

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Information derived from the Grand Valley State University Graduate School website (www.gvsu.edu/gs).

A. Purpose

The Graduate Assistantship Policy distinguishes Graduate level policies from policies detailed in the *Faculty Handbook* that currently govern Undergraduate Assistantships (section 1.08).

Graduate Assistantships serve several functions. First, they provide graduate students with a part-time, paid work experience. Generally this experience will be directly related to their field of study and will allow them to expand and/or apply their discipline knowledge and skills under supervision.

Second, they provide GVSU faculty and/or university staff assistance in carrying out special projects or other assignments that require the advanced discipline skills of graduate students. Consequently, Graduate Assistantships facilitate direct interaction between faculty and graduate students through a unique educational experience while providing faculty more opportunity to fulfill their teaching, service and scholarship responsibilities.

Third, Graduate Assistants may serve in an instructional role where appropriate. Service in an "instructional role" requires that the graduate student works under the direct supervision of a tenure track faculty member who has final grading responsibility for the course. This corresponds to policies that allow undergraduates opportunities for assisting in laboratory and studio sessions|| (Faculty Handbook, Section 1.08).

In all cases, the activities assigned are to have educational value for the graduate student and are not to be used in lieu of hiring student employees for clerical and office support. The opportunities provided to graduate students assigned a Graduate Assistantship clearly enhance the graduate student's experience, enriches their education, and broadens their range of professional skills.

See the Office of Graduate Studies website at www.gvsu.edu/gs for additional information.

B. General Policies

Grand Valley is committed to an open, well-advertised process of announcing positions and hiring graduate assistants. Each department with approved Graduate Assistantships will publicize them, and ensure that qualified applicants for these positions are offered an opportunity to apply. Available Graduate Assistantships should be advertised in recruitment materials, on the website of the department offering the Graduate Assistantships, and on the Student Employment electronic job board. In addition, The Graduate School will either post or provide a web-link for every Graduate Assistantship.

In recognition that many Graduate Assistantships are used to recruit students to specific graduate programs, and that many students may not have ready access to the website, departments may use positions to recruit students to their own graduate program, without posting to the wider student community. However, special positions funded through grants or from other sources that arise during the academic year should be fully advertised as noted above.

C. Qualifications:

To qualify for a Graduate Assistantship at GVSU, the student must be fully admitted as a degree-seeking student in a Grand Valley graduate program at the time of appointment. Subsequently a full-time Graduate Assistant must successfully maintain a minimum course load of 9 graduate credit hours per semester (up to 24 credits per year) or 5 graduate credit hours per semester for a half-time Graduate Assistantship. The unit offering the Graduate Assistantship must have a written position description, approved by the Academic Dean of the College or the Appointing Officer of non-academic units, and by the Dean of The Graduate School. Please note that the graduate assistantship job description must significantly focus on instructional or research responsibilities



in order to be compliant with the Internal Revenue Service definition of the tuition reduction exemption for Graduate Assistants (GA). If the Special Project Graduate Assistantship responsibilities are non-instructional or non-research then the tuition remission and stipend received by the student may be subject to Federal, State, and Local withholding tax.

A typical full-time Graduate Assistantship includes a 20-hour per week work assignment for 15 weeks per semester and support from GVSU which includes a minimum stipend as specified on the Graduate Assistantship appointment form and tuition credit for up to 24 graduate credits per fiscal year, unless the student is eligible for reimbursement of tuition from another source. A typical half-time Graduate Assistantship includes a 10-hour per week work assignment for 15 weeks per semester and a minimum stipend as specified on the Graduate Assistantship appointment form with tuition credit for up to 12 graduate credits per fiscal year, unless the student is eligible for reimbursement of tuition from another source. Students that fail to maintain eligibility or carry out the assigned work in a satisfactory manner in a multi-semester Graduate Assistantship may forfeit continuation of a Graduate Assistantship position for future semesters, thereby forfeiting both stipend and tuition grant.

