

# Principles for the Employment of Graduate Students at the University of Florida

The University of Florida, like other major research institutions, employs several thousand graduate students at any given time. In circumstances where the employment is directly contributive to the student's graduate degree program or professional development, the preferred form of this employment is the **graduate assistantship**.

In keeping with longstanding traditions in graduate education, graduate assistantships have multiple functions. Appointment as a Graduate Assistant is intended to:

- (a) Provide paid employment (and hence financial support) for the student involved;
- (b) Be an integral part of the graduate student's academic program, such that the employment supports progress toward the degree, and/or provides professionally relevant experience that will strengthen the student's subsequent career development; and
- (c) Support the employing department's human resources needs in pursuit of its academic mission.

To achieve the second element, a graduate assistantship may provide valuable university-level teaching experience that takes place within the context of a teaching assistantship. When the appointment is to a research assistantship, it may provide research experience relevant to general scientific knowledge and method or specific to a student's thesis/dissertation project.

Due to the close connection between the assistantship appointment and the student's academic program, all Graduate Assistants must be properly enrolled graduate students in good academic standing, and they must be registered for the requisite minimum number of credit hours during the period(s) of their appointment as Graduate Assistants. The registration information can be found at the following link: <http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#registration>

To be eligible for a tuition waiver, a graduate assistant must be appointed at .25 FTE or greater. While appointments at one-quarter (.25) time or one-third (.33) time fit well in some departments, the preferred appointment is at .50 FTE. Appointments exceeding .50 FTE are unusual because that level of commitment to the employee role would normally impede progress toward the degree objective. Academic Units contemplating the appointment of a Graduate Assistant at an FTE less than .25 are cautioned that such appointments will be viewed as exceptions to normal practice, will require justification on a case-by-case basis and will require the additional endorsement of the Graduate School, through the [petition](#) process.

Graduate Assistants may be appointed for a semester, an academic year or a calendar year. Those appointed for an academic year may or may not be offered appointments as Graduate Assistants during the summer semester.

Graduate Assistants are contracted exempt employees who are compensated by salary. This is distinct from student assistants, who are hourly employees, and thus may work and be paid on an "as needed" basis.

When a graduate student is appointed as a Graduate Assistant, the appointing department accepts responsibility for the student's tuition. Tuition may be paid by means of tuition waiver authority, or by means of a transaction within the University's fiscal management systems.

In addition to University expectations, Graduate Assistant appointments are significantly governed by a [Collective Bargaining Agreement between the University of Florida Board of Trustees and Graduate Assistants United](#), the duly certified representative of Graduate Assistants.

In part as a reflection of that agreement, and recognizing the valuable contribution of an assistantship to their professional development, graduate students who are employed for and assigned tasks and responsibilities that are, or are similar to tasks performed by Graduate Assistants **should be appointed as Graduate Assistants**, following the University's appointment procedures, as described at: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/hiring-center/creating-a-uf-appointment/the-appointmenthiring-process/#fellows>

In some circumstances, it is permissible to employ graduate students in positions other than graduate assistantships, for example as student assistants. It is not unusual for graduate students to be employed as temporary or part-time staff in the University's various food service operations, in the residence halls, to serve as staff for campus events or facilities and the like. The assigned tasks for such positions are **clearly and explicitly distinct** from those of Graduate Assistants. Other situations in which graduate students may be employed as student assistants might include brief periods of employment (e.g., a few weeks) for specific, time-limited tasks. During academic terms (especially summer semesters) in which graduate students are not enrolled for credit-earning courses, they are not eligible to be appointed as Graduate Assistants, and the proposed employment is therefore not directly contributive to their graduate degree program requirements, so employment as a student assistant or OPS hourly employee may be an option. In a small number of cases, duly appointed Graduate Assistants may accept employment in a second position that is not an assistantship, such as being hired to perform clerical work in a Department.

The University has Human Resources policies in place to manage graduate student employment in a manner that aligns with the numerous federal and state regulations that apply to student employment, as well as the principles outlined here. Both the principles and the policies reflect the fundamental preference for graduate student employment that supports the student's graduate education...typically in the form of the Graduate Assistantship. Exceptions to the basic policies due to special circumstances must be thoroughly documented and the proposed appointment must be approved by the Graduate School through the [petitions](#) process.

More detail on the appointment of student employees other than Graduate Assistants is available from University of Florida Human Resources under Recruitment & Staffing, The Appointment/ Hiring Process, at <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/hiring-center/creating-a-uf-appointment/the-appointmenthiring-process/#fellows>

For convenience, a brief summary of tasks that may help distinguish the work of graduate assistants from that of student assistants is provided below. It is emphasized that this summary should be seen as a point of reference. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

## **Examples of tasks that might be performed by Graduate Assistants**

Teaching Assistants might be expected to:

- Lecture
- Lead discussion groups
- Prepare a syllabus
- Identify reading assignments
- Grade papers or assignments
- Distribute assignments
- Hold office hours for meeting with students
- Proctor examinations
- Prepare class materials, presentations, visual aids
- Take attendance, record questions and responses in class
- Record lectures

Research Assistants might be expected to:

- Conduct laboratory procedures
- Observe or interview research subjects
- Collect, Record, review, or confirm data; manage existing data
- Analyze or summarize data (including statistical analysis)
- Write reports, draft articles, prepare poster presentations
- Review related scientific literature
- Design experiments
- Co-author research papers, prepare or edit research papers/manuscripts

## **Examples of tasks that might be performed by student assistants**

Student Assistants or other student appointees might be assigned to:

- Office tasks such as photocopying or clerical activities, errands
- Episodic tasks of brief duration
- Scheduling, telephone coverage
- Department website support/routine support of laboratory activities
- Recordkeeping, database updating/management
- Events
- Supervisory roles in residence halls
- Food service activities