



Graduate School



Southern University A&M College, Baton Rouge Policy for Graduate Assistantships, Fellowships and Tuition Scholarships

Developed

by

*Academic Affairs Taskforce for SUBR Policy and Procedures
for Graduate Assistantships, Fellowships, and Tuition
Scholarships*

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Graduate School

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Graduate School

Policy and Procedure for Graduate Assistantships, Fellowships and Scholarships

Forward

Financial supports to graduate students are available at Southern University, Baton Rouge, in the form of assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships. The Graduate School and various graduate departments and administrative divisions on campus award financial support to graduate students. These awards are available to students pursuing either a master's or doctoral degree. Unless otherwise specified, applications for these awards should be made to the appropriate graduate department chair/director or campus divisional office as early as possible, but no later than two weeks after the admissions application deadline for the applicable semester/term.

Teaching, research, and service assistantships are awarded on a semester by semester basis in an academic year. Academic units and administrative divisions that select and award assistantships assign graduate students in research, teaching, library, or staff service areas. The criteria for these awards are the individual's academic record and recommendation of the graduate department chairperson/director in the student's field of study.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (**SACS-COC**) Criteria for Accreditation mandates that the Graduate School develop policies governing the appointment and evaluation of graduate assistants (GAs) and monitor their implementation by employing units. These policies include setting minimum academic qualifications for holding a GA appointment, establishing appointment and renewal procedures, setting average workloads, and reviewing stipend levels and ranges.

A. Eligibility Criteria

It is imperative that academic units offering graduate programs and graduate program chairs/directors adhere to the Graduate School Policy and Procedure affecting graduate assistantships which include the following:

1. Graduate assistants are appointed by academic, administrative, or support service units of the University receiving a budgetary allocation for this purpose, subject to compliance with current applicable Graduate School Policy and Procedure.
2. Before an assistantship, fellowship, or tuition scholarship can be awarded, a student must be admitted to the Graduate School with a regular degree-seeking admission status.

3. Students who are admitted on conditional or provisional status are not eligible for graduate assistantships/fellowships. They may be appointed as graduate assistants only when they are off probation and have been granted regular admission status with good academic standing.
4. Full-time constitutes a minimum of nine semester hours in the fall or spring semester, a minimum of six hours for graduate credit) A minimum of six semester hours in the summer sessions (a minimum of three hours for graduate credit).
5. However, students enrolling in graduate school for the first time, who have been admitted on provisional or conditional admission status, may be considered for and granted assistantships by a department or division for the initial semester (first semester or first term in graduate school) only, using funding from other sources (non Graduate School funds).
6. All students enrolling with provisional or conditional status who are awarded assistantship by their departments or divisions must carry a full-time load and achieve a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 in the first semester of enrolling and continue to be in good standing to be considered for assistance during subsequent enrollment periods.
7. Hiring units are cautioned against appointing any conditionally-admitted student to an assistantship. If a conditionally-admitted student fails to meet the conditions designated, admission to the Graduate School is subject to termination, resulting in termination of any assistantship.
8. Graduate assistants shall be graduate students in good standing (GPA of 3.0 or above) on their appointment's effective dates. Students on academic probation are ineligible to begin a graduate assistantship appointment.
9. International students must hold and provide evidence of a current valid Visa (F-1, J-1) to be eligible for assistantship, fellowship, or tuition scholarship.

B. Appointment/ Reappointment Notification

It is the responsibility of the graduate department to give an official letter of appointment (*See Attachment A*) to every appointed graduate assistant stating the terms of the appointment that will include:

1. Appointment

- a. The amount of assistantship, fellowship or tuition scholarship available
- b. Information on the terms of the assistantship
- c. Explicit and clear information concerning workload expectations
- d. An acceptance deadline date
- e. Job performance evaluation

2. Deadline for a graduate assistantship appointment

- a. An appointment must be made before the last day to register or drop classes in each semester.

C. Categories of Assistantships

Graduate assistants are classified into the following four categories:

1. Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)

Graduate teaching/tutoring assistants are assigned to a graduate faculty member in his or her particular area.

