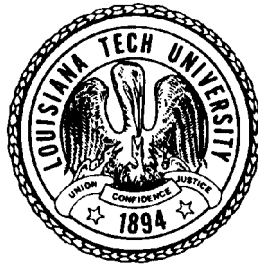


**UNIVERSITY POLICIES, PROCEDURES,
& GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE
ASSISTANTSHIPS**



Pending Approval from:

*Graduate Council
Council of Academic Deans
Dr. Reneau*

**LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY
Graduate School**

Revised Edition
Fall 2002

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INTRODUCTION

Graduate assistants and teaching assistants are vital components of the graduate programs at Louisiana Tech University. Their assistance is essential to the fulfillment of the role, scope, and mission of each of these programs. It is an honor to be selected as a graduate assistant. Students who serve in this capacity are recognized for academic achievement and professional promise. They serve in a supervised setting while also pursuing an advanced degree. Acceptance of an assistantship is a professional commitment for the time stipulated. Graduate assistants serve in variously assigned administrative, teaching, assisting, or clerical capacities. The criteria and policies for graduate and teaching assistants apply to departmental/unit, state-funded, and externally funded assistantships. Such appointments are not subject to retirement or social security withholdings, and appointees do not participate in University fringe benefit programs.

Administration

The Dean of the Graduate School administers the graduate programs of the University with senior administrative authority residing with the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Graduate instruction is supervised by the appropriate academic deans, directors of graduate studies, unit/department heads, and graduate faculty under policies set forth by the University's governing boards and the Graduate Council chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School. The President of the University is the final local authority in the operation of the graduate program.

The Graduate Council, chaired by the Dean of the Graduate School and composed of representatives from each College and the Student Government Association, recommends policy requirements and identifies issues that pertain to graduate programs, including graduate/teaching assistantships. The Graduate Council relies upon each College to establish specific policies within the framework established for the University. The policies established by each College must be in writing and recommended for approval by the Graduate Council. It is the responsibility of each College to implement, monitor, enforce, and file for review the guidelines set forth in this document.

Appointment and Reappointment Criteria

Graduate/teaching assistantships are normally budgeted to a College. The University also provides a number of University Assistantships. Applications for assistantships may be obtained from the Graduate School Office or the Graduate Director of each College. Completed application forms are to be filed with the academic or administrative unit/department in which the service is to be performed. A completed application and all necessary transcripts are required before a student can be considered for an assistantship. Certain units/departments may also require letters of recommendation. Students whose first language is not English and who are seeking graduate teaching assistantships must demonstrate English language proficiency (see page 6). Applications for assistantships beginning in the Fall Quarter should be received by the appropriate College no later than March 1st. Offers of assistantship should be extended no later than July 1st. Offers of assistantship for those students applying for admission to the Graduate School in quarters other than the Fall are subject to the same selection criteria and availability as those students applying for Fall selection.

Eligibility

Graduate/teaching assistantships are limited in number and are awarded on a competitive basis, subject to criteria such as grade point average, test scores, skills offered by the applicant, needs of the College or Unit/Department, and order in which the assistantship application was received. Each assistantship applicant may be asked to fill out a skills inventory form in order to determine what qualities the applicant has to offer.

To be eligible for an assistantship, a graduate student must

- meet Graduate School requirements,
- meet the requirements of the individual College, and
- be working toward an advanced degree.

Students admitted to the Graduate School in non-degree programs other than the Master's Plus 30 program will not be considered for a graduate/teaching assistantship. A graduate/teaching

assistant who becomes ineligible for continued enrollment in the Graduate School is ineligible to hold an assistantship.

Course Load

Graduate/teaching assistants are expected to earn not less than six hours of graduate credit during a quarter, including the summer quarter. Exceptions, for unusual circumstances, must be recommended, in writing, by the appropriate Director of Graduate Studies and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School or the Graduate Council.

Length

In most cases, appointments are made for an academic year, but occasionally, to meet special circumstances, an appointment is made for one or two quarters. Reappointment or continuation is contingent upon continued eligibility for graduate enrollment, satisfactory progress toward meeting degree requirements, and satisfactory performance of assigned duties as determined by the faculty mentor and the appropriate unit/department head.

