Policies Pertaining to Graduate Appointments  
March 2014

Graduate assistantships in the College of Education are intended to provide graduate students with experiences that add breadth and depth to their graduate education. These appointments typically involve duties in teaching, research, or service, and help fulfill the College's mission. They also provide a valuable educational experience for graduate students as well as sources of financial support for their graduate studies.

The following policies apply to all teaching assistantships, research assistantships, and fellowships administered through the College of Education.

1. Students enrolled in advanced degree programs in the College of Education are eligible for appointment as graduate assistants. (Under exceptional circumstances, students outside the College are eligible; a DEO, Center Director, or PI and the Dean of the College of Education must approve such exceptions.) In an effort to support as many graduate students as possible, students are routinely awarded no more than a half-time appointment in the College of Education. Typically, students with appointments in other colleges will be awarded assistantships through our College only when the total University appointment is equal to or less than a 50% appointment (20 hours per week). Any exceptions to this 50% rule must conform to Graduate College policies. Following Graduate College policy (Graduate College Manual of Rules and Regulations, Part 1. Section VII.F.), the adviser and the DEO will submit, prior to the offer of an appointment that results in a total appointment greater than .50, a request for exemption from the 50% rule. The request is made to the Office of the Dean. Approved requests will be forwarded to the Graduate College.

2. Students holding graduate assistantships in the College of Education must comply with all pertinent Graduate College guidelines, including those stipulating maximum allowable enrollments, for example, ½ time assistants may take no more than 12 hours per semester (Graduate College Manual of Rules and Regulations, Part 1. Section II. D.). In addition to Graduate College rules about maximum credit hours per semester, the College of Education stipulates minimum enrollment levels. Prior to completing comprehensive examinations, graduate assistants may take no fewer than 6 credits per semester. Later, after they have completed their programs of study or during the semester prior to taking comprehensive examinations, graduate assistants may formally request permission from their advisors to take fewer than 6 credits per semester. Both the advisor and the DEO must approve the reduction in advance and notify the Dean’s Office. Special Graduate Assistantships funded by the Iowa Testing Programs also require the advanced approval of the Director of the Iowa Testing Program. Once graduate assistants have passed their comprehensive examinations and completed their programs of study, they may with the approval of their advisors choose post-comp enrollment status and are no longer required to enroll for 6 hours of credit courses.

3. A Teaching Assistantship position may not be offered to students who are non-native English speakers until they have provided evidence of having passed the Speaking Proficiently in English Assessment Kit Test (SPEAK) and having successfully completed any Teaching Assistant Preparation in English (TAPE) and English Language Performance Test courses required for full certification, excluding 103:009.

4. For a half-time appointment, approximately 20 clock hours per week are expected in performing assistantship duties. The 20-hour limitation policy covers all duties required of a graduate assistant.
including scheduled times in classrooms, laboratories, or studios, as well as time required for preparation of assigned duties, grading students' work, scheduled office hours, and additional time required for meeting with and advising students. For appointments that are less than 50%, the time is proportional (for example, 10 hours a week for quarter-time).

The limitation on hours is intended to apply to graduate students who are adequately prepared to assume their assistantship duties. Graduate assistants who need to review material or to master techniques ordinarily expected of persons assuming TA or RA duties would, in general, pursue such extra work outside of the normal hour limitation. In addition, the limitation on workload is intended as an average to be applied over an entire semester or an academic year.

All policies concerning vacation, time-off, health insurance, and the like are addressed in the current collective bargaining agreement, copies of which are available.

Teaching Assistants
As a general "rule of thumb," 5 clock hours of preparation time are allotted for each hour of class time when a new course is being taught; 3 hours of "preparation time" are allowed if the assistant has taught the course before.

The following are general guidelines. Variations to accommodate different enrollments and other College and course-specific factors are to be expected.

General Guidelines

a. A one-half time teaching assistant should teach no more than 6 semester hours in any given semester. One-quarter time assistants should teach 3 semester hours each semester.

b. The teaching load should be no more than 3 semester hours in any semester in which the teaching assistant is teaching a course he/she has not taught before.

It is important to stress that these are guidelines, not absolute rules; they can be adapted to accommodate special cases that might arise as a function of class size or special instructional needs. What accommodations can be made, however, will of necessity depend not only on what might be judged to be the "ideal" instruction but also on the reality of limited resources in the College. For example, contact hours for discussion leaders as compared to teaching assistants having full responsibility for a course are expected to be heavier.

5. Each graduate assistant's performance must be reviewed annually, no later than April 15th, by the faculty or staff supervisor and the departmental chairperson or appropriate administrator prior to a decision on renewal of the assistantship. This review should consider competence in performing the responsibilities of the assistantship and satisfactory progress toward degree completion. The substance of the review should be conveyed to the graduate assistant in a face-to-face meeting or in writing.

In addition, the supervisor and administrator should consider the programmatic needs that the assistantship fills in the area. Although every attempt will be made to help eligible graduate assistants find support, funds are usually committed on an annual basis only. Being eligible for an assistantship does not guarantee that a student will receive an assistantship or an assistantship renewal but depends on the criteria above: competent performance of the responsibilities associated with the graduate assistant position, satisfactory progress toward degree completion, and the availability of funding for the position.
Usually, eligibility for renewal of College of Education graduate assistantships will conform to the following guidelines:

a. “College of Education Assistantship support” is defined as being appointed to an assistantship funded by an account administered by the College of Education. Previous or subsequent appointments on accounts administered by other colleges are not part of this policy.

b. Eligibility is counted by semesters during the academic year. Summer appointments do not count against eligibility.

c. Graduate students in a master's degree program will be eligible for up to four semesters of College of Education Assistantship support.

d. Graduate students enrolled in a Ph.D. program are eligible for up to ten semesters of College of Education Assistantship support.

e. Graduate students enrolled in an MA/Ph.D.* program are eligible for up to twelve semesters of College of Education Assistantship support.

*In the same program

6. To ensure that the conditions of the assistantship are followed, the DEO and the Office of the Dean monitor graduate assistantships. Offers of assistantships are to be made in writing to the student and should contain:

a. Starting and termination dates

b. A job description

c. The amount of the stipend

d. Designation of the supervisor

e. The status of the graduate student with regard to the number of assistantship award renewals remaining, if specified

f. Any contingencies affecting the award, for example, second semester of a teaching assistantship contingent on satisfactory performance in the first semester


The student's written acceptance of the offer should indicate agreement with these conditions. The appropriate administrator and the Office of the Dean file appointment forms. They also file termination forms when the appointment is completed.

7. The stipend for graduate assistantships is established annually and is followed consistently. The stipends received by graduate assistants in the College of Education are generally not tax exempt.

8. Questions about these policies may be addressed to students’ advisers, Departmental Executive Officers, or departmental and Dean’s Office staff.