

**Handbook for**

**Graduate Assistants**

**1993-94**

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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

Federal law requires all employees hired by the University 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 Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) must produce two documents: 1) a document to show identity, such as a driver's license, school identification card photo, or voter's registration card; and 2) a document to show eligibility to work in the U.S., 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 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, you must provide the required documentation within 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.

### **Alternative Formats of this Handbook**

This publication is available in alternative formats upon request from the Graduate Assistant Office, (612) 627-1075, 317 University Technology Center, 1313 5th Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55414.

### **Equal Opportunity Statement**

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, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

In adhering to this policy, the University abides by the Minnesota Human Rights Act, Minnesota Statute Ch. 363; by the Federal Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. 2000e; by the requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; by Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; by the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990; by Executive Order 11246, as amended; by 38 U.S.C. 2012, the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1972, as amended; and by other applicable statutes and regulations relating to equality or opportunity.

Inquiries regarding compliance may be directed to Patricia A. Mullen, Director, Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 419 Morrill Hall, 100 Church Street S.E., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455, (612) 624-9547.

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## **The Graduate Assistant Office**

**317 University Technology Center, 1313 5th St. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55414 (612) 627-1075. Please note this new location and phone number.**

The Graduate Assistant Office (GAO) is responsible for checking eligibility to hold a graduate assistantship and auditing appointments. The GAO administers the graduate assistant tuition benefit program, resident tuition rate privilege, and extended resident tuition rate benefit for students and members of students' immediate families. Bulletin board displays of available graduate assistant positions are maintained in the third floor corridor of Johnston Hall and in the GAO office. A quarterly newsletter for graduate assistants, *The Grapevine*, and this *Handbook for Graduate Assistants*, are distributed through academic departments, and are also available directly from the GAO. The GAO explains graduate assistant policies and procedures to departments and students.

For graduate assistants on the **Duluth Campus**, questions regarding eligibility, appointment procedures, and tuition benefits should be directed to the academic department handling the appointment. Further information about these matters may also be obtained from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Administration, 420 Darland Administration (218) 726-8836.

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

As University of Minnesota graduate assistants, you play active roles in the instructional, research, and service missions of the University. Your appointments involve you in interaction with students, faculty, and staff, and in the advancement of the educational programs of your departments and colleges.

The graduate assistantship fulfills a dual function. It provides instructional and research staff needed to accomplish the educational missions of the various units of the University. It also offers you both financial assistance and the opportunity to gain professionally related experience.

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

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, as a graduate assistant, you fulfill an important function as a member of the instructional, research, or administrative staff while you pursue your graduate studies and broaden your 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, class 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. You may work directly under the supervision of a faculty member who is primarily responsible for the course. In this case, your 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, advising

students, academic administrative duties, grading, etc. Teaching Assistants may do general advising and counseling not connected with specific coursework and may serve as tutors.

### **Research Assistant, class 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 basis for part or all of your 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 your field of study, the assistantship may not provide an educational experience that constitutes part of the degree requirements for your own degree program.

### **Administrative Fellow, class 9531**

An Administrative Fellow performs duties of a specialized nature connected with academic administration. Your 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; conducting institutional and inter-institutional policy and planning reviews; providing resource support for committees or administration, such as collecting and analyzing data, keeping records, preparing reports, and abstracting.

## **Appointments to Graduate Assistantships**

### **Opportunities for Assistantships**

Assistantships are one of the means by which departments provide financial assistance to their graduate students. Departments may restrict appointments or give priority in appointments to graduate students in their own degree programs. Descriptions of graduate assistant positions available to students outside of the hiring unit are posted on bulletin boards located in the third floor corridor of Johnston Hall, and the GAO, 317 University Technology Center. These positions are posted for a minimum of five days.

### **Eligibility for a Graduate Assistant Appointment**

Students admitted to Graduate School degree programs and post-baccalaureate professional degree programs are eligible to hold graduate assistantships. The eligible professional degree programs are: J.D., M.D., M.P.H., M.H.A., M.Ag., and M.Ed. "Course Work Only" and "Adult Special" registrations do not qualify. Appointment to a graduate assistantship may not begin before the quarter of admission, except that students admitted for fall quarter may hold graduate assistantships during the preceding summer. For specific dates, see "Quarterly Payroll Periods" in the Workloads and Compensation section.

