

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURAL CENTER

AG CENTER PS-48
Version: 0

Effective Date: March 15, 2012

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

1. Overview

The purpose of this policy is to establish parameters, pay and other matters relative to graduate assistantships in the LSU Agricultural Center. Persons holding AgCenter graduate assistantships have a relationship with both the AgCenter campus and the LSU and A&M campus. The person's graduate assistantship constitutes an employment contract between the individual and the AgCenter and as such, matters relative to their employment contract are governed by AgCenter policies. However, to hold a graduate assistantship, the individual must be a graduate student of the LSU and A&M campus and meet certain academic criteria governed by LSU and A&M campus policies. The following specific issues will be governed by LSU and A&M policies: tuition and fees, eligibility matters for graduate assistantships related to enrollment and acceptability of the academic record.

2. Definitions

Graduate assistantship appointments are part-time employee-employer contracts between full-time graduate students and the AgCenter. As a result, the graduate assistant is obligated to fulfill assigned duties for the specified amount of time and is entitled to compensation within the range established by the AgCenter.

Graduate assistant funding the AgCenter falls under one of the following categories:

- a. Research which involves assisting in conducting or supporting research activities
- b. Extension which involves assisting in conducting or supporting extension activities

Units employing graduate assistants are responsible for the graduate assistantship program in all of its dimensions, including appointments, stipend amounts, work assignments, job descriptions, and evaluations.

Graduate assistantship stipends will be based on the scale shown in the Appendix. These rates are based on a fiscal year at 50% effort. Rates are pro-rated for other appointment assignments. Differences in pay rates should be based on:

- a. The qualifications of the individual appointed
- b. The amount and/or scope of the work required
- c. Market considerations

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Graduate assistant fees and payment processes including residency issues are based on the policies of the LSU and A&M campus. The AgCenter's commitment under this policy is for payment of the graduate assistantship stipend only.

3. Qualifications

A student must be admitted to the Graduate School and be registered as a full-time graduate student to qualify for an assistantship.

4. Workload

The graduate assistantship should support the educational experience of the graduate assistant and should be related to the student's graduate program. Any proposed appointment to duties unrelated to the student's academic work must be requested in writing by the unit head to the appropriate Vice Chancellor.

Graduate assistants are contractually required to devote full-time to their graduate programs and to the responsibilities of their graduate assistantships. A graduate assistant may accept additional employment only with the approval of the chair of the student's department and the appropriate vice chancellor.

Graduate assistants are primarily students and their appointments may not exceed 50% of full-time effort (that is, twenty hours per week) without the approval of the appropriate vice chancellor. The percentages at which graduate assistants are appointed should be calculated on the basis of 100% equaling 40 hours per week. Graduate students are obligated to fulfill hourly work requirements based on their percent appointment as described in their job description.

5. Appointments

Units are responsible for initiating assistantship offers to eligible graduate students. The offer of appointment, once accepted, becomes a formal contract between the student and the appointing unit.

Appointing units must maintain current records on all graduate assistants. Each graduate assistant file should include the following:

- a. One copy of the letter of appointment signed by the student
- b. One copy of the job description of the position to which the assistant is being appointed; signed and dated by the student to indicate that she or he has received a copy; and
- c. One copy of a performance evaluation signed by both the student and the evaluator, covering each previous period of appointment for all reappointments.

Tentative offers of graduate assistantships by departmental representatives to persons who have applied to the Graduate School, but have not yet been admitted, must clearly state the tentative nature of the offer and the condition that the applicant be accepted for regular admission to the Graduate School.

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All offers of graduate assistantships must include the following paragraph:

Your appointment will be for a _____ month period beginning _____ (date), may be renewed, and is contingent on your being a student in good standing in the Graduate School. A student on academic probation is not in good standing. While you hold a graduate assistantship or fellowship, you are expected to devote full time to your graduate program and the responsibilities of your graduate assistantship. The conditions of your employment as a graduate assistant include: (1) adequate performance of assistantship duties and (2) satisfactory progress toward your degree. The term satisfactory progress includes, but is not limited to, maintaining a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0, taking and passing examinations on schedule, and, if applicable, working on your thesis or dissertation in a manner that meets the approval of your major professor; satisfactory progress toward the degree will be evaluated by appropriate graduate faculty of the degree program in which you are enrolled. Your performance in your assistantship duties will be evaluated in the context of a written job description; the chair or head of the department in which you are employed will be the final authority for judging performance of duties.

Units employing international students must also state in the letter of appointment that the international student must meet current language requirements by the end of the first year or risk losing the assistantship.

Graduate assistantships are always subject to availability of funds, but units will generally provide assistantships for one year at a time. Further, though funding cannot be guaranteed, units will have as a goal making funding available for the duration of the student's program provided the student is adequately performing assistantship duties and is making satisfactory progress toward his/her degree.

LSU is a member of the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) in the United States and therefore must also include a copy of the following resolution with all letters of appointment:

Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellow, Trainees, and Assistants

Acceptance of an offer of financial support (such as graduate scholarship, fellowship, traineeship, or assistantship) for the next academic year by a prospective or enrolled graduate student completes an agreement that both student and graduate school expect to honor. In that context, the conditions affecting such offers and their acceptance must be defined carefully and understood by all parties.

Students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support prior to April 15; earlier deadlines for acceptance of such offers violate the intent of this Resolution. In those instances in which a student accepts an offer before April 15, and subsequently desires to withdraw that acceptance, the student may submit in writing a resignation of the appointment at any time through April 15. However, an acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student not to accept another offer without first obtaining a written release from the institution to which a commitment has been made. Similarly, an offer by an institution after April 15 is conditional on presentation by the

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student of the written release from any previously accepted offer. It is further agreed by the institutions and organizations subscribing to the above Resolution that a copy of this Resolution should accompany every scholarship, fellowship, traineeship, and assistantship offer.

Graduate assistantships terminate when an assistant no longer meets Graduate School assistantship eligibility requirements or the graduate assistantship is not renewed.

6. Evaluation

Employing units are responsible for providing each graduate assistant with an annual written evaluation. This evaluation must be reviewed by the graduate assistant and one signed copy must be placed in the student's unit file. If an evaluation form is used, a sample must be submitted to the Graduate School, the appropriate College, and the AgCenter HRM Office; when more than one evaluation form is used, copies of each type must be on file.

7. Miscellaneous

Grievances involving the issues related to the student's employment as a graduate assistant in the AgCenter will be addressed under the AgCenter grievance policy. Issues related to grades, admission, and other student matters will be addressed through applicable LSU and A&M policies.