

**Handbook for**

**Graduate Assistants**

**1989-91**

**University of Minnesota**

## **The Graduate Assistant Office**

The Graduate Assistant Office (GAO) was established to administer the graduate assistantship program and to provide ombudsman services for graduate assistants. The GAO advises all University units on policies regarding graduate assistantships, and advises graduate assistants concerning problems which may arise from their dual role as students and employees of the University. The GAO is an administrative arm of the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, located in the Graduate School for the convenience of graduate students. The office publishes a quarterly newsletter, the "Grapevine," and distributes the *Handbook for Graduate Assistants*, as well as memorandums to departments and other offices on employment of graduate assistants. Other services include posting of graduate assistantship openings, explanation of grievance procedures, and administration of the tuition benefit plan for graduate assistants. Graduate assistants are invited to contact the GAO, 416 Johnston Hall, (626-1310) for assistance on matters that pertain to their assistantships.

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### **Attention: University Job Applicants**

Federal law requires all employees hired by the University after November 6, 1986, to provide documents showing they are U.S. citizens or aliens authorized to work. The University of Minnesota cannot employ you without the required documents even if you are a U.S. citizen.

U.S. citizens who do not have a U.S. passport (or a certificate of citizenship or naturalization issued by INS) must produce two documents: 1) a document to show identity, such as a driver's license, school identification card photo, or voters registration card; AND 2) a document to show eligibility to work in the United States, such as a social security card or a birth certificate.

Permanent resident aliens can prove their eligibility to work by showing a resident alien card (I-551 or I-151) containing their photo or an unexpired foreign passport with an unexpired I-551 stamp. Other aliens must show a form I-94 attached to their passport which indicates they are authorized to work, or show proper identification and other documentation from the INS proving work authorization.

If you are hired for the position you are applying for, you must provide the required documentation within (3) three business days of your first date of employment. Because the University cannot employ you without the required documents, it is essential that you plan ahead. If you do not have the necessary documents, apply for them now.

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## **The Role of the Graduate Assistant**

University of Minnesota graduate assistants play active roles in the instructional, research, and service missions of the University. Their appointments involve them in interaction with students, faculty, and administrators and in the advancement of the educational programs of their departments and colleges.

The graduate assistantship fulfills a dual function. On the one hand, it provides instructional and research staff needed to accomplish the educational missions of the various units of the University. On the other hand, it offers the graduate student both financial assistance and the opportunity to gain professionally related experience.

Similarly, graduate assistants have a dual responsibility. As members of the academic staff, they are responsible for performing those teaching, research, or administrative duties attached to their appointments. As graduate students, they are committed to pursuing the course of study required by their degree programs.

The two-fold nature of the graduate assistantship, along with the great diversity of requirements among different programs, makes establishing a single set of criteria for all assistants very difficult. In any case, graduate assistants clearly fulfill important functions as members of the instructional, research, or administrative staff while they pursue their graduate studies and broaden their professional experience.

## **Types of Graduate Assistantships**

Graduate students may be appointed to any of three positions: teaching assistant, research assistant, or administrative fellow. Each department may supplement the general descriptions provided below with specific descriptions of the duties required of the graduate assistants it employs.

### **Teaching Assistant, Classification 9511**

Teaching assistants work under the supervision of the academic staff, providing assistance to the faculty in the teaching

or advising of students registered in specific courses. Teaching assistants may be responsible for a range of duties. They may work directly under the supervision of a faculty member who is primarily responsible for the course. In this case, the TA's duties may be limited to such tasks as grading examinations and reports; supervising or instructing laboratory classes, recitation sections, or intern groups; or preparing examination or class materials. Teaching assistants may also be assigned the primary responsibility for an entire course including lectures, course organization, academic administrative duties, grading, etc.

### **Research Assistant, Classification 9521**

Research assistants perform duties of a specialized nature connected with research assigned by the supporting department or principal research investigator. Such duties include collecting research material, performing experiments, doing taxonomic work, taking field notes, recording data, performing statistical analyses, preparing bibliographies, abstracting, editing, etc.

For some students, the research assistantship may provide the base for part or all of his or her own thesis; for others, it may provide the technical skills specifically required of all students within a given degree program. For still other students, even though the duties of the research assistantship fall within the students' field of study, the assistantship may not provide an educational experience that constitutes part of the degree requirements for the students' own degree program.

### **Administrative Fellow, Classification 9531**

An Administrative fellow performs duties of a specialized nature connected with academic administration. The work is performed under the direction of designated members of the faculty or administrative staff. Duties may include; assisting administrative staff in the development, interpretation, and implementation of policies, guidelines and procedures; general advising and counseling not connected with specific coursework; conducting institutional and inter-institutional policy and planning reviews; providing resource support for committees; collecting and analyzing data; keeping records; preparing reports; abstracting, etc.

