



# Graduate Student Assistantships

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## POLICY STATEMENT

Cornell University supports consistent and similar educational experiences for graduate students on assistantships, across all graduate fields and colleges.

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## REASON FOR POLICY

The university is committed to an equitable, supportive, and professional environment for graduate education. Assistantships help students develop academic rigor and creativity, independent judgment, intellectual honesty, and the ability to communicate their knowledge, while providing financial support. This policy is designed to promote effective communication of expectations between students on assistantships and the faculty or staff members responsible for oversight.

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## ENTITIES AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY

- All units of the university, excluding the Weill Cornell Medical College and Graduate School of Medical Sciences

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## WHO SHOULD READ THIS POLICY

- All graduate assistants (graduate assistants, graduate research assistants, research assistants, and teaching assistants )
- Faculty and staff involved with graduate students on assistantships

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## WEB ADDRESS FOR THIS POLICY

- This policy: [www.dfa.cornell.edu/treasurer/policyoffice/policies/volumes/academic/assistantships.cfm](http://www.dfa.cornell.edu/treasurer/policyoffice/policies/volumes/academic/assistantships.cfm)
- University Policy Office: [www.policy.cornell.edu](http://www.policy.cornell.edu)

## POLICY 1.3

### Graduate Student Assistantships

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## RELATED RESOURCES

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### University Policies and Documentation

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[University Policy 3.13, Graduate Tuition and Other Support](#)

[University Policy 4.6, Standards of Ethical Conduct](#)

[University Policy 6.4, Prohibited Discrimination, Protected-Status Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Assault and Violence](#)

[Campus Code of Conduct](#)

[Code of Legislation of the Graduate Faculty](#)

[Cornell University Copyright Policy](#)

[Graduate School Grievance Policy](#)

[Graduate School Website](#)

[University Budget Model Manual](#)

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### External Documentation

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[Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986](#)

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## CONTACTS

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Direct any questions regarding this policy to your unit's administrative office. For questions about specific issues, contact the following offices:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>E-mail/Web Address</b>
<b>Policy Interpretation and Clarification</b>	Office of the Dean of The Graduate School	(607) 255-7374	<a href="mailto:dean_gradschool@cornell.edu">dean_gradschool@cornell.edu</a>
<b>Employment Limitations for Assistants and Fellows</b>	Associate Dean for Administration, Graduate School	(607) 255-5810	<a href="mailto:gradstudserv_assoc_dean@cornell.edu">gradstudserv_assoc_dean@cornell.edu</a>
<b>Graduate Student Grievance Procedures</b>	Associate Dean of the Graduate School	(607) 255-7374	<a href="mailto:grad_assoc_dean@cornell.edu">grad_assoc_dean@cornell.edu</a>
<b>Health Insurance Payments</b>	Office of the Bursar	(607) 255-6413	<a href="mailto:uco-bursar@cornell.edu">uco-bursar@cornell.edu</a> <a href="http://www.bursar.cornell.edu">www.bursar.cornell.edu</a>
<b>Hourly Appointments</b>	Office of Student Employment	(607) 255-9051	<a href="mailto:sesemp@cornell.edu">sesemp@cornell.edu</a>
<b>International Students</b>	International Students and Scholars Office	(607) 255-5243	<a href="mailto:isso@cornell.edu">isso@cornell.edu</a> <a href="http://www.isso.cornell.edu">www.isso.cornell.edu</a>
<b>International TA Training</b>	Center for Teaching Excellence	(607) 255-3990	<a href="mailto:itap@cornell.edu">itap@cornell.edu</a>
<b>Processing Assistantship Appointments</b>	Human Resource Records	(607) 255-6883	<a href="mailto:hris_records@cornell.edu">hris_records@cornell.edu</a>
<b>Stipends</b>	Human Resource Records	(607) 255-6883	<a href="mailto:hris_records@cornell.edu">hris_records@cornell.edu</a>
<b>Taxes</b>	Office of Tax Compliance	(607) 255-5195	<a href="mailto:uco-tax@cornell.edu">uco-tax@cornell.edu</a> <a href="http://www.dfa.cornell.edu/tax/">www.dfa.cornell.edu/tax/</a>

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## DEFINITIONS

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These definitions apply to terms as they are used in this policy.

