

Graduate Assistantships Handbook

The Graduate School, UNC Charlotte, 2020

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Graduate Assistantships

Definition

Graduate Assistantships (GAs) provide degree-related, experiential learning and knowledge discovery to qualified students admitted to or enrolled in doctoral, master's, and graduate certificate programs at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Graduate assistantships provide stipend (salary) for students to support the teaching and research mission of the University, thereby creating synergy between the student's education and University's mission of teaching and scholarship. This synergy separates a GA from other types of employment on campus and must exist for the role to be considered an assistantship.

UNC Charlotte adheres to definitions and policies established by the UNC system (Policy Manual 400.3.5), by SACSCOC for accreditation, relevant federal labor laws (FLSA overtime pay rules), and Department of Homeland Security employment requirements for international students enrolled on F-1 visas.

Eligibility

- GAs report to a supervisor with faculty status who guides the teaching, research and/or creative activity that contributes to the educational progression of the student (U.S. Department of Labor FLSA Fact Sheet 17S federal guidelines, pages 3-4: Student-Employees).
- GAs must be graduate students in good standing in their programs (UNC Policy Manual section 400.3.5) and hold at least a 3.0 GPA, or a 3.0 GPA if newly admitted.
- Graduate students may hold a graduate assistantship that is commensurate with their academic load/time status in the fall, spring, and summer semesters (Tables 1 and 2). Maximum GA hours are aligned with a student's academic load, however, students may be hired for fewer hours than they are eligible.
- Students enrolled in the summer may hold a graduate assistantship commensurate with their academic load during the summer (Table 2). Note that new international students on an F or J visa who first enroll in a summer semester must be full time enrolled (6+ hours in the summer).
- Summer graduate assistantships require enrollment only for new students. Continuing students are not required to enroll in the summer term but must be registered for the subsequent Fall semester.

Table 1. Fall and Spring Semesters

<i>*Academic Load/Time Status</i>	<i>Academic Load Hours</i>	<i>Maximum GA Hours</i>
Full Time	9 hours or GRAD 9800/7800 or GRAD 9999/7999	20

Three Quarter Time	7 - 8 Hours	15
Half Time	5 - 6 Hours	10
Less than Half Time	1 - 4 Hours	5

Table 2. Summer Semester (enrollment required for NEW students only)

<i>*Academic Load/Time Status</i>	<i>Academic Load Hours</i>	<i>Maximum GA Hours</i>
Full Time	6+	20
Three Quarter Time	4 - 5 Hours	15
Half Time	3 Hours	10
Less than Half time	1 - 2 Hours	5

*** Academic Load/Time Status:**

https://catalog.uncc.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=30&poid=8197&hl=student+load&returnto=search

Workload

- GAs will work no more than 20 hours per week on average in the assistantship and any other employment (especially important for students on an F-1 Visa) during the fall and spring semesters, and 40 hours per week in the summer if a student is not enrolled in classes.
- Students enrolled in the summer may hold a graduate assistantship commensurate with their academic load during the summer (Table 2). New international students on an F or J visa who first enroll in a summer semester must be full time enrolled (6+ hours).
- TA positions should begin and end according to the academic calendar for the semester or part-of-term of the course/s being taught, beginning on the first day of class or earlier, and ending on the deadline for grade submission. TA appointments in the summer should also encompass the entire term (or part-of-term, in which case the workload should be commensurate with the duration of the course). RA appointments may begin and end throughout a semester, as needed.
- GAs will be supervised by a faculty member who will directly oversee the responsibilities of the graduate assistantship as outlined in the Graduate Appointment Agreement. The supervisor is responsible for training and mentoring the GA, as well as evaluating the graduate assistant for effectiveness in carrying out the assigned duties and responsibilities as measured against the performance expectations for the appointment (UNC Policy Manual 400.3.5)

