



APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

WILLIAMS SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Graduate
Assistant
Handbook
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General Information

Much like our faculty and staff, graduate assistants (GAs) are a vital part of life at Appalachian and play an important role in meeting our institution's mission. There are many aspects to training, managing, and monitoring their work, and faculty or staff members who supervise them are important to their success. The assistantship not only enables the student to complete their program of study in a timely fashion, but also affords the opportunity to be involved in full-time study at the university. Students enliven the academic environment of the university by setting high standards for their fellow students and encouraging the best from their professors.

Our programs of study aim to provide students with a variety of opportunities for professional and scholarly development. Since graduate assistantships give students an opportunity to gain practical experience in teaching, research, or academic service under the guidance of a faculty member or institutional supervisor, these experiences can be a significant and challenging avenue to reinforce and enhance a student's professional and academic development. *Thus, service as a GA presents a dual challenge: those who hold the position are both students and employees.*

As Students—GAs are expected to concentrate on their studies under the direction of faculty or other institutional supervisors and to make satisfactory progress toward their scholarly and professional objectives. GAs are expected to perform well academically to retain assistantship status. The graduate assistantship relationship should always keep this at the forefront. *The GA workload should never become so cumbersome and time consuming that a student cannot excel in their program of study, nor should the workload cause a delay in degree completion.*

As Employees—GAs are expected to perform their assigned responsibilities and to both progress and support the work of the unit or department in which the GA is assigned. GAs should follow all the standard rules of professional conduct:

- being punctual and fulfilling the required work hours
- dressing appropriately for the work of the unit
- communicating with the supervisor and others in a professional, courteous manner
- making effective use of time while at work
- following the employment policies of the university
- completing assignments/responsibilities as given
- learning about departmental, college, or institutional regulations and following them consistently

Our graduate programs are designed to transform the individual from a student to a professional in their field of study. When a graduate assistantship is well conceived and executed, it should serve as an ideal activity to help facilitate this desired transformation.

The primary goal of the assistantship is to facilitate progress toward the graduate degree. The graduate assistantship process should not interfere or conflict with the student's educational objective. Since GAs play an important role in the educational and work activities of the university, they should be given assignments and supervision that will help them to grow academically and professionally. In that, their graduate studies and assistantship responsibilities should reinforce each other. Research projects, when possible, should work in concert with their

thesis or dissertation. Teaching assignments should give GAs greater insight into the content of their chosen area of study. Service responsibilities should provide an environment in which the GA learns more about working in a professional space.

The Cratis D. Williams School of Graduate Studies is the main administrative authority over GAs at Appalachian State University. All matters pertaining to GA appointments are handled by the Graduate School. In certain instances, we may consult with the Office of General Counsel, Human Resource Diversity Services, and/or the Provost's Office to gather information pertaining specifically to any appeals or complaints rendered on behalf of graduate assistants, faculty, or institutional supervisors regarding complaints, issues, or concerns they have about a graduate assistantship appointment.

This guide will serve to answer some employment questions, explain the required forms/procedures, and offer helpful supervision hints.

Employment Information

Affordable Care Act

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) became effective January 1, 2014. The law is complex and has an impact on both employers and individuals. Employees that average 30 or more hours a week or 130 or more hours a month for 3 consecutive months or more will be eligible for employer-paid healthcare coverage. The ACA does not exempt students who are employees of the university; although, there is an exemption for hours worked by students under federal or state work-study programs.

The Cratis D. Williams School of Graduate Studies mandates that graduate assistants cannot work more than 20 hours per week without specific written or electronic pre-approval from the Associate Dean of the Graduate School. Individual departments that employ students for more than 20 hours will be financially responsible for funding health insurance if the student is eligible under the ACA.

International Graduate Assistants are mandated by Federal Law to a maximum of 20 hours of work per week. While domestic students can exceed the 20-hour rule with a combination of the GA appointment and hourly student employment, this is not the case for International GAs. *International GAs cannot work more than an average of 20 hours per week.* The twenty (20) hour work week is also tied to the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Nepotism

No one shall be employed at Appalachian if their employment causes them to supervise an immediate family member or have influence over an immediate family member's employment, promotion, salary administration, or other related management or personnel considerations. Nepotism policies prohibit immediate family members of student employees from supervising them.

Worksite Safety

All student workers are considered employees. Employers must provide a safe working environment. Any necessary safety equipment and training should be provided by the employer. This is particularly important in laboratories, etc.

