

# **Graduate Assistant Policy & Procedures Manual**



**College of Education  
University of Nevada, Reno**

**Welcome!** The College of Education has hired you as a Graduate Assistant (GA). We are pleased to have you associated with the college. In case we get so busy that we forget to tell you, we appreciate the contributions you'll be making! This guide is an attempt to help GAs understand the formal and informal procedures of UNR and the college. We have probably left some things out, so if you think of items that should be included in this guide, please inform the Associate Dean. We will update this document periodically and your feedback will help us.

### **College Contact Information:**

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## **What is a Graduate Assistant?**

A Graduate Assistant (GA) is a graduate student who is hired as an employee of the college. The GA may teach a course, supervise lower-level students in internships or field experiences, and/or assist faculty with their teaching and related research. GAs are assigned to their responsibilities each semester, depending on experience and faculty or college needs. GAs are required to work 20 hours per week. In return, they receive a tuition fee waiver for a maximum of 9 graduate credits as well as a monthly stipend. For more information visit the Graduate School website (<http://www.unr.edu/grad/funding/graduate-assistantships>).

### **How Does a Graduate Student Become a Graduate Assistant?**

Applications can be obtained from any program office or downloaded from the web (<http://www.unr.edu/education/academics/graduate-assistantships>). Applications consist of statements of career interests, past employment, and educational experience. GAs are asked to specify areas of interest so efforts can be made to place GAs with faculty members with similar interests. GAs are asked to fill out an application every year to be eligible for re-hire. Applications are due by February 1. If openings occur mid-year, applications for these positions are due September 1.

### **Eligibility for Hire**

To be eligible for a GA position, students must be enrolled in at least 6 graduate level credits (12 maximum), have a 3.0 current or undergraduate GPA, and be admitted to the graduate school without provisional or probationary status. Graduate special students and students on probation are not eligible for a GA position. Individuals who will be working more than 10 hours in another job (including student internships) may be deemed ineligible. Doctoral students are given first priority for GA positions.

**International Students:** International students serving as Teaching Assistants must meet a minimum Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of 550 (paper version), 213 (computer version) and pass the SPEAK Test with a score of 50. (To make an appointment to take the SPEAK test, please contact IELC at 784-6075. The cost of the test is \$60). If you have taken the iBT (internet based version) of the TOFEL you must score 79/80 total and have a score of 24 on the speaking section of the test. The International Language Testing System (IELTS) score of a 7 can substitute for the TOFL. (A score of 50 on the Test of Spoken English (TSE) can be substituted for the Speak Test.)

### **Hiring Process**

The deadline for applications is Feb 1<sup>st</sup> for positions the following fall semester. If there are openings throughout the year, September 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for spring semester positions. Students applying will receive notification by March 1<sup>st</sup> for the fall semester or October 1<sup>st</sup> for the spring semester. The number of

applicants selected will be based on funding and the number of positions allocated to the College of Education. Priority will be given, in order, to continuing doctoral students, doctoral applicants, master's students with research and/or teaching experience, and first-time licensure students. Priority will also be given to applicants who are eligible to work 20 hours per week and who are making satisfactory progress toward degree completion. Fall GAs will continue in the spring contingent upon an acceptable performance evaluation by their supervisor and available funding.

## **What are Graduate Assistant Responsibilities?**

### **Attendance and Fulfillment of Duties**

GAs are required to work 20 hours per week unless fewer hours have been contracted. GAs may be asked to teach specific courses, participate in field experiences, grade assignments and exams, act as teaching assistants, or complete various types of work associated with research, teaching, or service activity. Please complete your 20 hours of GA work among the people to whom you are assigned. Example: If you are assigned to work for a professor for 10 hours and only work 8 hours, first see if you can use the other two hours for the other professor(s) you are assigned to and then check with the Program Coordinator.

Besides completing tasks assigned, GAs may be expected to attend meetings and participate in various activities for the college. Attendance is expected at all functions (e.g., college fairs or new student orientations) and will be reflected on evaluations at the end of each semester.