Termination

A student is to be notified in writing if the assistantship is to be terminated. The notification should present an explanation for the termination. Students wishing to appeal an assistantship termination may follow the appeal procedure in this document (see page 9).

Stipend Amounts

Stipends for graduate/teaching assistants are established by the department or unit in which the assistantship is offered. Out-of-state tuition is waived for those students meeting the criteria for graduate/teaching assistantships. Out-of-state fee waivers must be posted prior to the 9th (ninth) class day of the quarter of the award of the assistantship to be effective in that quarter. Out-of-state waivers posted after that deadline will be applied in the subsequent quarter if the student is awarded a continuing assistantship. Out-of-state fee waivers are not retroactive or prorated.

Orientation

All new graduate/teaching assistants must attend an orientation session at the beginning of the Fall Quarter. The Director of Graduate Studies of each College will be responsible for ensuring that new assistants will attend this orientation session. The Director of Graduate Studies will ensure that each new assistant receives a copy of the “Graduate Assistant Guidelines,” and that each new teaching assistant receives a copy of applicable guidelines from the Louisiana Tech University *Faculty & Staff Handbook*. All applicable College policies, supervision, in-service training, and evaluation procedures will be explained, as well as any other expectations the individual College may have. A “question and answer” session may also be included.

ASSIGNMENTS AND DUTIES

The academic or administrative unit/department to which the graduate/teaching assistant is designated is responsible for determining and assigning appropriate duties, for providing in-service training, and for evaluating performance. Generally, there are two categories of assistantships:

1. non-teaching assistantships and
2. teaching assistantships.

Non-Teaching Assistantships

Non-teaching assistants are normally master’s degree candidates not assigned classroom teaching responsibilities.

Duties

Graduate assistants may be assigned to a unit/department or to a faculty member who will define the graduate assistant’s specific duties. These duties may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Assistance in administering and grading objective exams or the objective

questions included in exams.

- b. Preparation of demonstration materials, displays, or audio-visual materials.
- c. Maintenance of classrooms, laboratories, equipment, and storage areas in good order; reporting needed repairs and problems to their supervisor.
- d. Library research.
- e. Computer assistance such as data entry, spreadsheets, statistical packages, and word processors; and assistance in conducting literature searches.
- f. Office assistance such as typing, copying, and filing.

Each graduate assistant may be expected to keep a daily log of time worked and type of work undertaken during that time.

Expectations

The graduate assistant is an extension of the permanent teaching faculty and as such must meet certain expectations:

- a. Assuming duties assigned, and reporting to appropriate faculty and staff members promptly and regularly.
- b. Maintaining a professional attitude toward students, staff, and faculty.
- c. Maintaining a standard of personal appearance and personal hygiene which reflects a professional demeanor.
- d. Handling confidential information in a professional manner.
- e. Representing the College and University to others with whom the assistant has contact.

Teaching Assistantships

A graduate teaching assistant is defined as one who teaches a course and/or assigns the final grade for such a course.

Duties

A teaching assistant should not be assigned primary responsibility for a class until he/she has earned at least eighteen graduate semester hours in the field being taught and demonstrates satisfactory language proficiency. Teaching assistants are required to maintain office hours. Office hour requirements are determined by the unit/department in which the assistant is teaching. Both teaching and service assignments are made at the unit/departmental levels. Some variations in assignments and duties will occur.

English Language Proficiency

Students for whom English is a second language may be appointed to graduate teaching assistantships only after having demonstrated proficiency in English. Such graduate teaching assistants, in addition to having achieved the required minimum score of 550 on the TOEFL exam, must also achieve the following, in this order:

1. A score of 2.3 on the SPEAK testing instrument.
2. Satisfactory completion of a lecture/presentation given to a four-person committee.

The four-person committee is composed of the unit/department head, a senior faculty member from the unit/department in which the student is applying for a teaching assistantship, a faculty member from outside the unit/department, and an undergraduate student from a related discipline. The committee shall then render a decision. If a negative decision is rendered, the student will be required to seek additional language instruction to acquire the necessary language skills. The unit/department will maintain a record of the committee's recommendation.

