

# GRADUATE ASSISTANT POLICIES & GUIDELINES

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Graduate assistantships are available to qualified, full-time degree-seeking graduate students. An assistantship is awarded to a student to enable him or her to obtain academic or research experience while making progress toward a graduate degree.

Graduate assistants are assigned individual duties consistent with the needs of the department and the experience and quality of the student. Graduate assistants have a role as a professional (albeit of an apprentice nature) in the University, and the duties of a graduate assistant are consistent with the teaching and research missions of the University.

Graduate assistants should become thoroughly familiar with the academic regulations of the Graduate School (published in the Graduate School Catalog and on the web<<http://www.umbc.edu>> and of the special requirements of their program. This manual is a compilation of University policies and practices governing the position of graduate assistant. Other University policies and procedures which may apply can be found in the **Graduate School Catalog** or at <http://www.umbc.edu>.



## I. QUALIFICATIONS, APPLICATIONS & SELECTION

A graduate assistant must be a full-time registered graduate student who is enrolled in a degree program and who is making satisfactory progress toward the degree. The student must be registered in courses that lead toward the degree. Satisfactory progress is defined as 3.0 or higher G.P.A. and a satisfactory progress report by the student's mentor or Graduate Program Director. Appointments are normally given to those students who have shown superior aptitude in their field of study and who appear likely to render a high quality of service to the University by their teaching and research activities.

Applications for assistantships should be made directly to the department in which the applicant desires to study. Offers of assistantships are made contingent on available funds and admission of the student to a degree granting graduate program.

Selection of graduate assistants is made by the chairperson of the department and/or program director with the recommendation of a graduate student recruitment committee or those responsible for graduate studies in that

area. The appointee should hold an appropriate baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution.

The University of Maryland Baltimore County is an equal opportunity institution with respect to both education and employment. Its policies are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations on affirmative action equal opportunity employment. Graduate assistants are selected in compliance with these policies.

## **II. CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYMENT STATUS**

There are six categories of employment for graduate students: Teaching Assistantship, Research Assistantship, Graduate Administrative Assistantship, Graduate Residential Assistantship, Peaceworker Graduate Assistantship, and Hourly Employee.

### **GRADUATE ASSISTANT (TEACHING)**

A graduate student whose primary focus is assisting in a teaching program. A full-time teaching assistant works 20 hours per week, is paid a stipend consistent with University guidelines, and is eligible for tuition remission and the UMBC Student Health Insurance or equivalent.

### **GRADUATE ASSISTANT (RESEARCH)**

A graduate student whose primary focus is research. A full-time research assistant works 20 hours per week, is paid a stipend consistent with University guidelines, and is eligible for tuition remission and health insurance benefits providing there are benefits monies available from the funding source.

### **GRADUATE ASSISTANT (ADMINISTRATIVE)**

A graduate student whose primary focus is assisting with administrative support functions within the needs of a non-academic department. A full-time graduate assistant works 20 hours per week, is paid a stipend consistent with University guidelines, and is eligible for tuition remission and the UMBC Student Health Insurance or equivalent.

### **GRADUATE ASSISTANT (RESIDENTIAL)**

A graduate student who assists with the administrative support functions for the Office of Residential Life. The Graduate Residential Assistant works for the Residential Life Office, registers for a full-time course load, and is paid a stipend consistent with University guidelines. He/she receives accommodations in an on-campus apartment and board and is eligible for tuition remission and for either the UMBC Student Health Insurance or equivalent. These positions are usually awarded to students who have had previous residential life employment experience. A specific description of the

position and qualifications may be obtained from the Office of Residential Life.

### **GRADUATE ASSISTANT (PEACEWORKER)**

A graduate student who participates in the Shriver Peaceworker Program and whose primary focus is community service that addresses the economic, social and/or cultural problems confronting urban America. A full-time graduate assistant works 20 hours per week, is paid a stipend consistent with University guidelines, and is eligible for tuition remission and the UMBC Student Health Insurance or equivalent.

### **HOURLY EMPLOYEE**

A graduate student whose primary focus is to assist with the administrative and support functions within the needs of a department or University office. An hourly employee may work a maximum of 20 hours per week. An hourly employee is not entitled to any benefits. Hourly wage rates may vary, but no student can be paid less than \$5.15 (minimum) an hour. Job description and pay rates in excess of \$11.95 an hour will be reviewed by the Director of Human Resources.

At the University of Maryland the graduate assistant is considered a contractual employee with an academic appointment without academic tenure. All graduate students holding U.S. citizenship wishing financial support must complete a FAFSA form each year (January) <<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>>.