### **Registration Requirements**

Registration for a minimum of one credit is required during each quarter or semester of the academic year in order to hold a graduate assistantship. If you are an International student visa holder or recipient of certain financial aid, you will have higher minimum credit requirements. Some degree programs also set higher credit requirements. If you are uncertain about credit minimums, check with the Institute of International Studies and Programs, Office of Student Financial Aids, or your degree program, as appropriate.

Registration deadlines are printed in the *Class Schedule*. **Failure to register, or subsequent cancellation of all courses, will result in termination of your graduate assistantship.**

Registration must be for credit, with A-F or S-N grading. Audit only and Independent Study courses do not fulfill the registration requirement.

Registration in courses offered through Continuing Education and Extension requires that courses are:

1. 5xxx or 8xxx level;
2. taken for credit (A-F or S/N);
3. taught by an approved instructor in your degree program; and
4. transferred to your graduate or post-baccalaureate professional degree program.

The GAO will place an "ON" hold on your record if the CEE course is your only registration. When your petition to transfer the CEE course to your official program is approved, take or send the notification to the GAO and the "ON" hold will be removed.

Summer graduate assistantships do not require summer session registration if you were registered the previous spring quarter or semester or you are admitted for the next fall quarter.

All graduate assistants must make satisfactory progress toward the degree as defined by your degree program.

Under current practice, FICA taxes (social security and medicare) are withheld from your paycheck if you are not registered by the third pay period. This practice is under review and may be changed effective winter quarter 1994 to require earlier registration to avoid FICA withholding. Watch for announcements. (See section on Social Security and Medicare, page 9.)

### **Terms and Conditions of Graduate Assistantships**

You are entitled to know the terms and conditions of your graduate assistantship.

Every hiring unit must provide you with the following information:

- title, rate of pay, percentage of time or hours to be worked, and length of appointment
- description of general duties attached to the position
- hours of work required per week and flexibility in the work schedule (Students who are F-1 and J-1 visa holders should see section on International Graduate Assistants for work hour restrictions, page 15.)
- type of payroll on which you are paid and how this may affect your appointment
- source of funding

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

- description of specific duties, and explanation of when and how those duties will be assigned
- name of 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
- standards for evaluation of job performance and person responsible for the evaluation
- procedure and timing of reappointment decisions

The faculty member or departmental administrator responsible for hiring should make such information available to you at the outset of your appointment. If complete information is not provided to you when you begin working, you should ask questions to make certain you understand your contract and responsibilities. Direct your inquiries to your immediate supervisor or the department head.

You may request a photocopy of your appointment. If you are uncertain of your rights and responsibilities under your particular appointment, you may contact the GAO for assistance.

Other terms of which you should be aware:

- In general, the title, rate of pay, percentage time, and length of appointment may not be changed within the current contract period without mutual written agreement between you and your hiring unit.
- Graduate assistant appointments require monetary compensation.
- Course credit cannot be substituted for graduate assistant pay.
- Resident tuition rate cannot be provided to non-resident graduate assistants in lieu of paid work time.

You should not be asked to perform duties that are unrelated to the instructional, research, or service missions of the unit that appoints you.

### **Graduate Assistantships Combined With A Fellowship or Traineeship**

When a graduate assistantship is combined with a Graduate or Professional School Fellow or Trainee appointment, the combined dollar value of the graduate assistantship and the fellowship or traineeship may not exceed the dollar value of the ceiling for a 75% graduate assistantship (see Compensation, page 8) during any academic quarter. If the dollar value exceeds this limit, either the assistantship or the fellowship/traineeship must be reduced.

### **Acceptance of Appointment**

Your acceptance of an offer of a graduate assistantship should be made in writing. This forms an agreement that both you and your hiring department are expected to honor. If you find it necessary to resign from an appointment, you should contact your department in writing as early as possible to facilitate the hiring of another student.

### **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 confirmed by April 15. In odd-numbered years when the University's biennial budget is before the state legislature, or in cases in which non-state grant funding or renewal has not been determined, such early notice may not be possible.