- a. Assistants are responsible for preparing lesson plans; teaching in the classroom, laboratory, and discussion sections, or in-studio settings from specific course outlines; keeping student records; grading tests and assignments; being available for outside classroom tutoring of students in the particular subject matter; mentoring students; developing instructional materials; accompanying or coaching artistic performances, and proctoring examinations.
- b. Graduate assistants will be closely supervised and evaluated by the faculty member.
- c. Graduate teaching assistants who have primary responsibility for teaching a course for credit and/or for assigning final grades for such courses, and who do not possess a terminal degree in their respective disciplines, must have earned at least 18 graduate semester hours in their teaching discipline and a master's degree; be under the direct supervision of a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline; receive regular in-service training; and be evaluated regularly.
- d. An appointment as a graduate assistant does not give faculty status; an assistant's status is that of a graduate student. As such, the GTA is expected to abide by regulations about such students.

2. Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)

Graduate Research Assistants usually work under the supervision of a principal investigator on a funded research project or a research graduate faculty.

- a. GRAs are responsible for performing laboratory research techniques, sample collection, and undergraduate research students' supervision.
- b. Research assistants apply research concepts and laboratory research techniques by conducting experiments, analyzing data, presenting findings.
- c. Assisting graduate faculty in preparing publications.
- d. Developing and managing research grant projects, or conducting institutional research for an academic, administrative or service unit.
- e. GRAs are generally paid stipend through research grants.

3. Graduate Administrative Assistant (GAA)

Graduate Administrative Assistants are usually assigned to work in the Graduate School or other University business offices.

- a. Assistants are responsible for performing clerical duties such as word processing, filing, telephone answering, and laboratory supervision, etc.
- b. GAAs may also be requested to perform administrative duties. They will be monitored closely and evaluated by their immediate supervisor.

4. Graduate Library Assistant (GLA)

Graduate Library Assistants work under the direct supervision of the Dean of John B. Cade Library or her/his designee. The GLA's duties include:

- a. Performance of procedures to circulate books, documents, and other instructional materials.
- b. Operating microfilming equipment.
- c. Assisting graduate students uploading thesis and dissertation on ProQuest.
- d. Conducting seminars on the use of books and performing on-line catalog and bibliographic data searches.
- e. Operating films, film strips, cassette tapes, and recordings.
- f. GLAs are closely supervised and evaluated by the Dean of the John B. Cade Library or the Dean's designee

D. Duties and Responsibilities

The specific duties and responsibilities of a graduate assistant will be based on the category (see C 1-4) under which the assistant is classified. However, the general duties and responsibilities will include the following:

1. Graduate assistants will serve under the direction and supervision of regularly appointed Graduate Faculty or unit administrator.
2. Graduate assistants are obliged to maintain the highest academic honesty and integrity standards and keep informed of and follow the program, departmental, college, and University policies, rules, and regulations.
3. Graduate assistants are not permitted to enroll in any course for which they are assigned GTA responsibilities.
4. A graduate assistant or fellow who drops a course, withdraws from the University, or resigns an assistantship before the end of the semester will be required to reimburse the University for courses paid by the tuition assistantship/fellowship/scholarship.
5. A graduate student may hold only one assistantship at a time.
6. Complete the University new hire packet, which the hiring unit or department initiates.
7. Pay tuition or use the tuition payment plan promptly.
8. Attend any orientation programs provided by the Office of Human Resources and by their employing unit.
9. Must register for at least nine credit hours to count toward their degree requirements every fall and spring semester while employed as a graduate assistant.

10. To continue with an assistantship, graduate assistants must remain in good academic standing, make satisfactory progress toward a degree, and complete at least nine credit hours in their program each semester.
11. Graduate assistants must work closely with their assistantship supervisor in carrying out assigned duties.
12. Students accepting assistantship appointments for the time specified in the offer letter and should not expect routine renewal or extension of appointments.
13. Assistantship award recipients are required to pay applicable state, federal and local taxes.
14. Assistantship recipients (both domestic and international students) are required to submit I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification Form.

