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Oversight Executive

Executive Vice President and Provost

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Reason for Policy

The University offers graduate assistantships to provide opportunities for graduate students to gain teaching and research experience. This policy specifies the qualifications for appointment to a graduate assistantship and the conditions under which tuition remission, tuition adjustment, health insurance subsidy, and wages may be awarded.

Definition of Terms

Advanced Doctoral Student

Description

A student enrolled in a doctoral degree program who has completed all degree requirements except the dissertation.

Affiliated Status

Description

Affiliated students are absent temporarily from the University for educational purposes and expect to complete their degree. Affiliated students are not enrolled, pay the affiliated status fee, and may not register for credits. Affiliated status must be approved by a student's dean and may be used only for the purposes defined in policy [PROV-011: Student Enrollment](#).

Assistantship–Related Terms

Description

Include:

- **Assistantship Wages:** Funds paid to a student in exchange for instructional or research services in a graduate assistantship; wages are not a form of stipend (see the definition of “Stipend” below).
- **Full Graduate Assistantship:** A Graduate Assistantship equivalent to 0.5FTE, roughly twenty hours per week.
- **Qualified Graduate Assistantship:** A Graduate Assistantship that is at least half of a full assistantship (0.25 FTE, roughly ten hours per week), which is eligible to receive tuition remission and the health insurance subsidy and is eligible for tuition adjustment. All Full Graduate Assistantships are Qualified Assistantships.

General Funds

Description

General tax revenues that are appropriated by the Virginia General Assembly for the use of the institution.

Graduate Assistantship

Description

A form of graduate student employment that involves a supervised educational experience, wages, and tuition aid (see [Section 6: “Qualified Assistantships and Tuition Remission”](#) below). Graduate assistantships at the University include graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) and graduate research assistants (GRAs). (For further detail see [Section 1: “Types of Assistantships”](#) below.)

Responsible Administrator

Description

The faculty member or administrator responsible for a decision(s) affecting a graduate student's assistantship. Responsible administrators are typically the student's Assistantship Supervisor, director of graduate studies, department chair, or dean.

Student(s)

Description

An individual who either has been admitted to a degree or certificate program at the University or has received permission to enroll and is registered for coursework (including credit or non-credit) at the University during any given academic session (including fall or spring semesters, Summer Session, or January Term).

Assistantship Supervisor

Description

The individual responsible for mentoring and supervising a graduate student in performing the duties associated with a graduate assistantship. For teaching assistantships this is typically the course instructor and for research assistantships this is typically a faculty member or Professional Research Staff member.

Parental Accommodation Event

Description

Either the birth, adoption, or placement of a child, or the assumption of legal guardianship for a child under 18 years of age.

Professional Research Staff

Description

Professional staff principally engaged in research and appointed to limited terms of employment at the University. Positions include postdoctoral research associates, research scientists, senior scientists, and principal scientists.

Non-General Funds

Description

Resources which are earned or generated by the University such as tuition, F&A recoveries, grants and contracts, auxiliaries, or private resources.

Terms Related to Financial Aid

Description

Includes:

Direct Aid: Any aid provided directly to a student, such as a stipend.

Indirect Aid: Any aid provided on a student's behalf to the University or another third party, including tuition, fees, and health insurance subsidies.

Fellowship/Scholarship: Unearned aid (no work or repayment requirement) awarded to students. Fellowships and scholarships may consist of direct and indirect forms of aid.

Stipend: An amount given directly to a student to support the pursuit of study or training. Students receiving a stipend are under no obligation to perform services as a condition of receiving the funds. Such support typically is provided over a period of time, e.g., ten monthly deposits of \$500 each.

Tuition Remission: The in-state tuition and all required fees paid on behalf of a student serving in a qualified graduate assistantship. Tuition remission pays only the in-state portion of an out-of-state student's tuition charges, but pays all required fees, including the comprehensive fee, the University activity fee, the school activity fee, and, where applicable, the international student fee.

Tuition Adjustment: The amount of tuition above in-state tuition paid on behalf of an out-of-state student serving in a qualified graduate assistantship. An out-of-state student who serves in a qualified graduate assistantship receives tuition remission (in-state tuition and all required fees) and may receive tuition adjustment (difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition; all required fees are covered as part of tuition remission).

