



UNI

University of Northern Iowa™
Graduate College

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP HANDBOOK

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Graduate Assistantship Position Information

What is a Graduate Assistantship?

- Graduate Assistantships (GA) are on-campus employment positions that work on assignments that meet the guidelines approved by the Council of Graduate Schools and any other current UNI policy. Assistantships are offered on a half-time (10 hours per week) or a full-time basis (20 hours per week) for a limited period of full-time coursework at the University of Northern Iowa. Please visit the [Maximum Support Rule](#) stated below for more information in regards to the limit of semesters students are eligible.
- A Graduate Assistant (GA) receives a stipend for services rendered to the University. Academic credit is not provided for work or services performed as part of the assigned duties for a Graduate Assistantship.
- Graduate Assistantships are available to qualified full-time students who are working toward an on-campus graduate degree at the University of Northern Iowa and who are in residence during the time of their appointment.
- Graduate Assistantships are essential to University graduate programs and their students. They serve the following purposes:
 - Recruitment of excellent students;
 - Providing graduate students with part-time, paid work experiences that are complementary to their field of study while working with faculty and staff mentors. These experiences allow students to develop and apply their discipline knowledge and skills; and
 - Assisting UNI faculty and/or university staff in implementing projects or other assignments that require the advanced disciplinary skills of graduate students.

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Types of Graduate Assistantship Positions

Graduate Assistantships are on-campus employment positions and they are available in both academic and non-academic departments at UNI. In this handbook, the term Graduate Assistant (or GA) is used to refer to all positions. GAs descriptions and exact duties can be found on departmental/program websites while GA openings are announced to all eligible students through email and are posted on the University's online job board or similar (currently, the online job portal is [Handshake](#)). Graduate Assistants can perform tasks based on the following types:

1. Research Assistant

A research assistant provides direct support for faculty research by reviewing the literature, data collection, analysis, and writing of professional papers and presentations (Approved by Graduate Council 4/13/2023).

2. Teaching Graduate Assistant

A teaching assistant takes full responsibility for an entry-level course in the student's area of study. TAs are trained and supervised by department faculty (Approved by Graduate Council 4/13/2023).

3. Instructional Aide

An instructional aide helps instructors by performing a variety of tasks to help with the delivery of courses. Tasks may include but are not limited to the following: tutoring students, leading review sessions, grading assignments or exams, and reviewing/proofreading assignments (Approved by Graduate Council 4/13/2023).

4. Support Specialist or Program/Project Assistant

A support specialist or program assistant will conduct training, provide academic support, assist with projects or programs, manage websites, recruit students, and assist with accreditation efforts in academic and/or non-academic units (Approved by Graduate Council 4/13/2023).

5. Pre-professional Graduate Assistants

A pre-professional graduate assistant provides services directly related to their fields of study and in which they gain experience, practice, or guidance directly related to their career preparation. Eligible students are (1) enrolled in any School of Health program and (2) are assigned to the UNI Counseling Center or other in consultation with the program coordinator of the appropriate department (Approved by Graduate Council 4/13/2023).

6. Resident Graduate Assistants

The Graduate Assistant Residence Life Coordinator (ARLC) is supervised by a Residence Life Coordinator (RLC). They are responsible for student staff supervision and assisting with administrative hall operations alongside the RLC. In conjunction with the Residence Life Staff, they develop and support the objectives of Residence Life, help maintain residence hall and university policies and procedures, and assist with the implementation of the Hall Engagement model. They participate fully in an on-call emergency rotation. Due to the nature of this position, these graduate assistants receive paid training outside of the assistantship 6 weeks before the start of the semester.

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Employment Restrictions for Graduate Assistants

- Graduate Assistants are not eligible for additional UNI employment as an adjunct, faculty, P&S, or merit employee.
- Full-time Graduate Assistantships are twenty (20) hours per week and half-time Graduate Assistantships are ten (10) hours per week for the entire semester.
- Graduate students cannot work more than 20 hours per week of University employment in the combination of assistantship and hourly student employment or any similar temporary appointment.
- International Students: Federal law mandates that international students who are employed by the University are strictly limited to working a maximum of 20 hours per week. There are no exceptions to this rule. See the University Student Employment Policy

(<http://www.uni.edu/policies/319>). Additionally, international students are restricted by immigration regulations from working off-campus without proper authorization. Contact the Office of International Engagement (international@uni.edu) and International Admissions (international.admissions@uni.edu) for more details in regards to this rule.

The following actions will be taken in response to violations of these employment restrictions:

- Payroll will monitor University employment hours and will inform the Graduate College (GC) of any violations.
- The Graduate College will communicate in writing to the student with directions that no further violation occurs
- Students who violate the maximum hours after their initial violation notification could be terminated from their student employee hourly position.

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Eligibility for Assistantship

When making awarding decisions, hiring units must make sure they review student's pre-eligibility for the assistantship. While some of the criteria below won't be fulfilled by the time the GA is offered, students who receive funding from the University are expected to meet these criteria before the start of each semester, otherwise their assignments cannot start.

The Graduate College will make sure awarded students are eligible before processing any payroll forms (PAFs) and will notify students immediately if they are not meeting the criteria before the semester. Both the GA and supervisor are responsible that the following requirements are met by the deadlines stated in the offer letters. Failure to fulfill eligibility requirements by these suggested dates will result in changing the GA start date, the stipend amount being reduced (prorated) based on a new start date, a delayed paycheck, and/or a potential loss of the GA position.

- Students must have an official and final transcript on file in the Office of Admissions showing that at least a bachelor's degree has been conferred.

