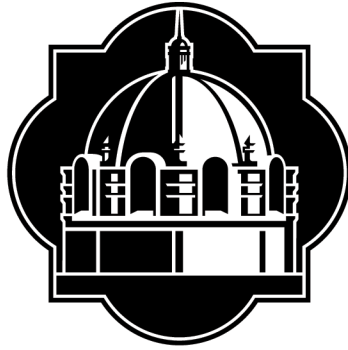


GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP HANDBOOK



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SAN ANTONIO

Graduate Studies

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Purpose of Graduate Assistantships

Graduate programs, departments, and eligible administrative units are designed to provide the opportunity for graduate students to make the transition to professional scholars and practitioners. The appointment of a graduate student as a Teaching Assistant (TA) or Research Assistant (RA) often provides the student with the necessary financial support to offset the financial burden of making this transition. Graduate students are defined by the [Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board](#) (2017) as “. . . student(s) possessing a baccalaureate degree or the equivalent and admitted to an approved master’s degree program at the institution.” Federal regulations include those who are “enrolled in a program, or course above the baccalaureate level or enrolled in a program leading to a professional degree” ([Code of Federal Regulations](#)).

Graduate studies and assistantship responsibilities should reinforce each other. The appointments are intended to allow students to gain valuable in-service experience in teaching, research, and administrative functions. The Office of Graduate Studies recognizes that providing graduate students with teaching and research assistantships is critical to the success of graduate programs at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. The principles that guide these assistantships are:

- Graduate assistants (GAs) are primarily students, not employees; successful completion of the academic program is the top priority for both the student and the institution.
- Assistantships are awards intended to assist students financially during their period of study. They should not interfere with a student’s timely and successful progression towards graduation. All graduate assistants are “at will” employees ([33.99.08.01](#)) [Student Employment](#).

To be eligible for student employment, the graduate student must be enrolled for a minimum of

six semester hours in a course of study leading to a recognized educational objective except as described in 33.99.08.01 Student Employment, section 1.3, and other exceptions must be approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies. Graduate Assistants must be in good academic standing and maintain an academic record acceptable to the department head for the employing department, including a cumulative grade point average of no less than 3.0.

Types of Graduate Assistantships

There are two types of graduate assistantships: Graduate Assistant – Non Teaching (GANT) and Graduate Assistant – Teaching (GAT). Funding sources include but are not limited to the Office of Graduate Studies, individual colleges, research centers, non-academic units (e.g., library, HR, IT), and external grants and contracts.

Graduate Assistant - Teaching (GAT)

Graduate Assistant – Teaching employees are employed to help meet the instructional needs of the university. GATs must be enrolled in a graduate program at A&M-San Antonio. They work under the direct supervision of a Division Head, Department Chair/Head, or other designated Faculty member. Continuation in the Graduate Assistant Program is based upon satisfactory performance on the job and meeting student employment eligibility requirements. The appointment is only for four and one half (4.5) or nine (9) months. The primary responsibility is to teach formally organized university undergraduate level courses. Duties may include, but are not limited to: teaching a minimum of three (3) and a maximum of six (6) semester credit hours, serving as the instructor of record of a formally organized course with the responsibility for assigning final grades (requires eighteen (18) semester hours of graduate credits in the field they will be teaching), participating in professional development and in-service training, and assisting the Division with other duties as assigned (33.99.08.01.01) [Student](#)

[Employment](#)

Graduate Assistant – Non Teaching (GANT)

Graduate Assistant – Non Teaching (GANT) are employed to assist the research efforts of the faculty or their administrative work in a capacity that relates to the student's educational goals. They must be enrolled in a graduate program at A&M-San Antonio. This non-exempt hourly appointment may be for four and one half (4.5), nine (9) or twelve (12) months. They work under the direct supervision of a Division Head, Department Chair/Head, or other designated Faculty member. Duties may include, but are not limited to: assisting Faculty with complex clerical and/or administrative assignments such as grading, assisting Faculty with research including library database searches and preparing manuscripts for submission to conferences and journals, and/or assisting the Division with other duties as assigned. Continuation in the Graduate Assistant Program is based upon satisfactory performance on the job and meeting student employment eligibility requirements. (33.99.08.01.01) [Student Employment](#)

Pursuing a Graduate Assistantship Position

Graduate students who are seeking a graduate assistantship position are encouraged to contact the Office of Graduate Studies.

