Policy: 05-20-00

Graduate Assistantship

OFFICE OF RECORD: Graduate Programs Office
ISSUED BY: Director of Graduate Programs Office
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Policy

Each semester, DSU offers a limited number of assistantships to qualified graduate students. Assistantships are, first and foremost, an educational tool that provides graduate students with the opportunities to apply some of the skills and knowledge they have acquired. Much like an apprentice, students undertake, under the supervision of experts, activities that complement their other educational experiences. Usually the work done for the university will relate to the degree being sought. Within this educational purpose, assistantships are used to meet a variety of needs: as a source of financial aid, to recruit highly qualified prospective students, and/or to provide much needed assistance for faculty and administrators.

Categories of Assistantships at DSU:

Graduate assistants are paid to teach, support instruction, conduct research, and/or perform administrative tasks for the university. Three categories of assistantships exist: Graduate Teaching Assistantships, Graduate Research Assistantships, and Graduate Administrative Assistantships.

1. Graduate Teaching Assistantships. Three types of teaching assistantships are available:

   o Classroom Instructors are engaged in direct teaching. They are responsible for instructional delivery and are the teacher of record for the course.

   o Instructional and/or Laboratory Support personnel provide instructional support to an instructor or lead instructor in a team-teaching situation. They are generally responsible for a variety of instructional support duties, such as proctoring exams, preparing course materials, and/or setting up labs. They support, rather than replace,
the instructor and are not the teacher of record for the course.

- Grading or Other Paperwork Support personnel provide only grading and paperwork support for an instructor. They are not responsible for any other instructional support or teaching activities.

2. Graduate Research Assistantships are assigned to research faculty, assist in the research process and are not responsible for any instructional support or teaching activities.

3. Graduate Administrative Assistantships work with department heads, deans, directors or other administrators to perform administrative and/or technical tasks/projects. They may be assigned undergraduate advising responsibilities. They are not responsible for any instructional support, teaching, or research activities.

**Procedures**

To apply for a graduate assistantship, applicants must complete the assistantship form included in the application packet. The dean, in collaboration with the Graduate Programs Office Director and the college's graduate admissions committee, makes assistantship decisions. Appointments may be for any duration up to 12 months. Renewal is not automatic; rather it depends upon the academic performance of the student, the quality of work performed, and the needs of the University.

The dean of the college offering the assistantship determines the level and type of assistantship that is awarded. Faculty supervisors are responsible for monitoring the graduate assistant's performance and work hours. Graduate assistants are expected to report for work during the academic semester and during academic breaks as required by their supervisor.

Individual colleges in which specific graduate programs reside may establish program-specific procedures for awarding graduate assistantships.

**Minimum Requirements for Graduate Assistants**

1. Graduate assistants must be regularly admitted graduate students in good academic standing in their degree program.

2. International students must have a student (F-1) visa and valid social security number.
3. Graduate assistants must maintain active status and be registered for the academic course load appropriate for the level of their appointment. (See the discussion below on appointment levels and course load requirements.)

4. Only those graduate students who have already earned a master's degree will be considered for teaching assignments in general education courses.

5. Graduate students with other full-time employment will not be considered for graduate assistantships. Exceptions may be granted in cases of unusual economic necessity or other extraordinary circumstances.

6. Graduate assistants must maintain a Plan of Study GPA of 3.25 to be eligible for a continuation of their graduate assistantship. Graduate assistants who have been denied renewal may appeal the decision following the established appeal procedure.

**Graduate Assistantships and Student Status**

Student status (i.e., full- or part-time) is generally determined by the number of credit hours in which the student is enrolled, and it is calculated on a semester-by-semester basis. However, a graduate assistant's student status is determined by both their academic course load and by their assistantship workload. (See the discussion below on appointment levels and course load requirements.) This combination of academic course load and assistantship workload is used to determine federal loan deferments and other federal financial aid issues. The Graduate Programs Office will calculate and record the graduate assistant's student status, will monitor course and workloads, and will notify other administrative offices of this status, as appropriate.

