

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

Departments assign graduate assistantship positions to eligible students according to the guidelines below. Regardless of terminology a unit or department may use to describe these positions (GXA, GSA, GA, GTI, RSA, etc.) the University recognizes only three official assistantship types: Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA), Graduate Service Assistantship (GSA) and Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA). Assistantships can be in support of teaching assignments, general administrative duties, or research. These policies and guidelines apply to GTAs, GSAs and GRAs except where specified and must be adhered to by all graduate colleges, schools, departments and recipients.

Assistantship Types

Following are descriptions of each type of assistantship:

- **Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)**

Graduate teaching assistants may support faculty by performing instruction-related duties such as teaching lower-level undergraduate courses and labs, developing teaching materials, leading class discussions, tutoring, preparing and giving examinations, and grading examinations or papers. GTAs are funded by the University budget. GTAs must demonstrate fluency in spoken English to be eligible to receive the GTA award. For more information, see the Required Tests for GTA Eligibility (<http://bulletin.du.edu/graduate/admission-and-enrollment-policies/additional-standards-for-non-native-english-speakers/required-tests-for-gta-eligibility/>) policy.

- **Graduate Service Assistant (GSA)**

Graduate service assistants may perform administrative and support functions or discipline-specific projects for an academic department or business unit. Responsibilities may include administrative support, lab monitoring, equipment management, web site development and maintenance, editorial work for scholarly journals, or routine support for publications or social media. To support professional development, the graduate service assistant should be given the opportunity to apply his/her academic skills to the assigned tasks and develop new administrative skills. GSAs are funded by the University budget.

- **Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)**

Graduate research assistants may perform research assignments under the direct supervision of a faculty member who generally is the principal investigator on an external grant or contract. The research must be directly relevant to the student's academic program of study, should relate directly to the student's degree requirements, and should be reasonably expected to contribute to the student's dissertation, thesis, or capstone project. The label "GRA" only applies to graduate assistants who receive stipend and waiver from external awards (e.g. grants or contracts).

Assistantship Eligibility

An assistantship recipient must be enrolled in an academic program during the terms in which they receive the award, stipend and tuition waiver hours. Departments may stipulate that recipients must be enrolled full-time.

Assistantship Academic Requirements

Students must be in good academic standing in order to maintain eligibility for an assistantship position. Students on academic probation or suspension are not eligible for an assistantship position until that status is resolved. After two consecutive terms below 3.0 GPA, a student is not eligible for an assistantship position until the GPA is raised to a 3.0 or better.

Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) Exams, Credentials and Experience

Any graduate applicant whose native language is not English or is from a country where English is not the native language, who wishes to be considered for any Graduate Teaching Assistantship during any year of study in any graduate department at the University of Denver, must demonstrate fluency in spoken English by scoring a minimum of 26 on the Internet Based TOEFL (iBT) exam speaking score, an IELTS score of 8 on the speaking section or a minimum score of 200 on the CAE speaking section.

GTA English Language Exemption

Prospective GTAs may be exempted from submitting TOEFL/IELTS/CAE scores if they:

- Have earned a baccalaureate degree or higher from a formally-recognized/accredited university where the institution's language of instruction and examination is English and have four or more consecutive years of work/instructional experience in countries with an official native language of English and the language of employment/instruction is English.

Note: GTA awards may be revoked or restricted to non-teaching assistantship responsibilities at the discretion of the division if the GTA does not demonstrate sufficient English fluency in the classroom.

English Language Proficiency Assessment

Students offered a Graduate Teaching Assistant position whose native language is not English will be contacted by the University of Denver's Office of Graduate Education to complete the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) designed specifically for GTAs.

Prospective GTAs who are awarded a GTA position based on demonstrated fluency in spoken English with TOEFL/IELTS/CAE minimum scores required for GTAs whose ELPA demonstrates they are not sufficiently proficient may be permitted to hold an assistantship position but must be restricted to non-teaching responsibilities.

Students may contact the unit and/or the Office of Graduate Education for additional details.

