TOWSON UNIVERSITY™

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP HANDBOOK

Revised August 2024

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Contact Information

Graduate Assistantship Office

Email: gao@towson.edu

Call: 410-704-4484

Location: Administration Building, Room 301/304

Graduate Assistantship Office Hours

Monday 8:30 am – 5:00 pm
Tuesday 8:30 am – 5:00 pm
Wednesday 8:30 am – 5:00 pm
Thursday 8:30 am – 5:00 pm
Friday 8:30 am – 5:00 pm

Introduction

The term ***graduate assistant*** is used generically in this document to cover all 3 types of graduate assistants: general graduate assistants, teaching assistants and research assistants.

The Office of Graduate Studies has prepared this handbook for the benefit of graduate students and supervisors of graduate assistants as part of the Graduate Assistantship program at Towson University. This handbook is intended to provide information about the various policies and procedures that are used for awarded graduate assistantship positions. Guidelines and procedures set forth in this document abide by University System of Maryland (USM) Policy III-http://www.usmd.edu/regents/bylaws/SectionIII/?t=print.php&zoom_highlight=policy+iii-7.11. Policy on Graduate Assistantships effective December 3, 2010 and updated June 22, 2012. Graduate Assistants are expected to become familiar with the information in the Graduate Assistantship Handbook and with the policies and procedures of Towson University that are published in the Graduate Catalog. View the electronic version of the Graduate Assistantship Handbook and an electronic version of the Graduate Catalog. For questions pertaining to Graduate Assistantship policies and regulations, graduate assistants also can contact the Graduate Assistantship Office at 410-704-4484.

Each year, the Office of Graduate Studies at Towson University and various academic and non-academic departments offer a limited number of graduate assistantships to qualified graduate students.

Objectives and Qualifications

Graduate assistants (GAs) are, first and foremost, graduate students pursuing an education. The opportunity to work closely with faculty members, staff, and undergraduate students is an integral part of their education.

Graduate students who hold assistantships benefit educationally and professionally. They gain further expertise in their field; enhance their research skills and develop pedagogical skills; acquire experience in leadership, interpersonal effectiveness, and performance evaluation; acquire academic administrative experience; and enjoy collegial collaborations with advisors that may result in joint publications and other professional activities. Skills learned in assistantships prepare students not only for the academy, but also for corporate, government, and nonprofit organizations.

Assistantships also provide graduate students with the financial resources necessary to pursue their degrees. This financial support—stipend and tuition remission—is part of the University's commitment to the success of our graduate students. The University is committed to ensuring that graduate assistant assignments are productive, enhance student qualifications, meet funding support and workload goals, and are consistent with the educational objectives of the student and their respective program.

To be eligible for an assistantship, a student must be admitted as a degree-seeking student to a post baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral program at Towson University and in good academic standing. To begin the assistantship students must be enrolled in coursework associated with their graduate degree. Start dates for beginning the assistantship are posted on the graduate assistantship website and on the rates and dates form for supervisors and departments. Students must begin the assistantship no later than the drop/add period of that term. The stipend will be retro-active for any student beginning the assistantship after the posted Start date. The tuition waiver will not be granted after the third pay period. Maintaining assistantship eligibility requires a minimum grade point average of 3.0 each academic term in all courses taken for graduate credit. This includes all pre-requisite and undergraduate courses that are part of the graduate program. Teaching assistants need to have completed all pre-requisites and undergraduate course work for the class they will be supporting before acceptance of this position.

Full-time assistants (20 hour) must register for a minimum of six (6) graduate units each fall and spring term they have the assistantship. Half-time assistants (10 Hour) must register for at least three (3) graduate units each fall and spring they have the assistantship. All assistants with summer responsibilities are required to register for at least three (3) graduate units during the summer sessions. These courses must be approved by the student's program director or department chair (See exception under the Place Holder Course Policy). Graduate students who are full time employees of Towson University or other University System of Maryland (USM) institutions are not eligible for graduate assistantships.

Procedures and Deadlines

- Graduate students who have been accepted into a graduate program of study can apply for a graduate assistantship. The Graduate Assistantship web page contains additional details.

- Available assistantship positions are available through Handshake. To apply, go to Handshake and type graduate assistantships in the search bar. Students should also check with their programs of study for additional leads for positions.

- Once a student has accepted an assistantship position the supervisor submits a GA Appointment Request Form to the Graduate Assistantship Office.

- The Graduate Assistantship Office will contact the student via email with instructions to complete the I-9 and payroll forms as required. Assistantship positions will not be processed until all forms are completed. **Students must complete the I-9 before they are legally allowed to work** (See Appendix A & B)."

- Due to payroll, parking and tuition issues, students are to abide by stated deadlines. Otherwise, the student may not be eligible for the assistantship.

All fees and tuition due is to be paid on time *regardless* of the assistantship. If not paid on time, a late fee will be issued and it is possible that courses will be dropped. There will be no advance pay for this situation.

- International students are subject to additional rules articulated by the federal government. Differences between international and domestic students include work eligibility, tax status and the ability to have additional on-campus employment. International students must obtain a social security number prior to be eligible to work. International students are to direct their questions the International Student and Scholar Office (ISSO) at 1 410-704- 2421. Where there are differences between information in the Graduate Student Handbook and information provided by ISSO, international students are to abide by ISSO guidelines (See Appendix C).

Appointment Letters

Upon appointment, each graduate assistant will receive an appointment that contains detailed information concerning the terms and expectations of the assistantship. The appointment letter (completed GA Appointment Request Form) and supporting documents will include information about:

1. Length of the appointment
2. Starting and end dates of the appointment, including the dates during which the graduate assistant is expected to be on campus to perform the duties of the assistantship
3. Average weekly time commitment of the assistantship
4. Basic responsibilities of the assistantship
5. Economic benefits of the assistantship, including stipend and tuition assistance amounts and any access to health and/or other benefits
6. Department or office to which the graduate assistant will report, including the name of the faculty member or other individual who will supervise the graduate assistant
7. Affirmation that the provisions of the institution's graduate assistantship handbook apply to the assistantship
8. Special requirements of the assistantship related to leave, scheduling or other terms (e.g., coverage over breaks and weather emergencies) that may vary from the provisions of the institution's graduate assistantship handbook.
9. Access to additional information and advice concerning the appointment and graduate assistant grievance rights and processes
10. Access links to USM Policy III-7.11 Graduate Assistantships, and Towson University Assistantship Handbook.

Stipend and Tuition Waivers

Graduate assistants are eligible for a stipend and tuition waiver. The amount varies according to the type of graduate assistantship, length of the period of employment (months), and the number of hours worked per week (10 or 20). [See Types of Graduate Assistant section]. Graduate assistants with out-of-state residency status are charged the in-state tuition rate for all courses taken.

The tuition waiver will be granted only for course units that are required for the degree program and/or approved by the degree program director. The graduate assistantship program also may be used to cover a maximum of 6 units of audited coursework the student takes over the entire period of the graduate degree program. Courses the student takes for audit first must be approved by the student's degree program director and be applicable to the student's program of study. To be covered by the graduate assistantship, the number of audited course units must be within the allotted units stipulated in the tuition waiver contract. Consistent with federal policy, students who are non-resident aliens/international are only eligible to audit a class if they maintain the required number of credits to maintain full time status. The minimum required credits to maintain full time status per academic term is 9 for students in master's degree programs and 6 for students in doctoral programs. The Graduate Assistantship Program does not cover classes that a student withdraws from after the drop/add deadline. It is the student's responsibility to reimburse the University for the tuition associated with these courses.

Tuition waivers are granted for undergraduate course units only when those courses are required as part of the graduate degree program. Because the students will be charged for these courses at the undergraduate rate, the tuition waiver will be awarded at the undergraduate rate. **University fees will not be waived; they must be paid by the student by the due date. Otherwise, classes will be dropped, and a late fee will be assessed**.

