

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP POLICY GUIDELINES

GRADUATE STUDY and LIFELONG LEARNING

Updated 2009-10

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP POLICY

The Oakland University Graduate Assistantship program provides students with a means of financial support while pursuing a graduate degree, an opportunity to gain experience in teaching or research, and the occasion to provide more individual instruction to undergraduate students, especially in laboratory courses.

OU GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP PROGRAMS

Oakland University budgets financial resources for a number of graduate assistantships that are made available to students pursuing graduate degrees. The OU Graduate Assistantship Package program is administered by Graduate Study and Lifelong Learning. The OU Graduate Research Assistantship program is administered by the Grants, Contracts and Sponsored Research Office.

All graduate assistantships have a service obligation for which the student receives a stipend. Stipends vary according to program level (doctoral and masters) and discipline. An accompanying tuition reduction, which has no service obligation, is awarded to the student for graduate course work.

OU Graduate Assistantship Program packages, administered by Graduate Study and Lifelong Learning are available for the academic year (fall and winter). Units will be responsible for funding graduate assistantships outside the academic year (summer). Unallocated OGS stipends and tuition reduction dollars remaining in the unit from fall or winter may NOT be reallocated for usage during summer without approval from Graduate Study and Lifelong Learning.

Graduate Assistantship Structure and Definition

- Graduate assistantship funds are used to support full-time, degree seeking graduate students
- All graduate assistantships have a service obligation for which the student receives a stipend
- Stipends vary according to program AND level (doctoral and masters)
- Full appointments (.50 FTE) require 20 hours of service per week from the student
- Half appointments (.25 FTE) require 10 hours of service per week from the student
- An accompanying tuition reduction, which has no service obligation, is awarded to the student for graduate coursework
- Students with assistantships are expected to maintain full-time enrollment at Oakland University during the semester(s) for which they are appointed.
- OU Graduate Assistantship packages (administered by Graduate Study) are limited to two years for master's degree students and four-years for doctoral students

Academic Requirements and Expectations

- Graduate Assistants must be enrolled as a **full-time** student (8 credits minimum) during each semester of their appointment AND maintain a full-time status for the entire semester.
- Graduate Assistants, who have applied to graduate, may be approved to enroll less than the full-time requirement during that semester.
- Assistantship agreements are subject to cancellation if the student does not meet the minimum enrollment requirement.
- Graduate course work or research must contribute directly to the satisfaction of degree requirements.
- Graduate Assistants must maintain at least an overall 3.0 grade point average.
- Graduate Assistants must satisfy academic progress, general degree and other program requirements established by Oakland and the graduate program as published in the Graduate Catalog or program handbook.
- Graduate Assistants may not accept other employment without written permission of their adviser and Graduate Study.

International Appointments

Graduate assistantship awards typically cover approximately 90% of the student's total yearly expenses. The student must present evidence of the remaining financial support. If financial documentation for the remaining funds is not provided, the Certificate of Eligibility will not be issued and the student will not be able to apply for a visa to study at Oakland University.

Student Residency Classification Policy

The Board of Trustees approved the revised policy on "Residency Classification for Admission and Tuition Purposes" dated January 1, 1999 with an effective term date of Winter, 1999. "All graduate students holding an assistantship or fellowship awarded through Oakland University will be charged in-state rates." Graduate Assistants reappointed for the next academic year, but not holding an assistantship during summer, will be charged in-state tuition rates during the summer term.

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE STUDY

OU Graduate Assistantship Programs

Levels of Service Categories

There are TWO (2) levels of service categories for graduate assistantships available for appointment during the academic year (fall and winter). The two service levels, full appointments (.50 FTE) require 20 hours of service per week from the student and half appointments (.25 FTE) require 10 hours of service per week from the student, are listed below with the accompanying stipend and credits:

Full Appointment Guidelines

A student with a FULL appointment is expected to devote, on average no more than 20 hours per week to their duties as a graduate assistant.

