

Principles for Employing Graduate Students at the University of Florida

Graduate students form a key, impactful part of the University of Florida's workforce. When their employment contributes directly to their degree program or professional development, a **graduate assistantship** is the preferred form of employment. Appointment as a **graduate assistant** is meant to:

- Provide financial support for the student in the form of paid employment.
- Advance the student's progress in the degree program and/or provide professional experience that will strengthen the student's career development via two paths:
 - As a teaching assistant, gaining valuable university-level teaching experience.
 - As a research assistant, gaining valuable experience in scholarly methodology that may contribute to the student's dissertation, thesis, or final project.
- Enhance the employing academic unit's human resources in exercise of its educational mission.

Eligibility

To qualify for a graduate assistantship, graduate students must be in good academic standing and properly enrolled for the required minimum of credit hours during their appointment period, as detailed online under "Registration Requirements" on this Graduate Catalog webpage: [Graduate Academic Regulations](#).

Length of Appointments

Graduate assistants may be appointed for a semester, an academic year, or a calendar year. Those appointed for an academic year may or may not be offered appointments as graduate assistants during the summer semester.

Compensation

Graduate assistants are contracted **exempt** (paid a salary) employees — unlike student assistants, who are **non-exempt** (paid an hourly wage) employees, and thus may work and be paid on an "as needed" basis.

FTE and Tuition Waivers

To be eligible for a **tuition waiver**, a graduate assistant appointment must be at least **.25 FTE** (quarter-time, 10 hours a week). Appointing academic units assume responsibility for covering tuition, either by tuition waiver authority or a transaction within UF's fiscal management systems. Appointments with lower FTE do not come with tuition waivers.

Please note: In 2018, the UF Provost's Initiative required all state-funded graduate teaching assistants to be appointed at **.50 FTE**. Effective Fall 2023, all recruited Ph.D. admittees promised state or non-state financial support must be appointed at **.50 FTE** (half-time, 20 hours a week).

Appointments more than .50 FTE are unusual, since its required work hours tends to get in the way of students focusing attention on making progress in their degree programs. Doctoral graduate assistant appointments below .50 FTE are exceptions to normal practice for which academic units must obtain, on a case by case basis, the Graduate School's approval through its [petition process](#).

Terms of Employment and Hiring Process

In addition to University of Florida policies and regulations, graduate assistant appointments are subject to a [collective bargaining agreement](#) between the **University of Florida Board of Trustees** and **Graduate Assistants United (GAU)**, the certified collective bargaining agent of graduate assistants. The process for appointing graduate assistants is detailed at this UF Human Resources webpage link: [Graduate Assistants](#).

Late Appointment

Graduate assistantships must be appointed by the start date for each semester posted in “Academic Year Appointment Calendar” memoranda emailed in January of each year to deans, department chairs, and directors and posted online here: [UF Administrative Memo](#). Approval for late appointments after those dates require a petition to the Graduate School through the week after drop/add or, beyond that deadline, to the Provost’s Office. Late appointment petitions must include an effective date for the appointment.

Other Forms of Graduate Student Employment

The fundamental preference for graduate student employment is work that supports the student’s graduate education monetarily and experientially — typically in the form of a **graduate assistantship**. However, in some circumstances, graduate students may be hired as **student assistants** — a form of employment **different and distinct** from graduate assistantships in the tasks assigned to it. They also may be employed on campus in **OPS (Other Personnel Services)** at-will, temporary jobs. The process for hiring student assistants is detailed at this UF Human Resources webpage link: [Student Assistants](#).

It is important for a hiring department to first evaluate the vacancy based on the duties being performed, then determine whether a person is eligible for that role. When evaluating duties, the hiring department should first determine if the purpose of the appointment aligns with a teaching, research, or administrative function. Then, the department should determine if the position should be treated as a Graduate Assistant, Student Assistant, or OPS role. Lastly, the department should determine if a person is eligible for that role (i.e. whether a student is enrolled for the minimum credit hours to be eligible for a GA or STAS role).

Departments that misclassify a position (regardless of intentionality) may have the appointment rejected and/or be subject to a grievance from the affected employee(s).

Examples of Graduate Student Employment

This table provides examples (not an exhaustive list) of what tasks might be part of different forms of graduate or undergraduate student employment.

Please note: A Graduate Student – General (or GA-G) would be classified as having a combination of research and teaching duties from the table below, or work-related duties applicable to their professional development in their area of specialization or field.

Teaching Assistants	Lead discussion groups Prepare a syllabus Identify reading assignments Distribute assignments Grade papers or assignments	Hold office hours with students Proctor examinations Prepare class materials and visual aids Take attendance Record questions and answers in class Providing live or recorded lectures
Research Assistants	Conduct laboratory procedures Observe/interview research participants Collect/record/review/confirm data that requires subjective analysis Manage existing data Analyze/summarize data/statistics	Write reports and draft articles Prepare poster presentations Review scientific/scholarly literature Design experiments Co-author or edit research papers
Student Assistants	Office tasks or clerical chores Run business-related errands Telephone coverage Scheduling/calendar maintenance Unit website support	Cleanliness/sanitation of lab supplies Clerical record and data entry Event coordination Residence hall supervision Food service support