Supervision

Normally, the academic unit/department head/coordinator by whom the assignment is made shall designate, subject to the approval of the Dean of the College, faculty members

holding full-time appointments to supervise and coordinate the work of the graduate teaching assistants.

In-Service Training

A graduate assistant shall meet with his or her supervising faculty a minimum of three times during each quarter. The first meeting shall be held before classes begin to discuss such topics as instructional strategies, testing and grading, student counseling, attendance regulations, academic misconduct and plagiarism, course content and syllabus, and discipline.

The second meeting is to be held approximately three weeks after the term has begun. Discussion at this meeting should focus on any problems that the graduate teaching assistant may have encountered. Although this meeting is primarily designed to provide possible solutions to these problems, other relevant matters may appropriately be considered.

The third meeting with the graduate teaching assistant will provide an opportunity to discuss the preparation and submission of final grades and other end-of-the-quarter activities. The mentor will help the graduate teaching assistant take a retrospective look at the quarter's work and make plans for improving the instruction and conduct of future classes.

Class Visitation

The mentor shall conduct a pre-announced visit of at least one entire class period to each teaching assistant's class. The mentor shall then hold a follow-up conference to discuss the teaching assistant's performance. This conference may be incorporated into the second meeting discussed above.

Evaluation Procedures

In addition to class visitations, evaluation of the graduate teaching assistant will follow the same procedures as the evaluation model for regular faculty. This activity includes self-evaluation, student evaluation, and administrative evaluation.

Appeal Procedure

Graduate assistants who have grievances involving their work requirements or performance will follow the procedures established in the *Faculty and Staff Handbook* and the *University Bulletin*.

Academic Regulations

It is the duty of each graduate teaching assistant to be familiar with the regulations in the *University Bulletin*, the *Faculty and Staff Handbook*, and other relevant materials concerning

- course requirements,
- class meetings,
- class attendance and records,
- absences and make-up work,
- grading policies,
- academic misconduct, and
- the student appeal procedure.

Discussion of each of these topics is listed below.

Course Requirements. Each graduate teaching assistant is expected to have clearly defined requirements for each course. These requirements should be detailed in writing, filed with the Unit/Department Head, and distributed to each student at the beginning of each quarter. The statement should cover such matters as attendance; the number and type of tests, projects, and reading; and other requirements as well as an explanation of the grading system to be used and the policy for making up work. The statement should agree with the course description given in the *University Bulletin*.

Class Meetings. Classes are to be met and dismissed on time. Food or drink is not allowed in auditoriums, classrooms, laboratories, and other instructional support areas. Any change in class time or location must be requested through the unit/department head, the

academic dean, and the Office of Institutional Research where the change will be recorded on the master room chart. In no instance should a graduate teaching assistant change the meeting place or time for a class without following this procedure. When the request is approved, a notice of the change should be posted by the Instructor on the door of the regular meeting place.

Class Attendance and Records. In accordance with the policy established by the Board of Trustees for State Colleges and Universities, each graduate teaching assistant shall keep a permanent attendance record for each class.

The names, attendance records, and grades of students shall be permanently recorded in the class record book in such a self-explanatory manner that a third person (perhaps an attorney or a judge) should be able to interpret the records and understand exactly how the final grade was determined. When class record books become filled, the books shall be kept in a locked filing cabinet either in the instructor's office, or in the unit/department head's office. At any time, the unit/department head must be able to obtain a class record from previous years.

Graduate teaching assistants separating from the University or not teaching during any quarter must leave record books with their unit/department heads.

Absences and Make-Up Work. To derive optimal educational benefits from their collegiate experiences, students must attend classes regularly and take examinations on scheduled dates. In the event that students must miss work (exams, reports, etc.) for valid and verifiable reasons, the students shall be given some fair and appropriate means and times for making up this work. All University excuses must be accepted; the policy for the acceptance of other excuses is left to the discretion of the instructor and shall be announced at the beginning of each quarter.

