

GUIDELINES AND POLICIES FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

INTRODUCTION

Education and research are at the core of the academic enterprise of the research university. Graduate teaching assistants (TAs) are important and essential links between the creation and dissemination of new knowledge and the learning environment that meets the needs and stretches the potential of undergraduate students. Whether they serve as graders, laboratory assistants, group discussion leaders, or have complete responsibility for a course, this group of additional teaching personnel enhances Tulane's ability to offer a broad range of courses to its students. Graduate research assistants (RAs) are at the forefront of the university's scholarly activities and provide a vital service to the university on the way to earning their graduate degree. The purpose of this document is to describe policies and procedures related specifically to the assignment and execution of teaching and research assistantships. Issues related to graduate student academic performance and violations (honor code), sexual harassment, fraud in research, and non-assistantship-related grievances are covered by other university policies.

ARTICLE 1: DEFINITIONS

"Graduate Student" means all persons enrolled at Tulane University pursuing post-baccalaureate studies on either a "for credit" or on an "audit" basis, and on either a full-time or part-time basis, including Research Dissertation and Masters. This includes, but is not limited to, students pursuing the eM.B.A., M.B.A., M.A., M.ARCHII, M.ACCT., M.F.A., M.FIN., M.L.A., M.P.S., M.S., M.S.W., and Ph.D. degrees. "Graduate Students" also includes persons who are not officially enrolled for a particular term but who have a continuing relationship with Tulane, or who have been notified of their acceptance for admission are considered "students."

"Research Assistant (RA)" means a graduate student who is paid a stipend to perform research duties.

"Teaching Assistant (TA)" means a graduate student who is paid a stipend to perform instructional duties.

"Tutoring Session" means assistance given by appointment to a single student or small group of students, often for pay, by someone who, at the time that he or she is rendering his or her services, is not in any way involved with the teaching of any section of the course in which the student or group of students is seeking help.

"Review Session" means an extra session provided within the context of a specific course, normally given by someone who is directly involved with the teaching of the course at that time. Review sessions should be open to all students in the course or section, and no student should be required, or even asked, to pay a fee for such help.

“Athletic Tutoring” means assistance to student athletes paid for by the Athletic Department, which may hire graduate students so long as they are not directly involved with any section of the course in which the student athlete is receiving help.

ARTICLE II: SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT

1. General

Teaching and research assistants are appointed each year by the School of Science and Engineering, hereafter referred to as the “School.” To be eligible for appointment as a teaching or research assistant, a nominee must be admitted to a graduate program without qualification. For reappointment, a nominee must be in good academic standing and making satisfactory progress toward an advanced degree.

2. Reappointment

A TA or RA may be considered for reappointment if:

- He or she meets the scholastic requirements for eligibility set by the department and School and is certified as being in good academic standing and making satisfactory progress toward the degree.
- He or she has, in the opinion of the department or School, provided satisfactory service.

3. Selection and Appointment of Teaching Assistants

Only graduate students who present satisfactory evidence of competence in English to read it, write it, speak it, and understand it when spoken are eligible for appointment as a teaching assistant. When proficiency in English is unproven or insufficient, international students will be required to successfully complete a class offered by the Tulane English as a Second Language Institute that is designed to focus on improving speaking and listening skills in English.

Only graduate students who have earned at least 18 credit hours of graduate course work are given complete instructional responsibility for a course offered by Tulane University.

Teaching assistants are governed by the same standards of conduct in the performance of their academic duties as are members of the faculty and shall respect the rights and opinions of students and uphold the academic standards of the University.

ARTICLE III: TA TRAINING

The Office of Academic Affairs offers an intensive workshop on teaching-related issues at the beginning of each academic year. The workshop covers issues such as effective lecturing, facilitating discussions, testing/grading, academic integrity, using technology in teaching, teaching as a performance art, and collaborative learning.

In addition, departments or programs have developed their own workshops to prepare their graduate students for their roles in undergraduate instruction. These programs are usually tailored to the special requirements of the discipline. This training may include, but is not limited to, a discipline-specific introduction to issues of course design and planning, instructional methods, effective assignment sequencing, and issues of evaluation and grading.

