



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

---

STUDENT AFFAIRS

**Hiring a Graduate Assistant Manual**  
Student Affairs Human Resources

## Table of Contents

Requesting a Graduate Assistant	3
- Hiring Seasons	
Placement for Graduate Assistants (PGA)	4
Graduate Assistant Policies	5
- Enrollment Fees	6
- Limitations	6
- Paid Leave	7
- Workload Policy	7
- Administrative Action	7
Guidelines for the Graduate Assistant Fellowship	9
- Compensation and Conversion	9
- Hiring Procedures	10
- FTE Guidelines	10
- Graduate Health Care Program	12
- Tuition Fellowship System	13
Resources for Graduate Assistants	13
- Professional Development	
- Housing	

## Requesting a Graduate Assistant

When looking to hire a graduate student within Auburn University Student Affairs, it is **required** that the Student Affairs Human Resources be notified in order to review guidelines, stipulations, and confirm approval from administration to move forward with recruitment and hiring. Please contact either Trey Lightner ([lightjl@auburn.edu](mailto:lightjl@auburn.edu)) or Andrea McAbee ([mcabeac@auburn.edu](mailto:mcabeac@auburn.edu)).

In the email please provide the following information:

- Department requesting
- Expected Direct Supervisor
- Job description including expected duties
- Degree programs applicable to the specific job duties

The following stipulations are considered when hiring a graduate student worker:

- Students working on Auburn University's campus are not allowed to exceed 20 hours per week. This includes responsibilities during assigned business hours. Any modification to hours should be discussed with the Student Affairs Human Resources.
- Departments wishing to hire a graduate assistant must provide the necessary compensation within the parameters of their departmental budget.
- Assistantships are temporary, and their continuation depends on the availability of funds, levels of enrollment, and research needs in the department as well as maintenance of good academic standing and steady progress toward the degree.
- The student's degree must be in conjunction to related work responsibilities and may be determined by the Graduate School.

## Hiring Seasons

If and when a department wishes to pursue hiring a graduate student within their department, the department is able to initiate that process with Student Affairs Human Resources. The hiring department requesting the GA is responsible for coordinating with the candidate and confirming their acceptance to the Auburn Graduate School.

Assistantships may be offered over the summer, however, unless that student is enrolled in courses, the individual will be paid on temporary status until that graduate student is enrolled in classes. The student **must be accepted** to a graduate program in order to receive temporary status for the graduate assistantship.

**For questions or concerns please contact the following:**

- Trey Lightner at 334-844-1308 or [lightjl@auburn.edu](mailto:lightjl@auburn.edu)
- Andrea McAbee at 334-844-1310 or [mcabeac@auburn.edu](mailto:mcabeac@auburn.edu)

### **Placement for Graduate Assistants (PGA)**

The Placement for Graduate Assistantships (PGA) is designed as an option to facilitate the process of hiring graduate assistants in Student Affairs at Auburn University. Most students are looking to continue after their graduate assistantships in the same or similar fields. This practical experience balances education, practice, challenge, and support to allow students to reach their career goals while improving programs and departments.

PGA is open to any potential graduate student who is considering graduate studies at Auburn University and has the desire to work in a student-centered environment. As Human Resources and the Graduate School continue to review positions, the student's academic degree program should connect to their assistantship for tuition waiver purposes. Most graduate assistants in Student Affairs are in the following programs: Higher Education, Adult Ed, Counseling, Educational Psychology, etc. Other positions may lend themselves to other degree programs.

**Use of PGA is encouraged but not required when hiring a graduate assistant.** The placement exchange takes place over one business day in mid-spring where candidates may receive interviews for multiple departments. A review board of representatives from each department determines where the student may best fit. Other duties and recruitment efforts are performed by the Higher Education Student Association.

**Contact for PGA hiring process:** please email [pga@auburn.edu](mailto:pga@auburn.edu).

## Graduate Assistant Policies

Students with a qualifying assistantship appointment of 0.33 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) or higher will automatically receive a Graduate Tuition Fellowship that pays resident and non-resident tuition each semester during which the qualifying assistantship is held until a maximum level of support has been received. Students with a qualifying assistantship appointment of 0.25-0.32 FTE will receive tuition support totaling 50% of in-state tuition rates. University funded in-state tuition support will be limited to 110% of the number of hours required for a graduate degree. Exceptions to this limit can be provided with documentation of the academic need and demonstration of good stewardship of the support already provided, with the approval of the graduate dean. Students may keep up with the amount of support available to them by logging onto the Graduate Tuition Fellowship System (GTUFS) on AU Access. This online system is useful to graduate assistants for keeping a record of the support used and remaining. Students are charged a Graduate Assistant Enrollment Fee each semester in which their fellowship is used

