



Graduate Assistant Supervisor Handbook

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GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

A graduate assistantship is an opportunity to work on campus in a research or service-oriented capacity in order to gain value work experience in higher education or an academic field and earn a stipend.

A GA performs such specific duties as:

- Supporting instruction.
- Supervising labs or other facilities.
- Assisting faculty with scholarship.
- Contributing to departments' academic, scholarship, and service endeavors.
- Contributing to the overall success of the university's operations.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for an assistantship, students:

- Must be matriculated into a degree-seeking graduate program.
- Must be enrolled in a minimum of nine (9) credit hours of graduate coursework applicable to their degree program.
- Must maintain good academic standing (3.0 cumulative GPA) in a graduate program at PennWest.

International students must first have approval from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services before seeking on-campus employment. I-9 documents can be obtained from the Office of International Programming and Study Away (conlogue@pennwest.edu or kspangenberg@pennwest.edu).

DUTIES

All GA employment activities are carried out under the supervision and direction of an approved university faculty or staff member. These may include:

- Assisting faculty with sponsored programs, research, or other scholarship.
- Assisting faculty and departments in academic, professional, or service functions.
- Supporting and assisting faculty in their teaching and instruction.
- Supervising laboratories, studios, or other university facilities.
- Providing service or support functions to academic or non-academic departments and offices.

The collective bargaining agreement between the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF, the faculty union) and Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE, the State System) includes the following provisions within Article 7.C 1 and 2: Presidents may appoint graduate assistants to be assigned to regular faculty members to assist in research, instruction, and other professional duties. At no time shall graduate assistants instruct lectures or laboratories unless the faculty member assigned to teach the course is present in the classroom or laboratory.

EVALUATIONS

Each graduate assistant is evaluated twice a year by the work-site supervisor. At that time, the GA will meet with their supervisor and discuss the evaluation in detail. This provides an opportunity for either party to discuss any deficiencies or expectations that are not being met.

Unsatisfactory performance will be immediately noted, and discussions will occur between work-site supervisor and student to try and improve performance. In some cases, the GA may be relocated to another work site in order to improve their performance. However, continued unsatisfactory performance is cause for loss of the assistantship.

GRADUATE ASSISTANT EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

Graduate assistants are subject to a variety of rules, regulations, and policies. In the performance of their responsibilities, they must abide by all relevant Human Resources employment policies. Graduate assistants shall respect the rights and opinions of students, staff, and faculty and uphold the academic standards of the university.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Three types of **mandatory** background checks are required under Pennsylvania law:

1. **Criminal History Record Check** – Conducted by the Pennsylvania State Police indicating the individual has not been convicted of a reportable offense.
2. **Child Abuse Clearance** - Certification from the Department of Human Services as to whether the individual is named in the statewide database as a perpetrator in a pending child abuse investigation, a founded report, or an indicated report of child abuse.
3. **Federal Criminal History Background Check** - Includes fingerprinting and review by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for the purpose of verifying the identity of the individual and obtaining a current record of any criminal arrests and convictions.

These background checks are processed in coordination with the Office of Human Resources. All graduate assistants are required to obtain these clearances with the Office of Human Resources within the GA's first 90 days of work.

The background checks are valid for employment purposes with the university for 60 months; they must be renewed after 60 months if the student is still employed by the university. If a graduate assistant does not complete the background checks and clearances process in coordination with Human Resources within the first 90 days of employment, a hold will be placed on their Payroll Account. The hold on their Payroll Account will not be released until all clearances are complete and received by Human Resources. Under no circumstances will students be allowed to work, receive payment for hours worked, or be able to make up lost hours.

PAYROLL PROCEDURES

New graduate assistants must complete payroll and tax information prior to the first day of employment. The Student Payroll and Background Check Forms, as well as other applicable forms, are available at <https://pennwest.edu/student-payroll-forms.pdf>. Supervisors are responsible for completing the Graduate Assistant Hiring form <https://pennwest.edu/student-payroll-forms.pdf> in addition to ensuring students complete the payroll forms. Specific instructions on the hiring process can be found at <https://pennwest.edu/ga-process>. No graduate assistant may begin work without completing and submitting the necessary payroll forms/background clearance forms. All graduate assistants must use direct deposit. The direct deposit forms are part of the payroll forms.

SPRING BREAK AND FINALS WEEK

Graduate assistants are student employees who normally work when they are actively attending classes and should not work during semester/term breaks, spring break, or finals week. Under special circumstances and with approval of their supervisor, a graduate assistant may work during some of these periods. However, the first priority in considering whether the GA should work during these periods is a focus on student academic success. A secondary consideration is the potential impact related to payroll processes.