<b>Assistantship</b>	<p>An arrangement in which financial support is given to a graduate student who engages in teaching and/or research in furtherance of the university's academic mission, as well as his or her graduate education. (See definitions of assistantship types below.) Students on full assistantships receive full tuition credit and a stipend. (See also, "Tuition Credit" definition below.)</p> <p>◆<b>Note:</b> Appointments that are paid on an hourly basis are not assistantships, and should not be portrayed as such.</p>
<b>Director of Graduate Studies</b>	<p>The faculty liaison between the Graduate School and a particular graduate field.</p>
<b>Fellowship</b>	<p>An arrangement in which financial support is given to a graduate student to pursue his or her degree without any obligation on the part of the student to engage in teaching and/or research in furtherance of the university's academic mission. Generally, fellowships are merit-based awards. Continued financial support is contingent upon the student maintaining satisfactory academic progress as defined by the field and the Graduate School.</p>
<b>General Committee</b>	<p>The faculty governing board of the Graduate School.</p>
<b>Graduate Assistantship (GA)</b>	<p>An academic appointment requiring 15 to 20 hours a week, averaging no more than 15 hours per week for the base stipend as established by the Board of Trustees. Graduate assistants receive full tuition credit, individual student health insurance, and a stipend.</p>
<b>Graduate Faculty</b>	<p>Cornell faculty members elected by vote of the graduate field and approval of the General Committee. The graduate faculty has authority over all degrees beyond the first degree offered by any school or college of Cornell University, except the Weill Graduate School of Medical Sciences, and the LL.M. degree offered by the Law School.</p>
<b>Graduate Field</b>	<p>A voluntary grouping of elected members of the graduate faculty who have academic interests in common and wish to exercise shared responsibility for an area of inquiry and for the admission, education, and, as appropriate, financial support of graduate students. Fields are independent of traditional college, department, or divisions, so they may draw together faculty members from several colleges, departments, divisions, and related disciplines in accordance with scholarly interests.</p>
<b>Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA)</b>	<p>An academic appointment focused on thesis or other degree-related research of a type that is required from all candidates for the degree. Because a student devotes considerable time to dissertation research, the time spent on research connected with the project is expected to be significant. GRAs are awarded full tuition credit, individual student health insurance, and a stipend.</p>
<b>Partial Assistantship</b>	<p>An academic appointment (GA, GRA, RA, or TA) for less than the standard hours (see definitions of assistantship types). Stipends and tuition are prorated to reflect the percentage of a standard appointment.</p> <p>◆<b>Note:</b> Appointments that do not provide both tuition and stipends in amounts proportional to the hours expected of a regular assistant are not partial assistantships, and should not be portrayed as such. Students on such appointments should be appointed on an hourly basis for the stipend, with the payment processed through COLTS. The tuition payment, if any, should be processed directly as a credit on the Bursar system.</p>

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### Graduate Student Assistantships

