

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS AND FELLOWS

Revised July 2017

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY Graduate Education

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The programs of Saint Louis University are open to all without regard to race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or veteran status. All University policies, practices and procedures are administered in a manner consistent with our Catholic Jesuit identity.

Programs and activities located in facilities not easily accessible to disabled persons will be made accessible through relocation or other means, upon request.

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I. PHILOSOPHY

A University with a sound assistantship policy should be able to improve the educational experience for undergraduate and graduate students alike, as well as enhance the research potential of its graduate programs. Students, departments and the University as a whole are beneficiaries of quality graduate assistantship programs when such programs are well conceived and executed.

The primary goal of an assistantship is to augment the student's educational objectives and to assist in the prompt and successful completion of the student's degree program. The student and the department share a central responsibility in the student's education. The graduate assistant is clearly a student who, while making progress in the degree program, has special opportunities to receive experience in a profession under the supervision of a faculty mentor. Although such students serve Saint Louis University with teaching, research, and/or administrative duties, they are considered students, and not employees, of the University, and the tasks assigned to them must be clearly and justifiably consistent with the student's educational and career objectives. It is essential that graduate assistants be given assignments and supervision in such a way that their graduate studies and assistantship responsibilities reinforce one another. The assistant/mentor relationship is vital, and the best assistantship experience will evolve from careful planning and monitoring. In this way, both the students and the University benefit from the relationship.

II. CATEGORIES OF GRADUATE AWARDS

Graduate Teaching Assistantship

A teaching assistant may work with undergraduate students in small groups, lead group discussions, monitor examinations and grade papers, help to prepare lectures, conduct laboratory sessions, or can be responsible for a course as the primary instructor. Under the close supervision of the faculty, the teaching assistant concurrently develops teaching skills and a deeper understanding of the discipline.

Graduate Research Assistantship

A research assistant may be appointed in a department through the college, school, or center's budget or by the principal investigator of a funded research project. In either case, the student is assigned a range of duties such as library searches, fieldwork, laboratory experiences, and preparation of research proposals and grants so as to gain professional skills in research which complement the student's graduate education. Again, close supervision by a faculty mentor is essential to the student's development as a researcher and scholar.

Graduate Assistantship

A graduate assistant performs other duties that are not primarily teaching or research. These may include clinical or administrative responsibilities that are inherently related to the student's education and career objectives.

Fellowships and Traineeships

Fellowships and traineeships require no service to the University, although the trainee is ordinarily required to complete some form of training experience during the appointment period. Fellows and trainees may be required to participate, as part of their overall graduate education, in the teaching and/or research activities of the department or program for the purpose of enhancing career opportunities.

Funding Sources and Types of Assistantships

Various funding sources exist for the above types of assistantships. These sources include grants, gifts, contracts, community service agencies, and the University.

III. QUALIFICATIONS OF ASSISTANTS

To qualify for an assistantship, the student should have achieved an excellent academic record and completed substantial coursework in the major field. The student must have been admitted as a Classified (degree-seeking) student in accordance with admission policies and procedures of Graduate Education. The English language proficiencies of international students must be thoroughly evaluated in relationship to the demands of the assistantship assignment prior to the start of the appointment period. All teaching assistants must demonstrate competency in spoken English through procedures established by the controlling department and the college, school or center.

IV. APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES

Applicants must have been admitted into Classified status, and students admitted in any other status will not be considered for University funded assistantships. To qualify for an assistantship, the student should have achieved an excellent academic record and completed substantial coursework in the major field.

Appointments of graduate assistants will be made by the dean or director of the college, school, or center upon the recommendation of the department or program. Following the dean's/director's approval of the departmental recommendation, a contract is prepared and an offer of the assistantship is made to the applicant. Offers of assistantships, fellowships and traineeships to prospective students and resignations/releases from appointments must conform to the established procedures of the Council of Graduate Schools (see Appendix A). Also included is information for the completion of the W-4 and I-9 forms (see Appendix B). ***It is the student's responsibility to see that these forms are completed prior to the start date of the appointment.*** By Internal Revenue Service regulations, Human Resources cannot enter the assignment into the University's payroll system until these forms have been completed by the student.