TERMINATION

If a graduate assistant terminates employment or is terminated from the position, the stipend will stop. If the graduate assistant was using payroll deduction to make tuition payments, the student will be immediately responsible for any unpaid tuition and fees and any overpayments issued through the Payroll Office. A student may be terminated from a graduate assistant position for cause before expiration of the Graduate Assistant Hiring Form under certain conditions:

- Graduate assistant's schedule drops below the required number of credits noted above.
- Graduate assistant fails to maintain good academic standing.
- Graduate assistant fails to fulfill work assignments, including reporting, satisfactorily.
- Graduate assistant violates laws or university regulations which, in the judgment of the university, affect duties or services performed by the graduate assistant.
- Graduate assistant violates provisions of the stipulations in the Graduate Assistant Hiring Form.
- Graduate assistant fails to meet financial obligations to the university.
- University ceases to make funds available for the graduate assistant position.

GRADUATE ASSISTANT SUPERVISORS

Graduate assistant tasks, responsibilities, and duties are assigned by approved graduate assistant supervisors. The supervisor, who may be a faculty or staff member of the university, is directly responsible for the items listed below. These responsibilities may not be re-assigned by the graduate assistant supervisor to any other faculty or staff member without approval by the division's vice president.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF GRADUATE ASSISTANT SUPERVISORS

1. Requesting a graduate assistant position by the established annual due date, including:
 - a. **Learning Outcomes** - At least three outcomes are required. Terms from Bloom's Taxonomy are used to clearly describe each learning outcome.
 - b. **Assessment/Evaluation** - Each learning outcome is accompanied by a description of the methods used to assess and evaluate the graduate assistant's progress toward achieving the learning outcomes.
 - c. **Tasks** - All of the tasks, assignments, activities, duties, and responsibilities that will be completed by the graduate assistant during the employment period.
2. Finding a qualified student to fill an approved graduate assistant position and ensuring that university hiring processes are completed prior to the graduate assistant commencing work.
3. Ensuring that the graduate assistant has completed any applicable FERPA, DEI and Title IX training, as well as the sexual harassment training that is a required part of the orientation for all graduate students.
4. Reviewing, understanding, and following the policies, procedures, and practices outlined in the PennWest Graduate Assistant Handbook.
5. Ensuring that the graduate assistant reviews, understands, and follows the policies, procedures, and practices outline in the PennWest Graduate Assistant Handbook.
6. Assigning each task, assignment, activity, etc. to the graduate assistant and ensuring that no work infringes on bargaining unit work as identified in relevant collective bargaining agreements.
7. Monitoring the work habits and functions of the graduate assistant and providing feedback, re-direction, and performance adjustment, when required.
8. Ensuring that the graduate assistant regularly documents and accurately submits to the supervisor time on task using the official time sheet.

9. Ensuring that the graduate assistant never works more than 30 hours per week, and not permitting the amount of time missed to exceed the number of hours in one normal graduate assistant work week.
10. Assessing, evaluating, and documenting the graduate assistant's progress toward attainment of the learning outcomes for the approved position.
11. Promptly notifying Payroll Shared Services through HRConnect, Student Accounts, and supervisor of any deficiencies in work performance, any changes in employment (including termination and dismissal), or any time the graduate assistant misses more than the hours in one normal graduate assistant work week.

HIRING PROCESS

A graduate assistant will not be compensated for work that is completed prior to a Graduate Assistant Hiring Form being approved and submitted to Payroll Shared Services. If a Graduate Assistant Hiring Form is submitted after the first week of the semester/term, the graduate assistant's compensation will be prorated based on the available pay periods in the term.

Graduate assistants must show satisfactory academic progress toward completing their graduate academic program, as defined by the department and the university; maintain appropriate standards of academic conduct; and honor the terms and conditions of the Graduate Assistant Hiring Form.

PROCESS TO HIRE GA'S - NEW AND RETURNING

The Human Resources Office will provide all departments with the following documents. Links also are provided for the documents.

- **Payroll Packet**, <https://pennwest.edu/student-payroll-forms.pdf>, which includes Background Check Documents
- **Graduate Assistant Hiring Form** – <https://pennwest.edu/ga-hiring-form>
- Prior to each semester, Human Resources will send a spreadsheet containing names of students currently active in SAP (providing confirmation if the student worked previously).