# **Appointments to Graduate Assistantships**

## **Opportunities for Assistantships**

Assistantships are one of the means by which departments provide financial assistance to their graduate students. Departments usually restrict appointments or give priority in appointments to graduate students in their own degree programs. Many assistantships, however, are offered throughout the year by departments that are either willing to consider more than their own graduate students, or that do not have graduate students of their own, such as administrative units of the University. These assistantships are posted in the Graduate Assistant Office, 416 Johnston Hall, as they become available. Students are advised to check the posting board on the same day each week in order to view all the appointments which come through. (Information on available appointments cannot be given over the phone. You must come in to see what is available.)

## **Eligibility**

Students admitted to Graduate School degree programs, are eligible to hold graduate assistantships. (Students in non-Graduate School Post-Baccalaureate degree programs in professional schools such as Law and Public Health, may, depending on their degree program, be allowed to hold graduate assistantships as well). Among those students who are not eligible to hold graduate assistantships are those admitted to the special Graduate School registration category "Course Work Only," and those admitted to the University as "Adult Special" students.

Appointment to a graduate assistantship may not begin before the quarter of admission to a Graduate School degree program, except in the case of those students admitted for Fall quarter, who may hold appointments beginning the preceding Summer. For relevant dates, see the section in this handbook on quarterly payroll periods (page 12).

A student who has graduated may continue to hold an appointment as a graduate assistant if he or she has been admitted directly into another Graduate School degree program. A student who has graduated and has not been officially admitted into another Graduate School degree program may

admitted into another Graduate School degree program may complete the remaining portion of a previously committed academic or fiscal year term of appointment, but a change in title to a non-graduate assistant classification will be required: research assistants will be reclassified as research specialists, teaching assistants as teaching specialists, and administrative fellows as either teaching specialists or research specialists.

The University of Minnesota is committed to making an impact on minority and female academic appointments by following affirmative action principles in the employment of graduate students. Departments are required to adhere to these principles in filling graduate student positions.

## **Degree Progress and Registration Requirements**

All graduate assistants must make satisfactory progress toward a Graduate School degree. In addition, all graduate assistants must be registered in each fall, winter, and spring quarter during which they hold appointments of at least 12.5% (65 hours) or more. (There is no registration requirement during the summer if the student was registered during the previous Spring Quarter or if the student is newly admitted for Fall). A hold will be placed on the record of a student who has held a graduate assistantship of at least 12.5% (65 hours) and has not registered for that quarter, or who has cancelled all valid registration for that quarter. Back-registration for that quarter must be completed before the student will be allowed to register for future quarters or to hold additional graduate assistantship positions. (Students may only back-register for "Student Status" to fill this requirement.)

Any registration in the Graduate School will fulfill the requirement that a student be registered in order to hold an appointment during Fall/Winter/Spring. Such registration includes but is not limited to one of the following: at least one credit of any course work, "Student Status" registration, doctoral candidacy registration (for those admitted prior to Fall 1983), or thesis credit registration. (Your specific department may have additional requirements.) Registration in course work offered through Continuing Education and Extension will not satisfy this requirement until the class has been officially transferred onto the student's official degree program. An "ON" hold will be placed on the student's record until confirmation of the transfer is received.

## Conditions of Assistantships

Graduate students are entitled to know the terms and conditions of their assistantships. Some information is essential to the decision to accept an offer and must be provided when an appointment is offered. Other information is integral to effective performance of assignments and should be available as the graduate assistant begins work.

Every hiring unit must provide the following list of informational items in writing when offering an assistantship or renewing a current appointment:

- title, pay rate, percentage of time, term of appointment
- description of general duties attached to the position
- hours of work required per week and flexibility in the work schedule (e.g. a half-time appointment implies an average of 20 hours per week)
- departmental guidelines that may set a maximum number of quarters of employment
- criteria for continuation of appointment from quarter to quarter and year to year, with respect to job as well as academic performance
- what payroll the student is paid from and how this may effect his or her appointment.

Every hiring unit must notify the graduate assistant in writing if these conditions of appointment change. In general, the title, rate of pay, percentage time, and length of appointment may not be changed without mutual agreement between the graduate assistant and hiring unit. Also, a graduate assistant should not be asked to perform duties that are not related to the instructional, research, or service missions of the unit that appoints the assistant.

The following information should be a part of every graduate assistant's initial orientation to the position:

- description of specific duties, or explanation of when and how those duties will be assigned;



- name of faculty or administrative supervisor
- educational resources available, including orientation and in-service training;
- TA training available through the department or University
- access to departmental clerical services, supplies, equipment, office space;
- criteria for evaluation of job performance, and name of faculty or administrative staff member who is to be responsible for the evaluation;
- procedure and timing of reappointment decisions;
- source of funding.

