

Graduate Associate Appointment Policies and Procedures

Graduate associate appointment policies and procedures are formulated by the Graduate School through the Graduate Council, the Office of Human Resources, the appointing unit, and the graduate studies committee of the student's academic unit. Graduate associates are expected to be familiar with all relevant policies, including those in the Graduate School Handbook, particularly Section 9. The Graduate School policies and rules consulted the most are summarized below.

1. **Percent time and load.** The majority of GAs are appointed at 50 percent time (an average load of 20 hours per week over the duration of the appointment period). The Average hours per week for appointments at other percentages are prorated according to this equation.
2. **Duration of Appointment.** A GA appointment may be terminated prior to the end of the appointment period for the reasons listed in Section 9 of the Graduate School Handbook. Early termination of the appointment requires the written approval of the Graduate School. International students on appointment who graduate, should be terminated the day after commencement.
3. **Duties.** The specific duties of GA positions are determined by appointing units.

Note for GRA appointments: Graduate Research Associate (GRA) appointments fall into two broad categories:

- a. GRAs on 50 percent appointments should spend approximately 20 hours per week on their appointment duties when they are supporting faculty research that is not directly related to their dissertations or theses.
 - b. For many GRAs, their appointment duties overlap with research for their own dissertations or master's theses. In these cases, it is difficult to separate the number of hours devoted specifically to the associateship. It is the responsibility of the faculty member to clarify expectations, including policies related to publication and intellectual ownership.
4. **Stipend.** The university establishes minimum stipends for GAs. Within the university's stipend policies, appointing units determine stipend levels, guided by such factors as levels of responsibility, years of experience, degree progress, previous GA performance, and stipend levels at peer institutions.
 5. **Verification of Eligibility for Employment.** The university is required by federal law to verify the citizenship and work authorization of all new appointees, and GA appointments are contingent on such verification. GA appointments may be contingent upon the completion of a criminal background check, at the discretion of the appointing unit.
 6. **Paperless Pay and Other Payroll Matters.** The Ohio State University uses a paperless system for all paychecks and pay stub information. All faculty, staff and student employees can receive their pay stub information online. To access paystubs, use the Employee Self Service View Paystub option.
 7. **Fee authorization.** Every GA appointment of at least 50 percent FTE receives a full tuition and fee authorization covering all instructional and general fees, including nonresident fees, and the technology (learning) fee. This also applies to GAs having multiple appointments that cumulatively equal or exceed 50 percent. One-half of instructional and general fees, including nonresident fees, are covered for 25 percent GA appointments.
 8. **Benefits.** Additional information is available in the Graduate Associate booklet, available from the Office of Human Resources.
 9. **Withdrawal/disenrollment/resignation.** A GA who is considering withdrawal should discuss the timing of the withdrawal and possible forfeiture fees with his/her advisor, supervisor, and/or graduate studies program coordinator. Other possible consequences should be discussed with the relevant office. Effects on health insurance coverage and subsidy, for instance, should be determined with the Student Health Insurance Office, the appointing unit's fiscal/human resources officer, and others as appropriate. Visa implications for international students should be reviewed with the Office of International Education.

If a graduate associate chooses to leave (withdraw from) the university or is suspended or dismissed, the GA will be billed for the value of the tuition and fees billed for that semester, session, or term in question based on the university's tuition and fee refund schedule (follow the "important dates" link at Office of the University Registrar).

If, for example, an unfunded student withdraws from the university during the second week of the semester, that student would be eligible for a 75 percent refund of tuition and fees paid. Since GAs on appointment do not pay their own tuition and fees, a GA on an appointment in a similar situation would be responsible for the 25 percent of the tuition and fees forfeited by the GA sponsor because of the withdrawal. If, however, a GA resigns their appointment prior to the completion of the appointment period, but remains enrolled, they will be billed for the full amount of the fees.

International GAs who complete their degree requirements and graduate are required to be terminated the day following commencement.