Academic Year = Fall and Winter

<u>Level</u> Program	ACADEMIC YEAR					
	Full Appointment		Fall 2010		Winter 2011	
	Stipend	Credits	Stipend	Credits	Stipend	Credits
<u>Doctoral</u>						
Engineering	14,000	16	7,000	8	7,000	8
All other programs	14,000	24	7,000	12	7,000	12
<u>Master</u>						
Engineering, Math & Sciences	6,500	16	3,250	8	3,250	8
All other programs	5,132	16	2,566	8	2,566	8

Half Appointment Guidelines

A student with a HALF appointment is expected to devote, on average no more than 10 hours per week to their duties as a graduate assistant.

Academic Year = Fall and Winter

<u>Level</u> Program	ACADEMIC YEAR					
	Half Appointment		Fall 2010		Winter 2011	
	Stipend	Credits	Stipend	Credits	Stipend	Credits
<u>Doctoral</u>						
Engineering	7,000	8	3,500	4	3,500	4
All other programs	7,000	12	3,500	6	3,500	6
<u>Master</u>						
Engineering, Math & Sciences	3,250	8	1,625	4	1,625	4
All other programs	2,566	8	1,283	4	1,283	4

Tuition Reduction Benefits

Graduate Study and Lifelong Learning provides a tuition reduction equal to the full amount of tuition, excluding late fees and other fees assessed by Oakland, for each semester during the term of their appointment, up to the maximum number of credits per semester identified in the signed GA Agreement.

The tuition reduction will be applied on a per semester basis to graduate credits that satisfy Oakland's degree requirements; it will not pay assessments for non-program credits, audited classes or courses which a student repeats. Tuition reduction benefits may not be used for undergraduate credits; except for undergraduate classes, in accordance with graduate policy and part of an approved plan of study required to satisfy graduate degree requirements.

This tuition reduction is a fringe benefit granted to the student, in excess of the reasonable compensation paid as a stipend, and it cannot be converted into a cash award. Tuition reduction benefits that are offered for a particular semester, but are not used in that semester, will be forfeited.

- Tuition reduction benefits are not a specific form of payment for services rendered.
- A tuition reduction is provided for graduate courses or research that contributes directly to the satisfaction of degree requirements.
- In circumstances where undergraduate courses are substituted, on an approved plan of study, no more than 12 credits will be allowed per graduate policy.
- Each semester a tuition reduction will be credited to the student's account according to the percentage of the assistantship (Full = 8 -or- Half = 4).
- Any tuition reduction benefits (credits), which are not used during the term in which the student holds the appointment are forfeited.
- Tuition reduction benefits earned as a graduate assistant is not taxable

Termination

Oakland may immediately terminate a graduate assistantship appointment, without prior notice to the student, if (a) they do not make satisfactory academic progress, or fail to perform all assigned service responsibilities in a satisfactory manner, as determined by their advisors or program chairperson; (b) they fail to comply with all rules, procedures or policies applicable to students at Oakland; or (c) if the Funds supporting their appointment are restricted, eliminated or reduced for any reason.

Appointments terminated for any reason on or before the date set by Oakland in the applicable Schedule of Classes as the last day for "official withdrawal" for that semester, including but not limited to voluntary withdrawal from the graduate assistant program, the student will be billed for tuition and costs (a) on a pro-rata basis for the remainder of the semester in which the appointment was terminated based upon the residency status as a graduate assistant; and (b) for any future semesters based upon the residency status prior to the appointment.

Resignation of Graduate Assistantship

A student, who resigns from their Graduate Assistantship, must provide written notice to the academic unit or department and the Office of Graduate Study. The stipend will terminate on the day the resignation is effective. Until the Office of Graduate Study receives written notification, of the effective resignation date from the academic unit or department, the student will continue to be paid their stipend.

Students who resign their graduate assistantship, withdraw from their classes or fall below the full-time credit requirement **before** completing one-half of a particular semester/session, will be billed (a) on a pro-rata basis for the remainder of that semester based upon their residency status prior to their graduate assistantship appointment; and (b) for any future semesters based upon their residency status prior to their appointment.

Time Limits

Graduate Assistantship positions, funded by the Graduate Study and Lifelong Learning, are limited to two-years for master's degree students and four-years for doctoral students. If units wish to continue supporting a student beyond this time, it requires position funding from the school or college. Time limits help assure units of a regular allotment of graduate assistantships for recruiting purposes.

