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2016



Graduate Assistant Handbook

The Graduate School

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY™



Eastern Illinois University
The Graduate School
Handbook of Regulations and Policies
Governing Graduate Assistantships

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The Mission of Eastern Illinois University

Eastern Illinois University is a public comprehensive university that offers superior, accessible undergraduate and graduate education. Students learn the methods and results of free and rigorous inquiry in the arts, humanities, sciences, and professions, guided by a faculty known for its excellence in teaching, research, creative activity, and service. The University community is committed to diversity and inclusion and fosters opportunities for student-faculty scholarship and applied learning experiences within a student-centered campus culture. Throughout their education, students refine their abilities to reason and to communicate clearly so as to become responsible citizens and leaders.

The Mission of Graduate Education

The mission of graduate education at Eastern Illinois University is to provide superior graduate degree, certificate, and post-baccalaureate options designed for career specialization and advancement, certification and credentialing, professional and leadership development, and preparation for advanced scholarship. The mission includes:

- strengthening the quality, diversity, and internationalization of the University's student body by attracting candidates who have the potential for academic and professional achievement;
- fostering advanced scholarship through a depth of content knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communication, application of technology, research/creative activity, and commitment to professional ethics;
- expanding the curriculum with rigorous advanced courses and options offered through lectures, laboratories, seminars, forums, practicum field experiences, internships, and partnerships with education, business, and industry;
- building and enhancing the excellence of the University's undergraduate majors and options through mutual and reciprocal research/creative activity with graduate students and faculty; and
- developing opportunities for the discovery and application of knowledge with graduate faculty members who reflect the University's teaching and mentoring priority and who have a record of research/creative activity and professional service.

The Mission of Graduate Assistantships

Graduate Assistantships provide financial support to make graduate education accessible to competitive well-qualified graduate candidates who seek Eastern's graduate programs. Assistantships provide superior graduate education through teaching, research, and applied learning experiences that advance Eastern's teaching, research, and service mission.

Graduate School Contacts

Candidates requiring information on graduate assistantships can access information using the web, phone, and mail contacts listed below. Comprehensive information regarding assistantships, including an application, regulations, and important deadlines is posted at the web site. Applicants are advised to review the information at the web site as their first source of information regarding

assistantships.

Web address: www.eiu.edu/graduate/students_assistantships.php

Phone: 217-581-2220

Fax: 217-581-6020

Mail: The Graduate School, 600 Lincoln Avenue,
Charleston, IL 61920-3099

Graduate Assistantship Manager

The Graduate Assistantship Manager is the first contact for graduate assistant applicants or candidates who have questions regarding regulations or policies that govern graduate assistantships. The Manager is also an appropriate contact to assist with resolution of concerns regarding assistantship eligibility or execution of duties. The Manager can be reached by contacting the Graduate School.

Applications and Initial Eligibility

An online application is available at the Graduate School web site. Completed applications for an academic year should be submitted by February 15 to the program of interest. Programs may establish other deadlines; therefore, students interested in assistantships should contact individual programs for specific details. Applicants interested in spring or summer appointments should contact the sponsoring unit or the Graduate Assistantship Manager.

Applicants may meet initial assistantship eligibility criteria in two ways. The first way to meet the criteria is to provide evidence of having earned a cumulative undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of 2.75 (4.00 scale) on the graded academic course work from the degree-granting institution and have been fully admitted to a graduate degree program. The second way to meet criteria is to provide evidence of having earned a cumulative undergraduate GPA of 2.75 (4.00 scale) on the last 60 semester hours of graded academic course work from the degree granting institution and have been fully admitted to a graduate degree program. Provisional admission does not qualify as full admission, therefore provisional candidates are not eligible. These requirements may not be waived or appealed.

Applicants who do not meet either of the two initial eligibility criteria, may reapply for an assistantship after they complete nine semester hours of graduate course work (courses numbered 4750 or higher) and earn a graduate GPA of 3.00 or higher and are fully admitted to a degree program. Note that applicants who were admitted as provisional graduate candidates must complete 12 semester hours of graduate course work while earning and maintaining a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher and must also complete all of the provisions required by the program to be a fully-admitted degree candidate. Graduate-degree candidacy is a requirement for assistantship eligibility. Note that sponsoring units, particularly academic units, may require additional criteria for eligibility.