- 10. Health insurance.** Columbus campus-based, degree-seeking graduate students who are enrolled at least half-time are required to carry health insurance as a condition of enrollment. All students, including regional campus students, are automatically enrolled in the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) upon registration, unless the student submits a waiver by the required deadline. GAs may elect to enroll in Prime Care Advantage instead of SHIP. Enrollment must be completed no later than 31 days after the beginning of the GA's appointment in the first semester of the qualifying appointment each year and must remain in effect for the remainder of the academic year. A GA must also complete the Prime Care Advantage enrollment form and waive the SHIP coverage by the applicable deadline in order to enroll in Prime Care Advantage. Additional information is available in the Graduate Associates booklet, and on the Office of Human Resources website under Benefits.

Note for international students: International students are required to enroll in the SHIP unless covered under a government sponsor, select international organization, or are a covered dependent of a U.S.-based employee. Additional information is posted at Student Health Insurance.

- 11. Health insurance subsidy.** The university pays 85 percent toward the GA's health insurance coverage and 85 percent toward dependent coverage if the GA, and, if applicable, the GA's dependent(s), enrolls in the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP). The subsidy amount will also be applied toward Prime Care Advantage premiums if the GA (and the GA's dependents, if applicable) decides to enroll in Prime Care Advantage instead of SHIP. This subsidy applies to GAs who have an appointment of at least 50 percent (or multiple appointments that cumulatively equal or exceed 50 percent) and are paid through the Ohio State payroll system. See Section 9.5 of the Graduate School Handbook and the Graduate Associates booklet.
- 12. Retirement.** All GAs are eligible to participate in the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS). GTAs who have established membership with the State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio (STRS), based on other Ohio teaching service, may elect either to continue contributions to that system or to request STRS membership exemption. GAs are automatically enrolled into the retirement system and exemptions from either system must be made within 31 days of the first day of the appointment. Additional information about eligibility, exemptions, and contributions is available in Section 9.5 of the Graduate School Handbook. All GAs are also eligible to contribute to voluntary 403(b) or 457 retirement accounts, which allow additional retirement dollars to be contributed on a pretax basis.
- 13. Additional fees.** The Office of Human Resources has implemented a Payroll Deduction Plan for graduate students supported as graduate associates, graduate fellows, and graduate trainees who are paid through the university payroll system.

This plan allows these graduate students to pay "Other Student Fees" via a monthly payroll deduction. GAs appointed at a 25 percent appointment (or greater) will participate in the monthly payroll deduction.
- 14. Other charges.** Each GA is responsible for other miscellaneous fees, such as athletic ticket fees and any penalties or late fees that he or she incurs.
- 15. Parking permits.** GAs may purchase "C" (student) or "B" (staff) parking permits for central or west campus. GAs are responsible for fees associated with the level of pass purchased as well as any other charges related to parking.

16. **Summer fee authorization.** Students who have held 50 percent or greater GA appointments for both autumn and spring semesters are entitled to a full fee authorization during the immediately following summer term without being on appointment. A graduate student who elects not to enroll during the immediately following summer term may not defer the use of the summer fee authorization.

Graduate students who have been appointed under the Fellow/Trainee title during any point of the year are not eligible to for the summer fee authorization benefit.

Note for 25 percent GA appointments: Students who have held between a 25 percent and 49 percent GA appointment for consecutive autumn and spring semesters have one-half of their fees authorized during the immediately following summer term without being on appointment, as detailed in Section 9 of the Graduate School Handbook. GAs who have multiple appointments that cumulatively equal or exceed 50 percent for consecutive autumn and spring semesters are entitled to a full fee authorization during the immediately following summer term without being on appointment, as detailed in the section above. A graduate student who elects not to enroll during the immediately following summer term may not defer the use of the summer fee authorization.