Due to Payroll processing, it takes at least 4-5 weeks for **new** student employees to receive their first paycheck for the stipend (4-5 weeks after the student completes the necessary HR paperwork - I-9, Direct Deposit & W-4). Once payroll paperwork has been completed, the GAO will receive a confirmation from HR. At that time, the GA Office can sign off on the student's GA Appointment. The automated system allows the Payroll Dept. and the Billing Office to view the Appointment/contract 24-36 hours later. Their review time depends on their current volume. For any student whose paperwork is submitted close to/on the GA due date, it takes at least one week to complete this whole cycle due to the high volume. Students who do not receive their first paycheck within 6 weeks are to contact the Graduate Assistantship Office at (410) 704-4484 or gao@towson.edu or Payroll Helpline (410) 704-5599. The first paycheck usually is mailed to the student's address. Thereafter, direct deposit can be managed through **Payroll Online Service Center (POSC).** Students also are encouraged to access POSC for information related to payroll taxes, etc.

Registration and Billing

Students must be registered for courses before they can receive a graduate assistantship. Supervisors are encouraged to submit the completed *Graduate Assistantship Appointment. Request Form* as early as possible. This will enable the Graduate Assistantship Office to submit the documentation for tuition waiver to the Billing Office and the Hiring Form for stipend payments to the Payroll Dept. in a timely manner. **Students must pay for or have submitted to the Billing Office completed evidence of payment for all fees and tuition not covered by the award before the tuition due date once they register for their courses. Examples of evidence of payment are financial aid packages, scholarships, and fellowships.**

Late payment for tuition and fees results in a $150 non-refundable late payment fee. **Supervisor's timely submission** of the Graduate Assistantship Request Form minimizes the risk that the student will be charged for the tuition and assessed the late fee.
Students who postpone registering for courses to delay when they will be billed by the University compromise the likelihood of receiving a graduate assistantship. They also run the risk that their needed courses will not be available.

Registration and Billing Schedule
Fall Spring Summer 2024-2025

Student Registration Date	Bill Due Date
4/8/2024 (Fall 2024)	9/4/2024 (Fall 2024)
11/11/2024 (Spring 2025)	
Summer 2025 TBA	Change of Schedule Period Ends
	9/4/2024 (Fall 2024)

Minimester Tuition
Graduate Assistants on Fall/Spring contracts are allowed to take minimester courses at the in-state tuition rate. However, graduate assistants are not eligible for a tuition waiver for these course units.

***All requests to take courses during minimester at in-state rates must be made via email to gao@towson.edu. Once the request is made, an email will be sent to the Billing Office to ensure the student is billed at the in-state rates.**

Summer Session

Graduate Assistants on spring assistantship contracts (10 h or 20 h) are eligible to take summer courses at the in-state tuition rate. However, spring graduate assistants are not eligible for a tuition waiver for summer course units unless they are on a summer assistantship contract.

Students on summer graduate assistantship contracts are eligible for a tuition waiver and stipend. Summer assistantships are separate contracts from fall/spring assistantships. Students who are not enrolled in classes during the summer sessions are not eligible to be graduate assistants. Programs, departments, and university units who choose to continue the employment of a student who is not enrolled in a summer class, are responsible for paying for the student's stipend.

Financial Aid/Student Loan Adjustments

Assistantship benefits often trigger financial aid/student loan reductions. Aid regulations also exclude the Graduate Assistantship Placeholder courses (See Placeholder Policy in Additional Benefits Section) from certain financial aid enrollment level calculations. All questions about these issues should be directed to the TU Financial Aid Office at www.towson.edu/finaid, finaid@towson.edu , or (410) 704-4236.

Student Loan Reductions

Assistantship tuition waivers and in-state tuition adjustments often require the TU Financial Aid Office to make the following adjustments to students' eligibility for student loans and other forms of financial aid.

1. Combined financial aid **including student loans and tuition waivers** cannot exceed financial aid **Cost of Attendance Budget**. TU's standard financial aid budgets are listed online at: www.towson.edu/admissions/tuition/cost.html
2. If the tuition waiver benefits or in-state tuition rate cost adjustments push the total aid beyond these aid budgets, the TU Financial Aid Office must reduce the amount of the loans.
3. During all fall assistantship adjustments, the Financial Aid Office will assume that each graduate assistant will receive the same tuition waiver amount for the spring term and will register for the same number of spring units. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the Financial Aid Office if the amount of the tuition waiver is different.
4. Loan reductions usually occur during the first week of the term (not all tuition waivers are posted until then).
5. Graduate assistants who receive a rebate check from the Billing Office before the Financial Aid Office reevaluates their eligibility for aid may have to return part of the rebate. The Billing Office now has DOC (Disbursement Online Center). DOC is a system created with our business partner PNC Bank that eliminates the need to physically come to the Billing Office to pick up a rebate.

If you elect to enroll, all student rebates will be transmitted electronically to the bank account of your choice. If you do not enroll, student rebates will be automatically mailed to the permanent address we have on file. At this time only students can sign up, therefore all rebates from Parent Plus loans will be mailed to the borrowing parent directly to the permanent address on file

6. Graduate assistants whose aid is reduced will receive an e-mail from the Financial Aid Office advising them to log into "**Towson Online Services"** https://inside.towson.edu/psLogin/ to view their new aid package.
7. The Billing Office will run new bills after the end of the Drop/Add period. Graduate assistants whose new bill indicates that there is a change to the amount they owe the university will receive an e-mail from the Billing Office directing them to view their eBILL online. Graduate assistants can view their TU Customer Account at any time using "**Towson Online Services"** https://inside.towson.edu/psLogin/
8. Students who receive a graduate assistantship for only the fall term (i.e., do not have an assistantship for the spring term) and want to request a spring loan increase, must notify the Financial Aid Office. They can increase their spring budget based on their spring out-of-state rates and can then reevaluate their maximum loan amounts.

Financial Aid Treatment of Assistantship Placeholder Courses (CGSR G90 & G91)
These placeholder courses help to increase students' enrollment levels toward half-time or full-time enrollment. The placeholder course is non-billable and not eligible for financial aid. The financial aid budget and award disbursement policies exclude all credit units from these assistantship placeholder classes (CGSR G90 & G91). All graduate assistants qualify for placeholder courses. Placeholder units are also excluded from Financial Aid Cost of Attendance budget calculations.

Minimum Course Units for Student Loan Disbursements and Half-Time Aid Status (Exclude Placeholder G90 & G91 Course Units):

- Master's Degree & Graduate Certificate Students: 6 units of classes per term
- Doctoral Students: 3 units of classes per term

Federal Student Loan Payment Deferments
Federal aid regulations apply more lenient requirements for deferring payments on prior federal student loans. To defer prior federal student loans, students must be enrolled half-time. Half-time status can include units from Placeholder CGSR G90 & G91 courses.

Payroll Deductions

Tax Status
Graduate assistants are subject to all applicable Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration laws, regulations, and policies. Because of the U.S. federal tax code revisions effective January 1, 1987, all graduate students became liable to pay

income tax on compensation (i.e., the stipend) received for graduate assistantships. The amount remitted for tuition qualifies as a non-taxable scholarship. Graduate assistants who have questions concerning tax obligations should consult a tax counsel or the **Internal Revenue Service (1-800-829-1040)**.

Retirement and Social Security (FICA)
Retirement benefits are not withheld from the stipends of graduate assistants. Graduate assistants are exempt from Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA) taxes provided they maintain enrollment and are registered with at least half-time status (6 units). Graduate assistants taking less than 6 course units during the fall and spring terms are subject to FICA.

Positions and Responsibilities

Graduate assistants may be awarded positions in academic programs, administrative offices, external works sites or other sites approved by the graduate dean. Students are encouraged to apply for though are not limited to those positions that are in the department of their degree program and in other university units related to their professional goals.

Graduate assistants are assigned duties that are commensurate with their experience and qualifications, and with the needs of the program/office/worksites. Responsibilities vary and may include general and project support for programs, departments, university units and external agencies; teaching and classroom support; research and grant support; technology support; and tutoring services. The Dean of Graduate Studies approves all job descriptions.

