

[1977]

Teaching Assistants ^{Info}

handbook for

GRADUATE

ASSISTANTS

university of
minnesota

[1977]



This handbook is a description of current University policies and procedures concerning graduate assistantships. It discusses only graduate assistantships that require service. For information concerning fellowships, scholarships, and traineeships, contact the Graduate Fellowship Office. Each college, department, or support unit is encouraged to adopt more specific guidelines that meet their particular needs. Graduate students should, therefore, consult the unit for more information.



I. THE ROLE OF THE GRADUATE ASSISTANT

The University decided in 1948 to link the support of graduate students to the needs and requirements of undergraduate instruction. Prior to this date, growing instructional needs had been met primarily with full-time instructors.

This decision and the unusual requirements attached to the assistantship appointments mark these academic appointments as special. The unusual requirements (part-time appointment, the requirement of Graduate School registration, residence tuition rate, satisfactory progress toward a graduate degree, etc.) are, together, an expression by the institution of the importance attached to graduate study and scholarship. However, since the resources used to fund graduate assistantships are allocated to meet teaching or research needs, the assistants also have a primary responsibility to teach and perform related activities or to contribute to the research program with which they are associated.

The dual responsibility of graduate assistants—as graduate students and as members of the academic staff (in research, teaching, or administration)—together with the great diversity of requirements among different programs makes it very difficult to

set down a single set of criteria that apply to all assistants. The original decision to establish the graduate assistantships reflects a uniform acceptance of the concept that the active participation in academic endeavors offers the students unique opportunities to acquire knowledge, skills, and experience that are essential components of graduate education, and this view is still generally accepted. The manner in which the educational aspects of the assistantship are reconciled with the service functions specified for the funds allocated for assistantships differs from program to program. In some programs assistants are *employed* to handle specific assignments, to be carried out in addition to the degree requirements as a means of earning financial support. In other programs the tasks for which the assistantship funds are allocated are part of the degree requirements and must be fulfilled by all students whether they hold assistantships or not, and the assistants' duties thus cannot be distinguished from the degree program. In either case the graduate assistants clearly fulfill important functions as members of the instructional, research, or administrative staff while at the same time they acquire new skills and experiences and pursue their graduate studies.



II. TYPES OF GRADUATE ASSISTANT APPOINTMENT

Depending upon individual interests, experience, and progress toward a degree, a graduate student may apply for an appointment to one of the following positions: Teaching Assistant, Teaching Associate I or II, Research Assistant, Project Assistant, or Administrative Fellow I or II. Since there is a good deal of variation in the actual use of these levels, it is expected that each department will supplement the general descriptions with a specific departmental description of the expected performance for each of the assistantship levels it employs.

A. *Teaching Assistant and Teaching Associate I or II*

A teaching assistant or associate provides assistance in the actual teaching of students in a specified course or courses, under the general supervision of the academic staff. Each department classifies its own teaching assignments according to the level of responsibility required. Duties of teaching assistants, who work under direct supervision of a member of the academic staff, may include grading examinations and reports; supervision and instruction of laboratory classes, recitation sections, and intern

groups; and preparation of examination or class materials. Teaching associates perform these duties and, in addition, (may) have primary responsibility for course organization, administration, or grading. Although qualifications for appointment to teaching associate levels are determined by departmental criteria, it is normally expected that persons receiving Teaching Associate II appointments will have had previous teaching experience.

Promotion to the rank of Teaching Associate II is determined after a review of, at least, academic progress and teaching performance. This review is conducted in accordance with the promotion criteria defined and distributed to all graduate assistants by each department.

B. Research Assistant and Project Assistant

The research assistant's and project assistant's activities are connected with research studies assigned by the supporting department or principal research investigator. The assignments, which vary considerably between programs, include the following: perform independent or collaborative research, collect research material, take field notes, record and analyze data, perform analytical work, conduct library searches and abstracting, prepare bibliographies, and do editorial work. These activities may or may not be directly related to the assistant's own thesis



research, and the two appointment titles have been established to distinguish between these two possibilities. The research assistant's work partially fulfills degree requirements. The project assistant title is used where the assistant is assigned special duties on special research projects, and the work is not to be used as part of the thesis research.

