

# ASSISTANTSHIPS

The assistantship program is predicated on the idea that graduate students, given an opportunity to assist the faculty, provide a service to the institution and also gain valuable experience through this work in association with the faculty. Appointments to assistantships are made by the dean of The College of Graduate Studies only upon recommendation by the student's academic department. In those instances, in which the student indicates acceptance of an assistantship award after April 15, the student may not accept another appointment without first obtaining formal release for this purpose.

Applications for assistantships must be accompanied or preceded by application for admission to the College of Graduate Studies. All applicants and current students with superior credentials including first-year international graduate students may apply for graduate assistantships.

Graduate assistants may be assigned to instructional, research, and/or other academic duties as determined by the department in which the assistant is appointed and as approved by the dean of The College of Graduate Studies.

**Graduate Assistant (GA)** A GA is normally assigned duties primarily focused on the conduct of research/scholarly activity. A GA may be assigned teaching duties, but should not be the instructor of record for a course. Appointment is typically for the Fall and Spring semesters of an academic year.

**Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)** A GRA is only assigned duties focused on the conduct of research/scholarly activity and will typically receive a twelve-month appointment.

**Graduate Assistant/Intern (GA/I)** A GA/I is a special category of graduate assistant, designated as a graduate assistant/intern (GA/I), which provides opportunities for University offices or departments, community companies or agencies, or other appropriate external sponsors to involve graduate students as academic assistants/interns in "real life" experiences related to their fields of study. The department/agency of service will provide funding for a stipend and fringe to the University. The University will pay the student through the normal stipend process. The GA/I will be expected to work in the internship work environment 20 hours per week.

**Teaching Assistant (TA)** A TA will only be assigned duties focused on instruction and may be the instructor of record for a one regularly scheduled lower division undergraduate class or classes.

Note: Additional academic services to the academic program in which the student is enrolled may be appropriate for all assistantship appointments.

A student appointed as a graduate assistant (GA, GRA, TA and GA/I) or fellow will be paid a stipend and fringe benefits that include:

- Remission of up to 36sh of instructional fees during the combined fall and spring semesters and up to 12sh for the summer term (for graduate courses required to complete a single degree program)
- Remission of the parking permit fee.
- Nonresident tuition surcharge
- Music performance fees (if applicable)

For GA/I appointments the department/agency of service will fund the stipend and fringe. A stipend will be paid to the student through the normal stipend process for GA/I appointments.

Stipends are subject to federal, state and city taxes. The fringe benefit or a portion of the fringe benefit may also be subject to taxes. GAs and fellows can select, if they wish, to participate in Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS).

Assistantship/fellowship appointments require 20 hours per week for 16 weeks for each fall and spring semester (including exam week) and 14 weeks for the summer semester (for 12-month appointments) for duties to be assigned by the department chair. Typically the assistantship/fellowship

schedule follows the YSU academic calendar. In some cases the schedule may need to be changed to accomplish the duties to be performed. In such cases, the department chairperson will provide written notice of the change to the student affected and to the Dean of Graduate Studies. Graduate assistants/fellows assigned to classroom or laboratory duties are under the direct supervision of a full-service faculty member who will retain full responsibility for the maintenance of high academic and pedagogical standards.

The Chair of the department will be responsible for assessing the oral proficiency in English. Students who do not achieve a satisfactory rating will not be permitted to teach, and will be assigned non-teaching duties (research, grading, etc.) International graduate students, who have been appointed as teaching assistants, including graduate assistants who are assisting with teaching duties, are required to demonstrate oral proficiency in English. The speaking subsection of a standardized test will be utilized in the assessment process. For a TA, a minimum of 23 on the TOEFL is considered satisfactory; a score of 7 is considered satisfactory on the IBT and for students completing Duolingo a review of the interview is required to assess oral proficiency.

Graduate students who are in provisional status because of undergraduate coursework deficiencies cannot be appointed as teaching assistants until the required coursework is completed. Such students can be considered for research appointments. Exceptions to this policy may be considered and must be reviewed and approved by the dean of the College of Graduate Studies.

