

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SPRINGFIELD

*Graduate
Assistantship
Policy Manual*



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SPRINGFIELD

**GRADUATE
ASSISTANTSHIP
PROGRAM**

Policy Manual

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Assistantships for Graduate Students

General Policy Statement

Assistantships for graduate students provide outstanding students with financial resources to help them complete their degrees. Assistantships offer varying educational and professional benefits but, in general, you can expect to –

- ◆ gain further instruction in techniques in your field
- ◆ hone your research skills
- ◆ acquire pedagogical experience necessary for an academic career
- ◆ develop professional skills including leadership, interpersonal effectiveness, and performance evaluation
- ◆ have collegial collaboration with advisers that could result in joint publications

The University of Illinois at Springfield awards a number of assistantships to qualified students each year. These awards are intended to help accomplish our educational mission as well as to supplement your academic and professional pursuits. The director of the Assistantship Program oversees its operation.

Objectives

Assistantships are designed to –

- ◆ recruit outstanding and promising students to graduate study, with special attention to access and equal opportunity policies
- ◆ provide graduate-level learning experiences through a supervised assignment
- ◆ provide support that enables you to complete your graduate degree on time
- ◆ provide us with limited support services in selected programs and areas

Eligibility for Appointment

To be considered for an assistantship, you must –

- ◆ You must possess an earned baccalaureate degree (or its equivalent) by your beginning assignment date. If you are applying to the GA program and are conditionally admitted to your graduate degree program pending submission of your final undergraduate transcript documenting the official posting of your baccalaureate degree, or in the case of international students, pending submission of attested and sealed degree certification documents, required documentation must be submitted to the UIS Office of Admissions prior to an assistantship contract being executed.
- ◆ You must satisfy the selection criteria for assistants established by the graduate program or unit where you will be placed
- ◆ You must be admitted to graduate study, enrolled in a UIS master's or doctoral program, and, for appointment, be in good academic standing at UIS, maintaining a cumulative graduate grade point average of no less than 3.00 with no incomplete grades assigned (except for your thesis or master's project courses).

- ◆ If you are a first-year graduate student who has earned no graduate-level credit, but has been admitted to a graduate degree program, your cumulative undergraduate grade point average must be at least 2.50.
- ◆ If you are an international student, you must have a current F-1 visa on file with UIS before you can begin working in your assistantship position. (Please note that this rule does not apply to students who are Canadian citizens.)

Preference will be given to students (a) who have not already obtained a graduate degree, (b) who have not previously been awarded an assistantship at UIS, or (c) who have held a UIS assistantship for less than four semesters.

Assistantships at UIS involve responsibilities that require assistants to be present on campus. Applicants who have applied to and been accepted by an online graduate degree program at UIS must notify the Graduate Assistantship Office and the Office of Admissions and Records, in writing when they submit the assistantship application, of their availability to fulfill on-campus responsibilities if awarded an assistantship. Applicants are strongly encouraged to initiate the application process at least three months prior to the graduate assistantship application deadline.

Application Process

To be considered for an assistantship, you must apply to and be accepted by a graduate degree program, complete the Graduate Assistantship / Graduate Public Service Internship Application form, and submit a current resume, personal goal statement (must be submitted in the **required** format), and three letters of reference (at least two letters must be from professors or academic advisors familiar with your academic performance).

The application for graduate study and a listing of graduate program application requirements can be found at: www.uis.edu/graduateeducation or by contacting the UIS Office of Admissions at 217.206.4847 or at admissions@uis.edu.

The Graduate Assistantship / Graduate Public Service Internship Application can be found at: www.uis.edu/graduateassistantships or by contacting the Graduate Assistantship Office at 217.206.6544 or at gaprog@uis.edu.

Your assistantship application file will be considered complete when:

- ◆ You have been admitted, either conditionally* or fully, to a UIS graduate degree program
- ◆ You have submitted a complete Graduate Assistantship/Graduate Public Service Internship Application for (either via the web or in paper form).
- ◆ You have submitted a current resume.
- ◆ You have submitted a personal goal statement in the **required** format.
- ◆ You have provided three letters of reference, at least two of which are provided from either faculty or academic advisors familiar with your academic performance.
- ◆ All academic transcripts and required admission documentation (e.g., Notice of Graduate Admission form) have been forwarded to the GA office from the UIS Office of Admissions.

*Please refer to page 2, Eligibility for Appointment heading, first bullet point for important information regarding conditional admission.

University of Illinois Nondiscrimination Statement

The commitment of the University of Illinois to the most fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity, and human dignity requires that decisions involving students and employees be based on individual merit and be free from inappropriate discrimination in all its forms.