After the graduate student has returned the signed contract to the college, school, or center, the department or program will be notified of the student's acceptance of the award. The department

chairperson should provide the graduate assistant with a copy of the department's assistantship handbook, which may be a supplement to this manual. The department's supplement should include any specific departmental policies governing graduate assistants. The supplemental manual is required for University Funded assistantships (UFA) and is suggested for externally funded assistantships. The new assistant should be notified of orientation meetings and other training opportunities as soon as they are scheduled.

All graduate assistants and fellows are required to have tax forms, an I-9 form, and a Human Resource Information form on file in Human Resources. New appointees are required to complete these forms within 72 hours of the start of the contract. Failure to meet this deadline in completing these forms will delay issuance of the first stipend check. Appointees who have been paid by the University within that last year are not required to complete forms again.

V. LENGTH OF APPOINTMENT

University Funded Assistantships (UFA) typically range from nine to twelve months. Nine-month appointments would generally correspond to thirty-six (36) weeks of service (9 monthly pay periods). Eleven-month appointments would generally correspond to forty-eight (48) weeks of service (11 monthly pay periods). In general, the start and end dates of all UFA appointments should correspond with the University's fiscal year, July 1 to June 30. Because the University's Human Resources System necessitates that assistants and fellows are paid monthly, the student's actual service commitment to the department may vary slightly from the payroll dates. For example, a nine-month graduate assistant's payroll start date is typically August 1, prior to the date classes actually begin. The payroll end date is typically April 30, prior to the end of the Spring semester. In such cases, it is clear that the assistant's responsibilities correspond to the academic calendar and the appointment dates on the contract rather than to the demands of the payroll system.

Some graduate assistantship appointments receive their funding from external sources (i.e., Federal grants, community agencies) although the student is paid through the University's payroll system. These appointments will generally carry appointment periods reflecting the funding period of the external source. For example, a student on an assistantship funded by an Office of Education grant might have an appointment for the period September 1 through August 30.

VI. GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING

Assistants are expected to maintain a cumulative grade-point average of 3.0 during the academic year of appointment. If the student's GPA falls below a 3.0 during any portion of the academic year, the student can be terminated by the department from the assistantship during that academic year.

VII. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ETHICS

The University is a community of learning, and its effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Any clear violation of academic integrity will be met with sanctions.

Ethical behavior must also extend beyond the academic setting and into professional life. Most major fields require their graduate students to complete an ethics requirement within the curriculum. Coursework or other training in ethics in research is required of academic personnel involved in traineeship and investigative programs funded by a number of Federal and other agencies.

For further information on academic integrity and ethics, please refer to the current *Saint Louis University Graduate Education Catalog*.

VIII. CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT AND REAPPOINTMENT

Graduate assistants who are performing satisfactorily in their studies and assistantship duties are eligible to continue their appointment from semester to semester. Should a student fail to perform satisfactorily the department is responsible for providing the student with a description of the responsibilities and expectations associated with his/her assistantship, including GPA requirements, details regarding the student's assistantship performance, and the consequences of that performance prior to terminating the assistantship during the academic year.

Graduate assistants who are performing satisfactorily in their studies and duties are eligible for annual re-appointments to the maximum time limit at the discretion of the department/program. Academic and professional performance and progress are measured by the following criteria: (1) grade-point average (both cumulative and over the past academic year) of at least 3.0; (2) student academic record with not more than one incomplete or missing grade [the grade of IP does not count as an Incomplete]; (3) report of the academic advisor; (4) formal evaluation by the faculty mentor; (5) length of time holding the assistantship; and, (6) length of time in the degree program.

Assistantship Extensions

Normally, the maximum number of years that a graduate student may hold an assistantship is two years while pursuing a Master's degree and five years in a Doctoral program. In the case of a student pursuing the Master's and Doctoral degree in the same major field, eligibility for funding is also normally limited to five years. A third year of funding for the Master's (thesis option only) or a sixth year for the Doctoral degree is possible provided funding through the department in question is available and the criteria established by the respective school/college are met. The appeal should be made during the spring semester of the second year of funding for the Master's or of the fifth year for the Doctorate to the Associate Dean for Graduate Education or the equivalent administrator of the particular school/college. No additional funding will be provided to implement.