## **III. APPOINTMENT, REAPPOINTMENT, & DURATION OF EMPLOYMENT**

An assistantship appointment may be for either a full-time assistantship (20 hours per week) or a half-time assistantship (10 hours per week). Appointments may not be for less than half-time. One-quarter, two-thirds, or three-quarter or other fractional appointments are not permitted.

Graduate assistants are generally appointed for either a regular academic year (10 months) or a 12-month period in research or administration. The appointment may be for a shorter period if so specified in the official offer. The academic year appointment begins August 17 and ends June 15. Twelve month appointments generally begin July 1 and end June 30. All appointments are automatically terminated at the end of the fiscal year (June 30) in which they are effective. Students may be reappointed one or more times at the discretion of the department. In order to allow a larger number of qualified students to benefit from these positions, some departments have limited the

number of years in which a student may serve as a graduate assistant in any capacity.

Each department is responsible for determining and communicating its own specific criteria, consistent with University policy, for assessing student qualifications for appointment and reappointment to graduate assistantships. In general, reappointment is dependent upon satisfactory performance, adequate progress toward a graduate degree, and the needs of the department. As with all faculty and staff positions, appointment and reappointment are contingent on the availability of funds.

The continuation of an assistantship will be evaluated at the end of each semester and is contingent on the student's quality of work, academic standing, and registration in appropriate courses.

#### **IV. LETTER OF APPOINTMENT**

The official letter of appointment for a graduate assistantship comes from the vice-president, dean, department chairperson, program director, or faculty member whose research project funds the assistantship. Students MUST be provided with a letter of appointment/reappointment annually. This letter will provide pertinent information on the terms of the assistantship, including:

- a. stipend level with biweekly pay rate;
- b. remission of tuition for permissible level of course registration per semester;
- c. UMBC or equivalent student health insurance benefits;
- d. specific beginning and ending dates of the appointment; date on which the graduate assistant is expected to report to the department;
- e. indication of the expected type of duties;
- f. indication of approximate time commitment in terms of responsibilities to the department;
- g. acceptance deadline date;
- h. the Associate Dean of the Graduate School must be copied on all letters of acceptance. For international students, the Director of International Education Services must also be copied.

**V. SALARIES & STIPENDS**

- a. Minimum stipend levels for graduate assistants, whether in research, teaching, or administration are set annually in accordance with institutional guidelines.

At present there are three categories ("steps") for the classification of graduate assistants. These categories, based on experience and progress toward the degree, determine the minimum stipend level which may be paid to graduate students. Any stipend offer which exceeds the minimum by more than 15% must be approved by the Associate Dean of the Graduate

- b. Appropriate payroll titles are:  
Graduate Assistant I or Graduate Assistant II, Subcode 1020

***MINIMUM GRADUATE ASSISTANT STIPENDS - FY 2000***

	10 MONTH	12 MONTH	CRITERIA FOR APPOINTMENT
<b>Step I</b>	\$11,102	\$13,322	Master's degree candidates only
<b>Step II</b>	\$12,193	\$14,688	Ph.D. students in their first and second year
<b>Step III</b>	\$13,140	\$15,824	Ph.D. students 3rd year and beyond, with recommendation

*Note: Appointment to Step III is not automatic but is at the discretion of the department or program. The graduate assistant must have performed successfully as a graduate assistant in the past, and availability of funding may affect promotions.*

## **VI. BENEFITS AVAILABLE**

### **Remission of Tuition**

Tuition benefits are based upon assistantship appointment status.

**Full Assistantship** (20 hours per week): up to **10 credit hours** tuition remission each semester, fall and spring.

**Half Assistantship** (10 hours per week): up to **5 credit hours** tuition remission each semester, fall and spring.

A student who earns less than the minimum full-time stipend (at any given step) is classified as a half-time assistantship.

Graduate assistants appointed to a **12-month**, full-time assistantship are also eligible to receive tuition remission for a maximum of 4 credit hours during the summer session, in addition to the 10 credits each fall and spring semesters. There is no remission for winter session.

For **each semester** assistants are eligible for remission, they must complete and submit a Tuition Remission form by the required deadline. **Tuition remission is not automatically applied to a student's account.** Remission will be granted only for those courses deemed necessary for the completion of the student's degree as determined by the student's mentor and Graduate Program Director.

### **Student Fees**

Payment of student fees during the semester incurred is mandatory and is the responsibility of the graduate assistant.

