

Graduate Assistantship Program Guide

Jacksonville State University

**Graduate Studies
322 Bibb Graves Hall**

Mailing Address

Graduate Studies
700 Pelham Road North
Jacksonville, AL 36265-1602

Telephone and Email

256-782-5345
1-800-231-5291
Email: vansandt@jsu.edu

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PURPOSE OF GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP PROGRAM

The objectives of the Graduate Assistantship Program are to provide professional experiences which complement graduate instruction and research while contributing financial assistance to students pursuing graduate degrees.

The assistantship program is designed to aid in the successful completion of the degree pursued and to enhance career opportunities through applied professional experiences. The Office of Graduate Studies provides administrative oversight to assure conformity with institutional policies and procedures.

In this Graduate Assistantship Guide, areas or departments that hire graduate assistants will be referred to as “units”.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP CATEGORIES

Depending on the needs of the organizational units within the University, available University funds, and the qualifications of the individual graduate student, the following assistantships are offered:

Graduate Administrative Assistant (GAA)

A Graduate Administrative Assistant (GAA) typically assists administrative staff with collecting, organizing, and analyzing various types of data or information. GAA's must also assist with special projects and other duties assigned by the unit's supervisor and/or appropriate faculty and/or staff.

Ideally, GAA's will work in an academic area or unit related to their field of study in order to gain greater exposure to and experience in that area.

Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)

A Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) is involved with assisting a faculty member or members with academic research that may involve data collection and analysis, lab and field experiments, computer programming, preparation of reports or presentations, or other comparable duties.

Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)

A Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) assists faculty by teaching lower level courses or labs; developing teaching materials; and preparing and grading examinations, papers, or other student work. The GTA's must be assigned to and responsible for teaching a credit-bearing course and will be under the supervision of a faculty member experienced in the teaching field. A GTA's work with students will be closely supervised and must provide opportunities to gain teaching skills and a better grasp of the academic discipline. The supervising faculty member is responsible for overseeing the assignment of all grades to students in the courses.

EMPLOYING A GRADUATE ASSISTANT (SUMMARY)

Vacancy Postings

1. Typically, the office of Graduate Studies sends an email notice to units to begin submitting upcoming Graduate Assistantship vacancy postings.

2. Units will submit the Graduate Assistantship posting through JSU's Online Employment System (currently, People Admin) to Graduate Studies for review and approval.
3. If changes need to be made to the posting, the posting will be returned to the unit for revision. Once revisions are made, the unit will resubmit the posting to Graduate Studies.
4. Once the posting is approved by Graduate Studies, it will be forwarded to the Office of Human Resources.

Request to Hire

Individual units review applications, interview applicants and make the final decision regarding vacancies in their unit. Units will submit a hiring proposal through People Admin to Graduate Studies for applicant eligibility approval. Once Graduate Studies approves the applicant's eligibility, the hiring proposal is sent to the Office of Human Resources. Student information from each hiring proposal is emailed to the appropriate person in the Student Financial Services office.

The office of Graduate Studies does not provide funding for the Graduate Assistantship Program. Funding is provided by each individual unit. ***Units should not submit a hiring proposal to Graduate Studies until the necessary funds are available in the appropriate accounts to hire a graduate assistant.***

The fall semester requires units to have a minimum of one-fourth of the tuition and one-fourth of the stipend in each account from the current budget for each graduate assistant they wish to hire. When the new budget becomes available on October 1 each unit will be responsible for transferring the remaining three-fourths balance of tuition and stipend for each graduate assistant into the appropriate account numbers.

Graduate Assistantship Acknowledgment

Graduate Studies will complete a Graduate Assistantship Acknowledgment form for each student hired. The completed form will be sent to the hiring unit.

