



WAGNER COLLEGE

Division of GRADUATE Studies

Practical Leadership For the Real World

Graduate Assistant Handbook

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Graduate Studies at Wagner College oversees all graduate assistantships (excluding Athletics). The policies and procedures outlined in this Handbook have been collaboratively developed among the Provost Council, the Graduate Council, and the Graduate Student Council. This handbook provides the most current information about Wagner College graduate assistantships and will be updated annually.

Graduate assistantships are available to students in all graduate programs. Graduate assistantships are granted to facilitate the academic progress of selected graduate students by providing institutional support. The Graduate Assistantship (GA) regulations and procedures outlined in this handbook are designed to promote this academic objective. Therefore, such factors as satisfactory academic standing and progress are considerations for retaining assistantships. Likewise, work assignments should complement or contribute to academic objectives and should not lead to unsatisfactory academic performance or interfere with completion of a degree in a timely fashion.

All questions regarding graduate assistantships should be forwarded to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who will coordinate the program college-wide.

CRITERIA FOR OBTAINING AN ASSISTANTSHIP

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for an assistantship, students must be admitted as a degree-seeking student in a graduate academic program. Students may apply for a graduate assistantship upon admission to a graduate program or may apply, at a later date. Students applying for assistantships for the first time after having taken graduate courses must have a minimum of a 3.0 graduate GPA based on a minimum of six graduate semester hours. To retain a graduate assistantship, the student must maintain a 3.0 GPA. Failure to do so is grounds for dismissal as a graduate assistant. The Office of Graduate Studies will monitor GPAs of all graduate assistants.

ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for an assistantship, students must be in good account standing with the College. Any student having an open account for tuition or fees will not be awarded an assistantship.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Candidates for graduate assistantships must complete a Graduate Assistantship Application from the Office of Graduate Studies (Campus Hall, Room 324). An active file will be kept in the Office of Graduate Studies. Individual department representatives may peruse the file to select candidates for interview. Once a department selects a candidate and notifies the Office of Graduate Studies, the candidate's file will be removed from the candidate pool. After a review of the candidate's application and recommendation by the department, a letter will be issued to the candidate informing her/him of acceptance as a graduate assistant.

WHAT GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS INCLUDE

MONTHLY STIPEND

The monthly stipend will be awarded depending upon the number of hours required for the assistantship. Under normal circumstances, a graduate assistant working for 20 hours/week will receive \$2400 per year. Some departments will be awarded an extra month depending on demonstrated need. Some departments may opt to award assistantships for working 10 hours/week on a pro-rated basis.

Payroll checks are issued the last working day of the month and may be picked up at the Cashier's window located in the Business Office, Cunard Hall. Generally, Graduate Assistants are paid in four monthly installments per semester.

Please note that the stipend is considered as income and it could reduce the amount of loans and grants, if a student has also applied for financial aid. The stipend, as a payment for services, is subject to federal and state tax. Therefore, an Employee Withholding Allowance Certificate (W-4) needs to be filed with the Office of Human Resources, Cunard Hall, or before the student can be put on payroll.

TUITION CREDITS

Graduate Assistants are awarded tuition remission during the semester or year that they hold an appointment. The tuition remission covers the equivalent of tuition credits as listed in your GA contract. The Assistant will be required to pay any additional tuition charges or fees assessed with any special courses they take. Tuition remission that was not used in the semester allotted cannot be used at a later date. Room and board is not included in the GA package.

Tuition remission is considered part of the financial aid package and may impact upon the other types of aid you may have otherwise been eligible for. Tuition remission is exempt from taxation, at the present time, because they are provided in recognition of the Graduate Assistant's academic accomplishments

LOCATING, APPLYING FOR, AND MAINTAINING ASSISTANTSHIPS

The primary source of contact for Assistantships is the Office of Graduate Studies. The Office of Graduate Studies will post graduate assistantships available throughout the academic year. Interested candidates must check the website or bulletin board outside Campus Hall Room 331 to keep abreast of openings.

GRADUATE ASSISTANT OFFER

Acceptance of an offer of assistantship, for the next academic year, by a prospective or enrolled graduate student completes an agreement that both the student and the College expects to honor. In that context, the conditions affecting such offers and their acceptance must be defined carefully and understood by all parties.

The College will make the assistantship offer in writing. The potential Graduate Assistant should accept or deny the offer by signing the offer and returning it to the Office of Graduate Studies.

GRADUATE ASSISTANT APPOINTMENTS

Wagner College encourages writing student contracts for the length of the academic year (fall and spring) to reduce possible interruption in financial aid for Graduate Assistants. The contract may be extended to May 31 or begin August 1 of that year if the student will be employed by the department for the remainder of the month of August or May; without obligating the student to enroll in the summer session preceding, or the summer session following the contract year.

