



Graduate Assistantship Hiring Guidelines

I. Types of Assistantships:

Graduate Assistant or “GA” is the common title used at the university level. Within that classification, Salisbury University has three types of assistantships available. Each graduate assistant should be placed into one of these categories.

Hiring Supervisors will be asked to provide a detailed list of job duties in order to determine which assistantship should be used. We have provided you with the following lists of acceptable job duties to use as an example. Please feel free to contact the Office of Graduate Studies and Research with any questions.

Graduate Assistant – Teaching (TA)

The specific duties vary across disciplines and departments but generally involve the following:

1. Assuming teaching responsibility for a laboratory or discussion session of a course.
2. Assisting a faculty member in the grading, advising, and preparation of materials for a course(s).
3. Assisting in general departmental administrative duties, such as advising, help sessions, presentations, workshops, etc.
4. Coaching in Athletics.

Graduate Assistant – Research (RA)

Research Assistants may work in a large variety of settings with the common thread of collecting, analyzing or supporting research data. Data support can be for faculty or departments. The specific duties vary according to the nature of the research but generally involve the following:

1. Assist with design of research components.
2. Assist with research and data gathering.
3. Assist with non-instructional laboratory activities
4. Provide data input and reports.

Graduate Assistant – Administrative (GA-A)

Perform administrative support functions in an office setting. There is a wide range of duties including the following examples:

1. Assist with program development and assessment.
2. Recruitment functions.
3. Planning and participating in special events.
4. Providing guidance to undergraduate organizations.
5. Assist with public relations.
6. General administrative support functions.

II. GA Vacancy Posting

Campus-wide postings are now available online. To post a vacancy campus-wide, please visit the Office of Graduate Studies and Research website. The following information is required to complete a posting online: <http://www.salisbury.edu/gsr/gradstudies/gapostingsform.html> .

A standard GA application is available for use on the Graduate Studies and Research website.

III. Eligibility:

To be eligible for an assistantship, students:

1. Must be matriculated into a degree-seeking Master's program
2. Must maintain minimum credit requirements (see Appointments).
3. Maintain good standing (3.0 cumulative GPA) in a graduate degree program at Salisbury University.
4. International students must possess necessary visa and other documents required for U.S. employment.
5. Students who have met all requirements for graduation and/or who graduate are no longer eligible. Students who graduate in either the December or May Commencement may continue to work until the end of their contract date, at the request of their supervisor and based on need.

A graduate assistant with a GPA lower than 3.0 will be notified by the Office of Graduate Studies and Research that they are on administrative probation and must meet the same requirements for academic probation to retain their assistantship.

IV. Appointments:

1. Length

The length of appointment may be for a single term or academic year. Twelve month contracts may be used in the case of grant-funded assistantships.

2. Time Commitment

Full-time Graduate Assistants are required to work 20 hours per week. Students must take at least 6 credits.

Part-time Graduate Assistants are required to work 10 hours per week. Students must take at least 3 credits.

Enrollment hours are verified by the Office of Graduate Studies each semester.

Work schedules are determined by the department need and job duties (i.e. scheduled class/lab times) and should be discussed during hiring process.

3. Time Restraints

Fall and Spring Semesters

- a) Students should not exceed 25 hours per week in totality for all campus jobs.

Winter Semester

- a) Employment during the winter semester will be paid on an hourly student contract and must follow the rules and policies outlined for student employment by the Office of Human Resources.
- b) Students should not exceed 40 hours per week in totality for all campus jobs.
- c) The 40-hour period for winter will generally begin after the university reopens (around January 2) and will end 3 weeks later.
- d) If students do work over 40 hours in a pay week (Thu-Wed), the student must be paid overtime. Supervisors are not permitted to move time worked in a paid status or adjust time worked in a paid status to another payroll period to avoid overtime payments.

Summer Semester

- a) Employment during the summer semester will be paid on an hourly student contract and must follow the rules and policies outlined for student employment by the Office of Human Resources.
- b) Students should not exceed 40 hours per week in totality for all campus jobs.
- c) The 40-hour period for summer will generally begin on the first day of the pay period immediately following Memorial Day and will end 12 weeks later.
- d) If students do work over 40 hours in a pay week (Thu-Wed), the student must be paid overtime. Supervisors are not permitted to move time worked in a paid status or adjust time worked in a paid status to another payroll period to avoid overtime payments.