- U.S. students must possess a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution before the start of the assistantship appointment.
- International students must have graduated from an accredited undergraduate academic program. This means that official and final transcripts should be on the student's file before starting the assistantship appointment.
- For students who have any post baccalaureate or graduate education, the bachelor's degree is still needed as part of their eligibility for the GA.
- The student must have been admitted unconditionally to graduate study in an eligible on-campus program at the University of Northern Iowa on a degree-track basis.
 - Students who are admitted with provisions due to a low GPA **are not eligible** for a Graduate Assistantship. Departments or hiring units could request the Graduate College Dean to make an exception to the GPA rule, but a formal request needs to be made explaining the situation and it will be approved at the discretion of the Graduate College Dean, Dean representative, or designee.
 - Students who are admitted with provisions due to the English language requirement **are not eligible** for a Graduate Assistantship.
 - Once provisions are lifted (usually after the first semester for full-time students), these students will be eligible if they meet the remaining criteria.
- A newly admitted graduate student must have at least a 3.00 GPA for undergraduate or previous graduate work of at least 8 graded graduate-level credit hours to qualify for University funding, including assistantships.
 - The student must maintain a minimum UNI cumulative GPA of 3.00 to be eligible for continued or further appointment.
- Applicants whose first language is not English must meet the TOEFL/IELTS/Duolingo score requirements or similar.
- The student must be enrolled full-time (at least 9 qualifying on-campus graduate-level credit hours) for each semester during the award.

- The following can't be used as part of the qualifying on-campus graduate-level credit hours:
 - Workshops, off-campus courses, audit, courses taken as credit/no-credit (except courses required by accrediting agencies), undergraduate, CIEP, Guided Independent Study (GIS), and courses offered through online cohort programs.
 - Repeated courses from previous semesters with financial support
- It is expected that all courses applying to the degree meet the minimum hour requirements for program completion established by the Graduate College. A student request should be submitted for any of these courses that do not automatically plot to the degree. Courses taken for the completion of certificates must be complementary to the degree program.
- Students in their final semester need a minimum of 3 qualifying credit hours of required coursework to complete their degree to be eligible for funding from the University. The remaining 6 credits can be electives or courses offered by other academic departments. Students requiring only a few credits to graduate in their last semester should consider the financial implications of taking additional courses.
- Students must meet UNI's HRS employment guidelines and complete Section I and II of the new hire paperwork before starting their GA assignment. New employees are required to provide documentation to verify identity and eligibility to work in the United States on or before the first day of employment. If these steps are not completed, the assignment can be terminated, per Federal law.
- Previously awarded and returning students, or students entering a second master's degree program at the University, should visit the [Maximum Support Rule](#) stated below to make sure they're still eligible.

Note: GAs are not allowed to start working their hours until these criteria are met and these steps are fully completed/approved.

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Maximum Support Rule

- Master/Specialist students are allowed a maximum of four (4) semesters of support per degree. Master students who enroll in a second Master's degree can receive an additional four (4) semesters of support as long as the first degree is completed. If a student is declared in two Master's degrees simultaneously, then progress needs to be made in both majors to receive the additional four (4) semesters of support.
- Doctoral students are allowed a maximum of six (6) semesters of support (students on doctoral support must have received their master's degree before starting doctoral support).
- Either Graduate Assistantships or Graduate College tuition scholarships can count as a semester of support, even if only one of these is awarded.
- Students who must resign their Graduate Assistantship before the end of the eighth week of classes due to a documented FMLA-type circumstance will not be counted as receiving a semester of support. See the [Resignation](#) section for more information.

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Assistantship Stipend

- Graduate Assistantship stipend amounts might vary based on the graduate student's degree, and these rates might change from year to year. The official GA offer letter sent to the student provides the stipend amount for their GA assignment.
- Stipends are based on 16 work weeks during the semester. The GA stipend will be dispersed through payroll in 5 equal monthly installments on the last working day of each calendar month of the appointment (August-December for fall and January-May for spring).

- Any reduction or adjustment in stipend due to resignation, leave of absence, uncompleted work, or other similar situation will consider the total number of weeks of work to calculate reductions in pay. In other words, the GA stipend is handled on a weekly basis.
- Assistantship compensation is taxable income paid through payroll to the student's bank account or by check (temporarily and as needed) and does not get applied to a student's U-Bill.

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Benefits

Graduate Assistants must work the entire semester to qualify for benefits. All Graduate Assistants with at least a half-time appointment for an entire semester receive the following benefits:

- Ability to purchase an "A" parking permit ("A" permit rates will apply).
- Worker's Compensation coverage (see more details at <https://hrs.uni.edu/mybenefits/workerscomp>).
- Non-Resident students receive tuition billed at Resident (in-state student) rates.
- Non-Resident spouse (partner) receives tuition billed at Resident rates, which must be requested on the assistantship application form and by contacting the Registrar's Office.

Important: Graduate Assistants are NOT eligible for University-sponsored insurance benefits, sick leave, or vacation days. For information related to health insurance, students should visit the [2023-2024 Health and Dental insurance for UNI Students](#) resource or contact the Student Health Clinic (<https://health.uni.edu/>).

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Work Hours

- Graduate Assistants with a half-time assistantship should work ten hours per week and those with a full-time assistantship should work twenty hours per week, with no exceptions. Stipends are based on 16 work weeks across the semester.
- Students who have a combination of a 10-hour assistantship with student or temporary hourly employment cannot exceed 20 hours a week, per UNI employment policies. Students incurring work beyond the 20-hour limit will be notified by the Graduate College and may also be terminated.
- Graduate Assistants:
 - Do not submit time cards but should keep track of hours worked.
 - Will work from the first week of classes (unless there is a late start) through final exam week (exact dates are specified in the offer letter). The GA stipend will be prorated as needed for any late starts.
 - Do not work Thanksgiving week in the fall semester, nor during Spring Break week in the spring semester.
 - Do not work as a GA over the Winter break.
 - GAs do not receive sick leave or vacation days.
 - Are not eligible for overtime compensation.
- Accidents or unanticipated extenuating circumstances may prevent students from performing assistantship duties.
 - If this is a short-term situation, the GA may work with their supervisor to create an alternative schedule and not have a reduction in pay.
 - If this is a long-term situation or habitual situation or the GA is not in regular communication with their supervisor, a different procedure for withdrawal will occur. On average, the graduate student should work 10 (half-time) or 20 (full-time) hours per week. Students and supervisors are both in charge of documenting and reporting any issues to the Graduate College properly and in a timely fashion..