NOTE: *Once a graduate assistant has been appointed, the department/area may request an extension of the graduate assistantship provided that all previous conditions for maintaining the position have been fulfilled. A memorandum or email requesting this extension is required. Note that no GA may hold her/his position more than three years (6 semesters excluding summer sessions).*

Residence Life Assistantships generally require students to be on the same schedule as the Residence Life Department. This means being on campus before the start of classes for orientation, training, and remaining on duty through the final examination period. Responsibilities for some assistantships could include being available during academic program break periods when the College is open. Graduate assistants are not expected to provide services or make up time because of College closures. Explicit agreements between the department and the student about hours, time off, absences, etc., need to be indicated in the offer letter, particularly if there are expectations for providing services when classes are not in session.

Once an offer is made and the student has accepted, the student must complete an I-9 (U.S. Department of Justice Employment Eligibility Verification), an Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate, along with any other necessary payroll information (see Office of Human Resources).

Graduate assistants are not to begin work until they have returned a signed contract to the Office of Graduate Studies and employment eligibility has been verified by the Office of Human Resources.

GRADUATE ASSISTANT ASSIGNMENTS

Work assignments should be such that the student's formal degree work is enhanced, and takes place in a setting related to the student's discipline. Master's degree students, if assigned to instructional responsibilities must be supervised by regular faculty members. Graduate assistantships will be offered in programs not in the candidate's major field if no positions are available.

If graduate assistants have concerns regarding their hours or duties, the normal procedure is to discuss the matter with their supervisor, graduate coordinator, or department chair/unit administrator. If, for substantive reasons it seems appropriate, students may then contact the Office of Graduate Studies. Note that all College employees should avail themselves of the Office of Human Resources for issues related to harassment, discrimination, etc.

MAINTAINING THE ASSISTANTSHIP

In order to maintain an assistantship, students need to:

- (a) meet the performance criteria expected by the department providing the assistantship*
- (b) enroll for the required number of credit hours for spring and fall semesters.*
- (c) maintain an overall minimum GPA of 3.0*
- (d) show satisfactory progress towards a degree completion*

RESPONSIBILITIES OF APPOINTING DEPARTMENT

*Departments are to provide appropriate training, supervision, working conditions, and the resources for Graduate Assistants to perform the duties assigned. Performance assessment procedures must be included as part of the assistantship process and should be shared by the supervisor with the student and the Office of Graduate Studies. See **Appendix B** for the Graduate Assistant Evaluation Form. A department/area may substitute its own evaluation process/form, as long as the form is sent to the Office of Graduate Studies as requested.*

TERMINATION/RESIGNATION

The Department, the Office of Graduate Studies or the graduate assistant may end the assistantship contract. A student may resign from an assistantship if it is determined that s/he cannot meet the conditions of appointment, e.g., leaving the College before contract ends, illness, etc. This resignation should be in writing from the graduate assistant (including his/her signature) to the responsible administrator such as an academic department chair or supervisor/director.

The department or the Office of Graduate Studies may terminate the assistantship if criteria for satisfactory performance as a graduate assistant or as a graduate student are not met. Not meeting the criteria below will result in termination of the assistantship. All terminations will occur in consultation with the specific department/area.

The criteria are:

- 1. Maintaining a 3.0 graduate GPA for each semester while on an assistantship.*
- 2. Maintaining an overall graduate GPA of 3.0 while on an assistantship.*
- 3. Enrollment in up to 9 credit hours of course work for each semester while on a full-time assistantship; or up to 4 ½ credit hours for part-time assistantships in the spring and fall semester. (Note that students may not carry over unused credits in a given semester to another semester and that any courses taken beyond the 9 credits are the financial responsibility of the student. Also, note that a graduate assistantship is given for up to one year at a time. Students wishing to continue their assistantships must request so in writing to their department/area supervisor. The supervisor will then notify the Office of Graduate Studies in writing (memorandum or email) to effect this request for an extension.)*
- 4. Maintaining satisfactory progress towards degree completion in a timely fashion: e.g, master's students on assistantship must complete a degree within a two- to three-year period.*
- 5. Maintaining appropriate student loan information (e.g., a problem will occur if there is a default of a student loan that has not been cleared within 6 months of having signed an assistantship contract).*
- 6. Satisfactory on the job performance as documented in writing by the department/area supervisor.*

Should resignation or termination occur before the end of the semester tuition remission, stipends and any charges will be prorated according to the number of weeks completed.

OTHER EMPLOYMENT

Graduate assistants working 20 hours/week are not allowed to take other assistantships or employment on campus while classes are in session during fall and spring semester. If the assistantship workload for fall or spring is less than 20 hours, the student may take an additional assistantship or student employment for the balance of hours up to 20. Departments must make a written request with rationale to the Office of Human Resources for appointments over 20 hours.

The College does not monitor off-campus employment of graduate assistants.

FEES

Graduate assistants are responsible for all student fees owed to the College.

HOUSING CONSIDERATIONS

*Due to financial constraints and equity issues, **under no circumstances** will graduate assistants be assigned Room and Board as part of the Graduate Assistantship package.*

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Wagner College is committed to non-discrimination and equal opportunity in programs, activities, and employment for students and employees regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, unfavorable discharge from military, or status as a disabled veteran or veteran of the Vietnam Era, or other factors prohibited by law.