The student is required to complete and sign the Graduate Assistantship Acknowledgment form. The hiring units' budget manager approves by signing the Graduate Assistant Acknowledgment form. After the form is signed by both the student and the budget manager, the form is returned to Graduate Studies for final approval and processing. ***The hiring unit is responsible for continued monitoring regarding eligibility of each graduate assistant within their unit.***

The Graduate Assistantship Acknowledgment will be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. When approved, the Graduate Assistantship Acknowledgment will be submitted to the Office of Human Resources.

Office of Human Resources

Once the Graduate Assistant has signed the Graduate Assistantship Acknowledgment form he/she will report to the Office of Human Resources, Room 326A, Bibb Graves Hall. The Graduate Assistant will need to present their valid driver's license, social security card, and a voided check (for direct deposit purposes). These documents must be provided to the Office of Human Resources prior to the date employment begins. For questions concerning documentation needed, please contact the Office of Human Resources, 329 Bibb Graves Hall or

256-782-5007, or by using their online Question Form, <http://www.jsu.edu/hr/question-form/index.html>.

APPLYING FOR A GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP POSITION

Each graduate assistant candidate must complete an online Graduate Assistantship application for appointment. The graduate assistantship application is available on the Online Student Employment site at: <https://jobs.jsu.edu/>. Each semester students must submit a new Graduate Assistantship Application to remain eligible. Applicants must attach any required and/or optional documents, such as a resume and transcripts, to the Graduate Assistantship Application. Following a review of potential candidates, units may interview preferences. These interviews will be coordinated by the individual units. It is understood that an interview is not a guarantee of award. ***Considerations for assignment shall include funding availability, job availability, and job performance.***

Each selected graduate assistant shall receive an acknowledgment which includes a job description, responsibilities, minimum course load, amount of stipend, tuition remission, dates of appointment, workload, name and position of a supervisor.

Graduate assistants must sign and adhere to acknowledgment forms filed in Graduate Studies. In addition, graduate assistants must present documents (at a minimum, the individual's valid driver's license, original social security card, and a voided check) necessary to be placed on university payroll. ***It is the sole responsibility of the graduate assistant to provide these documents to the Office of Human Resources prior to the date employment begins.***

The Office of Human Resources will collect tax forms, I-9's on student employees, and direct deposit information from each graduate assistant. The Office of Human Resources will also maintain student files, summarize payroll information and forward the acknowledgment to the Payroll Office.

Each graduate assistant shall be assigned a supervisor who will be responsible for identifying tasks, supervising, and evaluating the job performance of the graduate assistant. In addition, the supervisor will be responsible for monitoring completion of time sheets and assuring their return to the Comptroller's Office by the requested date.

COMPLIANCE

Jacksonville State University (JSU) is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. The University has filed with the Federal Government an Assurance of Compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. The University does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and no qualified person shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity which receives or benefits from federal assistance.

ELIGIBILITY

To qualify for a graduate assistantship appointment, a student must satisfy the following eligibility requirements:

1. Must be classified as a graduate student at JSU and enrolled in a degree program;
2. Must not be on academic probation;
3. Must be registered for at least six (6) **graduate** semester credit hours during a regular semester or at least six (6) **graduate** semester credit hours for the period of May through the last summer term. An exception to this requirement will be made by the Director of Graduate Studies, under the following conditions:
 - a. If a student is classified as a graduate student and is required to take undergraduate courses for the graduate degree (foundation courses for the MBA degree, undergraduate deficiencies in education or foundation courses for Computer Systems and Software Design program or any other graduate program).
 - b. If a student has made satisfactory progress toward obtaining the graduate degree and needs fewer than six (6) graduate hours to complete the degree, the student may be considered for an assistantship.
 - c. If a student does not intend to work as an assistant for all summer terms, the student must take either three (3) graduate hours for each summer term worked, or a total of six (6) semester hours over the summer terms.
 - d. If a student is required to enroll in a course that is less than three (3) graduate credit hours.
4. Must not be holding another campus job;
5. A graduate assistant is prohibited from accepting, receiving, or being credited for other forms of tuition scholarships from the university. Scholarships from sources outside of the university will not be prohibited;
6. It should be noted that the graduate assistantship tuition scholarship may affect the amount of federal financial aid for which students are eligible. ***The graduate assistant will be responsible for determining if there is any impact on eligibility of other financial aid programs;***
7. International graduate assistants must be certified by the Director of the International House Program to perform duties and receive compensation.