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Remote Work

- Graduate Assistantships are on-campus positions. Supervisors may determine that some, not all, of the work might be completed remotely within the state of Iowa only.
- State and local employment laws prohibit remote work outside of the state of Iowa for Graduate Assistants.
- For positions where the employee has an extraordinary reason for requesting remote work, the student should seek approval from both the Graduate College and the Human Resources Services office.

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Summer Graduate Assistantship Appointments

The Graduate College does not provide funding for GA appointments during the summer term. If a graduate student has the chance of working on a summer assignment, this must be processed as a student employment position paid at the GA rate or similar. Important, start and end dates of summer student employment positions should not overlap with the GA start dates.

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Academic Integrity

Whether working in a laboratory, classroom, office, or other setting, Graduate Assistants must maintain standards of academic honesty and integrity and report any violations of these to their supervisor. It is the responsibility of the GA to follow departmental, college, and university policies and the responsibility of the supervisor to discuss and set these standards during the first week of work. Supervisors should document and report any related issues to the Graduate College.

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Satisfactory Academic Progress

If a Graduate Assistant's UNI cumulative GPA goes below 3.00, their assistantship will be discontinued. If their UNI cumulative GPA returns to 3.00 or higher at a later date, the student would qualify again for an assistantship but would need to reapply for the position.

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Parental Support and Relief for Graduate Assistants

(Approved by Graduate Council 2/27/14)

Graduate Assistants who wish to suspend their academic responsibilities because of pregnancy or the birth or adoption of a child may request parental support or relief during the semester in which the pregnancy, birth, or adoption occurs. This policy applies to graduate students who are current Graduate Assistants and who are/will be related to the child as mother or father, including domestic partners. If both parents are Graduate Assistants, this policy applies to both. This policy is not mandatory – if the Graduate Assistant chooses not to suspend academic responsibilities during the semester of the pregnancy, birth, or adoption of a child, no action is warranted.

Summary of Policy

1. The Graduate Assistant must be currently enrolled in an academic program in good academic standing.
2. The Graduate Assistant shall provide the employer with written notice not less than thirty days prior to the date of the requested leave, if practicable. In the case of unforeseen/emergency circumstances only, to the extent reasonably possible the Graduate Assistant must give a verbal notice to the employer at least twenty-four hours prior to taking leave.
3. The GA must provide medical or legal documentation of the birth or adoption to the supervisor.
4. Prior to taking the leave, to the extent reasonably possible, the Graduate Assistant must make all arrangements with course instructors regarding making up coursework during the time of the leave.

5. Students who take a leave from their assistantship due to Parental Support leave will have their stipend prorated based on the duration of their leave.
6. Students who must resign their Graduate Assistantship before the end of the eighth week of classes due to Parental Support leave will not be counted as receiving a semester of support for the purposes of determining the number of semesters of support.
7. If a student is receiving a tuition scholarship, the scholarship will be retained by the student, who will complete all course requirements as determined in item #4 above. If the student withdraws from courses, the student may be required to repay the scholarship amount, as described in current Graduate Assistantship policies.
8. The graduate student who remains enrolled shall retain full access to UNI library services, computing services including email and MyUniverse, health center, sports and performing arts activities, and on-campus housing during the semester of leave, provided the necessary financial obligations are satisfied. If the student withdraws from all courses, the student will lose access to some of these services.
9. Students may request one extension for a total of up to 24 months during their studies, but time limits may be extended for active military service or other extenuating circumstances, at the recommendation of the program and the approval of the Dean of the Graduate College or designee.

Special Considerations

- All graduate students are responsible for determining the implications for eligibility of student loans and loan deferment privileges.
- All GAs are responsible for discussing with their research advisor how a leave would affect time-sensitive research projects and reporting, and the feasibility of resuming the same research project on return from leave. A graduate student may not necessarily be able to resume the same research project after a leave, but will have the opportunity to engage in similar research projects on return.

- International graduate students are responsible for determining the implications of a leave for fulfilling visa requirements.

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GA Orientation – GA Success

New hires are required to complete certain training modules before they start their GA duties, during their first week as part of their assignments. UNI's HR training modules are mandatory and these will be available only after the first day of employment and after the new hire paperwork is fully completed/approved. Completing this training is part of the GA assignment and cannot be started beforehand. For more details on getting acquainted with the GA role, students should visit the [GA Success portal](#).

These training modules are as follows:

- [Title IX Training](#)
- [FERPA Basics](#)
- [Harassment and Discrimination Prevention](#)
- [Free Speech](#)
- [Data Security](#)

Upon completion, GAs should provide the certificates to the supervisor and keep them for their own records.

Note: Student athletes are also required to complete the [Voices for Change: Student Athletes](#) training.

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Resignation of a Graduate Assistantship before the start date

To decline an assistantship before the start of a semester, the student should find their original offer letter received via email from the Graduate College. Use the link within the offer letter to access the electronic

system. Accessing the electronic system will require the student to log in securely with their UNI credentials. The student should click on “decline” for the semester(s) they want to decline.

Note: Once a semester begins, the “decline” button is disabled for that semester and the student will need to follow the following instructions on how to resign after the semester begins.