The faculty member responsible for hiring or the departmental administrator should make such information available to all graduate assistants at the outset of their appointments. If complete information is not provided at the time of appointment, graduate students should ask questions to make sure they are clear in their understanding of their contract and responsibilities. Graduate assistants should direct inquiries to their immediate supervisor or the departmental chair. If graduate assistants are unsure as to what rights or responsibilities they have under their particular payroll contract, they may contact the GAO. Graduate assistants may request a photocopy of their appointment document for their reference.

## **Reappointment/Non-Reappointment**

To the extent that the budget and other essential information permit, actions on appointments and non-reappointments for the following year should be completed and written notification given, preferably by April 1 and no later than April 14. However, in years in which the Minnesota State Legislature is considering the University's biennial budget, or in cases in which grant decisions are late, such early notice will not always be possible.

sible. **Please note:** your department may have set a maximum number of quarters for departmental support. Check with your individual department for details.

A department or unit may elect not to reappoint a graduate assistant for the next term of appointment on the basis of its evaluation of performance of the duties of the position, the student's progress toward the degree, or budgetary constraints. Adequate performance of duties and progress toward the degree do not guarantee reappointment. Under circumstances where external funding of the position is lost, the position may have to be terminated at the end of the current appointment.

### **Acceptance and/or Continuation of Appointment**

Acceptance of an offer of a graduate assistantship by either a current or prospective graduate student, regardless of the term of appointment, completes an agreement that both the student and the student's hiring department are expected to honor. The hiring contract is legally binding. Should the student subsequently desire to change plans, he or she should submit a written resignation from the appointment for the following year at any time through April 15. An acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student to the next year's appointment. Formal release from this appointment must be obtained if you wish to change plans, whether the assistantship was offered before or after the April 15 deadline. If you find it necessary to resign from an appointment, you should consult with your department as early as possible to facilitate the hiring of another student.

### **Assignment and Reassignment of Duties**

Each unit is expected to provide a minimum notice of four weeks for particular teaching assignments and two weeks for other duties, with the opportunity for the assistants to express preferences for assignments in advance of these notice dates whenever possible. (It is expected that the same notices of courtesy that are extended to faculty in the determination of the unit will make every effort to keep its graduate assistants informed with respect to these instructional contingencies.)

## **Dismissal**

A graduate assistant may not be summarily terminated. Removal cannot occur without citing reasons to you and giving you an opportunity to respond. Termination of a graduate assistantship for cause before the expiration of the appointment shall be presented to you, the graduate assistant, in writing, along with a description of appeal procedures (see the "Grievances" section in this handbook).

A violation of the University's Student Conduct Code, including an act of plagiarism, may result in a student being dropped from his or her program, and if so, a student would also lose his or her assistantship. There are 16 violations described in the standards of student conduct, ranging from falsification of documents to disorderly conduct. The following statement is from the University's "Statement of Standards," section IV., under "Conduct Code," and addresses the issue of plagiarism. It is only one of the aforementioned 16 disciplinary offenses actionable by the University:

1. Scholastic Dishonesty: submission of false records of academic achievement; cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement.

Note: If a graduate student is dropped from her or his respective academic program, her or his assistantship is automatically terminated because one must be a degree-pursuing graduate student to hold an assistantship. The graduate assistant is entitled, however, to finish the remainder of the quarter in which she or he was dropped from a program, or, if this occurs at the end of a quarter, be kept on the payroll for a short time to curb any sudden financial hardship.

## **Teaching Assistant Training**

Teaching assistant training was mandated by the Minnesota legislature in 1989. Workshops, panels, lectures and other informational sessions will be held on both a departmental and University-wide level. TAs will be expected and encouraged

to attend these sessions beginning Fall Quarter 1989. Graduate assistants should check with their respective departments for dates, times, locations, and topics to be covered in the sessions. Resource materials are also available in Wilson Library on preparing a course as well as improving teaching skills.

## **Workloads, Compensation, and Benefits**

### **Workloads**

Graduate assistants may hold either of two types of appointment: hourly or fixed percentage. A fixed percentage is based on compensation for a full-time position of 9 or 12 months. For example, a 50% appointment would imply an average of 20 hours of work per week at one-half the rate of pay for a full-time position. Graduate assistants may also hold hourly appointments for which they are compensated at an hourly rate for that position. In either case, all duties related to the appointment are included in determining the number of hours worked per week. The work schedule whenever possible, should be flexible so that a graduate assistant can work less than the average number of hours per week when other responsibilities, such as examinations, arise and more than the average number of hours per week when the duties of the appointment require it. (Note: this may not be possible in the case of TA positions.) During Fall, Winter, and Spring Quarters, graduate assistants at the University of Minnesota may not hold appointments or combined appointments totaling more than 75% time in all University payroll classes and appointments, including Continuing Education and Extension, Civil Service positions, and student worker positions without prior written permission of the Dean of the Graduate School. (This translates into no more than 60 hours in a two week pay period for the hourly assistant.) It is the responsibility of the hiring department, with consent and input from the student's advisor, to request such permission in writing well before the over 75% time period is expected to occur.

