

Procedure Number: 254	Effective Date: 11 May 2016
Policy Title: Graduate Assistantships	Revised: 2 May 2017, 13 September 2017, 10 July 2020
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Graduate Assistantships

I. PURPOSE: The purpose of Procedure 254 is to describe the nature of Graduate Assistantships at West Liberty University and to establish processes by which these positions may be established, individual students may apply for them, and by which appointments may be made.

II. DEFINITIONS:

- A. A Graduate Assistant(GA) is a graduate student appointed as a University employee in a position that provides the student with an apprenticeship experience. Such appointments may include the waiver of graduate tuition, housing waiver, stipend, and/or other financial support for graduate education. West Liberty University recognizes student employment as a Graduate Assistantship only under the definitions, conditions and categories below. Student employment outside these parameters will not be deemed a Graduate Assistantship.
- B. There are three categories of Graduate Assistantship:
1. Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA): The duties of the GTA are primarily instructional. These individuals are selected based on past teaching experience or academic promise as effective instructors in their field of study. A GTA may be assigned responsibility for a self-contained class, for a laboratory or discussion class accompanying a faculty-taught lecture class, or for assisting a faculty member with teaching-related tasks such as lecturing, leading discussion groups, serving as an assistant to laboratory classes, advising students, proctoring examinations, preparing class materials, assisting during class, grading tests and papers, and providing general assistance in the instructional process. Graduate students engaged as Assistant Coaches may be considered GTAs. GTAs who teach courses for credit and/or assign final course grades must meet the faculty qualification standards established by WLU Policy.
 2. Graduate Research Assistant (GRA): GRAs are selected for excellence in scholarship and promise as researchers. They may be employed by any of the University's academic, research, or administrative offices. They engage in part-time research as a portion of their training and academic program under the direct supervision of graduate faculty members, or support the research initiatives of the institution. The nature of the assistance they provide may vary by discipline and can involve a variety of activities, such as library work, proposal writing, data gathering, and data analysis. While placement of GRAs within their program of study is a priority, some GRAs may be appointed to units outside their academic discipline.
 3. Graduate Service Assistant (GSA): The title GSA refers to graduate students who are employed to aid faculty or staff members with functions of the unit in which the appointment is made. Any academic or nonacademic unit may establish service assistantships. The GSA is responsible to a professional member of the unit who supervises and trains the student in the service role. Duties vary depending on the needs of the unit.

III. ELIGIBILITY AND RIGHTS: To be eligible for a Graduate Assistantship, a student must have been accepted into a graduate program at WLU and be registered for at least six (6) credit hours for the term(s) in which they will receive the assistantship. They must also maintain the minimum GPA for the program in which they are registered. Graduate Assistantships will last no more than two (2) calendar years. Appointment as a Graduate Assistant does not confer any rights to permanent appointment. The length of service of a Graduate Assistant does not alter the temporary nature of the appointment or confer additional rights. Appointments are generally made on a semester-by-semester basis.

IV. BENEFITS:

- A. All WLU Graduate Assistantships cover a maximum of (eighteen) 18 credit hours of graduate coursework per academic year regardless of in-state or out-of-state tuition rate. A tuition waiver will not be given for any course(s) that must be retaken by the GA for the purposes of their academic program. Tuition waivers will not exceed the total credit hours required for the student's degree.
- B. GA students living on campus will also receive a housing waiver to be used in eligible student housing. GAs are not required to purchase a meal plan.
- C. Some positions may also include a stipend. Positions that include a stipend require the completion of additional paperwork in the WLU Human Resources Office and Payroll for exempt GA positions receiving a fixed pay amount.

V. EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION:

- A. If the student accepts the offer and then desires to withdraw, the student may submit, in writing, a resignation within two weeks.
- B. Full time Graduate Assistants can expect to work no more than 20 hrs/wk in both the fall and spring semesters. Summer work will vary based on position and academic program. The standard starting date for a Graduate Assistant should be one week before the first day of classes and the standard ending date shall be the last day of final exams. Graduate Assistants are NOT required to work when classes are not in session (ie holidays, between semesters), unless previously arranged with their supervisor. Graduate Assistants may receive compensation at an hourly rate of pay, or as a set stipend.
- C. Graduate Assistants will be required to participate in mandatory West Liberty University training as needed and must comply with all WLU policies and procedures.
- D. Resignation: A graduate Assistant choosing to resign or terminate his/her employment must submit a letter of resignation to the Director of Graduate Studies.
- E. Termination: Graduate students are expected to represent the University in a positive manner. A Graduate Assistant may be terminated for the following reasons:
 - 1. Suspension or dismissal of a graduate student from the University for disciplinary reasons and/or academic misconduct.
 - 2. The student is found responsible for violations of the Student Code of Conduct, Academic Program Handbook, or University Policies and Procedures.
 - 3. The student's overall GPA drops below the academic program requirement.
 - 4. Failure to perform work assignments at a satisfactory level.
 - 5. Lack of available University funding.
 - 6. The University reserves the right to terminate a Graduate Assistant if, at the discretion of the Provost, the circumstances of a particular situation warrant such action.
- F. If a Graduate Assistant resigns or is terminated, any waivers and/or stipends will be prorated based on the resignation/termination date.

VI. PROCEDURES: The following procedures shall be followed:

- A. Establishment of Graduate Assistant positions.
 - 1. A budget shall be established annually for the award of graduate tuition waivers, housing waivers, and stipends.
 - 2. Any unit requesting the establishment of an assistantship position must complete the online requisition form by November 1st using the approval workflow for GA positions. The position will be reviewed and approved by the President's Cabinet and approved positions will be placed on the Human Resources employment website.
 - 3. GA positions requested with stipends should also include the stipend in their unit budget request.
 - 4. The establishment of any GA position must be approved by the unit head, VP for Finance and Administration, and Provost.
 - 5. Positions must be renewed each academic year.
- B. Student Application Process
 - 1. Applications for Graduate Assistantships must be submitted online through the Human Resource Office.
 - 2. Applications will be considered as they are received.
 - 3. Students wishing to continue as a Graduate Assistant must submit a new application each academic year.
- C. Award of Assistantships
 - 1. The Director of Graduate Studies will process student applications and match applicants with positions.
 - 2. The office originating the position will conduct interviews with qualified candidate(s) identified by the Director of Graduate Studies.
 - 3. The Unit Head will decide on an applicant and notify Student Employment and the Director of Graduate Studies. Unit Heads will not offer a Graduate Assistant position to a student, as the Office of Graduate Studies must first verify that a student is eligible for a position.
 - 4. Notifications of awards will be made by the Director of Graduate Studies as they are determined.
 - 5. Awards are generally for one semester or summer term, but may be renewed.
 - 6. Students are required to sign their Award Letter each semester and their Graduate Assistant Agreement for each academic year.