The University of Illinois will not engage in discrimination or harassment against any person because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation including gender identity, unfavorable discharge from the military or status as a protected veteran and will comply with all access and equal opportunity policies and employment laws and regulations. This nondiscrimination policy applies to admissions, employment, access to and treatment in the University programs and activities.

University complaint and grievance procedures provide employees and students with the means for the resolution of complaints that allege a violation of this Statement.

Types of Assistantships

Each assistantship at UIS is categorized into one of four types: graduate teaching assistantships (TAs), graduate research assistantships (RAs), graduate assistantships (GAs), and pre-professional graduate assistantships (PGAs).

The duties of a **Graduate Teaching Assistant** are to conduct or support instruction. Assistants whose primary (i.e. greater than 50%) duties consist of the following types of activities will be categorized as Teaching Assistants:

- ◆ Teaching classes
- ◆ Leading lab or discussion groups in a course setting
- ◆ Developing academic instructional materials
- ◆ Accompanying/coaching musical or vocal performances
- ◆ Grading student assignments
- ◆ Providing artistic instruction
- ◆ Proctoring exams
- ◆ Overseeing/coordinating the work of other TAs
- ◆ Maintaining office hours to provide instructional support
- ◆ Tutoring students

The duties of a **Graduate Research Assistant** are to apply and master research concepts, practices, or methods of scholarship. Assistants whose primary (i.e. greater than 50%) duties consist of the following types of activities will be categorized as Graduate Research Assistants:

- ◆ Conducting experiments
- ◆ Organizing or analyzing data
- ◆ Overseeing work of other RAs
- ◆ Presenting findings in a publication or dissertation
- ◆ Collaborating with faculty in preparing publications
- ◆ Other research activities

The duties of a **Graduate Assistant** are to support administrative functions. Assistants whose primary (i.e., greater than 50%) duties consist of the following types of activities will be classified as Graduate Assistants:

Clerical Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Copying course materials ◆ General office work/clerical/receptionist ◆ Correspondence ◆ Supervising reading room
Technical/Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Website management/assisting faculty with web pages ◆ Network administration/end user support ◆ Equipment management ◆ Monitoring instructional and service labs (computer, video, etc.) ◆ Translation ◆ Routine support for publications (record keeping, writing copy for university or department newsletters or non-research publications, correspondence, etc.)
Advising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Providing curricular and academic advice to students ◆ Providing support to advisers
Outreach Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Recruiting students ◆ Publicizing programs and activities to campus and public constituencies ◆ Working with/assisting with event management

Pre-professional Graduate Assistants are appointed to positions in which their duties are directly connected to their fields of study and in which they gain experience, practice, or guidance directly related to their career preparation. At UIS students who are (1) enrolled in the following areas of study, and are (2) appointed in the units listed below will be considered Pre-Professional Graduate Assistants.

Areas of Study

Counseling fields
Human Services fields

Appointing Unit

UIS Counseling Center
Career Development Center

Terms and Conditions of Assistantship Awards

Notice of Appointment

All newly appointed and re-appointed assistants receive a letter of appointment that specifies the appointment title, stipend amount, effective dates of service, the supervising official in the program or department, and the full time equivalence (FTE) of the appointment.

Verification of Employment Eligibility

Beginning assistants **must** complete an I-9 form within three working days to verify eligibility for employment. A completed I-9 form must be taken to the UIS Human Resources Office; an employee's appointment cannot be processed without it. To download a copy of the I-9 form, go to www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-9.pdf.

International students must have F-1 visas on file with the University before they may begin working in their assistantship positions. (F-1 visas are not required for students who are Canadian citizens.)

Orientation & Training

The campus and the programs/units that appoint assistants share responsibility for providing orientation and training programs for the assistants they appoint. All graduate student assistants are required to attend a campus-wide orientation session at the beginning of each fall semester in which they participate in the program. The campus-wide assistantship orientation covers topics such as our graduate education philosophy; library, web, and technology resources; time-keeping, holidays, compensatory time, role relationships, and university policies related to professional behavior. Unit-level orientations focus on content and procedures that are specific to the assistant's duties.

Attendance at mandatory orientation and training activities is required for continuation of an assistantship. The time an assistant spends in orientation and training will be counted toward the assistant's required hours. Students who are awarded assistantships under late appointment circumstances, after the campus-wide orientation session has been held, will be required to meet individually with a representative of the Graduate Assistantship Office to review orientation information.

Work Responsibilities

You will be supervised directly by a faculty or staff member of the program/unit that offers your appointment. The assistantship supervisor recommends candidates for appointment, determines the assistantship assignments, and supervises and evaluates your work. Contact your supervisor for details about the assistantship.