Graduate assistants may hold up to a 100% time appointment during the summer without permission from the Graduate School. Under no circumstances may a graduate student hold a University appointment or combination of appointments totalling more than 100% time. For the hourly appointee, he or she should never work over 80 hours total from all appointments in a two week period.

Graduate students may not hold graduate assistantship appointments for which there is no monetary compensation, nor are they allowed to hold appointments for which they receive only course credit or resident tuition rates.

## Compensation/Quarterly Pay Periods

### Compensation

Graduate assistants are compensated according to a pay range established each year by the University's central administration and approved by the Board of Regents. Graduate assistants may be appointed to a rate of pay anywhere within this range. In determining the rate for an individual graduate assistant, a department may consider such criteria as the nature of the duties assigned; the individual's experience, in terms of both the assigned duties and his or her progress toward a graduate degree; as well as the quality of the individual's performance, in terms of the assigned duties and overall academic excellence. Compensation paid to graduate assistants employed in the same or different departments may vary according to these criteria.

For the 1989-90 fiscal year, the range for a 100% graduate assistant for a 9-month appointment is \$15,750 - \$20,736 (or \$1750 - \$2,304 per month). Salary ranges for appointments at, for example, 50% can be determined by multiplying the percentage of appointment by the 100% monthly rate.

Gross income for a 9-month 50% appointee based on the 1989-90 pay range would be as follows:

Time Period	Floor	Ceiling
per month	\$875 -	\$1,152
per quarter	\$2,625 -	\$3,456
per 9 month	\$7,875 -	\$10,368
per 12 month	\$10,500-	\$13,824

Updated schedules of compensation rates are distributed to departments each July at the beginning of the University's fiscal year. Contact your work department for information on the pay ranges currently in effect.

### Quarterly Pay Periods

Graduate assistant appointments may begin or end on any date, but they generally follow the quarterly and summer payroll period dates. These dates are the same each year:

<u>For Twin Cities campus appointments:</u>	
Summer	June 16 - September 15
Fall Qtr.	September 16 - December 15
Winter Qtr.	December 16 - March 15
Spring Qtr.	March 16 - June 15
<u>For Duluth campus appointments:</u>	
Summer	June 1 - August 31
Fall Qtr.	September 1 - November 30
Winter Qtr.	December 1 - February 28
Spring Qtr.	March 1 - May 31

Graduate assistants holding regular or miscellaneous payroll appointments (determined by the hiring unit) are paid semi-monthly, on the 15th and last day of the month. Graduate assistants holding appointments on Work-Study or in Continuing Education and Extension are paid on Bi-weekly Payroll, or usually every other Wednesday. If the pay date falls on an official holiday, Saturday, or Sunday, the payroll check will be issued on the preceding work day.

### **Payroll Deduction/Direct Deposit**

To be eligible for payroll deduction, your tuition and deductible fees must total at least \$150, and you must have a graduate assistantship of at least 25% for the entire 13-week quarter. Graduate assistants holding only miscellaneous payroll appointments or appointments on the bi-weekly payroll (Continuing Education and Extension or Work-Study appointments) are NOT ELIGIBLE for this service. (See the *Class Schedule* for complete information.)

Payroll deduction forms are available at the registration centers. They may be turned in at the same time that you

register, but they must be turned in no later than the due date on one's fee statement, or the fifth day of classes, whichever comes first. Please DO NOT ASK the people in registration to calculate how much tuition and deductible fees your paychecks will cover. If you have any questions, contact the Graduate Assistant Office.

### Direct Deposit

Graduate assistants may have their paychecks directly deposited in their savings or checking account. Enrollment forms for the Direct Deposit Payroll Service are available in department offices.

## **Employee Benefits**

### State Plan Health and Life Insurance

Graduate assistants on regular payroll who hold 75% time appointments of at least three months duration are eligible for the State Plan Insurance employee benefits package including health, dental, and life insurance. The hiring departments pay all or the majority of the premiums for the State plan, depending on the particular care provider selected by the employee. Graduate assistants with regular payroll appointments of 50 - 74% are eligible for the State Plan; but must pay the total cost of the coverage at group rates if they wish to participate. The various plans available through the Employee Benefits office (624-9090) include options for dependent coverage at additional cost. If you plan on participating in the State group insurance, make sure your department processes your payroll document(s) far in advance so that you are on the payroll system by the start date of your appointment. There is a 28 day waiting period beginning with the start date of your appointment. Coverage becomes effective on the first day of the next payroll period after the waiting period.