Resignation of a Graduate Assistantship after the start date

A graduate student may elect to resign from their Graduate Assistantship. To resign from an assistantship after a semester begins, the student must inform their supervisor and then send an email to the Graduate College (gradcollege@uni.edu) and copy their departmental secretary and supervisor on the email. The subject line should include their UID and name and indicate “resigning assistantship.” The email body should state that they are resigning from the position and provide the effective date and the hours worked (or will work) in the last week of their assistantship.

The GA’s stipend will terminate on the day the resignation is effective, or the last day worked if prior to resignation, and the stipend will be prorated. Stipends will continue to follow the regular pay schedule which is at the end of each month. Payroll will contact the student if any overpayment has been made to the student, in order to work out repayment of these funds.

Important: If the student is a non-resident and resigns from their Graduate Assistantship early, they might be charged tuition at the non-resident rate.

The student may retain their Graduate Tuition Scholarship, if applicable, even if the student elects to resign a Graduate Assistantship by maintaining a full-time course load in the program of study and a 3.00 or higher cumulative GPA. Full-time students in good academic standing are not required to rescind their Tuition Scholarship, even if their Graduate Assistantship is terminated because of their failure to perform the work assignments required of their assistantship. However, Tuition Scholarships awarded under an

externally funded grant or are Non-Graduate College-funded may be terminated as well, if required under the terms of the grant and assignment.

Important: If a Graduate Assistant with a scholarship resigns from their GA position due to their course load dropping below full time, the scholarship will be revoked and the student will be required to pay the full tuition charge for that semester.

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Rescinding a Tuition Scholarship

To rescind a scholarship, students need to decline the offer electronically. The Graduate College will process the scholarship removal and the student will owe the scholarship amount on their U-Bill. Refer to the following rule based upon the time of the semester that this withdrawal occurs: *"If the student withdraws from the semester or from the university due to a personal, family, or medical emergency, the tuition scholarship will be honored and applied to the U-Bill, based on the schedule below. This follows the percentages of [tuition and fees refund policy](#). The percentages are the amount of scholarship that is removed (i.e.: withdrawal during week 1, removes 90% of the value of the scholarship):*

- *Week 1 – 90% of the scholarship is removed*
- *Week 2 – 75% of the scholarship is removed*
- *Week 3 – 50% of the scholarship is removed*
- *Week 4 – 25% of the scholarship is removed*
- *Week 5 and beyond – the student gets to keep the entire award."*

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Termination of a Graduate Assistantship

A Graduate Assistantship appointment may be terminated for causes including, but not limited to:

1. Failure to complete I-9 form hire paperwork at the HRS office on time, per federal regulations.
2. Failure to be enrolled in the minimum qualifying hours each semester.

3. Failure to maintain academic standing (UNI cumulative GPA 3.0 or above).
4. Neglect of duties or incompetence.
5. Constant refusal to follow supervisor's advice/counsel.
6. Failure to comply with assistantship obligations as set forth by department/program rules/sponsored research agreements.
7. Personal conduct that violates UNI student conduct code policy 3.02 (See: <https://policies.uni.edu/302>) or state and federal law.
8. Suspension or dismissal of a graduate student from the University due to disciplinary reasons.
9. Performance that does not meet expectations may impact the renewal of the GA and, in certain circumstances, it may lead to the cancellation of any already accepted GA offers and other future/upcoming funding.

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Termination of Graduate Assistantships due to neglect of duties and/or failure to comply with obligations

The Graduate Assistantship might be terminated due to neglect of duties, refusal to follow supervisor's advice, and/or failure to comply with obligations, but this requires following appropriate procedures.

Departments and supervisors can recommend termination to the Graduate College after following the procedure stated in section "[Procedure to terminate Graduate Assistantships due to neglect of duties and failure to comply with obligations.](#)" A terminated student may elect to file a grievance under the [Graduate Assistant Grievance Procedure.](#)

Important: If the student is a non-resident and is terminated from their Graduate Assistantship early, stipend will be prorated and they will be charged tuition at the non-resident rate.

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Grievance Procedures and Appeals for Graduate Assistants

(Approved by Graduate Council 2/27/14)

- When complaints or disagreements arise concerning a student's Graduate Assistant assignment, efforts should be made to resolve problems informally. However, if such efforts fail, Graduate Assistants have the option of filing a grievance.
- Students who hold, or have held, a Graduate Assistantship, and who have a complaint or disagreement concerning their Graduate Assistantship, may file a grievance according to the steps outlined in the Graduate Assistantship Grievance Procedure in Policy 12.05-Graduate Assistantship Grievance <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1205>.
- Such grievances are restricted to interpretation or application of established policies and procedures governing assistantships; the grievance procedure does not apply to tuition remission and stipend adjustments.
- For academic grievances, GAs may use the procedure which is available to all students, Policy 12.01 <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1201>.
- Copies of both grievance procedures are available from the Graduate College.
- Appeals arising from suspension or dismissal for disciplinary reasons will be processed under the University's Student Conduct Code <http://www.uni.edu/policies/302>.
- Appeals from either party in a discrimination or harassment complaint will be processed according to the appeal procedures specified in the University's Discrimination and Harassment Policy <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1302>.

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Graduate Assistantship Performance Appraisal - for students

Evaluation is a crucial part of the Graduate Assistantship experience. It should be a supportive, constructive, and on-going process that helps identify strengths as well as weaknesses and develops a plan for improvement. All GAs must receive a formal performance appraisal by their supervisor each

semester. Both the student and the supervisor share responsibility for ensuring that the evaluation process is carried out.

While it's not required, GAs may choose to complete self-appraisals. A self-appraisal can give supervisors insight into their leadership and can help better guide their graduate assistants. Conducting self appraisals can give the opportunity to students to improve and work towards the position goals before their formal evaluation is carried out.

The formal performance appraisal process involves the student and the supervisor discussing a written evaluation. This process is intended to be constructive and to serve as an aid to the Graduate Assistant in correcting any cited performance problems. Following the review, the performance appraisal form will be signed by the Graduate Assistant, Supervisor, and Graduate Program Coordinator or Department Head. More information can be found on the "[Graduate Assistantship Performance Appraisal - for supervisors](#)" section.