Graduate assistantship appointments are typically half-time (20 hours per week) for one academic year (9 months). The time allocated to fulfilling work responsibilities should not exceed 20 hours per week; however, under special circumstances, an overload during one week may be balanced by a lighter load during the week before or after the overload. (International students, due to their visa status, are not allowed to work more than 20 hours per week in their assistantship.) Overload hours should be planned in advance and should be mutually agreed to by you and your supervisor. Under no circumstances may an assistant work more than 40 hours per week. Assistants do not earn vacation.

According to Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) regulations, **Graduate Assistantships** are considered "salaried non-exempt" appointments. Graduate Assistants (GAs) are required to record

their actual hours worked on an electronic timesheet (nessie.uhr.uillinois.edu/cf/index.cfm?item_id=161, select the appropriate pay period). These sheets should be reviewed and signed by the Graduate Assistant's supervisor on a monthly basis (or more frequently if requested by the supervisor).

Pre-professional Graduate Assistantships, Graduate Research Assistantships, and Graduate Teaching Assistantships are considered "salaried exempt" appointments under FLSA regulations. Pre-professional Graduate Assistants (PGAs), Graduate Research Assistants (RAs), and Graduate Teaching Assistants (TAs) are not required to submit time sheets; however, whenever possible, they should have prior approval from the supervisor for taking leave time and must report it using a standard Request for Leave form.

For all types of assistantships, if an assistant is sick or otherwise unable to come to work on a day that he/she is scheduled to work, the assistant should contact his/her supervisor. If you miss work hours, you should arrange with your supervisor to make up the hours unless those hours are covered by sick leave.

All assistantship contracts are considered academic appointments. Since assignments vary, your supervisor will monitor your work responsibilities. If an assistant is assigned duties during a scheduled holiday, he/she should be given equal time off at another time. This revised work schedule should be mutually agreed on by the assistant and his/her supervisor.

Please note that assistants are to report to work during the first week of the contractual period (August 16 until the first day of class). If your appointment begins in the spring rather than the fall, your starting date will be five working days before classes begin or the date when you actually begin employment, whichever is later. Except as noted below under Holidays and Sick Leave, you are expected to work when the campus is open.

Assistants are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is professional, courteous, and conducive to a professional atmosphere in the performance of their University duties. Assistants are expected to comply with all work rules and expectations that are developed in their appointing programs, departments, or units, as well as with applicable University rules and policies. Applicable University policies include, but are not limited to, Sexual Harassment and Human Rights Policies, the University and Student Codes of Conduct, and policies governing research with human subjects and the use of University resources. You are expected to be familiar with these policies. Electronic copies of the policies can be accessed through links available on the Graduate Assistantship Program web pages, under the **Employment-Related Policies** heading.

Work Plan

Working with your designated supervisor, you must develop and submit a written work plan that includes –

- ◆ Job Description -- general areas of responsibility as well as specific tasks
- ◆ Learning Objectives/Special Projects -- responsibilities as they relate to the assistant's academic pursuits and/or career aspirations
- ◆ Work Schedule -- the estimated number of hours per week to be spent on each assigned responsibility, and the schedule of days/times assistant will work each week

Your hours of work are reflected in your percentage of appointment. Hours of work are separate and distinct from the time required for your own academic coursework.

You and your designated primary supervisor must sign and date the work plan. The signature of the dean/division head is also required. The completed work plan must then be forwarded to the Graduate Assistantship Office to be reviewed and added to your file. Work plans must be submitted to the Graduate Assistantship Office by the end of the first week of appointment period.

In the event you wish to change your assistantship work schedule based upon adding or dropping a course, after the work plan has been agreed to, you should meet with your supervisor and discuss the impact on your schedule. The work schedule may be changed by mutual agreement between the assistant and supervisor. In the event mutual agreement cannot be reached, the work schedule as agreed to in the work plan shall prevail.

Satisfactory Academic Performance

Successful, timely completion of your master's degree is the paramount goal of our Assistantship Program. The responsibility for monitoring your mid-year and year-end academic progress rests with the Graduate Assistantship Office. As necessary, the Office will cooperate with your academic advisor, the dean or administrator of the program offering your appointment, and your assistantship supervisor in making these evaluations.

Assistants placed on academic probation must meet with their academic advisor to develop a plan for remediation and must submit a *Documentation of Academic Plan for Next Semester* petition, with all required signatures, to the Graduate Assistantship Office.