### Health Care Reimbursement Accounts

If you are scheduled to work 17.5 hours or more per week for at least six months of the year, you may elect to participate in this plan. The Health Care Reimbursement Account allows you to make pre-tax contributions to an account which you may then draw on to pay eligible medical and dental gradu

penses not covered by other sources. You can elect to participate in this program the first day of the pay period after you have been employed by the U for 28 days. You must have selected this option however, within 60 days of the start date of your employment. Parameters are established for how much you can contribute and what dependents, if any, are covered by the account. A descriptive brochure on this and pre-tax contributions to pay premiums of medical and dental plans is available from Employee Benefits (624-9090).

### Worker's Compensation/Unemployment Compensation

Graduate assistants are covered by Worker's Compensation but do not qualify for unemployment compensation, because Minnesota law specifically excludes registered students from this benefit.

## **Student Health Insurance**

All students are eligible to purchase health coverage. Students on the Twin Cities campus may purchase coverage for outpatient treatment at Boynton Health Service, as well as hospitalization insurance, for both the academic year and the summer. The student hospitalization coverage is available to students and their eligible dependents. The deadline for purchase of coverage for Fall, Winter, and Spring Quarters is Friday of the second week of classes for each quarter; the deadline for purchase of coverage for both first and second Summer Session is the Friday of the first week of classes in the session. Students covered for both first and second Summer session will also be covered during the period from the end of second Summer Session to the beginning of Fall Quarter coverage. Prices for Student Hospitalization insurance and the Health/ Student Services fees are listed each quarter in the *Class Schedule*. Outpatient services at Boynton Health Service are available to spouses and children over 18 years of age on a fee-for-service basis. Graduate assistants on the Duluth campus should contact the Duluth Health Service for information on health coverage.

## **Leave Time**

### Parental Leave

The Regents' policy provides maternity benefits for



graduate assistants. Graduate assistants who have held an appointment or combination of appointments for at least 9 months consecutively at an average of 50%, qualify for the following leaves while currently on at least half-time appointment: A woman may take up to six weeks leave with pay related to the birth of her child; men may take up to two weeks leave with pay and four weeks leave without pay related to the birth or adoption of his child; women may take up to two weeks leave with pay and four weeks leave without pay related to the adoption of her child. The leave must fall within terms of appointment, be taken consecutively, without interruption. Notification of intent to use parental leave must be submitted to the Department head at least four weeks in advance of the first day for which leave is requested, except in unusual circumstances. The leave must begin no later than six weeks after the birth of the child or placement of the adopted child, and can begin no sooner than two weeks before the expected birth or placement of the adopted child. In the case of pregnancy-related illness, a woman may receive 2 weeks informal sick leave.

Summer and Continuing Education and Extension appointments should be included in determining the 9 months of completed appointment required to be eligible for the benefit. Parental leave, however, if taken in Summer Session or on a CEE appointment, would be unpaid.

NOTE: An assistant with paid maternity leave totalling over 65 hours will still have to register during the quarter in which they take the leave.

### Official University Holidays

Paid holidays must be recognized for graduate assistants under the following appointments.

- Regular Payroll

If an official holiday falls on a day of the week normally scheduled for work, the graduate assistant shall receive the regular paycheck and shall not be required to make-up the hours that fell on the holiday. If a graduate assistant's schedule varies from week to week, the holiday pay shall be prorated for the work week. (For example, a 25% appointment prorated for one week in which one official holiday occurred would provide two

hours of release time for the graduate assistant.)

- **Miscellaneous Payroll**

For graduate assistants on a fixed percentage of time, the same provisions for Regular payroll apply (see preceding paragraph). For graduate assistants paid on hourly miscellaneous payroll which averages ten(10) hours per week or more, there are two decision rules; (a) if work hours are fixed on a weekly basis, holiday pay shall be provided if the holiday falls on the day of the week normally scheduled for work; or, (b) if the work schedule is variable, holiday pay shall be prorated for the work week. For example, the graduate assistant working ten hours each week should receive two hours of holiday (unworked) pay during the week in which one holiday falls.

- **Biweekly Payroll**

Graduate assistants who work an average of ten (10) hours a week or more shall be compensated for unworked time according to the same rules stated above for hourly miscellaneous payroll. Bi-weekly payroll hours that are in addition to a regular or miscellaneous payroll appointment to compensate for additional hours worked during intermittent peak periods, or where the nature of the duties result in irregular and variable hours that clearly do not meet the rule of an average of at least ten (10) hours per week, pay shall be based on actual time worked.