GAs are hired on 5, 10, or 12- month contracts. Typically, GAs begin work on August 1 and end work on May 31. GAs are not expected to work on University holidays. GA positions are available for fall and spring semesters only. Summer employment is not available unless it is through scholarship or grant funding.

GAs are employees of the College of Education at UNR and must adhere to all college policies and procedures, particularly confidentiality. Any information gained about individuals within your role as a GA is to remain strictly confidential (e.g., student grades, faculty evaluations). GAs are expected to meet or exceed the expectations noted in the **"College of Education: Graduate Assistant Requirements for Confidentiality and Professionalism,"** appended to this manual.

### **Timesheets**

Time sheets are **optional**, depending on your supervisor's request. When a timesheet is completed, one copy goes to each faculty member to whom the GA is assigned, and one copy is given to the College Doctoral Committee Chair. GAs would be wise to keep a copy for themselves. Please be sure to fill time sheets out accurately and completely. If time sheets are not completed, it will be assumed that work was not done. This may be reflected in semester evaluations. When each timesheet is completed, please keep one copy for your own records, submit one copy to each faculty member for whom you worked for signature.

### **Teaching a Class**

Teaching a class is a half-time assignment (i.e., 10 hours per week.)

### **Emergency/Illness Leave**

Graduate Assistants are required to work 20 hours per week, no more or less. The only exception is any week with a university holiday. In those cases GAs work a prorated number of hours based on an assumed 5-day workweek. In other words, each holiday weekday reduces work hours that week by 4 hours for 20-hour GAs and 2 hours for 10-hour GAs. GAs who need to take time off may work over 20 hours in advance to

compensate for absences. However, this must be coordinated with and approved by the faculty member(s) to whom GAs are assigned prior to any absence. Work missed for any reason (e.g., illness or family emergency) must be made up. This includes classes, vacations, and conferences.

## What Procedures Should Follow Appointment as a GA?

### Required Training

- All new GA hires will be required to attend a new Graduate Assistant orientation through the Graduate School, if available, in addition to an orientation from the college. You may include this time on your time sheet.
- GAs who are teaching courses may have to attend additional training sessions offered by the Graduate School. You may include this time on your time sheet. The Graduate School training is typically held in August two weeks prior to the start of classes. Given that GAs begin work on August 1, there should be no issues in availability to attend this training.
- As part of your GA duties, you may be asked to work with research data that a faculty member has collected from human participants. According to UNR policy and federal law, you should not do this work until you have been trained in human subjects' research rights and responsibilities. Therefore, all GAs are required to complete an on-line training for this purpose. For more information, go to <http://www.unr.edu/ohrp/training.html/>. You must complete this training within the first three weeks of your first semester as a GA. Please forward a copy of documentation that you have completed this training to the Associate Dean or whomever he/she designates to track this information (e.g., a GA).
- Also as part of your GA duties, you may be asked to teach courses and interact with students and faculty professionally in a variety of other ways. Therefore, all GAs are required to complete Sexual Harassment Prevention Training. For information, go to <http://www.unr.edu/eoaa/sexual-harassment-policy>. You may include the training time on your time sheet. Please forward a copy of documentation that you have completed this training to the Associate Dean or whomever he/she designates to track this information (e.g., a GA)

### Payroll Information

Upon notification of hire, the college will contact GAs to complete necessary paperwork. Paperwork should be completed and submitted before the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month during which GA employment begins. If paperwork is submitted after the 10<sup>th</sup> paychecks will not be distributed until the following month.

Paychecks are available on the first working day of each month for the previous month's work. The Board of Regents requires electronic payroll delivery via direct deposit. If you do not have a bank account, a Visa debit card will be provided. The university automatically deducts federal income tax from each paycheck issued.

### Fee Waivers

GAs pay a portion of the graduate credit fee; the balance of the credit fee is paid by a grant-in-aid. Fee waivers for courses are completed by the hiring program's administrative assistant and are submitted for the student using an online form. If the GA has already paid tuition, a tuition reimbursement check will be provided. Fee waivers for up to 9 graduate credits are available for each semester GAs are employed.