Assistants on academic probation who fail to raise their cumulative grade point average to the minimum required level of 3.0 during their next semester of enrollment and are placed on academic suspension must wait two consecutive terms before petitioning for readmission. As a consequence, the student will no longer be eligible for appointment and the assistantship appointment will be terminated. (Students who petition for readmission to UIS may reapply to the assistantship program; academic eligibility for reapplication will be reevaluated by the GA Office at that time.) In extraordinary situations, students may successfully appeal their academic suspension and be allowed to enroll for one semester under a conditional probation status; however, please note that continuing appointment as an assistant is not automatic under these circumstances. Another completed *Documentation of Academic Plan for Next Semester* petition must be submitted to the GA Office for consideration.

Resignation

If you cannot complete the period of your appointment, you must submit a letter of resignation to your assistantship supervisor, with copies to the dean/division head and to the Graduate Assistantship Office. The resignation letter must clearly state the effective date of resignation. The letter should be filed with the dean/division head **and** the Graduate Assistantship Office at least 10 working days before the effective date of your resignation. A written release from the appointing program or department is required if you wish to resign after acceptance of an appointment in order to accept a different assistantship position.

If you resign your appointment before serving 91 calendar days from the first day of your Fall or Spring semester start date, but continue as a graduate student at UIS, you will be assessed tuition for the term. Tuition payment is not required if you officially withdraw from UIS at the same time you resign your appointment. You will be required, however, to pay UIS fees and any withdrawal surcharges. *Note:* If your resignation is effective at the end of the fall semester, your termination date will be December 31.

Satisfactory Work Performance and Notice of Deficiency in Performance

Assistants are expected to meet responsibilities specified in the work plan and to adhere to the agreed-upon work schedule. For most problems with performance, the assistantship supervisor will first attempt to correct performance deficiencies through work-related counseling, instruction, or training. Assistants are encouraged to work cooperatively with their supervisors to resolve performance problems informally.

Deficiencies in performance that are not resolved informally through work-related counseling, instruction, or training may result in formal discipline and dismissal. Progressive discipline may include oral warning, written notice of deficiency in performance, suspension, and, in extreme cases, reduction of assistant duties with a corresponding reduction in appointment percentage and pay. Discipline might not be progressive if the offense is sufficiently serious. A recommendation to terminate your assistantship may occur if a very severe problem in performance exists or you fail to make specified improvements in performance within an established time period.

Discipline and dismissal may result from failing to attend mandatory orientation or other sessions; engaging in misconduct in the performance of University duties or academic activities; neglecting or refusing to perform assigned duties; demonstrating unsatisfactory performance; violating University regulations or policies; violating University regulations or policies related to discrimination and harassment; acting outside the appropriate exercise of University responsibilities so as willfully to physically harm, threaten physical harm to, harass, or intimidate a visitor or a member of the University community; and damaging, destroying, or misappropriating property owned by the University or any property used in connection with a University function or approved activity. Discipline and dismissal may result from an accumulation of minor infractions as well as from a serious infraction.

A supervisor alerted to the possibility of misconduct by an assistant will attempt to clarify the facts directly with the assistant. Discipline will be issued in a private manner so as not to cause embarrassment to the assistant.

In cases of disciplinary oral warning, the supervisor will inform the assistant that he/she is receiving an oral warning and will give the assistant the reasons for the warning. A pre-disciplinary meeting will be held if discipline other than an oral warning or written notice of deficiency in performance is contemplated. The assistant will be notified at least two days in advance in writing of the purpose of the pre-disciplinary meeting and the contemplated disciplinary action. The assistant will be given the opportunity to rebut the reasons for the contemplated discipline. Anonymous documents shall not be used to justify disciplinary action unless the University reasonably deems it necessary.

Termination

If your work performance is not satisfactory and you fail to make improvements specified in the notice of deficiency by the time your performance is re-evaluated, your supervisor, the dean/director, or the division head may recommend to the assistantship program director that your contract be terminated or not renewed for the next year.

Behaviors that may result in the termination of your assistantship without oral warning or notice of deficiency in performance include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ failing to maintain academic eligibility because of unsatisfactory academic progress;
- ◆ obtaining off-campus employment in excess of 20 hours per week;
- ◆ engaging in unethical conduct (see University Code of Ethics); or
- ◆ abandoning job duties (i.e., absence without approved leave for three working days or more)

The director of the Graduate Assistantship Program will review all recommendations for suspension, reduction in appointment and pay, non-renewal, and dismissal and make the decision on whether to terminate the appointment. Should the decision be made to suspend, reduce the appointment and pay, or terminate your appointment, you will be given 30 calendar days notice of termination. During the 30-day period, you have the right to appeal this decision to the Provost.