**Appointment Levels and Workload**

The graduate assistant's workload will be based on an average number of hours of work per week, using a 40-hour week as a base. However, this may vary slightly, depending on assignment.

- One-quarter time appointment = minimum of 10-11 hours/week
- One-half time appointment = minimum of 20-22 hours/week
- Three-fourths time appointment = minimum of 30-33 hours/week

These workload guidelines apply to all types of graduate assistantships: Graduate Teaching Assistants, Graduate Research Assistants, and Graduate Administrative Assistants.

Graduate assistants who receive one-half or three-fourth time appointments are ineligible for other campus employment. Graduate assistants who receive one-
quarter time appointments may work on an hourly basis for another campus department with the knowledge and approval of the dean of the college providing their assistantship.

**Maximum Course Load for Graduate Assistants**

All courses in the graduate assistant's course schedule taken for credit are counted as part of their course load and have an impact on the level of assistantship / workload that can be assigned. Additional limitations are placed on graduate students who are awarded teaching assistantships. (See the discussion below on teaching assistantships.) Graduate assistants who wish to enroll in course loads that exceed the limits described below must secure the permission of their advisor and the dean.

**Teaching Assistants**

Graduate assistants with teaching assignments shall use the following formula to determine their maximum course enrollments each semester:

Teaching credits + course credits < 12 credit hours.

**Graduate Research Assistants and Graduate Administrative Assistants**

Generally, only full-time graduate students (students enrolled in at least 9 credit hours) are eligible for one-quarter and one-half time research and administrative assistantships. However, the full-time equivalency requirement may be waived by the Program Committee if deemed warranted. Graduate assistants with one-quarter time appointments may take up to 12 credit hours per semester during the fall and spring semesters and up to 3 credits per summer school session. Graduate assistants with one-half time appointments may take up to 12 credit hours per semester during the fall and spring semesters and up to 3 credits per summer school session. Graduate assistants with three-quarter time appointments may take up to 6 credit hours per semester during the fall and spring semesters and up to 3 credits per summer school session.

**Reduced Tuition Benefits, Stipends and Salary**

The salary paid to a graduate assistant is the total value of the tuition reduction plus the per-semester stipend. The goal is for assistantship salaries to be market competitive, equitable within a college, and not less than a designated University minimum. Although a graduate assistant is considered part of the university's staff, he/she is not considered a permanent employee and, therefore, generally is not eligible for employee benefits such as sick leave, vacation, retirement, or insurance, regardless of the level / type of assistantship. (See BOR Policy 5.5.)
Reduced Tuition Benefits

To help universities recruit highly qualified students, the Board of Regents has adopted a special tuition rate for eligible graduate students. Graduate assistants are assessed one-third (1/3) of the resident graduate tuition rate for all graduate state-support courses. They are also assessed one-third (1/3) of the resident undergraduate tuition rate for all undergraduate state-support courses. (See BOR Policy 2.22 and 5.15.)

The reduced tuition benefit goes into effect the semester in which the student begins the assistantship. Graduate students who qualify for reduced tuition benefits during the fall or spring semesters may also be eligible for reduced tuition benefits during the subsequent summer school sessions. Graduate students may qualify for only one type of tuition reduction benefit in any given semester (i.e., tuition reduction benefit granted to graduate assistants versus tuition reduction benefit granted to South Dakota K-12 teachers).

Graduate assistants who ask to be released from their assistantship appointments before the end of the semester are expected to repay the tuition reduction benefits received that semester.

When a graduate program is offered cooperatively by two or more regental institutions, the Board of Regents may determine that graduate assistants who are eligible for the tuition reduction benefit at one institution are eligible for that same benefit at the other regental institution(s).

Stipends

The Board of Regents establishes minimum stipends for graduate assistants. These minimum stipends are evaluated each year by the Board of Regents at their March meeting.