Step 1

Supervisors should have the students complete the following background check forms (included in Payroll Packet):

1. **Background check certification for provisional employment form.**
2. **Background release form.**

Supervisors then submit the **two background check forms** through HRConnect by doing the following:

1. Go to <https://passhe.service-now.com/esc>
2. Select Request Assistance from the top menu bar
3. Select General from Catalog Filters on the left
4. Select Background Check/Fingerprint Inquiry
5. Use dropdown to select Other Inquiry (last option)
6. Type the following in the box:
 1. "Student Worker Background Check"
 2. Student's Name
 3. Department Name and Supervisor Name
 4. Add the **two forms** as attachments
 5. Select Submit

Step 2

Supervisors should complete the Graduate Assistant Hiring Form as follows:

1. Complete Sections 1, 2 and 3.
2. If the position is grant funded, the supervisor should send to grants accounting for grant name, cost center and signature.
3. Supervisor should email the form to the following:
 3. Academic Affairs – David Hartley
 4. Other Areas – Division Vice President's Office
4. David Hartley or the division's vice president will verify the position is approved in Section 5 and email the form back to the department.
5. If approved, the supervisor will complete section 4.
6. Have the student sign the form in Section 3.
7. Once all sections are complete, move to step 3

Step 3

Supervisors should review the spreadsheet of student workers to see if the student is on the list.

- **If the student is on the list** submit the *GA Hiring Form* through HRConnect by doing the following:
 1. Go to <https://passhe.service-now.com/esc>
 2. In the How can we help search bar, type "Student"
 3. Select Student Employee Inquiry at the top of the list
 4. In the box, type the following:
 1. "Hiring a GA"
 2. Students Name
 3. Department Name and Supervisor Name
 4. Add the **GA Hiring Form** as an attachment
 5. Select Submit
 - **If the student is NOT on the list**, the supervisor should have the student complete the following forms. In addition, the supervisor must verify the identifications required for Form I-9. See Instruction sheet for forms.
 - I9 Form
 - W4 form
 - Ethnicity form (optional)
 - Residency Certification form, local earned income tax withholding
 - Direct Deposit form (optional)
 - Local Services Tax Exemption form (if required)
 - Form REV-419 EX (for Ohio, W.Va., Va. residents) (if required)
 - Statement of Citizenship Status & Taxation by year (if required)
1. Once the forms are completed and reviewed, the supervisor should enter a case in HRConnect as follows:
 1. Go to <https://passhe.service-now.com/esc>
 2. In the How can we help search bar, type "Student"
 3. Select Student Employee Inquiry at the top of the list
 4. In the box type the following
 1. "Hiring a GA"
 2. Students Name
 3. Department Name and Supervisor Name

4. Attached the following documents as one PDF
 - GA Hiring Form
 - I9 Form
 - W4 form and instructions
 - Ethnicity form (optional)
 - Residency Certification form, local earned income tax withholding
 - Direct Deposit form (optional)
 - Local Services Tax Exemption form (if required)
 - Form REV-419 EX (for Ohio, W.Va., Va. residents) (if required)
 - Statement of Citizenship Status & Taxation by year (if required)
5. Select Submit

PAY RATE AND WORK HOURS

Graduate assistants are compensated with a stipend, with a pay rate of \$15.00 an hour. Stipends are applied against the student's tuition charges, unless the student has sufficient financial aid to cover the student's account. If there is not a balance owed by the student, payment will be made through the university's bi-weekly payroll system.

100 Hours Stipend/\$15 an hour: \$1,500 per semester
200 Hour Stipend/ \$15 an hour: \$3,000 per semester
300 Hour Stipend/\$15 an hour: \$4,500 per semester

Students are required to pay the difference between the stipend value and the tuition/fee charges when the stipend is presented to the Student Accounts Office for approval, unless there is adequate financial aid in place to cover the charges.

Note: Current Edinboro graduate assistants who are continuing with their program are pre-approved for their current package, which is:

- Tuition waiver for their in-state and non-resident tuition rate; and
- Pay rate of \$7.50 per hour for the graduate assistant work.

WORK HOURS

The length of an appointment may be for a single term or an academic year. Graduate assistants may work 100, 200, or 300 hours per semester/term. Whether the GA position is 100 hours, 200 hours, or 300 hours depends upon several factors, including the available budget for positions, the work required for the position, and the graduate student's availability for completing the work assignments and required work hours. The Graduate Assistant Hiring Form specifies work hours and standard dates of employment.

100-Hour Graduate Assistant

The 100-hour graduate assistant works 6.6 hours per week during the 15-week fall or spring semester, or 10 hours per week during a 10-week summer term.

200-Hour Graduate Assistant

The 200-hour graduate assistant works 13.3 hours per week during the 15-week fall or spring semester, or 20 hours per week during a 10-week summer term.

300-Hour Graduate Assistant

The 300-hour graduate assistant works 20 hours per week during the 15-week fall or spring semester, or 30 hours per week during a 10-week summer term.