A department may decide not to reappoint you on the basis of your performance, your lack of progress toward your degree, budgetary constraints, or lack of need for the position. Under circumstances where external funding of the position is lost, the position may be terminated at the end of the current appointment. A department may not terminate you prior to the end date of your current appointment for any reason other than just cause as described on page 7.

Note: Some departments may set a maximum number of quarters for support of students. Check with your department.

### **Teaching Assistants in CEE Extension Classes**

Appointments as Teaching Assistants in Extension Classes may be dependent upon minimum class enrollment and may be cancelled if minimum enrollment is not met. Ask your department if there is a minimum class enrollment requirement if you are assigned to teach a CEE Extension Class course.

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

Departments are expected to provide a minimum notice of four weeks for particular teaching assignments and two weeks for other duties, with the opportunity for 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 teaching assignments and responsibilities should apply to teaching assistants. You may be assigned or reassigned to any teaching or other duties that are appropriate for your class title.

### **Termination for Cause; Student Conduct Code**

Your appointment may be terminated prior to its end date for cause, which includes, but is not limited to: substandard performance, theft, involuntary termination from your degree program, violation of University policy, including the University's policy on equal opportunity, and violations of the Student Conduct Code. Any other serious misconduct or breach of your responsibilities may also be cause for termination. Loss of funding does not justify cause for early termination of your appointment.

You may not be summarily terminated from your graduate assistantship. Your supervisor must cite reasons to you in writing and provide you with an opportunity to respond before termination during the term of your appointment.

A violation of the University's **Student Conduct Code**, including an act of plagiarism, may result in your being dropped from the program. You are held responsible for knowing the violations described in the standards of student conduct, ranging from falsification of documents to disorderly conduct. The Student Conduct Code is published in the Minnesota Daily when classes begin in fall, winter, and spring quarters, and is available in the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, 110 Morrill Hall.

Students on the **Duluth Campus** may obtain a copy of the Student Conduct Code from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Support and Student Life, 297 Darland Administration Building.

### **Teaching Assistant Development**

The preparation and development of Teaching Assistants is a shared responsibility of departments, colleges, and the Office of Human Resources. Teaching Assistants should contact their departments to learn what is available.

University-wide services and activities are offered by the Office of Human Resources throughout the year. An orientation for new teaching assistants and a series of workshops highlighting effective instructional strategies for both new and experienced TAs are offered the week before classes begin in the fall. Additional workshops are held throughout the year. TAs are notified of workshop offerings through campus mail each quarter. A TA consultation service addresses teaching development on a one-on-one basis. Education consultants work with TAs on educational concerns, observe classes, and provide resources. A collection of books, articles, and newsletters on many aspects of teaching is located in the Reserve Room, 4 Walter Library, East Bank campus. These services are offered free of charge. For further information, contact Maureen Bowen at 627-4040.

The TA English Program offers a number of courses throughout the year to help non-native English-speaking TAs improve English language and communication skills for employment. These classes are described in the section, Proficiency in Spoken English, page 15. There is a charge for the classes, paid either by the TA or the employing department. To learn more about the program, please call Karin Smith at 624-4079/624-1503

The English Program for International Students offers intensive English classes for those who want to work on listening, speaking, reading, writing, or grammar skills for personal or professional enrichment. For further information, contact the Minnesota English Center at 624-4079.

TA orientation workshops are conducted on the **Duluth Campus** at the beginning of fall quarter under the auspices of the UMD Graduate Office and the UMD Achievement Center.

## Workloads and Compensation

### Workloads

Appointments may be for a fixed percentage time or hourly. A fixed percentage is based on a full-time position of nine months or longer. For example, a 50% time appointment implies an average of 20 hours of work per week at one-half the rate of pay for a full-time position. An hourly appointment may have a fixed or variable work schedule and will usually require preparation of a time card. Departments are to accommodate your student requirements, including class and examination schedule, oral and written preliminary examinations, etc.

