

APPOINTING UNIT PROCEDURES FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

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For use by appointing units

Posting openings and selecting assistants

Graduate Assistant Recruiting and Hiring Guide Instructions can be found at the Human Resources website www.hr.ilstu.edu

- The appointing unit creates a GA posting online.
- Applicants apply to the posting.

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

- Appointing unit selects GA.
- Appointing unit makes offer to GA via e-mail using template found on Human Resources website and forwards accepted offer to Human Resources.
- Appointing unit completes online selection form to appoint GA. The online selection form replaces the PERS900 for any GA appointed through the system.

An appointment can be issued if a student is in default on a student loan but the default must be cleared within six (6) months or the appointment will be terminated. To clear a default a student must obtain a letter from the loan institution which states that the student is making regular payments on the loan and present such proof to the Graduate School.

With the implementation of offer letters sent via e-mail, appointment notifications will no longer be generated. Once the GA accepts the offer, the appointing unit electronically forwards the original offer letter with the attached acceptance to Human Resources.

At the time of the accepted offer, the appointing unit should provide the graduate assistant with a copy of the Graduate Assistant Handbook for the current academic year.

Although most information will be captured electronically through the online system, there are still some documents that will need to be completed in paper format:

I-9

Health Insurance Certification Form- appointing unit must keep for one year

W-4 and Direct Deposit Forms

Notification to GA's academic program

When any appointing unit other than the student's academic program makes an offer to a GA, the appointing unit should also send an e-mail notification to the GA's academic program. The student's program is listed in the online application, and a list of program coordinators (clickable to address an e-mail message) can be found at <http://www.grad.ilstu.edu/programs/>. If the student's degree program is not readily apparent from the application form, Graduate School staff can assist you with that information.

It is very important that program coordinators know which of their students have GA offers. Most significantly, immediate notification to the program may permit another student to attend Illinois State. If the student you are appointing already has a tuition waiver from the department; the GA appointment, which carries its own tuition waiver, frees up that departmental waiver to support a new student.

In addition, if the GA you are appointing ever goes on academic probation he or she may be terminated (even in mid-year) unless the student's academic program makes a successful petition for continuation. Only the academic program can make that request, and if they do not know of the assistantship they cannot make a timely request for continuation.

Social Security Numbers

All international students must obtain a Social Security Number (SSN) before a paycheck can be issued. Upon receiving their SSN, the student must take their Social Security card to the following areas:

- Non-Resident Alien Tax Specialist-Hovey Hall, Room 108
- Student Service and Referral Center-Moulton Hall 107

The appointing unit should verify that the student has notified the areas listed above of their SSN. The Student Service and Referral Center will alert Human Resources once they have entered the SSN into the system so the student's appointment paperwork can be updated and a paycheck can be issued at the next applicable payroll. If the student is unable to obtain their SSN in time to be issued a paycheck, the appointing unit can request an interest-free emergency loan for up to 80 percent of the GA's monthly stipend by e-mailing a request to Human Resources.

International Graduate Assistants

Department Chairs/School Directors, as part of the appointment procedure, need to inform International Admissions of any assistantship offers including financial details. Assistantships impact on an international student's declaration of finances needed to issue an F-1 visa.

Appointment Period

The Graduate School and the Office of Financial Aid encourage writing student appointments for the academic year (August 16 to May 15) to reduce possible interruption in financial aid for graduate assistants. Summer appointments may be offered to students between the dates of May 16 – August 15. During the summer session, the student does not need to be enrolled in any hours.

Semester vs academic year appointments?

Units may choose to appoint a GA for one semester at a time or for the entire academic year. During the worst of the budget years some units were asked to make only single-semester appointments in case of mid-year budget cuts. Thankfully those mid-year cuts appear to be behind us, and units should now make the semester or year decision based on their own needs. **If you need the services of the GA both semesters, a nine-month appointment is preferable.** Processing only one appointment rather than two saves time in your unit and in Human Resources. International students also benefit from one 9 month appointment rather than two 4.5 month appointments, since only the appointment

that the GA has actually been offered counts toward the financial resources to be credited toward visa requirements.

Maintenance Criteria

The degree program is responsible for ensuring that an assistantship facilitates the progress made by each graduate assistant toward degree completion. If an assistantship is contributing to unsatisfactory academic performance or is interfering with the timely completion of a degree by a graduate student, this information should be considered in renewing assistantship appointments. A graduate assistant should maintain at least a 3.0 GPA each term and must maintain a 3.0 cumulative average in order to keep his/her assistantship. If the graduate assistant's semester GPA falls below 3.0 but their cumulative GPA remains 3.0 or higher, departments should consider whether continuation of the assistantship will interfere with the graduate assistant's future academic progress in the degree program. If a graduate assistant's cumulative average drops below 3.0, the assistantship should be terminated by the appointing unit. In special circumstances a request for an exception can be made to the Graduate School.

