ACADEMIC INFORMATION FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS (GA'S)

A prospective graduate/doctoral assistant must be enrolled as a regular, degree-seeking student in The Graduate College. Graduate/doctoral assistants may be employed as teaching assistants, instructional assistants, research assistants, or graduate assistants in either an exempt or non-exempt status from the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). The information below can also be found in UPPS 07.07.06.

Types of Graduate Assistantships

- **Graduate Teaching Assistants and Doctoral Teaching Assistants (GTA/DTA)** are employed by an academic department, paid from faculty salaries, and as the "teacher of record" for an organized undergraduate class. Graduate teaching assistants and doctoral teaching assistants receive a faculty contract for a semester or the academic year, are paid on a monthly basis, and are exempt from The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) under the learned professional exemption.

- **Graduate Instructional Assistants and Doctoral Instructional Assistants (GIA/DIA)** are employed by an academic department, paid from faculty salaries, but are not reported as the "teacher of record." Graduate instructional assistants and doctoral instructional assistants are responsible for a specific group of students (typically undergraduate students) and assign some portion of these students' grades. If graduate students are assigned as instructional assistants in graduate courses, they cannot grade other students' work nor have access to their grades. In rare circumstances, the dean of The Graduate College will allow an exception for doctoral instructional assistants assigned to master's level classes, provided there is no conflict of interest. The academic department may pay graduate instructional assistants' salaries for those assisting in the operation of a lab or an activity or recitation group from course fees collected for this purpose. Graduate instructional assistants and doctoral instructional assistants are appointed for a semester or the academic year, paid on a monthly basis, and are exempt from the FLSA under the learned professional exemption.

- **Graduate Research Assistants and Doctoral Research Assistants (GRA/DRA)** are employed by a department or university office and may receive pay from grant or university funds. Chapter 10 of the US Department of Labor's Field Operation Handbook defines research assistants as students "engaged in research in the course of obtaining an advanced degree and the research is performed under the supervision of a member of the faculty in a research environment provided by the institution under a grant or contract." If employed on a grant, the work performed must directly relate to the objectives of the grant. Graduate research assistants and doctoral research assistants can be appointed for a semester, the academic year, or the duration of a research project or any portion thereof, and paid on a monthly basis. They are exempt from the FLSA under the graduate research exemption, as provided in the June 28, 1994 DOL opinion letter #1263.

- **Graduate Assistants and Doctoral Assistants (GA/DA)** are employed by a department or university office and may receive pay from grant or university funds. Responsibilities may include research (not under the supervision of a faculty member), technical assistance, and institutional support. To avoid conflicts of interests, graduate and doctoral assistants cannot have access to records of graduate students of their degree-granting department. Graduate assistants and doctoral assistants who have access to records must be Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) trained and sign a confidentiality agreement. Within this role, there are two types of categories:
  
  - **Exempt** - A graduate/doctoral assistant is considered exempt if the job is not subject to the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Human Resource Office is responsible for determining the exemption/non-exemption status of a position. These assistants are required to record working times on an exception basis and are not eligible for paid leave, including holidays.
  
  - **Non-Exempt** - A graduate/doctoral assistant is non-exempt if the job is subject to the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Human Resource Office is responsible for determining whether students need to record working times on an exception basis and are not eligible for paid leave including holidays. Non-exempt students who work over 40 hours in a week will be compensated at time and one-half. Graduate assistants cannot hold an exempt and non-exempt position concurrently.

Academic Expectations

All assistants must maintain a minimum 3.0 Texas State GPA in course work leading toward completion of a graduate degree.

Course Load

The minimum course load required during a fall/spring term of employment is nine graduate semester hours. Students who enrolled in nine graduate semester hours during the prior spring and fall semesters (or with an approved exception on file) are not required to enroll during the summer; otherwise enrollment in three graduate hours is required for the summer term. Assistants taking more than 12 graduate semester hours during the fall/spring terms must have approval from the dean of The Graduate College. Similarly, assistants taking more than six graduate semester hours per summer session must have approval from the dean of The Graduate College.