During fall, winter, and spring quarters, graduate assistants may not hold appointments or any combination of appointments totaling more than 75% during the scheduled class periods and finals week. The combination of appointments includes all University employment categories and Continuing Education and Extension activities. (See also section on combining a graduate assistantship with scholarships or traineeships.) Exceptions to the 75% work limitation for restricted time periods may be requested from the Dean of the Graduate School or dean of the relevant professional school. Such permission must be requested in writing from your department and graduate advisor and approved in advance. In no instance will appointments totaling in excess of 100% time be paid. Note: Immigration and Naturalization Service regulations restrict international students in F-1 and J-1 visa status to 20 hours per seven day work week during the academic year class periods and examination week.

Graduate assistants may hold up to a 100% time appointment during the summer and winter and spring quarter class breaks without special permission from the Graduate School or dean of the professional school.

### Compensation

Graduate assistants are compensated according to a pay range established each fiscal year by the University's central administration and approved by the Board of Regents. Graduate assistants may be appointed to a rate of pay 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, your experience in terms of both the assigned duties and your progress toward the degree, and the quality of your performance in terms of the assigned duties and your overall academic excellence. Compensation paid to graduate assistants employed in the same or different departments may vary according to departmental criteria.

For the 1993-94 fiscal year, the hourly rate ranges from a minimum of \$10.56 to a maximum of \$13.90 per hour. There is no time-and-one-half rate of pay for time of day or holiday work. The salary range for a fixed percentage time appointment is based on a percentage of full-time salaries: for a nine-month appointment the minimum is \$16,542 and the maximum is \$21,771; for a twelve-month appointment, the minimum is \$22,056 and the maximum is \$29,028.

Gross income for a 50% appointment would be:

Time Period	Minimum	Maximum
Semi-monthly	\$ 459.50	\$ 604.75
Per quarter	\$ 2,757.00	\$ 3,628.50
Per 9 months	\$ 8,271.00	\$10,885.50
Per 12 months	\$11,028.00	\$14,514.00

## **Pay Periods for Twin Cities and Duluth Campuses and Law School:**

Twin Cities campus:

Summer	June 16 - September 15
Fall quarter	September 16 - December 15
Winter quarter	December 16 - March 15
Spring quarter	March 16 - June 15

Duluth campus:

Summer	June 1 - August 31
Fall quarter	September 1 - November 30
Winter quarter	December 1 - February 28
Spring quarter	March 1 - May 31

Law School semesters:

Summer	May 16 - August 15
Fall semester	August 16 - December 31
Spring semester	January 1 - May 15

Continuing Education and Extension:

Classes may be on either a quarter or semester basis. Pay periods vary by collegiate unit.

Graduate assistants on regular and miscellaneous payrolls are paid semi-monthly on the 15th and last day of the month; bi-weekly payroll checks are issued 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.

Minnesota law requires that you be paid for wages earned at least once every 30 days. If you have not received a paycheck on the pay date expected, see your department payroll person immediately.

### **Payroll Deduction**

To be eligible to have your tuition and student services fees deducted from your payroll check, tuition and student services fees must total at least \$150 per semi-monthly pay period on regular or miscellaneous payroll, and you must have a graduate assistantship of at least 25% time. Graduate assistants holding hourly appointments on either miscellaneous or bi-weekly payroll are not eligible for payroll deduction.

### **Direct Deposit**

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

### **Social Security and Medicare Taxes Withholding**

If you are not registered as a student, FICA taxes (social security and medicare) will be withheld from your paycheck by the third pay period. The question of how many credits are necessary to qualify for the student FICA exemption is under review and may change effective winter quarter 1994. Watch for announcements.

### **Federal and State Income Taxes**

Graduate assistant salaries are subject to federal and state income taxes. You must complete a W-4 Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate, available from your department. Employer-paid tuition benefit and medical coverage are non-taxed benefits.

International students should refer to the section on page 15.

## Benefits

### Tuition Benefit Based on Graduate Assistant Appointment

Graduate assistants who work a minimum of a 25% time appointment (or 130 hours during a quarter or 195 hours during a semester) are eligible for a tuition benefit equal to twice the percentage of appointment. A graduate assistant must work 260 hours in a quarterly payroll period or 390 hours in a semester to be eligible for a 100% tuition benefit. **The time worked must fall within the quarterly or semester pay period dates** (shown under Compensation). If you are paid on bi-weekly payroll, you need to be aware that the beginning and ending pay periods usually fall in two quarters. For the purpose of administering benefits, the calendar dates will apply.