C. Administrative Fellow I or II

An administrative fellow performs duties of a specialized nature connected with administrative studies or student personnel. This work is performed under direction of designated members of the academic or civil service staff. Duties, which may vary between departments, are as follows: to advise students with regard to academic matters; to do applied studies and research related to internship experiences; to conduct institutional and interinstitutional policy and planning reviews; to collect or analyze data; to do abstracting; to provide resource support for committee meetings and other planning meetings; to meet with administrative staff to assist in the development, interpretation, and implementation of policies, guidelines, and procedures; to keep various kinds of records; to prepare reports.

III. APPOINTMENT TO GRADUATE ASSISTANT POSITIONS

A. Eligibility

Upon admission to the Graduate School, a student may apply for appointment as a research assistant, teaching assistant or associate, or administrative fellow. Since 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 field. Graduate assistants must be registered during each quarter of appointment (not including the summer session) and make satisfactory progress toward an advanced degree.

As a university of national prominence, the University of Minnesota is in a favorable position to make an impact on minority and female academic appointments by following affirmative action principles in the employment of graduate students. Departments are expected to adhere to these principles in fulfilling the University's obligations as an equal opportunity employer.

It is required that every unit, at the time of appointment, provide each graduate assistant with the information pertinent to his or her position. Such information should include a description of the duties, qualifications, rank, and percentage time of appointment.

B. General Limitations on Appointment

Graduate students at the University of Minnesota may not hold combined appointments totalling more than 75 percent time without written permission from the dean of the Graduate School. Under no circumstances may a graduate assistant hold appointments totalling more than 100 percent time at the University of Minnesota. Graduate students may not hold appointments for which there is no monetary compensation, nor are they allowed to hold appointments for which they receive only course credit or in-state tuition rates.

C. In-State Tuition Privileges

Graduate assistants receiving assistantship support through appointments at 25 percent time or more pay in-state tuition rates. This same tuition privilege applies to members of their immediate families. These tuition privileges are extended beyond

the term of qualifying appointment if an assistant has held an appointment for a minimum of 3 academic quarters at 25 percent time or more after fall quarter 1969. (Two summer terms count as one academic quarter.) After completion of the qualifying 3 quarters, the extension is granted on a quarter-by-quarter basis to a maximum of 6 quarters. For example, appointment for 3 quarters allows the minimum extension of in-state tuition privileges for an additional 3 quarters; appointment for 5 quarters allows 5 quarters of extension; 8 quarters of appointment give 6 quarters of extended privilege. The appointee and members of her or his immediate family are entitled to the extension of this tuition privilege over a period of 3 years from the termination of the last qualifying appointment.

D. Conditions of Assistantship

Before accepting an assistantship, graduate students are entitled to know and should request information about the expectations connected with the appointment including:

- the title, rate of pay, term of appointment, and pay periods;
- the total hours of work required per week and flexibility in scheduling this work (e.g., a half-time appointment implies an average of 20 hours per week);

- the faculty supervisor;
- orientation, pre-service or in-service training aids;
- educational resources available (e.g., University Measurement Services Center);
- accessibility to departmental clerical staff, supplies, equipment, and office space;
- whether a minimum number of course credits must be earned each quarter to hold the appointment;
- departmental guidelines or policy that may set a maximum number of quarters of employment;
- criteria for continuation of appointment from quarter to quarter and year to year, and procedure and timing for reappointment;
- whether a structured system of performance evaluation exists, and, if so, the faculty member responsible for evaluating performance;
- promotion possibilities (within graduate assistant ranks);
- source of funding;
- opportunities to participate in departmental and collegiate committee work centered around educational planning and policy-making.

The above information must be made available by the faculty member responsible for hiring or by the departmental administrator at the time the offer of appointment or reappointment is made.

E. Acceptance 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 college are expected to honor. Should the student subsequently desire to change plans, the student should submit a written resignation from the appointment at any time through April 15. However, an acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student to the appointment. Formal release from this appointment must be obtained if the student wishes to change plans.

A person may be terminated without notice at any time if he or she fails to comply with the condition of being registered in the Graduate School. A hold will be placed on the records of students who have accepted pay for graduate assistantship work and are not registered, and they will not be allowed to register in future quarters until they comply with this requirement. This problem normally is resolved by completing the required registration.



F. Assignment and Reassignment of Duties

Each unit is expected to provide a minimum notice of four weeks for particular lecturing 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 all faculty in the determination of teaching assignments and responsibilities should apply also to graduate assistants.) Problems may arise during rush periods at the beginning and end of academic quarters. It is expected that the unit will make every effort to keep its graduate assistants informed with respect to these instructional contingencies.