The Dean of The Graduate School is responsible for administering Graduate Assistantships. Any deviation from these terms (such as 10-month or 12-month appointments) requires prior approval by the Dean of The Graduate School.

D. Assistantship Procedures:

The Appointing Dean will forward all of the required information to the Office of Financial Aid on a current Graduate Assistantship Appointment Form to be uploaded into Onbase for The Graduate School review. All Graduate Assistantship procedures and forms are available at The Graduate School website. The Dean of The Graduate School will review each Graduate Assistantship Appointment Form to ensure that all appointments meet current policy and procedure. If an assistantship appointment meets those guidelines, the Dean of The Graduate School will confirm the appointment and notify the appropriate offices.

E. Internationals GA Appointments:

Offers of Graduate Assistantships to international students must be coordinated with the Director of International Student and Scholar Services, in the Padnos International Center. The Padnos International Center will advise international students with Graduate Assistantship appointments on employment issues related to visa status.

F. Appeals and Exceptions to the Graduate Appointment Policy:

The appointing officer shall submit in writing any appeals or requests for exceptions to any terms of the Graduate Assistantship Policy to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

G. Grant-Funded or Other Non-Base Funded Graduate Assistantships:

Grant-funded and other non-base funded Graduate Assistantships must follow the prevailing procedures, as detailed on The Graduate School website, and must provide support for both stipend and tuition. When a Graduate Assistantship position is to be funded by a grant, the grant writer/Principal Investigator (PI) should make every effort to obtain funding for the tuition grant from the funding source as well as the stipend for the position. If the grant source does not or will not provide tuition support, the PI must request approval at the time of grant submission for the tuition to be paid by GVSU and count that tuition support as a cash match in the grant budget. Requests will be made to the Dean of The Graduate School for tuition match on each separate grant and Graduate Assistantship position, as applicable.

H. Graduate Assistantships Assigned to Assist Faculty in Instructional Duties:

Graduate Assistants assigned to assist faculty in an instructional role are those graduate students who are involved in supervised instruction in a variety of educational settings. Supervised



instruction means that the graduate student works under the direct supervision of a tenure track faculty member. Qualified Graduate Assistants perform instructional duties in an area of their particular expertise, most often within their home department.

In rare cases, a graduate student may possess qualifications that make them uniquely qualified for a particular instructional role. For example, an attorney holding a JD degree may decide to work toward an MBA. Because they hold a JD, the graduate student may be highly qualified to teach a business law course. In these unique circumstances, a department may petition the Dean of The Graduate School to permit a Graduate Assistant to formally teach a course.

GVSU, The Graduate School, and departments appointing Graduate Assistants are responsible for ensuring that those students are capable and prepared to complete their assigned duties. Departments will have primary responsibility for evaluating an appointee, and may choose to evaluate the ability of a potential appointee in any way the department deems appropriate. However, language skills of all potential appointees (not just ESL applicants) must be considered as part of the evaluation process. Additionally, academic departments are responsible for reviewing the instructional performance of each Graduate Assistant, similar to the review of faculty teaching performance. Graduate Assistants will be provided access to the current online course management system (currently Blackboard) to insure communication with students assigned to their sections. In addition, this will allow students in those sections the opportunity to submit meaningful course evaluations. In this regard, departments are required to submit a clearly articulated plan outlining faculty oversight and evaluation of Graduate Assistants assigned instructional duties to The Graduate School prior to any Graduate Assistantship appointments.

GVSU faculty members oversee all Graduate Assistants with instructional duties. Duties may include:

- a. faculty supervised instruction in a laboratory course setting.
- b. conducting discussion or studio sections.
- c. conducting help sessions and holding office hours to advise students on course.
- d. assignments.
- e. assisting with laboratory setup.
- f. assisting with grading papers, objective exams, laboratory reports, and homework or tutoring.
- g. other duties pertaining to the instructional mission of GVSU excluding being listed as the instructor of record with the exception noted above.