Qualifications

All GAs must hold bachelor's degrees or the equivalent, be admitted in a graduate degree program, and be in good academic standing (33.99.08.01.01) [Student Employment](#). Additional academic requirements include:

- Graduate students must be enrolled for a minimum of six semester hours in a course of study leading to a recognized educational objective. Any exceptions to enrollment requirements must be for demonstrably valid reasons, submitted by program/department

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head, and approved in advance by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

- Graduate assistants must meet the general requirements for employment at A&M-San Antonio applicable to all employees.
- Graduate assistants may not work hours during which their scheduled classes are being conducted.
- Graduate students may not be paid under the Graduate Assistantship Program without prior approval from the Office of Graduate Studies and the Office of the Provost. If the employing department employs a graduate student under the graduate assistantship program object and title codes without obtaining prior approval, the department shall assume responsibility for the payment of all applicable wages, benefits and taxes.
- Current Students: graduate GPA of at least 3.0.

Appointments are given to those students who have shown superior aptitude in their fields of study and who render a high quality of service to the university by their teaching or research activities or their administrative work in a unit.

Each employing departmental unit or university office will review the qualifications of all appointees at the time of appointment to ensure compliance with existing policies. Any exceptions must be for documented demonstrably valid reasons and be approved in advance by the Office of Graduate Studies. Appeals regarding the Office of Graduate Studies' decision will be reviewed by the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs (33.99.08.01) [Student Employment](#). All graduate assistant appointments will be reviewed in the Office of Graduate Studies to ensure minimum criteria are met.

Responsibilities of Graduate Assistants

A fundamental responsibility of all graduate assistants is to work closely with their supervisors in carrying out assigned duties while at the same time making satisfactory progress towards the completion of their degree programs. Service assignments for each graduate assistant will be outlined at the time of appointment. Duties may include a range of assignments; the exact duties will depend on the needs of the department, the background and qualifications of the GA, and the professional goals of the student. Work assignments should take into account both the needs of the department and the graduate student's obligation to make satisfactory progress in their chosen academic program.

(33.99.08.01) [Student Employment](#)

Graduate Assistants are responsible for becoming familiar with this handbook, general academic procedures in the University Catalog, the Faculty Handbook, and the Student Code of Conduct. The documents are available on the University's website.

All new GAs must complete TAMUS mandatory online training courses including Title IX training and any safety training required by the courses within 30 days after being notified of the mandatory online training courses. Failure to do so may lead to rescinding the GA award. They must also undergo a period of orientation prior to beginning work. All employees of TAMUSA, including GAs, have the right to file a grievance and/or complaint regarding conditions of employment or treatment by management, supervisors, or other employees [32.01.02 - Complaint and Appeal Process for Nonfaculty Employees \(tamus.edu\)](#).

Enrollment Requirement (Credit Hours)

Graduate assistants are expected to make steady progress toward the completion of an advanced degree and meet minimum enrollment requirements. Graduate students must be enrolled

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for a minimum of six semester hours in a course of study leading to a recognized educational objective. Individual programs, departments, and/or colleges may have additional enrollment requirements. During the summer, student employees need not be enrolled to maintain student employee status as long as they intend to enroll in the following fall term and enrolled in the previous spring term. Any exceptions to enrollment requirements must be for demonstrably valid reasons, submitted by program/department head, and approved in advance by the Dean of Graduate Studies. If a student fails to maintain any of the above enrollment requirements throughout the semester (i.e., by dropping a course), their assistantship may be terminated.

Work Assignment

Graduate assistants are required to work 20 hours per week (33.99.08.01) [Student Employment](#).

The exact days and hours may vary and should be decided in coordination with the GA's supervisor prior to the start of the term. They are expected to work throughout the entire employment period except on university holidays. Graduate Assistants should work out a schedule to cover the hours missed when the university is closed. Appointments at 50% FTE are recommended so students can be eligible for in-state tuition and employee benefits.

Graduate Assistants are limited to an average of 20 hours per week and appointments beyond 50% must receive prior approval from the Office of Graduate Studies.

Professional Ethics

Graduate Assistants are expected to support and maintain an academic environment conducive to the positive educational development of all students and faculty members. This standard of professional conduct requires each GA to perform their responsibilities without intimidation and harassment based on sex, race, religion, politics, or professional interest. Special caution must be

exercised to avoid exploitation of students or colleagues for private or professional advantage, especially those who are subject to one's authority.