G. Non-Reappointment

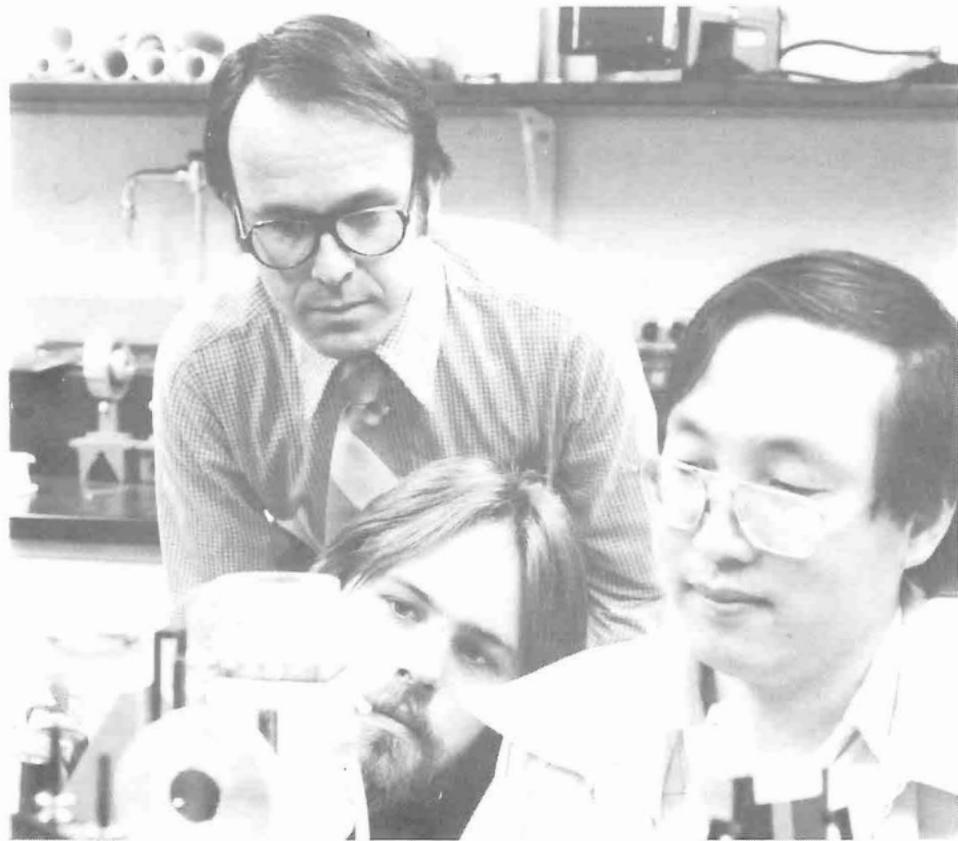
A department or unit may elect not to reappoint a graduate assistant for the next term of appointment on the basis of its evaluation of performance of the assistantship duties, progress toward the degree, or budgetary constraints. Adequate performance of duties and progress toward the degree do not guarantee

reappointment. Under circumstances where external funding of the position is lost, the position may have to be terminated. *To the extent that budget and other essential information permit*, actions on appointments and non-appointments should be completed and written notification given preferably by April 1 and no later than April 14. However, in years in which the 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.

H. Dismissal

Early termination of a graduate assistantship for cause shall be presented to the graduate assistant in writing, along with a description of appeal procedures (see Section V). The faculty supervisor must provide the graduate assistant with the opportunity to be heard before suspending or terminating employment.





IV. GRADUATE ASSISTANT COMPENSATION AND WORKLOADS

A. Compensation

A schedule of fixed rates applicable to graduate assistant appointments, differentiated by rank, is developed each year by central administration officers on the basis of studies of comparable rates paid in similar institutions. This schedule is given final approval by the Board of Regents. A copy of this schedule of rates is provided to departmental offices by the central administration. The rate schedule in Table I on the facing page applies for the 1977-78 academic year. Updated schedules are available each July in departmental offices.