To be eligible to serve as a Graduate Assistant with instructional responsibilities, the student must attend a departmental orientation and training session. The orientation and training will focus on helping the Graduate Assistants develop the skills that are relevant to their instructional duties. The orientation and training program is to be filed with the Dean of The Graduate School for review.

I. Graduate Assistantship Tuition Waivers:

Tuition waivers are to be used for graduate coursework at GVSU. With approval from the Dean of The Graduate School, tuition waivers may be used for any undergraduate coursework required for the graduate degree program at GVSU.

J. Graduate Assistant Orientation:

All graduate students assigned a Graduate Assistantship must complete an orientation that explains Graduate Assistant rights and responsibilities. The orientation is offered by The Graduate School. Training specific to a particular unit will be the responsibility of the unit.

K. Graduate Assistant Complaints:

At times, it may be necessary for a Graduate Assistant to file an appeal related to their position. Assistantship-related disputes or concerns should be directed first to the appointing Dean who will intervene or refer the issue to the appropriate University office. Complaints may include but are not limited to issues such as termination of their Graduate Assistantship, arbitrary or capricious



behavior of the supervisor, or expectations not outlined in the position description. Unresolved complaints may be appealed to the Dean of The Graduate School and ultimately to the Provost.

Graduate Assistantship Rules 2018-19

1. Tuition waiver credit hours received for all GVSU funded graduate assistantships will be as follows:
 - a. 9-month GA – 18 credit hours (F – 9, W – 9)
 - b. 10-month GA – 21 credit hours (F – 9, W – 9, S/S – 3)
 - c. 12-month GA – 24 credit hours (F – 9, W – 9, S/S – 6)

**Tuition waivers are to be used for graduate coursework at GVSU. Tuition waivers may not be used for undergraduate coursework without prior approval from the Dean of The Graduate School.*

Students will be limited to receiving a maximum of 9 credit hours of tuition waiver during the Fall and Winter semesters and a maximum of 6 credit hours of tuition waiver during the Spring/Summer semester.

2. Tuition waivers may not be used for 696/796 coursework without prior approval of the Dean of the Graduate School.

3. Unused tuition waiver credits may not be rolled over into subsequent semesters without approval of the Dean of The Graduate School.

4. Full-time, graduate assistantships may only be split into two half-time positions with the prior approval of the Dean of The Graduate School. Half-time, 9-month graduate assistantship positions will receive 4.5 credit hours of tuition waiver for both the Fall and Winter semesters (9 credit hours total). Half-time, 10-month graduate assistantship positions will receive 4.5 credit hours of tuition waiver for both the Fall and Winter semesters and 1.5 credit hours of tuition waiver for the Spring/Summer semester (10.5 credit hours total). Half-time, 12-month graduate assistantship positions will receive 4.5 credit hours of tuition waiver for both the Fall and Winter semesters and 3 credit hours of tuition waiver for the Spring/Summer semester (12 credit hours total).

5. All graduate assistantships must have a current position description that is on file with The Graduate School. In order to be in compliance with the Internal Revenue Service definition of the tuition reduction exemption for Graduate Assistants (GA) all job responsibilities for GAs must include a significant instructional or research component. If the GA responsibilities are non-instructional or non-research then the tuition remission and stipend received by the student is subject to Federal, State, and Local withholding tax under I.R.C. § 117(d). Please clearly identify the significant instructional or research component when submitting the GA Job Descriptions.



EXPECTATIONS FOR THE CSAL GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

First Year Graduate Staff:

1. Ask lots of questions.
2. Understand that some transitions will be a struggle.
3. Seek a mentor.

Second Year Graduate Staff:

1. Serve as a positive role model for the first year graduate cohort.
2. Continue to network.
3. Work toward post graduation goals.

