Graduate Assistantships & Fellowships

- Tuition Waiver (p. 1)
- Graduate Assistantships (p. 1)
- Types of Graduate Assistantships (p. 1)
- Annual Evaluation of Graduate Teaching Assistants and Doctoral Students (p. 2)
- Background Check Policy (p. 3)
- Graduate Fellowships (p. 3)
- Graduate Assistantship Workload Policy (p. 3)

Tuition Waiver

Non-Alabama resident graduate assistants may receive a waiver of the out-of-state portion of their tuition if they are on at least a 25 percent graduate assistantship (new appointments beginning in Fall 2013 must be at 33 percent) and are paid a minimum monthly stipend set each year by the provost. Such graduate assistants who have been on assistantship for consecutive fall and spring semesters are eligible to have the out-of-state portion of their tuition waived for the summer semester whether or not they are on assistantship that semester. Students will need to contact the Graduate School to have this waiver applied.

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistant appointments are temporary. Continuation depends upon availability of funds, level of enrollment, and research needs. Salaries are paid in accordance with the budget policies and payroll procedures of the university. The Board of Trustees is obligated to pay certain fixed charges against the institution and thereafter pay salaries in full insofar as funds are available. If for any reason beyond the control of the Board of Trustees funds are not available, salaries will be prorated.

Each graduate assistant must be in a degree-seeking program and registered in the classification of MST, EDS, PHD, or GPR. The student also must be registered for at least one course (during each academic term of the assistantship), must satisfy the minimum course load specifications of the individual departments and must be making satisfactory progress toward the degree.

Workloads for graduate assistants are defined on the basis of a normal teaching load or the equivalent time in other duties as determined by each department head and the dean of the school or college in which the assistant is employed. For example, a one-third workload is one-third of a normal teaching load. Graduate students may hold multiple assistantships and the assistantships may come from different units on campus, but together they cannot add up to more than a 100 percent appointment. Maximum course loads for graduate assistants are determined by individual departments. It is recommended that graduate students working more than half-time not carry a full academic load.

Requirements that graduate students register for hours not included in the plan of study as a condition of employment or to enhance credit hour production for administrative purposes are inappropriate. Similarly, requiring hours on the plan of study beyond the degree requirements established by the Graduate Faculty for such administrative purposes is also inappropriate unless the additional requirements are required by university policy.

International graduate students on F1 visas cannot hold a greater than 50 percent work appointment. International graduate students on F2 visas cannot hold a work appointment. Multiple assistantships for international graduate students cannot add up to more than a 50 percent work appointment.

International graduate teaching assistants who are assigned to scheduled lecture or laboratory sections must first be certified in spoken English proficiency. Certification may be attained through a minimum score of 50 on the Test of Spoken English (TSE) or a 23 on the speaking section of the Internet Based TOEFL offered by the Educational Testing Service or approval by the director of the English as a Second Language Program (ESL). Applicants who hold a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution whose instruction is in English may be exempted from this requirement.

Types of Graduate Assistantships

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

A Graduate Teaching Assistant must meet eligibility requirements and be supervised by an appropriate graduate faculty member. The GTA’s primary responsibility is to support the instructional mission of the University. The GTA’s responsibilities may include, for example: classroom or laboratory teaching; advising or mentoring of students; proctoring exams; grading papers, homework, and/
or projects; preparing instructional materials; or providing other general assistance in the instructional process. A GTA may also be assigned primary responsibilities in an extension, outreach, or service role for which those responsibilities support the instructional mission of the university. GTAs may not be given duties to support faculty research or duties primarily clerical in nature. Whatever their instructional responsibilities, GTAs must be supervised by a faculty member who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating their performance at least on an annual basis. GTAs who have no prior teaching experience must be given some form of training before being allowed to teach. Any GTA with primary responsibility for a course must have a minimum of 18 semester hours of graduate course credit in that field of instruction.

*GTAs are not permitted to teach courses numbered 6000 or above, although they may assist with laboratories for such courses. Additionally, they may not teach or assist with a course in which they are enrolled.

**Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs)**

A Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) must meet eligibility requirements and be supervised by an appropriate graduate faculty member. The GRA’s primary responsibility is to provide general support to the University’s research mission. Services provided by a GRA may include, for example: assisting faculty members in a research or creative activity; performing degree-related professional or administrative services that support the research, instruction, professional development, or outreach missions of the University; performing research related to the objectives of an extramural grant or contract; developing and evaluating instructional materials or curricula; or assuming responsibility for designated scholarly endeavors. Since many GRA’s assist with projects funded by external grants or contracts, the GRA’s responsibilities may or may not be related directly to the student’s thesis or dissertation. The faculty supervisor determines the students’ specific duties and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the GRA’s performance at least on an annual basis.

“Performing degree-related professional or administrative services” does not include jobs that are outside of the student’s field of study.

**Graduate Extension Assistants (GEAs)**

A Graduate Extension Assistant must meet eligibility requirements and be supervised by an appropriate graduate faculty member or extension agent. GEAs are responsible for various kinds of extension work and interaction with the public. The various branches of the Extension Service award these assistantships. A faculty member or extension agent should be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the performance of GEAs at least on an annual basis.

**Graduate Assistants (GAs)**

Graduate Assistants must meet eligibility requirements and be supervised by a faculty member, administrator, or other appropriate university employee. GAs are responsible for duties other than teaching, research, or extension. Tuition waivers for graduate assistants not engaged in teaching, research, or extension are subject to taxation and income tax withholding. These responsibilities can be varied and could include performing administrative duties not related to the GA’s field of study or the instructional or research missions of the university. Whatever their responsibilities, GAs should be supervised by a faculty member, administrator, or other appropriate university employee who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating their performance at least on an annual basis.

**Annual Evaluation of Graduate Teaching Assistants and Doctoral Students**

**Policy:** Effective beginning Fall 2014, the Graduate School will require that each department conduct -- at least on an annual basis -- an evaluation of the progress of each Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) and each graduate student enrolled in a doctoral program.

**Reporting:** Annually, each department will report to the Graduate School, confirming that the evaluation of all GTAs and doctoral students has been completed. In addition, the department will provide the Graduate School with a summary report of all instances in which a GTA or doctoral student has received an unsatisfactory review.

**Expectations:** Each department will be responsible for developing procedures (if not already in place) for the annual evaluation of the progress of GTAs and doctoral students. Following guidelines for best practices, the review should include at least the following:

- A student self-report and assessment of academic progress; teaching (if applicable); and research (if applicable) [prepared in advance of the review conference];
- A report prepared by the student’s advisor (and preferably at least one other faculty member, e.g., a member of the student’s advisory committee) that assesses the student’s academic progress; teaching (if applicable); and research (if applicable) that identifies strengths and weaknesses, and establishes expectations for the next year. The report may be augmented by reports from teaching supervisors or other members of the student’s advisory committee;
- An opportunity for the student to discuss the report in person.
• A signed copy of the written assessment should be placed in the student’s file and a copy given to the student.

**Background Check Policy**

The Graduate School requires that all graduate student employees (including hourly paid) have an approved consumer report and/or investigative consumer report (background check) as a condition for appointment. The information contained in these reports may be used to deny an individual employment or continued employment with Auburn University. The background report and its contents are deemed private and confidential and shall be disclosed only for the purposes described in “Procedures for Securing Background Reports for Graduate Students Before Hiring” to those University employees who have a need to know, or as otherwise required or permitted by law. This policy is effective for all graduate student employees whose new appointments begin on or after January 1, 2014.

**Graduate Fellowships**

Auburn University provides in-state tuition fellowships to most of its students holding graduate assistantships. Though administered through the Graduate School, applicants should contact the specific academic departments concerning eligibility and availability.

**Graduate Assistantship Workload Policy**

Graduate students may not normally hold an appointment of more than 50 percent, whether the appointment is from a single unit or multiple units. This policy also applies to internship appointments (whether called an internship or externship). Graduate students may hold multiple assistantships (assistantships and/or hourly employment) from one or more units on campus, but the cumulative appointments cannot add up to more than a 0.50 FTE (20 hours per week) appointment. This allows the students the time needed to devote to their academic programs. An exception is automatically allowed in the special case of a graduate assistant assigned to teach one four credit course and one three/four credit course. In such cases, appointments will be made at 0.58/0.67 FTE, respectively. Other exceptions may be requested, with compelling academic justification, in writing to the Provost by the dean. For multiple assistantships from different units, coordinating approval memos from the home unit and the hiring units are required. Please note that federal regulations limit the cumulative appointment for international graduate students to no more than a 0.50 FTE (20 hours per week) appointment.