Graduate Teaching Assistantships

Definitions

Graduate Teaching Assistants provide support to the teaching mission of the University by extending faculty resources to help promote student understanding of an academic discipline. Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) may be assigned a variety of instructional responsibilities depending upon their educational background and experience, and are compensated accordingly with a stipend (salary). As students with exempt employment status under the Fair Labor Standards Act, GTAs must have a primary duty of teaching to impart knowledge. Those duties include:

- **GTA** is responsible for grading and/or other instructional efforts related to a specific course, including course/lab set-up and in- and/or out-of-class assistance. Effort may also include work in a tutoring or writing center or similar unit that provides direct educational support to students. AND/OR:
- **GTA** is responsible for teaching a course section. Teaching includes facilitating a recitation or course section, grading student assignments, and potentially holding office hours. AND/OR:
- **Instructor of Record (GTA, IOR)**: a GTA in this role may be responsible for overall design of the course, and does not have direct supervision of a faculty member.

Eligibility

- A GTA *Instructor of Record* must have earned at least 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline, receive regular in-service training, and be evaluated regularly ([SACSCOC Standard 6.2.a](#) and UNC Policy Manual section [400.3.5: Training, Monitoring and Evaluation of Graduate Teaching Assistants](#)).
- An Instructor of Record for a **graduate** level course must be appointed as a Regular or Associate Graduate Faculty member ([SACSCOC Standard 6.2.a](#)).
- Students for whom English is a second language may be appointed as a GTA Instructor of Record only after the English Language Training Institute (ELTI) certifies the student's proficiency in oral and written communication is sufficient (UNC Policy Manual section 400.3.5).

Workload

- One (1) credit hour taught is equivalent to 3 hours of effort, therefore a GTA, IOR may teach a maximum of 6 credit hours for a 20-hour/week assistantship.

- GTAs may be assigned to support a maximum of “x” sections for a 20-hour/week assistantship.

Graduate Research Assistantships

Definition

Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) perform independent research or creative activities under the supervision of a faculty member that directly contributes to the student’s education and to the faculty member’s research or creative scholarship.

Eligibility

Consistent with the Fair Labor Standards Act (see [U.S. Department of Labor FLSA Fact Sheet 17S](#) for federal guidelines, pages 3-4: Student-Employees), the primary role of Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) is as students, with the GRA secondary. Therefore, Graduate Research Assistantships are provided as a mechanism to support the student’s educational relationship rather than as an employment relationship.

Workload

Work expectations must be consistent with the number of hours in the contract and the roles and responsibilities of the graduate assistantship as detailed in the GA Contract. Efforts may include:

- Perform independent research under the direction of a faculty member
- Perform data analysis
- Experimental design and execution
- Literature review and synthesis
- Co-author research articles
- Assist in a faculty member’s laboratory
- Mentor undergraduate researchers

Graduate Fellows

Graduate Fellows are students who obtain their own external fellowship or are supported on a training grant, and hold an appointment that matches the definition of GRA. The fellowship or training grant may provide research, stipend, or other educational support.

Any stipend support should be routed through Grants and Contracts to provide a fund number and method to subsequently provide the stipend via eGA and payroll. These fellowships may also require that the money be provided tax-free via a student's university account. Graduate Fellows may be eligible for GASP (as long as otherwise eligible), when the stipend is paid via eGA or, with the Graduate School's permission, directly to the student's account.

Administrative Student Employment

Human Resources, in consultation with Legal Affairs, implemented the U.S. Department of Labor changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), effective July 1st, 2020. Accordingly, students may be hired with a stipend, non-hourly salary, under the following conditions (see [Fact Sheet #17S](#)):

- In a primary role as a teacher (GTA)
- As a student doing research toward their degree (GRA)

Student employees with roles other than the two above are protected under the FLSA, eligible for overtime pay, and therefore must be hired hourly as a Student Temporary Employee through the Office of Human Resources rather than as a graduate assistant with a stipend salary.