Graduate assistants are to provide appropriate support in the assigned department, administrative unit, or off-campus site for the number of hours per week specified in the letter of the appointment. Graduate assistants will be given a written description of their responsibilities. However, the supervisor retains the flexibility to adjust these responsibilities throughout the term to meet emerging needs.

Length of Graduate Assistantship

The graduate assistantship is for the term of the contract which may be 2.5 months, 4.5 months, or 9 months. They may be full time or half time:

- Full-time graduate assistants are for 20 hours per week. The 20-hour graduate assistantship, together with class attendance and study, is considered a full-time undertaking. Full-time assistants must satisfactorily fulfill their responsibilities to the university without conflict by outside employment.

- Half-time graduate assistantships are for 10 hours per week. The 10-hour graduate assistantship is designed to accommodate the special needs of departments and working students. Half-time assistants must satisfactorily fulfill their responsibilities to the university without conflict from outside employment.

The total hours that must be met are as follows:

Term	10–Hour per Week	20–Hour per Week
Summer	100 hours total	200 hours total
Fall	165 hours total	330 hours total
Spring	165 hours total	330 hours total
Fall and Spring	330 hours total	660 hours total

To fulfill the total number of hours required by the assistantship, graduate assistants may need to work through the minimester. Graduate students are to communicate with their supervisors regarding how they will fulfill the required hours of work. Using a Sample Time Sheet is recommended. It can be found under Hiring Department Forms on the GA web page.

Types of Graduate Assistants

Graduate Assistants (General)
Graduate assistants may work within a graduate program, department, college, other units of the university (Office of the President, Student Activities, International Students Scholar Office, etc.), or external sites. Graduate assistants work under the direct supervision of a program director, faculty member, department chair, off-site supervisor, or other administrative officer. Such positions are expected to have research, educational, or professional development component.

There is a very wide range of duties; the following are examples:

- Assist with program assessment, accreditation, and activities.
- Assist with program development.
- Participate in recruitment and marketing initiatives.
- Assist with public relations (e.g. department newsletters, alumni events or contact with the public)
- Plan special events.
- Guide undergraduate organizations.

Teaching Assistants (Master's and Doctoral Level)
Master's level teaching assistants always work under the direct supervision of a faculty mentor. The final responsibility for the material covered, grades, and other formal course responsibilities remains with supervising faculty member. Teaching assistant roles and responsibilities vary among programs, departments, and colleges**,** but may include the following:

- Running an undergraduate laboratory -(In-class lab contact hours should not be more than half of the total assistantship hours)
- Assisting the professor in preparation of teaching materials and learning resources
- Grading class assignments (from a key or rubric of the professor)
- Making a presentation as part of a regular class
- Leading recitation, help, or tutoring sessions for undergraduate students
- Providing support associated with instruction, but not being in charge (i.e., instructor of record) of a regular class

Teaching Assistants in terminal degree programs (Doctoral and MFA) also may serve as an instructor of a class when provided with assistance and mentoring on a routine basis from a full-time faculty member, and when approved by the department chair and college dean. Under such circumstances, those teaching assistants on a 20 hour a week assistantship may teach a maximum of 6-7 units of coursework; those on a 10 hour a week assistantship may teach a maximum of 3-4 units of coursework.

Research Assistants (Master's and Doctoral levels)

Graduate research assistants work under the direct supervision of a faculty mentor. Usually, their position relates to a research or scholarly project of the faculty mentor. The research or scholarly project may be qualitative or quantitative in nature. It may or may not be directly related to the student's project, thesis, or dissertation. The actual work assignment depends on the nature of the research or scholarly project. Examples include:

- Assisting or independently conducting literature reviews or examining supporting documents and materials
- Assisting with or independently carrying out a project or research, including data collection, coding, assessment, analysis, and the creation of new products that are relevant to or expand upon the faculty member's research or scholarly project
- Inputting data, managing resources, creating products, and drafting reports
- Disseminating results through regional and national professional forums

Step Increases

Students may receive a 'step' increase to their base assistantship from non-OGS funding. Steps are awarded based on program specific criteria that may include years of service, special skill sets, competitive recruitment, and others as determined by the department, program and/or supervisor. Programs should make every effort to be consistent in the use of steps across students.

Doctoral Research Scholars – new Fall 2023

Doctoral Research Scholars (formerly Doctoral Fellows) work under the supervision of a faculty mentor on their dissertation. While in this position, the student may perform teaching assistant responsibilities for one class per academic year. However, their primary responsibilities should most closely be those of a research assistant. The actual work assignment depends on the nature of the research. Examples include:

- Independently conducting literature reviews or examining supporting documents and materials
- Independently carrying out a project or research, including data collection, coding, assessment, analysis, and the creation of new products that are relevant to or expand upon the faculty member's research or scholarly project
- Inputting data, managing resources, creating products, and drafting reports
- Disseminating results through national and international professional forums

Reapplication for Graduate Assistantship

Students seeking graduate assistantships beyond the terms in the contract must reapply; renewal is not automatic or guaranteed. Students will not be awarded a graduate assistantship beyond a maximum of four 9-month contracts. Factors influencing the decision to reappoint a graduate assistantship may include:

1. Satisfactory academic performance and progress towards degree
2. Satisfactory performance of assigned assistantship responsibilities and duties
3. Availability of funds
4. Department, university, and institutional limits on the number of years for which an assistantship may be renewed
5. Specific departments and university unit needs, constraints and policies, including efforts to allow a large number of qualified students to benefit for assistantships.

Notice of Continued Appointment

Except under justifiable circumstances, graduate assistants whose appointments are for more than one term will be notified by their supervisor of their appointments and of decisions not to renew appointments, at least 60 days prior to the start date of the appointment.

1. If a decision to renew an appointment cannot be made within that time, the graduate assistant will be informed by the supervisor at least 60 days in advance of the assistantship's start date of an estimated date for the renewal decision.
2. Circumstances which may justify fewer than 60-day notice include, but are not limited to, uncertainty in funding the graduate assistant position, availability in resources, and course enrollments.

3. Nothing in this section shall prevent a program, department or unit from making an appointment to a graduate assistant on short notice based on a change in circumstances in class enrollments, availability of resources or other factors.

Additional Benefits

Time Away from Duty
As per USM Policy III-7.11, 12-month full time graduate assistantships are eligible for 20 hours of paid time away from duty per year. Note: 12-month assistantships usually are not awarded at Towson University. The paid time away from duty: (a) is in addition to institution holidays and other days that the institution is closed such as inclement weather; and (b) is to be scheduled, with the permission of the graduate assistant's supervisor, at times that do not conflict with the duties of the assistantship.

For those graduate assistants who work less than 12 months, the number of weeks in an academic term is more than the number required to complete the total required hours for their assistantship. Thus, these graduate assistants should confer with their supervisor regarding requests for time away from duty. Requests for paid time away from duty must be approved by the graduate assistant's supervisor and the program director, department chair, or unit head, with consideration given to the personal needs of the graduate assistant for such leave.

- If the University has a planned closure such as a scheduled holiday or other event, the graduate assistant is not required to work or to make up the missed time.
- If the University closes due to inclement weather or other extenuating circumstances, the graduate student is not required to work or to make up the missed time.
- The University recognizes Holy Days and Religious Observances and will accommodate observant individuals with reasonable support.
- It is up to the discretion of the supervisor & department needs if/when a student is obligated to work over Winter & Spring Break.

Vacation, Sick Leave, Illness, Maternity and Family Leave
As opposed to the paid time away from duty described in the above section, graduate assistants are not eligible for vacation or sick leave credit. Graduate assistants who become ill must notify their supervisor as soon as possible. Absence because of illness should be supported collegially. After four consecutive days of absence due to illness, the supervisor may require the graduate assistant to provide a letter from the physician or other licensed healthcare professional that states the nature and duration of the illness and clarifies that health reasons are preventing the graduate assistant from returning to work. If the student provides a doctor's note after four consecutive days, the student will be excused from their duties/hours. If the illness results in

absence that exceeds a time period longer than two weeks, the graduate assistant typically should **not** be kept on payroll. Also, review the Billing Office Refund policy and Exceptions to the Refund Policy (including medical) for the tuition waiver.