E. Criteria for Allocating Funds for Assistantships, Fellowships and Scholarships

The following factors/criteria determine the allocation of assistantship, fellowship, and tuition scholarship funds to each graduate program:

1. Past shares of funds and actual use.
2. Full-time graduate program (master's, doctoral) enrollment.
3. Graduate student credit hours (SCHs) generated in the preceding academic year.
4. Past academic year number of completers (master's, doctoral).
5. Graduate faculty productivity (number of papers presented at professional conferences, number of published referred and non-referred journal articles, research in progress, research grant proposals submitted and funded, and other intellectual contributions)
6. other academic unit, graduate program, graduate students and faculty creative works.

F. Compensation/award or Stipend Amount

1. Graduate assistantships, fellowships, and tuition scholarships are awarded on a ninemonth basis, except in exceptional cases where students are assigned to work for more than nine months. In those particular cases, such as the summer semester, students are compensated for the additional months provided they meet the requirements of the Summer School.
2. Eligible graduate programs and support units receive graduate assistantship funds as determined by the ***Graduate Council Student Affairs and Financial Support Committee*** based on the allocation criteria and available funds *and approval of the Graduate Council* at the beginning of each academic year.
3. The maximum award amount for a fifteen-week fall/spring semester should not exceed the total tuition and fees/semester or \$5,000 for a master's and \$8,000 for a doctoral student. For an eight-week summer term, assistantship should not exceed the total tuition and fees/semester or \$3,000 for a master's and 4,000 for a doctoral student. The awarded assistantships can be full-time (20 hours per week) or half-time (10 hours per week).
4. An academic unit can choose to allocate larger stipends to fewer students or smaller grants to many students while remaining within the total fund approved for the department.

5. The following **may not hold graduate assistantships**:
 - a. Students in conditional and provisional admission status
 - b. Students in non-degree admission status
 - c. Students on academic probation
 - d. Students enrolled in less than nine credit hours during fall and spring semesters and less than six credit hours in the summer semester.
6. Upon the Graduate Council approval of graduate assistantship, fellowship, and scholarship funds allocation, the Graduate school notifies academic units and graduate program departments of the approved lump sum amount of fund for the specific semester or semesters.
7. After academic units/departments identify the number of graduate assistants and recipients, the amount of assistantship awarded, the number of working hours and assignment of each graduate assistant, they send offer letter to the selected graduate assistants. (*See Attachment B*)
8. Academic units/graduate departments submit electronic Personnel Action Form (ePAF) to the Office of Human Resources.
9. Once the assistantship award process is completed, each academic and support service unit is required to submit the ePAF listings with a cover letter to the Graduate School before mid-term of the fall and spring semesters and before the end of the summer session.

G. In-State and Non-Resident Fees Waiver

1. All eligible graduate students that are recipients of graduate assistantships shall receive non-resident or out of state tuition waivers.
2. Doctoral students shall receive full tuition waivers as long as they are research assistants (GRAs) or teaching assistants (GTAs).
3. Students who are recipients of such awards from departments/divisions of Southern University (other than the Graduate School) must submit a request for out-of-state fee waiver through their academic deans and/or graduate program chairs/directors to the Graduate School by the published University deadlines.
4. In order to continue receiving graduate assistantship and certain tuition waivers, graduate students must meet the Graduate School's grade point average (GPA) requirement of 3:0 for making satisfactory academic progress toward a degree.

H. Work Hours

1. Appointments shall be full-time (20 hours) or half-time (10 hours). It shall be the prerogative of the hiring unit to determine the appropriate duties of graduate assistants. Assistants holding a full-time appointment will be assigned to work no more than 20 hours per week, and those on half-time assignments not more than 10 hours per week.
2. A student may hold two graduate assistantships for which the terms of appointment overlap only if each of the assistantships is half-time during the period of overlap and if together the appointment hours do not exceed 20 per week.
3. A graduate assistant may not accept additional employment in any capacity with Southern University except by permission of the graduate department's chair, the

student's academic adviser, the Dean of the unit awarding the graduate assistantship, and the Office of Human Resources.