Assistantship Pay Rate

The Graduate School sets the minimum stipend amount for GAs. The minimum stipend for 20 hours per week for 600 hours is \$9500/ for students. The minimum stipend in STEM fields is \$10,500. Departments may determine their pay levels, but they must at least provide the minimum rates noted above. The minimum hourly rate for an administrative assistant is \$15.83 per hour. Departments should review budgets and determine pay based upon job requirements, available funds, and the student's qualifications. Supervisors must monitor student hours worked and ensure that they are not working more hours than approved. **It is the individual department's responsibility to track hours regardless of their funding source to avoid exceeding an allocation.**

Eligibility

Assistantships may only be awarded to graduate students who have been admitted without provision to the School of Graduate Studies under the "Regular" degree admission classification. Provisional degree or non-degree admits are **not eligible** to hold a graduate assistantship. Students must be full-time, degree-seeking students enrolled for the requisite number of hours, remain in good academic standing and maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0. If an Incomplete (I) grade is received, the graduate assistant must remove the "I" during the following semester to maintain their graduate assistantship.

Graduate Assistants must be registered for a minimum of 9 credit hours of course work for the Fall or Spring semester within the program of study throughout the period of the assistantship. Summer Sessions I or II together require a minimum of 2 credit hours, and the student must be registered concurrent with, or before, the term in which they hold an assistantship.

Assistantships are normally available during the Fall and Spring semesters. The standard starting date for a graduate assistant shall be the first day of classes for administrative positions or the 16th of the month for all others. The assistantship runs for 15 weeks total. The standard ending date shall be the last day of final exams or the 15th of the month. Graduate assistants may work a maximum 20 hours per week.

Assistantships are granted to provide an opportunity for graduate students to complete their degree in a timely manner. This is defined by a student progressing normally to degree completion based upon the standards set by the various graduate programs at Appalachian State University. Normal progression to degree completion will vary by discipline and level of degree.

To this end, GAs must meet full programmatic credit hour requirements during the semester in which the GA appointment is held to maintain a graduate assistantship. The specific graduate credit hour load requirement in each semester will be defined by the program as the GA progresses through the various components of their program of study. For instance, during regular course work, a GA may need to be enrolled in nine (9) graduate credit hours in each semester. However, a GA may take as little as one (1) credit hour IF it is within the same semester that the GA is graduating AND if they have applied for graduation.

Types of Graduate Assistantships

Assistantships constitute employment at Appalachian. There are six different types of assistantship positions available:

- **Graduate Teaching Faculty Associate (GTFA)**—Works with a faculty member to assist in the preparation or delivery of class/lab instruction and has faculty of record status and the primary responsibility of teaching a course. A graduate student must meet additional academic criteria to maintain GTFA status. A GTFA is not required to submit a web time entry electronic timesheet because pay is granted in equal stipend payments. However, the supervisor is required to track GTFA work hours and complete an evaluation at the end of each term. See Attachment 1.
- **Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)**—Works with a faculty member to assist in the preparation or delivery of class/lab instruction, grading, etc. A GTA is not required to submit a web time entry electronic time sheet because pay is granted in equal stipend payments. However, the supervisor is required to track GTA work hours and complete an evaluation at the end of each term. See Attachment 1.
- **Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)**—Duties include research related tasks such as field work, lab work, theses/dissertations, etc. A GRA is not required to submit a web time entry electronic time sheet because pay is granted in equal stipend payments. However, the supervisor is required to track GRA work hours.
- **Graduate Research Assistant Mentee (GRAM)**—These awards are highly competitive and given to a faculty member, who in turn, hires the graduate assistant to work closely with a faculty member on a research project. The award is designed to fund the assistantship position for up to two years (four semesters), but it can be granted to different students each year if needed. A new GRAM assistantship form must be submitted each academic year. A student does not need to be identified prior to applying for a GRAM award. This type of assistantship is always Graduate School funded. A GRAM is not required to submit a web time entry electronic time sheet because pay is granted in equal stipend payments. However, the supervisor is required to track GRAM work hours.
- **Graduate Administrative Assistant (GAA)**—Job duties include the planning and implementation of events, the monitoring of social media accounts, and/or administrative or clerical tasks, often in a department office. The supervisor must track hours, and the student **MUST** submit a web time entry electronic timesheet every two weeks.

Timesheets

An important aspect of the ACA is that all graduate assistants are considered student employees. Therefore, all students must keep regular timesheets. Supervisors must review the hours submitted and approve them. For **GAA** positions, students **MUST** also submit hours via web time entry every two weeks through Banner Self Service. The supervisor and the student should check **BEFORE** the first timesheet due date that a web time entry timesheet is available in Self Service.

The screenshot shows a digital timesheet interface. At the top, there's a header with days of the week: SUNDAY, MONDAY, TUESDAY, and WEDNESDAY. Below this, a row of dates is displayed: 17 (Sunday), 18 (Monday), 19 (Tuesday), and 20 (Wednesday). The date 18 is highlighted in a dark blue box. Below the calendar, there's a section for entering time. It includes a dropdown menu for 'Earn Code' with 'REG-Regular Pay Hours' selected, and a text input field for 'Hours*'. To the right of these fields is a '+ Add Earn Code' button.