Graduate Assistants and Teaching Assistants may wish to consult the collective bargaining agreement, posted electronically on the GA website, for additional information.

Renewal for Subsequent Academic Year

Reappointments to assistantship positions are not automatic. Students must apply for reappointment through the Graduate Assistantship Office by completing an *Assistant's Request for Reappointment* form. Additionally, your assistantship supervisor must submit an *Assistantship Supervisor's Reappointment Endorsement* form. Your application materials, academic records, performance evaluations, and length of time in the assistantship position will be considered when you seek reappointment. Graduate students who are not re-appointed will be notified in writing by the Graduate Assistantship Program.

Academic eligibility for reappointment requires that you are in good standing at UIS, have completed at least 16 semester hours of credit during the academic year, are making satisfactory progress toward completion of your degree, and have no incomplete grades. Incomplete coursework must be completed before a student can be reappointed.

Assistantships are normally limited to a maximum of four semesters. Students normally will not be considered for assistant appointments that exceed four semesters alone or in combination with other comparable fellowships and graduate internships. Exceptions to this policy can be considered under extraordinary circumstances. To request this exception, **you must complete a Graduate Assistantship petition form, have it signed by your assistantship supervisor, the dean or unit administrator, and your academic program administrator, and submit it to the Graduate Assistantship Office for review and approval**

by the Graduate Assistantship Program Director. Graduate assistantship petition forms are available in the Graduate Assistantship Office (PAC 518), or for download from the GA web site (www.uis.edu/graduateassistantships, select the “GA Forms” link).

Other Employment

You may not hold regular employment with UIS while holding an appointment as an assistant. This does not prohibit limited (maximum 5 hours per week) compensation for tasks such as survey research polling, parking cars, or other limited occasional employment. Such limited employment may have tax consequences. Contact the Employment Office for details.

Because being both a graduate student and a graduate assistant will occupy most of your time, we do not recommend that you hold an outside job during your assistantship. Nevertheless, we do not prohibit you from holding off-campus employment – which in no event may exceed 20 hours a week. It is up to you to determine how much time, if any, you can devote to additional activities and still make progress toward your degree and fulfill your responsibilities as a graduate assistant. Programs or units do have the discretionary right, however, to make appointments to students whose level of commitment suggests that they will be most likely to attain their educational goals while maintaining their graduate assistant responsibilities.

The assistantship policies do not prohibit students from working fulltime in another job during Thanksgiving Recess, Spring Recess, Winter Break, and the summer.

International students, due to their visa status, are not allowed to work more than the 20 hours per week required for their assistantship while school is in session. International students may be eligible to work full-time in other positions while school is not in session – please contact the Office of International Student Services for more information.

Request for Exception(s)

The dean or division head must submit a written recommendation and receive written approval from the director of the Graduate Assistantship Program before your request for exception(s) or consideration for special circumstances can be accepted and implemented.

Use of University Resources

Assistants will be provided with access to work space, telephones, computers, internet, email, mail, supplies, and equipment as necessary to fulfill their work responsibilities. Assistants are not permitted to use University of Illinois course materials, curricula, facilities, resources, or other materials in non-University employment or activities.

Stipend and Benefits

Stipend

Assistantships provide monthly stipends during the contract period. The stipend rate depends on whether an assistant is in the first year or the second year of appointment. An assistant is considered a second-year assistant if he/she held an assistantship position during the previous academic year, which includes assistants who were appointed in the spring semester of the previous year.

Assistantships are subject to federal and state income tax. See the **Taxability of Stipends and Tuition Waivers** section below, and also consult the Internal Revenue Service for specific tax information.

For information regarding current stipend amounts, please visit the GA web site at www.uis.edu/graduateassistantships, select the "Benefits" link.

Sick Leave

Assistants on standard appointments (9 months/50%) receive 6.5 (eight-hour) sick days per academic year. Graduate students appointed to one-semester assistantships receive 3.25 eight-hour days of sick leave. For **Graduate Assistants** (GAs), sick time leave is based on the actual number of hours of work you missed due to sickness. For example, if you call in sick on a day that you were scheduled to work three hours, your sick leave time will be decreased by three hours. **Pre-Professional Graduate Assistants** (PGAs), **Graduate Research Assistants** (RAs), and **Graduate Teaching Assistants** (TAs) must report their absences in half-day increments. Full- and half-days are defined by the assistant's work schedule as outlined in his/her approved Work Plan (e.g., an RA scheduled to work 5 hours per day for 4 days per week has a full-day definition of 5 hours and a half-day definition of 2.5 hours). A Request for Leave form should be completed to report all sick leave absences. Contact the GA Office if you have questions.