4. Hiring Departments must not permit graduate assistants to begin working outside their assistantship assignment without first securing permission from the Office of Human Resources.
5. Federal regulations strictly prohibit international graduate students on an F-1 or J-1 visa from working more than 20 hours per week while classes are in session. Thus, International graduate students must enroll in 9 semester hours in the fall and spring semesters and six semester hours in summer.
6. Graduate assistantship recipients who are enrolled in their final semester may hold assistantships with 6 hours of enrollment.

I. Duration of Graduate Assistantships, Fellowship and Tuition Scholarships

1. Assistantships for master's degree students will be limited to a maximum duration of two years. Doctoral degree students will be limited to a full term of four years.
2. Graduate program chairs/directors will monitor and enforce these limits. Graduate program chairs/directors who select, recommend, or award assistantships, fellowships, and tuition scholarships to students who violate this policy without the required approvals will automatically lose those assistantships, fellowships and tuition scholarships.

J. Job performance and Evaluation

Evaluation is a crucial part of the assistantship experience for graduate students. It should be a supportive and constructive process that helps identify strengths and weaknesses and develop a plan for continuous improvement. Components of the job performance evaluation (*See Attachment C*) include:

1. A graduate assistant must be given clear information on the supervisor's job expectations at the beginning of the employment period.
2. A graduate assistant must be informed on the need for job evaluation, mainly how strengths and weaknesses measure in the review.
3. Evaluations against predetermined expectations will be conducted at the end of each semester by the employing unit or department for all graduate assistants.
4. The graduate assistant will get a written evaluation; a copy shall be kept on file in the graduate department office for the appointment duration.

K. Reappointment for Graduate Assistantship

The decision to offer a continuation or reappointment for a graduate assistantship, fellowship and tuition scholarship depends on the following factors:

1. Satisfactory job performance evaluation during the previous assistantship period.

2. Satisfactory academic progress toward completion of a degree program.
3. A graduate assistant will be terminated during the appointment period, upon the unit or department supervisor's recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School.
4. A graduate student will not be reappointed if he/she:
 - a. Did Not make adequate progress toward the degree.
 - b. Has been placed on academic probation.
 - c. Did not perform job tasks satisfactorily within the assistantship period.
5. Students who fail to maintain a full-time course load in any given semester or term will automatically lose their assistantships.
6. Graduate program department chairs/directors are expected to inform graduate assistants of this policy, monitor the course load of graduate assistants and report any violations of this policy to the Graduate School.

L. Resignation and Termination of Graduate Assistant or Tuition Fellow or Scholarship Appointment

1. Hiring units cannot appoint or award graduate assistantship, fellowship, or tuition scholarship to any conditionally-admitted student. If a conditionally admitted student fails to meet the Graduate School policy's conditions, the admission to the graduate school, graduate assistantship, fellowship, or tuition scholarship will be terminated.
2. A graduate assistantship, fellowship, or tuition scholarship will be withdrawn from a graduate assistant at any time, without any warning or notice, if any of the following occur:
 - a. A graduate assistant fails to maintain a semester or cumulative GPA of 3.0.
 - b. A graduate assistant fails to maintain a full-time course load (nine semester hours in the Fall and Spring semesters, and six semester hours if enrolled in the Summer terms. A student who violates this policy will be disqualified from awards in, subsequent semesters.
 - c. A graduate assistant does not perform work assignments satisfactorily.
 - d. A graduate assistant fails to make satisfactory academic progress toward their chosen graduate degree.
3. After a graduate assistant begins an appointment, the assistant may resign that appointment with two weeks of written notification.
4. The program chair/director will send a written notice of acceptance of the resignation to the student indicating the date of resignation, and forward along with ePAF and the student's resignation letter to the Office of Human Resources and the Graduate School.
5. Notwithstanding any other statements in University policy, practice, or procedure, graduate assistants shall have their appointments terminated immediately if, during the term of work:

- a. The graduate assistant is academically dismissed or suspended.
- b. The graduate assistant is placed in a probationary status.
- c. The graduate assistant is found otherwise to be ineligible according to University policy or federal or state law.
- d. Any deviation from termination due to probationary status shall be possible only upon request from the major department with final approval by the Dean of the Graduate School's office.