Sponsoring Unit

Graduate assistants provide teaching, research or service to the sponsoring unit. A majority of assistants are appointed to the department or school in which a degree program is offered; however many sponsoring units are campus centers or offices that do not offer degree programs. Agencies external to the university, in collaboration

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Signed Contract Obligations

National Council of Graduate Schools

Mandatory Orientation

orientation is scheduled and are urged to attend these sessions.

Mandatory Identification for Domestic Assistantship Appointments

The Federal Immigration Control Act of 1986 requires certain statements and/or documentation to verify that graduate assistants are eligible under federal law to hold appointments as offered by an assistantship contract. Failure to provide such statements or appropriate documentation, if requested, invalidates a signed contract. Candidates holding assistantships will be notified of the documentation verification process used to meet University employment regulations. The process requires that candidates provide legible copies of two forms of identification. Acceptable forms of identification include a valid driver's license, social security card, birth certificate, valid passport, or other federal or state issued forms of identification. Failure to provide the required identification will delay the processes required to provide the stipend and tuition waiver, so it is essential that candidates comply with identification requirements.

Mandatory Regulations for International Students Assistantship Appointments

International students holding assistantships are required to provide the following forms of identification during the mandatory Orientation: I-94, I-20 and a valid passport with an F-1 or J-1 visa to complete the I-9 form. International students must provide evidence of an I-9 once each calendar year that an appointment is held. In addition, international students must provide evidence of an I-9 with each change of appointment. Assistance to secure social security numbers for international students is provided during the International Student Orientation. International students who require support for obtaining a social security number must contact the Office of International Students and Scholars.

Laws Governing Appointments for All Students

Public Act 85-827 requires assistantship recipients to complete a form regarding previous loans made from or guaranteed by state or federal funds for the purpose of financing attendance at an institution of higher education. Failure to complete this form will invalidate the signed contract. Assistants act as agents of the University when they perform their assistantship duties. Their responsibilities may include submission of incident reports and other written communications that may fall within the definition of student records. The University may use such reports and communications and may disseminate these to various people or organizations. The signature on the contract authorizes the University to make appropriate use of reports or communications completed by the assistant as may be deemed necessary.

Assistantship Categories

Eastern Illinois University offers the following assistantships.

- A Standard Assistantship is offered by a sponsoring unit at Eastern Illinois University. Assistants in this category may have primary duties in support of teaching, research, or service.
- An Agency Assistantship is funded by an agency or grant in collaboration with an academic program and focuses on service to the agency.
- A Presidential Assistantship is a competitive assistantship focusing on support for the teaching mission of the university.
- A Provost's Assistantship is a competitive assistantship focusing on integrative

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- A Fellowship is offered through the Eastern Illinois University Foundation. Fellowship responsibilities are specified in the Fellowship contract.
- A Summer Research Assistantship is a specialized appointment focusing on support for the research mission of the university.

Assistantship contracts may be for an academic year, single term, or a specified time period. Academic year contracts are offered for nine months on an academic calendar that starts on August 16 and ends on May 15. A term contract may be for a Fall, Spring, or Summer Term. A Fall term contract is for 4 months and starts on August 16 and ends on December 15. A Spring Term is for 4 months and starts on January 16 and ends on May 15. The length of a Summer Term appointment is specified in the contract and varies according to program need. Contracts may be offered outside of the definitions of an academic year or term, particularly contracts offered by non-academic units and contracts funded by grants and external agencies. These awards have start and end dates that are specified in the contract. Some contracts may specify an early start date and an extended end date depending on the requirements of the sponsoring unit.

Graduate assistant contracts specify that assistants are required to perform their duties within the dates specified in the contract, including the week of final examinations. Sponsoring units may reduce the stipend by the appropriate prorated amount if assistants fail to fulfill the terms of their appointment as specified in the contract. Graduate assistant contracts typically do not require performance of duties during periods when the University observes official holidays or scheduled breaks including Fall Break, Semester Break, and Spring Break. Some sponsoring units may specify; however, that performance of duties during official holidays and/or breaks is required. Performance of duties will be required during holidays and/or breaks only if specified in the contract.

