



Executive Policy Chapter 5, Academic Affairs

Executive Policy EP 5.223, Graduate Assistants

Effective Date: XXXX 2024

Prior Dates Amended: September 2016, October 2014, April 2013; May 2011 (est)

Responsible Office: Office of the Vice President for Academic Strategy

Governing Board of Regents Policy RP 9.202 (G), Graduate Assistants

Review Date: XXX 2027

## **I. Purpose**

Pursuant to Regents' policy, RP 9.202, the President "shall have the authority to establish, amend, and administer a classification and compensation plan for graduate assistants." The purpose of this executive policy is to describe the duties, qualification and eligibility criteria, compensation, and appointment terms for individuals who receive graduate assistantships.

## **II. Definitions**

A Graduate Assistantship (GA) is a form of financial assistance provided to graduate students through part-time academic employment. Assistants are paid a stipend or a salary and receive tuition remission in exchange for work they perform for a faculty member, the department, or the college or school. The work is performed for either a 9-month or 11-month duty period, and the work schedule is generally up to 20 hours per week, or .50 full-time equivalence. All GAs are eligible for sick and bereavement leave as outlined in EP 9.240. Where eligible, a GA may receive additional benefits (e.g., additional pay for approved work above the 20 hours per week).

There are three types of graduate assistantships: (A) Graduate Assistantships, (B) Graduate Teaching Assistantships, and (C) Graduate Research Assistantships. Assistantship duties for each type may vary considerably both within and between programs. However all three types are limited to a workload to not exceed 20 hours per week, unless approved for an overload. The three general types of graduate assistantships are described below; however, for purposes of this policy, the assistantships regardless of type are generally referred to as graduate assistants.

### **A. Graduate Assistant (GA)**

Graduate assistants (GAs) are graduate students who provide academic and program support to academic, administrative or service units of the university. Their appointment may be either 9 months or 11 months. GA responsibilities may be administrative in nature and consist of duties not directly related to teaching or research. This may include such duties as academic advising, program/event planning, advising student groups, and assisting with the administration of academic and student services offices.

## B. Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA)

Teaching assistants (GTAs) usually have a 9-month appointment that corresponds with the academic year. The specific duties of a GTA vary depending on the needs of the department and on the qualifications and experiences of the GTA. All GTAs serve under the supervision of a regularly appointed member of the faculty. They may teach a section(s) of a multi-section course or a laboratory section(s) of a course. In addition, they may assist a faculty member in grading assignments or exams, advising students, laboratory set-up, or performing course-related administrative duties. An experienced GTA may be assigned as the instructor of a course. In such a case, the GTA must meet all of the qualifications required to appropriately teach the course, or have completed a relevant training program. All new GTAs are required to attend a training session offered by the Office of Faculty Development and Academic Support - Center for Teaching Excellence.

University policy stipulates that in a course taught by a GTA, the determination of final grades is the responsibility of the supervising faculty. However, since the GTA plays a significant role in determining grades and may be the instructor of record, the supervising faculty and the GTA should thoroughly discuss course grading policies and procedures. The supervising faculty or Department Chair, should have access to all grades for courses taught by a GTA. To ensure fairness to all students enrolled in the course, grading policies and procedures should be announced at the beginning of the semester through a course syllabus. GTAs should be knowledgeable about official university policies on credits and grades, disciplinary actions, and academic grievance procedures. They should also be aware of the various student services available at their specific campus as well as the System Office of Student Affairs, so that they may refer students to the appropriate resources when necessary

## C. Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)

Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) usually have an 11-month appointment. In general, a GRA supports the research activities of a faculty member who is the principal investigator of a funded project. The specific duties of a GRA vary depending on the needs of the project and on the qualifications and experiences of the GRA. The duties may be directly or tangentially related to the GRA's program of study, and results from the research project may be incorporated into a thesis or dissertation as relevant. Some GRAs exercise a great degree of independence while performing their duties; others carry out specific tasks that leave little room for independent judgment. GRAs should be knowledgeable about official university policies on research and publication.

### **III. Policy Guidelines**

The President delegates authority to appoint Graduate Assistants to the respective Vice Presidents or Provost/Chancellors, as appropriate, with the ability to further delegate to Deans/Directors, as applicable, in accordance with the following:

#### A. General duties and responsibilities

Under supervision of a faculty member or other designated supervisor, with some latitude for independent action as appropriate, to serve, for example, in one or more of the following capacities: teach a section of a multi-section course or a laboratory section of a course; teach a stand-alone course; assist a faculty member in grading assignments or exams, advising students, performing course-related administrative duties, preparing exhibits, serving as a demonstrations assistant in charge of tutorials, or reviewing material presented by the faculty member in charge of the course; supporting and assisting in the research activities of a faculty member who is the principal investigator of a funded project; or assisting in a range of administrative, planning, and organizational activities that may not entirely relate to teaching or research.

Specific duties and level of supervision depend on the needs of the project or department and on the qualifications and experience of the graduate assistant.