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Faculty and Staff Information

Graduate Assistantship Job Descriptions

- The basic elements of a position description are set by the Graduate College, and each year the Graduate College sets and distributes a [set of guidelines](#) to follow.
- Each Graduate Assistantship position must have a job description reviewed and approved by the Graduate College before its advertising, recruitment, and selection. Each type of assistantship must be posted to the departmental website before accepting applications.

- The Graduate College will link and display all departmental and non-academic GA position descriptions on the Graduate College's website (<https://grad.uni.edu/graduate-assistantship-position-inventory>).
- Non-academic GAs should publish openings on the [UNI's online job board](#) or similar, to find new applicants, as needed.
- The department must provide each student with their specific job description immediately upon starting the Graduate Assistantship position, if not earlier. A copy of the job description should be kept in the student's departmental personnel file.

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Guidelines to create Graduate Assistant positions for Academic and Non-Academic departments

Refer to the [following template](#) to create or update any GA position before its publication and advertising; overall, any GA experience must:

- Enhance students' graduate education through:
 - a) exposure to the professional activities and concerns of their discipline;
 - b) involvement in university activities related to their academic and professional interests;
and
 - c) opportunities to work closely with the community and/or faculty and staff.
- Enhance our campus community through supporting:
 - a) undergraduate instruction, such as teaching under careful supervision, providing teaching or research support for faculty, serving as laboratory assistants, and serving in other academically appropriate ways;
 - b) activities linked to scholarship, creative, and community-engagement; and/or
 - c) additional activities such as promoting the University and its graduate programs with stakeholders.
- Have academic and professional value while allowing students to fulfill their educational goals.

Additionally, GA position descriptions and postings:

- Must indicate whether or not the position needs commitment for the academic year or for the semester only.
- Must clearly outline preferred qualifications.
- Should indicate the primary responsibilities of the position. The graduate college, for listing GA responsibilities, recommends:
 - Outline the core responsibilities by drafting a comprehensive but concise list, do not forget unique and day-to-day duties tied to your office and projects, according to [Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com), 2023.
- Must include UNI's Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action statement at the bottom.

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Graduate Assistantship Appointment Process – Academic Department

Graduate Assistantships, regardless of funding source, are awarded by the Graduate College and are made under the Council of Graduate School guidelines and any other current UNI policy. For assistantship appointments held on academic departments:

- The Graduate College will notify each graduate program/department of the minimum number of Graduate Assistantships committed to the graduate program/department from Graduate College funds.
- If the graduate program/department determines at any time they will not use any portion of the Graduate College allocations, they should notify the Graduate College so that funding can be reallocated and made available to other eligible graduate programs/departments.
- Academic departments should always consider and may use and allocate their own funds to attract students to support undergraduate instruction, run grants and projects, among others.
- Graduate Assistantship and Tuition Scholarship decisions reside in the graduate program/department.

- Graduate programs/departments must review all Graduate Assistantship applications received. Students must apply for funding separately (graduate assistantships and scholarships or Financial Aid) and students should be encouraged to do so in advance of the admission and application deadlines, whenever possible.
- The department must consider all qualified students; however, eligible, previously-hired students who have performed well should have priority for continued support.
- The graduate program/department will determine who will be offered an assistantship and at half-time or full-time status. The department will also determine if the offer is for fall semester or spring semester or both.
- By recommending a student to the Graduate College for a Graduate Assistantship, the department certifies that the student meets the qualifications stated in the preceding sections.
- An offer of admission does not include an offer of funding, nor is it implied. Students will be notified separately of any funding they might receive.
- The responsibility for recommending students for Graduate Assistantships and Graduate College Tuition Scholarships resides in the department. Once an offer is made, the department cannot rescind it, unless there is a special circumstance approved by the Dean of the Graduate College.
- Since Graduate Assistantships are employment positions, any unselected applicant should be also given a timely rejection notice.
- All Graduate Assistantship and Tuition Scholarship offer letters to students must come from the Graduate College. Departments should not inform a student verbally or in writing that they will be receiving a Graduate College-funded award. Please use this language (or similar) when reaching out to students in regards to their recommendation for funding: *“We received your funding application, and the department is recommending you as a potential recipient of funding to the Graduate College. The Graduate College will verify your eligibility and will send the offer letters to your email, if you meet the criteria. Should you not receive an offer during the upcoming days, feel free to reach out to us.”*

Graduate Assistantship Appointment Process – Non-Academic Units

Graduate Assistantships, regardless of funding source, are awarded by the Graduate College and are made under the Council of Graduate School guidelines and any other current UNI policy.

- Hiring decisions reside in the Non-Academic Unit.
- Non-Academic Units must review all Graduate Assistantship applications received.
- Interviews are recommended to select the best and alternate candidates. These should be conducted equally among qualified applicants. Hiring units and supervisors can visit the UNI's [HRS supervisor portal](#) to make sure they're in compliance in regards to UNI's hiring practices.
- The Non-Academic Unit must consider all qualified students; however, eligible, previously-hired students who have performed well should have priority for continued support.
- The Non-Academic Unit will determine who will be offered an assistantship and at half-time or full-time status. The unit will also determine if the offer is for fall semester or spring semester or both.
- Since Graduate Assistantships are employment positions, any unselected applicant should be also given a timely rejection notice.
- By recommending a student to the Graduate College for a Graduate Assistantship, the Non-Academic Unit certifies that the student meets the qualifications stated in the preceding section. Since Non-Academic Units might not have access to check a student's eligibility, they might contact graduate program coordinators or graduate program secretaries for information, under the compliance of FERPA regulations.
- Non-Academic Units hiring recently admitted International Students might seek advice from the International Admissions office in regards to their eligibility and credentials at the discretion of the director and under the compliance of FERPA and immigration regulations.
- The responsibility for recommending students for Graduate Assistantships resides in the Non-Academic Unit. Once an offer is made, the unit cannot rescind it, unless there is a special

circumstance approved by the Dean of the Graduate College. When these situations occur, awarded students should be contacted in a timely manner to verify that they are able to secure alternate funding.