Enrollment Requirements for Maintaining an Assistantship

Fall and spring assistantship appointments require that graduate assistants remain enrolled on campus as degree-seeking students for a minimum of nine semester hours of graduate course work (courses numbered 4750 or above). With prior approval by submission of the Waiver of Policy form with the Graduate Dean, assistants may substitute undergraduate teacher certification, professional certification, or required prerequisite courses for the graduate courses to remain in compliance with assistantship enrollment requirements; however, the student must remain enrolled on campus as a degree-seeking student for a minimum of nine semester hours. During the Fall and Spring semesters assistants may enroll for a maximum of 16 semester hours. Degree granting programs may require assistants to carry less than the maximum load of 16 semester hours in the Fall or Spring terms. Assistants are advised to consult with degree programs regarding load restrictions.

Summer assistantship appointments require that graduate assistants remain enrolled on campus as degree-seeking students for a minimum of three semester hours of graduate course work (courses numbered 4750 or above). With prior approval by submission of the Waiver of Policy form with the Graduate Dean,

Academic Requirements for Maintaining an Assistantship

Assigned Duty Requirements for Maintaining an Assistantship

Performance of Duties

- A place to perform assigned duties.
- A supervisor or advisor who will supervise/advise the assistant.
- A list of duties or job description with performance expectations.
- An orientation and/or regular meetings to receive and discuss feedback regarding the assistant's acceptable or unacceptable performance of duties.
- A list of suggestions for improving performance in order to meet the expectations of the sponsoring unit.

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Standard, Presidential, Provost, Summer Assistantships and Fellowships do not accrue sick leave or emergency leave benefits. Assistants who are ill should contact the supervisor of the sponsoring unit to report the illness. A supervisor may require the candidate to document evidence of the illness. Assistants who must be absent from their assistantship duties during the contract period for emergencies should inform the supervisor of the emergency and absence from duties. Supervisors may ask assistants to document emergencies requiring absence from duties. When the supervisor determines that the number of absences due to illness or emergencies are sufficient to prevent the assistant from completing assigned duties during the contract period, the supervisor may develop a duties completion plan. The plan should be developed in collaboration with the assistant and specify the additional days beyond the assistant's contract that are required to complete the assigned duties.

Professional Conduct and Internal Governing Policies

Graduate assistants are advised to review and understand the University Policy on Diversity, Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action (IGP 174) which applies to all university employees and states that discrimination based upon race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, disability, Vietnam War veteran status, or any other basis of discrimination precluded by federal and state statutes, is strictly prohibited.

Ethics Training

Policy on Resignation after Initiating Duties

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Assistants who resign prior to the mid-term date published in the Class Schedule, but who remain enrolled for courses, will be re-billed for tuition for that semester. Assistants who resign after the mid-term date published in the Class Schedule, but who remain enrolled for courses, will not be billed for tuition for that semester.

A graduate assistant resigning after the beginning report date, but prior to the completion of the contract period will be paid only for that time served, as certified by his/her supervisor. An assistant who originally held an academic year appointment, but does not continue the appointment through the Spring semester will be eligible for a maximum of four monthly installments (September through December). Stipend payments are terminated the day of resignation.

Policy on Resignation or Termination

Assistantship contracts are terminated by the Graduate School under the following conditions:

- During the semester the assistant did not remain enrolled in nine semester hours of course work during the Fall and Spring Terms or three semester hours during the Summer Term.
- At the end of the term the assistant failed to meet the 3.00 graduate cumulative GPA requirement.

Assistantship contracts may be terminated by the employing unit under the following conditions:

- The assistant cannot perform the assigned duties to the satisfaction of the sponsoring unit after an appropriate plan and time line for duties has been established
- The assistant violated the terms specified in the Student Conduct Code, available from the Office of Student Standards
- The assistant violated Internal Governing Policies or Ethics Act
- The assistant violated other non-specified appointment requirements

Tuition Waiver Scholarship Benefits

Tuition waiver scholarships are provided in recognition of the graduate assistant's academic accomplishments. The scholarships are provided as part of the financial aid package, but they are not related to services.

Graduate assistants who are in compliance with enrollment in nine to 16 semester hours of graduate course work or approved prerequisites during the fall/spring terms and three to thirteen semester hours of graduate course work or approved prerequisites during the summer term will receive a full tuition waiver scholarship unless specified in the contract.

Tuition Waiver Scholarship Non-Covered Expenses

Tuition waiver scholarships may not be applied to any program or service fees. Tuition waiver scholarships may not be applied to audited courses, sponsored-credit courses, and study abroad courses.