You must promptly notify the assistantship supervisor or department head so that arrangements for coverage of duties can be made and the usage recorded. Assistants are subject to University policies concerning use of sick leave which are subject to modification from time to time.

Parental Leave

Eligible assistants are entitled to up to two weeks of parental leave without loss of pay immediately following the birth of a child, or upon either the initial placement or the legal adoption of a child under 18 years of age. Eligible assistants are those who hold an active appointment at the time the parental leave is taken.

Jury Duty

Assistants are eligible for leave of absence without loss of pay for the duration of jury duty on the day or days when the assistant would have otherwise been performing assistant duties. An assistant may also retain funds paid in compensation for jury duty in keeping with University policy.

An assistant summoned as a juror shall immediately inform his/her supervisor of the absence. Assistants who are called for jury duty shall discuss with their supervisor whether jury service will conflict with their duties and if so, whether requesting a deferral from jury duty is appropriate. An assistant who reports for jury duty and is dismissed shall resume his/her normal duties as soon as possible.

Military Leave

Military leave shall be in accordance with applicable state and federal law, and University policy. The University of Illinois at Springfield Office of Human Resources determines the eligibility of graduate assistants called to active military service to continue to receive the graduate assistant stipend.

Bereavement Leave

Assistants are eligible to receive up to three days of paid leave due to the death of a member of his/her immediate family or household and one working day due to the death of a relative outside his/her immediate family or household. Immediate family in this instance includes an assistant's spouse, domestic partner, mother, father, children, brother, sister, mother/father-in-law, daughter/son-in-law, sister/brother-in-law, grandparents and grandchildren. Relatives outside the immediate family or household are defined as an aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, and first-degree cousin.

Coverage Responsibility

If you must be absent from work, it is your responsibility to inform your supervisor in advance of the absence, to explain to the supervisor the reason for the absence, to secure the supervisor's approval of the absence, and to follow the employing unit's policies concerning arranging for substitutes to perform the assistant's duties.

Personal Leave of Absence

An assistant may be granted an unpaid leave of absence during the term of his/her appointment, upon request to and at the sole discretion of the University and subject to such terms and conditions as the University may establish. Contact the GA Office to discuss requirements for this request.

Holidays

Assistants are expected to work when the campus is open, with the exception of the week designated as Thanksgiving Recess in the fall semester, the week designated as Spring Recess in the spring semester, and Winter Break. Winter Break is defined as the week between Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Additional holidays on which the campus is closed during the standard period of appointment include Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Labor Day. Assistants also receive two four-hour "floating" holidays, which can be taken at any time during the academic year with prior approval from the supervisor. Floating holidays cannot be carried over from one academic year to the next.

Assistants are not required to make up the hours that they normally would have worked on a day that is designated as a holiday. For example, if a holiday falls on a Monday, and you normally

work three hours on Mondays, you would not be expected to make up those three hours. Holidays cannot be carried over or accumulated from one semester to the next, or from one academic year to the next.

In the event that an assistantship requires work during a recess or break period, the assistant should be informed of this at the beginning of the appointment period, and the change in schedule should be mutually agreed upon by the assistant and his/her supervisor. Each supervisor is responsible for assigning and notifying their respective assistants of the work duties assigned during the recess period. **Assistants should carefully track assigned hours worked during recess or break periods and should receive time off from their regular semester schedule equal to time worked during those periods.**

Course Load and Tuition Waivers

As an assistantship recipient, you are eligible to receive a tuition and service fee waiver (which includes the activity fee, the intercollegiate athletic fee and the Career Center fee) for qualifying course work. General fees and course fees are **not** waived. (*NOTE:* Undergraduate course work will not be paid for with assistantship tuition/service fee waiver benefits unless detailed as a pre-requisite course on your Notice of Graduate Admission form, or formally specified as a degree requirement by your graduate degree program.) If you served as an assistant during a semester preceding a summer session, you are eligible for a tuition waiver for a maximum of 6 hours during that summer session. It is important to note that assistants are entitled to a **maximum of 30 credit hours of tuition waived during the academic year** (fall, spring, summer). You will be billed for any course taken beyond 30 hours and charged the in-state tuition rate.

Late Appointments to Assistantships

FALL SEMESTER: If your appointment is a replacement or a late appointment which begins before September 15, you will receive a full tuition/service fee waiver. If your appointment begins between September 15 and October 14, one-half of your tuition/service fee will be waived. If your appointment begins after October 14, tuition/service fee charges will **not** be waived for the fall semester.

SPRING SEMESTER: If your appointment is a replacement or a late appointment for the spring semester, please contact the GA Office for questions related to the determination of your tuition/service fee eligibility.