Policy Statement

Graduate Assistantships ("Assistantships") provide supervised opportunities for graduate students to gain experiences in teaching or research while receiving wages. Graduate students serving in Assistantships are, first and foremost, students, and the goal of any Assistantship must be to aid the student in the successful completion of their degree.

Graduate students who serve in an Assistantship are paid in accordance with the [wage authorization](#) established each year by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost and published on its website. In addition to wages, graduate students who serve in an Assistantship may receive financial aid through Tuition Remission, Tuition Adjustment, and/or health insurance subsidy.

1. Types of Assistantships:

The University offers two types of Graduate Assistantships: Teaching Assistantships and Research Assistantships

A. Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs):

GTAs have instructional assignments in classrooms and/or laboratories. In general, GTAs engage in a range of experiences that contribute to their development as educators; their duties ordinarily extend beyond grading. GTAs are expected to prepare sufficiently.

Effective July 1, 1988, the Board of Visitors defines a full-time graduate teaching assistantship (GTA) for salary purposes as twenty work hours per week for the academic session. For laboratory and discussion sections, eight contact hours per week of supervision are a full workload; for multi-

section courses, six credits per semester (e.g., two sections of three credits each) are a full workload. In all cases, the remaining hours needed to reach the twenty hours/week workload established by the Board of Visitors can include time for office hours, consultations with students, administration, grading of papers, preparation time, or other such duties as may be assigned.

An advanced doctoral student hired to teach an undergraduate course without the supervision of a faculty member is not a GTA and should be employed as a faculty wage employee (policy [PROV-026: Faculty Wage Employment](#)).

Graduate students paid on an hourly basis to provide other types of academic support, such as grading or other short-term projects, are hired as student wage employees, not GTAs, and are therefore not eligible for Tuition Remission (although they may be eligible to receive other forms of financial assistance).

B. Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs):

GRAs conduct and engage in academically significant research as part of their academic degree program. Research Assistantships foster students' development as future researchers under the guidance and supervision of a faculty member or Professional Research Staff member. Graduate students hired to assist with research not directly related to their development as scholars, organize conferences, or provide other types of support are not considered GRAs and are not eligible for tuition remission.

2. Qualifications:

Students must be enrolled full-time in a graduate degree-granting program at the University and must be in good academic standing as defined by their school of enrollment to be eligible for appointment to an Assistantship. Graduate students who are on leave or on Affiliated Status are not eligible for an Assistantship.

A. Additional Qualifications for Appointment as a GTA:

Per the University's established qualifications for teaching courses for academic credit (policy PROV-008), all GTAs must:

- have a master's degree or 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline they are teaching;
- receive direct supervision from a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline;
- participate in regular in-service training; and
- undergo planned and periodic evaluations.

In the event a school dean elects to support the appointment of a graduate student as a GTA who does not meet the qualifications established in this policy, the dean must retain documentation that provides evidence of the individual's qualifications. This documentation may be subject to periodic audit.

GTAs are not normally assigned to courses carrying graduate credit; however, in exceptional circumstances, the dean of the school offering the course may grant exceptions for graduate students who have completed at least 18 credits in their discipline and who have substantial knowledge or expertise in the subject matter. In these cases, GTAs must demonstrate mastery of course content. Rationale for exceptions and documentation of the dean's approval must be maintained by the dean's office and may be subject to periodic audit.

GTAs may not be assigned Assistantship responsibilities for courses in which they are enrolled.

A prospective international graduate teaching assistant who did not complete four years at an accredited U.S. college or university is required to take the University of Virginia English Language Proficiency Exam (UVELPE) Oral administered by the Center for American English Language & Culture (CAELC).