Maternity or family leave is not regarded as illness. Maternity or family leave should be discussed with the supervisor as soon as possible to determine how and if the student can fulfill the terms and obligations of the assistantship.

Residency Classification
Regardless of their official state of residence, graduate assistants who are on at least half-time appointments are billed at the in-state tuition rate for course units taken during their appointment, including any course units they take over the tuition remittance allowance (See Length of Graduate Assistantships). Official residency classification, however, does not change. Consequently, graduate students will be billed according to their official residency status when they are no longer supported by the assistantship. Thus, out- of- state graduate students may pay in-state tuition rates during the terms they have an assistantship and out-of-state rates during the terms they do not have an assistantship. Graduate students are to be aware of their official residency status, notify the Office of Registrar regarding any change in residency status, and address any problems immediately.

Health Insurance
Graduate assistants can purchase health care insurance through Health Center at Towson University. Some assistantship positions may include Health Insurance, confirm with your supervisor if your position includes this benefit.

Facilities
Programs, departments, and university units generally provide graduate assistants with suitable workspace, laboratory space, and office space when necessary. Also, graduate assistants usually have access to desks, file space, mailboxes, computers, telephones and duplicating machines or services. Graduate assistants are to contact the individual program, department, or university unit for more specific information.

Parking
Graduate assistants who have a 20 hour per week assistantship, two 10 hour per week assistantships or one 10 hour per week plus one adjunct position is eligible for a Faculty/Staff parking permit at the lowest rate. Parking permits are to be obtained from the Parking Services Office, in the University Garage. To obtain a parking permit, the graduate assistant must send a copy of their adjunct contract and/or assistantship letter(s) to Parking & Transportation. Students who have a 10-hour assistantship pay for parking at the regular student rate. Students can reference Parking & Transportation Services web page if needed.

Breaks
Students working more than five consecutive hours per day must take a minimum 30-minute unpaid meal break. Paid breaks are given at the discretion of the supervisor. Any additional breaks should not exceed 15 minutes.

Placeholder Course Policy & Purpose
Students receiving a 10-hour or 20-hour per week graduate assistantship may qualify for these additional course units to achieve full-time graduate student status. The additional course units will be in the form of a placeholder course/class that is non-billable and ***not eligible for financial aid.*** Graduate assistants who work 20 hours per week will be eligible for the *Office of Graduate Studies G90* for 3 units. Graduate assistants who work 10 hours per week will be eligible for the *Office of Graduate Studies G91* for 6 units. To qualify for financial aid, students must have at least 6 units (master's) or 3 units (doctoral) of actual coursework (the placeholder course/class/units will not count). The Registrar's Office will add the placeholder classes, ***after change of schedule*** (drop/add), to any student who needs placeholder units to achieve full-time status.

Placeholder classes will be graded SX/UX (count as an attempt, but no credit is earned). These units will be reported to the National Student Loan Clearinghouse so the student will be considered half-time or full-time graduate student at Towson (based on Towson University definitions). Thus, if they have previous federal student loans, they will not go into repayment. The placeholder course also is reported to Enrollment Verifications which are used for car insurance, housing contracts, etc.

Graduate Assistant Supervisors

Faculty and staff who supervise graduate assistants must be familiar with the institution's policies and procedures for graduate assistants.

- Each department chair, faculty member or unit head who supervises a graduate assistant shall have access to the Towson University Graduate Assistantship Handbook and shall receive a copy of the graduate assistant's appointment letter. The Handbook is available on the Graduate Assistantship web page.
- Supervisors are to review the terms of the graduate assistantship with the student and to complete and return the Graduate Assistantship Acceptance form to the Graduate Assistantship Office.
- Supervisors are accountable for adherence to the terms of their graduate assistant's appointment letter and the requirements stated in the Towson University Graduate Assistantship Handbook.
- Supervisors are to provide guidance and feedback, monitor the quality of an assistant's work, and verify that the required work hours are fulfilled each term.
- Supervisors should speak with their students regarding proper dress code for their specific GA responsibilities.

Evaluation of Graduate Assistants

The performance of graduate assistants in their assigned responsibilities is expected to be of the highest quality throughout the term of appointment. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to develop criteria for work expectations and to provide feedback to the graduate assistants regarding their performances in the assistantship. They are to have a system for monitoring the work hours and type and quality of work.

Supervisors and graduate assistants are to maintain a record of the hours worked and the work done each week. The work is to be educationally and professionally relevant, rather than clerical in nature. There is some flexibility in the hours graduate assistants work each week. Those with a 10-hour assistantship should work about 10 hours per week (a total of 165 hours in fall or spring semester); students with a 20 hour assistantship should work about 20 hours a week (a total of 330 hours in a fall or spring semester). Under no circumstance should work extend beyond 40 hours in a week and only if the student is able to accommodate the additional hours without compromising academic studies. Working 30-40 hours in a week is considered a rare exception and should not occur several weeks in succession. In addition, supervisors and graduate assistants should keep a record of the supervisory sessions. Supervision should occur routinely throughout the assistantship.

Conduct and Professional Behavior

Graduate assistants are expected to conduct themselves with the same sensitivity and thoughtfulness that they would expect to receive from others in all their interactions with students, faculty, and other members of the university community. A graduate assistant's teaching, research and administrative activities are subject to the ethical precepts and code of the academic profession, to the laws of the State of Maryland regarding its employees, and to the university policies that govern institutional obligations. Violation of any of these standards constitutes the basis for disciplinary action in accordance with procedures set forth in the Towson University's policies. These and other university policies on sexual misconduct, academic integrity and intellectual property rights are included in the Graduate Catalog and are available on the Towson University website. It is the responsibility of the graduate assistant to review and become familiar with these policies.

In the event of violations involving their conduct while serving as graduate assistants, several procedures are available for resolution, some formal and some informal. For details of the formal aspects of the procedure, consult the Graduate Catalog and the Towson University website.

Equal Opportunity Statement
Towson University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer and has a strong institutional commitment to diversity. Women, minorities, and veterans are encouraged to apply.

Non-Discrimination
Towson University's policies, programs, and activities comply with federal and state laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and veteran status. If you wish to request ADA accommodation, please telephone 410-704- 0203, or send an email to ada@towson.edu.

Sexual Harassment
Towson University is committed to creating a safe and welcoming campus environment. The University established this sexual harassment policy to prohibit sexual harassment, to establish a complaint procedure to investigate allegations of sexual harassment, and to provide for appropriate discipline for persons who violate this policy.

Termination of Assistantship

Students may terminate the assistantship at any time by giving two weeks' notice in writing to their supervisor and to the Graduate Assistantship Office. The stipend will be paid on a pro rata basis through the last day of work. Termination by the student prior to completion of the contractual agreement voids the tuition waiver. The student will be billed for the entire tuition owed for that academic term. Graduate assistants with out-of-state student status will be billed at the out-of-state rate. Graduate assistants who terminate their assistantship because of withdrawal from Towson University must abide by Towson University policies and procedures for withdrawal notification and refund policy requests as stated in the Graduate Catalog and on the Towson University website under Billing Office Refund Policy.

The assistantship may be terminated by the supervisor under unusual and compelling conditions for such reasons as unsatisfactory performance, excessive absenteeism; behaviors considered detrimental to the program, department, university unit or external site; moral turpitude; academic misconduct; delinquency in academic work; extended illness (consistent with applicable law, including ADA and FMLA); violations of state or federal law; misrepresentation or false data given on the graduate application materials; or violation of the terms of the assistantship agreement. Written notice of such termination is to be given to the student. A Cancellation Form must be submitted to the Graduate Assistantship Office by the supervisor for all terminations. Payment of the stipend and voiding of the tuition waiver is the same as when the student terminates the assistantship.

The assistantship also can be terminated due to departmental financial exigency. In this case, the stipend is discontinued as of a specified date, but the tuition waiver is continued to the end of the current academic term. Upon the request of the graduate assistant, the Graduate Assistantship Office will direct the graduate assistant, whose position was rescinded after the appointment has been made due to financial or other exigencies, to other employment positions.