OU subscribes to the [Resolution adopted by the Council of Graduate Schools](#) which, among other provisions, states students are under no obligation to respond to assistantship offers prior to April 15; earlier deadlines for acceptance of such offers violate the intent of this Resolution. In order to accept an assistantship offer at another institution after April 15, prospective graduate assistants must first obtain a written release from any other institution to which a previous commitment has been made.

Graduate Assistantship Categories and Descriptions

The academic unit or department to which a Graduate Assistant is assigned must identify and assign service level consistent with the following guidelines:

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) have a primary responsibility in an instructional capacity. They provide approximately 20 hours of instructional service per week over the course of a semester. Services provided by a graduate teaching assistant may include lecturing in undergraduate level courses, leading discussion groups, serving as assistants to laboratory classes, and grading tests and papers.

Graduate Research Assistants

Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) are selected for excellence in scholarship and potential as researchers. Graduate Research Assistants provide approximately 20 hours of service per week, over the course of a semester and under the direct supervision of faculty members.

Research activities should relate directly to the student's degree requirements and should be reasonably expected to contribute to a student's dissertation, thesis, independent or directed study, or otherwise be undertaken for the primary benefit of the student's research, scholarship or academic program.

The department or academic unit is responsible for ensuring that the work assigned is academically appropriate and meets maximum hour guidelines. Oakland reserves the right to change any teaching and/or research assignment at any time and for any reason.

How to Apply for a Graduate Assistantship

A graduate student who wishes to apply for a Graduate Assistantship Award should request an application form directly from the department or academic unit in which he or she is interested. Steps in the Graduate Assistant application process are:

- 1) The applicant must complete an application for Graduate Assistantship Award form (available on graduate study website)
- 2) The applicant must submit the application form directly to the academic unit or department in which she or he is requesting an appointment. The applicant should not submit the application form to the Office of Graduate Study.
- 3) Before an applicant can be awarded a Graduate Assistantship, the applicant must be admitted to a graduate degree program.
- 4) The letter of offer and Graduate Assistant Agreement will come directly from the academic unit or department (except with an international applicant).
- 5) To accept a Graduate Assistantship appointment, the applicant must sign, date and return the Graduate Assistant Agreement to the academic unit or department.
- 6) A student who has been awarded a Graduate Assistantship receives the award only for the duration stated in the Graduate Assistant Agreement.

Qualifications

- 1) The student must possess a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution prior to admission to graduate study and to the appointment of an assistantship. Academic credentials for all international students must be evaluated by NACES (National Association of Credential Evaluation Services).
- 2) Graduate students must be admitted to a degree program, and be in good standing, to receive an assistantship.
- 3) International students must have the appropriate student status with the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service. While school is in session, international students cannot exceed the 20-hour per week maximum service level during the academic year. During summer and other school breaks there is no hour limitation.

The Selection Process

Academic units and departments are accountable for the review and selection process for graduate assistantship appointments. Each department is responsible for ensuring that graduate students selected are qualified for the position. Graduate Assistants whose academic standing and service record have been satisfactory may, in many cases, have their appointments renewed, subject to the availability of funds and the need for service. Graduate Assistantships, regardless of the funding source, are subject to the policies and procedures included in the Graduate Assistantship Guidelines. The steps in the appointment process are:

- 1) Graduate Study releases the annual Graduate Assistantship State-Funded Packages, for the next fiscal year beginning July 1st. The Deans for the College and Schools are responsible for allocating GA packages to the departments. The Deans will be notified in writing of any increases to the number of graduate assistantship packages, differentiated as Doctoral or Master, or increases in the stipend rate.
- 2) The departments are responsible for preparing and submitting Graduate Assistantship Agreements for reappointments to Graduate Study by April 15th. It is the responsibility of the academic dean, department chair or designee to notify those students who have not been recommended for an award.
- 3) By recommending a student for a Graduate Assistantship, the academic unit or department certifies that the student meets the qualifications stated in preceding sections of this guide.
- 4) The Graduate Assistantship Agreement, initiated by the academic unit or department must indicate the award period (semester/year) and the service level (full-time or half-time).
- 5) The student must sign and return the Graduate Assistantship Agreement to the academic unit or department, as acceptance of the offer or respond in writing declining the offer.
- 6) The academic unit or department submits the signed Graduate Assistantship Agreement and specified documentation to Graduate Study. Graduate Study will process the I-9 form, manage the employment verification process, produce the payroll record (stipend) and generate the tuition reduction award.
- 7) General Counsel has prepared the Graduate Assistantship Agreement. This Agreement serves as a contract between Oakland University and the graduate assistant. The academic unit or department may **NOT** alter this Agreement. Please contact Graduate Study if you have any questions as to language.
 - Graduate Assistants must be registered full-time (8 credit minimum) to satisfy the enrollment requirement
 - Tuition reductions are disbursed 10 days prior to the first date of class
 - Graduate assistants may not begin their assignment until Graduate Study has processed the I-9 form, confirmed employment eligibility, received the signed GA Agreement and appointment forms.
 - The stipends paid to graduate assistants are treated as taxable income by the Internal Revenue Service and the university is therefore obligated to withhold income taxes.

