

Graduate Assistant Policy Handbook

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I. FORWARD

Purpose

Graduate Assistants (GAs) are, first and foremost, graduate students pursuing an education. The opportunity to work closely with faculty and undergraduate students in teaching, research, or administrative environments is an integral part of that education. The University is committed to ensuring that graduate assistant assignments are productive, enhance student qualifications, meet funding support and workload goals, and are consistent with the educational objectives of the student and his or her program.

Salisbury University supports graduate students by:

Advancing the student's graduate education through practicum-based experiences, including the development and application of teaching, research and other skills, while also advancing the mission of the institution.

Providing financial support, including stipends and tuition assistance, to aid degree-seeking students enrolled in SU masters programs and appointed as graduate assistants in the pursuit of their graduate degrees.

This handbook is intended to provide information regarding graduate assistantships at Salisbury University and follows guidelines and procedures set forth by the [University System of Maryland Policy on Graduate Assistantships](#).

Equal Opportunity Statement

Salisbury University (SU) has a strong institutional commitment to diversity and equal employment and educational opportunities for its faculty, staff and students. To that end, the University prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, marital status, pregnancy, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, veteran status, or other legally protected characteristics. The University adheres to the EEO/AA policies set forth by federal and Maryland laws.

SU values diversity among our students, faculty and staff and believes that interactions with those holding various perspectives, backgrounds and beliefs contribute to a well-rounded educational experience and promotes personal and professional development. Therefore, the University is committed to providing qualified individuals access to all academic and employment programs, benefits and activities on the basis of demonstrated ability, performance and merit without regard to personal factors that are irrelevant to the program involved.

selection for training. Consistent with its obligations under the law, it also extends to the maintenance of affirmative action programs for minorities, women, persons with disabilities and veterans.

SU assigns a high priority to the implementation of its equal opportunity policy, and the University is committed to assuring compliance with all laws prohibiting discrimination in employment and educational programs. The Office of Institutional Equity is responsible for the campus-wide administration and implementation of equal opportunity policies and affirmative action programs. Members of the University community are encouraged to contact the Associate Vice President of Institutional Equity for questions, complaints or concerns about these matters:

Office of Institutional Equity
equity@salisbury.edu
www.salisbury.edu/equity

Non Discrimination

Salisbury University's policies, programs, and activities comply with federal and state laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and veteran status. If you wish to request ADA accommodation, please telephone 410-543-6087 or send an email to disabilitysupport@salisbury.edu.

Sexual Harassment

Salisbury University is committed to creating a safe and welcoming campus environment. The University established this [sexual harassment policy](#) to prohibit sexual harassment, to establish a complaint procedure to investigate allegations of sexual harassment, and to provide for appropriate discipline for persons who violate this policy.

Information

Available GA positions will be posted on the Graduate School website as they become available. Student should apply directly to the hiring supervisor as listed in the job posting.

Every effort has been made to make this a comprehensive reference for Graduate Assistants. Any questions or requests for clarification should be forwarded to the Graduate School.

The Graduate School
Holloway Hall 267
410-548-5395
jlscott@salisbury.edu

II. TYPES OF ASSISTANTSHIPS

Graduate Assistant or “GA” is the common title used at the university level. Within that classification, Salisbury University has three types of assistantships available. Each graduate assistant should be placed into one of these categories. On occasion, graduate assistants may have appointments in more than one category.

Graduate Assistant Teaching (TA)

Teaching Assistants work closely within a department to assist in the delivery of academic information. Departments develop their own hiring criteria. It is expected that all TAs will meet Salisbury University’s English Language proficiency requirements. The specific duties vary across disciplines and departments but generally involve the following:

- a) Assuming teaching responsibility for a laboratory or discussion session of a course.
- b) Assisting a faculty member in the grading, advising, and preparation of materials for a course(s).
- c) Assisting in general departmental administrative duties, such as advising, help sessions, presentations, workshops, etc.
- d) Coaching in Athletics.

Graduate Assistant Research (RA)

Research Assistants may work in a large variety of settings with the common thread of collecting, analyzing or supporting research data. Data support can be for faculty or departments. The specific duties vary according to the nature of the research but generally involve the following:

- a) Assist with design of research components.
- b) Assist with research and data gathering.
- c) Assist with non-instructional laboratory activities
- d) Provide data input and reports.

Graduate Assistant Administrative (GA)

Perform administrative support functions in an office setting. There is a wide range of duties including the following examples:

- a) Assist with program development and assessment.
- b) Recruitment functions.
- c) Planning and participating in special events.
- d) Providing guidance to undergraduate organizations.
- e) Assist with public relations.
- f) General administrative support functions.

III. ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for an assistantship, students:

1. Must be matriculated into a degree-seeking graduate program.
2. Must maintain minimum credit requirements (see Appointments).
3. Maintain good standing (3.0 cumulative GPA) in a graduate degree program at Salisbury University. A graduate assistant with a GPA lower than 3.0 will be notified by the Graduate School that they are on administrative probation and must meet the same requirements for academic probation to retain their assistantship.
4. International students must possess necessary visa and other documents required for U.S. employment.
5. Students who have met all requirements for graduation and/or who graduate are no longer eligible. Students who graduate in either the December or May Commencement may continue to work until the end of their contract date, at the request of their supervisor and based on need.
6. Graduate students who are full-time employees of Salisbury University or another University

Time Restraints

Fall and Spring Semesters

- a) Students may not exceed 25 hours per week in totality for all campus jobs.
- b) Domestic students who wish to hold a position on campus beyond their graduate assistantship (20 hours for full-time, 10 hours for part-time), may work additional hours equaling 25 hours per week (5 hours for full-time, 15 hours for part-time). These additional hours will be covered by an hourly contract and students will be required to record those hours on a timesheet.
- c) International students may not exceed 20 hours per week in totality for all campus jobs.

Winter Semester

- a) Employment during the winter semester will be paid on an hourly student contract and must follow the rules and policies outlined for student employment by the Office of Human Resources.
- b) Students should not exceed 40 hours per week in totality for all campus jobs.
- c) The 40-hour period for winter will generally begin after the university reopens (around January 2) and will end 3 weeks later.
- d) If students do work over 40 hours in a pay week (Thu-Wed), the student must be paid overtime. Supervisors are not permitted to move time worked in a paid status or adjust time worked in a paid status to another payroll period to avoid overtime payments.

Summer Semester

- a) Employment during the summer semester will be paid on an hourly student contract and must follow the rules and policies outlined for student employment by the Office of Human Resources.
- b) Students should not exceed 40 hours per week in totality for all campus jobs.
- c) The 40-hour period for summer will generally begin on the first day of the pay period immediately following Memorial Day and will end 12 weeks later.
- d) If students do work over 40 hours in a pay week (Thu-Wed), the student must be paid overtime. Supervisors are not permitted to move time worked in a paid status or adjust time worked in a paid status to another payroll period to avoid overtime payments.

Although the university requires GAs to meet all employment and academic requirements, students are not prohibited from seeking additional employment at a place of employment not affiliation with SU or another State or USM institution.

Appointment Letters/Contracts

Departments may issue correspondence and offers to candidates which outline appointment information. This document does not replace the official contract. Work schedules are determined by the department need and job duties (i.e. scheduled class/lab times) and should be discussed during hiring process.

Students should be provided the following information:

- a) Length of appointment
- b) Starting and ending dates of the appointment
- c) Weekly Time Commitment
- d) Job Duties and Basic Responsibilities

Termination of Appointment

A student may terminate their assistantship at any time by providing 30 days written notice to the Department Chair, Graduate Program Director and the Graduate School. Students who terminate their assistantship prior to their start date should alert their Supervisor and the Graduate School immediately.

The reporting supervisor may also terminate an appointment for various reasons including:

- a) Absenteeism
- b) Inferior work performance
- c) Poor academic performance
- d) Conduct code violation
- e) Revocation of visa status for international students

In cases of unsatisfactory work performance, all instances should be documented by supervisor.

Supervisor must provide written notice of termination to the student. A [Notice of Separation](#) should be completed and submitted to the Graduate School.

In all cases where an appointment is terminated prior to the end of a term in which the student is registered, whether termination is by the student or the supervisor, the waiver of tuition for that term may be cancelled or pro-rated.

Students who plan to leave Salisbury University will be asked to return all materials and property prior to leaving campus. Items to include, but not limited to:

Parking Permit

GullCard

Property Keys

Laptop

Other items determined by supervisor and/or the Graduate School.

V. BENEFITS

Stipend

Full-time GAs - The current minimum stipend is \$4,635 per fall and spring semesters.

Part-time GAs - The current minimum stipend is \$2,317.50 per fall and spring semesters.

Departments may opt to pay more based on job duties and departmental budget allowance.

Tuition Waivers

Full-time GAs - Earn a guaranteed tuition waiver of nine (9) credit hours (paid at standard, in-state rate) per fall and spring semesters.

Part-time GAs - Earn a guaranteed tuition waiver of 4.5 credit hours (paid at standard, in-state rate) per fall and spring semesters.

Students are eligible for a tuition waiver (paid at the standard in-state rate) in the semester in which employment begins. To receive a waiver during winter or summer sessions, student must have been employed in the preceding semester and not have exceeded their 18 guaranteed credits.

Tuition benefits are budgeted at the standard in-state rate. For those students admitted to programs with a differential or flat rate, you may be responsible for paying the difference in-state rate. Please discuss this with your supervisor prior to accepting position.

Tuition is waived only for graduate courses applicable toward degree requirements. No waiver may be used for undergraduate credits **unless** they are required for a degree program. To use a waiver for an undergraduate course, a student must submit a letter from their Graduate Program Director which confirms the necessity of the undergraduate course for graduate degree completion.

Waivers cannot be applied to courses taken for audit.

Any unused portion of the waiver expires at the end of the academic year and may not be carried over to the next year. GAs will not be compensated for unused credit hours.

