

Financial Awards for Graduate Students

Financial awards are determined by the graduate program and college dean following the policies and guidelines described below. For specific qualifications, conditions, amounts, length and types of awards, contact the appropriate graduate program director.

Graduate Assistantships

A. Nature of the Graduate Assistantship

A Graduate Assistant (GA) is expected to participate directly in either instructional, research, or administrative duties in support of the ongoing activities of the University's academic, research, and service units.

It is the University's intention to make the assistantship an integral and valuable part of the student's graduate education. It should be viewed as an apprenticeship in teaching, research, or administrative service.

B. Categories of Graduate Assistants

1. **Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)** - participates directly in teaching activities, such as the teaching of a course, holds responsibility for a laboratory section, or is assigned to specific instructional support or related activities. The University recognizes two levels of graduate teaching assistant responsibilities and activities: GTA-Instructors and GTA-Assistants.
 - GTA-Instructors directly communicate and interact with students in ways that lead to the conveyance of knowledge or skills required to successfully complete the course. Included in this category are graduate students who serve as instructors, laboratory supervisors, recitation leaders, and tutors.
 - GTA-Assistants do not directly instruct students; instead, they serve as graders and/or classroom or laboratory assistants.
2. **Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)** - participates directly in research or support activities conducted by faculty members or administrators. The University recognizes two categories of graduate research assistant responsibilities and activities: GRA-Faculty Assistants and GRA-Project Assistants
 - GRA-Faculty Assistants assist faculty on non-sponsored research activities.
 - GRA-Project Assistants assist faculty on sponsored research projects funded through external grants and contracts managed by the Old Dominion University Research Foundation, or through funds generated by the Educational Foundation or gift accounts.
3. **Graduate Administrative Assistant (GAA)** - participates directly in the support of the activities of a University administrative unit. Such positions must provide graduate students with an academically and/or programmatically appropriate level of intellectual and/or professional experience. The appointment of GAAs in non-academic units is to be made in consultation with the graduate program directors of the pertinent academic units.

C. Graduate Teaching Assistant Instructor Institute (GTAI Institute) Requirement

1. All GTA-Instructors will be required to pass the GTAI Institute prior to their semester of appointment. GTA-Assistants are not required to pass the GTAI Institute, but they must be approved and supervised by their appropriate faculty instructor.
2. The Institute is offered twice a year during the week before fall and spring classes begin. All graduate assistants, including those who have research and/or other non-instructional assignments, are encouraged to participate in the Institute in anticipation of future teaching assignments. The Institute is comprised of the University portion and the college portion. Students are required to attend both portions to pass the Institute. Departments are encouraged to develop their own on-going programs for training graduate teaching assistants. Such programs

should be tailored to the specific needs of the discipline and department policies.

3. International students must pass the SPEAK test prior to attending the GTAI Institute. This requirement may be waived if the student has a score of 26 or better on the Speaking portion of the iBT TOEFL exam or a score of 8.0 on the IELTS exam. Waivers are approved by the Graduate School.

D. Application

Application forms for graduate assistantship stipends paid by the University (GTAs, GRAs, and GAAs) are available from the Office of Admissions or from the University's web page. The completed form, together with a brief essay by the applicant discussing academic interests and career objectives, must be submitted to the appropriate graduate program director or office making the appointment, as soon as possible for fullest consideration. Applications for GRA positions funded through ODURF are made through the faculty member who is the principal investigator, the department chair, or graduate program director.

E. Eligibility

1. Only students admitted to graduate degree programs in regular or provisional status on the basis of complete and fully evaluated credentials and in good academic standing are eligible for appointment to a graduate assistantship. Students appointed as graduate assistants must be enrolled at least three-quarter time in fall and spring and at least half time in summer with the exception of those doctoral students who have advanced to candidacy or those master's students who are in their final semester of study (see the section in this policy on "Enrollment Requirements;" see also the related Graduate Catalog policy on "Enrollment Status"). Additional criteria apply for appointment as a graduate teaching assistant (GTA) (see the sections in this policy on "Categories of Graduate Assistants" and "Graduate Teaching Assistant Instructor Institute (GTAI Institute) Requirement").
2. All students appointed to a graduate assistantship are required to verify their identity and employment eligibility and complete an I-9 Form, according to University procedures, prior to commencing their duties. This requirement is established in order to comply with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Students are also required to complete the Child Support Disclosure and Authorization Form, the Commonwealth of Virginia's Policy on Alcohol and Other Drugs Form, ODU Use of Electronic Communications and Social Media Form, the Commonwealth of Virginia Selective Service Form, and the Employee Payroll Direct Deposit Authorization Form.