GA Resignation/Termination Procedures

For a GA resigning from the position, the student should submit a resignation letter to the appointing unit who will forward that letter and the PERS 910 showing the termination date to Human Resources. If the student resigns on or before August 31 in the fall semester/January 31 in the spring semester, the student does not receive a tuition waiver.

Nearly all GAs perform their assignments diligently and maintain their eligibility. However, there are exceptions, and the Graduate School has recently fielded several inquiries about how to terminate a GA. The procedure varies depending on the grounds for termination. The following three grounds cover almost all cases.

Failure to maintain academic load

Apart from thesis or dissertation students taking 499 or 599, and students who have received departmental/school and Graduate School approval for a lower load via a PERS 938, GAs must maintain at least 9 hours. Assistants who drop below 9 hours may be terminated with a letter of notification to the student and by submitting a copy of the letter and the PERS 910 to Human Resources. (Units may instead request an exception to permit them to continue the assistantship.)

Lack of satisfactory progress

Assistants are required to maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0. A student whose cumulative GPA drops below 3.0 may be terminated by a letter of notification and submitting a copy of that letter and the PERS 910 to Human Resources. (Again, a unit may request an exception to allow a student to keep an assistantship.)

Breach of appointment (Failure to perform duties satisfactorily.)

This is the only criterion with an explicit due process requirement (and the only one that is normally open to contest from the student through Community Rights & Responsibilities.)

The student should first be advised in writing that the unit is proposing termination for breach of appointment, and offered the opportunity to respond to the letter.

It is up to the appointing unit to determine whether the breach is remediable or not.

In the case of a remediable breach, the letter to the student should include

- the reason for the proposed termination (in what way is the performance unsatisfactory?)
- the specific steps to be taken to correct the breach, along with a time limit for that correction
- an invitation for the student to meet or respond in writing regarding the issues raised in the letter, with a deadline for that response

If the student's response does not cause the unit to reconsider the proposal to terminate and the breach is not remedied by the deadline, the termination can proceed.

If the unit decides that the breach is so serious as to be non-remediable, the letter includes

- the reason for the proposed termination (in what way is the performance unsatisfactory?)
- a statement that the breach is not remediable (there is no time period for correction)
- an invitation for the student to meet or respond in writing regarding the issues raised in the letter, with a deadline for that response

If the student's response does not cause the unit to reconsider the proposal to terminate, the termination can proceed.

In each case, due process requires that the student be notified of the breach and the consequences, and offered the opportunity to respond before a final decision is reached. This step assures that the student has the chance to address possible errors of fact or misunderstandings before any termination is processed.

A unit that decides to proceed with the termination should submit a copy of the correspondence with the student, a memo from the chair indicating the final disposition of the student's employment, and the PERS 910 to Human Resources.

If the student is terminated on or before August 31 in the fall semester/January 31 in the spring semester, the student does not receive a tuition waiver.

Summer Tuition Waivers

A student who has had an assistantship for at least one semester during the academic year is eligible for a tuition waiver fellowship for the summer session immediately following his/her appointment year unless he/she graduates. Departments/Schools may request a tuition waiver for students for the summer session preceding their appointment year if the student has: 1) been admitted to the Graduate School and 2) accepted a graduate assistant offer for the Fall semester. A student not on a summer appointment can enroll for up to twelve (12) hours in the summer session.

Other Employment in Addition to Assistantship

An assistant working twenty (20) hours a week may not be employed in any other capacity in the University on a regular basis. **Graduate assistants with summer appointments may work more than 20 hours per week on campus.**

Additional Payments to Graduate Assistants

Additional payment is the means for compensating a graduate assistant for services considered to be above and beyond their regular assignment. These services are categorized as extra pay or administrative increment. All additional payments for graduate assistants must be approved by the appointing unit supervisor and the Director of Graduate Studies prior to services being rendered. For specific instructions for submitting additional payments, see the link for the PERS 916 instructions on the Human Resources web site.

Extra pay is compensation for services rendered on an irregular or one-time basis. A graduate assistant can receive a maximum of one such payment each semester.

Administrative increment is reserved for special situations where a graduate assistant has a full-time assistantship and also is receiving monthly compensation for services not related to their assistantship.