If the department has a rotational plan for assistantships, graduate assistants may not necessarily be re-appointed. It is important that the student be notified of this fact at the time of the original appointment.

Graduate assistants are strongly encouraged to engage in discussion with the department chair and/or departmental assistantship coordinator regarding the re-appointment process. Departments are notified during the month of March regarding their assistantship pool for the following fiscal year. Departments are encouraged to begin recommending students for re-appointment at that time.

VIX. BENEFITS FOR ASSISTANTS

Since graduate assistants are not employees of the University, they enjoy all the rights and privileges of other graduate students. The privileges and benefits of assistantships are variable across the University. In general, graduate assistants enjoy extended library-loan privileges and can renew the checkout over the telephone. They will not be assessed any fees which are commonly charged to University staff members, such as membership fees in the Simon Recreation Center.

Tuition Scholarship

In general, graduate assistants will receive a stipend and a tuition scholarship. Tuition scholarship hours awarded in conjunction with a graduate assistantship or fellowship cannot be moved from one semester to another without the written approval of the department chair or program director and the dean or director of their college, school or center. Tuition scholarship hours cannot be transferred from one fiscal year to the next. Unused scholarship hours will not be reimbursed as a cash award to the student.

Scholarship hours awarded in conjunction with a graduate appointment can only be utilized during the period of appointment. For example, a student awarded an assistantship for Fall and Spring cannot use the accompanying tuition scholarship during the Summer Session prior to or following the award period.

Tuition scholarship hours can only be used for tuition charges. It cannot be used to pay for other fees (i.e., graduation fee, registration fee, etc.).

Please Note: Beginning in Fall 2004, “0” credit hour registrations for 599 or 699 will not be allowed until the student has successfully completed six hours of 599 or 12 hours of 699. This means that students can begin to register for thesis and dissertation hours when they begin their research, even if prior to the formal examination. Students should **not** register for more dissertation hours than required to fulfill degree requirements.

In order to utilize tuition scholarship hours within a semester, hours must be added by mid-term during the semester. Scholarship hours not used by mid-term will be forfeited for that semester. Students adding hours during the semester will be subject to the change of registration fee if applicable.

Under special conditions it is sometimes possible to transfer tuition scholarship hours from one semester to another *during the assistantship/fellowship period*. For example, if a student is registered for six hours during the Fall semester but must register for twelve hours during the Spring semester and is on a graduate appointment during the period, the student may petition to transfer three hours from Fall to Spring. *Any transfer of tuition scholarship hours must be requested in writing and must be approved by their dean or director.*

Health Insurance

Students assigned to University Funded Assistantships (UFA) may receive health insurance benefits during their contract period at the discretion of the college/school/center as long as they maintain full-time enrollment status. Students supported by external grants or contracts may also qualify for the health insurance benefit on the condition that the premium was included in the direct costs of the grant or contract. The award of the health insurance benefit as part of the assistantship or fellowship award will be indicated on the contract.

Saint Louis University requires full-time Undergraduate and Graduate/Professional students to have basic health insurance during Fall and Spring semesters. Students that do not receive health insurance benefits as part of an UFA nor waive the Saint Louis University sponsored health insurance, may be charged for health insurance coverage. Summer coverage is not required. In order to receive the health insurance benefit offered in conjunction with the assistantship or fellowship, students must formally enroll under the Saint Louis University sponsored health insurance plan in a timely manner (i.e. within 31 days of the contract start date or during the applicable semester's Open Enrollment Period).

During periods while not on contract (e.g., during the Summer Session), students can continue the health coverage at their own expense provided they satisfy the health plan eligibility requirements. Coverage for spouse and/or dependents is available at an additional charge to the student. Dependent coverage can only be elected at the time of initial enrollment unless there is a Qualifying Life Event (QLE) such as the birth of a child or the acquiring of a new dependent through legal marriage or adoption.

Student Continuation Coverage

Student Continuation Coverage, which is an extension of coverage under the health plan, is available to students and their dependents when Saint Louis University sponsored health insurance would otherwise end. Some restrictions may apply. Students can elect continuation coverage for either three or six months. The Saint Louis University sponsored health plan will notify students when they have the opportunity to continue coverage under the Student Continuation Coverage option.