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#### DEFINITIONS, continued

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<b>Professional Degree</b>	<p>An advanced degree that prepares a student to practice his or her profession, teach the subject matter of the profession, or pursue original investigations into its functions, administration, history, and progress. Award of a degree is contingent upon mastery of the chosen field, and, where appropriate, upon completion of a thesis or other independent project. Students who are enrolled in professional degree programs are ineligible for assistantships outside of their graduate field of study, unless the director of Graduate Studies for the student's program requests an exception based on the student gaining experience directly supporting the student's ability to teach the subject matter of the profession. Requests for exceptions must be approved by both the dean of the Graduate School and the dean of the college in which the professional degree program is housed. The college that administers the professional degree in which the student is enrolled is responsible for payment of the tuition. Professional degree students may be appointed as Graduate Teaching/Research Specialists.</p> <p>Professional degrees administered by the Cornell Graduate School are defined in the Code of Legislation of the Graduate Faculty. (See Related Resources.) The professional degrees of D.V.M., J.D., LL.M., and M.B.A. are administered by the appropriate school or college.</p>
<b>Research Assistantship (RA)</b>	<p>An academic appointment for research that is not directly thesis-related, 15 to 20 hours per week, averaging no more than 15 hours per week for the base stipend as established by the Board of Trustees. RAs are awarded full tuition credit, individual student health insurance, and a stipend.</p>
<b>Research Degree</b>	<p>A degree that is contingent upon the completion of a research project report, thesis, or dissertation constituting an original contribution to knowledge. The Cornell graduate research degrees are defined in the Code of Legislation of the Graduate Faculty. (See Related Resources.)</p>
<b>Special Committee</b>	<p>A small group (usually three to four) of graduate faculty members, selected by a student in a research degree program, to guide his or her academic program. The special committee has primary responsibility for developing the student's independence in scholarship.</p>
<b>Stipend</b>	<p>Financial support for a registered graduate student's living expenses, paid either semi-monthly (as in the case of an assistantship) or as a lump sum at the beginning of the semester (as in the case of a fellowship). The base assistantship stipend assumes responsibilities requiring at least 15 hours per week. Stipend support may be supplemented for additional responsibilities or special competency. The minimum academic-year stipend is set by the Board of Trustees.</p>
<b>Teaching Assistantship (TA)</b>	<p>An academic appointment in support of the teaching of a course of 15 to 20 hours per week, averaging no more than 15 hours per week for the base stipend as established by the Board of Trustees. The assignment is usually in the student's major field or a closely related one. TAs are awarded full tuition credit, individual student health insurance, and a stipend. (See also, "Tuition Credit" definition below.)</p>
<b>Tuition Credit</b>	<p>A credit posted to a student's bursar account and applied toward the student's tuition charge. The tuition credit is at the research tuition rate regardless of the student's degree program.</p>

## POLICY 1.3

### Graduate Student Assistantships

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## RESPONSIBILITIES

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<b>Dean of the Graduate School</b>	Respond to student grievances. Provide policy clarification.
<b>Director of Graduate Studies</b>	When appropriate, conduct telephone or interactive visual computer interviews with foreign applicants. Act as liaison between the Graduate School and the field. Consult and communicate with students regarding their graduate study and field requirements. Oversee field admission process.
<b>Faculty Member</b>	Observe all students who are serving as TAs for the first time, and provide helpful feedback. Provide routine performance reviews for graduate assistants as part of the general learning experience.
<b>Field</b>	Consider difficulty of assignments, curricular background, and course responsibilities when making student assistantship assignments. Make appropriate assistantship assignments, as outlined in this document. Require teaching according to this document.
<b>Student</b>	Register each semester of assistantship. Make satisfactory progress in meeting academic requirements and in fulfilling assistantship responsibilities.
<b>Unit</b>	Write appointment letters. Ensure that students are registered. Make appropriate assistantship assignments, as outlined in this document.
<b>University</b>	Support consistent and similar educational experiences for graduate students on assistantships, across fields and colleges, as outlined in University Policy 1.3, Graduate Student Assistantships.

## POLICY 1.3

### Graduate Student Assistantships

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## PRINCIPLES

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### Introduction

A significant number of Cornell University's graduate students are supported on assistantships each year. Recognizing the special role that assistantships play in students' academic development, assistantship opportunities are limited based on the student's program of study.

- Research degree programs are designed for those who wish to obtain further education in a selected field and to develop their ability for critical inquiry, independent research, and teaching. It is important that these students gain teaching experience that will enable them to communicate knowledge in a variety of contexts. Research degree students are, therefore, eligible for any assistantship opportunity at the university.
- Professional degrees prepare students to practice their profession at an advanced level, to teach the subject matter of their profession, or to pursue original investigations into its functions, administration, history, and progress. Professional degree students are thus eligible only for assistantship opportunities within the graduate field of study to which they were admitted and are currently enrolled, unless the director of Graduate Studies for the student's program requests an exception based on the student gaining experience directly supporting the student's ability to teach the subject matter of the profession. Requests for exceptions must be approved by both the dean of the Graduate School and the dean of the college in which the professional degree program is housed. The college that administers the professional degree in which the student is enrolled is responsible for paying the tuition. For graduate research assistantship (GRA) appointments, tuition, because it is professional student tuition, flows to the home college for the student. The home college must provide a one-half tuition waiver as required by university policy for all sponsored GRA appointments.

This policy addresses issues of importance to both faculty and staff members responsible for oversight and graduate assistants.

