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Recommended Citation

Graduate School, "Graduate Assistants Handbook 2021-2022" (2021). *Graduate School Handbooks*. 1. https://thekeep.eiu.edu/acaffair_gradschool_handbooks/1

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2021-2022

Graduate Assistant Handbook

The Graduate School



EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY™

Eastern Illinois University
The Graduate School
Handbook of Regulations and Policies
Governing Graduate Assistantships

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they are not related to services.

Graduate assistants who are in compliance with enrollment in nine to 16 semester hours of graduate course work or approved prerequisites during the fall/spring terms and three to 13 semester hours of graduate course work or approved prerequisites during the summer term will receive a full tuition waiver scholarship unless specified in the contract.

Tuition Waiver Scholarship Non-Covered Expenses

Tuition waiver scholarships may not be applied to any fees. Tuition waiver scholarships may not be applied to audited courses, sponsored-credit courses, and study abroad courses.

Tuition waiver scholarships may not be applied to some courses offered through the School of Extended Learning or to any Study Abroad course. To verify the application of a tuition waiver scholarship, candidates must check the “Attribute Type” section in the published Course Schedule to determine the status of the course. Courses not covered by an assistantship tuition waiver scholarship will be identified by the statement “Waivers May Not Be Used” in the Attributes Type category. Candidates who enroll for these courses will be billed tuition.

Graduate students who have held standard, Provost, or Presidential assistantship contracts or Fellowship contracts for at least four months immediately preceding a Summer Term or who have signed a graduate assistant contract for Fall Semester may apply for a summer term tuition waiver scholarship. Summer tuition waiver scholarships require that students remain enrolled for a minimum of three semester hours and no more than 13 semester hours in graduate level course work. Coursework fulfilling approved prerequisites for the graduate program is eligible for the tuition waiver scholarship. Only one summer tuition waiver scholarship per 9-month graduate assistant contract may be claimed. The summer tuition waiver application can be found on the D2L orientation or the Graduate School web site and must be submitted by the student one month prior to the end of the spring semester.

Stipends

University regulations require that stipend payments be made only after completion of assigned duties. Monthly stipends may vary according to the terms specified in the contract. In return for the stipend, the assistant satisfactorily performs the duties assigned by the sponsoring unit. All stipends are subject to various payroll tax deductions. Graduate assistants enrolled in less than 6 semester hours are also subject to FICA tax which is currently at 7.65%. This generally affects graduate assistants employed during summer term as that is the only term where graduate assistants are allowed to be enrolled in less than 9 hours (with the minimum of 3 hours) to be eligible for the assistantship.

Student Health Insurance

Enrollment in the Student Insurance Plan is automatic for graduate assistants under contract to the University. The Student Insurance Fee will be included on their tuition and fee bill each term they are under contract. Coverage dates for each term are provided on the Student Insurance website www.eiu.edu/studentinsurance.

Payroll Process

Assistantship appointments offered through Eastern Illinois University provide stipends on the last working day of the month except for December when payment will be made on the first working day of January. If a contract start date begins the 16th of the month or later the stipend payment will be made the last day of the following month.

Graduate assistants appointed through the university are required to enroll in the Electronic Funds Transfer (Direct Deposit) program to receive stipend payments. Necessary forms are available through the Graduate School Orientation and are also available in the Payroll Office.

Assistantship appointments offered through a private agency may be paid according to the time table established by the agency. Assistants should consult with the Graduate Assistant Manager for information on these payroll plans.

Financial Aid

Graduate Assistants may be eligible for other forms of financial aid and applicants should access information regarding additional aid from the Office of Financial Aid. Typical processes for financial aid application require completion of the FAFSA or Free Application for Federal Student Aid form. Guidelines are specified at the web site and include filing as an independent using the prior year's tax return. Any change in enrolled credit hours must be reported to the Office of Financial Aid in order to adjust the benefit of the tuition waiver scholarship appropriately.

Billing and Payment of Fees

The tuition waiver benefit will be applied only to tuition charges. Graduate assistants will be billed all fees. The fees must be paid by the date specified on the account or late charges will be assessed. Occasionally, assistants may reduce enrollment hours after a tuition waiver benefit has been applied to an account. In these cases, waiver benefits may temporarily exceed billing charges until the waiver benefit is reduced to match the student's actual course enrollment.

Assistants must pay their fees by the date specified on the account because the tuition waiver benefit will be adjusted to match the tuition payments later in the billing cycle. If the fees have not been paid a late fee will be assessed.

Assistants enrolled in online graduate programs will be charged the current per-semester-hour School of Extended Learning fee and the current per-semester-hour textbook rental fee in place of the standard fees.