If you do not work the minimum time required, or work less than the hours estimated for provisional benefits, you will be billed for tuition benefit that was credited but not earned. Similarly, if you worked more than the hours estimated, you will receive a credit.

### Tuition Benefit Processing

During the **academic** year, the amount of the tuition benefit will be entered into the Student Registration Data Base when your appointment is processed by the Graduate Assistant Office. For graduate assistants on hourly payroll, the tuition benefit is based on estimated hours reported by the hiring department. When the quarter is completed, the hours actually worked will be checked against the estimated hours and any increase or decrease from the estimate will be credited or billed by Student Accounts Receivable. At the present time, graduate assistants enrolled in the Law School, Medical School, and the M.B.A. degree program in the Carlson School of Management, will need to complete the Tuition Benefit Information Form; other day school students should no longer use this form.

To receive a tuition benefit for **Continuing Education and Extension** classes, you must complete the Tuition Benefit Information Form available from your hiring department or the Graduate Assistant Office. This form, accompanied by a copy of your appointment document (called a PAF), must be processed by the Graduate Assistant Office. To receive tuition benefit in Continuing Education and Extension extension classes, courses must be:

1. 5xxx or 8xxx level;
2. taken for credit (A-F or S/N);
3. taught by an approved instructor in your degree program; and
4. transferred to your graduate or post-baccalaureate professional degree program.

Independent Study courses are not eligible for tuition benefit.

The GAO will stamp the Tuition Benefit Information Form for CEE registration. You must have the approved form when you register in Wesbrook Hall.

Information about tuition benefit processing for summer session 1994 will be provided in the spring quarter 1994 newsletter, *The Grapevine*.

Tuition benefits may be applied retroactively. To claim a tuition benefit retroactively, you must have accrued at least 130 hours during the quarterly payroll dates or 195 hours during the semester dates. You need to provide the Graduate Assistant Office with a copy of your appointment document (PAF), payroll abstracts, and copies of signed time cards (if applicable), and a Tuition Benefit Information Form if you are in the M.B.A., M.D., or J.D. degree program, or have taken an Extension class. Late registration fee(s) cannot be waived by the Graduate Assistant Office.

Graduate assistants on the **Duluth campus** should complete the University of Minnesota - Duluth Tuition Benefit Information Form.

## **Resident Tuition Privilege**

Non-resident graduate assistants who work a minimum of 25% time during the 13-week quarter (or 130 hours), are eligible to pay resident tuition rate for the quarter. Semester appointments require 195 work hours. Eligibility for resident tuition rate is entered into the Student Registration data base by the Graduate Assistant Office when your tuition benefit is processed.

Resident rate privilege applies to the graduate assistant's immediate family, including a registered domestic partner. Spousal benefit requires proof of marriage, either a marriage certificate or both names on a visa; dependent proof requires birth certificate or both names on a visa. Parents or legal guardian or ward living in the same household are also eligible. Proof for domestic partners requires completing a registration form in the Office of Human Resources, Department of Employee Benefits, room 210 University Technology Center, 1313 5th Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55414; (612) 624-9090. Once proof has been provided to the GAO, subsequent requests from family members of the graduate assistant may be made by phone call to the GAO.

## **Extended Resident Tuition Privilege**

Minimum eligibility for this privilege requires completion of three quarters of a graduate assistantship at 25% time or 130 hours worked each quarter or 195 hours worked each semester. Maximum extended resident tuition privilege is six quarters. Three quarters' employment will provide three quarters of extended resident tuition privilege; four, five, and six quarters' employment provide four, five, and six quarters, respectively, of extended resident tuition rate. Extended resident tuition privilege must be used within three years of the date of the qualifying quarter or semester.

Extended resident tuition also applies to the former graduate assistant's immediate family, including a registered domestic partner. Spousal benefit requires proof of marriage, either a marriage certificate or both names on a visa; dependent proof requires a birth certificate or both names on a visa. Parents or legal guardian or ward living in the same household are also eligible. Proof for domestic partners requires completing a registration form in the Office of Human Resources, Department of Employee Benefits, room 210 University Technology Center, 1313 5th Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55414; (612) 624-9090. Once proof has been provided to the GAO, subsequent requests from family members of the former graduate assistant may be made by phone call to the GAO. Extended resident tuition rate may be applied to day school classes, extension classes through Continuing Education and Extension, and Summer Session classes which have non-resident rates.