If one is not available, contact the Graduate School so corrective action can be taken immediately. Do not project future hours when submitting or approving time. The paper timesheet is available at the end of this guide—see Attachment 2. **All other positions are paid a stipend amount semi-monthly and are not required to submit an electronic timesheet.**

It is important to define the graduate assistant position and to select the appropriate form to begin the graduate assistant hiring process. Once the job duties are defined, the person hiring (or the person submitting the form for the supervisor) must go to the Williams School of Graduate Studies website “Forms” page <https://graduate.appstate.edu/forms> and select the Assistantship Forms Request section as seen in the image below.

Graduate Assistantship Form Request Steps

(Note: The form is integrated with Banner and is a series of pull-down selection menus). To proceed, the student must be a full time, degree-seeking, graduate student who is enrolled in the prerequisite number of graduate hours (9 or 1 and applied to graduate, if in the last semester).

1. Select the [Request to Hire Graduate Assistant](#) link found in the Assistantship Appointment Forms section on the [Forms](#) page of the Graduate School website. Only faculty or staff can access and use the form via University SSO.
2. All fields are required for submittal. Begin with the student Banner ID. All requirements will be automatically checked in Banner, and if the student is eligible, the last and first name will populate. Check that the correct student is selected and select “Go.”
3. The screen will populate with student information and terms of employment. If you receive an error message, you cannot proceed.
4. Select either term or both if the student is working the full academic year starting in August. Appointment forms for an Academic Year can only be selected in the fall term. Please note that summer term contracts are handled differently. Once a term is selected, choose the correct position type from the dropdown menu. For a brief description of the types of positions available, select the “More Info” icon.
5. Next, select the Timesheet Organization code. Select the number or department name where the student will be working. Please be careful to select the correct department.
6. Enter the supervisor’s username and validate in Banner. The form will route via

- DocuSign, so the username must be correct for signature routing.
7. Please provide a brief but thorough description of the student's job description. If teaching, provide the course(s), etc. The description of duties should match the type of form selected in number four.
 8. Select the funding source of the graduate assistantship: **Graduate School** or **Other** if funded by the department, a grant, etc. When Graduate School is selected, the funding information below will be correctly populated. If Other is selected, **complete** funding information is needed or all fields can be left blank with a FOAP contact if another office is providing funding. Do not send partially completed and then also complete a FOAP contact.
 9. Select a start date on the calendar. The ideal start date is always the first day of the current payroll period. The first date of payroll in August and January is the 16th. Select the last day of classes or the 15th of the month (December or May) as the end date.
 10. Select the number of hours per week that the student will be working. Please note that the maximum is 20.
 11. Enter the **total** earnable amount for the employment period.
 12. Enter the hourly rate only if the position is a GAA. The hourly rate can be calculated by dividing the total number of hours a student can work by the total amount awarded. Total number of hours equals the hours per week x the number of weeks (15 for each academic semester or 5 for each summer session).
 13. FOAP (Fund/Org Code/Account/Position) information must be provided if the Graduate School is not funding the position. If another office is paying outside of your department, provide the username of the FOAP Contact person, i.e., Business Officer in your Dean's Office, etc. and validate.
 14. The Preparer (person submitting the "Request to Hire") will populate based on the SSO login.
 15. The "Head of Hiring Unit," is usually the department chairperson but can be a director, etc., depending upon the structure of the hiring unit.
 16. Enter the "Dean or Dean's Designee" (each college should provide the person to enter here, usually it is the Business Officer but contact that office if unsure). Please do not just add the Dean's Name—check who is responsible for signing.

When the form is complete, preview the entire form before selecting submit. A submission confirmation will be emailed to the form preparer that will include the student's name and the Request ID number.

If any required fields are left blank in the form, the request cannot be submitted. If a confirmation email is not received, the request did not go through. The confirmation email will be from no-reply@appstate.edu.

Within 24 to 48 business hours, you will receive an email from either: Teresa Greene, greenetm1@appstate.edu (GRA, GAA or GRAM), or Monica Rose, rosemd@appstate.edu (GTFA or GTA), in the Graduate School via DocuSign asking you to "Please Sign this Graduate XX Appointment Form."

This DocuSign form is the actual Assistantship Appointment form containing all employment conditions of the GA and is first received by the Preparer to start the process.

Open the DocuSign email to review the document, sign, and send to the student to sign next. Once the student signs, it will route for all the other signatures based on the individuals entered

on the request. The Preparer will receive an email when the document is complete with an Adobe PDF attachment of the Appointment form that can be downloaded and saved.