B. Minimum qualifications and eligibility

1. Graduation from an accredited college or university, and acceptance as a graduate student in an advanced degree program.
2. Only graduate students enrolled in a graduate program for an advanced degree as approved by the University (excluding MD, JD and PharmD) are eligible for assistantships. Applicants must be enrolled in the discipline of the graduate assistantship or possess the minimum requirements of the assistantship assignment. Graduate students enrolled in graduate certificate programs are not eligible.
3. An applicant must be in good academic standing upon admission (GPA of 3.0 or higher); have an undergraduate scholastic record with an adequate background in the field where the appointment is made; be in continued good academic standing for any renewal of the GA; and may not be on academic probation.
4. Graduate Assistants must carry a minimum of 6 units of graduate level credit or equivalent toward the degree each semester and must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher to be continued in the position. The maximum number of units of graduate level credits should not exceed 9 credits, unless approved by the respective graduate division. Note that one credit of thesis (specifically 700F) or dissertation (800) are equivalent to full time.
5. International students must also demonstrate proficiency in English through sufficiently high scores in measures determined by each campus. If the language of instruction is Hawaiian, proficiency in the Hawaiian language as determined by the program and relevance to the duties is expected.
6. Graduate Assistants must possess experience or other qualifications appropriate to the duties of the assistantship to which appointed and meet any further criteria stipulated by individual fields of study. Appointments are made on a competitive basis to the best qualified students.

In addition to grade point average and scores on special examinations, the motivation and goals of the student and familiarity and interest in the specialty areas of the faculty may be important factors in the awarding of assistantships.

C. Tuition exemption

UH Mānoa and UH Hilo graduate assistants, as a function of their appointment to an assistantship, are exempt from eligible tuition as it pertains to approved coursework for the regular fall/spring semester and, if applicable and approved, coursework for Outreach College credits for UH Mānoa. Graduate assistant appointments of .50 FTE, or 20 hours of work per week, are exempt from full-time graduate level tuition charges, excluding any student fees. Graduate assistant appointments of 0.25 FTE, or 10 hours of work per week, are exempt from one-half of the applicable tuition charges, excluding any student fees (see RP 6.207(C)).

D. Pay schedule

1. A pay schedule shall be developed by the Office of the Vice President for Academic Strategy. The schedule shall reflect steps for appointments, with a 17% differential between 9-month and 11-month based appointments. There shall be 4% differential between steps. The stipend or salary is paid over the duration of the appointment. Attachment A is the current schedule.
2. The Provost/Chancellor of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and University of Hawai'i at Hilo may determine the minimum step for graduate assistants enrolled in programs at their campus. A campus appointing a graduate student enrolled in another campus must pay the minimum step or higher than the student's academic home campus. Any UH Mānoa unit offering a GA below the minimum must receive prior approval from the Graduate Division. Where the student has external funding (e.g., Fulbright or other fellowships), the GA stipend or salary and the external funding combined can be no lower than the minimum step at which units are allowed to hire a GA.
3. The pay schedule shall be reviewed on an annual basis by the Office of the Vice President for Academic Strategy to consider whether adjustments to the steps need to be made. Considerations will include cost of attendance.

E. Recruitment and appointment

1. The college may determine whether an advertisement is necessary. If the college cannot fill the appointment with eligible candidates, the vacant GA positions should be advertised.
2. Selections must be made according to the Equal Employment Opportunity requirements. Placement in a teaching, research or other assistant appointment is made as appropriate to the requirements of the assigned duties.

3. Appointments are generally for one academic year, with the possibility of renewal based on continued progression towards a graduate degree. The appointee must be in good academic standing. Appointments of shorter duration may be warranted if funding cannot be secured for two semesters or if the work required does not exceed two semesters. Appointments of duration of less than one academic year shall be conveyed at the time of selection and contained within the offer letter. In the case of extramurally funded positions, an appointment of more than one year may be offered if funding is available.
4. Initial placement on the pay schedule will reflect the graduate student's experience, ability, discipline, and assigned responsibility, but may not be lower than the minimum level designated for the student's home campus except for students approved to be hired at the lower rate as described in D2.
5. Notification of appointment to the selectee shall be provided as quickly as possible, followed by an offer letter. See Attachment B for an offer letter template.

#### F. Reappointments

1. Appointments may be renewed annually, based upon satisfactory performance both as a student and as a graduate assistant, and contingent upon available funds. The designated supervisor (e.g., department chair or principal investigator) is responsible for initiating discussion with the graduate assistant and notifying the respective human resources office.
2. Advancement to the next step, after at least one year of satisfactory service, may be considered, subject to fund availability, and recommended by the supervisor (e.g., department chair, principal investigator, staff, etc.), with the approval of the pertinent academic dean or institute director.
3. Reappointments must meet criteria established for new appointees.
4. Notification of reappointments via a letter of reappointment shall be made to the graduate assistants in a timely manner by April 15 for fall reappointments and November 1 for spring reappointments. If notification of reappointment cannot be given by these deadlines, the graduate assistant cannot be obligated to commit to possible future assistantships.
5. While individual circumstances may vary, the total time as a graduate assistant should be limited to three years for a master's degree student and to six years for a doctoral or other terminal degree student.