Tuition waiver scholarships may not be applied to some courses offered through the School of Continuing Education under a “tuition recovery” program. To verify

Graduate students who have held standard, Provost, or Presidential assistantship contracts or Fellowship contracts for at least four months immediately preceding a Summer Term or who have signed a graduate assistant contract for Fall Semester may apply for a summer term tuition waiver scholarship. Summer tuition waiver scholarships require that students remain enrolled for a minimum of three semester hours and a maximum of 13 graduate level course work or approved prerequisites during the summer term. Only one summer tuition waiver scholarship per 9-month graduate assistant contract may be claimed. The summer tuition waiver application can be found on the Desire2Learn orientation or the Graduate School web site and must be submitted by the student one month prior to the end of the spring semester.

University regulations require that stipend payments be made only after completion of assigned duties. Monthly stipends may vary according to the terms specified in the contract. In return for the stipend, the assistant satisfactorily performs the duties assigned by the sponsoring unit. All stipends are subject to various payroll tax deductions. Graduate assistants enrolled in less than 6 semester hours are also subject to FICA tax which is currently at 7.65%. This generally affects graduate assistants employed during summer term as that is the only term where graduate assistants are allowed to be enrolled in less than 9 hours (with the minimum of 3 hours) to be eligible for the assistantship.

All graduate assistants under contract with Eastern Illinois University are automatically billed the student insurance fee when they register for any number of on-campus hours. Coverage is effective on the day classes begin as stated in the Academic Calendar.

Assistantship appointments offered through Eastern Illinois University provide stipends on the last working day of the month except for December when payment will be made on the first working day of January.

- Assistants who hold academic year appointments are issued a stipend in nine equal monthly installments paid September through May.
- Assistants who hold Fall Semester appointments are issued four equal monthly installments paid September through December.
- Assistants who hold Spring Semester appointments are issued four equal monthly installments paid February through May.
- Assistants who hold summer appointments are issued a stipend based on the terms specified in the contract.
- Assistants who hold summer appointments beginning May 16 receive their first installment June 30 for the period of May 16- June 30.

Graduate assistants appointed through the University are required to enroll in the Electronic Funds Transfer program to receive stipend payments. Necessary forms are available through the Graduate School Orientation and are also available in the Payroll Office.

Assistantship appointments offered through a private agency may be paid according to the time table established by the agency. Assistants should consult with the Graduate Assistant Manager for information on these payroll plans.

Financial Aid

Graduate Assistants may be eligible for other forms of financial aid and applicants should access information regarding additional aid from the Office of Financial Aid. Typical processes for financial aid application require completion of the FAFSA or Federal Student Financial Aid form. Guidelines are specified at the web site and include filing as an independent using the most recent tax return. Any change in enrolled credit hours must be reported to the Office of Financial Aid in order to adjust the benefit of the tuition waiver scholarship appropriately. The *Status Change* form is available on the Financial Aid web site.

Billing and Payment of Program and Service Fees

Graduate assistants will be billed all program and service fees. The fees must be paid by the date specified on the account or late charges will be assessed. The tuition waiver benefit will be applied only to tuition charges. Occasionally, assistants may reduce enrollment hours after a tuition waiver benefit has been applied to an account. In these cases, waiver benefits may temporarily exceed billing charges until the waiver benefit is reduced to match the student's actual course enrollment.

Assistants must pay their program and service fees by the date specified on the account because the tuition waiver benefit will be adjusted to match the tuition payments later in the billing cycle. If the fees have not been paid a late fee will be assessed.

Assistants taking only Continuing Education courses will be charged the current per-semester-hour Continuing Education fee and the current per-semester-hour textbook rental fee in place of the standard fees. Those assistants taking only Continuing Education courses who choose to use the University Health Service Clinic will be charged the current health service fee per semester at the time of their first visit.

Supplemental Contracts

Graduate assistants are limited to one on-campus contract per semester with the exception of a supplemental contract. Graduate assistants may be considered for supplemental non-recurring contracts for an assignment that is related to a specific area of expertise. The combined hours of duties required for the assistantship and the supplemental contract must remain at or below an average of 20 clock hours per week and the supplemental duties may not be part of the assistant's regularly assigned assistantship duties. Supplemental Contract Approval Forms are available at the Graduate Assistantship web site. To initiate a contract the administrator in the program or office offering a supplemental assistantship contract forwards the contract to the assistant's primary sponsoring unit for approval. The primary sponsoring unit forwards the contract to the Graduate School. Requests for supplemental contracts must be approved with required signatures prior to performance of the duties. Requests for approval and compensation after the assignment is completed will not be approved. Agents or supervisors are responsible for ensuring completion of paperwork prior to completion of duties. Students must meet the following criteria to be eligible for a supplemental contract:

