



2020-2021

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

Comprehensive information regarding assistantships, including an application, regulations, and important deadlines is posted at the Graduate School’s web site under Assistantships. 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
 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 with academic programs, may also offer graduate assistantships. Assistants are responsible for satisfactorily performing the duties required of the sponsoring unit.

Signed Contract Obligations

The signed contract is in effect at the time it is received by the Graduate School and completes an agreement between the candidate and the Graduate School that both are expected to honor. An applicant's signature on the contract indicates that the applicant has read, understands, and accepts the terms of the award.

The signed contract obligates the candidate to initiate the duties specified in the contract for the time specified and at the stipend rate specified. Dates for reporting for duty are
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specified in the contract and vary by the sponsoring unit. Assistants who are unable to fulfill the obligations specified in the contract or who fail to report for duty as specified in the contract may be subject to pro-rated loss of the stipend or other sanctions as determined by the sponsoring unit and the Graduate School for the days of service that are not fulfilled.

Graduate assistants may not hold any other contracts for any other employment on campus while working as an assistant, unless approved for a supplemental contract by the dean of the Graduate School.

The signed contract obligates the candidate to follow standard guidelines for professional courtesy when withdrawing from the contract. Assistants who accept an offer by returning a signed contract to the Graduate School and who subsequently wish to withdraw the contract must submit a written letter of resignation to the sponsoring unit and the Graduate School and request a minimum of 30 days notice.

National Council of Graduate Schools

Eastern Illinois University is a member of the national Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and has adopted the guidelines for accepting offers of financial support developed by the Council. The guidelines indicate that acceptance of an offer of financial support for the next academic year by a prospective or enrolled graduate student completes an agreement that both the student and graduate school expect to honor. Students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support prior to April 15. In those instances in which a student accepts an offer before April 15, and subsequently desires to withdraw that acceptance, the student may submit in writing a resignation of the appointment at any time through April 15. However, an acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student not to accept another offer without first obtaining a written release from the institution to which a commitment has been made. Similarly, an offer by an institution after April 15 is conditional on presentation by the student of the written release from any previously accepted.

Mandatory Orientation

All graduate assistants are required to complete the on-line Graduate School Orientation Program offered through Desire2Learn (D2L). Candidates will receive written notification and instructions regarding the Orientation process.

Sponsoring units may require that assistants attend orientation sessions specific to the unit. Assistants are advised to contact sponsoring units to determine if an 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 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 learning.
- 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.

Contract Term and Length of Appointment

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. A term contract may be for a Fall, Spring, or Summer Term. (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, often including the week of final examinations. Sponsoring units may reduce the stipend by the appropriate pro-rated 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, 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 as a degree-seeking student for a minimum of three semester hours. During the summer sessions, assistants may enroll for a maximum of 13 semester hours. Degree granting programs may require assistants to carry less than the maximum load of 13 semester hours in the Summer. Assistants are advised to consult with degree programs regarding load restrictions.

Academic Requirements for Maintaining an Assistantship

Graduate assistants must meet the standards for graduate degree-seeking students as established by the Council on Graduate Studies. Degree requirements include maintenance of a 3.00 cumulative graduate grade point average and retention of degree status in one of the University’s graduate degree programs.

Assigned Duty Requirements for Maintaining an Assistantship

Clock hour requirements for an assistantship vary by contract and are specified in the contract. The maximum level of an appointment is 19 clock hours of assigned duties to the sponsoring unit each week the student is under contract. The unit has full authority to require the full number of hours each week specified in the contract and may require assistants to document completion of clock hours each week. Sponsoring units may not require assistants to work beyond the maximum number of hours in the contract and University policies prevent graduate assistants from performing duties in excess of 20 clock hours per week while school is in session. *For a remote work assignment



due to COVID-19 in the Fall 20 semester, please see policy below. Assistants should be physically present performing their assigned duties while under contract, though may work remotely with a supervisor’s permission. Hours required to perform duties may not be “accumulated” in order to make up for past weeks or in anticipation of future weeks. Sponsoring units may not require assistants to work beyond the maximum level specified in the contract for a specified week because fewer hours were assigned during a prior week or because fewer hours are anticipated in a future week. Contracts held in the summer term are limited to 15 clock hours per week.