Students who are not in good academic standing (i.e. a GPA below 3.0) may not be appointed to an assistantship. An existing assistantship appointment will be terminated for any student whose GPA falls below 3.0 and whose status subsequently moves to probationary at the end of a given semester. An exception may be granted for one semester by the Dean of the Graduate School or designee provided that 1) a remedial plan of study with set benchmarks is developed and confirmed in writing with the student, the student's advisor, and if pertinent, the student's supervisor, and 2) a justification is submitted by the graduate program director and approved by the dean of the college or dean's designee. An extension for a second semester may be granted only if the student has shown significant improvement toward the benchmarks and by using the same process.

F. Enrollment Requirements

Graduate students who are supported through graduate assistantships and appointed as Graduate Assistants are required to be enrolled during the semester of their appointment, but their registration requirements may differ based on their funding sources, duties, and/or residency status:

- **Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Administrative Assistants**
 - Graduate Teaching Assistants, including both GTA-Instructors and GTA-Assistants, and Graduate Administrative Assistants who are paid from non-restrictive Commonwealth funds must register for and complete a minimum of **nine (9)** hours of graduate coursework per fall and spring semesters and **three (3)** hours of

graduate coursework per summer semester. Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Administrative Assistants who are paid from restrictive Commonwealth (S5) funds must register for and complete a minimum of **nine (9)** hours of graduate coursework per fall and spring semesters and **six (6)** hours of graduate coursework per summer semester.

• **Graduate Research Assistants**

- Graduate Research Assistants, including GRA-Project Assistants and GRA-Faculty Assistants, have additional conditions that may affect their registration requirements. GRA-Project Assistants are paid only from external funds managed by the Old Dominion University Research Foundation or the Educational Foundation or from funds generated from gift accounts. They must register for and complete a minimum of **six (6)** hours of graduate coursework per fall and spring semesters and **three (3)** hours of graduate coursework per summer semester. GRA-Faculty Assistants are paid from Commonwealth funds. Those who are paid from non-restrictive Commonwealth funds must register for and complete a minimum of **nine (9)** hours of graduate coursework per fall and spring semesters and **three (3)** hours of graduate coursework per summer semester. Those who are paid from restrictive Commonwealth (S5) funds must register for and complete a minimum of **nine (9)** hours of graduate coursework per fall and spring semesters and **six (6)** hours of graduate coursework per summer semester.

For international students taking fewer than **nine (9)** hours of graduate coursework in either the fall or spring semester, a Reduced Course Load Request Form (RCL) must be filed with the Office of Visa and Immigration Service Advising (VISA). International students beginning a new academic program during the summer semester must register for and complete a minimum of **six (6)** credits, regardless of their funding source.

Students are required to complete all of the credit hours as listed in the individual program sections necessary for the degree. Undergraduate prerequisite courses and courses taken for audit are not normally counted toward the enrollment requirement, except upon the recommendation of the graduate program director, the department/school chair, and the dean of the appropriate academic college. International students must comply with any regulations or conditions associated with their visa status, in addition to the requirements of this enrollment policy.

Exceptions to enrollment requirements:

1. Doctoral students who have successfully advanced to candidacy must register for and complete at least **one (1)** hour of graduate credit every semester until graduation (see Continuous Enrollment Policy). Such students may be appointed as Graduate Assistants even while registered for a reduced course load. They are eligible for full tuition exemption and are considered to be full-time for financial aid purposes. The graduate form, Doctoral Candidates 1-Hour Full-Time Notification, must be completed and forwarded to the Office of the University Registrar, the Office of Financial Aid, and for F-1 and J-1 visa holders, the Office of Visa and Immigration Service Advising (VISA). Such students shall not be paid from restrictive Commonwealth (S5) funds.
2. Master's students appointed as Graduate Assistants in their final semester of study may register for a reduced course load, although they will not be considered full-time for financial aid purposes. The graduate form, Master's Student Full-Time Status Notification, must be completed and forwarded to the Office of the University Registrar and, for F-1 and J-1 visa holders, the Office of Visa and Immigration Service Advising (VISA). For F-1 and J-1 visa holders, the Reduced Course Load Request Form (RCL) must also be filed with VISA. Master's students appointed as Graduate Assistants may register for a reduced course load for no more than one semester. Such students shall not be paid from restrictive Commonwealth (S5) funds.
3. Except in certain professional programs, Graduate Assistants normally may not enroll for more than **nine (9)** credit hours per semester. Enrollment above **nine (9)** credit hours requires the approval of the appropriate graduate program director.

4. The Board of Visitors has authorized the president or his or her designee to consider waivers related to the minimum enrollment requirements specified above.

G. Appointment Process

1. Assistantships in Departments/Schools

The dean or other appropriate administrators notifies the individual departments/schools or units of their allocation of assistantships for the coming year.