- The assignment is not part of the assistant's assigned duties: Graduate assistants hold contracts for academic terms or academic years and earn a stipend and tuition waiver in compensation for assigned teaching, research, or university service that directly supports the mission of the University. Supplemental contracts compensate assistants for duties that are not part of the assistant's regularly assigned duties. For example, an assistant in the music department may hold an assistantship to provide teaching assistance for several courses in the music department. A supplemental contract may be offered to compensate this assistant to play the piano at a University scheduled event. Providing music is not part of the assistant's regularly assigned duties; therefore, a supplemental contract may be offered.
- The supplemental assignment is related to the assistant's specialized area of expertise: Frequently, graduate assistants have unique expertise that may be needed by a department/unit for a special project. Unique expertise may be related to computer competencies, competencies in the arts, teaching experience, business knowledge, or other specialized skills related to the assistant's professional training and background. Supplemental contracts may be offered to compensate the assistant for an assignment associated with this expertise.
- The assignment is non-recurring: Supplemental assistant contracts are for duties associated with non-recurring demand such as an offer to provide music at campus events or an offer to provide a workshop for technology applications. Supplemental contracts are not approved for general non-specialized weekly duties associated with recurring student employment. Those positions are for students who do not hold assistantships.
- The combined supplemental contract and regular assistantship hours remain at or below 20 per week: Assistantship contracts are normally for 18 to 19 clock hours per week. A student who holds an 18 hour per week assistantship and is offered a supplemental contract to provide 2 four-hour workshops during the 15 week Fall term remains in compliance because the

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8 hours averaged over the 15 weeks insures that the assistant's weekly average remains at or below 20 hours per week.

- The contract is approved prior to completion of the assignment: Supplemental contracting and payment are available only with prior approval. Verbal promises for payment without prior approval will not be honored. University staff who make offers but fail to secure prior approval are responsible for any promises of payment. Supplemental contracts are paid only through payroll.
- The contract is approved by the Primary Sponsoring Unit and the Graduate Dean: Primary sponsoring units must support any supplemental contracts because an assistant's first responsibility is to the primary sponsoring unit. The Graduate Dean will serve as the final authority for determining if the supplemental contract meets the criteria specified for supplemental appointments of graduate assistants.

Guidelines for a Successful Appointment

Time management is essential to a successful assistantship. Assistants are expected to maintain their scholarship while simultaneously performing their assistantship duties to the satisfaction of the supervisor in the sponsoring unit. Providing the supervisor with a schedule of time when available to execute duties and providing some flexible time to perform unexpected duties ensures a successful outcome.

Assistants are encouraged to engage in timely resolution of concerns. When a supervisor calls a concern to the assistant's attention, assistants are urged to meet with the supervisor and outline a resolution to the concern with an appropriate time line. In the event that a concern is not satisfactorily resolved with the supervisor, an assistant should seek the assistance of the appropriate Graduate Coordinator. Issues unresolved by the Coordinator should be called to the attention of the Department Chair. The final step in resolution of a concern is to seek the assistance of the Graduate Dean.

The University provides a variety of resources to support all students. Resources include but are not limited to the University Counseling Center, Women's Resource Center, Writing Center, Recreation Center, and Health Center. Assistants are urged to use those resources that will help them successfully manage their assistantship and academic responsibilities.

Completion of Appointment and Assessment Program

Upon completion of the contract, graduate assistants must comply with all required clearance procedures mandated by the sponsoring unit.

Contacts to Resolve Problems or Questions

Please contact:

The Graduate School; for questions regarding graduate admissions, graduate policies and graduation	581-2220
Bursar's Office; for questions regarding your student account	581-6715
Counseling Center	581-3413
Graduate Assistantship Manager; for questions regarding assistantship contracts, regulations and requirements	581-7490
Health Services	581-3014
International Students and Scholars; for international students	581-2321
Office of Civil Rights	581-5020
Office of Financial Aid; for questions regarding loans and aid	581-3711
Office of Student Standards	581-3827
School of Continuing Education for questions regarding courses and workshops	581-5114
Student Insurance	581-5290
Payroll; for questions regarding tax issues and federal payroll requirements	581-5510



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