Assistants must consult with their academic advisers prior to registering each semester because decisions about course load and course selection need to be informed by assistantship guidelines and applicable financial assistance policies. The following assistantship guidelines are among those that should be considered, in consultation with your academic adviser, before you register for courses:

Min/Max Course Load

During each regular semester, you will receive a tuition waiver for a minimum of 8 semester hours to a maximum of 12 semester hours, for an academic year total of 16-24 semester hours. Assistants must enroll and remain enrolled throughout a regular semester for a minimum of 8 to a maximum of 12 credit hours. If your course load is going to exceed the maximum or is less

than the minimum in a semester, **you must complete and file a Graduate Assistantship petition to obtain prior approval for the overload/underload.**

Assistants who register for fewer than 8 semester hours or more than 12 semester hours during a regular semester without an approved student petition for overload or underload will not receive a tuition waiver and will be billed for the full amount of their tuition. Registration changes must be completed by the deadline for partial withdrawal to avoid possible loss of the tuition waiver.

Audited Courses

Courses taken on an audit basis do **not** count toward meeting the minimum course load and are **not** eligible for a tuition waiver. If an assistant decides to audit a course, it is his/her responsibility to inform the GA Office before changing the status of the course with UIS Records and Registration to ensure that tuition/service fee waiver funds are adjusted accordingly. If funds are applied because the GA Office is not notified, and the matter is not discovered until the end of the semester when final grades are posted, the tuition/service fee waiver will be adjusted at that time and the balance will become the student's responsibility.

Credit/No Credit Courses

The assistant's academic program determines whether courses taken on a credit/no credit basis may be counted toward the degree and, therefore, counted toward meeting the minimum course load. Courses taken on a credit/no credit basis that are counted toward the degree will be eligible for tuition waiver. **Assistants must contact the Graduate Assistantship Office in advance to have eligible credit/no credit courses covered by the tuition waiver,** and to see if any petitions are required.

Concurrent Registration at Another UI Campus

Graduate students who plan to enroll for courses on more than one University of Illinois campus must contact UIS Registration (217 206-6174) to obtain information and complete the necessary application forms regarding concurrent registration. A course taken on another UI campus is generally eligible for tuition waiver under the UIS assistantship program if:

- the student's UIS graduate degree program verifies the course will reduce the hours need for degree completion;
- the total number of credit hours of registration, when combined for the two campuses during the semester of concurrent registration, is within the minimum/maximum credit hour limit established by the UIS assistantship policy;
- the maximum tuition waiver of 30 credit hours is not exceeded for the academic year; and
- the necessary concurrent registration paperwork has been completed and filed in advance with UIS Registration and with the Graduate Assistantship Office.

Assistants must submit a completed Graduate Assistantship Request for Concurrent Registration Tuition Waiver to the GAO for prior approval. Students should be aware that participating in concurrent registration at another UI campus may be associated with a change in the tuition and fee range charged to their accounts, and that they are responsible for any additional charges that may be assessed.

Other Financial Assistance Considerations

There are additional considerations when any graduate student receiving financial aid plans (a) to register for less than 12 credit hours in a given semester, (b) to register for undergraduate-level courses, and/or (c) to register for graduate-level courses that will not count toward the degree. In such cases, graduate students are advised to consult with the Office of Financial Assistance before registering so that they do not incur unexpected tuition or fee charges.

Taxability of Stipends and Tuition

Assistant stipends are subject to federal and state taxes. Current tax law exempts Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Research Assistants (RAs) from having to pay taxes on tuition and service fee waivers associated with these appointments.

Effective January 1, 2003, the University adopted an Educational Assistant Plan, complying with Internal Revenue Code 127, which excludes from taxable income \$5,250 per calendar year in tuition and service fee waivers associated with graduate assistant (GA) and/or pre-professional graduate assistant (PGA) appointments. Under other sections of the Internal Revenue Code, GA and PGA tuition and service fee waivers exceeding \$5,250 per calendar year may be excluded from taxable income if the GA or PGA appointment meets certain criteria.

Students receiving waivers associated with GA or PGA appointments will receive information from the Payroll Office to assist in determining what portion, if any, of the waiver should be considered taxable income and whether or not it will be necessary to withhold additional taxes from these students' paychecks. Please contact the Payroll Office if you have questions.

Assistantship Performance Evaluations

You and your supervisor together will formally evaluate your performance at midyear and at the end of the academic year. Evaluations are typically due to deans or unit administrators two weeks before the last day of classes in the semester, and are due in the Graduate Assistantship Office at least one week before the last day of the semester. Please refer to the *Important Tasks, Due Dates and Deadlines* calendar provided to you during orientation for dates.