The system will check to see if the student has been employed before or has had a break in service over 365 days. If the student is considered a new employee, a copy of the contract is copied to the Office of Human Resources for the onboarding process to begin.

Human Resources Requirements

While the Williams School of Graduate Studies processes assistantship forms, the Office of Human Resources processes all other employment documents.

If the student is a new hire or has had a break in service over 365 days, the completed appointment form will be sent to the Office of Human Resources. Please be sure to tell your **new** GAs to follow the I9Anywhere link provided in the confirmation email they will receive upon signing the DocuSign. It is very important for students to work directly with HR to complete the necessary paperwork to comply with all employment policies and procedures.

Failure to complete necessary employment forms with the Office of Human Resources will result in the termination of the position. The Office of Human Resources will follow up with both the student and the supervisor via email if the process is not completed.

Change or Termination Information

The process to change or terminate a position is similar to creating an appointment. Begin at the Graduate School website Forms page. Under the section entitled, Assistantship Appointment Forms, select the link, "Assistantship Change or Termination Form Request."

The original Preparer must also initiate a Change or Termination Request, as the system tracks who submitted the original request. The page will display a list of every submission made by the Preparer. From this menu, select the position that needs to be changed or terminated.

The screen displays all requests submitted, the Request ID, the form type, and the status. Find the correct student contract, click on the Request ID, and choose Change or Termination.

Please pay attention to dates, types, etc. if you have more than one request for the same student, i.e., a summer position and a fall.

If a change is needed, provide the date of the change and a detailed explanation of what changes are needed. Please be very clear and concise. When a change is requested for pay or dates, a new DocuSign document will be routed for signature.

If a position is being terminated because the student has left employment, select "Terminate" instead. Provide the total hours completed (for payroll purposes), the date of termination, and a clear and concise explanation of why the termination is requested. Please remember to send a Termination form when a student leaves a position as the payment process **MUST** be stopped or

the student will continue to receive pay and will be required to return it to the University!

Supervision Information

Supervisor Suggestions

Supervisors train and oversee student work and performance while complying with Appalachian policies and procedures. Supervisors should provide a positive, professional work setting for students and staff. They must also verify hours worked and maintain a record for each student. The nepotism policy prohibits supervisors from overseeing employees who are immediate family members.

An excellent supervisor needs strengths in several areas. The National Student Employment Association developed several guidelines for working with student employees and are as follows:

- **Be an Example.** Model strong work habits through efficient, dedicated work practices. Let your own approach be an example from which students can learn.
- **Be Flexible.** Workers are students first and employees second. Though it is important to have high standards on the job, it is also important to be flexible to accommodate academic obligations.
- **Communicate Expectations.** Explain standards and expectations to your graduate student employees. Don't assume students already know them, though they may seem obvious to you.
- **Give Feedback Frequently.** Provide consistent and appropriate evaluations to your student employees. Students, like all employees, benefit from a response to their job performance, but your evaluations should be phrased in positive language. Correct and encourage.
- **Be Fair.** Supervisors who are too lenient are not doing students any favors. Student jobs are real jobs. Remember to treat student employees as you would like to be treated.
- **Train, Train, Train.** Instruct your students in key work skills, attitude, and habits. These include perseverance, time management, phone etiquette, continuous improvement practices, and professional solutions for difficult situations. This commonsense approach leads to success.
- **Be a Team Player.** Develop and nurture the contributions of each staff member. Take a global perspective.
- **Give Recognition.** When you see a student giving extra effort or persevering through difficulties, acknowledge it in front of staff and peers. Everyone needs to feel appreciated and that includes student employees.
- **Share the Vision.** Have regular meetings with your student employees and let them know how their work fits into the larger purpose of the department and institution. Purposeful work is meaningful work.
- **Be an Educator.** Ask yourself how you can contribute to the education of your graduate student employees.

Supervisory Role. The supervisor is vital to a successful work setting. The supervisor's management allows the department to operate and to accomplish its daily and long-term goals. At all times the supervisor must show concern for the GA's development as a student and worker. The best supervisors treat students as individuals and understand that these employees have other interests and responsibilities. The GA supervisor should make the GA's work

interesting, significant, and worthwhile.

Planning For Supervision. The supervisor must delegate work, yet there is often the temptation to give out assignments in small portions because a student only has a few hours to work. Students and supervisors can benefit from long-range planning whereby supervisors assign the task as well as the continuing responsibility for its completion. Planning requires homework by the supervisor and ensures that the student has relevant and compelling tasks during work hours.