6. Termination procedures

- a. Termination of appointment action is initiated by the chair/director of the graduate department to which the graduate assistant is assigned. The graduate program chair/director meets with the graduate assistant and explains the causes of termination.
- b. The graduate program chair/director forwards a recommendation for appointment termination to the Office of the Graduate School Dean.
- c. After reviewing the recommendation, the Graduate School Dean may terminate a graduate assistantship, fellowship, or tuition scholarship.
- d. Grievances regarding termination shall follow the University Policy and Procedure for resolving student complaints.

Revised: March, 2021

ATTACHMENT A

ASSISTANTSHIP DEFINITIONS ASSISTANTSHIP DEFINITIONS

1. Graduate Assistantship

- a. Financial support awarded to eligible graduate student in exchange for service, either in teaching/tutoring, research, library support, or administrative assistance. An assistantship provides a monthly salary, and an institutional contribution toward a state fee waiver.
- b. Master's and doctoral students are appointed to work for the different graduate academic units, administrative departments, the John B. Cade Library, and the Graduate School.
- c. To maintain assistantship, besides other specific requirements, graduate assistants must:
 - i. Keep up grades (minimum 3.0 GPA)
 - ii. Make progress toward degree completion
 - iii. Demonstrate satisfactory job performance

2. Graduate Fellowships

- a. A merit-based financial support/stipend or tuition waiver awarded to a full-time admitted doctoral student without a commensurate service requirement. The only requirement is that the student continues to make good progress toward degree.
- b. Doctoral students appointed to acknowledge and support outstanding graduate students in pursuit of their advanced degree objectives.
- c. Graduate Fellows are not employees of Southern University, and appointments are not governed by contractual bodies.
- d. The intent of fellowships is to ensure that an incentive remains for doctoral graduate students to seek competitive graduate assistantship support and for high achieving graduate students to be recognized and honored for the distinction that they bring to

themselves and to the University as a result of their success. In general, fellowships are larger than scholarships.

- e. To maintain fellowships, among other specific requirements, students must:
 - i. The award is contingent upon the student maintaining full-time status as a doctoral student.
 - ii. Maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA.
 - iii. Make progress toward degree completion.
 - iv. Attend conferences, submit papers at conferences, symposiums, etc.

3. Tuition Scholarship

- a. An academic financial support offered to exceptional students entering SUBR Graduate School to pursue a master's degree on a full-time basis that does not need to be repaid by the recipient.
- b. Scholarship award require recipients to maintain the level of academic performance stipulated in the Graduate School policy.
- c. Scholarship awards are based on graduate student potential as demonstrated by past achievements.

4. Grants

- a. Financial support based on academic achievement or other criteria that may include financial need. A grant recipient is selected based on specific criteria, which is typically set by the federal or state governments or the institution. Generally, the proceeds of the grant are used to offset the cost of the student's education for an upcoming or current academic year for performance or criteria met during the previous academic year.

5. Stipend

- a. A stipend is a fixed amount of money provided to people pursuing unpaid work to help offset expenses such as housing and food. A stipend may exempt a person partially or entirely from waged or salary employment.
- b. Stipends are provided to those ineligible to receive a regular salary or wage in return for their services.
- c. Normally, to receive a stipend, the job must focus on training and learning, and the training must primarily benefit the recipient rather than the employer.
- d. An employer may not promise the recipient a job at the end of the training or have them do work in place of a regular employee.
- e. Stipend is usually paid to researchers, graduate students, **interns and apprentices**.
- f. The most common use for a stipend is to cover expenses related to housing, food and travel. But stipends also encourage certain activities, such as academic research or continuing education for career development.

6. Financial Aid

The financial aid package is the complete collection of scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study employment from all sources (federal, state, institutional, and private) offered to a student to enable him or her to attend the University.