- G. Step advancement. As stated under section F.2., advancement to the next step, after one year of satisfactory service, shall be considered, subject to fund availability. In addition, for doctoral students, upon completion of a graduate master's degree, the graduate assistant shall submit a copy of the degree documentation and have the opportunity to meet with the supervisor to discuss a justified step movement. All proposed step advancement shall be recommended by the designated supervisor (e.g.,

department chair, principal investigator, staff, etc.) with the approval of the pertinent academic dean or institute director. The frequency of the step movement is subject to fund availability and individual program guidelines which accounts for internal salary alignment.

- H. Outside employment. The University's priority for a graduate assistant is degree completion. While outside employment in addition to the graduate assistantship is not prohibited, such outside employment is discouraged to allow the graduate student to focus on degree completion. However, the University recognizes the need for graduate assistants to fulfill personal financial obligations. The graduate student shall consider the impact of such outside employment on degree completion and the fulfillment and performance of the graduate assistant duties and responsibilities, and address any conflicts of interest. Where applicable, graduate assistants may be required to complete an outside employment form as detailed in RP 9.207.
- I. Schedule accommodation and duties coverage. Graduate assistants do not earn vacation leave. EP 9.240, graduate assistants are eligible for sick and bereavement leave. Through the Online Leave System (OLS), notification of absence because of illness shall be given as soon as possible to the graduate assistant's supervisor on or before the first day of absence, or if impracticable, as soon thereafter as circumstances permit. Sick leave may be allowed for medical, dental, optical, and optometric appointments that the graduate assistant cannot schedule during non-duty time.

Graduate assistants shall be allowed three (3) working days of bereavement leave which shall not be deducted from any other leave that the graduate assistant receives. Bereavement leave shall be granted on days requested by the graduate assistant, provided they fall within a reasonable period of time after a death in the immediate family. If the death or funeral occurs outside the State of Hawai'i, a graduate assistant may request a reasonable number of additional days of leave without pay (LWOP). Additional days of LWOP may affect the graduate assistant's eligibility for a tuition waiver. Graduate assistants shall claim all bereavement leave through the OLS.

In situations where a graduate assistant is unable to attend work due to illness, emergency or bereavement, the designated supervisor (e.g., department chair, principal investigator, staff, etc.) shall identify a primary and a secondary department member who will serve as the point of contact and provide accommodations in the graduate assistant work schedule. In the case where there are critical teaching or research deadlines, to the extent it is possible under the circumstances, the graduate assistant shall work with the designated supervisor to identify resources to provide the critical teaching or research coverage.

- J. Termination of Assistantship. An assistantship may be terminated if the student fails to maintain good academic standing, if performance is unsatisfactory, for misconduct, or for lack of funding. The graduate assistant shall be given reasonable notice.
- K. Resignation. A graduate assistant may terminate the assistantship with reasonable notice.

- L. Grievances. An employment-related grievance shall be filed in accordance with the GA Complaint Procedure.
- M. Other. Graduate assistants who meet the eligibility requirements of the Family and Medical Leave Act or Hawai'i State Family Leave, may request leave pursuant to University procedure.

#### **IV. Delegation of Authority**

There is no policy specific delegation of authority.

#### **V. Contact Information**

Office of the Vice President for Academic Strategy  
Telephone: 956-6897  
Email: [ovpas@hawaii.edu](mailto:ovpas@hawaii.edu).

#### **VI. References**

- A. Link to superseded Executive Policies in old format  
<https://www.hawaii.edu/policy/archives/ep/>
- B. Link to Administrative Procedures in old format  
<https://www.hawaii.edu/policy/archives/apm/sysap.php>
- C. Attachment A: Graduate Assistant Pay Schedule
- D. Attachment B: Offer Letter Template
- E. EP 9.240 Graduate Assistant Sick and Bereavement Leave
- F. RP 9.207 Outside Employment

Approved:

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David Lassner  
President

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Date

**Attachment A**

**Graduate Assistant Pay Schedule.**

<u>Step</u>	<u>9-months</u>	<u>11-months</u>
1	14,382	16,380
2	14,958	17,502
3	15,558	18,204
4	16,182	18,930
5	16,830	19,686
6	17,502	20,472
7	18,204	21,288
8	18,930	22,140
9	19,686	23,028
10	20,472	23,952
11	21,288	24,912
12	22,140	25,908
13	23,028	26,946
14	23,952	28,026
15	24,912	29,148
16	25,908	30,312
17	26,946	31,524
18	28,026	32,784
19	29,148	34,098
20	30,312	35,460
21	31,524	36,878
22	32,785	38,353
23	34,096	39,887
24	35,460	41,482
25	36,878	43,141
26	38,353	44,867
27	39,887	46,662
28	41,482	48,528
29	43,141	50,469
30	44,867	52,488



