

POLICY ON GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

This policy is intended to provide a guide to the appointment, classification and evaluation of Graduate Assistants.

I. DEFINITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. "Graduate Assistant" (Classification 2355) is a graduate student who is appointed as a University employee to provide the student with an apprenticeship experience and with financial support for graduate education. Graduate Assistants serve at the pleasure of the president. Graduate Assistants are not members of the Unit 3 (Faculty) Bargaining Unit.
2. Appointment as a Graduate Assistant does not confer any rights to permanent appointment to any person. The length of service of a Graduate Assistant does not alter the temporary nature of the appointment or confer additional rights upon him/her.
3. Graduate Assistants may be appointed outside their own department or graduate program.
4. A full time assistantship is defined as a maximum of twenty (20) hours per week of service. Full-time Graduate Assistants may not be appointed concurrently in other CSU classifications. Part-time Graduate Assistants may be appointed to another student classification up to a combined total of twenty (20) hours per week.
5. Appointments to the Graduate Assistant classification may be allowed for any fraction up to full time (20) hours per week) as long as the fraction is exactly equivalent to a two (2) decimal FTE without rounding.
6. The responsibilities of a Graduate Assistant are to be determined by normal departmental procedures. Responsibilities, under the close supervision of a faculty member, typically include:
 - a. assisting the faculty member in the preparation of course materials and instructional aids
 - b. setting up laboratory experiments and equipment
 - c. providing research and library assistance
 - d. tutoring in small group or individual situations
 - e. supervising informal study areas or homework solving sessions
 - f. assisting in the evaluation of student examinations and assignments
 - g. assist in distance learning
 - h. maintaining office hours to provide direct contact to students and to clarify course material or course content for students
 - i. performing other duties directly related to the instructional program which require knowledge and skills beyond those generally possessed by undergraduate assistants
6. Graduate Assistants shall not be responsible for the instructional content of a course, for selection of student assignments, for planning of examinations, or for determining the term grade for students, nor are they assigned responsibility for instructing the

entire enrollment of a class, or for providing the entire instruction of a group of students enrolled in a class.

7. Graduate Assistants shall not be assigned as the instructor of record
8. Departments are responsible to inform each Graduate Assistant of university and trustee policies that relate to his/her assignment and to assist the Graduate Assistant in the implementation of these policies.
9. The responsibilities of a Graduate Assistant shall be described in the offer of appointment.
10. In the event a graduate assistant has an extended absence or does not complete the assigned work, then the salary may be docked.

II. NOMINATION PROCEDURE

1. All nominations for appointment to a position of Graduate Assistant to perform any academic service under the auspices of California State University, Fresno shall be made only after a complete review of the qualifications of the individual and upon the recommendation of the appropriate department or unit.
2. The opportunity to apply for a graduate assistantship shall be made available to all graduate students in the department, including eligible applicants. Each department and/or program shall publicize the opportunity to all graduate students and applicants in the program. Each applicant for appointment as a Graduate Assistant shall complete and sign the form "Application for Graduate Assistant or Teaching Associate".¹
3. Departments shall acknowledge receipt of all applications for graduate assistantships.
4. Review of applications for graduate assistantships shall follow normal department appointment policies. At a minimum, the departmental procedures shall include a review of applications by the program graduate committee or other appropriate committee in the department.
5. Prospective graduate assistants shall be approved on the basis of their qualifications and academic standing.
6. If a department recommends an individual for appointment as a Graduate Assistant, a completed "Application for Graduate Assistant and Teaching Associate" and a "Teaching Associate and Graduate Assistant" nomination form shall be sent to the Dean. After review by the dean, the nomination **shall be** reviewed by the Dean of the Division of Graduate Studies and Academic Personnel Services.
7. Access to application materials is limited to persons authorized access in the conduct of University business. Individual applicants shall not have access to these files.
8. Applications for graduate assistantships are to be treated with the strictest confidentiality. All deliberations on applications shall be conducted in executive session and remain confidential as provided by law. **Violation of this confidentiality is considered to be unprofessional conduct and is grounds for disciplinary action.**

¹ Departments are encouraged to maintain a pool of qualified applicants to fill positions when emergencies arise.