### Quarter Breaks

For class break periods between fall and winter quarters and winter and spring quarters, paid time must reflect hours worked except for the following:

- (1) official holidays shall be paid according to the provisions under the University Official Holidays section above;
- (2) Teaching Assistants who are the day course instructors of record shall be paid over the entire quarter. Payment is made in six equal semi-monthly payroll checks and includes course preparation, instruction, advising, and grading. The quarterly payroll periods do not necessarily reflect either the class schedule or the time period in which the graduate assistant prepared the course. The six pay periods in each quarter assure equal payment for a course taught in each of the three quarters. For a teaching assistant whose sole responsibility is the teaching

of a course or courses, there is no work required during the break period following submission of grades.

(3) Teaching assistants who are not instructors of record, research assistants, and administrative fellows on straight percentage time appointments, also receive equal semi-monthly paychecks. In order for these graduate assistants to be paid if they wish to be absent during the break, additional hours should be worked by prior arrangement between the supervisor and graduate assistant to compensate for the period of absence. The graduate assistant and supervisor should discuss break plans at the beginning of the quarter to prevent misunderstandings between the department and student. In the event an arrangement for additional hours has not been made, a leave of absence without salary should be processed.

Note: Holiday time is not paid during a leave without salary.

### Sick Leave

Sick leave days based on service are not accrued in any academic appointment. Graduate assistants are, however, entitled to informal sick leave, not to exceed two weeks' consecutive pay, for absences caused by occasional or serious illness or injury. In the case of repeated absences due to illness, a health care providers certification may be requested.

### Vacation

Graduate assistants receive no paid vacation. Academic vacation eligibility requires eleven months' service at 100% time. No vacation is earned or prorated for other terms of appointment. Because graduate assistants cannot work on a twelve month 100% time contract, there is no paid vacation. (For holidays see above section on official "University Holidays.")

## **Travel Insurance**

Travel accident insurance is provided to graduate assistants on University of Minnesota business. Business Administration Form 9, Travel Authorization or Advance Request, should be submitted in advance of travel to ensure coverage. Graduate assistants should obtain the form from their departments, fill it out, and return it to the department. It must be signed by your department head before being turned in to tuition

Accounting Records and Services. For questions about what is covered by travel insurance, call University Property Casualty Insurance at 625-0062.

## **Resident Tuition Privilege/Extended Benefit**

Non-resident graduate assistants holding at least a 25% appointment for an entire 13-week quarter (130 hours of work within the quarterly payroll period), are eligible to pay resident tuition rates for that quarter. Non-resident graduate assistants holding only hourly or miscellaneous hourly payroll appointments would receive resident rates as a matter of course if they obtain a Provisional Tuition Benefit from the Graduate Assistants Office, or if they obtain tuition benefits retroactively when their appointments are completed for the quarter. (See the Tuition Benefits section of this handbook for information on obtaining a Provisional Tuition Benefit.)

Resident rates or Extended Benefit privileges also apply to the members of the graduate assistant's immediate family. (The University defines "immediate family" as spouse, children, parents, or legal guardian or ward living in the same household as the graduate assistant.) These resident tuition privileges are extended beyond the term of qualifying appointment if an assistant has held such an appointment for a minimum of three academic quarters (both Summer Sessions are counted as one academic quarter). After completion of the qualifying three quarters, the Extended Benefit is granted on a quarter-by-quarter basis, equivalent to the number of quarters of assistantship, up to a maximum of six quarters. For example, an appointment for three quarters allows the minimum extension of resident tuition privileges for three additional quarters; appointment for five quarters allows five quarters of extended privilege. Appointments for more than six quarters only allow the maximum six-quarter extension of resident tuition privileges. The appointee and members of his or her immediate family are entitled to draw on their accumulated extended privilege over a period not longer than three years from the termination of the last qualifying appointment.

Resident tuition eligibility for non-resident graduate

privilege for their immediate family members, and non-resident graduate students who formerly held appointments as graduate assistants and who wish to claim the resident tuition privilege for themselves or their family members, should contact the Graduate Assistant Office, 416 Johnston Hall, 626-1310.

## **Tuition Benefits Based on Assistantships**

Graduate assistants who hold a minimum of at least 25% time for an entire quarter (130 hours), are eligible for a tuition benefit equal to twice the percentage of appointment. Those persons on regular payroll are eligible for this benefit when they register. If your payroll documents were not processed early enough, however, it may not show up on the Registration terminal. Miscellaneous percentage appointments, and those regular payroll appointments not on the computer system, must always process their tuition benefit manually by bringing a copy of their PAF and a completed Tuition Benefit form from their department to the GAO, preferably before going to Registration.