7. Scholarship

Financial support based on academic achievement or other criteria that may include financial need.

- a. The donor of the scholarship sets the criteria for recipient selection. The grantor specifically intends money be spent to defray the costs of study, training, or research.
- b. Proceeds of the scholarship offset the cost of the student's education for an upcoming or current academic year, depending on when the student receives the fund

ATTACHMENT B

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP OFFER LETTER



Graduate Assistant Offer Letter

(SAMPLE)

Dear (Graduate Student full name) ID# _____

I am pleased to notify you that you have been awarded a **(full-time/half-time)** appointment as a Graduate Assistant in the College of _____, Department of _____ for the **(Fall/Spring Semester, 20xx – 20xx academic year)**. This appointment will be in the form of a(n):

- Graduate Teaching/Tutoring Assistantship (GTA)
- Graduate Research Assistantship. (GRA)
- Graduate Library Assistantship (GLA)
- Graduate Administrative Assistantship (GAA)

The assistantship offered requires that you devote _____ hours per week. This assistantship is subject to the availability of funds and contingent upon your acceptance in writing and your ability to meet University eligibility requirements.

You will be supported with a stipend of \$_____ paid on a monthly basis minus applicable state, federal and local taxes.

The current appointment is for the **20XX-20XX** academic year (Fall/Spring/Summer)_____semester(s) only. This appointment may be renewable in future years, subject to the continued availability of funds, departmental needs, satisfactory progress in your degree program and satisfactory performance in your assigned assistantship responsibilities.

You will be expected to meet the following obligations for the stipend:

1. Approximately ____ hours of service per week.

2. Maintain full-time student status (9 graduate hours minimum) with at least a 3.0 GPA.
3. You may not accept any other employment on campus without prior approval from the Graduate School.

(Insert specifics on the teaching, research, library or administrative duties the GA will be doing and other departmental expectations.)

This offer is also contingent upon proof of identity and work authorization. The I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification Form must be downloaded and completed in person no later than three (3) days after you have reported to work or prior to the start of your employment. Review the credentials listed that you will need to bring for documentation. Domestic students will need to have their I-9 form completed at their department of employment. International students will need to have their I-9 Form completed through the Center for International Education.

Please indicate your acceptance of this offer by signing below and returning one copy of the letter to me with your original signature no later than _____.

Sincerely,

Graduate Program Chair/Director

Date

I hereby accept this appointment and agree to the above conditions.
(Graduate Assistant)

Date

ATTACHMENT C

GRADUATE ASSISTANT EVALUATION FORM



The Graduate School

Graduate Assistant Evaluation Form

Graduate Assistant's Name: _____ ID# _____

Graduate Assistant's Academic Program: _____

Department of Assistantship: _____

Supervisor's Name: _____

Evaluation Period: _____

This form may be used to facilitate evaluation of the performance of Graduate Assistants (GAs). The supervisor should answer the questions below, followed by a scheduled meeting with the Graduate Assistant to discuss the evaluation. The supervisor can also ask the GA to complete the form as a self-evaluation. If challenge or problem areas are identified and the GA assignment is expected to continue, a written corrective action plan should be provided. Copies of this evaluation (and the corrective action plan, if needed) should be provided to the GA and retained by the supervisor.

What were the GA's strengths over the past semester?

What were the GA's areas of weakness over the past semester? Provide specific examples.

If specific weakliness are listed, please provide a written corrective action plan including the following:

1. Describe the specific behaviors that the GA needs to change.
2. Specify the time-line for expected changes.
3. Indicate how the changes will be assessed. As appropriate indicate any required recordkeeping expected from the GA.
4. Describe any resources that the GA may be able to use to facilitate the changes.
5. Indicate the expected outcomes if the GA does or does not change their behaviors.

Rate this GA's overall performance over the past semester

Excellent Very Good Good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory

Supervisor's additional comments:

The undersigned met and discussed this evaluation on:

(date)

GA's Signature

(date)

Supervisor's Signature

(date)