- 1) An assistantship is qualified for a full Graduate Tuition Fellowship regardless of the type under the following conditions:
  - a) **The Fellow has a minimum appointment of .33 FTE** (i.e., at least 13.2 hours per week).
  - b) **The Fellow is in the assistantship for the full semester** (no later than the 8th class day [5th class day in Summer semester], through the last day of classes).
  - c) **The Fellow receives an assistantship stipend greater than or equal to the minimum set by the Provost.** \*Please see page 9 for hourly rate/salary
  - d) **The Fellow is a degree-seeking student** (although provisionally accepted students are eligible for their first semester).
  - e) **The Fellow is in good academic standing** (cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0). Students on academic probation lose the benefit of the full tuition waiver. Non-resident students on probation retain the out-of-state waiver, but both non-resident and resident students on probation lose the resident tuition waiver and must pay tuition at the in-state rate. When the student is again in good academic standing, with a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0, the full tuition waiver will again be awarded.
  - f) **The Fellow is registered for at least 1 hour, but not more than 15 hours, of academic credit.**
- 2) Attempted hours are defined as any hours for which the University charges tuition or fees, regardless of level (undergraduate versus graduate) or grade type (graded, pass/fail, or ungraded). The fellowship, however, does NOT pay for distance education courses or any related fees.
- 3) Graduate students who receive a tuition fellowship waiver will also be charged a graduate enrollment fee, billed as Student Services Fee – GRA/GTA/GA. **The fee for 2021-2022 is \$680. This fee is not covered by the tuition fellowship program.**

## GRADUATE ASSISTANT HIRING MANUAL

When the support available to students through the tuition fellowship program is exhausted, they will continue to receive a waiver for the non-resident portion of tuition as long as they maintain their assistantship. Graduate assistants who have received a 0.33 FTE or higher assistantship for two semesters of a given academic year and are not on assistantship for the third semester will receive tuition support during that corresponding third semester.

### Examples

- A doctoral student continuously supported with a qualifying assistantship is in a program that requires a minimum of 65 hours to complete. The maximum Graduate Tuition Fellowship support available to this student is 110% of 65 hours, which is 71.5 hours. If the student has not completed the degree in 72 supported hours and they retain an assistantship, tuition and fees will be charged at in-state rates thereafter.
- A master's or specialist degree student continuously supported with a qualifying assistantship is in a program that requires a minimum of 33 hours. The maximum Graduate Tuition Fellowship support available is 110% of 33 hours, which is 36.3 hours. After 36 supported hours, tuition and fees are charged to students holding a qualifying assistantship at in-state rates.

### Limitations

**Distance education:** The Graduate Tuition Fellowship does NOT pay for courses for which a distance education fee is charged.

**Number of degrees:** Tuition support will be provided for one of the following:

- One master's degree or recognized dual-degree master's program;
- One PhD degree; or
- One master's degree plus one PhD degree within the same or a complementary field.

**Number of semesters:** Students must be enrolled each semester they receive the tuition fellowship, but they are not required to be enrolled full-time. No student will receive more than **12 semesters (36 hours) of support while remaining a master's student**, even if they have taken less than the maximum number of hours for which they are eligible, given their degree program. Likewise, **no doctoral student will receive more than 24 semesters (72 hours) of support** (inclusive of master's study supported at Auburn).

### Students Supported on Extra-Mural Fellowships

A number of departments have students supported on extra-mural fellowships that perform duties as a requirement of their degree programs that are equivalent to the duties performed by graduate research assistants. Their work contributes directly to the performance of research in the laboratory in which they are assigned and to the overall University research mission. As such, it is University policy to treat such fellowships as the equivalent of graduate research assistantships for the purposes of the Graduate Tuition Fellowship Program. However, these students are not automatically included for the program. Therefore, each Semester, each department with such fellowships should supply the list of fellows to the Graduate School so that they may receive the Graduate Tuition Fellowship.

### **Policy on Paid Leave for Graduate Assistants (GAs)**

All Graduate Assistants within student affairs are exempt employees, meaning they are paid on a monthly basis for 20 hours a week (1044hr per year). It is Auburn University policy that hourly-paid Graduate Assistants be paid during official University holidays and breaks, including Fall Break, Spring Break, and/or official University closures.