This section and "Appointment Letters," and "Conflict Resolution" of Procedures are relevant to all assistantship appointments. Information specific to Teaching Assistantships (TAs), GRAs, Research Assistantships (RAs), and Graduate Assistantships (GAs) will be found in the respective sections of this document. The procedures contained in this document should be implemented consistently throughout the university.

## POLICY 1.3

### Graduate Student Assistantships

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## PRINCIPLES, continued

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<b>Registration</b>	Assistantships may be awarded only to full-time registered graduate students. Assistants must be registered as graduate students during the period of appointment (including summer). Individuals who have completed their graduate degrees or are no longer registered as graduate students may not be appointed to assistantships.
<b>Assistantship Assignments</b>	<p>Student assistants should be asked to perform only duties that are directly related to the university's academic mission. Assistants are not to be asked or permitted to provide personal services, such as childcare or pet care as part of their responsibilities.</p> <p>In general, assistantship assignments should be equitable. Special care should be given to the allocation of responsibilities among assistants. All faculty and staff members responsible for oversight are encouraged to be alert to possible unequal assignments and guard against them.</p>
<b>Admission Letters</b>	<p>It is very important that fields include the following statement in all admission letters that include financial support:</p> <p>"Continued funding is contingent upon academic performance constituting good standing in the graduate field and satisfactory fulfillment of any teaching or research responsibilities." Fields in which funding is uncertain should include, "...and availability of funds."</p>
<b>Mentoring</b>	Faculty and staff members responsible for oversight should provide regular feedback to assistants as part of the general mentoring experience. Periodically, they should observe all students who are teaching, and provide helpful feedback.
<b>Appointment Period</b>	<p>The typical appointment periods are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fall: August 16 – December 31</li><li>• Spring: January 1 – May 15</li><li>• Summer: May 16 – August 15 (10-week assignment with 13-week pay period)</li><li>• Academic Year: August 16 – May 15</li></ul> <p>Graduate students are paid their assistantship stipends semimonthly, usually on the 15th day and in the last week of each month.</p>
<b>Publications</b>	<p>Authorship issues for work done by the student should be resolved prior to the beginning of the research or the research proposal.</p> <p>◆<b>Note:</b> For more information, see the Cornell University Copyright policy.</p>

## POLICY 1.3 Graduate Student Assistantships

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### PRINCIPLES, continued

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#### **Combined Assistantships, Hourly Student Appointments, and Outside Employment**

GRAs may accept a combined total of up to eight hours per week during their GRA assignments of additional assistantship, hourly student appointment, or outside employment.

RAs, TAs, and GAs may accept a combined total of up to five hours per week during their assignments of additional assistantship, hourly student appointment, or outside employment if the combination does not exceed 20 hours per week.

Because tuition has already been covered through the initial appointment, the additional appointment may be considered a TA, RA, GRA, or GA supplement, and may be processed as an assistantship. Alternatively, if hours for the additional appointment are to be tracked, the additional work may be processed as an hourly appointment through COLTS.

#### **Time Away**

A graduate student on an assistantship who needs time away from his or her assistantship responsibilities should confer with the special committee chair and faculty or staff member responsible for oversight(s) to create a way for the student to complete his or her responsibilities at a different time or in a different way.

## POLICY 1.3 Graduate Student Assistantships

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### PROCEDURES: TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP (TA) ASSIGNMENTS

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#### Teaching Assistantship (TA) Assignments

In making a Teaching Assistantship (TA) assignment, faculty and staff members responsible for oversight should consider the difficulty of the assignment and the curricular background of the prospective TA. An appropriate amount of time needed for the TA to learn the material to be taught should be incorporated into the assignment. Where there are disparities in the assistantship assignments from course to course, those responsible for appointments should weight the assistantship assignments to ensure a fair distribution of assignments.

#### Appointment Period

TA assignments follow the academic year calendar. Because the academic calendar does not always correspond with the appointment periods, TAs should be informed that, when a semester either begins or ends outside that period, they may be required to fulfill teaching responsibilities outside of the appointment period.

◆**Note:** The department is encouraged to put this information in writing.

#### Required Teaching

Teaching experience required by the field is to be completed during the first four years of a student's enrollment. Exceptions to this rule should be mutually agreed upon by the student and field, and documented in writing with the signature of the student, the special committee chair, and the director of Graduate Studies.