4. Appointment Letters

Students will be notified of appointments with an official Letter of Appointment and Contract (located at: http://www.salisbury.edu/gsr/gradstudies/grad_assistantships.html) from the Hiring Supervisor. This letter will provide students with the following information:

- a) Length of appointment - **You must indicate start and end dates for work during fall and spring semesters. Any work done during winter or summer semesters will be done on an hourly student contract.**
- b) Starting and ending dates of the appointment
- c) Time Commitment
- d) Job Duties
- e) Stipend Amount and Tuition Waivers
- f) Hiring Department and Supervisor
- g) Availability of GA Handbook
- h) Any special requirements related to leave, scheduling or other terms
- i) Contact information to obtain additional information

Letters of Appointment and subsequent employment forms should be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research four weeks prior to the start date to ensure all departments have sufficient processing time. Once all completed forms have been received, the Office of Graduate Studies and Research will review all documents for accuracy. We reserve the right to request more information or clarification if necessary. Upon approval, forms will be forwarded to the appropriate office (Payroll, Human Resources).

**Please ensure your student worker is familiar with FERPA guidelines. For more information and to access an online tutorial, visit <http://www.salisbury.edu/registrar/Resources/FERPA/>

No GA may begin working until all paperwork has been submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.

5. Grant-Funded Positions

All positions being funded by a Salisbury University grant or contract MUST be approved by the Fiscal Grants Management Office prior to final review by the Office of Graduate Studies and Research. Please contact Teri Herberger at 410-543-6066.

6. Renewal of Appointment

Students may be re-appointed to assistantships for successive terms, but renewal is not automatic or guaranteed. Factors entering into a decision to reappoint a graduate assistant may include:

- a) Satisfactory academic performance and progress toward degree;
- b) Satisfactory performance of assigned assistantship responsibilities and duties;
- c) Availability of funds;
- d) Departmental or institutional limits on the number of years for which an assistantship may be held; and
- e) Specific departmental needs, constraints and policies, including efforts to allow a large number of qualified students to benefit from assistantships.

Departments are expected to notify students of appointment renewals at least 60 days before the date upon which the appointment is to begin.

Departments unable to meet that notification deadline must provide justification which may include, but is not limited to, uncertainty in departmental funding and course enrollments.

This does not prevent departments from creating new appointments based on enrollments, funding and other factors within the 60 day deadline.

7. Termination of Appointment

A student may terminate their assistantship at any time by providing 30 days written notice to the Department Chair, Graduate Program Director and the Office of Graduate Studies and Research. Students who terminate their assistantship prior to their start date should alert their Supervisor and the Office of Graduate Studies and Research immediately.

The reporting supervisor may also terminate an appointment for various reasons including:

- a) Absenteeism
- b) Inferior work performance
- c) Poor academic performance
- d) Conduct code violation
- e) Revocation of visa status for international students

In cases of unsatisfactory work performance, all instances should be documented by supervisor.

Supervisor must provide written notice of termination to the student, Graduate Program Director and the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.

In all cases where an appointment is terminated prior to the end of a term in which the student is registered, whether termination is by the student or the supervisor, the waiver of tuition for that term may be cancelled or pro-rated.

Students who plan to leave Salisbury University will be asked to return all materials and property prior to leaving campus. Items to include, but not limited to:

Parking Permit
GullCard
Property Keys
Laptop
Other items determined by supervisor and/or Office of Graduate Studies

For any contract termination, a [Notice of Separation](#) should be completed and submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.

V. BENEFITS

1. Stipend

Full-time GAs - The current minimum stipend is \$4,000 per fall and spring semesters.

Part-time GAs - The current minimum stipend is \$2,000 per fall and spring semesters.

Departments may opt to pay more based on job duties and departmental budget allowance.

2. Tuition Waivers

Full-time GAs

- a) Earn a guaranteed tuition waiver of nine (9) credit hours per fall and spring semesters.
- b) Must be enrolled in a minimum of six (6) credits in fall and spring semesters.

Part-time GAs

- a) Earn a guaranteed tuition waiver of 4.5 credit hours per fall and spring semesters.
- b) Must be enrolled in a minimum of three (3) credits in fall and spring semesters.

Students are eligible for a tuition waiver in the semester in which employment begins. To receive a waiver during winter or summer sessions, student must have been employed in the preceding semester and not have exceeded their 18 guaranteed credits.

Tuition is waived only for graduate courses applicable toward degree requirements. No waiver may be used for undergraduate credits **unless** they are required for a degree program. To use a waiver for an undergraduate course, a student must submit a letter from their Graduate Program Director which confirms the necessity of the undergraduate course for graduate degree completion.

Waivers cannot be applied to courses taken for audit.

Any unused portion of the waiver expires at the end of the academic year and may not be carried over to the next year.