TYPES OF ASSISTANTSHIPS

Graduate assistants may serve in one of the following categories: (a) Instructional, (b) academic services, (c) student services, (d) institutional support, and (e) auxiliary services.

INSTRUCTIONAL GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

The following departments (areas) are considered instructional: Early Childhood Center, Biology, Business, Education, and Nursing.

Instructional Graduate Assistants may be assigned responsibility for general office tasks, for assisting a faculty member with teaching-related tasks such as grading papers, meeting with students, preparing class materials, assisting during class, etc., or responsible for laboratory assignments or supervision accompanying faculty taught classes. Instructional GAs may also be assigned to an individual faculty member or program to assist with research. The nature of this assistance varies by discipline and can involve a variety of activities, such as library work, proposal writing, data gathering, and data

analysis. Most instructional graduate assistants are supported through academic departments that receive funds allocated for those purposes through the College's budget process. Others may be funded through externally obtained grants and contracts.

ACADEMIC SERVICES GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

The following departments (areas) are considered academic services: Experiential Learning, Library, and Media Services.

The responsibilities for Academic Services GAs are varied and can be located in many campus-wide administrative offices. They include such functions as administrative/professional duties, computer support, program planning etc.

STUDENT SERVICES GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

The following departments (areas) are considered student services: Academic Advisement, Career Planning, Health Services, Financial Aid, Registrar, Student Government, Wagnerian, and Co-Curricular Programs.

The responsibilities for Student Services GAs are varied and can be located in many campus-wide administrative offices. They include such functions as administrative/professional duties, computer support, program planning etc.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

The following departments (areas) are considered institutional support: Business Office, Copy Center, Postal Center

The responsibilities for Institutional GAs are varied and can be located in many campus-wide administrative offices. They include such functions as administrative/professional duties, computer support, program planning etc.

AUXILIARY SERVICES GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

The following departments (areas) are considered auxiliary services: Residential Life

Residence Life Assistantships are available with the Residence Life Department, in addition to usual assistantship support, they may also involve assistance with housing. These positions may supervise undergraduate Resident Assistants (RAs).

NOTE: Departments or areas listed under each category above may be changed. Departments or areas may be deleted or added depending on demonstrated need for graduate assistants.

APPLICATION AND GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTSIPS

We welcome your interests in Wagner College's Graduate Assistantship Program. Please read the following information carefully before submitting your application:

Criteria for Appointment:

- Must be a matriculated student in a graduate degree program. (International applicants must be eligible to work in the US.)
- Must have been selected for a position by a Position Supervisor (department).
- Must be a full-time student, i.e. taking at least 9 credits in your program per semester
- Must maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative average each semester.

Benefits of the Assistantship:

- Tuition remission of 9 tuition credits
- Monthly stipend for working 20 hours per week on campus
- Opportunity for professional growth

Your graduate program discipline and work experiences are taken into consideration when your application is reviewed, but the Assistantship awarded may not necessarily be associated with your field of graduate study.

The following forms must be completed and submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, Campus Hall Room 324.

___ Application – every item must be completed

___ Two (2) references from academic or professional sources. It is the applicant's responsibility to follow up that the references have been forwarded to be associated with your application. Copies of original references submitted in support of your application for College admission will be accepted.

The Office of Graduate Studies cannot begin to process Graduate Assistant Applications until all above items are received. Position Supervisors will not interview a prospective candidate until the program admission status of that candidate has been confirmed.

Please note that there are a limited number of Graduate Assistantship positions available each year. Simply completing the Assistantship Application and being admitted to the College does not in any way imply that an Assistantship award will be received. Applicants must undergo a review and approval process which involves initial review by the Dean of Graduate Studies, interview and recommendation for a position by the Assistantship Supervisor, review and approval by the department or area in which the position is housed, and final approval by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

**Wagner College
Graduate Assistant
Performance Evaluation**

Name: _____

Date _____

Semester: _____

The information below represents an evaluation of the graduate assistant's performance based upon observation and review of the employee's work.

Assessments will be conducted at least once per semester. Department faculty, administrative assistant, and chair/supervisor shall provide input into the performance assessment. The Chair/Supervisor of the department/area shall complete the form and meet with the graduate assistant to discuss the results. A signed copy should be forwarded to the Office of Graduate Studies (CH 331).

Characteristic	N/A	Above Avg.	Average	Needs Improvement	Poor
Professionalism (enthusiastic, pleasant)					
Initiative (does work on own, self-starter)					
Creativity (has new ideas)					
Job Knowledge (computer, telephone skills)					
Efficiency (punctual, thorough, accurate)					
Productivity (completes desired amount of work)					
Responsibility (dependable)					
Attendance/ Punctuality					
Overall Performance					

Evaluators' Comments: _____

Dept. Chair's/Supervisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

GA Comments: _____

Graduate Assistant's Signature: _____ Date: _____