- Based on the UVELPE Oral score, a prospective graduate teaching assistant may be required by their dean's office to undergo additional language training from the CAELC before they are given a teaching assignment.
- Exemptions from the UVELPE Oral testing requirement and/or additional language training may be granted by a dean's office on a case-by-case basis, and schools are responsible for publishing the criteria they will use to evaluate exemption requests.
- Some prospective international GTAs who completed four years at an accredited U.S. college or university may still benefit from additional English language training. In such cases, the department offering the course to which the GTA would be assigned should consult with their dean's office to determine whether to require the prospective GTA to take the UVELPE Oral and any resulting recommended additional language training.

Only in exceptional circumstances and with documented approval of a school dean may visiting graduate students serve as GTAs (see policy [PROV-012: Financial Aid to Non-Degree-Seeking Students](#)).

3. **Supervisory Responsibilities of the Institution:**

Each graduate assistant must be supervised by a member of the faculty professional research staff (Assistantship Supervisor) in performing the activities associated with their Assistantship.

If the graduate assistant is a GTA, the supervising faculty member will be the faculty member responsible for the course or lab. The supervising faculty member of a GTA is responsible for:

- designing the course content and publishing a course syllabus;
- determining the grading policy;
- providing in-service training for all GTAs assigned to the course; and,
- evaluating the progress of the class and the GTA.

If the graduate student is a GRA, the Assistantship Supervisor will normally be a member of the faculty or Professional Research Staff associated with the grant used to support the GRA's wages.

For any type of Assistantship, either the Assistantship Supervisor or program leadership (e.g., department chair) will notify the graduate assistant in writing of any decision that affects the graduate student's academic or Assistantship status, including advance notice of evaluation procedures and a summary of the evaluation.

An Assistantship may be suspended or terminated if the Assistantship Supervisor or program leadership has cause. Possible causes for suspension or termination of an Assistantship include, but are not limited to, professional incompetence, unacceptable performance after due notice, unethical or unlawful conduct, misconduct that interferes with the graduate student's capacity to effectively perform the responsibilities of the Assistantship, failure to make adequate progress towards the degree, and falsification of credentials or experience. In the event of suspension or termination of an Assistantship, any Tuition Remission and Tuition Adjustment awarded in conjunction with the Assistantship will remain in effect for the current academic term; however, Tuition Remission and Tuition Adjustment committed for future terms may be

withdrawn, along with commitments for future Assistantships.

4. Appointment Restrictions:

To ensure that graduate students maintain good progress toward degree completion while serving in an Assistantship:

- A graduate student may hold no more than one Full Assistantship at any time (or multiple Assistantships at the equivalent of no more than one full Assistantship); and
- A graduate student who is appointed to a full Assistantship (or multiple Assistantships at the equivalent of a full Assistantship) will not engage in other employment, either inside or outside the University. However, a graduate assistant and their Assistantship Supervisor may request an exception to this restriction in accordance with the provost's [wage authorization](#) document).

5. Notice of Reappointment:

Unless specified otherwise in an Assistantship appointment letter, an Assistantship is for a single academic term only. Schools and departments are encouraged to notify graduate students at least six weeks before the end of the academic term as to whether they will be appointed to an Assistantship in the subsequent term, even if exact responsibilities or funding sources cannot be specified at that time.

A Parental Accommodation Event, a significant life event beyond the control of the student, or protected status may not be considered when deciding to offer a reappointment.

6. Qualified Assistantships and Tuition Remission and Adjustment:

Only graduate students appointed to a Qualified Graduate Assistantship (those that are at least half of a full assistantship - 0.25 FTE/ roughly ten hours per week) are eligible to receive Tuition Remission, Tuition Adjustment, and/or the health insurance subsidy.

A. Tuition Remission:

Each academic term, the University will provide Tuition Remission to graduate students who serve during that term in a Qualified Assistantship. Tuition Remission should be made from the same source of funds from which the student is paid wages. For GTAs, this source is usually tuition revenue. For GRAs, this is usually a grant or contract. If sufficient funds are not available or payment is not allowable from the same source of funds, the department chair or dean should identify another source of non-general funds from which to make the payment.