To serve as instructor of record for an undergraduate course, graduate teaching assistants must be qualified by appropriate credential or tested experience as defined by the Higher Learning Commission:

- Completed program of study in the discipline, with substantial coursework at least one level above that of the courses being taught or developed.
- Earned degree at least one level above that of the program in which they are teaching, typically a master's degree, with substantial graduate coursework in the discipline of those courses.

or

- Industry certification and years of experience successfully working in the field.
- Documented recognition of excellence in teaching.
- Expertise, ability, and talent validated through publication or wide critical and public acclaim.

Assistantship Employment

Assistantship Hiring

Assistantship appointments are made on a full-, half-, one-third, or quarter-time basis. Assistantship awards can be made for any one quarter or all four academic quarters.

In general, full-time graduate assistants are expected to devote 20 hours per week to their assignments, half-time graduate assistants devote 10 hours and quarter-time graduate assistants devote 5 hours. However, some academic areas may require different hours.

Assistantship Employment Restrictions

Students who are admitted with provisions must satisfy the provisions in the time frame specified in the admission letter in order to remain eligible for a graduate assistantship.

If a graduate assistant should wish to change his/her major field of study to another college, school or department, the award is not transferable to the new department.

Graduate assistantships should be awarded to eligible students in the same or closely related field as their degree program.

A graduate student cannot hold more than the equivalent of one full-time assistantship (GTA, GSA and/or GRA). Full-time is normally defined as 20 hours per week (1.0 FTE).

Students cannot simultaneously hold both an assistantship position and a work-study position. However students may hold an assistantship and a work-study position in separate academic terms.

Students cannot simultaneously hold both a full-time benefitted staff position and an assistantship position, or any combination of the two exceeding 40 hours per week.

Students cannot serve as a graduate assistant in a course in which they are currently enrolled.

Assistantship Hiring Paperwork

Background Check

- All DU employees are required to complete a background check in order to be eligible to be hired. Students must be cleared as eligible to hire by Human Resources prior to officially being offered the assistantship.
- As long as a graduate assistant is re-hired within 120 days of their last day worked, then no additional background check is required to re-hire the student. All inquiries regarding background checks should be made with Human Resources.

Other Hiring Paperwork

Students who have never worked at DU before must also submit the following items to the University's Shared Services Office:

- I-9: As mandated by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of November 6, 1986, the University administration is required to verify the identity and work eligibility of all employees. All hiring paperwork must be completed by the student through the Shared Services Office. If an international student's visa status changes after the student has been hired, a new I-9 must be submitted.
- Affirmation Statement: As mandated in House Bill 1017, the law requires employers to take additional steps in verifying work authorization for all new hires.

- W-4: University Payroll requires all new hires complete a new, original W-4. The Shared Services Office is the only University entity authorized to verify and complete the W-4 paperwork for new employees.

Assistantship Termination

If a graduate assistant is proven incapable of performing the responsibilities of the position, the unit has the right to terminate the award prior to the end of the award period. Units should work with Human Resources when pursuing the termination of a graduate assistant.

If the appointment of a graduate assistant is terminated by means other than death or disablement before the end of an academic term, the award recipient is responsible for repayment of the “unearned” share of the award, including waiver hours “borrowed” from the future (GTA and GSA only). Repayment may occur through deductions from the final paycheck or by other means.

With permission from the appropriate business officer, the program may hire a replacement graduate assistant and reallocate the unused portion of any remaining stipend or waiver award to the new assistant.

Assistantship Stipend and Waiver Awards

Assistantship offers must include both a tuition waiver and monthly stipend unless the student has completed all coursework and is registered for Continuous Enrollment. In that case, the student may be offered a stipend without a tuition waiver.

Awards are made through the graduate college, school, or department. Assistantship awards can be made for any one or multiple academic quarters.

Assistantship awards will be full-, half-, one-third, or quarter-time. Graduate Assistants who are less than full-time receive stipend and waivers proportional to their appointment.

Assistantship Stipends

Stipends are paid through payroll and are taxable income.

Assistantship Waivers

Tuition waivers are considered merit-based scholarships and are not taxable income.