To remain eligible for the assistantship, an appointee must discharge his or her duties satisfactorily and maintain good academic standing. An appointee must maintain enrollment of a minimum of six (6) semester hours of degree-credit coursework for each fall and spring semester - nine (9) semester hours is recommended. In addition, students appointed through the summer terms must also enroll in at least six (6) semester hours. With the advisor's approval, graduate coursework that is not part of the graduate assistant's degree program may be counted toward the minimum enrollment required. Approval to carry more than 18 semester hours or fewer than the minimum required hours in any semester/term may be granted by the dean of The College of Graduate Studies upon clear justification by the student's academic program director or advisor.

Graduate assistants shall not hold other full-time employment but may accept occasional or temporary employment outside the University during the term of the assistantship, subject to the approval of the department chair or the program director of the department. Other employment on the YSU campus requires the approval of the dean of The College of Graduate Studies.

## Guidelines for Graduate Assistant Leave

Circumstances occasionally occur that prevent graduate assistants (including GAs, TAs, and GAIs) from performing the duties of their appointment. Consistent with Youngstown State University's effort to support all members of our community, these guidelines seek to reduce the professional and personal stresses that can develop when graduate assistants encounter extenuating circumstances that warrant a temporary absence from their assistantship duties. The purpose of these guidelines is to outline how instances of personal and/or family illness, injury, childbirth or adoption, and other agreed upon and valid reasons for absence should be addressed by the unit funding the assistantship. These guidelines are intended to ensure that the graduate assistant support be maintained to the extent possible during an approved absence. In the cases of foreseeable events, the graduate assistant should inform his/her direct assistantship supervisor as soon as the circumstances and dates of needed leave are known. For unforeseeable events, notification should be made as soon as possible once the need arises.

It should be noted that leave requests may be jeopardized or denied for reasons including, but not limited to, multiple leave requests, unsatisfactory performance levels, evidence of dishonesty, and insufficient documentation. Furthermore, these guidelines pertain only to issues related to the individual as a graduate assistant. There are separate attendance policies for the individual as a graduate assistant at YSU.

Short-term graduate assistant absences may be requested for valid periods of absences which typically span less than two weeks in duration. In these instances, the graduate assistant should make the request to his/her direct assistantship supervisor as promptly as possible, so that coverage of duties during the requested short-term absence can be addressed. Reasonable requests for short-term absences can typically be approved with all graduate assistant benefits maintained. The graduate assistant should work with the direct assistantship supervisor and the department chair to ensure that the time can be made up in a reasonable manner through creative ways such as working up to an extra five hours per week, working over university breaks, etc. The graduate assistants, the direct assistantship supervisor, and the department chair should agree to this plan in writing through the Short Term/ Extended Leave Form (See Attached).

For needed absences from graduate assistant duties of longer than two weeks, a graduate assistant must formally request an extended leave. Long-term absences may be requested for a variety of valid reasons as previously noted. These types of requests should be reasonable and include written documentation related to the reason for absence (such as a letter from a medical doctor, legal documentation, etc.). The request for extended leave must be made to the chair of the department providing the assistantship in consultation with the direct assistantship supervisor. Whenever possible, the department chair should not reassign workload to another graduate assistant.

Graduate assistants who are formally approved through the Short Term/ Extended Leave Form will be excused from their regular graduate assistant activities for the duration of their approved leave. Although tuition remission will continue during the extended absence, graduate assistants will no longer receive the monthly stipend for the duration of their approved leave. The graduate assistant's monthly stipend resume upon successful return to the graduate assistant position within the particular appointment period.

Should the graduate assistant require additional leave time beyond the original agreement, this must be formally approved by the department chair in consultation with the direct graduate assistant supervisor through the Short Term/Extended Leave Form. Should the graduate assistants be unable to return until after the original appointment ending date, there is no guarantee of the availability of a continued graduate assistantship. However, the graduate student would be considered for future graduate assistant appointments in a manner consistent with all other graduate students.