- While it's necessary to ensure and sustain effective communications with applicants and selected students, all Graduate Assistantship offer letters must come from the Graduate College. Non-Academic Units should not inform a student verbally or in writing that they will be hired for a Graduate Assistantship. Please use this language (or similar) when reaching out to students in regards to their recommendation: *"We received your GA application, and the department/office is recommending you as a potential recipient of the graduate assistantship position of XX (use the GA name used to advertise the position) to the Graduate College. The Graduate College will verify your eligibility and will send the offer letters to your email, if you meet the criteria. Should you not receive an offer during the upcoming days, feel free to reach out to us."*

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Graduate Assistantship Offer Process

The steps required to offer any Graduate Assistantship are as follows:

- Interviews can be conducted and are highly encouraged to make hiring decisions. This interview process must be done without biases. GA positions are employment opportunities and therefore, all the current federal and state laws apply to ensure inclusive and equitable hiring practices.
- The hiring department will complete and submit an electronic offer in the [EOFS GC10 system](#) for each awarded student. Offer Forms follow a workflow approval process, requiring approval from the unit (usually the department head or departmental budget approver) and the Graduate College funding coordinator. Funding from a Foundation account will include UNI Foundation in the approval process.
- Academic Departments should be sure to track remaining funds and offer declined allocations to other students before the deadlines assigned by the Graduate College.

- All Graduate College allocations must be offered to qualifying students in a timely manner. Any declined offers can be subsequently offered to another qualified student by the deadline determined by the Graduate College. Students should accept/decline their GA offer before the deadline stated in their offer. Unused allocations will return back to the Graduate College.
- Any declined Extra Awards designated for a specific student will automatically return to the Graduate College. Academic Departments and Non-Academic Units cannot offer their Extra Allocation funds to another student.
- Specific dates for the offer process during an academic year will be provided and posted by the Graduate College (see the [Graduate College's website](#) and Original/Extra Allocation letters for specific dates). It's important to stick to these deadlines since the Graduate College must process and submit paperwork to other offices such as the Financial Aid and Registrar's offices (to report the residency benefit) as well as the HRS and payroll offices.
- Departmentally or Non-Graduate College funded Offer Forms (using departmental, grant or Foundation funds) are highly recommended to be submitted before **March 1**. Special consideration should be given for offers funded by departments, grants, or Foundation allocated to international students, since any delay would impact on their visa paperwork and therefore the likelihood of arriving to campus before the start of the semester.
- Department-funded scholarships (using departmental, grant or Foundation funds) should not be reported to the Graduate College through the Electronic Offer Forms system. Any unit needs to report these types of awards independently and directly to the Financial Aid Office through a scholarship roster (currently a [FW90 form](#)). Any unit planning to offer a graduate student a scholarship needs to send the student an official offer. This offer letter should include information on the requirements of receiving and keeping the scholarship. You can also use the Office of Financial Aid's [sample letter](#) or reuse [this language](#). For any scholarship offers to international students: (1) attach or link the following [tax notice](#) and (2) copy international.admissions@uni.edu and edyta.cichon-barche@uni.edu on the email offer. It is necessary for the Office of International

Admissions to be made aware, in a timely manner, of each student's funding offers so the information can be included on the student's visa paperwork.

- Once the Graduate College reviews an Offer Form and determines that a student meets eligibility requirements (or at least are pre-eligible), a formal offer letter will come directly from the Dean of the Graduate College via email with a copy to departmental contacts listed on the Offer Form.
- The University of Northern Iowa has supported a resolution by the [Council of Graduate Schools](#) that suggests acceptance of an offer of financial support (such as a graduate scholarship, fellowship, traineeship, or assistantship) by a prospective or enrolled graduate student also include an agreement that both the student and the graduate school expect to honor. In that context, the conditions affecting such offers and their acceptance must be defined carefully and understood by all parties. More specifically, students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support prior to **April 15**; earlier deadlines for acceptance of such offers violate the intent of this Resolution.
- It is the responsibility of the hiring unit to notify students, in a timely fashion, who have not been recommended for an award. Since Graduate Assistantships are employment opportunities, each applicant must receive some type of follow-up and notification.
- If a student declines the Graduate Assistantship offer, the department can make an offer to another qualified student and an Offer Form should be initiated for the next selected individual. Any Graduate College funded offers declined after the specified date will automatically return to the Graduate College (see our [website](#) or your Original/Extra Allocation letters for specific dates).
- International students may be offered assistantships but additional items must be considered:
 - Offers to International students should be made as soon as possible to allow time for the student to apply for documents necessary to attend UNI.
 - International students should remain in contact with the International Admissions office during their admission process.

- If an international student will be on an assistantship that involves teaching or tutoring undergraduate students, the hiring unit must also verify the applicant's English language proficiency.

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Graduate Assistantship Offer Acceptance Process

The steps for students to accept or decline their offer(s) are as follows:

- Students must use the [electronic link](#) within their offer letter to accept or decline the Graduate Assistantship offer by the due date listed in the offer letter. When the offer is accepted or declined, an automatic email will be sent to the Graduate College and those listed on the Offer Form.
- If a student accepts an offer and later wants to decline *before* the start of the semester, the student must go to the original offer letter and click on the [link provided](#) and then select "decline."
- If a student accepts an offer and later wants to decline *after* the start of the semester, then the student should follow directions in the [Resignation of a Graduate Assistantship](#) section.