Waivers paid out of state funds do **NOT** cover university fees. **Graduate Assistants are responsible for all academic fees and tuition beyond the waiver allotment.** These must be paid by the due date or a late fee will be assessed.

IF a tuition waiver is being paid by a grant or sponsored program, the budget supervisor may opt to also pay their GAs mandatory fees. This should be discussed between the student and supervisor during the hiring process.

If a GA is entering their final semester and needs to enroll in less than six credits, they must complete a waiver for a [Change of Enrollment Status](#).

3. Tuition Rates

Graduate Assistants receive tuition at the in-state rate. This, combined with applicable tuition waivers, may affect existing financial aid packages. If an assistantship is terminated or not renewed, aid packages will need to be reevaluated. Graduate Assistants are responsible for reporting this information to the [Financial Aid Office](#) in a timely manner.

Graduate Assistants are billed at the in-state tuition rate during their appointment, including any credits taken over and above the guaranteed 18 waived credits. This does not affect official residency status which was decided upon admission. Therefore, if an appointment is terminated or not renewed, the student will be charged in accordance to their residency status for all future credits. For questions relative to Residency, please contact the [Residency Office](#), HH 223, 410-543-6547.

4. Payroll

Payroll is issued bi-weekly and follows the Contractual Payroll Schedule. As a condition of employment, all employees are required to use direct deposit. Due to processing, it takes an average of four weeks to receive your first payment. For questions relative to payments and direct deposit, please contact the [Payroll Office](#), HH 215, 410-543-6046.

5. Taxation

For Graduate Assistants performing teaching or research activities, the related tuition waiver will not be subject to taxation. For Graduate Assistants performing administrative functions, the related tuition waiver will be subject to taxation and withholding. The amount of the taxable tuition waiver will be reported on a W-2 form. Salisbury University staff are not authorized to advise you on taxation issues. Please consult a tax advisor for further information.

6. FICA

FICA is not withheld from GA payroll. For more information, please contact the [Office of Human Resources](#), HH 153, 410-543-6083.

7. Parking

To accommodate various work schedules, GAs are guaranteed a green parking permit which allows main campus parking. In certain cases, Teaching Assistants may be eligible for a red permit based on their class and office hours.

8. Health Insurance

GAs are not eligible for health insurance benefits.

Salisbury University has compiled insurance information for students who may experience a change in their health insurance needs which can be found in Student Health Services. Plans vary, according to the coverage they provide, price, deductibles and other variables pertinent to selecting an adequate plan, so be sure to check with your insurance company and home state to become familiar with laws regulating coverage.

There are also resources on line. Parents and students are encouraged to research companies they are familiar with. Many have student plans or extensions of coverage if the student was previously insured under a family plan. If you have questions once you have reviewed available resources, please feel free to contact [Student Health Services](#), HH 180, 410-543-6262.

9. Leave

GAs are not eligible for vacation or sick leave.

IF a GA is on a 12-month appointment, they shall be granted 20 hours of paid leave in addition to any institutional holidays or other days that the institution is closed. This leave must be

scheduled at a time that does not conflict with the job duties of the position and must be approved in advance by the supervisor.

10. Holidays

Legal university holidays are observed by all offices and employees and GAs are not typically required to report. On occasion, GAs may be required to report to work based on their job expectations. If this occurs, the GAs must be given an alternative day off. Holiday work expectations should be discussed during the hiring process.

11. Breaks

Students who work five consecutive hours or longer are required to take a 30 minute unpaid break.

VI. JOB EXPECTATIONS

1. Job Duties

To the extent feasible, Graduate Assistants will be notified of expected duties, at least two weeks before the beginning of the semester. An overview of duties is expected to be included in their official Letter of Appointment from the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.

2. Dress Code

Graduate Assistants working within an office setting are expected to dress in a business casual manner. Graduate Assistants working in other areas should discuss appropriate dress with the hiring supervisor.

3. Conduct

Salisbury University is committed to creating a campus climate that is respectful and in accordance to the laws of the State of Maryland. All employees, including Graduate Assistants, are expected to abide by university policies in regards to sexual misconduct, discrimination, and academic integrity. Any Graduate Assistant found in violation of these policies will face disciplinary action.

4. Confidentiality

Graduate Assistants may have assigned job duties that require access to sensitive information. As such, Graduate Assistants are required to treat such information in a highly professional and confidential manner. Any student who is found in violation of this will face disciplinary action.

5. Orientation

Your role as a GA can be rewarding, but very challenging as well. As a GA, you will be held to certain expectations and standards. You will also be required to interact with undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff in a professional and responsible manner.