Direct Deposit of Stipend Check

Graduate assistants are eligible to participate in the University's direct deposit option. Direct deposit offers convenience and security of funds. Assistants may choose to have paychecks deposited directly to one or two personal bank accounts. Direct deposit authorization forms may be obtained from the Payroll Office, located in the Lindell Building. Beginning with the monthly payroll dated January 30, 2006 those not participating in Direct Deposit will have their paychecks mailed to their *permanent address* via the U.S. Postal Service.

X. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASSISTANTS

A graduate assistant is expected to make steady progress toward the degree while effectively performing assigned duties. The course load and assistantship responsibilities should form a program that facilitates the student's progress. An assistant will normally register for six to nine hours or the equivalent in a given semester and usually performs assistantship duties for twenty (20) hours per week. **A graduate assistant must be registered each academic semester during the appointment period, including the Summer Session.** The mentor and/or faculty advisor has a serious responsibility to help the student monitor his/her ability to manage both the academic and assistantship roles.

The graduate assistant should be informed of departmental, School and University regulations and follow them consistently. Assistants are obligated to maintain standards of academic honesty and integrity.

PLEASE NOTE: *Students appointed to an assistantship or fellowship must be registered during the appointment period, usually for six (6) to nine (9) hours of credit. If the appointment period includes part or all of the months of June and July, appointees are to be formally enrolled for the Summer Sessions.*

Students appointed to an assistantship or fellowship may not engage in any concurrent employment without the expressed consent of the department or program and their dean or director. Requests for an exemption must be made in writing. Participation in any unapproved employment will result in the immediate withdrawal of the assistantship.

Fair Labor Standards Act

Departments and graduate assistants should be aware of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which does not permit an employee to be paid simultaneously an hourly (non-exempt) wage and a salary (exempt) wage by the same employer for two or more distinct positions. Graduate appointments at Saint Louis University are considered exempt (salary) positions. Graduate assistants **cannot** hold, in addition to the assistantship, other University jobs which are hourly paid (e.g., college work study, student worker).

Student workers and Federal work study positions typically provide non-professional support for various departments of the University. It is possible that a graduate assistant, working as a student

worker or in a Federal work study position, may be performing duties of a professional nature. If that is the case, it might be possible to pay a salary for that assignment and avoid violating wage and hour regulations.

If a department feels that the responsibilities of the student worker or work study position might qualify the position as exempt (salary), a completed job description form should be completed and forwarded to their dean or director. This form will then be forwarded to Human Resources for an evaluation of the duties as exempt or non-exempt.

Under no circumstances will a graduate assistant be allowed to hold a non-exempt (hourly) position while on an assistantship or fellowship.

Graduate Assistant Orientation

University Funded assistants and fellows are required to attend orientation/training activities at the University and departmental levels. Because this is an orientation to the University and is not limited to the activities of graduate teaching assistants, it is recommended that all internally and externally funded graduate assistants be encouraged to attend.

Prior to the start of the Fall semester, the University conducts an orientation for assistants and fellows. Information on the orientation is included in the contract packet.

XI. RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEPARTMENTS

The integration of the assistantship responsibilities and academic program must be carefully coordinated and monitored by a faculty mentor consistent with the underlying philosophy described on page 1. Graduate assistants should be assigned space, supplies, books, and equipment to carry out their assignments effectively.

Each department must designate an individual who has the overall responsibility for the department's assistantship program. Departments that receive UFA assistantships must develop assistantship manuals or supplements that include the following:

- (1) description of the responsibilities and expectations associated with each assistantship;
- (2) description of orientation, training, and mentoring activities for assistants; and,
- (3) evaluation plan that includes at least an evaluation of the assistant by the mentor.

Finally, it is expected that every UF assistant and fellow will participate in an orientation for new graduate assistants to be held each Fall, immediately preceding the beginning of classes.

XII. EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Departments are expected to design an evaluation plan consistent with Section XI, Item 3 above. Evaluation should be an ongoing process of communication between the graduate assistant and the faculty mentor. A formal evaluation should be a supportive process that helps the assistant to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to plan concretely for improvement. A formal evaluation should be entered into the student's departmental record each year.