B. Tuition Remission and Multiple Sources of Pay:

If an Assistantship is "split-funded," that is, the student is either receiving wages as both a GTA and a GRA, or receiving wages that are funded from multiple sources of funds, Tuition Remission should be made from each source of funds proportional to the wages paid from each source. The percentage of Tuition Remission paid from a grant can be no more than the percentage of work for which the student is being paid from the grant. For example, a graduate student who is dedicating one-quarter of their Assistantship time as a GTA (approximately five hours per week) and three-quarters of their Assistantship time as a GRA (approximately fifteen hours per week) in a grant-funded lab should receive one-quarter of their remission payment from a non-grant source and three-fourths from the grant associated with the lab.

Graduate students who receive part of their wages through an Assistantship that is at least half-time (and therefore a Qualified Graduate Assistantship) and part through a position that is not an Assistantship (e.g., a student wage employee at the University Bookstore) should receive Tuition Remission entirely from the source of funds that is paying the wages for their Qualified Graduate Assistantship. For example, a half-time GRA who is also working as a student employee in the

University Bookstore would receive full Tuition Remission from the grant that is paying their wages as a GRA.

C. Tuition Adjustment:

In some instances, Schools or Departments may provide full or partial Tuition Adjustment (the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition) to an out-of-state student who serves in a Qualified Graduate Assistantship and earns at least \$5,000 in wages over the course of the fiscal year. All required fees are covered as part of tuition remission.

7. Health Insurance Subsidy:

A graduate assistant must be offered the health insurance subsidy if they earn at least \$5,000 in wages over the course of a fiscal year as a graduate assistant. Schools wishing to provide health insurance to graduate assistants who do not meet these qualifications may do so by processing a health insurance subsidy through the Student Information System (SIS) using non-general funds.

The following students do not automatically qualify for the health insurance subsidy; however, a school or department may choose to provide a subsidy:

- Graduate students employed by the University only in non-Assistantship capacities (such as a graduate student wage employee or a work-study employee or graduate students hired as faculty wage employees); and
- Students enrolled exclusively in the first professional degree programs offered by Law, Medicine, or Darden. Students enrolled in these schools may be qualified if they are enrolled either in a Ph.D. program in the school or in certain combination (formerly termed “dual”) graduate degree programs and meet the criteria defined above..

The amount provided on behalf of each Qualified Assistant as a health insurance subsidy is defined as part of the University’s annual budget process and may be less than or equal to 100% of the premium for single coverage under the University-sponsored student health insurance program. Annually, the University evaluates the cost of the single coverage premium for all eligible students relative to available University resources and reserves the right to reduce the subsidy to less than 100% if necessary.

The health insurance subsidy is non-transferable and non-refundable; unused subsidies cannot be refunded for their equivalent cash value.

A student may cease to qualify for the health insurance subsidy for reasons including, but not limited to:

- The student withdraws from the University during the academic year; or
- The student is not employed in the capacity that was anticipated at the start of the academic year (i.e., the student was expected to serve in a Qualified Assistantship during the spring semester, but in actuality was not employed in that capacity).

Before September 15 of each academic year, if a student ceases to qualify for the subsidy, the University will cancel payment of the student’s health insurance subsidy. After September 15, if a student ceases to qualify after s/he has been offered the subsidy and has enrolled in the student health insurance plan, the University will not cancel its payment of the student’s subsidy.

8. Grievances:

A graduate student who wishes to bring a complaint related to a decision regarding an Assistantship must do so within ten (10) business days of the date on which the decision being contested was communicated to the graduate assistant. Only complaints related to the suspension or termination of an Assistantship, assignment of Assistantship responsibilities that differ significantly from those included in the appointment letter, or violation of the provisions of this policy may be grieved under the terms of this section. Related procedures are described below in Procedure 4.

Complaints of discrimination or harassment, that is any complaint that the student has been subjected to discrimination on the basis of age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, marital status, national or ethnic origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, military or veteran status, or family medical or genetic information by the University, are not appropriate for review under the grievance procedure described in this policy and are handled under policy [HRM-009: Preventing and Addressing Discrimination and Harassment \(PADH\)](#), [HRM-010: Preventing and Addressing Retaliation](#), and the related [complaint procedures](#) maintained by the Office for Equal Opportunity & Civil Rights (EOCR).