For M.S. or M.A. students, the maximum teaching requirement should be one semester.

For M. /Ph.D. or Ph.D. students, the maximum requirement should be two semesters or equivalent.

Professional master's students are exempt from a teaching requirement.

Students on external fellowships may be required to teach, but must be paid the same stipend as other assistants for performing the assignment. Whenever possible, the teaching assignment should be scheduled so that it does not occur simultaneously with the fellowship. The student may be asked by the field to defer his or her fellowship for the appropriate period of time in order to perform the mandatory teaching.

If the fellowship agency will not permit deferral of the fellowship, then the field must notify the agency of the teaching requirement. If the agency approves, the student may receive both the assistantship and the fellowship stipends. If the agency will not permit the student to teach while receiving its funds, so that the student must relinquish the fellowship in order to fulfill the teaching requirement, the student must receive a full assistantship package of stipend and tuition during the required teaching assignment.

## POLICY 1.3 Graduate Student Assistantships

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### PROCEDURES: TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP (TA) ASSIGNMENTS, continued

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◆**Note:** The combination of fellowship and assistantship stipends must not exceed the current academic-year cap (for more information, contact the associate dean for administration of the Graduate School).

#### Teaching Assistantship (TA) Training for International Students

All international students who serve as TAs, and who have no prior TA experience, should participate in a TA training program in their respective field, their college, or the program provided by the Center for Teaching Excellence.

◆**Note:** The International Teaching Assistantship Program (ITAP) is mandatory for international TAs before they teach for the first time. See “English Proficiency” below.

#### English Proficiency

International students are expected to demonstrate English language proficiency, as judged by the Center for Teaching Excellence before beginning a TA.

**International students serving as a TA in their first semester of registration** as a graduate student must participate in the mandatory summer ITAP, offered in August each year. The following are exempt from this requirement:

- Citizens and permanent residents of countries whose first language is English. This exemption does not extend to regions of countries where the official language is not English
- Students who have already been exempted by the ITAP staff based on the ITA language assessment (ILA)
- Students who have completed at least three years of undergraduate and/or graduate study at an institution where the official language of instruction is English, and in a country where English is the first language. Such students are exempt from the summer program, but are required to participate in an ILA and may be required to enroll in ALS 5780 before they can assume a TA

The program appointing the teaching assistant has the right to rescind the automatic exemption from ITAP for any student who formally qualifies for the exemption, but who, in the judgment of the hiring program, needs ITAP.

Students who are not exempted from the ITAP course, and who do not successfully complete the course, will not be allowed to teach. The field to which the student was admitted must provide other financial support for the student, or he or she will not be allowed to register.

**International students serving as a TA in the second semester or later of their graduate degree program** who have not taken the Test of English as a Foreign Language, or (TOEFL) Internet-based Test (iBT), or who have received a speaking score below a 28 on the iBT, are required to participate in an ITAP Language Assessment (ILA) before beginning any TA. Students who receive a 28 or above on

## POLICY 1.3 Graduate Student Assistantships

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### **PROCEDURES: TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP (TA) ASSIGNMENTS, continued**

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the TOEFL iBT are exempt from this assessment. Departments should arrange for an ILA for international TAs at least one semester before scheduled TA duties.

◆**Note:** This exemption does not apply to the mandatory summer ITAP for incoming students who will be a TA in their first semester.

The director of Graduate Studies and/or admission committee members are strongly encouraged to conduct telephone or interactive visual computer interviews with international applicants who are being considered for admission with the support of a TA. Applicants whose language skills are not adequate for effective communication in the classroom should not be offered admission that depends on such support.

## POLICY 1.3 Graduate Student Assistantships

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# PROCEDURES: GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIP (GRA) ASSIGNMENTS

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### **Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA) Assignments**

Students appointed as graduate research assistants receive support for thesis or other degree-related research of a type that is required from all candidates for the degree. Because considerable time and attention is required for the thesis research, the time devoted to the Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA) assignment is expected to be significant; hours spent on assignments are not tracked.

### **Appointment Period**

GRA assignments follow the university calendar rather than the academic year calendar. When the university is closed for official university holidays, GRAs are not expected to perform assistantship assignments. When students are required to perform duties on university holidays, arrangements for other time off should be agreed upon before the university holiday by the student and the faculty or staff member responsible for oversight.