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Process for Assistantships after Offer is Accepted

A fall/spring semester PAF can be initiated for any student that has accepted their assistantship offers before the deadlines the Graduate College will set for each academic year (see our [website](#) or your Original/Extra Allocation letters for specific dates).

Important: Employment must not begin before the first day of classes of each semester. If the GA position requires specific training before the semester starts, then a student or temporary employee appointment needs to be processed so the student can be trained and prepare for their assignment through a short-term paid assignment. The start and end dates of this assignment should not overlap with the GA start dates.

Note: The Graduate College should be notified of any changes made in the supervisor prior to submitting the PAF through a Revised Offer Form. If a PAF indicates a different supervisor, then the Graduate College will withhold its approval until the revision of the GC10 Offer Form has been completed. This can delay the processing of the PAF, which could cause delays on completing UNI HRS' hire paperwork and issuing paychecks.

The PAF should be submitted once the student meets the following requirements:

- The student must maintain a UNI cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher for the entire semester. All grades must be posted in order for a GPA to be verified. Newly admitted graduate students must have at least a 3.00 GPA for undergraduate or previous graduate work of at least 8 graded graduate-level credit hours.
- If a student has a missing grade, it is their responsibility to contact their instructor to make sure the grade is posted promptly. Students with a missing grade will not be able to start their assistantship until a grade is posted for that course, at which point their GPA will be verified.
- Students with a grade of "I" (Incomplete) will not be able to start their assistantship until a grade is posted for that course, at which point their GPA will be verified. Students with an Incomplete grade who have extenuating circumstances can request an exception. Students should send their request to the Graduate College Dean via email and copy their advisor. The request needs to include details of the extenuating circumstances as well as the timeline to make up the incomplete grade. The student will be contacted after a decision is made.
- The student must be enrolled in at least 9 qualifying on-campus graduate-level credit hours for each semester during the award.
- The following cannot be used as part of the qualifying on-campus graduate level credit hours:
 - Workshops, audit, undergraduate, CIEP or GIS courses.
 - Repeated courses taken in a prior semester with financial support.

- It is expected that all courses applying to the degree meet the minimum hour requirements for program completion established by the Graduate College. A student request, Substitution or Declaring courses, should be done for any of these courses that do not automatically plot to the degree. Courses taken for the completion of certificates must be complementary to the degree program.
- Students in their final semester need a minimum of 3 qualifying credit hours of required coursework to complete their degree. The remaining credit hours (6 or less) of coursework do not need to apply to the student's degree program. Students requiring only a few credits to graduate their last semester should consider the financial implications of the decision in taking additional courses.
- The student must have official transcripts on file in the Office of Admissions showing that a bachelor's (or any other required) degree has been conferred.
- The student must be regularly admitted without provisions to degree status in a graduate degree program. Students may be eligible for an assistantship when the provisions are not linked to the GPA or English language requirement
- New GAs must complete new hire paperwork in person at the Human Resource Services office, students not completing this step will have their PAFs on hold by the last approver.

Important: Students need to have all requirements met before the deadline for the fall semester in order to start to work and to be guaranteed a paycheck for August, and GAs in the spring semester must meet all requirements by the deadline to be guaranteed a paycheck for January. If new hire paperwork is not completed and received within three days of the effective employment date, per Federal regulations, steps will be taken to terminate the GA appointment.

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Absences

GAs are not awarded sick leave or vacation days. Accidents or unanticipated extenuating circumstances may prevent a student from performing assistantship duties:

- If this is a short-term situation, the GA may create a mitigation plan with their supervisor and not have a reduction in pay.
- If this is a long-term situation or habitual situation, or the GA is not in communication with their supervisor, a different procedure for withdrawal will occur. Departments and supervisors should always contact the Graduate College when students are not showing up to work and failing to communicate effectively.

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Remote Work

- Graduate Assistantships are on-campus positions. Supervisors may determine that some, not all, of the work may be completed remotely within the state of Iowa only.
- Remote work outside of the state of Iowa is prohibited for Graduate Assistants because of state and local employment laws.
- For positions where the employee has an extraordinary reason for requesting remote work, the student should seek approval from the Graduate College and the Human Resources Services office.

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Graduate Assistantship Supervisor Responsibilities

The Graduate Assistant's supervisor(s) are required to perform many responsibilities, some of which are outlined below. Please note, there may be other supervisor responsibilities or duties not included in this listing. GA supervisors are required to:

- Meet with the GA on the first day of work to review (a) the student's job description in detail, and (b) discuss the expectations of both the student and the supervisor.
- Verify all hire paperwork has been completed or submitted.

- Review University and Departmental guidelines and policies.
- Discuss safety and emergency protocols, as needed.
- Sustain performance development and work closely with the GA during the entire semester to ensure they are carrying out assigned duties and goals. The performance development process is an active partnership between supervisors and employees that enhances engagement and performance to ensure employee success. This collaborative effort is supported by setting clear and aligned expectations, creating a culture of accountability, and providing continual coaching and feedback.
- Work with the GA to set up a work schedule to ensure they will meet the required weekly hours of work.
- Make sure new GAs complete new hire training modules required by the UNI's HRS office: [Title IX](#), [Harassment Prevention for Staff](#), [FERPA Basics](#), [Data Security](#) and [Free Speech](#). These modules will be available for completion by the first day of employment and accessed on Blackboard or listed on the [GA Success](#) page.
- Per the [Iowa Code section 261H.6](#), the [Freedom of Speech employee training](#) must be completed each and every year for employees and students at UNI. Therefore, returning GAs should revisit this mandatory training during their first weeks.
- Have regular weekly contact with GA.
- Be aware of the hours the GA is working and the GA's performance.
 - If a student is not showing up for work, not putting in required work hours, or not performing duties at a satisfactory level, the supervisor should document this in detail. Conversations, emails or feedback the supervisor provides to the GA regarding these issues should also be documented. Detailed documentation is essential for unsatisfactory performance/work and if a change needs to be made.
 - Always contact the Graduate College for direction on how to proceed with problems related to unsatisfactory performance and/or insufficient work hours.
- Conduct the performance appraisal process (see [next section](#) for details).