Required Teaching Assistantship Courses

As a condition of employment, all GTAs, DTA, GIA's, and DIA's must complete a total of three hours of professional development course work. The course titles for the required in-service teaching courses vary by department. Some departments offer one three-hour course, some departments offer a two-hour and one-hour course for a combination of three hours, and other departments offer a one-hour course to be taken three times. Assistants enroll in the course offered by the department in which they are employed during their first term of employment and continue to enroll in subsequent terms until the three-hour requirement is met, as applicable. **Students may not enroll in this course work beyond the required three hours.** Up to a total of three semester hours may be used with other graduate courses to satisfy the minimum nine semester hours of enrollment required as a condition of employment. The University administration will cover the fees and tuition for the required teaching assistantship course (up to a total of three semester credit hours only).

Allowable Work Hours

During the fall and spring terms, assistants may work up to 50% (20 hours per week) full time equivalent (FTE). An exception request with justification from the graduate advisor or department chair approved
by the dean of The Graduate College must be on file with The Graduate College for employment requested over 50% FTE. Only under exceptional circumstances may the dean of The Graduate College approve up to a maximum of 75% FTE (30 hours per week) for non-international students. The graduate dean may approve up to a maximum of 75% FTE (30 hours per week) during the fall and spring terms for non-international students. International student appointments may not exceed a combined total of 50% FTE. International graduate/doctoral assistants cannot be employed more than 50% FTE during the fall and spring terms.

Teaching Load for Graduate/Doctoral Teaching Assistants
The usual semester hour teaching load during the fall or spring term is six semester hours or two classes. The usual semester hour teaching load during a six-week or eight-week summer session is one course (up to a maximum of four hours). A twelve-week summer session carries a normal teaching load of six hours. The dean of The Graduate College must approve any exceptions to these teaching loads.

These policies are designed to protect the graduate/doctoral assistant from bearing an unfair employment and course load, which could impede the timely completion of the degree. Refer to UPPS 07.07.06 (http://www.txstate.edu/effective/UPPS/upps-07-07-06.html), Salaried Graduate Assistant Employment Procedures, for more detailed information regarding salaried graduate student employment procedures.

Assistantship Orientation
Most departments conduct one or more orientation sessions for new assistants. Newly-hired assistants should inquire about orientation attendance requirements with the department or university office at the time they apply for employment.

Academic Eligibility Requirements
To see a detailed list of academic and enrollment requirements needed to be eligible for a specific assistantship position, please view The Graduate College’s guide.

How to Apply for a Graduate Assistantship
Applications for assistantships should be made directly to the department or university office following their application procedure. It is also possible to apply for certain assistantship positions online through Career Services at Jobs4Cats (http://www.careerservices.txstate.edu/resources/jobs4cats.html).

Selection and Appointment
Offers of assistantships are contingent on available funds and admission of the applicant to a degree-seeking graduate program. Graduate assistantship appointments range from a four and one half month period during a summer term to a nine-or twelve-month period during the fall or spring term. The term of an appointment for a Research Assistant may be based on the period of available grant funding. Renewal is at the discretion of the department or university office for which the student is employed. In all cases, the account manager or the manager’s designee will decide who is hired in accordance with the qualifications and standards required for the position.

Supervision and Evaluation
Teaching assistants are the “teacher of record” for the courses assigned; however they are under the direct supervision of a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline. Instructional assistants are supervised by the Instructor of Record or Laboratory Coordinator of the courses assigned. Research assistants are usually supervised by the faculty member or office supervisor with whom they work. All assistantship positions undergo regular evaluation as required by the department in which they are employed.

Salaries and Benefits
Assistants are paid in accordance with the University Pay Plan salary schedule which can be viewed at http://www.hr.txstate.edu/univpayplan/student.html.

Eligibility for In-state Tuition
Certain assistantship types may qualify for tuition waivers through the office of Student Business Services. For more details, please refer to the Tuition Waivers and Exceptions list here: http://www.sbs.txstate.edu/students/waivers-exemptions.html.

Health Insurance
Assistants, employed at least half-time (50% FTE) for a minimum period of four and a half consecutive months, are eligible for employer group insurance plans administered by the Human Resources Benefit Office. Assistants may choose between the Student Insurance Plan administered by the Student Health Center and the Employer Group Insurance Program administered by the Human Resources Office. Also, some assistants may already be covered by insurance outside the university and, therefore, may choose not to enroll in a health insurance option offered by Texas State. Assistants should refer to the comparison summary on the Human Resources Office web site in order to make an educated decision.

Non-Discrimination
No person shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under, any program or activity sponsored or conducted by Texas State University on any basis prohibited by applicable law, including race, color, age, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.