Mid-Year Formative Evaluation

The written midyear performance evaluation will be formative in nature and must be completed no later than December 15. (Refer to the *Important Tasks, Due Dates and Deadlines* calendar.) This evaluation is intended to identify both progress and areas of concern related to the accomplishment of your work plan. The midyear performance review should be completed from a formative perspective by the designated primary assistantship supervisor, in consultation with the assistant. The review must be completed by the deadline, using the standard *Mid-Year Formative Evaluation* form to indicate areas of satisfactory performance and/or concern in relation to work assignments. In situations where the assistantship involves working with several faculty or staff members in a department or unit, the designated primary supervisor may solicit and consider their feedback before preparing the evaluation. The evaluation form should be completed by the assigned assistantship supervisor, and reviewed with the assistant before signatures are obtained.

End-of-Year Evaluation

A written summative year-end evaluation must be completed by you and your supervisor. The results are to be forwarded for review and approval by the dean or unit head and by the director of the Graduate Assistantship Office. The year-end evaluation must include the following information –

- ◆ your work plan
- ◆ your written self-evaluation
- ◆ your supervisor's written observations and evaluations
- ◆ solicited comments from program or unit faculty and staff

Both you and your supervisor should follow the general outline below. Examples of projects (i.e., brochures, publications) or other documentation may be attached.

- ◆ **Learning:** Specific skills learned, application of theoretical knowledge, personal development.
- ◆ **Service:** Projects accomplished, benefits to the program, benefits to the campus.
- ◆ **Expectations and outcomes:** Your view of the relation between the anticipated and the actual experience. Supervisor's examination of your achievements compared to the work plan.
- ◆ **Summary:** The value of the assistantship experience. How the assistant experience could have been more valuable.

Both the self-evaluation completed by the assistant and the assigned assistantship supervisor's written observations and evaluations should be reviewed by both the assistant and the supervisor before signatures are provided, and then forwarded for additional departmental reviews and signatures.

Exit Survey

Assistants are required to complete a UIS Graduate Assistantship Exit Survey at the end of their final semester of appointment or at the time of resignation, and submit it to the GAO. All responses to the survey will be kept confidential. Survey results will be summarized and interpreted at aggregate levels as part of ongoing efforts to assess and assure the quality of the UIS Assistantship Program for future students.

Other Useful Information

Informal Problem Solving

Assistants and their supervisors are encouraged to make every effort to resolve assistantship-related problems informally. If there is a problem involving your assistantship, meet with your supervisor to attempt to resolve the matter. An informal conference, when conducted in good faith by both parties, leads to a fair and prompt resolution of most problems. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, an assistant may file a formal grievance with the college dean or unit head.

Formal Grievance Procedures

All assistants have access to a formal grievance procedure, which may be used when attempts to resolve a problem informally have been unsuccessful. A formal grievance must be in written form, and grievance procedures have specific steps and time limits that apply to filing a grievance and appealing decisions. The procedures must be followed for the grievance to be considered.

If informal problem-solving was not successful, you may elect to file a formal grievance. For all assistants, the basic steps for filing a formal grievance are as follows:

1. If an assistant wishes to file a grievance related to suspension, reduction in appointment and pay, or dismissal during his or her term of appointment, a written grievance may be submitted to the college dean or unit director, or his/her designee, within fifteen (15) calendar days following notice of the suspension, reduction, or dismissal.

All other written grievances may be filed with the college dean or unit director, or his/her designee, within twenty (20) calendar days following the date of the act or omission giving rise to the grievance.

2. The dean/director, or his/her designee, will, within twenty (20) calendar days of the filing of the grievance, arrange a formal conference between the appropriate campus representative(s) and the grievant. If the conference results in resolution of the grievance, the grievance will not be processed further. The dean/director, or his/her designee, will notify the grievant of any resolution reached as a result of the conference.
3. A grievance may be withdrawn at any time by the grievant.
4. If the grievance is not settled at Step Two, and the grievant wishes to appeal the grievance decision, he or she may file a written request to the Provost, or his/her designee, in the Office of the Provost within fourteen (14) calendar days after the Step Two decision is received or due. Upon receipt of an appeal, the Provost, or his/her designee, will make a complete and thorough review of the written record of the dean/director, or his/her designee, and will issue a written decision on the grievance within twenty (20) calendar days from the date of the receipt of the appeal.

Graduate Assistants and Teaching Assistants may wish to consult the collective bargaining agreement, posted electronically on the GA website (select the "Helpful Web Links for Grad Students" link), for additional information.