### **In-State Billing Status**

During the semesters of the performance of the assistantship, graduate assistants are eligible to be billed at the in-state rate for tuition in excess of the allotted remission. All other fees are the responsibility of the graduate student. Upon termination of the assistantship, students revert to their original billing status unless they have filed a formal petition for change of residency. Copies of the in-state status residency petition are available from the Graduate School or the Office of the Registrar.

### **Health Insurance**

Graduate assistants are eligible to enroll in either the UMBC or UMB student health insurance program. Additional information is available from the departmental payroll office or Graduate School or University Health Services.

### **Retirement and Social Security**

Retirement contributions are not withheld from the salaries of graduate assistants, and they are not entitled to retirement benefits. Social Security

(FICA) is not withheld during the academic year when a student is registered as a full-time student.

### **Credit Union**

Graduate assistants are eligible to join the Maryland State Employees Credit Union.

### **Vacation and Sick Leave**

Graduate assistants are not eligible for vacation or sick leave credit.

### **Identification Cards**

Graduate assistants will be authorized to obtain a Student ID card. Faculty level library privileges may be obtained by presenting a copy of the assistantship letter of appointment to the Library each instance of use.

## **VII. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS**

Graduate assistants must be registered as full-time whether they are appointed to a full assistantship or a half assistantship. To be considered full-time, a student must be registered for a minimum of 48 *UNITS*. The student must be registered in courses that lead toward their degree.

A **full-time assistantship** is equivalent to 24 units, therefore a student appointment to a full assistantship must register for a minimum of 24 units in addition to the assistantship, ie. 4 credits of 6xx - 8xx courses or 2 credits of either 799 or 899 research courses.

A **half-time assistantship** is equivalent to 12 units, therefore a student appointed to a half assistantship must register for a minimum of 36 units in addition to the assistantship, ie. 6 credits of 6xx - 8xx courses or 3 credits of 799 or 2 credits of 899.

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### ***GRADUATE UNIT SYSTEM***

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Courses in the 001-399 series carry 2 units per credit hour

Courses in the 400-499 series carry 4 units per credit hour

Courses in the 500-599 series carry 5 units per credit hour

Courses in the 600-798, 800-898, and 901-999 series carry 6 units per credit hour

Master's Thesis Research (799) carries 12 units per credit hour

Doctoral Dissertation Research (899) carries 18 units per credit hour

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## **VIII. ADMINISTRATION OF THE ASSISTANTSHIP**

The graduate assistant works directly under the supervision of the department that offers the appointment. The department determines the assignment, supervises the work, and makes the recommendation for continuation, reappointment and promotion. The department is the primary source of information about any of the details of the assistantship. The responsibility for the assistant's work is determined by the department chair or program director, any duly appointed executive committees and assistants to the chair, and the faculty member assigned to supervise a particular course, laboratory session or research project.

## **IX. DUTIES**

The assigned duties of a graduate assistant shall be consistent with the mission of the University. The particular assignment depends on the department's needs and the experience and qualifications of the assistant.

### **Graduate Teaching Assistants**

The specific duties of a graduate teaching assistant vary from one department to another, but, for the majority, assignments and responsibilities will fall into the following five categories:

- a. teaching responsibility for a laboratory or discussion session of a course;
- b. teaching responsibility for a classroom section of a multi-sectional course, under the close supervision of the director or directors of the course;
- c. assisting a faculty member in the grading, advising, proctoring, and administrative duties necessary for a course or courses;
- d. assisting with the administration of community programs, workshops, etc.
- e. assisting with general departmental administrative duties. All graduate teaching assistants serving in any capacity are under the direction and close supervision of a regularly appointed member of the faculty. Graduate students functioning as teaching assistants will not be permitted to be solely in charge of a course, but will be given an appropriate degree of

responsibility in a classroom or laboratory so that they may be introduced to teaching activities gradually and effectively. The final responsibility for material covered, grades, and other formal course responsibilities must remain with the supervising faculty member. Distribution of responsibilities among teaching assistants is in the hands of the department and should reflect both the interests and skills of the graduate assistants and the desire of the department to further his or her professional development.

### **Graduate Research Assistants**

The duties of graduate research assistants vary according to the nature of the research project in which they participate and the source of funding. Graduate research assistants may be assigned to work on research which is directly applicable to their thesis or dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the master's or doctoral degree. The duties of the research assistant are performed under the direction and supervision of a member of the faculty.

### **Graduate Assistants with Administrative Assignments**

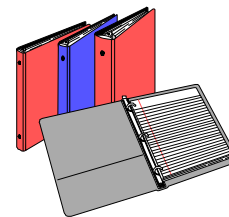
A number of administrative offices employ graduate assistants in administrative roles. Responsibilities vary, as do the durations of appointments. Usually graduate assistants with such appointments perform administrative support functions but should not perform the duties of or replace an Administrative Assistant.