Students are responsible for all academic work missed during their absences, whatever the reasons. Students shall keep their instructors informed about anticipated absences,

especially when examinations are scheduled on these dates, and shall make prior arrangements with their instructors regarding assignments and examinations in conformity with the instructor's announced policies. In the event of emergency absences, students shall initiate such arrangements immediately.

Grading. Graduate teaching assistants must submit, in person, final grades to the Registrar's Office on the "University Report of Grade" form, which is distributed to units/departments prior to the announced deadline. The University's system of grading is traditional:

- A grade of A is given for the highest degree of excellence that is reasonable to expect of students of exceptional ability and application.
- A grade of B is superior.
- A grade of C is average.
- A grade of D is given for a quality of work that is considered the minimum for receiving credit for the course.
- A grade of S indicates satisfactory completion of the course. The S grade increases hours earned, but does not affect hours pursued or quality points.
- A grade of F is given for a failure, and the work must be repeated to receive credit.

Some other grades given by the University need more explanation.

- A grade of I is used to denote failure to complete all assigned class work and/or examinations as a result of conditions beyond the student's control. It is the responsibility of the student to initiate a request with the instructor that a grade of "I" be issued. If the student's work is of passing quality, the instructor may approve the student's request and will assign a grade of "I" plus the average letter grade on all work completed to that point (e.g. IA, IB, IC, or ID). A grade of "IF" cannot be issued. If the instructor agrees to issue

an “I”, he/she will complete a standard “contract” with the students detailing requirements for course completion and specifying the date those requirements must be finished. Instructors then provide a copy of the contract to the student and a copy to the unit/department head/director. Students will receive a grade of IA, IB, IC, or ID on their grade report (and transcript) for that quarter. Incompletes are factored into hours attempted and quality points awarded. Therefore, they impact a student’s quarter and cumulative grade point averages and are a factor in academic probation or suspension decisions. The maximum amount of time allowed for a student to finish incomplete work is Friday of the fourth week in the following quarter, with one exception: students receiving an “I” in the Spring quarter have until Friday of the fourth week in the following Fall quarter to complete their work. A reminder of this date is published in the academic calendar each quarter and can also be found on the academic calendar at Tech’s website. If the student does not complete the required work within the contracted period, the instructor will change the “I” to an “F” by delivering a final grade change to the Registrar’s Office by Friday of the fifth week of the following quarter. The final grade replaces the “I” on the student’s permanent record (transcript); attempted hours, earned hours, quality points, and quarter/cumulative grade point averages are recalculated applying the final grade. A student may be placed on, or removed from academic probation or suspension based on the recalculated GPA at the time an “I” grade is cleared. “I” grades are cleared only by completing the required course work, and not by registering for the course again.

- A grade of W is issued when a student withdraws from a class (drops a class) after the final date from registration has passed and before the published final

date for withdrawing with a “W” grade in each quarter. The “W” grade will appear on the student’s grade report and permanent record (transcript), but is not included in computing the student’s GPA. Students who stop attending class(es) without following proper drop/withdraw or resignation procedures (walk-away) will receive an “F” grade for each class affected.

Grade reports are available through B.O.S.S. on-line, by telephone, or by special request for fax or mail service. Quality points indicate the quality of a student’s work.

- A grade of A receives four quality points per semester hour,
- A grade of B receives three quality points per semester hour,
- A grade of C receives two quality points per semester hour,
- A grade of D receives one quality point per semester hour, and
- A grade of F receives no quality points.

Academic Misconduct. Academic misconduct at the University is determined by the Instructor under whom such misconduct occurs. The penalty for cheating and other forms of misconduct is also determined by the Instructor. This penalty may be dismissal from the University, a grade of “F” in the course, or lesser penalties levied at the discretion of the Instructor.

1. Academic cheating includes, but is not limited to, the accomplishment or attempted accomplishment of the following:
 - a. Copying or obtaining information from another student’s test paper.
 - b. Using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test.
 - c. Collaborating, conspiring, or cooperating during a test with any other person by giving or receiving information without authority.
 - d. Stealing, buying, or otherwise obtaining all or part of an administered or unadministered test.