Reports of sexual assault, sexual exploitation, intimate partner violence, stalking, or sexual or gender-based harassment are not appropriate for review under the grievance procedure described in this policy and are handled in accordance with policy [HRM-041: Policy on Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence](#) and its appendices.

Disciplinary actions taken against GTAs/GRAs as a result of an investigation pursuant to HRM-009, HRM-010, or HRM-041 do not qualify for review as a grievance under this policy.

Procedures

1. Appointment to a Graduate Assistantship:

Each graduate student appointed to an Assistantship must receive a letter of appointment at least once each year (or once each term, if the terms of the appointment change from term to term) referencing this policy and specifying the term of the appointment, weekly hours, assigned responsibilities, compensation, and whether the Assistantship will qualify for Tuition Remission, the health insurance subsidy, and Tuition Adjustment. The appointment letter serves as the contract and a copy should be returned to the department or dean's office with the signature of the appointee indicating their acceptance of the appointment and shared with the Assistantship Supervisor. The dean's office or the department must retain the signed appointment letter for three years. Changes in the source of funding for an Assistantship (for example, from one grant to another) during a term does not require additional written notice to the graduate assistant, as long as the terms of the graduate assistant's payment and assignment of responsibilities do not change.

Departments that wish to appoint, as a GTA, a graduate student who does not meet the qualifications for teaching established in section 2(A) must receive approval from the school dean before the appointment is made. The request should include the student's name, the course(s) to which the GTA responsibilities would be assigned, and the justification for the exception, which must be one of the following:

- Strong undergraduate academic record; TA assignment limited to facilitating discussion and grading under the supervision of a faculty member;

- Strong undergraduate record; fluent speaker in language of instruction (for World Language courses);
- Strong undergraduate record; TA assignment supplemented by extensive instruction in pedagogy within the discipline; or
- Unforeseen/emergency teaching need (explain circumstances and describe graduate student's qualifications).

2. **Processing Wages for an Assistantship:**

GTAs and GRAs are paid wages on a bi-weekly schedule using the University's payroll system. Of the twenty-six bi-weekly pay periods, ten occur during the fall term, ten occur during the spring term, and six occur during the summer. To determine the payment schedule for a particular academic year the start of the fall term for the current year, see the [wage authorization](#) issued annually by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.

GTAs are assigned the job title of either Graduate Instructor A (normally those graduate students pursuing a master's degree or its equivalent) or Graduate Instructor B (normally students who already possess a master's degree or its equivalent). GRAs are assigned the job title of either Graduate Research Student A (those students pursuing a master's degree or its equivalent) or Graduate Research Student B (those students who already possess a master's degree or its equivalent). The job titles of Graduate Instructor A and B and Graduate Research Student A and B may not be used for any other purpose than those defined in this policy.

Graduate students holding a full-time assistantship (considered a 0.5 FTE) must be entered in the University's human resources system as Part-time-Regular and have normal hours of 20 hours per week. Students holding a half-time assistantship (considered a 0.25 FTE) are also entered as Part-time-Regular, with normal hours of 10 hours per week. Students may not be entered with an FTE of 0.25 or greater unless they are serving in a Qualified Assistantship.

3. **Disciplinary Suspension or Termination:**

A Responsible Administrator who wishes to suspend or terminate a graduate assistant from all or part of an Assistantship for disciplinary reasons prior to the end of the academic term should provide written notice to the graduate assistant of the charge(s) and the information supporting the charges.

If the Responsible Administrator determines that the graduate student will be removed from some or all of their Assistantship responsibilities immediately, the graduate student will continue to receive Assistantship wages pending resolution of any related grievance. If a graduate student is serving as both a GTA and a GRA, they may be suspended or terminated from one Assistantship but continue to serve in the other at the discretion of the dean (or designee) and the Assistantship Supervisor for the other Assistantship. Once the disciplinary suspension or termination is final, the wages related to the suspended or terminated responsibilities will end immediately.

4. **Grievance Procedure:**

A graduate assistant who wishes to bring a grievance pursuant to Section 8 should follow the process below:

- *Step 1: Informal Resolution.* Before filing a grievance, the student should first attempt to resolve their concerns directly with the Responsible Administrator. These attempts should be sincere and

substantial and should occur within ten (10) business days of the date on which the decision being contested was communicated to the graduate assistant.