Salisbury University is committed to ensuring that graduate assistantships are productive and enhance student qualifications. Therefore, [Office of Graduate Studies and Research](#) holds an online Graduate Assistant Orientation each year.

The orientation program is designed to assist you in meeting the demands of your graduate assistantship by providing you with some tools to help you succeed. Sessions will include overviews of programs, policies and campus resources. New students may request a campus tour.

This is a mandatory program for all appointed graduate assistants.

6. Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisors are responsible for providing a work schedule and list of job duties prior to the contract start date. Discussions regarding duties, work schedule and possible holidays should occur during the hiring process.

Supervisors are responsible for providing training and reviewing performance through evaluation. The type and/or method of evaluation is dependent upon job type and department. All evaluations, positive and negative, should be discussed with the GA.

7. Review/Evaluation

USM Policy on Graduate Assistants encourages departments to provide feedback concerning performance in the assistantship. To assist you, a standard [evaluation form](#) is available on our website if needed. You do not have to replace any current evaluation tools with this form.

VIII. GRADUATE ASSISTANT GRIEVANCE POLICY

1. Overview

The grievance policy will apply to disputes concerning:

1. Workload volume and scheduling;
2. Inappropriate work assignments;
3. Termination of a graduate assistantship within the term of appointment; and
4. Non-renewal of assistantship for arbitrary or capricious reasons including reprisal for filing a grievance.

The decision whether to renew an assistantship, except for the reason listed above, remains within the discretion of the department chair and is not subject to the grievance process. However, if a graduate assistant believes that an assistantship was not renewed because of unlawful discrimination or other unlawful grounds, the graduate assistant may pursue available institution processes.

Graduate assistants may raise concerns regarding suspected on-campus fraud or fiscal irregularities through the confidential University System of Maryland hot-line: 1-877-330-2320.

2. Procedure

The University is an academic and collegial community. Regular and clear communication between GAs and their supervisors is essential to maintaining an effective educational environment. GAs who believe their work experience is not in conformity with the *Graduate Assistant Policy* may seek a review in accordance with this Section.

In all instances, the GA should attempt to resolve these matters locally, collegially, and informally. If the difficulty has not been resolved to the GA's satisfaction through informal means, then he or she may elect to file a formal grievance.

- a) **Informal Consultation:** The Graduate Assistant should first attempt to resolve any difficulty by discussing the situation with his or her supervisor as expeditiously as possible. If a satisfactory resolution is not reached, the GA should next discuss the situation with the Chair of the Department or follow "the chain of command" for the unit in which they are employed.
- b) **Formal Grievance:** Most problems related to assistantships are resolved through informal consultation. If a problem has not been solved informally to the GA's satisfaction, he or she may initiate a formal grievance. The formal procedures outlined below are intended to provide a mechanism through which grievances related to assistantships can be formally made and decided.

If a satisfactory resolution has not been achieved following informal consideration, the GA may initiate a formal grievance by sending a letter to the Dean of her or his academic School or Vice President of the unit where he or she is employed, copying the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research. To be considered, it must be received within 30 calendar days from the action involved or from the GA having reasonable knowledge of it. Under exceptional circumstances, that deadline may be extended. The letter must be signed and:

1. Contain a clear description of the facts giving rise to the grievance; and,
2. Be copied to the GAs supervisor
3. Be Copied to the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research
4. Propose a solution

Upon the receipt of the letter, the unit head (Dean or Vice President) will render a decision, informing the GA, the supervisor and the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research within 10 working days. If the GA finds the solution unacceptable, he or she may appeal to the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research. This appeal must be sent within 10 working days of the unit head decision. The letter must clearly state why the proposed solution is unacceptable.

Upon receipt of a letter of formal grievance, the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research will offer to meet with the GA and the supervisor, either individually or together, before proceeding. The Dean of Graduate Studies and Research may also consult with the unit head and other persons knowledgeable about the policies and practices involved. If no solution (agreeable to all parties) can be reached through these discussions within 10 working days, the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research shall refer the matter to a Graduate Appeals Panel. If a solution is reached, a letter detailing the solution will be sent to all parties.

The Dean of Graduate Studies and Research shall appoint a Graduate Appeals Panel consisting of two graduate faculty (one of whom shall chair the panel) one graduate student, and as appropriate, an HR representative to review the matter and make a recommendation. Neither the faculty nor the graduate student appointed to the Panel will be from the department or unit involved in the grievance. Either party to the grievance may request that a panel member be substituted on the grounds that the panel member has a conflict of interest. Additionally, if the grievance involves the office of Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, the Dean shall remove himself/herself from the proceedings and the Provost shall appoint someone to oversee the process. The Dean of Graduate Studies and Research will provide the panel with the letter of formal grievance and the written response(s). The panel shall offer to meet with the GA and the supervisor.