Supervisor Responsibilities

Below are some responsibilities/duties that are agreed upon when becoming a supervisor of a graduate assistant student employee:

- Compose a concise but detailed job description(s) for the Assistantship form that reflects what work the student employee will actually perform.
- Initiate the appropriate form for the job duties from the School of Graduate Studies website.
- Ensure that a completed Appointment Form with correct information has been filed with Graduate School.
- Ensure that new hires complete all new employee paperwork with the Office of Human Resources and that they add an address via Self Service per Attachment 3.
- Check that a web time entry timesheet is available to the GAA BEFORE the first pay period ends, so there is time to take corrective action before a manual paycheck is required.
- Provide training and instruction about responsibilities.
- Make sure the employee has a workspace.
- Be certain timesheets are accurate before approving them in Banner.
- Keep employee work records for auditing purposes.
- Track all hours and pay for totals on a regular basis.
- Notify the Graduate School immediately if a student resigns, changes positions, or leaves the University—we have no way of knowing unless you tell us!
- Work with the student to resolve any issues as they relate to work performance, assigned tasks, attendance, etc., and if not quickly and easily resolved, bring your department Graduate Program Director into the conversations, so they may contact the Graduate School for support and guidance.

Evaluating Graduate Assistant Student Employee Performance

After training concludes, supervisors should periodically check with student employees to make sure they are meeting the department or agency's expectations. Regular conversations, as often as every day, may include praise or criticism. Shortcomings and problems need immediate attention, but satisfactory and good work should also be praised. Work habits, both good and bad, deserve a timely response. Remember, understanding success and making improvements will benefit the student long-term.

Communicating With Students

Communication is vital at work. Supervisors must clearly explain their expectations for assignments and responsibilities.

- Reinforce instructions. Tasks should be explained and demonstrated when they are assigned.
- Recognize differences. Supervisors must use appropriate language or visuals to convey instructions. Students have different abilities, perspectives, cultural backgrounds, and weaknesses. Be sure your instructions are understood.
- Emphasize non-verbal communication. Your ideas and feelings are as important as the words, demonstrations, and methods you use.

We expect student employees to meet job expectations just as they would in the professional world. Because criticism is difficult to give and to receive, it is important to follow professional guidelines. Evaluations and requests for improvement will be more effective when delivered in a structured context. In return, you will receive a more positive response from students.

Here are some basic guidelines:

- **Be specific.** What are the actual examples of poor performance? What can be done to improve quality?
- **Maintain privacy.** Good work may deserve praise in front of other students or employees, but criticism should never be made within earshot of others.
- **Be positive.** When discussing performance problems with a student, start on a positive note. Most people perform at least some aspect of their work satisfactorily, so find a strong point for praise and mention it first. Praise the student's positive abilities and then explain what needs improvement. When criticism is presented in a supportive way, students will realize you are trying to help and are more likely to listen and incorporate your guidance.
- **Be proactive.** Students may know they are falling short. If you fail to react to unacceptable work, you may lose the respect of the student, as well as that of other workers in the department. Your goal is to provide a good setting for all students to flourish.
- **Be Sensitive.** People are different and have varied production and proficiency levels. Differences in abilities and aptitudes should be considered with each student's evaluation.

The long-term goal of any evaluation is not just grading the work. It is a method of helping the student grow while offering a broader work and educational experience.

Some student employee evaluations are required, not just encouraged. If the graduate assistantship is a GTFA or a GTA, an evaluation **MUST** be completed at the end of each term. The required form can be found online at <https://graduate.appstate.edu/about-us/forms>.

Disciplinary Reports and Termination

Employers are encouraged to give positive responses to students, but sometimes a graduate assistant student employee fails to meet your expectations for attendance, punctuality, job performance, or attitude. In these cases, you must explain your concerns to the employee and set goals for improvement. In some cases, progressive disciplinary action will be needed. This course of action is recommended when circumstances do not improve. The goal of disciplinary action is to improve performance and correct problems. Your response should be the same as for a regular, full-time employee. Contact the Associate Dean of the Graduate School for assistance and to discuss any performance issues with a student.

Practical Tips for Responding to Performance Shortfalls

- Look for common ground.
- Work together to find solutions.
- Reinforce abilities and achievements.
- Provide examples of better results.
- Provide direction for achieving better results.
- Respect the employee's knowledge and judgment.
- Engage the student rather than presuming knowledge of the situation.
- Encourage employees to find solutions.

Student Responsibilities

Graduate assistant student employees should consider their Appalachian job assignment as a serious commitment. When hired for a position, the student becomes a member of a department or team, and supervisors should convey such information to the student. A supervisor may reasonably expect students to

- report on time and ready
- avoid personal matters on the job
- have a positive attitude and a willingness to complete assignments
- dress appropriately
- notify a supervisor of schedule changes
- keep an accurate record of hours worked
- submit the web-based time entry form in Banner Self-Service ON TIME if a GAA
- communicate with each supervisor if employed in more than one position
- notify supervisor of any job-related accident
- stay within the appropriate number of hours per week and within the total salary allocation
- bring any issues to the attention of the immediate supervisor (or if the issue is with the supervisor, to the attention of the Graduate Program Director)

Grievance Procedures

Informal Grievance Procedure

The GA must initially seek to resolve the complaint or disagreement by informal means. The Associate Dean of the School of Graduate Studies is available for consultation, not only with the GA but also with the supervisor, to help resolve any problems. Resolutions of complaints and disagreements at the informal level are strongly encouraged.