Complaints, Grievances and Dispute Resolution

Informal Resolution of Concerns
Graduate assistants having difficulties with their roles and responsibilities first should discuss the situation with their supervisor. The student is to arrange a meeting with the supervisor. The supervisor is to meet with the student within 10 working days of the request. Supervisors are concerned with the success of the project and the graduate assistant, and usually are eager to help. The supervisor has 10 working days after the meeting with the student to provide a written response.

Formal Grievance Procedure
This procedure applies to the following issues:

a. Workload volume and scheduling
b. Inappropriate work assignments
c. Termination of a graduate assistantship within the term of appointment
d. Non-renewal of an assistantship for arbitrary or capricious reasons including reprisal for filing a grievance

No other issues can be the subject of this formal grievance procedure.

Graduate assistants who have a dispute with the determination made by their supervisor or if the issue remains unresolved, are to submit the issue to their program director, department chair, or head of the university unit where they have the assistantship. This procedure is to be followed regardless of the funding source for the graduate assistantship as the supervisors are accountable to their program director, department chair or university unit head for the supervision of the graduate assistant. In those situations, where there is a program director and a department chair, the graduate students should follow the protocol within the department as to the appropriate person to contact. Graduate assistants are to submit the grievance in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the written response by the supervisor and provide a detailed description of the grievance, the facts supporting the grievance, and all pertinent documentation.

The program director, department chair or head of the university unit is to meet with the graduate assistant within 10 working days of receiving the written grievance. The purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for the graduate assistant to discuss the grievance and to provide the facts and evidence that support it. Neither the graduate assistant nor the supervisor has the right to have counsel present at the meeting. The program director, department chair, or head of the university unit also may request further pertinent documentation from any source, question and interview any persons with pertinent information, or consult with university counsel. The graduate assistant has the burden of demonstrating the merits of their grievance. The program director, department chair, or head of the university unit is to provide a written response within 10 working days after the meeting with the graduate assistant that states the resolution to the grievance.

The graduate assistant may appeal the decision of the director, chairperson, or unit head to the dean of their academic college (for academically related graduate

assistantship placements) or the dean of Graduate Studies (for non-academically related graduate assistantship placements). The graduate assistant is to submit the appeal in writing to the dean, including all documentation provided to the program director, chairperson, or unit head and the written response from the program director, chairperson, or unit head, within 10 working days after the date of (receipt of) the director, chairperson, or unit head's written response. The graduate assistant has the burden of demonstrating the merits of their grievance. The graduate assistant has no right to meet with the dean to discuss the appeal. The dean may request further pertinent documentation from any source, question or interview any person with pertinent information, or consult with university counsel. The dean will review the information and provide a written response within 10 working days of receipt of the written appeal.

The graduate assistant can appeal the decision of the dean in writing to the Graduate Studies Committee. The Graduate Studies Committee consists of graduate faculty representing each of the academic colleges and a member of the Graduate Student Association. The student or the supervisor may request that a panel member be substituted on the grounds that the panel member has a conflict of interest. The student is to forward all documented evidence to the Graduate Studies Office who will forward the materials to the Graduate Studies Committee. To appeal, the graduate assistant must submit all documentation provided to the program director, chairperson, unit head, and the dean, and the written responses from the director, chairperson, unit head, and dean, within 10 working days from receipt of the dean's written response. The graduate assistant has the burden of demonstrating the merits of their grievance. The graduate assistant has no right to meet with the Graduate Studies Committee, or any of its members, to discuss the appeal. The Graduate Studies Committee also may request further pertinent documentation from any source, question or interview any person with pertinent information, or consult with university counsel. The Graduate Studies Committee will review the appeal at its next scheduled monthly meeting and provide a written response within 10 working days after the meeting. The decision of the Graduate Studies Committee is final.
Any of the above time periods can be extended if there is compelling reason to do so. Reprisals against graduate assistants for filing a grievance are strictly prohibited.

The decision whether to renew an assistantship, except for the reasons listed above remains within the discretion of the department chair and is not subject to the grievance process. However, if a graduate assistant believes that an assistantship was not renewed because of unlawful discrimination or other unlawful grounds, the graduate assistant may pursue available institution processes, such as access to the University's Fair Practices Office.

The grievances discussed here do not include academic grievances, nor grievances related to Student Rights and Code of Conduct. These procedures are detailed in the Graduate Catalog.

Graduate assistants may raise concerns of suspected on-campus fraud or fiscal irregularities through the confidential University System of Maryland hot-line

mechanism on USM Policy VIII-7.10, University fraud reporting policies, and any relevant state or federal "whistleblowing" laws.

Additional On-Campus and Outside Employment

Domestic graduate assistants who wish to hold a position on campus beyond 20 hours of a graduate assistantship may do so only if the payment for the additional position comes on an hourly basis paid through a timesheet. The total amount of work hours per week allocated to an assistantship and other forms of on campus employment may not exceed 25 hours per week. Graduate assistants on a 20-hour assistantship may be employed on campus for a maximum of 5 more hours per week beyond assistantship duties. Graduate assistants on a 10-hour assistantship may be employed on campus for an additional 15 hours per week. Graduate assistants on a 20 hour per week assistantship may **not** be hired as Adjunct Faculty. Graduate assistants on a 10 hour per week assistantship may teach one 3–4-unit course each semester as Adjunct Faculty. International students may be limited to a certain number of hours of employment according to their visa status; these students should check with the International Student & Scholar Services Office, (410) 704-2421.

Although it is expected that the combined responsibilities of a graduate assistantship and necessary study will occupy all the time available to a student during the academic year, the university does not prohibit a graduate assistant outside employment in addition to their university appointment. It is up to the graduate assistants to determine the amount of time, if any, they may devote to additional activities while still maintaining satisfactory progress toward the degree and satisfactory fulfillment of his or her assistantship obligations. Departments and programs do have the discretionary right, however, to make appointments to students whose commitment suggests that they are most likely to attain their educational goals and maintain assistantship responsibilities in the most expeditious and effective ways.

Professional Development

Orientation and Information
Graduate assistants are to attend the orientation meeting scheduled by the Graduate Assistantship Office and to access and review the online graduate assistant orientation and Graduate Assistantship Handbook that contains all relevant policies and procedures applicable to graduate assistants.

Teaching Assistantship Workshop
Shortly before the start of the fall term, the Office of Graduate Studies holds a one-day Graduate Teaching Workshop for new teaching assistants. Faculty members with expertise in higher education teaching present instructional strategies on assessment, learning styles, active learning, academic integrity, and professionalism. Supplemental workshops related to teaching may be offered throughout the academic year.

Professional Development Opportunities
Graduate assistants are strongly encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities including workshops offered by academic departments, GSA, or the GAO such as the Teaching Assistant Workshop if applicable. These also include, but are not limited to, opportunities offered through the Graduate Student Association (GSA), such as the GAAC Peer Advisory Committee and GSA meetings. In addition to these opportunities, the Office of Technology Services offers workshops, training sessions and can provide support for technical related issues or concerns.

Communication with Administration – Meet & Confer

Each fall & spring, the Provost, VP for Administration & Finance, VP of Operations & Chief Human Resources Officer, and the Dean of Graduate Studies host a meeting with all graduate assistants. The purpose is to provide opportunities for graduate assistants to discuss the issues related to graduate assistantships, and to communicate their concerns to campus administration if needed. The Graduate Student Association will send a minimum of two electronic invitations to all graduate students to attend this meeting. In addition, the Graduate Student Association will seek volunteers through electronic correspondences and at this meeting to serve on the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee.

The Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee (GAAC) will represent the interests of the graduate assistants. Membership on the Graduate Assistantship Advisory Committee will be open to all graduate assistants, but efforts will be directed to seeking at least one graduate assistant from each of the six academic colleges that has graduate assistant students. Efforts will be directed to seek an equitable number from each college to provide balanced representation across the colleges. Twice annually, the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee will meet with the Provost, Vice President of Administration and Finance, and the Dean of Graduate Studies as part of a *meet and*

confer process. This shall occur regardless of whether graduate assistants elect to engage an external representative [See below]. The purpose of these meetings is to provide the opportunity for the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee to:

- Advise the Provost and Dean on the development and implementation of policies and procedures related to graduate assistants
- Discuss issues of importance to graduate assistants such as stipends, benefits, and terms of appointment
- Represent graduate assistants in institution-wide graduate assistant orientations
- Participate fully in shared governance.

Towson University administration will give serious consideration to the information, views, and suggestions gained from the meet and confer process in any relevant policy decisions regarding graduate assistants, regardless of whether graduate assistants elect to engage an external representative. Agreements reached during the process that are amenable to formalization as policy may be adopted as such through appropriate decisional processes of the institution; however, the University President retains final authority over all such decisions.

The Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee will have the option of engaging an external representative in this meet *and confer* discussions, as described below.

a. Graduate assistants may elect to engage a representative, which may be a labor organization, to assist them in "meet and confer" discussions with institution administrators over issues of concern to graduate assistants, including stipends, benefits, and terms of appointments.

    - At the beginning of each fall, the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee will inform graduate assistants electronically of the opportunities to pursue meet and confer process with an outside labor organization

    - To initiate the election process, the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee will have to provide an expression of interest on the part of at least on external organization to serve as the meet and confer representative.

    - The election will be administered in collaboration with the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee in a manner intended to maximize participation, subject to basic USM and institution ground rules.

    - The ground rules will include:
        i. A requirement that the election be held within 60 days of a written request by the Graduate Assistant Advisory Committee.
        ii. A minimum period of three to seven days, during the academic year, in which voting may take place. The voting period may exceed 7 days if needed at an institution.

iii. The ability of graduate assistants to vote electronically from a remote site.

b. Towson University will provide resources to the Graduate Student Association to conduct the election process. At least 51% of the graduate assistants need to participate in election and at least 51% of those voting need to vote *yes* for having a representative, for the representative to assist them in the meet in confer process. The labor representative will be the entity that receives the most votes among those under consideration. An affirmative vote by the graduate assistants for a representative will be in effect for a period of three years. After that time, another election needs to be held for the graduate assistants to determine if they continue to choose to have a representative assist them in the met and confer discussions. (See Appendix D)

c. Communications between graduate assistants and Towson University administration are based upon the free and candid expressions of views. The presence of a meet and confer process at an institution in which graduate assistants engage a representative does not limit or constrain the role, function, or processes of institutional shared governance. Shared governance bodies and other groups of graduate assistants remain free to confer with administrators regarding matters of concern to those groups. Graduate assistants may participate in institutional shared governance bodies, consistent with institution policies.

Changes to Policies and Procedures

Graduate assistants shall be apprised of any changes to relevant policies and procedures on a timely and ongoing basis. These changes will be posted on the Graduate Assistantship website and updated in the Graduate Assistantship Handbook.

Reminders

- Tuition waivers are granted for undergraduate course units only when those courses are part of the graduate degree program. Because the students will be charged for these courses at the undergraduate rate, the tuition waiver will be at the undergraduate rate.

- Fees are **not** covered. The student is responsible for all fees.

    - Tuition waivers for students in the Applied Information Technology (AIT-MS), Information Technology (IT-DSc) and the Accounting & Business Advisory program will be fully covered.

    - Assistantships are only valid for the dates expressly stated in the Graduate Assistantship contract. Assistantships are not automatically renewed.

- Students are not permitted to work until all of their paperwork has been processed in the Graduate Assistantship Office. Please note that due to payroll processing deadlines this process takes an average of 4 weeks before the assistant will receive their first paycheck.

- Students should not work over the 10 or 20 hours they are assigned. If this occurs, they should be compensated by one of two ways:
  a. Paid as a student worker for any extra hours
  b. Allowed to leave early for another day so that the hours worked are properly balanced

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a graduate assistantship?

A: Graduate Assistants (GAs) are, first and foremost, graduate students pursuing an education. The opportunity to work closely with faculty members and undergraduate students in teaching, research, or office environments is an integral part of education.

Graduate students who hold assistantships benefit educationally and professionally. They gain further expertise in their field; enhance their research skills and develop pedagogical skills; acquire experience in leadership, interpersonal effectiveness, and performance evaluation; acquire academic administrative experience; and enjoy collegial collaborations with advisors that may result in joint publications and other professional activities. Skills learned in assistantships prepare students not only for the academy, but also for corporate, government, and nonprofit organizations.

Assistantships also provide graduate students with the financial resources necessary to pursue their degrees. This financial support—stipend, tuition remission, and benefits—is part of the University's commitment to the success of our graduate students. The University is committed to ensuring that graduate assistant assignments are productive, enhance student qualifications, meet funding support and workload goals, and are consistent with the educational objectives of the student and their respective program.

.***Q: Where are assistantships available?***

A: Each college can award graduate assistantships. Students apply through their program. Other positions are available in other non-academic and administrative offices. External assistantships, if applicable, can be arranged at businesses off campus.

Q: What are the responsibilities of a graduate assistant?

A: Graduate assistants are responsible for a variety of activities, including assistance to faculty and administrators, research, and diverse assignments for external employers. Assistants provide appropriate work for the number of hours per week specified in the letter of appointment.

Q: What are the requirements to apply?

A: Graduate student must be:

- Admitted into a graduate program at Towson University
- Maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 while enrolled in the program

Q: How many hours must a graduate assistant work each week?

A: Graduate assistants work 10 hours or 20 hours a week, depending on the terms of their contract. With attendance in classes and study, 20 hours is expected to be a full-time undertaking. The 10 hours is designed to accommodate special needs of the departments. Graduate assistants must be able to satisfy their graduate assistantship responsibilities to the university without interference from outside employment.

Q: What are the minimum unit requirements per semester?

A: Full-time (20 hours) assistants must register for a minimum of six course units; and half-time (10 hours) assistants must register for at least three course units.

Q: Can unused tuition waiver carry over from one semester to another?

A: Tuition waivers are awarded per semester; unused tuition waiver will not carry over into the proceeding semester nor will students be reimbursed for the unused portion.

Q: How are graduate assistants compensated?

A: Out-of-state and International students will receive in-state tuition rates. A graduate student who receives a 20-hour, 9-month assistantship receives a stipend and a maximum tuition waiver up to 24 units that will be distributed on a 12 unit per semester basis. A graduate student who receives a 10-hour, 9-month assistantship receives a stipend and a maximum tuition waiver up to 12 units that will be distributed on a 6 unit per semester basis. Fees are not covered.

Please Note: **The Graduate Assistantship Program only will pay tuition waiver for degree required courses and prerequisite courses that pertain to the graduate assistant's degree program**.

Q: Are health care benefits or other benefit types tied to a graduate assistantship?

A: Health benefits are included for Doctoral Scholars. Other assistantship positions may have health benefits at the discretion of the hiring unit. Students are encouraged to contact the Dowell Health Center for additional health insurance options.

Q: Is the stipend taxable?

A: Yes, the stipend is considered taxable income. Contact the IRS to determine if tuition waivers are tax-exempt.

Q: Will my assistantship benefits affect my eligibility for student loans and other forms of financial aid?

A: Consult the Award Guide for Financial Aid. Review Award Changes & Reductions to learn how and when your aid may be adjusted and how to prevent and prepare for changes in financial aid.

How does a graduate student apply for a graduate assistantship?

A: Handshake typically includes positions for non-academic and administrative offices. (i.e. Housing & Residence Life, Parking & Transportation, Student Activities, etc.) Most Graduate Program positions are awarded directly by the Graduate Program.

APPENDIX A: Graduate Assistantship Checklist

Graduate Assistant New Hire Checklist
(US Citizens and Permanent Resident Aliens)

Congratulations on receiving your Graduate Assistantship award. As part of the hiring process you must complete the following steps in the checklist below.