Effective summer 1993, one five-week summer session will be credited as one-half of a quarter; two five-week summer sessions or one ten-week summer session will be credited as one quarter.

## **Medical Coverage Benefit Graduate Assistant Health Care Plan**

University-subsidized medical coverage through Group Health, Inc. is available to graduate assistants with appointments of at least 25% time or 130 hours in a quarter or 195 hours in a semester. The University pays a portion of the HMO premium equal to twice the appointment percentage. To receive this coverage, eligible students must apply during the first quarter of your appointment by the enrollment deadline. If you are already enrolled in the plan, you do not reapply each quarter. To enroll, you must complete an application form available in the Graduate Assistant Health Insurance Office, 411 Johnston Hall, 625-4346. Once enrolled, you remain a member until you lose your eligibility. Upon loss of eligibility, you must cancel your participation in the group plan by completing a cancellation form. Failure to cancel means you will be billed for the full cost of the insurance. Dependent coverage is available but the full cost must be paid by the graduate assistant. For more information, contact Group Health, Inc. at 883-5600.

Graduate assistants on the **Duluth campus** should direct questions to either the UMD Graduate Office (218) 726-7523 or to Ms. Cathryn DeBruyne at Boynton Health Service (612) 624-6618. Graduate assistants on the Duluth campus are covered by First Plan HMO. The UMD Health Services is the Primary Care Clinic. You must enroll at First Plan HMO, 1620 London Road, Duluth, within 30 days of the starting date of your appointment. For more information, call First Plan HMO at (218) 724-3083.

## **Paid and Unpaid Leaves**

### Official University Holidays

Paid holidays must be recognized for graduate assistants.

- Graduate assistants on 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 your 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.

- Graduate Assistants on Miscellaneous Payroll

For graduate assistants on a fixed percentage of time, the same provisions for regular payroll apply. See the preceding paragraph.

For graduate assistants paid on hourly miscellaneous payroll which averages ten 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, if you are working ten hours each week, you should receive two hours of holiday pay (unworked) during the week in which one holiday falls.

- Graduate Assistants on Bi-weekly Payroll

Graduate assistants who work an average of ten hours a week or more shall be compensated for unworked time according to the same rules stated above for hourly miscellaneous payroll. For 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 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 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 you 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 fixed percentage time appointments also receive equal semi-monthly paychecks. In order for you, as one of these graduate assistants, to be paid if you wish to be absent during the break, you should make prior arrangements with your supervisor to work additional hours to compensate for the period of absence. You and your supervisor should discuss break plans at the beginning of the quarter to prevent misunderstandings between you and your department. In the event an arrangement for

additional hours has not been made, a break in service should be processed. Holiday time is not paid during a leave without salary.

Note: Teaching Assistants who serve as instructors of record for courses have completed the quarter's work when grades are submitted. All other graduate assistants must be physically present at the job on the last day of the appointment. If you have arranged to leave the job early, then the appointment dates on your payroll document must reflect the actual dates you worked.

### Daily Breaks

Graduate assistants are entitled to a 15-minute paid break when work is scheduled for four consecutive hours. There is no paid lunch time.

### Vacation

Graduate assistants receive no paid vacation.

### Sick Leave

Sick leave days based on service are not accrued in any academic appointment. As a graduate assistant, you are entitled to informal sick leave, not to exceed two weeks' consecutive pay, for absences caused by occasional or serious illness or injury to yourself or to your dependent child. In the case of repeated absences due to illness, your appointing authority (dean or department head) may request a health care provider's certification verifying the illness.

The sick leave policy pertains to graduate assistants in all payroll categories. For graduate assistants on an hourly payroll, there are two decision rules: (a) if work hours are fixed on a weekly basis, sick pay shall be provided if the sick day falls on the day of the week normally scheduled for work; or (b) if the work schedule is variable, sick pay shall be prorated for the work week. For example, if you work ten hours each week, you should receive two hours of sick pay for each day you are sick.