### **Graduate Assistantship Workload Policy**

Regular University office hours are 7:45 to 11:45 a.m. and 12:45 to 4:45 p.m., Monday through Friday. These times may vary depending on the departmental schedule or position. It may be necessary for students to work outside normal schedule because of emergency situations. If there have any questions concerning work schedule, please direct them to Student Affairs Human Resources

Supervisors have the right to establish the graduate assistant's schedule which may periodically fluctuate based on special projects, events, or other pertinent reasons. However, these changes should be an exception. The priority should still be placed on the student's degree progress and should not inhibit class attendance.

Graduate students may not normally hold an appointment of more than 50 percent, whether the appointment is from a single unit or multiple units. This policy also applies to internship appointments (whether called an internship or externship). Graduate students may hold multiple assistantships (assistantships and/or hourly employment) from one or more units on campus, but the cumulative appointments cannot add up to more than a 0.50 FTE (20 hours per week) appointment. This allows the students the time needed to devote to their academic programs. Exceptions may be requested, with compelling academic justification, in writing to the Provost by the dean. For multiple assistantships from different units, coordinating approval memos from the home unit and the hiring units are required. Please note that federal regulations limit the cumulative appointment for international graduate students to no more than a 0.50 FTE (20 hours per week) appointment.

### **Graduate Assistant Performance Improvement and Administrative Action Policy**

#### **Failure to Satisfy Performance Standards**

Performance Improvement Meetings – In addition to regularly scheduled performance reviews, when a supervisor determines that a graduate assistant is failing to meet satisfactory performance standards, the supervisor will meet with the graduate assistant. Together, they will review the duties and responsibilities expected of the graduate assistant, and the supervisor will identify those areas in which the performance of those duties and responsibilities is judged to be unsatisfactory. The supervisor will then advise the graduate assistant that if performance does not improve to a satisfactory level within a time period specified by the supervisor, the assistantship will be terminated. The time period established by the supervisor should provide a sufficient and reasonable time for the graduate assistant to demonstrate a satisfactory level of performance. In some instances, the graduate assistant's failure to meet satisfactory standards of performance may be disruptive of the educational process. In such instances, the graduate student should be advised that any subsequent failure to meet satisfactory performance standards may result in termination of the assistantship. As soon as possible following this meeting (generally within three working days) the supervisor will provide the assistant with a written summary of the meeting, including notice of areas of unsatisfactory performance and the time period specified for improvement to a satisfactory level. A copy will be sent to the leadership staff of the department for review/approval and to the dean of the Graduate School.

### **Termination of an Assistantship**

If a graduate assistant fails to meet acceptable standards of performance as prescribed in the performance improvement meeting, the supervisor will notify the appropriate staff within the department and Student Affairs HR. The leadership team and/or professional staff will schedule a meeting with the supervisor and graduate assistant as soon as possible, generally within three working days. At that meeting, the graduate assistant's performance will again be reviewed. If it is concluded that the graduate assistant has failed to meet acceptable performance standards, the supervisor may terminate the graduate assistantship appointment. The supervisor will provide a written notice summarizing the meeting and the action taken to the supervisor, graduate assistant, the dean of the college, and the dean of the Graduate School within five working days of the meeting.

### **Acts of misconduct or unprofessionalism may require prompt action. Such acts may include, but are not limited to**

1. Refusing to obey reasonable and necessary instructions or job assignments, insubordination, or using abusive or unprofessional language in the workplace.
2. Indulging in offensive or obscene manner.
3. Drinking intoxicants on University property, with exception of events acting in accordance with the University Campus Alcohol Policy.
4. Using illegal drugs on University property.
5. Stealing or misappropriating University property or property belonging to students or University employees.
6. Scientific misconduct

Appropriate actions include termination of an assistantship, suspension of an assistantship for a specified period, and reduction of the FTE and/or benefits associated with that assistantship. If a supervisor believes a graduate assistant has engaged in such an act of misconduct or unprofessionalism, the following steps are to be taken.

For incident(s) of unprofessional acts or behavior which violate accepted norms of professional conduct, the supervisor will provide notice of the proposed administrative action to the graduate assistant and document the situation in a written report. In such cases, the graduate assistant may be placed on immediate administrative leave with pay from the assistantship duties, at the discretion of the supervisor. The report will be provided to the leadership team or professional staff to whom the supervisor reports, who will schedule a meeting with the supervisor and graduate assistant as soon as possible, generally within three working days. At that meeting, the incident(s) will be reviewed, and the proposed administrative action may be affirmed, amended, or overturned by the professional staff. The professional staff will provide a written notice summarizing the meeting and his/her decision regarding administrative action to the supervisor, graduate assistant, the dean of the college, and the dean of the Graduate School within five working days of the meeting.