◆**Caution:** It is strongly recommended that these arrangements be documented in writing.

Summer GRA assignments are for a ten-week period. The pay period, however, is 13 weeks. (See "Appointment Period" in Principles.)

## POLICY 1.3

### Graduate Student Assistantships

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## PROCEDURES: RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIP (RA) AND GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP (GA) ASSIGNMENTS

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#### **Research Assistantship (RA) and Graduate Assistantship (GA) Assignments**

Research assistants perform non-thesis research on a faculty's research project. If the Research Assistantship (RA) assignment directly relates to the student's thesis or dissertation, then the appointment should be processed as a Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA).

A GA appointment is appropriate when a student is receiving stipend and tuition credit (including health insurance but not student activity fees) for performing certain duties, but cannot be classified appropriately as a Teaching Assistantship (TA), GRA, or an RA.

#### **Appointment Period**

RA and GA assignments follow the university calendar rather than the academic year calendar. When the university is closed for official university holidays, RAs and GAs are not expected to perform assistantship assignments. In situations when students are required to perform duties on university holidays, arrangements for other time off should be agreed upon before the university holiday by the student and the faculty or staff member responsible for oversight .

◆**Caution:** It is strongly recommended that these arrangements be documented in writing.

Summer RA and GA assignments are for a ten-week period. The pay period, however, is 13 weeks. (See "Appointment Period" in Principles.)

## POLICY 1.3 Graduate Student Assistantships

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### PROCEDURES: APPOINTMENT LETTERS

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An appointment letter should be prepared specifically articulating each assistant's responsibilities. This letter should be written at the time an offer of admission is made and rewritten every subsequent year. Letters written at the time of admission are the responsibility of the director of Graduate Studies in the field to which the student is admitted. Subsequent appointment letters are the responsibility of the department funding the assistantship. All appointment letters should contain a reference to this policy.

#### **Required Information**

Appointment letters should include, at a minimum, the following information:

##### Assistantship Details

- Individual responsible for oversight
- Type of assistantship
- Duration of assistantship (semester(s) and specific dates)
- Duties and responsibilities of the assistantship appointment

##### Financial Details

- Pay schedule
- Stipend amount, tuition fellowship, and any other provisions

##### Terms of Assistantship

- A statement that continued support will depend upon satisfactory academic and assistantship performance, as defined by the field, as well as continued availability of funding (where appropriate)
- Reference to University Policy 1.3, Graduate Student Assistantships

##### Next Steps

- Acceptance terms

A sample letter and other suggested wording is included in the appendix.

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### Graduate Student Assistantships

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## PROCEDURES: CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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#### **Handling Disagreements**

The university has a graduate student grievance procedure to address serious disagreements between graduate students and faculty. For more information, see the “Grievances” section of the Graduate School’s *Guide to Graduate Study*.

#### **Harassment**

The university has clear policies on sexual and other forms of harassment. All students and faculty members should make themselves aware of the Campus Code of Conduct, University Policy 4.6, Standards of Ethical Conduct, and University Policy 6.4, Prohibited Discrimination, Protected-Status Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Assault and Violence. For more information, contact the Office of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations, whose staff is available for informal consultation, as well as for formal complaints.

#### **Unsatisfactory Assistantship Performance**

When a faculty or staff member responsible for oversight is dissatisfied with a student’s performance in fulfilling the responsibilities of an assistantship, the following steps should be taken.

1. The faculty or staff member responsible for oversight should, in the course of routine mentoring, discuss the shortcomings of the student’s performance, making specific recommendations for changes.
2. If improvement is not made, the faculty or staff member responsible for oversight must advise the student in writing of his/her concerns, and allow sufficient time for the student to address the performance issues raised by the faculty or staff member responsible for oversight. Specific recommendations for changes in performance should be provided again. A copy of this letter must be sent to the director of Graduate Studies of the student’s field.
3. The assistantship may be terminated if sufficient improvement is not made in a timely manner. The faculty or staff member responsible for oversight must provide notification of such a termination in writing. This notification must state that the student has the right to file a grievance with the Graduate School.
4. The Graduate School grievance policy provides a mechanism for further review if the graduate student believes the action to be unfair, and he or she is unable to resolve the matter at the field level.