- a. The department/school recommends candidates for the assistantships to the appropriate academic dean. Candidates should be interviewed before final recommendations are made for appointment. Particular care should be taken in the consideration of applicants to determine the adequacy of academic preparation and language skills. A completed E-1SG form or ODURF Form for all graduate assistant appointments will accompany the candidate's nomination to the dean or administrator. All completed E-1S forms with award letters, acceptance forms, and job descriptions are to be sent to the Office of EIS Processing for processing. ODURF forms are submitted electronically to the Old Dominion University Research Foundation. Prior to submission of a nomination, the department/school should determine whether the student has been nominated for or accepted another graduate assistantship.
- b. Nominations are reviewed and approved by the dean of the academic college or his/her designee to insure that applicants meet the eligibility criteria for appointment, such as admission to a degree program, English language proficiency requirements, good academic standing, and enrollment, and that the appointment is in compliance with applicable University and college policy.
- c. Applicants for GTA appointments must demonstrate written and oral fluency in the English language. For international students, a good command of written English will be evidenced by acceptable TOEFL scores and required entrance essays. Oral proficiency in English will be determined through the SPEAK test administered by Old Dominion University's English Language Center personnel. A passing score on the SPEAK test is 50. Students who marginally fail the SPEAK test with a score of 45 will be offered the opportunity to participate in a re-test as a part of the GTAI Institute to determine if face-to-face communication is sufficient for holding a teaching assistantship.

2. Assistantships in Non-Departmental Units

- a. Each non-departmental unit, e.g., Career Development Services, Athletics, the Office of the University Registrar, submits to the Graduate School a position description for each Graduate Administrative Assistant (GAA) position available within their unit. Along with the position description the unit will provide a list of those graduate programs in which students have or are proposed to have the interest and skills required. The position must require and provide an academically and programmatically appropriate level of intellectual and professional activity. If the position description is approved, the department chair and graduate program director will coordinate with the non-departmental unit the selection of academically qualified and highly ranked students from their current or to-be recruited graduate students. The appointment of the GAA is made jointly by the academic and non-departmental administrative departments.
- b. Determination of the number and the availability of funds must be done as early as possible in order to facilitate offering these GAA positions to the top ranked applicants/students in the appropriate graduate programs. As part of the December - January budget submission process, non-departmental units must submit a justification for continued and increased support of GAAs, i.e., stipends and tuition waiver.
- c. Each semester, the GAA's immediate, non-departmental supervisor will evaluate the performance of the student and make recommendations for continuance or termination. This written evaluation will be reviewed by the graduate student and his/her

GPD or academic advisor and a final set of recommendations made regarding continued awarding of the assistantship.

H. Appointment Workload

Graduate assistantships require up to 20 hours per week of service and are generally made for a period of one academic year with a nine-month performance period. For a GTA, the work load should include no more than six hours of classroom teaching or nine contact hours of laboratory supervision per semester, plus normal preparation time.

Nominations should be submitted at least 30 days before the semester of employment in order to assure adequate time for processing. A graduate assistant funded through a grant or contract may be appointed for shorter periods if required by the conditions of the grant or contract.

An assistantship workload (up to 20 hours per week) may be divided between teaching and research duties with the approval of the dean of the appropriate academic college. A graduate assistant appointment may be renewed upon nomination, review of qualifications, and satisfactory previous performance.

I. Additional Employment

Full-time (20 hours per week) graduate assistants are not permitted to accept additional on-campus employment during the period of their assistantship. In particular, graduate assistants (graduate teaching assistants, graduate research assistants, and graduate administrative assistants) may not be paid for part-time teaching or other campus employment for the University in addition to their normal responsibilities. Exceptions to this policy may only be made under unusual circumstances and only with the approval of the dean of the appropriate college or equivalent administrator upon the written recommendation of the graduate program director and the department/school chair. Any outside employment (i.e., off-campus) should be undertaken with caution and in consultation with the GPD. It should in no way adversely affect academic performance or assistantship duties and responsibilities. Information on employment guidelines that are specific to international students may be obtained from the Office of Visa and Immigration Service Advising (VISA).

J. Evaluation and Monitoring

All graduate assistants shall be provided with a written job description of their responsibilities, and be evaluated at least once by their supervisor(s) during the period of the award, preferably before the end of the first semester of service is completed. The evaluation shall be discussed with the assistant and a copy forwarded to the appropriate graduate program director or chair.

K. Termination

A graduate assistantship normally ends when the period of appointment is concluded and the terms of the assistantship agreement are fulfilled. Otherwise, a graduate assistant may be terminated for the following reasons:

1. Resignation by the student. Resignation shall be in writing to the supervisor with a copy to the appropriate department chair, program director, and academic dean or equivalent administrator.
2. Failure of the student to perform his or her assigned duties adequately. Termination must be recommended by the student's supervisor and approved by the department chair, graduate program director, and the appropriate academic dean or equivalent administrator.
3. Failure of the student to remain in good academic standing in accordance with the graduate continuance regulations.
4. Failure of the student to maintain enrollment in the requisite number of graduate credits.
5. Expiration of a grant or contract that funds the student's stipend.
 - a. Any overpayment must be reimbursed to the University by the student as soon as possible after termination. Failure to repay the amount owed may result in legal action against the student for recovery.
 - b. If a student resigns from an assistantship or is terminated for reasons other than the completion of the appointment or expiration of the funding contract, the department chair or graduate program director should notify the appropriate academic dean or

administrator as soon as possible and nominate a replacement if necessary.