Due to time constraints on the overall grievance procedure, the informal procedure should be pursued promptly. Should a formal grievance be deemed necessary, the informal procedure should be limited to no more than ten working days from when the occurrence of the grievance was first noted.

Formal Grievance Procedure

If resolution by informal means fails, the GA may then initiate the formal grievance procedure. The formal grievance must be filed within 30 calendar days of the date when the occurrence of such grievance is first noted (or should have been noted) by the GA.

Grievance Procedures—Two principles must be followed during the grievance procedure:

- *The first is Preponderance of Evidence.* If a GA believes that a faculty member or other person has acted inappropriately, then that GA must gather sufficient evidence which may be in the form of emails, letters, or other forms of written documentation.
- *The second principle is Without Retaliation.* At no time during the process should a faculty member or other person take action that could be considered retaliation against the GA who has submitted the grievance.

Procedure—Procedure is defined as the process of resolution in which the graduate student contacts the faculty/staff/administrator who has committed the grievance, and if needed, additional personnel up to the level of the GA's college dean to resolve the situation.

STEP 1—This is initially covered through the Informal Grievance Process. Failure of the informal process can begin the formal process in which the GA sends an email or makes contact in writing and asks the faculty member/staff/administrator to cease engaging in the behavior(s) in question.

STEP 2—If the behavior of the faculty/staff/ administrator persists, then the GA should notify the department head of the faculty member or the immediate supervisor of the staff/administrator. The GA will provide the supervisor with a copy of the email or written correspondence noting the date of the request to desist and ask them to arbitrate the matter. The department head/immediate supervisor will notify the GA after they have spoken with the faculty member/staff/administrator within five working days.

STEP 3—If the behavior of the faculty or administrator continues after the intervention by the department head or other administrator, or the GA is not satisfied with the response from the department head, the student will contact the Dean of the College. If the GA is not satisfied at this point, the GA may ask for intervention by the Cratis D. Williams School of Graduate Studies.

Written Complaint and Formal Investigation—The Associate Vice Provost and Dean of the Cratis D. Williams School of Graduate Studies reserves the right to engage in a formal investigation. Formal investigation is defined as the process of investigation wherein the Graduate School convenes a review committee to investigate and recommend a resolution to the provost, who will pronounce the final decision.

A formal investigation is convened when the graduate assistant submits a written complaint. The Graduate School will promptly (within ten working days) designate a committee to investigate the complaint. The committee will be formed by establishing a Grievance Sub-Committee of the Graduate Committee of the Faculty Senate.

Responsibilities of the Investigating Committee—One member of this Grievance Sub-Committee will serve as the chair of the investigating committee. The Chair may consult with the relevant institutional offices to ensure the sub-committee renders a decision consistent with legal, human resources, or other institutional policies. The chair will communicate with the graduate student concerning the following:

- the manner and frequency with which the graduate student will be updated about the status of the investigation
- the need for a high level of discretion during the investigatory process
- ensuring that there is no retaliation against the GA

Normally within five working days of receipt of the assignment, the Investigating Committee will advise of and provide the faculty or administrator who is alleged to have committed the violation with:

- the manner and frequency in which the faculty member or administrator will be updated about the status of the investigation
- the need for all parties to exercise a high level of discretion during the investigatory process and the University's policy with respect to retaliation
- an opportunity to submit a written response to the complaint within five working days of notification of the complaint

Investigation—The purpose of the investigation is to gather facts. Depending upon the facts of the case, an investigation may range from a one-on-one conversation between the investigating committee and the two parties to an inquiry with multiple witness interviews. The investigating committee will produce a written finding of facts at the conclusion of the investigation.

The investigating committee decision shall be made on the "preponderance of evidence" standard. Any finding against an individual or department about grievance must be supported by a preponderance of the evidence.

Investigations should normally be completed within five working days from the date the complaint was first asserted. If this is not reasonably possible, the investigation committee should make the grievant and the faculty or administrator who is alleged to have committed the violation aware of the status of the review and provide an estimated conclusion date.

Submission of Investigative Report—Upon completion of the investigation, the Chair of the Grievance Sub-Committee shall submit the report to the Associate Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School. Upon receipt of the investigative report, the Graduate School shall review the report and submit an initial determination to the AVP and Dean that states that a violation did or did not occur. If an initial determination is that a violation did occur, then the AVP and Dean shall also submit an initial proposal stating what "prompt remedial action" the AVP and Dean considers appropriate, including potential disciplinary action. This will be done in consultation with the Provost. The Provost will assist in making the final determination as to what actions, if any, should be taken.