Step 1: Course Registration Enroll in course credits	Complete? ☐
Step 2: Tuition Fees Pay all tuition fees by deadline	☐
Step 3: W-4 Form Complete W-4 Form & MW 507 How to Complete W-4 & MW 507 Form *bring to HR – see Step 6	☐
Step 4: Direct Deposit Form Complete Direct Deposit form for automatic payments *bring to HR – see Step 6	☐
Step 5: I-9 Employment Eligibility Registration Complete Section 1 of the I-9 Employment Eligibility	☐

Step 6: Go to Office of Human Resources (Location: Administration Building, Room 101) Complete Section 2 of the I-9 – bring two original forms of identification **Acceptable forms of identification** * Bring completed W-4 Form & Direct Deposit Forms Option Sign up for: Payroll Online Service Center (POSC)	☐

Graduate Assistant Hire Checklist

(For International Students with Social Security #)

Congratulations on receiving your Graduate Assistantship award. As part of the hiring process you must complete the following steps in the checklist below.

Step 1: Course Registration Enroll in course credits	Completed? ☐
Step 2: Tuition Fees Pay all tuition fees by deadline	☐
Step 3: Direct Deposit Form Complete Direct Deposit form for automatic payments *bring to HR – see Step 5	☐
Step 4: I-9 Employment Eligibility Registration Complete Section 1 of the I-9 Employment Eligibility	☐
Step 5: Go to Office of Human Resources (Location: Administration Building, Room 101) Bring proof of work authorization, for example: (VISA, I-20(s), I-94) Complete Section 2 of the I-9 & Take copy of I-9 Confirmation Tax Residency Status Form **Acceptable forms of identification**	☐

Step 6: Contact Non-Resident Alien Tax Office Email nratax@towson.edu from your TU email to have an online tax record set up in Glacier Complete the online tax record Email nratax@towson.edu again to schedule an appointment to finish tax summary and W-4	☐
Step 7: Go to Non-Resident Alien Tax Office (Location: Administration Building, 4th Floor) **Bring** all immigration documents (VISA, I-20(s), I-94), Social Security card and copy of I-9 Confirmation Tax Residency Status Form	☐

Graduate Assistant Hire Checklist

(For International Students without Social Security #)

Congratulations on receiving your Graduate Assistantship award. As part of the hiring process you must complete the following steps in the checklist below.

Step 1: Course Registration Enroll in course credits	Completed? ☐
Step 2: Tuition Fees Pay all tuition fees by deadline	☐
Step 3: Direct Deposit Form Complete Direct Deposit form for automatic payments *bring to HR – see Step 5	☐
Step 4: I-9 Employment Eligibility Registration Complete Section 1 of the I-9 Employment Eligibility	☐
Step 5: Go to Office of Human Resources (Location: Administration Building, Room 101) Bring proof of work authorization, for example: (VISA, I-20(s), I-94) Complete Section 2 of the I-9 & Take copy of I-9 Confirmation Tax Residency Status Form **Acceptable forms of identification**	☐

Step 6: Go to International Student & Scholar Office (ISSO) (Location: Psychology Building, Suite 408) Bring proof of work authorization, (VISA, I-20(s), I-94) Bring copy of I-9 Confirmation Tax Residency Status Form Bring Original Employment Letter from Supervisor (printed on department letterhead)	☐
Step 7: Go to Social Security Office located at: **28 Allegheny Avenue, Towson, MD 21204** Bring proof of work authorization, (VISA, I-20(s), I-94) and ISSO endorsed Employment Letter Complete Application for Social Security # Card (SS card will be mailed to student's address in approximately 4 weeks)	☐
Step 8: Contact Non-Resident Alien Tax Office (as soon as you receive your SS# card) Email nratax@towson.edu from your TU email to have an online tax record set up in Glacier Complete the online tax record Email nratax@towson.edu again to schedule an appointment to finish tax summary and W-4	☐
Step 8: Go to Non-Resident Alien Tax Office (Location: Administration Building, 4th Floor) Bring all immigration documents (VISA, I-20(s), I-94), Social Security card and copy of I-9 Confirmation Tax Residency Status Form	☐

Appendix B: Payroll & Hiring GA Procedures

1. Payroll receives a complete hiring packet for each Graduate Assistant from the GAO.
    - International Students must:
        i. Have a Social Security Number before paperwork can be sent to Payroll for processing. However, they can begin to work while they are waiting receipt of the SSN.

ii. Complete a tax analysis with NRA Tax Office before paperwork can be submitted. Packet processed by GAO office includes:
    - New Hire Form (previously the 311T) with personal and payment information completed
    - Semester(s) & Fiscal Year
    - Type (GA,RA,TA)
    - Number of hours per week
    - Total pay and biweekly pay
    - Hiring department
    - Funding department

    Additional Payment Forms Individual completes:
    - W-4
    - Direct Deposit
    - Tax Residency Status (showing proof of I-9 completion)
    - International Students with NRA Tax Status

2. Payroll updates PeopleSoft Job Data to process the hire data and sends appropriate paperwork to Central Payroll Bureau.

3. Payroll sets up Pay information in PeopleSoft and maintains a bi-weekly pay verification spreadsheet.

4. Employees are paid retroactive pays due to them on the first available pay date.

GA Hiring combinations:

- Payroll cannot issue any salary advances to student employees.
- Students **can** only be hired in the following combination of positions:
    - GA (10 hour only) & PT Faculty (Adjunct) – see limit on hours in Additional On-Campus Employment)
    - GA and Hourly student employee
- Students **cannot** hold the following combination of positions:
    - Staff and student employee
    - GA and Staff
    - GA, PT Faculty (Adjunct) and Staff
    - GA, PT Faculty (Adjunct) and Student employee

Appendix C: International Student and Scholar Office

International Student & Scholar Office

Frequently Asked Questions

Before You Arrive at Towson University

When You Arrive

Working, Traveling and Leaving TU

Am I allowed to work?
F-1 or J-1 full-time students are allowed to work on-campus for any Towson University department or office, on a part-time basis, up to 20 hours per week during the school year and full-time during school vacation periods. Off-campus employment requires special permission and usually can be done only after the first academic year (9 months) of full-time study at Towson University.

Where can I find information about on-campus and off-campus jobs?
You can search for on-campus jobs using the Career Center's web portal. Also, speak to your department or academic advisor about possible job openings.

In addition, the Career Center has a job search database, "Going Global." Access "Going Global" for 600,000 worldwide job/internship postings, 35 country career guides, searchable H1B Plus database and MORE! The link to "Going Global" can be found on the Career Center's home page.

How do I get a Social Security Number (SSN)?
F-1 students are permitted to apply for a Social Security Number provided they have an on-campus job offer. A Social Security Number is intended for individuals who will work in the United States and cannot be issued simply for identification purposes. For more details about getting a SSN if you have an on-campus job offer, please check the International Students "Employment" section of the ISSO website.

Can I work as a volunteer?
While volunteering can be a great experience, you need to be careful that the experience is truly considered volunteer work. To be a "volunteer," you cannot accept any type of payment or compensation for your work. That means that you cannot be paid money for your work, and you also cannot work in exchange for housing, food, transportation, or clothing. Nor can you accept things like parking passes, free meals etc.

Unpaid internships are acceptable in most situations if:

- The company or organization offers unpaid internship positions on a regular basis.
- The internship activities are not the same as those of a regular, paid employee.
- The services are entirely voluntary or solely for internship credit, with no promise of advancement or future employment relationship.
- The activities are predominantly for the student's benefit.
- Remember, an unpaid internship is only acceptable if no form of compensation is provided – e.g. stipend, parking pass, lunch, etc.

Please note that if you have applied for OPT, have secured a job and are waiting for your work authorization, you cannot volunteer for the company until your work authorization arrives. http://www.towson.edu/academics/international/isso/

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR OFFICE

Working
Many students are interested in working while on their student visas. However, there are several rules, regulations, and limitations regarding student employment. Please read the following to find out detailed information regarding on-campus employment, Social Security Numbers, Curricular Practical Training, and Optional Practical Training. When in doubt, it is good practice to contact an advisor at the ISSO.