III. APPOINTMENT

1. All appointments shall be based solely on ability and fitness for the position to be filled. For specific qualifications, see Section IV below.
2. The Provost or designee shall make all Graduate Assistant appointments. No other person is authorized to appoint Graduate Assistants, nor to modify or revise the provisions of any appointment or offer of appointment. No other person is authorized to make statements, either oral or written which may be construed to be commitments to appointment by the university.
3. Appointments to the position of Graduate Assistant may be made on a month by month or a semester / term basis. the length of the appointment shall be noted in the offer of appointment. Any adjustments must be made in workload rather than in date of appointment. The only exception is when a graduate assistant must be replaced because of illness, resignation, etc.
4. Contracts of Graduate Assistants are conditional upon progress toward the advanced degree, budget and enrollment. Subsequent appointments are based upon prior performance as a Graduate Assistant and progress toward the advanced degree. The length of the appointment shall be noted in the position offer.
5. The official offer to a Graduate Assistant shall also indicate that the appointment automatically expires at the end of the period stated and does not establish a right to subsequent appointments or any further appointment rights. No other notice shall be provided.

IV. QUALIFICATIONS AND REMUNERATION

1. Initial appointment to the position of Graduate Assistant requires:
 - a. possession of a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited university
 - b. For graduate students with conditional classified standing in the discipline, current enrollment of at least six (6) units in graduate study in a graduate program is required.²
 - c. For graduate students already matriculating in a graduate program, a pattern of significant and satisfactory progress toward the completion of the graduate degree is required.
 - d. communication skills appropriate to responsibilities of the graduate assistantship
 - e. evidence of subject matter competence
 - f. other qualifications as necessary to perform assigned duties.
2. Credential students, unclassified students, and graduate students outside the CSU, are ineligible for a graduate assistantship.
3. In addition to the qualifications listed above, reappointment to the position of Graduate Assistant requires a pattern of significant progress in accomplishing graduate degree requirements. At a minimum, this means
 - a. that the applicant is earning a 3.0 grade point average or better during each semester of appointment

² Graduate Assistants must be enrolled or matriculating in the department where service is being rendered.

- b. that the applicant is enrolled in, and completes, two (2) courses or six (6) units of equivalent graduate level work toward the graduate degree including work toward the completion of the thesis / project each semester (withdrawal from a course(s) after the fourth week does not constitute acceptable progress)
 - c. that the applicant completes all prerequisite coursework in the first semester of appointment unless such prerequisites as listed by the department on the "Graduate Admission Request" cannot be completed in a single semester
 - d. that the applicant meets the requirements for and achieves both classified standing and advancement to candidacy in a timely manner (i.e. have achieved classified graduate standing, advancement to candidacy, and other degree requirements according to University policy announced in the General Catalog).
4. All approved appointments are rechecked by the Division of Graduate Studies after the add/drop deadline to verify continued eligibility.
 5. The Dean of the Division of Graduate Studies is responsible for verifying the eligibility and compliance of all applicants.
 6. Graduate Assistants are compensated according to the campus schedule for Graduate Assistant Stipends. Initial appointment to a graduate assistantship is normally at Level I of the schedule. Reappointment of a Graduate Assistant shall be at the same or higher salary level as in the previous appointment.³
 7. Since the Graduate Assistant classification is a student classification, graduate assistants are not provided benefits.⁴

V. EVALUATION

1. Departments should prepare a written assessment of the performance of a Graduate Assistant at the end of each semester. This evaluation shall be placed in the academic file of the Graduate Assistant.
2. Departments should provide the Graduate Assistant who has completed his/her degree an opportunity to assess his/her experience in this apprenticeship. As part of that assessment, the department chair should conduct an exit interview for each Graduate Assistant. The information obtained from these assessments should be used to evaluate the overall apprenticeship program in the department.

VI. PRIVILEGES AND BENEFITS

Graduate Assistants are covered under State Workers Compensation.

³ It continues to be the case that a graduate assistant should be required to meet his/her assignment without regard to the specific number of hours required similar to faculty and other exempt employees. The salary rate is for the term of the assignment, not an hourly rate.

⁴ Graduate Assistants are eligible to purchase student health coverage through health and psychological services at group rates.

VII. DISTRIBUTION

The department shall provide a copy of this policy to all Graduate Assistants at the time of their initial appointment.

Reference: CSU Classification and Qualification Standards: Graduate Assistant

Link to: http://www.calstate.edu/tier3/HR-Adm/pdf/E99/Graduate_Assistant.pdf

Technical Letter (HR 2001 – 20)

<http://www.calstate.edu/HRAdm/pdf2001/HR2001-20.pdf>

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