This Panel shall endeavor to convey a written decision and, where appropriate, the remedy, to all parties involved within 15 calendar days of receipt of the letter of grievance.

The Panel shall provide the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research a written report containing a statement of the issues, the panel's findings of fact, the controlling policy provisions, the panel's conclusions regarding the merits of the grievance, and a recommended disposition of the grievance, including any suggested remedy.

The decision, and proposed remedy, of the Graduate Appeals Panel, shall be final.

3. General Principles Controlling Grievances

These procedures are not intended to mimic a courtroom and be adversarial in nature. Rather, they are formal in the meaning of offering a structured method to investigate, weigh and remedy differences. They are designed to preserve collegiality and minimize injury to the student-faculty relationship. Because grievances, if not made known or not considered expeditiously, threaten the learning experience, GAs, faculty, and administrators share responsibility alike to deal with them promptly. Experience has shown that the following rules promote the orderly and efficient disposition of grievances. Accordingly, they shall be observed:

1. There is a burden of proof. The GA has the responsibility of convincing the unit head (Dean or Vice President), the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research or the Graduate Appeals Panel of three things: a) that the *Graduate Assistant Policy* has not been followed; b) that the GA has been adversely affected; and c) that any proposed solution is inappropriate.
2. All matters to be considered in support or defense of a grievance should be made known as early in the informal process as possible. Absent extenuating circumstances, matters not raised in the informal process should not be considered in the formal process. In both the informal and formal process, it is the responsibility of the GA and faculty member, respectively, to produce in a timely way the evidence they each wish considered, including any documents and witnesses.
3. The Grievance Procedure is not a trial. Formal rules of evidence commonly associated with criminal and civil trials may be counterproductive in an academic investigatory process and shall not be applied. The unit head, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research,

and Graduate Appeals Panel shall give effect to the rules of confidentiality and privilege, but shall otherwise accept for consideration all matters which reasonable persons would accept. Unduly repetitive, irrelevant, or personally abusive material, however, should be excluded. They may also consider matters within the common knowledge and experience of University faculty, including published policies of the University System of Maryland and Salisbury University.

4. The GA may be assisted at any meeting by another person. Although the GA is expected to take an active role in all meetings, the other person may help with organization of arguments and evidence, but they may not speak directly to the panel.
5. The University has in place other grievance procedures and administrative processes designed to address specific types of claims. These are meant to be the exclusive avenue for review and redress. Grievances that by their subject matter may be considered under other established institutional procedures must be brought under those procedures and may not be considered under these procedures. Matters pertaining to the general level of wages, wage patterns, fringe benefits, or to other broad areas of financial management and staffing are not grievable. These procedures also may not be used to challenge faculty judgment about a GA's academic performance (including, for example, test scores, grades, waivers, dissertation defenses and other indicia of mastery of subject matter and taught skills).
6. The filing of a grievance does not relieve the GA of the obligation to perform all duties as assigned unless and otherwise decided. Financial awards (e.g., "back pay", "damages", "compensation", and "raises") may not be awarded. The acceptance of a proposed remedy by the GA shall terminate the grievance process. The matter may not then be further considered or additional remedies sought under the campus procedures.
7. A decision may not be made at any step that conflicts with or modifies a policy, regulation, or grant of authority approved by the Board of Regents, the Chancellor, the President, the Provost, or the Faculty Senate or with any applicable Federal or State of Maryland law.
8. Only currently enrolled Salisbury University graduate students may initiate a formal grievance. The grievance must pertain to the GA's personal services, not those of another GA. Group, although similar grievances may be consolidated and processed together as a single issue. As a general matter, where a number of individual grievances have been reduced into a single grievance, not more than three GAs selected by the group may be excused from their duties to attend. But they may attend (no matter how many) if they do not need to be excused from their duties.
9. Because it is critical to address potentially corrosive grievances sooner than later, and because the remedies available are prospective, the time requirement established for initiating a formal grievance is necessary to the effective administration of the graduate program. Time requirements are measured from the first occurrence of an event; "continuing" wrongs are not recognized for the purpose of satisfying time requirements.

Reprisals against graduate assistants for filing a grievance are prohibited.

**For more information please contact the
Office of Graduate Studies and Research at 410-548-5395.**