Appointments not on the Regular payroll, including Extension, Bi-weekly, Work-Study, and Miscellaneous hourly may apply for the Tuition Benefit retroactively, in other words, when they have completed their hours for the quarter. Alternatively, graduate assistants in this category may be eligible for a Provisional Tuition Benefit, that is a tuition benefit at the beginning of the quarter, provided the work department is willing to, and can fairly accurately predict the number of hours the graduate assistant will work during the particular quarter. It is imperative if you receive a Provisional Tuition Benefit that you fulfill the number of hours certified for that benefit. If not, unexpected back-billing to you for a portion or the entire amount of your tuition may result. The department must provide an accurate prediction of the hours to be worked on departmental stationary, complete a Tuition Benefit Information form and provide a copy of your PAF. With this documentation you would then visit the GAO and manually process the tuition benefit.

To claim a tuition benefit retroactively, you must have accrued at least 130 hours between the quarterly payroll dates. This is equivalent to a 25% appointment and would carry a 50% tuition benefit. A graduate assistant must work 260 hours in a quarterly payroll period to be eligible for a 100% tuition benefit. You may bring in payroll abstracts, copies of authorized time

cards, or payroll check stubs, with a completed tuition Benefit form to the GAO for processing. Then you can take the Tuition Benefit form to Registration to obtain a revised fee statement, before being reimbursed by Student Accounts Receivable.

## **Registration Covered by the Tuition Benefit**

Graduate assistants may register for any credit course, thesis credits, student status, or doctoral candidate registration through the Graduate School and be eligible to use the Tuition Benefit. (Some restrictions on the Tuition Benefit with respect to thesis credits occur in summer. Please refer to information specifically about summer tuition benefits or call the GAO.)

Graduate students may not register for non-credit courses and /or undergraduate courses in Continuing Education and Extension and be eligible for the Tuition Benefit. Classes taken in CEE must first of all, be 5000 and/or 8000 level, secondly, taught by a Graduate School approved instructor, thirdly, taken for graduate credit, and finally, must be courses that are part of your official graduate program. Tuition Benefits for Extension are processed manually. If you meet the above requirements you should present a copy of your PAF, a completed Tuition Benefit Information Form, and a completed course request form with your advisor's signature to the GAO. Providing the above conditions are met, the GAO will then stamp the Tuition Benefit form for CEE registration. You can then proceed to Westbrook Hall to register.

**Please note:** Tuition benefits are contingent on the completion of the qualifying appointment(s). If your assistantship is terminated or you resign, you may be assessed part or all of the tuition formerly waived for that quarter.

## **Grievances**

Every graduate assistant has the right to fundamental fairness regarding complaints arising from his or her appointment, without prejudice to other rights and/or privileges. If you have a complaint you should discuss it with your faculty supervisor and, if the grievance is still unresolved, discuss it with the department or unit head. If you wish to discuss your situation

with someone outside of the work department on an informal basis, the Coordinator of the Graduate Assistant Office may be contacted. If a grievance cannot be resolved by informal means through these discussions, the formal system of grievance procedures should be activated. There is a time limit of 30 days from the date of the alleged incident for filing a formal grievance or a letter of intent to file a formal grievance. The Graduate Assistant Office will provide initial information and copies of the established procedures, "Grievance Procedures for Graduate Assistants," upon request.

## **Foreign Graduate Assistants**

Everything in this book applies to foreign graduate assistants; however, there are some special situations of which foreign students should be aware.

### **Social Security Cards**

You must have a Social Security number in order to be put on the University payroll and to use Payroll Deduction. Though the process for getting a Social Security number is simple, it is time consuming. **FIRST**, you must go to the University's Administrative Services Center at 1919 University Avenue in St. Paul in order to get an application. You must have (1) your passport, (2) your I-94, and (3) a copy of your Personnel Action Form (PAF) from your department. **NOTE:** if you are on an F-1 visa you also must present an I-20 identification document. **SECOND**, you must see a representative of the Social Security Administration who will take your application and give you your Social Security number. If you do not get your Social Security number at the Administrative Services Center, then you must go to a Social Security Administration office. There is one in St. Paul at 316 N. Robert St., and one in Minneapolis at 1811 Chicago Ave. For information, call 1-800-234-5772 (this is a Twin Cities number).

The University provides shuttle-bus service to the Administrative Services Center at 1919 University Avenue. The Inter-Office Shuttle bus runs every hour and can be boarded at the Civil and Mineral Engineering Building or at the intersection

of Oak and Washington streets in Stadium Village. Call: 625-9000 for the schedule and other locations of shuttle stops.

## **Proficiency in Spoken English**

If you are a prospective Teaching Assistant (9511), you will be referred to the English as a Second Language Program, 116 Klaeber Court (624-1503) for testing. Depending on the results of this oral exam, you may be required to take classes in Classroom Communication Skills before appointment as a TA. Contact your Director of Graduate Studies if you have any questions.