TABLE I
University of Minnesota
FIXED RATES FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS
1977-78

Fixed Rates	Monthly	9 months 100% time	9 months 75% time	9 months 66% time	9 months 50% time	9 months 33% time	9 months 25% time	12 months 100% time	12 months 75% time	12 months 66% time	12 months 50% time	12 months 33% time	12 months 25% time
Teaching Associate I and Administrative Fellow II	\$1,167	\$10,503	\$7,877	\$6,931	\$5,251	\$3,501	\$2,625	\$14,004	\$10,503	\$9,242	\$7,002	\$4,621	\$3,501
Teaching Associate II	1,242	11,178	8,373	7,377	5,607	3,726	2,791	14,904	11,178	9,836	7,452	4,918	3,726
Teaching Assistant, Project Assistant, and Administrative Fellow I	1,045	9,405	7,053	6,207	4,702	3,136	2,351	12,540	9,405	8,276	6,270	4,138	3,135
Research Assistant	993	8,937	6,702	6,898	4,467	2,979	2,233	11,916	8,937	7,864	5,958	3,932	2,979

TABLE II
FRINGE BENEFITS FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS¹

% of Appointment	Social Security	Minnesota State Retirement	\$5,000 Group Life Insurance	Workman's Compensation	Unemployment Compensation²	Employee Group Health Insurance	Group Dental Plan	Formal Vacation & Sick Leave
75% time and over	none	none	yes, no cost to G.A.	yes	none	yes, no cost to G.A.	yes, no cost to G.A.	none
50% to 74% time	none	none	eligible for group rates, but G.A. must pay	yes	none	eligible for group rates, but G.A. must pay	none	none
Under 50% time	none	none	none	yes	none	none	none	none

¹See notes on facing page.

²Under Minnesota state law, a registered student is not qualified for unemployment compensation.

NOTE: Travel-accident insurance is provided to graduate assistants on University of Minnesota business. To apply, submit Business Administration Form 9, Travel Authorization or Advance Request, in advance of travel.

Identification cards may be obtained *by request only* at Window 4, Morrill Hall, when you register and turn in the Certificate of Appointment. This yellow, wallet-size I.D. card is your proof of employment.

Teaching associates are entitled to faculty privileges in using the University Libraries when the I.D. card is presented at the circulation desk.

Graduate assistants on regular payroll (but not miscellaneous payroll) may have tuition payments deducted from the last four paychecks of each quarter. A payroll form is available in department offices.

Student Health Service Extended Coverage Plan (available to all fee-paying students) is available on an individual basis or under the family plan *for a fee*. If you leave school for a quarter or if you will not be paying the student services fee during the summer months, you may continue to receive regular outpatient benefits at the Health Service. Additional information is available at Room W224 Health Service or by calling 373-3768.

Graduate assistants on regular payroll may join the Credit Union and are eligible for 9-month loans. Repayment may be deducted from payroll checks during the length of appointment.

B. Fringe Benefits

Table II on the facing page shows the extent of eligibility for fringe benefits for graduate assistants.

C. Workloads

A graduate assistant with a half-time appointment works an average of 20 hours per week. All duties related to the appointment are included in determining the number of hours worked per week. The work schedule 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. In no instance may a graduate assistant be required to perform duties that are not related to the instructional, research, or service mission of the department or college that appoints the assistant.



V. GRADUATE ASSISTANTS OFFICE

The Graduate Assistants Information and Assistance Office has been established to provide ombudsman services for graduate assistants. The office handles the range of problems and informational requests of individuals serving a dual function as students and University employees. The office, a part of the Graduate School, is an administrative arm of the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. It is staffed by graduate students. The office publishes a quarterly newsletter, the *Grapevine*, and distributes the *Handbook for Graduate Assistants*. Other services include help with tax audits, contingency check information, and explanations of grievance procedures and employee benefits. Students may contact the office, in 411 Johnston Hall, at 376-3644 weekdays from 9:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



VI. GRIEVANCES

Every graduate assistant has the right to be heard regarding complaints arising from his or her appointment without prejudice to other rights and privileges. The graduate assistant should discuss the complaint with the faculty supervisor and, if it is still unresolved, the department or unit head. If a grievance cannot be resolved by informal means through these discussions, the formal system of grievance procedures should be activated. The Graduate Assistants Office will provide counsel and information on these established procedures. All grievances start at the departmental level.

Prepared by the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Standing Committee on Graduate Assistant Affairs, and the Graduate Assistants Information and Assistance Office.

Photographs courtesy of the Graduate School Research Development Center. Kenneth D. Greer, photographer.

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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, creed, color, sex, national origin, or handicap. In adhering to this policy, the University abides by the requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, by Section 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 Lillian H. Williams, Director, Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 419 Morrill Hall, 100 Church Street S.E., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455, (612) 373-7969, or to the Director of the Office of Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 330 Independence Avenue S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201.