- *Step 2: Filing a Grievance.* If the matter is not resolved following attempts at Informal Resolution, the student may submit a grievance to the department chair (or other program leadership) within ten (10) business days of meeting with the Responsible Administrator. Students who, for good reasons, do not meet first with the Responsible Administrator may still file a written grievance with the department chair (or other program leadership) within ten (10) business days of the date on which the decision being contested was communicated to the graduate assistant.

The grievance must specify the decision being contested, the steps the student has taken to resolve their complaint, and the requested resolution. The student should include any supporting documentation they consider relevant to the grievance. If the student elects to file the grievance with the department chair (or other program leadership) without first attempting an Informal Resolution, the grievance should also specify the reasons for not attempting to resolve the complaint with the Responsible Administrator.

- *Step 3: Adjudication of the Grievance.* The department chair (or other program leadership) will investigate the complaint described in the grievance. Investigation will include, but is not limited to, reviewing relevant documentation and meeting separately with the student and the Responsible Administrator. Within thirty (30) calendar days after receiving the grievance, the department chair (or other program leadership) will communicate in writing their decision to both the student and Responsible Administrator (and the Assistantship Supervisor where applicable).
- *Step 4: Filing an Appeal.* Within five (5) business days after receiving the department chair's (or other program leadership's) decision concerning the grievance, the student may appeal to the school dean (or designee). The only basis for filing an appeal to the school dean (or designee) is documented evidence that adjudication of the grievance failed to comply with the terms of this policy. Dissatisfaction with the outcome of the grievance shall not be grounds for an appeal.
- *Step 5: Adjudication of an Appeal.* Within thirty (30) calendar days after receiving an appeal, the school dean (or designee) will consider the evidence and communicate in writing their decision to the student, the Responsible Administrator, the Assistantship Supervisor (where applicable), and the department chair (or other program leadership). The school dean's (or designee's) decision will be final.

If the Responsible Administrator is the department chair (or other program leadership), Assistantship Supervisor, or otherwise unable to adjudicate the grievance, the school dean will designate an alternate to investigate and adjudicate the grievance. If the Responsible Administrator is the school dean, the vice provost for academic affairs will designate an alternate to investigate and adjudicate the grievance and appeal.

Any individual charged with reviewing the student's concerns in accordance with this policy must document each meeting with the student in writing and place a copy in the student's department or school file.

5. Health Insurance Subsidy:

Graduate Students: To take advantage of the health insurance subsidy, Qualified Graduate Assistants must enroll in the University's student health insurance plan. The University pays the insurance subsidy

directly to the insurance provider on the student's behalf.

Schools and Departments: The health insurance subsidy for qualifying GRAs should be charged to the appropriate grant. If sufficient funds are not available from the grant, the subsidy must be funded from another available non-general fund source in the school.

Related Information

[HRM-009: Preventing and Addressing Discrimination and Harassment \(PADH\)](#)

[HRM-010: Preventing and Addressing Retaliation](#)

[HRM-041: Policy on Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence](#)

[PROV-019: Student Academic Suspension Grievance Policy](#)

[PROV-027: Extensions to Time-to-Degree Limits for Graduate and Professional Students Who Experience Significant Life Events](#)

[PROV-028: Parental Accommodation for Graduate Students on Assistantship](#)

["Graduate Students Employed as GRA or GTA and Fellowship/Scholarship Recipients Receiving Health Insurance Benefits"](#) [additional information from Investment and Tax Services (.pdf)]
[Student Health](#)

Major Category [Executive Vice President & Provost Policies](#)

Next Scheduled Review Sunday, April 11, 2027

Revision History

Revised 4/11/24; 2/5/16, 8/17/15.

Supersedes Policy Text

PROV-001, Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs); PROV-008, Tuition Remission Policy for Graduate Teaching, Administrative, and Research Assistants; PROV-008: Health Insurance Subsidy for Qualified Graduate Students.

Approved By Executive Vice President and Provost

Approved Date Thursday, June 7, 2012