All Graduate Staff:

1. Attend orientation training prior to the start of the academic year.
2. Attend all monthly graduate assistant professional development meetings.
3. Seek resources and information that will be helpful for your growth and development.
4. Express concerns and provide feed back in an appropriate manner. Think through solutions beforehand.
5. Keep an open mind and be open to new suggestions and ways of doing things.
6. Understand and uphold the mission statement of GVSU, the division, and your individual department.
7. Find ways to balance work, academics, and personal issues.
8. Learn and grow from mistakes and successes.
9. Represent, in a professional manner, your department and the division.
10. Always try your very best.
11. Be flexible - the graduate assistant position is ever changing and issues are rarely black and white.
12. Serve as an appropriate role model at all times, especially in relationships with students.
13. Keep a positive attitude and remember that everything is a learning experience.
14. Allow yourself to be unique – everyone is different and will have varied experiences.
15. Offer support to fellow graduate assistants.
16. Be timely to events and with administrative responsibilities.
17. Maintain confidentiality between other graduates, supervisors, and students.



CSAL GRADUATE ASSISTANTS VACATION AND TIME OFF SCHEDULE

The purpose of the assistantship is to gain professional experience that will support your ability to be employed in the profession of student affairs. Today's job market is very competitive and competency based. Therefore, these guidelines for vacation and time off have been developed to assure that you gain significant professional experience from your graduate assistantship.

1. Class attendance is the first priority for all graduate assistantships. Work activities are not to be scheduled during class times.
2. The maximum number of hours scheduled for a graduate assistantship is 20 hours per week. A schedule of these hours is to be given to each supervisor. Graduate Assistants are expected to be in their respective offices or responsibilities during these times. Alternate hours are to be authorized by the supervisor.
3. Student Services Division meetings and graduate assistant CSAL Professional Development meetings are considered part of the 20-hour weekly commitment. Other meeting times need to be coordinated with the supervisor in order to determine if these meetings are part of the weekly work allocation. Graduate Assistants' supervisors will be informed of attendance at professional development sessions.
4. Lunch is not considered part of the graduate assistant's time allocation.
5. Meetings for group projects (i.e. Case Study Presentations) are considered academic responsibilities. These meeting times are to occur outside of graduate assistants' 20-hour weekly time commitment.
6. Supervisors establish the work priorities and special assignments for each graduate assistant.
7. Break Time is scheduled according to the academic calendar. If the essential part of the graduate assistantship conflicts with the academic calendar, the supervisor outlines these requirements. Alternative break time will be arranged accordingly. Additional vacation time is given at the discretion of the graduate assistant's supervisor.
8. Up to four days of professional development may be approved by the graduate assistant's supervisor – this time is to be used for job interviewing, attending national and local conferences related to the field of student affairs, and other workshops deemed necessary for the professional development of the graduate assistant. All professional development must receive the approval of your immediate supervisor. Any additional professional development must be in consultation with your immediate supervisor.
9. Supervisors are to be personally informed of all absences due to personal illness, family crises and/or deaths. All time off, for any reason, has to be pre-approved by the supervisor. Arrangements need to be made with the supervisor to make up time missed and to cover work.

Please consult with your supervisor for your department's policy and procedures to request time-off.

A sample Graduate Assistant Time-Off Request form is included for your use.





Graduate Assistant Time-Off Request

Graduate Assistants are expected to develop a regular working schedule approved by their supervisors (on average 20 hours per week during the contract period). Sometimes you will need to change your regular schedule for time to attend conferences, job search activities, or other personal commitments. **To request time off from your regular work schedule, submit this form to your direct supervisor at least 10 working days prior to the date requested off.** The requested time off is not approved until signed by your supervisor.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Date(s)/Times(s) Requested: _____