Additionally, for misconduct covered by the Student Code of Conduct or the Sexual Misconduct Policy, the case will also be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Acts of misconduct may include, but are not limited to, theft, fraud, physical altercation, and sexual harassment, as defined in the Student Code of Conduct and the Sexual Misconduct Policy.

Supervisors and students should be aware that termination or reduction of the FTE of an assistantship, will have large financial impacts, which can be particularly problematic for a student if termination or FTE reduction occurs before the last class day of a semester.



**Appealing Action Regarding an Assistantship**

If a graduate assistant wishes to appeal a decision of administrative action regarding an assistantship, including termination, they may file a written appeal within five working days of receipt of the professional staff's written notice with the assistant director/director of the department. The graduate assistant will be notified in writing of the result of the appeal within five working days of the submission of the written appeal. The decision resulting from this process is final and not subject to further appeal.

For any appeal or termination of a graduate assistantship, Student Affairs Human Resources **must be notified.**

**Guidelines for the Graduate Assistant Fellowship**

**Compensation & Conversions**

All Graduate Assistants within Student Affairs will follow the below salary schedule:

Degree Seeking Student	Hourly	Annual
Master Student	\$22.12/20hr week	\$23,000
Ph.D. Student	\$25.96/20hr week	\$27,000

## GRADUATE ASSISTANT HIRING MANUAL

### **Hiring Process**

Graduate Assistant hiring is processed through the People Admin Student Employment module. Please see detailed instructions on creating postings and hiring proposals at this link: [Student Employment | Office of Human Resources \(auburn.edu\)](#)

The “Graduate Assistant Position Description” form must still be completed and signed by all required parties and then uploaded manually into the People Admin hiring proposal on each individual candidate. The form can be found at this link: [Graduate-Assistant-Position-Description.pdf \(auburn.edu\)](#)

For assistance with postings or hiring proposals, please contact:

### **Student Affairs HR**

Andrea McAbee  
[mcabeac@auburn.edu](mailto:mcabeac@auburn.edu)  
(334) 844-1310

### **Student Employment**

Amy Bruce  
[robera2@auburn.edu](mailto:robera2@auburn.edu)  
(334) 844-1671

### **Graduate School**

Julie Reece  
[reeceju@auburn.edu](mailto:reeceju@auburn.edu)  
(334) 844-2125

### **Full Time Equivalent System (FTE)**

As a demonstration of its commitment to graduate education and to the critical role that graduate assistants play in supporting the University’s priorities and mission, Auburn University provides Graduate Tuition Fellowships to its graduate assistants who meet or exceed specific requirements. The fellowships are administered through the Graduate School. There is no application process associated with this program. All contact and any questions concerning availability of assistantships should be directed to specific academic departments or the deans’ offices of the respective academic colleges or schools. Questions pertaining to the Graduate Tuition Fellowship Program that are not answered fully by the material below or by the [FAQs](#) should contact the Graduate School.

1. To be on assistantship, a graduate student must:

- be in a degree-seeking program. Students in degree-seeking programs will be classified as MST, EDS, PHD, or GPR.
- be registered for at least one course (anything carrying an Auburn University course number) during each academic term of the assistantship.

## GRADUATE ASSISTANT HIRING MANUAL

- satisfy the minimum course load specifications of the individual departments and be making satisfactory progress toward the degree.
2. Assistantships meeting certain criteria are eligible for the Graduate Tuition Fellowship. To be on assistantship AND receive a Graduate Tuition Fellowship, a graduate student must meet the above criteria and the criteria outlined on the Graduate Tuition Fellowship Web page.
  3. Assistantship appointments should be 0.25, 0.33, or 0.50 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE).
  4. Graduate students may hold multiple assistantships (assistantships and/or hourly employment) from one or more units on campus, but together the cumulative appointment should be 0.25, 0.33, or 0.50 FTE and cannot add up to more than a 0.50 FTE (20 hours per week) appointment. This allows the students the time needed to devote to their academic programs. **An exception is automatically allowed in the special case of a graduate assistant assigned to teach one four credit course and one three/four credit course. In such cases, appointments will be made at 0.58/0.67 FTE, respectively.** Other exceptions may be requested, with compelling academic justification, in writing to the Provost by the dean. For multiple assistantships from different units, coordinating approval memos from the home unit and the hiring units are required.
  5. International graduate students on F1 visas cannot hold a greater than 50 percent work appointment. Rules for summer terms are different. Please check with the Office of International Programs in Foy Hall.
  6. All international graduate assistants are required to submit evidence of satisfactory speaking skills. This can be demonstrated with a score of 23 or higher on the Speaking Section of the Internet-based TOEFL (iBT), or a score of 7 on the Speaking section of the IELTS, or a score of 4.4 and above in the Speaking section of the iTEP (replaced the SPEAK test), which is administered at Auburn University prior to the start of classes. A student may be asked to enroll in a course designed to improve the oral communication skills of international graduate assistants. Both department and SAHR are responsible for making sure that international Graduate Assistants meet the minimum requirements for employment, including but not limited to a satisfactory background check and proficiency in English.
  7. All graduate assistants registered for at least one hour are exempt from FICA and Medicare (Section 218 of the Social Security Act).
  8. Graduate assistants who meet the requirements for GRAD7900 (Thesis Completion) or GRAD8900 (Dissertation Completion) and register concurrently for at least one hour of the Research and Thesis course or the Research and Dissertation course are considered full-time students and are exempt from FICA and Medicare on graduate assistant stipends.
  9. Effective January 1, 2014, all new graduate student employees (including hourly paid) must have an approved consumer report and/or investigative consumer report (background check) as a condition for appointment. The information contained in these reports may be used to deny an individual employment or continued employment with Auburn University. The background report and its contents are deemed private and confidential and shall be disclosed only for the purposes described in "Procedures for Securing Background Reports for Graduate Students Before Hiring" to those University employees who have a need to know, or as otherwise required or permitted by law.