## **Taxes**

The tax situation is more complicated for foreign Graduate Assistants than for U.S. citizens with assistantships. Some persons will not need to pay taxes on their assistantship wages because tax treaties have been signed between their governments and the United States. It will be necessary for a foreign graduate assistant to go to the University Payroll Department or call them early in the graduate students' employment to determine if a treaty exists. In other cases the type of visa they hold may exempt them from paying certain taxes.

Usually, however, the University will withhold money from the students' paycheck, some of which will go to the Federal Government, some to the state government. The student will have to file forms with the United States government and the state of Minnesota in order to receive any of this money back. Generally, foreign persons cannot claim deductions which allow them to pay less tax because they have dependents (spouses, or children) living with them in the United States.

All persons holding non-immigrant visas must file their annual tax return by April 15 on a special version of the required reporting forms. To make the annual report to the Federal Government on your income foreign persons must use Form 1040-NR which is not available from normal sources such as Post Offices and Libraries. You can call the Internal Revenue Service at 1-800-424-3676 and ask to have this form sent to you. You may also want to consult or have sent to you, relevant publications of the Internal Revenue Service, including the most recent revisions of:



- Publication 518, Foreign Scholars and Educational and Cultural Exchange Visitors;
- Publication 519, U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens;
- Publication 520, Scholarships and Fellowships; and
- Publication 17, Your Federal Income Tax.

You are encouraged to consult a tax attorney or to contact the IRS for definitive responses to questions (IRS HOTLINE: 1-800-424-1040).

### **Office of International Education**

Counseling and advisory services are provided for students from other countries by the Office of International Education. Assistance is given to those seeking information about visa regulations; federal, state, and local regulations governing foreign nationals; financial aid requirements; English language requirements; and educational, social, and personal problems. This office also coordinates orientation and English language programs for new international students. Students are invited to address inquiries to the Office of International Education, Room 10 Nicholson Hall, 216 Pillsbury Dr., Minneapolis, MN 55455 (626-7100). The office hours are : 8 a.m. - 12 noon, and 1 p.m. - 4:15 p.m., Monday - Friday.

### **Graduate Assistants and Taxes**

The University withholds state and federal taxes on payments to all Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants, and Administrative Fellows.

In the past, the IRS has treated the stipends of some RAs as tax-exempt on the grounds that they were scholarships or fellowships, thus allowing some graduate assistants to recover the taxes that have been withheld. As a result of the Tax Reform Act of 1986, however, the exclusion for scholarships and fellowships has been restricted considerably. Under current law, scholarships and fellowships awarded to degree candidates are considered taxable income, except for the amounts of the students' "qualified tuition and related expenses," defined as

tuition and fees required for enrollment, and necessary books, supplies, and equipment required for courses. Room and board, travel, research, clerical help, and other expenses not actually **REQUIRED FOR ENROLLMENT** are not qualified expenses. The use of funds for qualified tuition and related expenses must be in accordance with the conditions of the source of funds. For non-degree candidates, the full amount of the scholarship or fellowship is considered taxable income.

Students holding graduate assistantships who wish to claim that some portion of the award is tax-exempt are urged to keep accurate records, including receipts, of all funds received and all expenditures for qualified tuition and related expenses.

## **Social Security**

Graduate assistants are not assessed social security tax on their graduate assistant wages. Graduate assistants may, however, be assessed taxes on other positions they hold within the University.

## **International Students on F-1 or J-1 Visas**

In general, most persons employed in the United States must pay taxes to the Federal and State governments. A certain amount of money is withheld from each paycheck to cover any taxes which might be owed at the end of the year. In some cases the amount of money withheld is greater than what the total annual tax is, but you must wait until the end of the year before you can recover the excess amount paid by filing your tax return forms. (See p.18 of this handbook for further information.)

## **Taxation of Tuition Benefits Based on Assistantships**

As of November, 1988, there is no longer taxation of Tuition Benefits. This means that the Tuition Benefit is not counted as income, and so, is no longer taxable. The wages from employment as a graduate assistant, however, are still taxable.

Students who wish to know more about the tax law may want to consult relevant publications of the Internal Revenue Service, including the most recent revisions of Publication 508,

Educational Expenses; Publication 520, Scholarships and Fellowships; and Publication 17, Your Federal Income Tax. Students are encouraged to consult a tax attorney or to contact the IRS for definitive responses to questions (IRS HOTLINE: 1-800-424-1040).

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Prepared by the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Graduate Assistant Office.

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, handicap, age, veteran status, or sexual orientation. In adhering to this policy, the University abides by the requirements of the Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, by Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and by other applicable statutes and regulations relating to equality of opportunity.

Inquiries regarding compliance may be directed to Patricia A. Mullen, Director, Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 419 Morrill Hall, 100 Church St., S.E., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, 55455 (612) 624-9547, or to the Director of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, Department of Labor, Washington, D.C. 20210.

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