to fulfill their 20 hour requirement each week. These tasks may include but not limited to: collecting and analyzing research data, prepare materials for project presentations, maintain accurate records and publish progress report, maintain budget for projects for which they are assigned, etc. Each Research Assistant will report to the supervising professor over the project for which they are assigned. Research assistants will also be required to maintain proper certification through the Institutional Review Board and other outside parties necessary for the research that they are performing.

Graduate Teaching Assistants

Teaching assistant will be assigned by the department of employment to teach and maintain classes to fulfill their 20 hour requirement average each week. This may include but not limited to: preparing and delivering lectures, compiling necessary course assessment data, grading assignments, complying with supervision from supervising professor, etc. Each Teaching Assistant will report to the professor assigned to supervise them for their teaching course load by the Chair of their department of employment.

C. Terms of Service

Graduate assistants will be appointed to one year contracts that will extend no further than the upcoming Fall semester and concluding no later than the end of the following Spring semester. These appointments add to a total of thirty-six (36) calendar weeks total maximum. Graduate assistants must be presently enrolled in six hours of graduate level coursework at all times in

order to retain employment. Failure to enroll or maintain in six graduate level hours will result in immediate dismissal from employment. Exceptions to this requirement can be made, provided that the only hours remaining for the graduate assistant are thesis or research hours required to complete their respective program.

Graduate assistants wishing to work over Summer I and Summer II academic terms may be offered an additional contract, as long as they are enrolled in graduate level hours in at least one of the two summer terms. Extensions through the Summer are on a departmental basis, and are not guaranteed, even if the graduate assistant is enrolled in courses over the summer.

In addition to the requirements regarding enrollment in hours, graduate assistants must also constantly maintain a 3.0 GPA in order to retain position. If the department to which the graduate assistant is assigned has a higher GPA requirement threshold, then the higher requirement will be upheld.

D. Termination/Resignation

At any time, the graduate assistant may choose to voluntarily terminate their employment with the University at any time if necessary. A formal letter of resignation must be submitted to the appropriate supervisor for a resignation to occur. Should said resignation occur during the duration of an academic semester, all financial compensation and other benefits (such as tuition waiver) will be prorated to the day in which the resignation takes effect.

Following a poor evaluation or repeated disciplinary issue, a supervisor may choose to involuntarily terminate employment of a graduate student. Disciplinary action will follow the prescribed Progressive Discipline policy (Arkansas State University Staff Handbook page 14). If a Graduate Assistant has repeated poor performance reviews, they will be subjected to the same Progressive Discipline policy as outlined above. Some incidents that are deemed “severe” may

be cause for immediate termination, and bypass the Progressive Discipline policy. Discretion of what is to be deemed “severe” is left to the associated supervisor.

E. Evaluation

Graduate assistants shall undergo an evaluation procedure at the end of each academic semester established by each respective department to evaluate the performance of their duties throughout the course of their employment. If the department chair (or other supervisor) determines that the graduate assistant’s performance has been below standard, the department chair or supervisor may elect to terminate the graduate assistant’s employment following a poor performance review.

F. Additional Expectations

Graduate assistants, along with any other employee of the University, must maintain a standard of good conduct at all times, even while off-duty or not on University property. Graduate assistants that engage in behavior that can be seen as an embarrassment to the University or the department to which they are attached may be reprimanded or terminated depending on the severity of the alleged offence. Should a case of dismissal be necessary following a confirmed negative allegation, the department will not be constrained to the performance review procedure outlined above in order to dismiss the graduate assistant in question.

G. Compensation

The total stipend provided for each graduate assistant will be set by the University every year, and be awarded on a per-semester basis. Tuition waivers are not provided by the University, but may be provided by the department to which the graduate assistant is assigned. Tuition waivers are determined by individual departments, and may vary from position to position. All graduate

Assistant positions are considered “exempt”, and are thus ineligible for receiving overtime pay.

Graduate Assistant positions are also ineligible for accruing vacation and sick time.

Students categorized under “out of state” and “international” designations will have their tuition readjusted to meet “in state” tuition rates. No other forms of compensation will be provided by the University, but can be selectively offered by individual departments or other areas of assignment. Other forms of compensation outside of the University may be provided on a department to department basis as they each see fit.

H. Title IX Eligibility

Like all other employable positions on campus, Graduate Assistants are subject to Federal rules and regulations regarding sexual, racial, age, or any other kind of discriminatory behavior towards an employee or student. All Graduate Assistants will be subjected to disciplinary action for engaging in any type of discriminatory behavior.