### **Graduate Assistants with Residential Assignments**

A small number of resident graduate assistant positions in the UMBC undergraduate residence halls are available. These positions are open to both men and women. Application should be made to the Director of Residential Life.

### **Peaceworker Graduate Assistants**

A graduate student who participates in the Shriver Peaceworker Program and whose primary focus is community service that addresses the economic, social and/or cultural problems confronting urban America is eligible for a Peaceworker Graduate Assistantship. Supervision for these assistantship recipients resides in the Shriver Center.



## **X. ADDITIONAL UMBC ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT**

Graduate students awarded a full assistantship are not eligible to work for the University beyond the 20 hours per week associated with the assistantship. Any exceptions **must** have the prior approval of the Associate Dean of the Graduate School.

Students awarded a half assistantship are not eligible to work for the University for more than 10 additional hours per week beyond the 10 hours associated with the assistantship.

***Winter and Summer Sessions:*** During the Winter or Summer Sessions, Graduate Assistants on a 10 month assignment are eligible to work for the University up to an additional 20 hours per week beyond the 20 hours associated with their assistantship. However, employment may not exceed a 40-hour work week.

## **XI. PERFORMANCE REVIEWS**

Each department is responsible for determining and implementing procedures for review and evaluation of graduate assistants. Therefore, the process of evaluation will vary, but it may include written assessment of work by an individual faculty member, classroom visitation by designated faculty members, and written student evaluation. The results of reviews and evaluations should be discussed with the graduate assistant concerned.

## **XII. MEANS OF RESOLVING COMPLAINTS**

Several departments have formal or informal structures for handling complaints of graduate assistants and graduate students. An attempt should always be made first to resolve difficulties at the departmental level. In addition, the University has in effect procedures for orderly action on specific issues such as race discrimination, sex discrimination, academic misconduct, arbitrary and capricious grading, and student academic misconduct. A mediation procedure is also established to try to resolve conflicts that are not covered by other grievance policies. These policies may be found in the **Graduate School Catalog**.

1. **Informal Consultation:** If a graduate assistant is having unusual difficulties with his or her assignment, the situation first should be

discussed with the individual faculty member who serves as the supervisor. If the problem is not resolved, the graduate assistant may wish to discuss the matter with the director of the graduate program and the chairperson of the department.

2. **Formal Complaints:** If a graduate assistant does not receive satisfaction at the departmental level, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Associate Dean of the Graduate School. The Associate Dean is available to mediate any difficulties whether they are related to work as a graduate assistant or as a graduate student. The Dean and Associate Dean are directly concerned with all academic problems of graduate students that require mediation beyond the department.

### **XIII. CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE**

In their teaching and research activities, all graduate assistants are subject to the ethical precepts and code of the academic profession, to federal laws such as immigration status, to the laws of the State of Maryland regarding its employees, and to the University policies which govern their institutional obligations. Violation of any of these constitutes the basis for disciplinary action. The minimum expectation of graduate assistants include behavior in compliance with the UMBC Code of Student Conduct.

### **XIV. TERMINATION**

An appointment may be terminated before expiration of the specified time under unusual and compelling conditions, such as:

- a. incompetence, inefficiency, or neglect of duty;
- b. misconduct that is job-related;
- c. delinquency in academic work;
- d. moral turpitude;
- e. discontinuance of the work in which the appointment is made;
- f. chronic physical or mental ailment or defect which interferes with the graduate assistant's performance of required duties;
- g. academic misconduct;
- h. enrolling in courses unrelated to the degree being pursued;
- i. violation of the Statement of Rights and Responsibilities for Academic Integrity;
- j. voluntary mutual agreement;
- k. budgetary appropriations;
- l. violation of federal or state law;

- m. misrepresentation or false data given on graduate application material;
- n. violation of the UMBC Code of Student Conduct.

Except in the most egregious instances, the graduate assistant will receive written notice of termination at least two weeks prior to the effective date of termination. The amount of the stipend and the tuition remission benefit will be prorated according to the termination date.

## V. TAX STATUS

As a result of the U.S. federal tax code revisions effective January 1, 1987, all graduate students become liable to pay income tax on stipends received for graduate assistantships.

Reductions in tuition received by assistants are tax-exempt provided that such reductions are not received in lieu of compensation for performance by the recipient of past, present, or future service.

If an assistant has any questions, it is best, in every case, to consult tax counsel or the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