Professional behavior must be maintained in the relationships among students, peers, and faculty members. Sexual harassment, intimidation, or exploitation of professional relationships undermines the academic freedom of all. Protection of the atmosphere of trust, essential to the flourishing of an academic community, is the professional responsibility of all University personnel.

Personal Relationships with Students

Relationships between GAs and students that go beyond the platonic must be avoided. It is never appropriate for a GA to enter a sexual relationship with one of their students. It makes no difference if the relationship is consensual. Even consensual relationships between university employees in positions of authority and their subordinates or their students are not permitted and may result in disciplinary action. In fact, not only are such relationships morally suspect and unacceptable, they may also be considered a form of sexual harassment, which is illegal. For more information on 'Consensual Relationships' see System Policy [07.05.01 - Consensual Relationships \(tamus.edu\)](#).

Sexual Harassment, Harassment, and Discrimination

Texas A&M University-San Antonio and the Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) are committed to creating and maintaining a work and educational environment where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity and where all are free to participate in a lively exchange of ideas. Each student has the right to learn, and each employee has the right to work in an environment free of all forms of harassment and discrimination and one in which ideas may be freely expressed. For information regarding Civil Rights, see system policy [08.01 - Civil Rights Protections and Compliance](#)

[tamus.edu](https://www.tamus.edu) Civil Rights Compliance.

In addition, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity. Sexual harassment, which includes sexual violence, is a form of sex discrimination. Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination, including discrimination based upon sex. The University provides resources to students, faculty, and staff to address concerns related to sexual harassment, sexual assault (rape), sexual misconduct, sex discrimination. For more information, please see [Title IX Information \(tamusa.edu\)](https://www.tamusa.edu)

Employee Benefits

Vacation, Holiday, and Sick Leave Time

Graduate assistantships, like other student employee appointments, are considered to be “at will” temporary appointments and do not qualify for vacation, sick leave, emergency leave, or holiday pay. Social Security and Workers’ Compensation insurance benefits, however, are provided to all student employees. [33.99.08 - Student Employment \(tamus.edu\)](https://www.tamus.edu)

Group Insurance

Graduate students who work at least 50% time for 4½ months are eligible to participate in group insurance programs. For more information on benefits, see system policy [31.02.01 - Administration of Employee Benefit Programs \(tamus.edu\)](https://www.tamus.edu). Graduate assistants are eligible to participate in group insurance programs, but are ineligible for retirement or other benefits stated in System Regulation 33.99.08 [Student Employment](https://www.tamus.edu). For more information see the Office of Human Resources at <https://www.tamusa.edu/human-resources/>

Out-of-State Tuition Waivers

Graduate Assistants employed 50% FTE and their spouse and children who are not Texas residents may qualify for in-state tuition waivers per Texas Education Code Section [EDUCATION CODE CHAPTER 54. TUITION AND FEES \(texas.gov\)](#) and receive in-state tuition and fees at the rate charged to Texas residents for the semester in which they hold the assistantship appointment. To receive in-state tuition rates, students must maintain a graduate course load and enrolled for a minimum of six semester hours during long semesters. Individual programs, departments, and/or colleges may have additional qualification requirements (see section “Enrollment Requirements”).

Out-of-state tuition waivers may be rescinded if:

- a student registers for too few hours or
- does not work in the qualifying position by the 12th class day of long semesters and the 4th class day of summer semesters. The hiring department/program may request an exception for any appointments made after these specified dates, in writing, to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

NOTE: Termination of the student’s employment (voluntary or involuntary) during the semester may result in revocation of the exemption, recalculation of tuition at the nonresident rate, and requirement for immediate payment of the tuition due.

International Graduate Assistants

International students will be offered employment in accordance with Texas A&M University System (System) Regulation [33.99.09 - Employment of Foreign Nationals \(tamus.edu\)](#).

Hiring Department Responsibilities

Administrative responsibility for graduate assistantships rests within the department in which

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the student is employed, in consultation with all other relevant departments. In addition, departments must have a clear process for hiring graduate assistants including but not limited to the following:

- Create and maintain a job description for each GA that aligns with type of assistantship appointment (e.g., GAT, GANT),
- Submit requests for new graduate assistant positions to Human Resources for posting in Workday. This includes: (1) Submit a Position Management Request (PMR) in Jira to create (if applicable) and post position; (2) attach memo approved by Dean with justification for new position; (3) attach position description; (4) all requests must include the funding source, department, and supervisor; (5) when PMR in Jira has completed routing with all approvals, HR will post the position in Workday. All graduate assistants will apply for the position in the Workday system. See Human Resources timeline below for information on hiring new graduate assistants. Graduate Assistants are not permitted to perform any work until they have completed new hire orientation and onboarding.
- Ensure that all student employees comply with mandatory university training requirements within 30 days of hire (i.e., Ethics, Information Security Awareness, Orientation to the System, Reporting Fraud, Waste, and Abuse, and Creating a Discrimination Free Workplace) (33.99.08.01.01) [Student Employment](#) and
- Establish a work schedule and ensure that the job duties for each GA are appropriate for the job code and title used, train GAs on departmental procedures, and maintain adequate time records as supporting documentation for the department's payroll voucher and submit payroll to the appropriate office provide the student with an official letter of appointment

(33.99.08.01.01) [Rule Template \(tamusa.edu\)](https://tamusa.edu) using the letter template provided in the **Appendix.**

- Departments must have the newly hired GA submit the I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification form, Criminal Background check, and other supporting documentation as required by the Office of Human Resources before they can report to work. All offers of employment are contingent upon an acceptable background investigation. It is recommended that the hiring department submit the required criminal background check forms to The Office of Human Resources prior to making an offer of employment.

Office of Human Resources Timeline

The Office of Human Resources will schedule a new hire orientation for graduate assistants on the same timetable as the new faculty for the new academic year. This will be at the end of July or beginning of August. All HR processing must be completed before the graduate assistant can attend the new hire orientation session. HR will advise the department when the graduate assistant is ready to attend the new hire orientation.

New Hire Processing: HR must have the complete hiring packet at least three weeks prior to the scheduled new hire orientation. After the hiring packet has been reviewed by HR then:

- Hire request must be created and routed in Jira.
 - This allows for comments and questions from all approvers.
- The hire process must route in Workday.
- Background check will need to be completed prior to the new hire orientation date.
- I-9 must be completed on or before the first day of employment as per the Department of Homeland Security.

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Payroll: New hire must have completed routing in Workday by payroll closing date for either monthly or bi-weekly. This includes their onboarding tasks.

- Monthly payroll generally closes 8 calendar days before pay date.
- Bi-weekly payroll generally closes 3 calendar days before pay date.
- Holidays will modify closing dates to an earlier date. This information is sent from HR through email to the campus.

Payroll changes: payroll changes must have completed routing in Workday by payroll closing date for either monthly or bi-weekly.

- Monthly payroll generally closes 8 calendar days before pay date.
- Bi-weekly payroll generally closes 3 calendar days before pay date.
- Holidays will modify closing dates to an earlier date. This information is sent from HR through email to the campus.

Compensation

Salary ranges for graduate assistants are set by the Office of Graduate Studies. Individual colleges or employing non-academic units will set the exact salary amount for each assistantship based on job assignment, the type of degree program, level of academic progression or other factors as determined by the hiring department and approved by the Office of Graduate Studies.

(33.99.08.01.01) [Student Employment](#).

Appointments and Reappointments of Graduate Assistants

Offers of assistantships are contingent upon available funds and admission of the applicant to a graduate program and are made by the head of the unit that will employ the GA. Graduate assistantship appointments are normally made for 4½-month academic semester or 9 months. If grant

funded, the term of an appointment for a graduate assistant may be based on the period of available grant funding as stated in their initial appointment letter (33.99.08.01.01) [Student Employment](#).

Decisions regarding the reappointment of graduate assistants will be based on the needs of the University and the past performance of the graduate assistant. To be reappointed, graduate assistants must have demonstrated satisfactory progress in their academic programs and satisfactory performance of their employment duties at the university (33.09.08.01.01) [Student Employment](#). The assistantship is contingent upon satisfactory progress toward their degree.

Request for Leave

Graduate assistants are paid a salary and therefore required to work a number of hours based on their percent effort. Graduate assistants are not eligible for paid sick leave and absences must be without pay; however, time taken off may be made up within the work week with supervisor approval. Title IX regulations also require the university to treat pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, and recovery therefrom as a justification for a leave of absence for so long a period of time as is deemed medically necessary by the student's physician. Students requesting leave of absence under this provision should contact Title IX Coordinator for information.

<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/titleix/index.html>

Training and Support

All new GAs will complete Texas A&M University System mandatory TrainTraq online courses including Title IX training and any safety training required by the courses and undergo a period of orientation prior to beginning work. This orientation will be conducted by the employing department and include an overview of procedures, facilities, duties and university rules and procedures (33.99.08.01.01) [Student Employment](#)

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The nature of training activities will vary from department to department, but each unit is responsible for a plan that ensures each GA such support to provide maximum opportunity for professional development. The academic unit responsible for a GA will provide them with such support (access to office space, computers, telephones, supplies, etc.) as appropriate to their activities.