- e. Selling or giving away all or part of an administered or unadministered test or any information concerning specific questions and items on an administered or unadministered test.
 - f. Requesting, bribing, blackmailing, or in any other way causing another person to obtain an administered or unadministered test or information about an administered or unadministered test or a test in the process of being administered.
 - g. Substituting for another student, or permitting any other person to substitute for oneself to take a test.
 - h. Submitting as one's own, in fulfillment of academic requirements, any theme, report, term paper, essay, other written work, painting, drawing, sculpture, or any other art work prepared totally or in part by another.
 - i. Any selling, giving, or otherwise supplying to another student for use in fulfilling academic requirements any theme, report, term paper, essay, other written work, painting, drawing, sculpture, or other art work.
 - j. Any other devious means of securing an earned grade in a course offered for credit.
2. Plagiarism is the use of any other person's work (such work need not be copyrighted) and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work in one's own work.

In the case where a grade penalty is given to a student because of academic misconduct, the student has the right to appeal the grade penalty as well as the charge of academic misconduct in accordance with the grade and academic appeals procedure listed below.

Student Appeal Procedure. A final grade in a course represents the cumulative

evaluation and judgment of the instructor placed in charge of that course. If a student feels the final grade or an academic decision in a course was not determined in accordance with University policies or was determined arbitrarily, the student may appeal by adhering to the following procedure:

1. Confer with the instructor, setting forth clearly all points of concern. If unsatisfied with the results of the conference, then
2. confer with the head of the unit/department in which the course is taught, setting forth clearly all points of concern. If the student remains unsatisfied, then
3. write a letter of appeal to the Dean of the College in which the course is taught. The Dean will send copies of the letter to the instructor and unit/department Head. This letter must
 - a. be received by the Dean within the first ten regularly scheduled class meeting days of the term immediately following the term in which the appealed grade was received, and
 - b. be an accurate and complete statement of all facts pertaining to the matter. Falsification may result in disciplinary action.

The Dean may make a decision, which will be final in the matter, or refer the appeal to the College's committee on standards for review and recommendation. The committee's report would be a recommendation to the Dean, whose decision would be final.

In reviewing the appeals, both the Dean and the committee would have broad latitude in their procedures and recommendations. They might, for example, request additional information privately from those involved, or they might choose to invite specified persons, including the student and instructor, to a meeting to discuss the matter. Whatever their approach, it should take appropriate account of the interests of both the student and

Instructor.

In all cases, the Dean shall communicate the final decision to the student, instructor, unit/department head, and, if a grade change is involved, the Registrar. In appeals where the Dean initially makes the decision, the decision should normally be communicated within ten class days after the appeal deadline. When appeals are referred to the committee, the final decision should normally be communicated by the Dean within twenty class days after the appeal deadline.

REQUIRED FORMS

Upon receiving a graduate/teaching assistantship appointment, a student is responsible for having all paperwork completed by the appropriate deadlines. Failure to do so may result in a student not receiving his or her out-of-state tuition waiver or paycheck. Questions concerning the following procedures should be addressed to the appropriate Graduate Director's office.

Appointment Request Forms

Graduate/teaching assistants are appointed after the submission and approval of an Appointment Request Form. Appointment Request Forms must be completed every fiscal year (or part thereof, as appropriate) by the Graduate Director of each College. Amended forms need to be completed if a student's stipend, position, or award time period changes. No appointment is final until approval has been received from the President and the appointment request form is filed in the Personnel Office. Forms must be received by the 15th of the month in order for a paycheck to be issued for that month. Assistants whose forms are received after the 15th will be paid the following month for the hours he or she has worked. Out-of-state fee waivers are applied, as appropriate, on the Appointment Request Forms and

posted by the Graduate School Office.

Attendance Reports

All graduate/teaching assistants are required to submit monthly time and attendance reports to their unit/department head. Forms will be distributed by the Personnel Office monthly for completion. These forms must be completed by each graduate/teaching assistant, including those on research/external appointments, and returned to the student's unit/department head and appropriate Dean/administrator for review and signature prior to submission to the Personnel Office.