Employment for F-1 (Foreign Student Visa) Students

- Employment Eligibility for F-1 Students
- On-Campus Employment for F-1 Students
- Information for supervisors of TU student workers
- Sample employer letter for Social Security Number Application (For TU supervisors)
- Curricular Practical Training for F-1 Undergraduate Students
- Curricular Practical Training for Graduate F-1 Students
- Optional Practical Training for F-1 Students

Employment for J-1 (Exchange Student Visa) Students

- Employment Eligibility for J-1 Students

Important information on how to apply for a Social Security Number:

- You must have an on-campus job.
- Complete the I-9 process in the Office of Human Resources (first floor, Administration Building). Please bring all of your immigration documents with you (passport, I-20).

- Have your supervisor complete the top portion of the sample employer letter, and print it on office letterhead.
- Bring the completed letter to ISSO to certify. ISSO staff will contact you when it is ready for pick-up.
- Complete the SSN Application and take this, along with ISSO/Employer certification letter and all of your immigration documents to the local Social Security Agency.
- Once you have your Social Security Number, make an appointment with the Nonresident Alien Tax Office at nratax@towson.edu.
- Remember – you can begin to work after you complete the I-9 process and before you receive your SSN; however, you will not be paid until you have a SSN.

Taxes
Do you have questions regarding taxes? Please contact the Nonresident Alien Tax Office at nratax@towson.edu, located in the Administration Building on campus. The Nonresident Alien Tax Office will assist you to make sure that you follow nonresident alien tax withholding regulations. For more information about taxes, please visit the NRA Tax Office website.

Interested in Hiring an International Student?

International Student and Scholar Office
Psychology Bld. Room 408
Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30am – 5:00pm

Phone: 410-704-2421
Fax: 410-704-6040
isso@towson.edu

Please Note: Students are not allowed to begin work until they have completed the I-9 process with the Department of Human Resources.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TOWSON UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS REGARDING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER APPLICATIONS:

Effective October 13, 2004, international students in F-1 non-immigrant status who wish to apply for a social security number must now show proof of employment, or evidence of a job offer, at the time they submit their social security number application.

If you have hired or intend to hire an international student with **F-1*** status, you will need to complete the following steps to assist them in obtaining a social security number.

- Write a letter which includes specific information requested by the Social Security Administration (SSA) verifying their employment. (The International Student and Scholar Office (ISSO) has drafted a letter (see example below) that meets all of the SSA requirements and is available on the ISSO web site.

- An individual letter must be completed for each student.

- Please complete the required information (up to the "Signatory's Title" section) and print it on your office letterhead.

- Once this letter has been printed, an original signature in blue ink is necessary.

- The student must then bring the letter to the International Student and Scholar Office for certification by a Designated School Official (ISSO staff member), as this is also a Social Security Administration requirement.

Thank you for assisting your F-1 student employee with obtaining a Social Security Number. If further information would be helpful, please contact our office.

*** Most Towson University students are on F-1 student visas. There are currently about 800 students on our campus in F-1 student status.**

To Whom It May Concern:

This is evidence of on-campus employment for _____

Nature of student's job (e.g., wait staff, library aide, research assistant, etc.):

_____

Start date: _____ Number of hours/weeks: _____

Employer Contact Information:

52-600-2033 (Chartwells, etc. will have a different number)

_____
(Employer telephone number)

Supervisor

_____
(Printed name of student's immediate supervisor)

Sincerely,

_____ _____
Supervisor's Signature (original) Date

_____
Supervisor's Title

*** Section below to be completed by ISSO ***

This is to certify that _____ is a full-time, F-1 student attending Towson University.

_____ _____
Designated School Official Signature Date

_____ _____
(Leave space for the DSO's stamp) Phone

Appendix D: Organization of the Meet and Confer Representative Selection Process

University System of Maryland
Organization of the Meet and Confer Representative Selection Process
Principles and Guidelines

1) Upon their request, the Graduate Assistants (GAs) and Adjunct Faculty (AF) at each University System of Maryland (USM) institution will be given the opportunity to select an outside labor organization to represent them in periodic meetings with administration (referred to as "meet and confer" or M/C).
   a) The GAs and AF may choose to continue to meet directly with administration without a labor representative.
   b) In general, upon a successful election, one outside labor representative will represent all of the institution's GAs or AF. However, in exceptional circumstances, an institution may agree to more than one representative if, within the GA or AF populations, distinct communities of interest clearly exist whose concerns can be addressed adequately only with separate representation.
   c) The M/C process is available to GAs who are covered by the USM Policy on Graduate Assistants, No. III--7.11, and AF, as defined in USM Policy on the Employment of Adjunct Faculty, No. II—1.07.

2) Each institution will have functioning GA and AF advisory groups that meet policy requirements. If feasible, these groups should be selected through election by a reasonable number of GAs or AF, either as part of a larger shared governance organization or as a separate GA or AF advisory group. If an election process is not feasible, then the advisory group will consist of all GAs or AF who volunteer to serve on the group.

3) Once formed, each advisory group and institution administrators will develop a charter for the group's long-term governance and organization, including elections regarding the engagement of an outside labor representative for the M/C process.

4) The advisory groups will meet at least twice a year with key institution administrators, consistent with the above policies.

5) At the beginning of each fall semester, GAs and AF at each institution will be informed in writing of the opportunity to pursue M/C with an outside labor organization through an outreach process determined by the institution consistent with USM Guidelines that are published on the institution's website and readily accessible**.**

6) The USM will provide for:
   a) Amendments to the current GA and AF policies to reflect the availability of M/C and the fundamental requirements for the M/C process.
   b) The preparation of guidelines and fact sheets for use and distribution as each institution determines is appropriate.
   c) An orientation and training program for campus administrators and others to take place after a request by GAs or AF for an election is made at an institution.

7) Selection of External Representation for M/C. Upon the request of a GA or AF advisory group, an election will be held at the institution to determine whether GAs or AF wish to engage an external representative.
   a) To initiate the election process, the GA or AF advisory group will also have to provide an expression of interest on the part of at least one external organization to serve as their meet and confer representative.
   b) The election should be administered in collaboration with the GA or AF advisory group in a manner intended to maximize participation, subject to basic USM and institution ground rules.
   c) Election ground rules will be developed by the advisory group and institutional administration and will include:
      i) The standard for qualification as an external representative.
      ii) A requirement that the election be held within 60 days of a written request by the GA or AF advisory group, unless the group specifically requests a longer period**.**
      iii) A minimum period of three to seven days, during the academic year, in which voting may take place. The voting period may exceed 7 days if needed at an institution.
      iv) The ability of GAs and AF to vote electronically from a remote site.
   d) A minimum of 50% of GAs or AF must participate in an election for it to be valid. However, if exceptional circumstances make 50% participation infeasible, an institution may establish a lower voting threshold of at least 30%.
   e) If a majority of those voting choose to participate in M/C with a labor representative, then the labor representative will be the entity that receives the most votes among those under consideration.

8) Once an election is held:
   a) If 50% participation is achieved, and a majority of those voting elect to engage a labor representative, then the representative elected will serve as the meet and confer representative for three years from the date of their selection. After three years, the election process must be repeated.
   b) If 50% participation is not achieved, or if a majority of those voting elect not to engage a labor representative, the advisory group will continue to meet with administration without a labor representative.

i) The President of the institution may certify the validity of an election where less than 50% participation has been achieved upon a showing of exceptional circumstances which demonstrate that the election process nonetheless has been fair and representative. If the election does not result in the selection of a labor representative, the institution will not be required to hold another election for two years.

9) The institution will collaborate with the GA or AF advisory group on the selection process and will provide logistical support, including:
   a) The ability to identify and contact the GA and AF populations, including the provision of the names and institution email addresses of GAs and AF to GA and AF advisory groups and the mailing to the GAs of information regarding interested unions.
   b) A mechanism for electronic voting.
   c) Opportunities for GAs and AF to meet with potential labor representatives on campus.

(USM Archives, September 22, 2014)