Waivers paid out of state funds do **NOT** cover university fees. **Graduate Assistants are responsible for all academic fees and tuition beyond the waiver allotment.** These must be paid by the due date or a late fee will be assessed.

IF a tuition waiver is being paid by a grant or sponsored program, the budget supervisor may opt to also pay their GAs mandatory fees. This should be discussed between the student and supervisor during the hiring process.

If a GA is entering their final semester and needs to enroll in less than six credits, they must complete a waiver for a [Change of Enrollment Status](#).

Tuition Rates

Graduate Assistants receive tuition at the in-state rate. This, combined with applicable tuition waivers, may affect existing financial aid packages. If an assistantship is terminated or not renewed, aid packages will need to be reevaluated. Graduate Assistants are responsible for reporting this information to the [Financial Aid Office](#) in a timely manner.

Graduate Assistants are billed at the standard, in-state tuition rate during their appointment, including any credits taken over and above the guaranteed 18 waived credits. This does not affect official residency status which was decided upon admission. Therefore, if an appointment is terminated or not renewed, the student will be charged in accordance to their residency status for all future credits. For questions relative to Residency, please contact the [Residency Office](#).

vary, according to the coverage they provide, price, deductibles and other variables pertinent to selecting an adequate plan, so be sure to check with your insurance company and home state to become familiar with laws regulating coverage.

There are also resources on line. Parents and students are encouraged to research companies they are familiar with. Many have student plans or extensions of coverage if the student was previously insured under a family plan. If you have

Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisor are responsible for providing a work schedule and list of job duties prior to the contract start date. Discussions regarding duties, work schedule and possible holidays should occur during the hiring process.

Supervisors are responsible for providing training and reviewing performance through
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environment. GAs who believe their work experience is not in conformity with the *Graduate Assistant Policy* may seek a review in accordance with this Section.

In all instances, the GA should attempt to resolve these matters locally, collegially, and informally. ~

- c) The Grievance Procedure is not a trial. Formal rules of evidence commonly associated with criminal and civil trials may be counterproductive in an academic investigatory process and shall not be applied. The unit head, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, and Graduate Appeals Panel shall give effect to the rules of confidentiality and privilege, but shall otherwise accept for consideration all matters which reasonable persons would accept. Unduly repetitive, irrelevant, or personally abusive material, however, should be excluded. They may also consider matters within the common knowledge and experience of University faculty, including published policies of the University System of Maryland and Salisbury University.
- d) The GA may be assisted at any meeting by another person. Although the GA is expected to take an active role in all meetings, the other person may help with organization of arguments and evidence, but they may not speak directly to the panel.
- e) The University has in place other grievance procedures and administrative processes designed to address specific types of claims. These are meant to be the exclusive avenue for review and redress. Grievances that by their subject matter may be considered under other established institutional procedures must be brought under those procedures and may not be considered under these procedures. Matters pertaining to the general level of wages, wage patterns, fringe benefits, or to other broad areas of financial management and staffing are not grievable. These procedures also may not be used to challenge faculty judgment about a GA's academic performance (including, for example, test scores, grades, waivers, dissertation defenses and other indicia of mastery of subject matter and taught skills).
- f) The filing of a grievance does not relieve the GA of the obligation to perform all duties as assigned unless and otherwise decided. Financial awards (e.g., "back pay", "damages", "compensation", and "raises") may not be awarded. The acceptance of a proposed remedy by the GA shall terminate the grievance process. The matter may not then be further considered or additional remedies sought under the campus procedures.
- g) A decision may not be made at any step that conflicts with or modifies a policy, regulation, or grant of authority approved by the Board of Regents, the Chancellor, the President, the Provost, or the Faculty Senate or with any applicable Federal or State of Maryland law.
- h) Only currently enrolled Salisbury University graduate students may initiate a formal grievance. The grievance must pertain to the GA's personal services, not those of another GA. Group, although similar grievances may be consolidated and processed together as a single issue. As a general matter, where a number of individual grievances have been reduced into a single grievance, not more than three GAs selected by the group may be excused from their duties to attend. But they may attend (no matter how many) if they do not need to be excused from their duties.
- i) Because it is critical to address potentially corrosive grievances sooner than later, and

initiating a formal grievance is necessary to the effective administration of the graduate program. Time requirements are measured from the first occurrence of an event; “continuing” wrongs are not recognized for the purpose of satisfying time requirements.

- j) Reprisals against graduate assistants for filing a grievance are prohibited.

IX. GRADUATE ASSISTANT SHARED GOVERNANCE

Salisbury University believes strongly in the shared governance model. The Graduate Student Council (GSC) was created with the goal of representing all graduate students equally. The GSC is a completely student run organization. The GSC advocates on behalf of graduate students, and addresses their concerns with University administration and shared governance groups, USM officials, the Board of Regents, and lawmakers.

Graduate Assistants may elect to engage a representative, which may be a labor organization, to assist them in “meet and confer” discussions with institution administrators. Further information can be found in [USM Policy III-7.11](#).

APPENDIX B

Policies

USM Policy on Graduate Assistantships