Reason for Request: _____

Are there any meetings or projects that are affected by your absence? _____

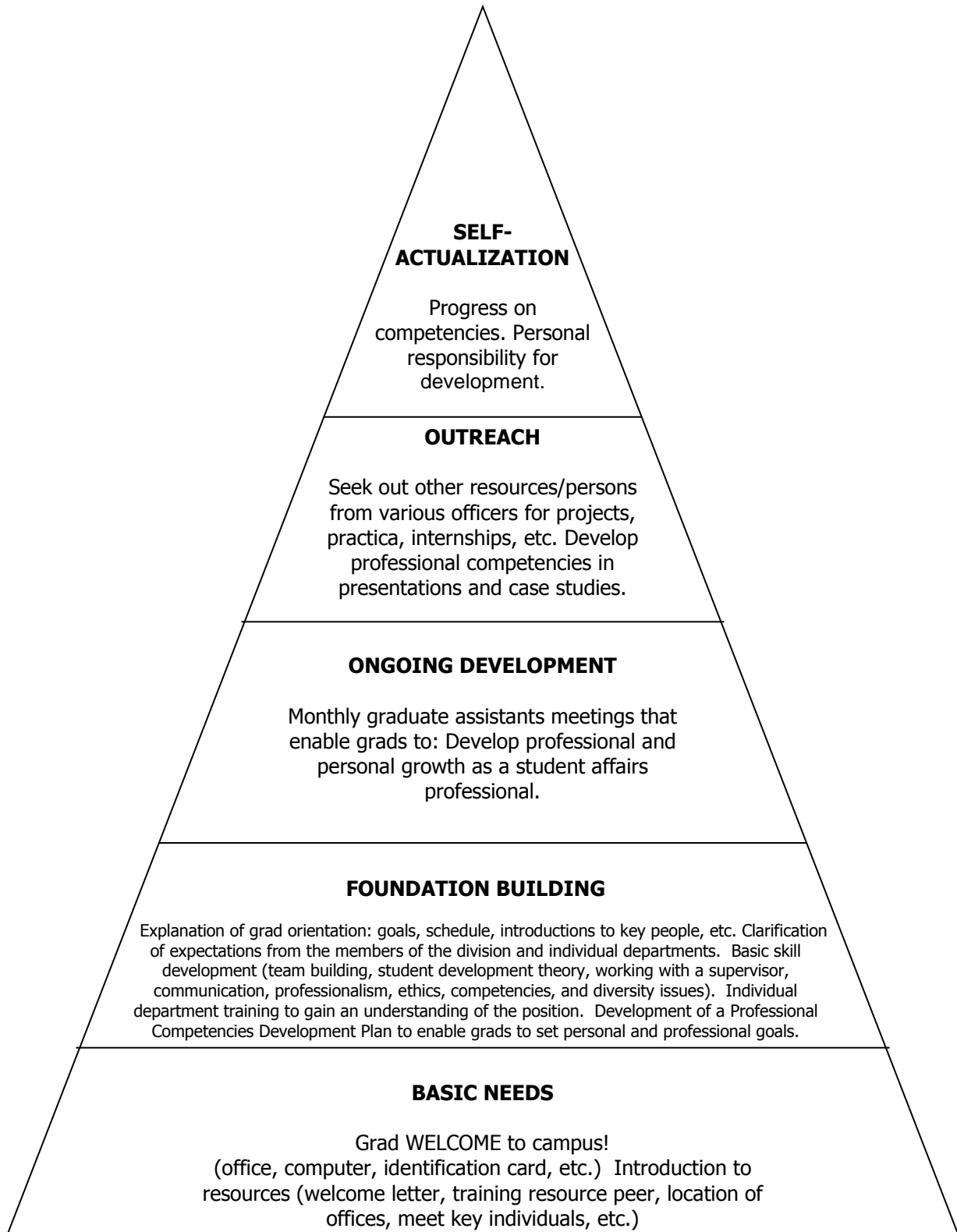
If so, how will your responsibilities be covered while you are away? _____

How do you plan to adjust your work schedule to make up for the time missed? _____

Approved by Graduate Assistant Supervisor

Date





Developmental Model – p 2-2 – Diagram



CSAL STUDENT PRIORITIES