Summer Employment Classifications

Graduate Assistantships

There are no Office of Graduate Study (OGS) graduate assistant appointments available for summer appointments. Units may elect to support Graduate Assistants, during the summer term, by funding the stipend and tuition reduction from a grant, academic unit OR department resource. Such appointments give units the option of creating 12-month assistantships by combining their own summer resources with the Office of Graduate Study funded positions for the academic year. This is designed to make OU assistantships more competitive, particularly in the international arena and recruitment of scholars.

Summer graduate assistant appointments must have a service obligation, for which the student receives a stipend, AND an accompanying tuition reduction. Graduate Assistantships during the summer term must comply with all policies and qualifications stated in previous sections of these guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to the enrollment policy, which states: **students with assistantships are expected to be full-time at Oakland University during the semester(s) for which they are appointed.** Students in this employment classification must receive a letter of offer and return a signed Graduate Assistant Agreement.

Graduate Student Assistants (GSA)

Academic units and departments may elect to support Graduate “Student” Assistants, during the summer terms. Graduate students in this category are NOT required to be enrolled for the term in which they receive funding. This classification of student earns a stipend, but is NOT provided any tuition reduction. It would be the responsibility of the Academic unit or department to provide the source of funding.

Not all graduate students qualify for this employment classification.

Qualifications

- 1) The student must have been a Graduate Assistant, enrolled in the previous winter semester;
OR
- 2) A returning graduate student, enrolled in the previous winter semester, WITH evidence of Graduate Assistantship Agreement for the impending Fall semester

Employment process for Graduate Student Assistants requires a “summer” signed letter of offer. Please note, the position title “Graduate Student Assistant” must be cited in all employment documentation. You cannot use the title “Graduate Assistant” for this employment classification.

New graduate students admitted for summer semester cannot be hired as a Graduate Student Assistant.

New graduate students admitted for the impending Fall semester, who are a US citizen or have permanent residency status, may be eligible for employment as a temporary employee (up to 40 hours per week) or casual employee (up to 19 hours per week).

OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING

Research Incentive Program

Please contact the Office of Grants, Contracts and Sponsored Research (5xx Wilson Hall) to receive information on the Incentive Program.

New Program Budgets

New approved graduate programs, which have included graduate assistantships in their proforma budgets are funded from their program budgets. Once the program has received a positive 5-year budget review, and has been approved as a permanent program, the graduate assistantship dollars are merged into the Graduate Assistantship funds (package created and dedicated to the appropriate program in the college or schools) to ensure stipends are indexed with faculty salary increases.

Department and Non-Academic Unit Funds

Individual department funds can be used to fund a graduate assistant. All departments and non-academic units must comply with the policies published in the Graduate Assistantship Policy Guidelines.

King-Chavez-Parks Future Faculty Fellowships (KCP)

The King-Chavez-Parks Future Faculty Fellowship Program is administered by Graduate Study and Lifelong Learning with the support of the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, King-Chavez-Parks Initiative. Graduate Study and Lifelong Learning holds a competition for KCP awards and provides recipients with financial assistance to pursue master's and/or doctoral degrees. A master's recipient can receive a maximum stipend of \$20,000, and a doctoral fellow can receive a maximum stipend of \$35,000. Preference is given to those pursuing a doctoral degree. The fellowship service requirement is a three-year teaching service to the State of Michigan at the post-secondary level.

All Graduate Assistantship Awards must conform to policy or exceptions be approved by the Office of Graduate Study.