Note: HRS has put together the [supervisor portal](#), available on their website, for UNI supervisors to help support them in fulfilling requirements of their roles.

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Graduate Assistantship Performance Appraisal - for supervisors

Evaluation is a crucial part of the Graduate Assistantship experience. It should be a supportive, constructive, and on-going process that helps identify strengths as well as weaknesses and develops a plan for improvement. All GAs must receive a formal performance appraisal by their supervisor each semester as follows:

- The student must be provided a job description and be given clear information by the supervisor about job expectations at the beginning of the employment period.
- The student must be informed of the ways in which progress will be measured.
- An informal performance appraisal should be conducted 3 weeks after the student's start date (optional).
- A formal performance appraisal needs to be conducted at the end of the semester.
- At any point during the semester, additional appraisals may be conducted at the request of the Graduate Assistant or their supervisor.
- The supervisor must use the following [Graduate Assistant Performance Appraisal form](#).
- Performance evaluations are a great time to determine if the position has gone through significant changes that may require updating job descriptions.

Note: While it's not required, supervisors and/or departments may choose to require their GAs to complete self-appraisals. A self-appraisal can give supervisors insight into their leadership and can help better guide their graduate assistants. Conducting self appraisals can give the opportunity to students to

improve and work towards the position goals before their formal evaluation is carried out.

The formal performance appraisal process involves the student and the supervisor discussing a written evaluation. This process is intended to be constructive and to serve as an aid to the Graduate Assistant in correcting any cited performance problems. Following the review, the performance appraisal form will be signed by the Graduate Assistant, Supervisor, and Graduate Program Coordinator or Department Head. Both the student and the supervisor share responsibility for ensuring that the evaluation process is carried out.

The performance evaluation should be kept in the Graduate Assistant's personnel file in the department. Any evaluations that are not satisfactory or indicate discipline issues, along with all related documentation, need to be sent to Human Resource Services and the Graduate College immediately. A copy of these should also be kept in the GA's personnel file for at least 3 years once the student is no longer a Graduate Assistant in the department.

Note: HRS offers online and in-person supervisor performance appraisal training. HRS has helpful resources available on their [website](#).

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Procedure to terminate Graduate Assistantships due to neglect of duties and failure to comply with obligations

The Graduate Assistantship cannot be terminated due to neglect of duties, refusal to follow supervisor's advice, and failure to comply with obligations without appropriate procedures. Before a department and supervisor recommends termination due to neglect of duties, refusal to follow supervisor's advice, and failure to comply with obligations, they must:

- a) notify the student of the specific nature of the problem or problems, with documentation of non-performance or poor performance of duties,
- b) allow the student a reasonable opportunity to be heard, whether the student wishes to respond orally or in writing,
- c) if possible, attempt an informal resolution to avoid termination, and
- d) give the student written notification of the department's reasons for recommending termination if an informal resolution cannot be achieved.

After the above steps have been followed, the department shall forward its written recommendation, including the reasons leading to the recommendation, to the Graduate College for review and approval.

The Graduate College and the department to which the graduate student is assigned have a joint responsibility to ensure that appropriate procedures are followed before the termination. A department cannot terminate an award without the review and approval of the Dean of the Graduate College or designee, even if the funding is not provided by the Graduate College.

If a student elects to file a grievance under the [Graduate Assistant Grievance Procedure](#), then the procedures therein take precedence over all of the above.

Important: If the student is a non-resident and is terminated from their Graduate Assistantship early, stipend will be prorated and they will be charged tuition at the non-resident rate.

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UNI Policies and Procedures

UNI Mission Statement

The University of Northern Iowa at Cedar Falls is recognized as having a mission of sufficient scope to enable it to be a distinguished arts and sciences university with outstanding professional programs in

education and business. It provides leadership in the development of programs for the preservice and in-service preparation of teachers and other educational personnel for schools, colleges, and universities. The institution offers undergraduate and graduate programs and degrees in the liberal arts and sciences, including selected areas of technology. It offers pre-professional programs and conducts research and community outreach programs to strengthen the educational, social, cultural, and economic development of Iowa and the larger community.

For more information, please visit <https://policies.uni.edu/102>.

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Drug-Free Workplace and Schools Policy

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) is committed to providing a drug-free workplace and learning environment. Alcohol and drug abuse pose a threat to the health and safety of university faculty, staff, students, and visitors.

This policy is intended to comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act Amendments of 1989 and the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991. This policy is also intended to serve in maintaining the health and safety of the University's faculty, staff, students, and visitors, in addition to providing the practice and procedure for managing issues regarding drug and alcohol abuse in the workplace and on campus.

For more information, please visit <http://www.uni.edu/policies/413> and <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1318>.

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Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Policy

The University of Northern Iowa is committed to achieving fairness and equity in all aspects of the educational enterprise and therefore prohibits discrimination, harassment, and retaliation under this policy. Alleged violations of this policy are subject to resolution using the Complaint Resolution Process.

This policy applies regardless of the status of the parties involved, who may be members or non-members of the campus community, students, student organizations, faculty, administrators, and/or staff.

For more information, please visit <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1302>.

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Equal Opportunity & Non-Discrimination Statement

No person shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in employment, any educational program, or any activity of the University, on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, political affiliation, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran or military status, or on any other basis protected by federal and/or state law.

For more information, please visit <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1303>.

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Accommodations of Disabilities Policy

No qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to unlawful discrimination by the University.

This policy applies to all aspects of campus activities including employment, education, student programming, and services provided to the community at-large.

For more information, please visit <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1315>.

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