

POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

FOREWORD

The duties and responsibilities of the graduate assistants are carried out directly under the supervision of members of the Graduate Faculty. It is incumbent upon all graduate assistants to become familiar with the rules and regulations of the Graduate School and of the specific program in which they are enrolled.

I DEFINITION

A graduate assistantship is an award made on a competitive basis to graduate students at the University of South Alabama. Graduate students are assigned duties related to their program of study.

II QUALIFICATIONS

Selection of students for graduate assistantships is based on academic performance, letters of recommendation and, in some cases, standardized test scores. To be qualified a student must hold regular status and enroll for at least one semester hour. Some departments require a higher course load. **Note that failure to enroll for a full (6hr) load will result in classification as a part-time student and will affect deferment of student loan payments. Students enrolled for less than 3 hours will be subject to FICA withholding.**

III APPOINTMENT OF GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

A. Applications for graduate assistantships may be obtained from the appropriate department or program office. In addition to the application, a candidate must submit three letters of recommendation, standardized test scores if specified by the department, and transcripts of all previous college level work. Deadlines for application may be specified by individual departments.

B. Every student appointed as a graduate assistant will be given an official letter of appointment which will state the terms of the appointment. This statement will include:

1. The stipend.
2. The maximum tuition remission.
3. The dates of appointment.
4. An acceptance deadline date.

C. Graduate assistants who wish to be employed in addition to the assistantship must receive permission from the appropriate Graduate Director. Normally permission will be granted if there is no conflict with academic or assistantship responsibilities.

D. A graduate assistantship may be canceled due to budgetary consideration.

IV DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. The duties and responsibilities of graduate assistants will vary from program to program.

B. Graduate assistants will serve under the direction and supervision of regularly appointed members of the Graduate Faculty.

C. Graduate assistants are obligated to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity and to keep informed of and follow programmatic, departmental, college, and University rules and regulations.

D. Graduate assistants are not permitted to enroll in any course for which they are assigned assistantship responsibilities.

E. A graduate assistant or fellow who drops a course, withdraws from the University, or resigns an assistantship before the end of the semester will be required to reimburse the University for courses paid by the tuition fellowship.

F. A student may hold only one assistantship at a time.

V TIME COMMITMENT

A. The time commitment for an assistantship is twenty hours per week devoted to assigned duties at the University. This time includes hours spent in preparation or in supporting work outside the classroom or laboratory. This work load is not to interfere with academic responsibilities. **The work period is set by the Graduate School office each academic year. Please check with your department for the actual dates of your assistantship.**

B. The work commitment is included in a semester work schedule to be established at the initiation of work assignments. If unable to perform any duties, the assistant will notify their respective supervisors of the circumstances as soon as possible.

VI FORMAL EVALUATIONS

The performance of graduate assistants will be evaluated by the department near the end of each academic year. The graduate assistant will be given a written evaluation, a copy shall be kept on file in the department office for the duration of the appointment.

VII REAPPOINTMENT OF GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

Reappointment will be considered for those assistants who are making satisfactory progress toward completion of their degree program, have been performing well in their assistantships based on formal evaluations, and the length of time they have held their assistantships.

VIII STIPEND AND TUITION WAIVER

A. Graduate assistants receive a stipend as determined by department in consultation with the Graduate Dean. Their tuition will be waived up to a maximum of ten semester hours, but only for courses that are essential to the degree program. Out-of-state-tuition fees are also waived for graduate assistants. Fees other than tuition will not be waived, nor will tuition be waived for courses audited or courses not a part of the degree program.

B. A biweekly payroll form must be filled out and signed by the student's graduate faculty supervisor and departmental chair and returned to the payroll department. Checks are picked up at the Bursar's office or direct deposit is available through the Payroll Office, Room 1, Administration Building.

C. Income tax forms, an employment eligibility verification form (requires appropriate identification documents) and a FICA withholding statement must be signed at the Graduate School office prior to receiving the first check.

IX PROCEDURES FOR RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

A. INFORMAL DISCUSSION

The graduate assistant should make every effort to resolve a complaint with the graduate supervisor. If this form of negotiation does not result in an acceptable agreement, the following steps shall be taken.

B. REQUEST FOR MEDIATION

The graduate assistant shall prepare and submit a written grievance to the Department Chair, or to the appropriate Dean if the Department Chair is party to the dispute, or if there is no Department Chair or Acting Chair. A copy of the grievance shall be sent to the appropriate Dean to whom the Chair reports. For following references to "Chair" read also "or appropriate Dean."

C. REQUEST FOR MEDIATION AND MEETING

The person grieved against may submit a written response to the Chair before the meeting with the Chair occurs. The Chair acts as a mediator to attempt to resolve the complaint. If the difficulty cannot be resolved, the written complaint, a written response from the other party, and a recommendation from the Department Chair are submitted for resolution to the Director of Graduate Studies who will consider the complaint and make a decision.

D. APPEALS

Either party involved in the complaint may appeal the decision to the Graduate Dean whose ruling will be final. This process is not the same as the Graduate Student Academic Conduct Policy or Final Grade Grievance Procedure.

X TERMINATION OF GRADUATE ASSISTANT OR FELLOW APPOINTMENT

A. Any appointment may be curtailed, diminished, or terminated at any time for lack of funds; failure of the student to maintain satisfactory student status or to make appropriate progress toward the degree; no further need for the functions to be performed; incompetence or misconduct of the graduate assistant or fellow; or failure to complete the degree requirements.

B. A termination of appointment action is initiated by the Chair of the department to which the graduate assistant is assigned. The Chair meets with the graduate assistant and explains the causes of termination.

C. The Chair forwards a recommendation for termination of appointment to the Director of Graduate Studies of the appropriate college. The letter explains the basis of the recommendation for termination. The Director of Graduate Studies reviews the recommendation for termination of appointment and may investigate the circumstances of the termination. After the review, the Director of Graduate Studies sends a recommendation regarding the termination to the Dean of the Graduate School. Only the Graduate Dean may terminate an appointment.

D. Grievances in regard to termination shall follow the Procedure for Resolving Complaints. (See IX)

E. A termination for budgetary considerations is not subject to the Procedure for Resolving Complaints.

XI ADDITIONAL BENEFITS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Expenses incident to assigned duties. Graduate assistants will be reimbursed by the institution of necessary expenses and/or travel associated with assigned duties.

B. The graduate assistant shall secure approval from the Department Chair prior to incurring expenses.

C. The department or college will provide the necessary physical space and services for execution of the graduate assistants' duties.