COVID 19 Graduate Assistant Work Request/ Accommodation Procedure for Fall Semester 2020

Any graduate assistant who seeks a remote work/teaching request accommodation for their graduate assistantship duties due to medical vulnerabilities should do the following:

1. Consult with their graduate assistant supervisor to determine if duties can be rearranged to limit social interaction. At this stage, graduate assistant supervisors are not required to create a remote work plan, but can determine if a graduate assistant’s duties on campus can be revised to assist the student.

2. If an internal arrangement with a supervisor and graduate assistant cannot be reached according to each parties’ satisfaction, or if the graduate assistant is requesting a full remote work accommodation, the graduate assistant and the graduate supervisor should consult with the Graduate School Dean, which may also potentially entail consultation with EIU’s Office of Human Resources. Graduate assistants are required to provide medical documentation in order to gain approval for a full remote work request accommodation. Remote work assignments require written documentation of required duties and specified work expectations for the graduate assistant.

3. Graduate assistants who seek and receive an accommodation should understand that they should not be participating in social/public elements of the university, including their face-to-face graduate courses, seminars, labs, or utilizing the public aspects of the university library, among possibly other social/public elements of the university.

4. Graduate assistants who test positive for COVID 19 and are in isolation, or graduate assistants who were exposed or may have been exposed to COVID 19 and are in quarantine or self-separation as requested by medical/health professionals must provide medical documentation to their supervisor. In these cases, if the assistant remains asymptomatic, the graduate supervisor should create a remote work plan for the isolation/quarantine/self-separation period. 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 graduate assistant and specify the additional days beyond the assistant’s contract that are required to complete the assigned duties. Graduate assistants may appeal a duties completion plan to the Graduate School Dean. As noted in the Graduate Assistant Handbook, graduate assistants do not accrue sick leave or emergency leave benefits. Stipends may be pro-rated according to time absent for required duties. Every reasonable effort will be made to identify a remote work arrangement accommodation during the period absent from campus work duties.

5. Graduate assistant supervisors cannot require isolation, quarantine or self-separation for graduate assistants. Such medical decisions are determined by medical professionals.

Please see the University’s policies regarding safety precautions and guidelines at: <https://www.eiu.edu/covid/>

Performance of Duties

Assistants are required to perform their teaching, research, and service duties to the satisfaction of the sponsoring unit. Assistants are encouraged to ask sponsoring units for the following support mechanisms to insure that performance of duties is satisfactory:

- 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.

If a supervisor/advisor determines that an assistant is unable to perform assigned duties to the satisfaction of the employing unit, the supervisor, in consultation with the Graduate School, must establish a plan that provides the assistant with guidance to improve performance of duties with reasonable time lines to achieve the improvements. If the assistant remains unable to perform the assigned duties as determined by the guidelines and dates outlined in the plan, the sponsoring unit may terminate the assistant’s contract.

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.

Some agency assistantships provide sick days and assistants are advised to review the provisions with the coordinator at the time of appointment.

Professional Conduct and Internal Governing Policies

Graduate assistants are required to meet the standards for professional conduct and be in compliance with such standards as specified in the Eastern Illinois University Student Conduct Code.

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,

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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 hours per week as an average over the academic semester: 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 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 studies 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 Civil Rights and Diversity, University Counseling Center, Women’s Resource Center, Center for Gender and Sexual Diversity, Writing Center, Literacy in Financial Education 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.. 581-3715
- Counseling Center.....581-3413
- Graduate Assistantship Manager; for questions regarding assistantship contracts, regulations and requirements..... 581-7490
- Health Services581-3013
- International Students and Scholars; for international students581-2321
- Office of Civil Rights and Diversity581-5020
- Office of Financial Aid; for questions regarding loans and aid..581-3711
- Office of Student Standards581-3827
- School of Extended Learning 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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