Under Minnesota law, if you hold a 50% time appointment or work an average of 20 hours per week, you may have a paid leave of absence up to 40 work hours to undergo a medical procedure to donate bone marrow upon verification by a physician.

### Parental Leave

Graduate assistants are eligible for parental leave if they have been employed for an average of twenty or more hours of service per week for at least nine months during the year prior to the leave, and are currently employed for an average of twenty or more hours during the period of the leave. Teaching appointments in Summer Session and CEE are recognized in determining eligibility for parental leave. Summer Session appointments will be counted at the percentage time for the dates shown on the appointment document or, if pay is hourly, on the actual hours paid. Appointments in extension classes paid on a credit hour basis will be counted as 30 hours per term for each credit taught. Non-credit courses will be computed on the basis of 10 contact hours in the classroom as being equal to one credit. Short-term conferences, seminars, and workshops, and Independent Study activities are not counted. Parental leave during Summer Session and Extension Class teaching appointments shall be without pay.

A female graduate assistant may take up to six weeks' leave with pay related to the birth of her child. You need not prove actual disability during this six-week period. This leave is for the purposes of recovery from physical disability associated with the birth (four weeks) and child rearing (two weeks). A male graduate assistant may, upon request, take up to two weeks' leave with pay for the birth of a child.

Female and male graduate assistants may, upon request, take up to two weeks paid leave for the adoption of a child.

The paid leave must fall within the dates of your appointment. The paid leave time must be taken consecutively and without interruption. The leave must start no later than six

weeks after the birth or adoption and no sooner than two weeks before the birth or adoption. In the case where the child must remain in the hospital longer than the mother, the leave must begin no later than six weeks after the child leaves the hospital. A request to use parental leave must be submitted to your supervisor at least four weeks in advance, except in unusual circumstances.

In the case of pregnancy-related illness, a female graduate assistant may receive two weeks' paid informal sick leave. For additional unpaid leave, see the Family and Medical Leave Act below.

### Family and Medical Leave Act

Under federal law, you may be eligible for up to twelve weeks' absence during a fiscal year for **parental leave** - childbirth and/or care of the newborn, placement of an adopted or foster child; **family medical leave** - care of a close family member (spouse/child/parent) with a serious health condition; **personal medical leave** - a serious health condition that prevents you from performing your job. The twelve week period may be consecutive, part-time, or taken intermittently; it includes any paid time provided under Sick Leave and Parental Leave. Leave other than paid time provided under Sick Leave and Parental Leave is unpaid. Eligibility requires that you have worked at least 1250 hours in the twelve months preceding the leave. Request for family or medical leave should be submitted to your supervisor. You may obtain more information about the Family and Medical Leave Act from your department office.

### **Worker's Compensation**

Graduate assistants are covered by the Worker's Compensation provisions of the State of Minnesota.

### **Unemployment Compensation**

Graduate assistants are not eligible for Unemployment Compensation by Minnesota statute, which specifically excludes registered students.

### **Travel Insurance**

Travel accident insurance is provided to graduate assistants on University of Minnesota business.

### **Grievances**

Graduate assistants have the right to fundamental fairness regarding complaints arising from their appointments, without prejudice to other rights and/or privileges. If you have a complaint, you should first seek informal resolution through your Director of Graduate Studies, faculty advisor, or department/unit head. If your employment problem is still unresolved, contact the GAO. Graduate assistants with employment grievances are covered by the Regents' University Grievance Policy. The policy and form for filing a complaint may be obtained from the University Grievance Office, 315 Walter Library, (612) 624-1030.

### **Americans With Disabilities Act**

If you are a graduate assistant with a disability, you may request accommodation from your employing unit that will enable you to perform the essential functions of your position. The federal law also entitles you to accommodation to share equal benefits and privileges of employment as are provided to graduate assistants without disabilities. For assistance with accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services, 16 Johnston Hall, (612) 624-4037. Any questions you have about compliance may be directed to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, Patricia A. Mullen, Director, 419 Morrill Hall, 100 Church St. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455; (612) 624-9547.