## GRADUATE ASSISTANT HIRING MANUAL

### Health Insurance Program

All graduate assistants with assignments of 10 hours (0.25 FTE) or greater for the full semester in the fall and/or spring semesters, who meet the minimum monthly stipend established by the Office of the Provost and are in good academic standing are required to have health insurance coverage.

If one has equivalent/greater prior coverage and can so demonstrate, that person may choose to opt out of the University plan. **Those who wish to opt out must complete the required form by September 5<sup>th</sup> for the fall and February 16<sup>th</sup> for the spring.** Waiver applications are accepted for two months following the waiver deadline but are subject to prorated insurance costs. Example if you turn in your waiver in March for a spring waiver you are susceptible to paying for January and February's insurance. Graduate assistants will be automatically enrolled in the Auburn University Graduate Student Group Health Plan (GSGHP). The 2019-2020 premium is \$2,028, which will be billed in two installments of \$1,022 for fall and \$1,006 for spring/summer.

International graduate students and dependents in F or J immigration status will continue to be covered and billed similarly under the Mandatory International Student and Scholar Health Plan—check with the Office of International Programs ([insurance@auburn.edu](mailto:insurance@auburn.edu)) for details. Those graduate students who do not qualify for the automatic enrollment may opt-in to the program. They must complete a request form and submit it to the Graduate School. For further information on optional enrollment, please visit the [Detailed Enrollment Information](#) page.

To find out more about the GSGHP or to get enrolled, please contact Aime McCorcle at 334-844-5012 or by email at [insurance@auburn.edu](mailto:insurance@auburn.edu).

### Health Care Premium Rates for 2019-2020

GSGHP 2019-202	Annual Premium	Premium for Fall Semester	Premium for Spring/Summer semester	Premium for Summer semester only
Student	\$2,028	\$1,022	\$1,006	\$512
Spouse	\$2,028	\$1,022	\$1,006	\$512
Child	\$2,028	\$1,022	\$1,006	\$512
2+ children	\$3,998	\$2,015	\$1,983	\$1,009
All dependents	\$5,968	\$3,008	\$2,960	\$1,506
Coverage Dates	8/16/21 – 8/15/22	8/16/21 – 2/15/22	2/16/22 – 8/15/22	5/16/22 – 8/15/22

## Tuition Fellowship System

GTUFS provides Auburn University graduate students with a record of their Graduate Assistantship and Tuition Fellowship Program (tuition waiver). GTUFS shows students the number of hours taken toward their degree as of the current semester, the number of hours allowed under the tuition waiver, and the number of tuition hours remaining to be covered by the waiver.

In order to access GTUFS:

1. Log-In to [AU Access](#)
2. Click-on the **Student Menu** option of the My Academics tab.
3. On the “Student” tab, click Graduate Tuition Fellowship System (GTUFS).

If you have any questions, contact [Julie Reece](#) in the Graduate School (334-844-2125).

[FAQs](#)

## Resources for Graduate Assistants

Professional Development:

- Higher Education Students Association ([HESA](#))
- Graduate School [Professional Development Calendar](#)
- [Graduate School Council](#)

Academics

- Master Student [Checklist](#)
- Ph.D. Student [Checklist](#)
- Professional Development Course [GRAD8100](#)

Housing

- Off-Campus Housing [Search](#)
  - o Find housing, roommates, and off-campus resources