Graduate assistants will not receive tuition waivers during any term they are not receiving a stipend.

Students must inform their program of their plan for waiver hour use.

The combination of all tuition waivers cannot exceed tuition charges (prior to any assessed fees) and waivers cannot be awarded in cash.

Normally, full-time graduate assistants receive 8-10 hours of waiver for each academic term. Awards in specific colleges, schools, or departments may vary.

There is no tuition-waiver benefit for spouses, dependents, or non-dependents of graduate assistants.

When assistantship recipients have both scholarship and waiver hours available in any given term, scholarship hours will be drawn upon first to pay tuition bills. When assistantship recipients are also employees and have a combination of employee waiver, scholarship and/or assistantship waiver hours available in any given term, the employee waiver will be drawn upon first, then the scholarship hours and finally the assistantship waiver hours will be drawn upon to pay tuition bills.

Because the fiscal year ends before the summer term closes, waivers cannot be carried forward from the spring to the summer term.

Waiver hours cannot be used for interterm courses, noncredit courses, or any other fees or fines, including continuous enrollment fees.

If the student drops courses after or during the refund period for which waiver hours have been used, the waiver will not be re-awarded for future use.

Graduate assistant positions awarded late or after the fall term may affect other financial aid that a student is receiving.

GTA/GSA Award Duration and Use

When GTA and GSA appointments are made for multiple terms during an aid year (for instance, fall through spring), tuition waiver awards (“waivers”) will be divided equally among the terms. “Appointment” means that the student is working as a graduate assistant and earning a stipend. In the case of single term or term-by-term appointments, waivers will be available for use during the term of appointment only (i.e., cannot be borrowed from the future or carried over to the next term).

Tuition waivers cannot be awarded prior to the term of appointment (e.g., waivers cannot be awarded for summer if the student will not be working until fall term).

GRA Award Duration and Use

GRA awards are for one-quarter duration and GRA waivers cannot carry forward. There is no borrowing from the future and no carry-over from one term to the next, and GRA waivers cannot be made available until the term they are earned. GRA awards are subject to these policies for the life of the research grant.

Neither the stipend nor the waiver portion of a GRA award can cover any period outside of the grant or contract period. For example, if a grant or contract begins or ends at the halfway point of a term, no more than one-half of a full award (stipend and waiver) can be paid during that term.

Health Insurance Scholarship

The Graduate Assistantship Health Insurance Scholarship ("Health Insurance Scholarship") covers the cost of the DU Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) and the Health and Counseling Fee (HCF).

Health Insurance Scholarship Eligibility

To be eligible for the Health Insurance Scholarship, graduate assistants are required to meet the following criteria for the entire academic year (fall, winter and spring quarters):

- hold a full-time assistantship appointment (GTA, GRA, GRA or combination)
- successfully fulfill the requirements of their assistantship appointment
- have a tuition waiver offer of a minimum of 24 total credit hours
- register for and complete a minimum of 24 total credit hours of graded coursework (e.g., not Continuous Enrollment)
- must not register for Continuous Enrollment alone in any of the three academic quarters

Health Insurance Scholarship Requirements

Students who wish to receive the Health Insurance Scholarship must accept the terms and conditions of the scholarship and the award in PioneerWeb (<https://pioneerweb.du.edu:8447/cas-web/login/?service=https%3A%2F%2Fpioneerweb.du.edu%2Fc%2Fportal%2Flogin>).

After receiving the Health Insurance Scholarship, failure to comply with any of the terms and conditions may result in a hold being placed on the student's account. The hold will not be removed until the student has re-paid the health insurance charges.

The award payment will be automatically applied to the student's account 10 days before the start of every term if they have maintained eligibility, have registered for classes, have been assessed the DU Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) and/or the Health and Counseling Fee (HCF) and have not waived the SHIP and/or HCF charges.

Students registered for fewer than six credit hours of graded coursework will not be assessed the SHIP or HCF fees automatically and must complete the enrollment forms available through the Health and Counseling Center for all applicable terms in order to receive the Health Insurance Scholarship.