APPOINTMENT

The Dean/Director of the appropriate school/area, in consultation with the unit, determines the availability of, and approves graduate assistant positions.

Following approval of positions from the unit and the Director of Graduate Studies, graduate assistantship positions will be posted online at <https://jobs.jsu.edu/>.

An applicant's file will be reviewed and interviews held by the units wishing to hire. Selection(s) will be made by the unit, with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

The office of Graduate Studies does **not** provide funding for the Graduate Assistantship Program. Funding is provided by each individual unit. ***Units should not submit a hiring proposal***

to Graduate Studies until the necessary funds are available in the appropriate accounts to hire a graduate assistant.

PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT

Graduate assistants are appointed on a semester by semester basis. In some cases, this appointment may include one or more summer terms. The awarding of an assistantship does not imply future employment. A graduate student maintaining satisfactory academic progress toward a degree will be eligible for a graduate assistantship throughout the full length of his or her program of study.

STIPEND AND WORKLOAD

Compensation for graduate assistantships is determined by the Provost/ Vice President for Academic Affairs. Graduate assistantships provide stipends based on a workload equal to twenty (20) hours per week. However, in some compressed summer terms, workload may increase to twenty-six (26) hours per week under special circumstances. Graduate assistants are prohibited from accepting, receiving, or being credited for other forms of university tuition assistance. If a graduate assistant resigns an assistantship or is terminated, the stipend will be prorated through the last day of employment.

Tuition scholarships for a maximum of nine (9) graduate semester hours or full summer term and a waiver of the general university fees are awarded to graduate assistants in addition to a monthly stipend.

EVALUATION

The evaluation process is a crucial part of the assistantship program. Supervision and performance reviews should be an ongoing process of communication between the graduate assistant and the supervisor.

At least one formal evaluation of all graduate assistants in each unit will occur each semester. The office of Graduate Studies will email a “Graduate Assistant Evaluation” form to each unit for each graduate assistant the unit has employed during the semester. The evaluation is to be completed and signed by both the supervisor and the graduate assistant. Upon completion of the evaluation, the supervisor will review the results of the evaluation with the graduate assistant. Completed evaluations will be returned to LaRilda VanSandt, Graduate Studies, vansandt@jsu.edu, by the due date indicated on the back of the evaluation form.

TERMINATION

A graduate assistantship award may be terminated prior to the end of the appointment period for any of the following reasons:

1. The student is no longer enrolled in Graduate Studies.
2. The student’s performance is determined to be unsatisfactory by the employing academic unit.

Graduate Studies must be notified in writing upon termination of any graduate assistant. Please send email to: vansandt@jsu.edu.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The graduate assistant will be notified in writing of all decisions that affect his or her status as an assistant by the assigned unit. This includes advance notifications of evaluation procedures and a summary of the evaluation by the assigned unit.

It is important to resolve, as early as possible, any disagreement which may arise between assistants and supervisors. Should a problem arise in the work assignment, the graduate assistant has the right to initiate a grievance or to appeal a decision through the specified channels.

The student shall first inform the unit supervisor of the problem and, attempt to resolve the grievance in an informal manner. If the matter cannot be resolved in an informal manner, the following formal grievance procedure is to be followed:

1. If the grievance is not resolved in discussion with the immediate supervisor, a formal, written complaint is filed with the unit director/department head within five (5) working days after the conference described above. The unit director/department head must give a written decision on the grievance, within five (5) working days after receipt of the complaint.
2. If the grievance is not resolved by this decision, a written appeal may be filed with the Director of Graduate Studies no later than ten (10) working days of receipt of the unit director/department head's decision on the grievance. The final decision lies with the Director of Graduate Studies.