◆**Note:** An assistant who receives feedback indicating unsatisfactory performance is encouraged, at any time during this process, to confer with the director of Graduate Studies and the faculty or staff member responsible for oversight.

## POLICY 1.3 Graduate Student Assistantships

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### APPENDIX: SAMPLE LETTER OF APPOINTMENT

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Date of Letter

I am pleased to tell you that you have been awarded a **[teaching] [research]** assistantship in the department of \_\_\_\_\_ for the **[academic year 201\_\_ - 201\_] [calendar year 201\_] [fall semester 201\_] [spring semester 201\_] [summer 201\_]**. Your teaching assistantship will be for **[Course Name and Number]** with Professor \_\_\_\_\_. **[You are expected to begin your assistantship on \_\_\_\_\_, and finish on \_\_\_\_\_.] [Your teaching assistantship responsibilities begin the week before classes start and will end on the day after the deadline for completion of the final exam grades.] [Your research assistantship responsibilities begin on the first day of fall classes and end on the last day of the spring exam period.]**

Duties and responsibilities of this assistantship include: **[attending all classes, running \_\_\_ sections, holding office hours, making weekly assignments, grading assignments, grading papers, grading midterms, grading finals, maintaining the class electronic mailing list, maintaining the class web site and providing administrative support to the director of Graduate Study]**. It is possible that there may be changes in assignments due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., fluctuations in the pattern of funding and in course enrollments). You will be notified promptly of any changes.

Your assistantship responsibilities will not exceed 20 hours per week with the average to be 15 hours per week. You will arrange the allocation of this time with Professor \_\_\_\_\_. During peak periods such as examinations, finals, and other busy times of the semester, the assistantship may entail extra hours, with compensating adjustments made at other times.

This assistantship includes a fellowship award for tuition, fees and health insurance, and a stipend of **[\$ \_\_\_\_\_] [\$ \_\_\_\_\_ semi-monthly]** for the \_\_\_ month period. You will be responsible for payment of a \$\_\_\_ graduate student activity fee. The Cornell student health insurance plan provides coverage from August \_\_, 201\_ through August \_\_, 201\_. This coverage remains in place even if you should cease to be enrolled as a graduate student. Individuals who leave the university or are not funded by the university during the spring semester **must** pay the health insurance premium for that period (approximately \$1100).

You will be paid on a semi-monthly basis, usually on the 15<sup>th</sup> day and in the last week of each month. The first check will be available on or about \_\_\_\_\_. Cornell encourages students to take advantage of direct deposit. Please see your department administrator to make arrangements. All assistantship stipends are subject to state and federal taxation. The tuition insurance premium portion of the award is not taxed.

Continued funding is contingent upon academic performance constituting good standing in the graduate field and satisfactory performance in any teaching or research assignments, as defined by the field of \_\_\_\_\_. **[You must reapply for your assistantship each year. Your renewal will depend upon your progress in the program and performance as a [teaching] [research] assistant as determined by the field]**, as well as departmental needs and assistantship availability. **[Financial support is also dependent upon the continued availability of funding.]**

If you accept this appointment and its conditions (please consult University Policy 1.3, Graduate Student Assistantships and \_\_\_\_\_ for further detail), please sign and return a copy of this letter no later than **[date]** to \_\_\_\_\_. Assistantships uncommitted after the above date will be made to other graduate students.

Please contact Professor \_\_\_\_\_ as soon as possible **[to discuss the plans for the course] [before research plans for the**

POLICY 1.3  
Graduate Student Assistantships

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**APPENDIX: SAMPLE LETTER OF APPOINTMENT, continued**

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**semester are finalized]** so that you can have a common understanding of assistantship requirements.

In addition, please come to \_\_\_\_\_ **[the department administrator]** to complete paperwork required for your appointment (including **[Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 (you will need to bring either your passport or two forms of identification such as valid driver's license, original Social Security card or birth certificate)] [IRS form W-4] [benefits form] [Inventions and Related Property Rights Assignment form]**).

Congratulations on being selected for this assistantship. We look forward to having you as a member of our team. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at \_\_\_\_\_. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

**[Chair] or [Director of Graduate Studies]**

**Accepted:**

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## POLICY 1.3

### Graduate Student Assistantships

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