17. **Time off.** Rules regarding time off during semester breaks or other times are determined by the appointing unit. When university offices must maintain services on university holidays and GAs are scheduled to work, they must be given the equivalent time off on another day.
18. **Short-term absences and leaves of absence.** GAs may request time off to manage personal and/or family illness, bereavement, childbirth, and adoption. See Section 9 of the Graduate School Handbook.
19. **Military leave.** Information is available in Section 9.5 of the Graduate School Handbook.
20. **Academic Requirements.** A pre-candidacy student must be enrolled for a minimum of 8 credits each semester (4 for summer term) in order to hold a graduate associate appointment. A post-candidacy student must be enrolled for 3 credits each semester, including summer term, in order to hold a graduate associate appointment. A GA must also maintain reasonable progress toward their degree and maintain good academic standing with the Graduate School and his/her academic program each semester or session or term.
- Note for GA appointments below 50 percent: A student on a GA appointment below 50 percent must enroll for a minimum of 4 credit hours each semester (2 credit hours in summer term), make reasonable progress toward their degree, and maintain good academic standing with the Graduate School and his/her academic program each semester or session or term. GAs who have multiple appointments that cumulatively equal or exceed 50 percent have greater registration requirements, as described above.
21. **Additional GA appointments or employment.** A GA may not hold an appointment of more than 75 percent FTE, whether as a single appointment or combination of appointments. GAs must consult with their graduate advisors and/or supervisors before engaging in employment outside the university to ensure that these additional commitments would not interfere with their academic progress or GA responsibilities. International students are not permitted to hold an appointment for more than 50 percent FTE.
22. **Fellowships held concurrently with GA appointments:** A GA who wishes to accept a concurrent fellowship appointment may do so by petitioning the GA's graduate studies committee and obtain written approval of the Graduate School, provided the GA appointment does not exceed 25 percent and all other conditions for holding GA and fellowship appointments are met.
23. **Supervisor.** A GA should be informed in writing about the name(s) of the person(s) who will oversee GA responsibilities.
24. **Training.** Most training requirements are established by units appointing graduate associates. The university requires that all Graduate Teaching Associates receive a baseline of preparation and ongoing support for their teaching. GTAs must be notified by their appointing units when they are required to attend training provided through the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching, the appointing unit, or another office. Specific requirements apply to international students appointed as Graduate Teaching Associates.

25. **Graduate student codes of conduct and research ethics.** Graduate students are expected to learn, respect, and abide by the professional codes of ethics and responsibilities of the university and those commonly accepted in the student's field of study or area of research. These codes include but are not limited to the Graduate Student Code of Research and Scholarly Conduct and the university's Code of Student Conduct.
26. **Intellectual property and other research policies.** GAs should be familiar with Ohio State's policies on intellectual property, including copyrights and, when applicable, patents. GAs should work with their supervisors from the beginning of their appointments to clarify the relationship of their work to intellectual property and other research policy issues. Research policies are governed by the Office of Research.
27. **Performance expectations.** Units that appoint GAs are expected to provide information in writing about GA duties and responsibilities. GA-appointing units are also expected to inform GAs in writing about the criteria and procedures for evaluating and reporting GA performance, including information about the Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI) form and other student evaluations. GAs who are not meeting the specified responsibilities should be notified in writing and provided a plan as to how they can meet the expectations.
28. **Renewal of appointment.** Appointment renewals are contingent on many factors, including the availability of funds and need for services as well as the student's prior satisfactory performance as a GA, satisfactory progress toward degree completion, and good standing in the Graduate School. Renewal is not guaranteed.
29. **Nondiscrimination.** The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a diverse community to reflect human diversity and to improve opportunities for all. The university is committed to equal opportunity, **affirmative action**, and eliminating **discrimination**. This commitment is both a moral imperative consistent with an intellectual community that celebrates individual differences and diversity, as well as a matter of law.
- Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, programs, admission, and employment.
30. **Problem-solving.** Regular, clear communication between GAs and their advisors and supervisors is essential to establishing and maintaining an effective work environment. Should problems related to a GA appointment arise, it is generally preferable to settle them at the local level. If, however, talking with an advisor or immediate supervisor does not resolve a problem or potential grievance, a GA should consult program handbooks and other materials provided by the appointing unit to learn about problem-solving approaches and grievance guidelines that may be in place. GAs may also seek assistance from graduate program chairs, heads of appointing units, or Graduate School staff. GAs can seek additional guidance from the Graduate Advising Best Practices section of the Graduate School Handbook.
- Still, there may be instances in which recourse to these individuals does not lead to resolution. The Graduate Council has established grievance procedures, which are available in Appendix D of the Graduate School Handbook.
31. **Workers' compensation.** GAs are protected by the provisions of the Ohio Workers' Compensation Law.
32. **Unemployment compensation.** Because a graduate associateship is a student position, GAs are not eligible for unemployment benefits when their appointments end.