Graduate assistants will have the opportunity to evaluate the assistantship experience each year. This evaluation should likewise be a supportive process which will help the department identify the strengths and weaknesses of its assistantship program. The Associate Vice President Graduate Education will conduct this evaluation at the end of the Spring semester.

The Associate Vice President Graduate Education and the Dean/Director will meet with the department's assistantship coordinator and chairperson to discuss the evaluation data of the previous year. The AVP-Graduate Education will then meet with the Dean of the School in which the department is located to discuss recommendations for the departmental assignment of assistantships for the next academic year.

XIII. REINERT CENTER FOR TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING & LEARNING

The mission of the Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching & Learning is to assist faculty and graduate students to develop as teachers by increasing their awareness of a variety of teaching methods and learning styles. Services provided include: a certificate in university teaching skills; assistance in developing a teaching portfolio; classroom observation; workshops on effective teaching; small group instructional feedback sessions; instructional consultations; and assistance integrating the University's course management system, SLU Global (a.k.a., Blackboard 9.1), and other learning technologies into course curricula.

Effective Teaching Seminars

Effective Teaching Seminars are offered during the fall and spring semesters and involve interactive presentations by University faculty on pedagogical issues. Specific strategies and skills are introduced to provide practical instruction as well as philosophical enrichment. The schedule of seminars is available on the CTE website (www.slu.edu.cttl).

Certificate Program

The Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning awards the Certificate in University Teaching Skills to participants upon the satisfactory completion of all requirements of the certificate. These requirements include:

- (1) Participation in ten Effective Teaching Seminars;
- (2) Videotape of classroom teaching;
- (3) Consultation with a teaching mentor;
- (4) Mentor and peer observation of teaching;

- (5) Demonstrated understanding of integrating technology or service learning into teaching;
- (6) Completion of readings related to teaching;
- (7) Development of course materials in their discipline;
- (8) Preparation of a teaching portfolio; and
- (9) Completion of a short reflection paper.

For more information about the Certificate Program or other services related to teaching enhancement, please email slu.edu/crr or call (314) 977-3944.

XIV. MISCELLANEOUS

Employment Verification

Periodically graduate assistants require verification of employment with the University when seeking housing. Beginning February 7, 2008 the University began referring employment verification The Work Number at www.theworknumber.com or (800) 367-5690. Step-by-step instructions on how to use The Work Number are available at <http://www.slu.edu/human-resources-home/hr-information-systems/employment-verification>. On the Human Resources web page, select Employment Verification from the menu of options located to the left of the screen or call human resources at (314) 977-2360 or e-mail HRIS@slu.edu.

Access to Students Records

Saint Louis University's Banner Self Service provides online access to the University's general academic information and allows each student to access his or her personal information. Among other options, this allows you to view your most current scholarship/financial aid information, view your student accounts information, register for classes, request transcripts, and view your paycheck information as it pertains to direct deposit. Contact the Registrar's Office for more detailed information about online access.

Tax Report

All graduate assistants and fellows will receive a year-end tax report from the University for income tax reporting. ***It is very important for all graduate assistants and fellows to verify their mailing address in Banner Self Service so that the tax report is received in a timely manner.***

XV. RESIGNATION

Resignation from any graduate appointment must be communicated in writing to their dean or director and countersigned by the department or program chairperson or project director. The exact date of resignation or termination must be indicated. A letter acknowledging the resignation will be sent to the student and copies will be issued to the department, AVP Graduate Education, and Office of Scholarship and Financial Aid.

Graduate assistants in Doctoral programs often complete their programs and have their degrees conferred at various times throughout each semester. If the degree is conferred prior to the end of the assistantship appointment, the student must resign from the award effective the date of degree conferral since, at that point, the individual is no longer a student of the University.

The above policies and procedures have received the approval of the appropriate governing bodies of Saint Louis University. If a revision of any of these policies and procedures becomes necessary, all graduate assistants, the Departmental Coordinators, and Department Chairpersons will be informed in writing immediately. Revised policies and procedures will take precedent if in conflict with the above.