Notification of Decision and Appeal Process—Upon conclusion of the determination process, the complainant and respondent will receive a written copy of the decision. The faculty/staff/administrator who is alleged to have committed the violation may appeal the decision in writing, within five working days, to the Provost. The appeal must be based on (a) new facts not previously available, (b) the sanction is arbitrarily harsh or capricious, and/or (c) procedures were not followed that substantially affected the result. The Provost will render a final decision within five working days. This decision completes the university process.

General Advice to Graduate Assistants in Pursuing Grievance Procedure—It is recommended that GAs use their discretion in following these suggestions:

- maintain a diary of events to ensure a chronological record with the sequence of events surrounding the grievance is readily available
- if possible, seek to change the major advisor if the current major advisor is the person against whom the grievance was lodged
- keep copies of written communications that are involved in the grievance and any further communication from the faculty member or administrator against whom the grievance was lodged

Harassment/Discrimination

As it relates to matters of both Termination and Grievance, both parties must be considerate of issues of Harassment and Discrimination. Harassment based on protected class constitutes a violation of university policy and may also constitute a violation of civil rights laws. Such harassment will not be tolerated at Appalachian State University. It subverts the mission of the university and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Prohibited harassment includes harassment based on race, gender, age, religion, color, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, and veteran status.

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is prohibited by federal regulation. Sexual harassment in academic settings and in the employment area where Graduate Assistants are involved is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, graphic, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct may be explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a GA's academic success or employment; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct may be used as the basis for employment or academic decisions affecting the GA and the GA's total educational and/or work experience; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with a GA's employment or academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or educational environment that is severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive. GAs who are unsure or are unclear if they are facing harassment or discrimination, can (1) contact the Associate Dean of the Williams School of Graduate Studies to generally discuss their concerns; or (2) contact the Equal Opportunity and Title IX office to discuss their concerns.

Students with Disabilities

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) outlines the federal laws protecting otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination on the basis of disability. The ADA requires an employer to provide reasonable accommodation to employees and applicants for employment, unless it would be an undue hardship.

A supervisor may become aware of a student applicant's disability when scheduling an accessible interview location or when a student requests reasonable accommodations necessary to perform the employment responsibilities. The supervisor must avoid asking about a disability unless a reasonable accommodation is requested. Any questions must be limited to whether the applicant is able to perform the essential functions of the position with or without a reasonable accommodation. A supervisor need not alter essential functions of a position to accommodate a disabled applicant; in the event an applicant would be unable to perform essential functions of a position, the applicant would not be otherwise qualified for the position.

A student who claims to have a qualified disability must report it to the Office of Disability Services. This office will work with the student to gather documentation, verify the qualified disability, and identify reasonable accommodations. Any questions about student applicants or student employees with disabilities should be addressed directly to that office.

Summary

Hopefully many of the questions or concerns you have about the hiring and the supervising of graduate assistant employees have been addressed here.

Thank you for helping us to help you! With the implementation and use of an electronic hiring system, it is our hope that this process is clear and consistent for all concerned. Thank you all for everything you do for our graduate assistant employees!

Should you have any questions regarding this guide, please feel free to contact the Williams School of Graduate Studies at x2130.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How do I hire a graduate student as an assistant?

A: Go to <https://graduate.appstate.edu/forms> - Assistantship Appointment Forms

Q: How do I know what my funding source is?

A: There are three primary funding source choices: Graduate Studies allocation, department funds, or your Academic Dean's Office or another office (titled FOAP Contact in the DocuSign system).

Q: Who do I talk to in the Graduate School about assistantship requests?

A: Teresa Greene, greenetm1@appstate.edu processes GAA, GRA, and GRAM requests, and Monica Rose, rosemnd@appstate.edu processes GTFA and GTA requests.

Q: If I have fund to use but do not have a position number because I have never hired a Graduate Assistant with it before. How do I get a position number?

A: Contact the person who processes the type of position you are hiring (see previous question above) and ask them via email to create one for you.

Q: Is there an hourly minimum rate of pay? Who gets paid hourly?

A: Only GAA positions are paid hourly, and the current minimum is \$15.83.

Q: What if my student works past the end date of the contract?

A: The last day of the contract is the last day your student will have the ability to see their timesheet if a GAA. If they work past their end date, you will need to resubmit a Change request.

Q: How can I get a copy of my Assistantship request?

A: Before submission, you can "Preview" and print and after it has completed routing, a .pdf copy will be attached at the bottom of the email you receive.