- c. A student who believes that he or she may have been unjustly terminated may appeal the decision. First, the student should meet with the supervisor, graduate program director, and department chair in an effort to resolve the situation. If this effort fails, the student may make an appeal in writing to the dean or administrator of the appropriate academic college. If the matter is not resolved, it will be referred to The Graduate School and then be automatically refer the matter to the Graduate Appeals Committee for review. The decision of the Appeals Committee is final.

L. Grievance Procedure

Should a graduate assistant believe that his/her assigned duties and/or the workload required to fulfill these duties do not conform to University Graduate Catalog policies, he/she should first attempt to reconcile the grievance with his/her academic/nonacademic immediate supervisor. If the grievance is not resolved, the graduate assistant will ask his/her graduate program director (GPD) to mediate the grievance between him/her and the immediate supervisor. If the GPD is the student's immediate supervisor, the GPD chair/dean's designee will attempt to mediate. If the chair is the student's supervisor, the GPD shall refer the case directly to the dean or the dean's designee. If this course of action does not resolve the grievance, the GPD/chair/dean's designee will seek mediation with the supervisor of the student's immediate supervisor. If a resolution cannot be achieved, the chair/dean's designee will appoint an ad hoc committee comprised of two senior faculty members from the student's department and one senior faculty member from another department. If the student's assistantship is a non-academic unit, the third member will be a senior level administrator from the nonacademic unit. Should the committee not resolve the grievance, it will be referred to the dean of the student's college for a final decision. For matters involving sexual harassment and/or discrimination, please see the "Student Complaint Procedure" or the "Discrimination Policy" in this catalog.

M. Recognition of Outstanding Performance

Each academic year, two graduate teaching assistants will be recognized for their outstanding performance as a classroom or laboratory instructor. Recipients of the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Awards will receive a \$1,000 financial award to be used to support their educational expenses. A request for nominations and criteria is distributed by the Graduate School.

Graduate Fellowships

Fellowships are awards granted for scholastic achievement and promise. Their objective is to enable full-time students to pursue graduate studies and research leading to advanced degrees without requiring them to render any service. Part-time and/or nondegree students are not eligible. Fellows are responsible for payment of their tuition, in- or out-of-state, as applicable.

University fellows are chosen by their graduate programs and are supervised by their colleges. Applicants should indicate their intent to apply for a fellowship when applying for admission. Letters of recommendation, current transcripts, and any additional evidence of scholastic achievement that would assist in an evaluation of the student should be on file in the Admissions Office.

Tuition Grants

Tuition grants are scholarships disbursed through the Office of Financial Aid and/or the Old Dominion University Research Foundation that are earmarked specifically for payment of tuition. They may be offered to regular or provisional degree-seeking graduate students who are enrolled full- or part-time. Tuition grants may be combined with other forms of scholarship or fellowship support. The decision to award a grant, including the amount, is made by the graduate program director in consultation with the chair and the dean or designee of the college. Students holding tuition grants who withdraw from courses may be held personally liable for repayment of funds utilized.

Tuition Waivers

Tuition waivers are partial-to-full remittances issued by the Office of Finance and/or the Old Dominion University Research Foundation specifically to accompany graduate assistantships. They may be offered to regular or provisional degree-seeking graduate students who are enrolled at least three-quarter time in fall and spring and at least half time in summer with some notable exceptions (see the section on “Enrollment Requirements” under the policy on Graduate Assistantships;” see also the related Catalog policy on “Enrollment Status”). The decision to award a waiver, including the percentage, is made by the graduate program director in consultation with the chair and dean or designee of the college. Students holding tuition waivers who withdraw from courses may be held personally responsible for repayment of funds utilized. Domestic graduate students who receive tuition waivers and who reside out-of-state are urged to declare Virginia residency as soon as possible.

Minimum Stipend Levels

In compliance with federal guidelines a graduate student must receive a minimum of \$3,200 in assistantship or fellowship support for the fall and spring semesters and a minimum of \$2,500 during the summer.

Supplements to the minimum stipend amount can be made based upon the availability of funds and upon approval of the appropriate dean and the funding agency. The stipend is considered to be taxable income since it is payment for services.

Return of Tuition Assistance

A student who completes less than half of the assistantship or fellowship appointment will be required to return his/her full tuition assistance award to the university.