ARTICLE IV: TA RESPONSIBILITIES

Graduate teaching assistants perform a variety of roles related to teaching that represent different levels of independence and direct contact with undergraduate students. The level of responsibilities assigned to TAs is determined by the departments in consultation with the appropriate dean(s). To the extent possible, departments are encouraged to make assignments that contribute to the intellectual and professional development of graduate students.

Whether graduate TAs serve primarily as assistants to a faculty instructor, graders, laboratory assistants, discussion group facilitators, or as instructors of their own sections, they are governed by the same standards of conduct in the performance of their academic duties as are members of the faculty. They are expected to maintain the highest levels of professional and ethical standards.

ARTICLE V: FINANCIAL PAYMENTS

It is the responsibility of the School to determine how TAs and RAs are paid, whether on an hourly basis or on a set stipend. In both cases, graduate assistants are paid a fixed rate for their services on a bi-weekly basis for the academic year. In some cases, research assistantships may be offered for a calendar year.

Minimum stipend rates for TAs are set by the Office of Academic Affairs for the School. Although the professional development of graduate students as teachers is considered an important part of doctoral training, Tulane University is committed to ensuring that the students have sufficient time for other, equally important, components of their doctoral education. No TA is expected to perform instructional duties that would take more than 20 hours per week.

Minimum stipend rates for RAs are set by the individual departments and programs.

ARTICLE VI: TERMINATION OF APPOINTMENT

Termination of a teaching or research assistant before the expiration date of the stated period of appointment will be only for good cause shown. Pursuant to the provision of Article XII of the Statement on Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Responsibility approved by the University Senate on March 1, 1971, and by the Administrators of the Tulane Educational Fund on March 2, 1971, the School hereby institutes the following regulations and procedures relative to the protection of the academic freedom of its graduate, teaching, or research assistants:

1. In no case will a graduate teaching or research assistant be dismissed from her or his assistantship before the end of the period of appointment without having been provided with a statement of reasons and an opportunity to be heard by a duly constituted committee of the School. The department in question shall provide the statement of reasons along with the statement of intent to dismiss.
2. In any case when an individual in one of the above named categories is not reappointed, he will, upon his request, be provided with a statement of reasons. If the formal terms of his first appointment have given reasonable expectation of reappointment, and if he believes that a consideration violative of his academic freedom significantly contributed to his non-reappointment and if he can establish in writing a case for his belief to the satisfaction of a duly constituted committee of the School, he will be given an opportunity to be heard by that committee.
3. In all cases involving teaching assistants, it must be recognized that because this School maintains the policy that supervised teaching be made, wherever possible, a part of the graduate student's degree program, the teaching assistant is, in effect, a student-teacher, and it is the intent, therefore, of the foregoing paragraphs to safeguard the academic freedom of the individual in his role as teacher while preserving all necessary and reasonable limitation inherent in the faculty-student relationship.
4. In all cases the committee referred to in paragraphs (1) and (2) shall be a standing committee consisting of a representative of the Dean as Chair, three faculty members of the School, and three graduate students to be appointment by the Dean. The Chair shall vote only in case of a tie vote.
5. In all cases, the committee will report its findings and recommendations to the Dean for appropriate action.

ARTICLE VII: TUTORING

1. A graduate student is allowed to supplement his or her stipend by tutoring undergraduate students in courses in which he or she has no direct responsibility at the time.
2. A graduate student who is teaching a class or lab of a multi-section course that uses a common syllabus and common exams may not tutor any student in any section of that course.
3. A graduate student may use his or her office for tutoring or may ask departmental permission to use a classroom or other appropriate university facility.
4. The graduate advisor or department chair may require a graduate student to limit his or her tutoring activity if, in the view of the department, such activity is impeding the graduate student's academic progress or keeping him or her from fulfilling responsibilities within the department.
5. A graduate student, like any other member of the teaching faculty, may offer review sessions for his or her students to which he or she may invite students from other sections of the same course. The graduate student arranging such a session may not under any circumstances take money from the students in attendance.
6. A graduate student must have prior approval from the chair or advisor to work outside the department, since such activities might impede progress toward degree.