

Graduate Assistantship and Fellowship Policies

A graduate assistantship provides financial support for pursuing graduate studies in the form of employment. In return for contribution to the academic mission of North Dakota State University through teaching, research, or administrative service, students receive a stipend, and if requirements are met, a waiver of graduate base tuition may be granted at the discretion of the graduate program's academic college. A graduate assistantship may involve research or teaching experiences conducted off-campus. In these instances, the experience should be clearly linked to the student's Plan of Study and involve a collaborative relationship between NDSU and the outside entity.

Students with Graduate Fellowships who are contracted to work in NDSU laboratories and/or classrooms must adhere to Graduate Assistant Policies.

To be eligible for an assistantship students must

- Be a degree seeking students
- Be in good academic standing
- Be enrolled in a minimum of 6 graduate credits during the fall and spring semester
 - This policy does not apply if the student is enrolled in their final graduating semester and needs fewer than 6 credits to complete their plan of study or program curriculum. (updated 11/2024)
 - Departments may require students to register for more than 6 credits to hold an assistantship
 - Students seeking a summer assistantship must be enrolled for a minimum of 6 credits either during the spring prior or fall term immediately after the summer fellowship; summer enrollment is not required for a summer term assistantship.

Assistantship appointments may vary in length and are contingent upon the availability of funding, which is determined by individual graduate programs. Graduate assistants must be paid at least minimum wage and wage is determined by individual graduate programs. For information, refer to the graduate student handbook or website of the program/department.

A full-time assistantship consists of 320 hours per term (i.e. 20 hours/week). Exceptions may include:

- Allowing up to 40 hours of work weekly during spring break, winter break, and summer semester.
- Allowing up to 26 total hours/week.
 - To make this request, a Special Request form must be filed each spring and fall semester to add additional hours to a full-time domestic or permanent resident student's assistantship.
 - If approved by the Graduate College, a copy of the request must be attached to the payroll form.

In some instances, degree seeking students in good academic standing and meeting the enrollment requirement of six credits during the fall or spring semester may be eligible for a half- or part-time graduate assistantship. A minimum of 160 hours per semester (i.e. 10 hours/week) are required to qualify for a half- or part-time assistantship.

Assistantship Categories

Graduate Research Assistants (GRA) conduct research with faculty members that contributes directly to their graduate education and may lead to a dissertation or thesis topic. GRAs responsible for, or with access to, controlled substances and other drugs, explosives, or potentially dangerous chemicals must submit to a criminal background check. Students on research assistantships may also do related research for course credit. The number of hours of work per credit may vary depending on the discipline/department.

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) share faculty responsibilities for undergraduate teaching but cannot teach graduate level courses. Responsibilities may include instruction, grading, course development, and proctoring exams. GTAs must demonstrate English proficiency (refer to catalog section titled "English Language Proficiency Procedures for Graduate Teaching Assistants"). A criminal background check is required.

Graduate Service Assistants (GSA) provide non-academic support for departments and campus services. Duties may vary between departments and positions. A criminal background check is required.

Additional Employment

Students with a full-time assistantship are discouraged from having additional off-campus employment.

Further, students with a full-time assistantship are restricted from working in any other capacity for NDSU, any other North Dakota University System (NDUS) campus, or any State of North Dakota agency or office.

Expectations of Graduate Assistant/Fellow

Students receiving a graduate assistantship are expected to fulfill their responsibilities adhering to the professional and academic expectations of their discipline and in compliance with NDUS and NDSU policies. Violations of these policies and expectations may result in sanctions, including loss

of assistantship and/or termination from the Graduate College. Adjudication of these violations will occur using NDSU Policy 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct

Graduate assistants must

- be registered for a minimum of six graduate credits each semester (fall and spring) they receive an assistantship; credit requirements may vary by program
- remain in good academic standing
 - Students placed on Academic Warning may retain their assistantship
 - Students placed on Academic Probation may no longer receive an assistantship
- maintain the appropriate residency status
- abide by the appointment conditions outlined in the assistantship contract
- perform tasks as assigned
- make satisfactory degree progress
- make satisfactory research progress
- complete required trainings within 30 days of their first day of work and as required thereafter

Expectations of Assistantship Supervisor

Assistantship and Fellowship contracts

The Graduate Contract specifies expectations and responsibilities of the graduate assistant or fellow.

The hour commitment defined by an assistantship may be averaged across a given time period. For example, a teaching assistantship of 20 hours/week should total to 320 hours across the 16 weeks of the academic term. In these cases, students should be given adequate advance notice of these variable expectations so that they can adjust their schedules to meet the requirements of the assistantship. Supervisors must also remain sensitive to the academic demands faced by graduate students.

Assessment

Assistantship supervisors must provide oral and written assessment of graduate student employees. As outlined in the contract, GSA and GRA performance must be evaluated at least annually. GTA review with respect to overall communication proficiency must be completed by the third week of the semester.