Supplemental Contracts

Graduate assistants are limited to one on-campus contract per semester with the exception of a supplemental contract. Graduate assistants may be considered for supplemental non-recurring contracts for an assignment that is related to a specific area of expertise. The combined hours of duties required for the assistantship and the supplemental contract must remain at or below an average of 20 clock hours per week and the supplemental duties may not be part of the assistant's regularly assigned assistantship duties. Supplemental Contract Approval Forms are available at the Graduate Assistantship web site. To initiate a contract the administrator in the program or office offering a supplemental assistantship contract forwards the contract to the assistant's primary sponsoring unit for approval. The primary

sponsoring unit forwards the contract to the Graduate School. Requests for supplemental contracts must be approved with required signatures prior to performance of the duties. Requests for approval and compensation after the assignment is completed will not be approved. Agents or supervisors are responsible for ensuring completion of paperwork prior to completion of duties. Students must meet the following criteria to be eligible for a supplemental contract:

- The assignment is not part of the assistant’s assigned duties: Graduate assistants hold contracts for academic terms or academic years and earn a stipend and tuition waiver in compensation for assigned teaching, research, or university service that directly supports the mission of the University. Supplemental contracts compensate assistants for duties that are not part of the assistant’s regularly assigned duties. For example, an assistant in the music department may hold an assistantship to provide teaching assistance for several courses in the music department. A supplemental contract may be offered to compensate this assistant to play the piano at a University scheduled event. Providing music is not part of the assistant’s regularly assigned duties; therefore, a supplemental contract may be offered.
- The supplemental assignment is related to the assistant’s specialized area of expertise: Frequently, graduate assistants have unique expertise that may be needed by a department/unit for a special project. Unique expertise may be related to computer competencies, competencies in the arts, teaching experience, business knowledge, or other specialized skills related to the assistant’s professional training and background. Supplemental contracts may be offered to compensate the assistant for an assignment associated with this expertise.
- The assignment is non-recurring: Supplemental assistant contracts are for duties associated with non-recurring demand such as an offer to provide music at campus events or an offer to provide a workshop for technology applications. Supplemental contracts are not approved for general non-specialized weekly duties associated with recurring student employment. Those positions are for students who do not hold assistantships.
- The combined supplemental contract and regular assistantship hours remain at or below 20 hours per week as an average over the academic semester: Assistantship contracts are normally for 18 to 19 clock hours per week. A student who holds an 18 hour per week assistantship and is offered a supplemental contract to provide 2 four-hour workshops during the 15 week Fall term remains in compliance because the 8 hours averaged over the 15 weeks insures that the assistant’s weekly average remains at or below 20 hours per week.
- The contract is approved prior to completion of the assignment: Supplemental contracting and payment are available only with prior approval. Verbal promises for payment without prior approval will not be honored. University staff who make offers but fail to secure prior approval are responsible for any promises of payment. Supplemental contracts are paid only through payroll.
- The contract is approved by the Primary Sponsoring Unit and the Graduate Dean: Primary sponsoring units must support any supplemental contracts

because an assistant's first responsibility is to the primary sponsoring unit. The Graduate Dean will serve as the final authority for determining if the supplemental contract meets the criteria specified for supplemental appointments of graduate assistants.

Guidelines for a Successful Appointment

Time management is essential to a successful assistantship. Assistants are expected to maintain their studies while simultaneously performing their assistantship duties to the satisfaction of the supervisor in the sponsoring unit. Providing the supervisor with a schedule of time when available to execute duties and providing some flexible time to perform unexpected duties ensures a successful outcome.

Assistants are encouraged to engage in timely resolution of concerns. When a supervisor calls a concern to the assistant's attention, assistants are urged to meet with the supervisor and outline a resolution to the concern with an appropriate time line. In the event that a concern is not satisfactorily resolved with the supervisor, an assistant should seek the assistance of the appropriate Graduate Coordinator. Issues unresolved by the Coordinator should be called to the attention of the Department Chair. The final step in resolution of a concern is to seek the assistance of the Graduate Dean.

The university provides a variety of resources to support all students. Resources include but are not limited to the Civil Rights and Diversity, University Health and Counseling Services, Women's Resource Center, Center for Gender and Sexual Diversity, Writing Center, and Student Recreation Center. Assistants are urged to use those resources that will help them successfully manage their assistantship and academic responsibilities.

Completion of Appointment and Assessment Program

Upon completion of the contract, graduate assistants must comply with all required clearance procedures mandated by the sponsoring unit.

Contacts to Resolve Problems or Questions

Please contact:

The Graduate School; for questions regarding graduate admissions, graduate policies and graduation.... 581-2220

Bursar's Office; for questions regarding your student account.. 581-3715

Health and Counseling Services/Counseling Clinic...581-3413

Graduate Assistantship Manager; for questions regarding assistantship contracts, regulations and requirements..... 581-7490

Health and Counseling Services/Medical Clinic 581-3013

International Students and Scholars; for international students581-2321

Office of Civil Rights and Diversity581-5020

Office of Financial Aid; for questions regarding loans and aid..581-3711

Office of Student Accountability and Support581-3827

School of Extended Learning for questions regarding courses and workshops 581-5114

Health and Counseling Services/Student Insurance.....581-5290

Payroll; for questions regarding tax issues and federal payroll requirements.....581-5510



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