Graduate Assistant Performance Evaluation

Each department is responsible for determining procedures for review and evaluation of GAs and for informing GAs of these procedures. The process of evaluation will vary by department and type of assistantship and may include written assessment of work by an individual faculty member or supervisor, classroom visitation by designated faculty members, and student evaluations. The results of reviews and evaluations should be maintained by department and discussed with the GA
(33.99.08.01.01) [Student Employment](#)

Texas A&M University-San Antonio Graduate Assistants have the right to file a grievance related to employment. Complaints must be made in accordance with the provisions of System Regulation [32.01.02 - Complaint and Appeal Process for Nonfaculty Employees \(tamus.edu\)](#)

However, a complaint alleging discrimination, sexual harassment and/or related retaliation must be filed in accordance with System Regulation 08.01.01 [Civil Rights Compliance](#), Civil Rights Compliance and University Rule [08.01.01.01 CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE \(tamusa.edu\)](#).

Dismissal and Termination

Graduate Assistant appointments are “at-will,” which means that the University or the GA may terminate the employment at any time. A GA’s continued employment will be in jeopardy for failure to meet work/academic/enrollment requirements, loss of funding, unacceptable performance/conduct, or academic delinquency. Supervisors who are considering termination of a

graduate assistant's employment before their appointment end date due to performance or policy violation must first advise Human Resources to follow the standard procedure for termination of employment. This includes a review by Human Resources and the Office of General Counsel before terminating employment.

Academic and Enrollment Requirements

Students failing to meet the minimum academic/enrollment requirements at the time of appointment will not be approved. Students in GA positions who do not maintain academic and enrollment requirements are subject to losing their positions.

Loss of Funding

A graduate assistantship may be terminated due to loss, reduction, or reallocation in appropriation, grant, contract, gift, or other funds which support the appointment. Subject to the fiscal priorities of the unit, programs will make a good faith effort to find alternative funding for the full term of the appointment for a GA who is in good standing and making satisfactory progress towards a degree.

Unacceptable Performance/Conduct

A GA may be terminated as a result of unacceptable performance or conduct. Examples of unacceptable performance or conduct include but are not limited to incompetence, inefficiency, carelessness, neglect of duty, insubordination, repeated or extended absence, and misconduct related to the GA's suitability or capacity to continue to perform assignments. A GA may be suspended from responsibilities without pay pending the investigation regarding suitability of continued employment. Disciplinary action associated with performance must be documented and HR must be consulted before taking any action.

Academic Delinquency

An appointment may be terminated if the GA is not making satisfactory academic progress towards a degree or is otherwise not in good academic standing. The termination shall be in writing and may be immediate or with such notice as the University believes compatible with the GA's academic situation. An appointment may be terminated for any reason by delivery of written or electronic notice to the GA.

Appendix

Offer Letter Template

Date

Name

Address

Dear (Name):

We are pleased to offer you a Graduate Assistantship – Teaching (GAT) in the **XXX Program** of the Department of **XXX** at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. This is a one academic-year appointment from **September 1, 2023, to May 31, 2024**, which comes with a stipend of **\$12,000.00**. You will be expected to work for the department 20 hours per week (50% effort) and be enrolled as a full-time graduate student. Employment is contingent upon providing evidence of employment eligibility and the completion of a satisfactory criminal background check.

You are expected to assist with the teaching and/or mentoring of undergraduate students in the classroom, laboratory, or field. Furthermore, you may be required to grade undergraduate student work, or do other academic work as assigned by the Graduate Coordinator of your Program.

Before the start date, you will need to attend a new employee orientation, which includes an overview of benefits, payroll, and mandatory online training requirements. Please bring your identification and social security cards, as they are required for the payroll system. If you cannot locate your Social Security card, please go to the nearest Social Security Administration Office and request a new one.

We look forward to having you work in the Department of **XXX**. We are confident that you will be a great asset to the Department. If you agree to the stipulations outlined above, please sign this letter and return it to the Department of **XXX** in College of **XXX**, at Texas A&M University-San Antonio, within five business days of receipt. Thank you.

Student

Date

Chair, Department of **XXX**

Date

Dean, College of **XXX**

Date

Dean of Graduate Studies

Date