### Insurance and Medical Benefits

GAs are required to have health insurance coverage, and coverage will be provided as part of your full-time employment as a GA as long as you are enrolled in at least 6 credits. If you already have health insurance coverage, you must submit an insurance waiver to deny coverage. You can find out more about health insurance coverage

and fee waivers at the Graduate School web site (<http://www.unr.edu/hr/training-and-development/graduate-assistantships>).

### **Mileage Compensation**

GAs are not provided mileage compensation for their work-related travel unless specified in a grant or special project. GAs should document their work-related travel for possible income tax deduction.

## **How Are GA Appointments Maintained?**

### **Evaluations**

At the end of each semester, GAs and faculty will be asked to complete evaluations. The forms are located at the end of this manual. GAs will have an opportunity to evaluate each faculty member to whom they were assigned. The faculty members will have the same opportunity to evaluate the GAs. Evaluations will be taken into consideration for rehire and termination. Fall GAs will continue in the spring if they receive acceptable performance evaluations and funding is available.

### **Termination Procedures**

GA's serve at-will, and can be terminated at any time.

### **Grievances**

If a GA has concerns about any matters related to working for individual faculty members, the GA may present a case to the College Doctoral Committee or the Doctoral Program Director. Concerns about sexual harassment, discrimination, and inappropriate behavior may also be brought to the Affirmative Action Office on campus. These issues may also be taken to off-campus organizations, including the Nevada Equal Rights Commission (NERC), Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

## **General Information**

### **Office Space, Equipment, and Supplies**

Office supplies are available through the program office associated with your duties. These supplies may not be used for personal or academic work. If supplies for particular items are running low or special items are needed, notify the office manager immediately so orders may be placed for new supplies.

All GAs will be assigned a desk and will have access to a computer. Keys for access to spaces where GA duties are performed will be issued at the beginning of the year. Access to the building after hours may be arranged through the program office manager.

From a campus phone, you can contact another on-campus number by dialing the last five digits of the number (do not dial "9" for an outside line). Local calls can be made from on-campus phones by dialing "9." Long distance calls cannot be made without a personally assigned access number. If your GA work requires you to make long distance calls, get approval through the faculty member you are working for.

GAs will not be given their own personal copy codes. When making copies, please use the copy code of your supervisor. In addition, GAs may not use program or college equipment and supplies for printing that is not related to GA duties.

### **Intra-Campus/Inter-School Mail**

Outgoing mailboxes are located in the various program office areas. Intra-campus mail should have the mail stop number clearly marked on it. Mail going to Washoe County schools should have the person's name, the school or department, and WCSD/190 circled in red on the envelope. Mail can be sent to UNR from WCSD in the same manner. The mail stop for each program is different, so check with the office manager. U.S. mail must have the proper postage or be sent in a program or college envelope with a typed address.

### **Learning and Resource Center (LRC)**

The Learning and Resource Center is located on the first floor of the College of Education. Students and staff can check out books, instructional materials, audio/visual equipment, and other resources from the LRC.

Instructors may also put items on reserve for their students. The LRC has a number of computers for conducting searches of the LRC's materials and for previewing selected educational software. The LRC includes a design lab with resources for digital video editing, transfer of digital video to different media, and design stations for multimedia computer projects. Their graphics room provides access to equipment for laminating, binding, lettering, spray mounting, color copies, and other graphics resources. Use of the equipment is free for students but students must pay for materials. The LRC may also be used for conferences with students if a program-area conference room is not available.

YES NO copies made this month (if yes is checked, then copy log must be attached to time sheet)

YES NO copy log is attached

### COE Graduate Assistant Time Sheet

Name:

Month & Year:

Week-1

Task	Hours Needed	Professor	Date Completed

Name:

Month:

Week-2

Task	Hours Needed	Professor	Date Completed

Name:

Month:

Week-3

Task	Hours Needed	Professor	Date Completed

Name:

Month:

Week-4

Task	Hours Needed	Professor	Date Completed

Signature(s) from supervising professor(s): \_\_\_\_\_

## Faculty Feedback on Graduate Assistant

Name of GA \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate this GA in terms of the following:

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Is available for work					
Performs tasks as assigned					
Completes assignments on time					
Returns communications					
Clarifies misunderstandings					
Produces work of appropriate quality					
Maintains appropriate professional relationships					

Will the work you have assigned this GA carry over to the next semester? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please describe:

Please describe the type of work you assigned to this GA in the last semester (Please note: State-supported GAs are expected to work on projects related to the teaching mission of the college)

Please explain any ratings of Sometimes, Seldom, or Never. Also note any other comments here:

Overall evaluation (check one):      \_\_\_\_\_ Excellent

\_\_\_\_\_ Commendable

\_\_\_\_\_ Satisfactory

\_\_\_\_\_ Unsatisfactory (recommend termination)

Would you like to continue to work with this GA next term?     Yes     No

Faculty member \_\_\_\_\_

**Graduate Assistant Feedback on Faculty**  
**College of Education**

Faculty Name \_\_\_\_\_ GA Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Please use a separate form for each faculty member for whom you did assistantship work.*

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Kept you informed of needs & schedule					
Gave work appropriate to your skills					
Helped you develop new skills					
Gave you appropriate feedback					
Respected your time and commitments					
Communicated clearly and openly					

Please explain any ratings of Sometimes, Seldom, or Never. Also note any other comments here:

Describe the types of work you did for this faculty member:

***We cannot guarantee assistantships will continue from year to year, but we will try to support as many students as possible.***

Would you like to continue your assistantship next term?       Yes       No

Would you like to work with this faculty member next term?       Yes       No



## College of Education Graduate Assistant Requirements for Confidentiality and Professionalism

Graduate Assistants (GAs) in the College of Education must know and follow the university policy observing the confidentiality of student records in conformity with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Graduate assistants are often in a privileged position to grade student work, view student records, or overhear faculty discussions regarding students. Consequently GAs will be held to a high standard of professional behavior.

The College of Education requires graduate assistants to acknowledge that they have read the university policy on FERPA, available at [http://www.unr.edu/Documents/student-services/student-services/enrollment/beyond\\_ferpa.pdf](http://www.unr.edu/Documents/student-services/student-services/enrollment/beyond_ferpa.pdf). FERPA training will be required once hired as a GA. In addition, GAs must agree to the following list of professional behaviors developed by the college:

1. Student work and the grades assigned to student work will not be shared with others (including other GAs) unassociated with the course or program.
  2. Grades cannot be posted in any manner. Communication of grades can be facilitated through WebCampus, or by asking students to provide stamped, self-addressed envelopes.
  3. Graded work must be returned directly to the specific student(s) who submitted the work and cannot be left for general pick-up where others will view it. Work should be maintained for a reasonable amount of time after the end of the semester before being discarded.
  4. Students' telephone numbers, addresses, or email addresses should not be shared or posted without the permission of the student. Students' Social Security numbers should never be shared or posted under any circumstances.
  5. GAs may have access to information that is not related to their specific assignments. For example, information may come from overhearing conversations or seeing documents such as those from shared printers, fax machines, or copy machines. This information should be considered confidential and should not be repeated, reproduced or shared with anyone.
  6. GAs with concerns about difficult students or student issues should seek guidance from a faculty mentor who is directly involved in the relevant program or with the Associate Dean responsible for graduate study. Concerns should not be shared with other GAs. The College of Education has a referral process for significant student issues (student dispositions referral).
  7. Access to copying and office supplies are for work assignments for the college. GAs may NOT use the copy machines for personal or class work. Faculty who assign GAs to reproduce materials are responsible for any infringement of copyright. Disciplinary action will be taken against any GAs who use college resources to copy textbooks for their own use.
  8. Telephones and computers in GA office areas are available for personal and professional use. However, no long distance calls may be made without authorization and GAs must adhere to university policy regarding installation or downloading of software, music, videos or other media.
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I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the University of Nevada, Reno FERPA policy and the professional behaviors required by the College of Education. I will seek clarification if I am unsure of any actions constitute unprofessional behavior or that might compromise student privacy. I realize that any violation of this policy will jeopardize my employment.

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Signature of Graduate Student

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Date