Q: When I receive a GRAM award, can I hire a student for a full academic year or by terms?

A: A GRAM can be awarded for a full year by selecting both terms. Or you can select one term if hiring different students for each term. GRAMs renewed for a second year require new form submissions for that second year.

Q: How does the student submit time?

A: Payroll has asked that GAAs submit their time in Employee Self-Serve. Encourage your student not to submit their time worked through their AppalNet account.

Q: How do I change a contract?

A: Go to: <https://graduate.appstate.edu/forms> - [Assistantship Change or Termination Form Request \(link is external\)](#). Some students have more than one contract. If you submit a Change or a Terminate request, please choose the correct contract. Remember, only the person who submitted the original request can see the submissions.

Q: If I have an allocation for the Graduate School, how do I know what it is?

A: Allocations from the Graduate School are sent to the Academic Dean and that office assigns the amount to each department. Each Department Chairperson should have that information from the Associate Dean.

Q: Who do I have sign as Dean's designee?

A: Check with your Academic College Business officer for the authorized designee as it may or may not be the Dean.

SACS REQUIREMENTS FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS (GTFA/GTA)

The SACS requirements for teaching assistantships, which "enhance student understanding of the content and pedagogy of the discipline and extend faculty resources and their contribution to the teaching mission of the University," are as follows:

GTFA/GTA responsibilities

- Grading papers, setting up laboratory experiences, keeping class records, preparing instructional materials, and/or other instructional duties; and/or
- Teaching a laboratory or recitation section of a course;
- Teaching an independent section of a course.

SACS requirements for Graduate Teaching Faculty Associates or Assistants

- GTFA/GTAs who have primary responsibility for teaching a course for credit and/or for assigning final grades for such a course must have earned at least 18 graduate semester hours in their teaching discipline, be under the direct supervision of a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, receive regular in-service training and be evaluated.
- Students for whom English is a second language may be appointed as GTFA/GTAs only when the applicant's proficiency in oral and written communication indicates that the appointment is appropriate.
- GTFA/GTAs must possess a demonstrated competence in the subject matter that they will be teaching as determined by experts in the field. They should have an appreciation for the theory and practice of the subject matter as well as a developing understanding of the major themes and divisions of their field.
- GTFA/GTAs should have an appreciation for the teaching and learning enterprise acquired from their own undergraduate and graduate academic programs, as well as by means of both required and optional teacher training seminars, symposia, workshops, publications, and university staff resources. Competency to teach includes an effective command of the language of instruction, usually American English, and an appreciation for the culture of the American university classroom.
- GTFA/GTAs must be graduate students in good standing in their programs.

SM HOURLY WAGE EMPLOYEE TIME RECORD

Please complete this form in its entirety before submitting to Time Originator

Pay Period Ended _____
mm/dd/yy

Scheduled Pay Date _____
mm/dd/yy

Department Name _____
& Timesheet Organization Number _____ Position # _____

Budget Code: Fund _____ Org _____ Account _____ Program _____

Employee Type: ☐ S = Student Temporary ☐ W = Student - Work Study ☐ T = Non-Student Temporary

Use the letter representing the employee type in the blank of the earn code. (Please see above)

Employee's Banner ID _____

Employee's Name

Last First MI Suffix

Shift _____

Hourly Rate \$ _____

Date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	OR	
Date	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
Earn Code																	Sub Total
X__R																	
X__H																	
X__O																	
																	Total Hours

I certify that the above Account No., Hourly Rate, and Hours Data are correct to the best of my knowledge.

Employee Date

Date Department Head/Supervisor

This record must be kept by all Departments and is subject to audit by the Payroll Department, University, State and Federal Auditors. Retain for 2 years then transfer to University Archives for Retention.

Earn Codes

X_R = 100% of all regular hours worked not greater than 40. Per ASU workweek. (Monday 12 am thru Sunday midnight).

Including hours worked on a holiday.

X_H = All hours worked on a holiday to receive premium pay.

X_O = All overtime hours worked over 40 in an ASU workweek (Monday 2 am thru Sunday midnight).

Instructions for Updating Your Address in Employee Self-Service

You must have an updated Human Resources-Alumni Address to receive a direct deposit. If you are issued a paper check during employment, it will be mailed to this address, and your W-2 form will also be sent to this address.

How to Access Personal Information in the Employee Self-Service Portal:

Please note your AppState email address must be active to log in to self-service. Visit:

<https://appalnet.appstate.edu/>

Log into Self-Service

- Select General
- Select Personal Information (Banner 9)
- Address/Add New - Add Human Resources-Alumni Address (Type of Address), Valid From-enter today's date, and please, **DO NOT** enter a **VALID UNTIL DATE. LEAVE THIS AREA BLANK.** Click Add once you are finished.