## **International Graduate Assistants**

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

### **Employment Limitations: F-1 and J-1 Visa Holders**

The federal Immigration and Naturalization Service restricts your total paid appointments to 50% time or 20 hours per seven-day work week during scheduled class periods and final examination week. Exceptions for Practical Training should be referred to International Student and Scholar Services, 20 Nicholson Hall, (612) 626-7100. Work during break periods and summer may be up to 100% time or 40 hours per week. Time worked in excess of these limitations cannot be paid under federal law.

### **Federal and State Income Tax Withholding**

Taxes will be withheld from your paycheck unless you are exempt from taxation under an international tax treaty between your country and the U.S. If you do not know if a tax treaty exists, contact the University Payroll Department. If you have additional questions about a tax treaty, call the St. Paul Internal Revenue Service general number, 644-7515, and ask for the tax treaty information section.

If income taxes are withheld, you will need to file separate forms to receive federal and state refunds. Generally, you cannot claim deductions which allow you to pay less tax because you have dependents (spouse, children) living with you in the U.S.

Relevant publications of the Internal Revenue Service are:

Publication 4: [Student's Guide to Federal Income Tax](#)

Publication 519: [U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens](#)

Publication 520: [Scholarships and Fellowships](#)

Publication 901: [U.S. Tax Treaties](#)

Publications and tax forms may be requested by calling the Internal Revenue Service Forms Order number, 1-800-829-3676. The publications and forms will be mailed to you.

The University does not provide tax advice. If you have questions or need information about taxes, call the Internal Revenue Service at 1-800-829-1040 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. All Internal Revenue Service phone numbers listed above are toll free.

### **Institute of International Studies and Programs (Formerly the Office of International Education)**

Counseling and advisory services are provided for students from other countries by International Student and Scholar Services which is a division of the Institute of International Studies and Programs. 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 the Pre-Registration Program for new international students. You are invited to address inquiries to International Student and Scholar Services, 20 Nicholson Hall, 216 Pillsbury Drive, (612) 626-7100. The office hours are: 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, and 1:00 p.m. to 4:15 p.m., Monday through Friday.

International graduate assistants on the **Duluth campus** should meet the international student advisors located in 101 Kirby Student Center, (218) 726-8738.

### **Proficiency in Spoken English**

If you are not a native speaker of English, the University of Minnesota employment policy requires that you pass a test of spoken English (the SPEAK Test). This oral English proficiency requirement for employment is in addition to the admission and placement requirements made by the Graduate School and your department. This policy applies to all non-native English speakers (including those who have degrees from institutions in the

United States or other countries where English is the medium of instruction) who are hired for TA positions requiring contact with students. These positions include assignments such as holding office hours or tutorials, leading laboratories, recitations, or discussion sections, and lecturing.

To sign up for the SPEAK Test, call the TA English Program office, 624-4079/624-1503. The SPEAK Test is an institutional version of the Test of Spoken English (TSE) developed by the Educational Testing Service. Your department can provide you with a description of the test and how it is scored, or you can pick up a TOEFL Test booklet in room 9 Eddy Hall and refer to the section on the TSE. University policy requires a score of at least 230 out of 300. There is no charge for the test. It is best to be tested as early as possible; if you do not pass the test, you will need to enroll in one or more quarters of TA English Program classes before being hired for positions such as those described above. TAs who pass the SPEAK Test may also enroll.

In these classes, groups of four TAs meet once a week for a three-hour class to videotape short presentations and work on language, teaching, and interaction skills. Each TA is also scheduled for a weekly 50-minute individual tutorial. Classes are held in the afternoon and evening and begin the second week of the quarter. The Office of Human Resources at the University pays one-half of the total \$400 tuition for graduate students who will be hired by their departments as TAs. The department or the TA pays the other \$200.

If you need to take any English classes for admission or academic placement purposes (that is, if you have an A-Z hold on your registration) contact Mark Landa, Minnesota English Center, 624-1503. Mr. Landa will determine which, if any, courses you should take in the English Program for International Students. After you have fulfilled all admission and academic placement requirements, you may still need to take one or more TA English Program classes to fulfill employment requirements. TA English Program classes may not be used to fulfill admission or academic placement requirements.

International graduate assistants on the **Duluth campus** with questions about the SPEAK test should contact the Instructional Development Service Office (218) 726-7131.