



Graduate Assistantship Policies

Department of Kinesiology • Michigan State University • East Lansing MI 48824 • <http://www.education.msu.edu/kin>

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These graduate assistantship policies apply to graduate assistantship positions administered by the Department of Kinesiology (KIN). If there are discrepancies, MSU policies published in the current Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities document, the Academic Programs catalog, or the Graduate School brochure on graduate assistantships take priority. For teaching assistantships, the current Agreement between MSU and the Graduate Employees Union takes priority.

I. Types of Graduate Assistantships

- A. **KIN-administered assistantships.** KIN-administered assistantships include all assistantships funded by the Department, by units associated with the Department, or by grants and contracts awarded to faculty members in the Department. Assistantships may be categorized as teaching, research, or athletic training assignments.
 1. **Teaching assistantships** typically involve teaching skills courses in the Basic Instructional Program or teaching lecture or lab courses. Teaching assistantships may also involve instructional support activities such as academic advising or curriculum development. Any student who teaches a course as part of his/her assistantship position is considered to be a teaching assistant.
 2. **Research assistantships** may involve assisting in research laboratories or faculty-conducted, research projects.
 3. **Athletic training assistantships** typically involve providing athletic training services in high school, clinical, or university settings.
- B. **Externally-administered assistantships** are funded and administered by other units within Michigan State University or by outside agencies. Examples of externally-administered assistantships include assignments in the residence halls, Student Services, Intercollegiate Athletics, or other MSU departments.

II. Criteria for Awarding Graduate Assistantships

- A. **Academic performance**
 1. **Scholarly ability and promise.** Preference will be given to students who demonstrate exceptional scholarly ability and promise in Kinesiology as demonstrated by parameters such as grade point averages, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, and publications and presentations.
 2. **Progress toward degree completion.** Preference will be given to KIN students who are making satisfactory progress toward degree completion. Grade point averages (MSU requires a 3.00 minimum grade point average), credits earned toward the degree, absence of deferred grades in non-variable credit courses, an approved program plan, completion of comprehensive examinations, or approval of the thesis/dissertation proposal are examples of evidence of progress toward the degree.

B. Ability to contribute to the Department

1. Teaching Assignments

- a. **Basic Instructional Program (BIP).** Preference will be given to KIN students who are capable of teaching a variety of skills courses as demonstrated by letters of recommendation, transcript records, teaching certifications (e.g., WSI, IDEA), or experience as a player or coach. All students selected to work in the BIP program must be qualified to ensure the safety of participants as demonstrated by relevant safety certifications (e.g., first aid, CPR, training in the management of blood-borne pathogens), and by appropriate skills for the teaching assignment (e.g., ability to "spot" in gymnastics).
- b. **Lecture or laboratory courses.** Preference will be given to KIN students who have successfully completed: (a) course work in the relevant content area; (b) course work related to teaching methods; or (c) at least one semester as a volunteer or for-credit assistant in the course. Preference will also be given to KIN doctoral-level students.
2. **Research assignments.** The recipients of research assistantships will be selected by the faculty member who directs the laboratory or research project, with approval from the Department Chairperson. Preference will be given to KIN students who demonstrate qualifications for the position as demonstrated by: (a) completion of courses related to the topic of the research; (b) completion of relevant courses in statistics or research methods; (c) prior research experience; or (d) research interests consistent with the project. Preference may also be given to KIN doctoral students.
3. **Athletic training assignments.** The recipients of athletic training assistantships will be selected by the faculty member(s) associated with the athletic training concentration with approval from the Department Chairperson. Preference will be given to KIN students who are certified as athletic trainers by the National Athletic Trainers Association – Board of Certification (NATABOC) and who have clinical experience as athletic trainers.

C. Proficiency in the English language. All graduate assistants are expected to possess effective spoken and written English language skills as per current University policies (e.g., acceptable TOEFL and SPEAK scores).

D. Other considerations

1. **Affirmative action.** The Department is committed to the affirmative action policies adopted by Michigan State University.
2. **Disciplinary concentration.** When possible, the Department will provide graduate assistantship support to qualified students from a variety of academic concentrations within Kinesiology.
3. **Doctoral students.** When resources are limited, preference will be given to KIN doctoral students.

III. Extent of Graduate Assistantship Support. The extent of graduate assistantship support is limited for three reasons, to encourage students to complete their degrees in a timely manner, to protect the student from exploitation by the Department, and to permit the Department to fund as many students as possible.

A. KIN-administered graduate assistantships

1. **Masters degree students.** Master's degree students may receive up to four semesters of graduate assistantship support. Assistantship support received during the summer semester shall not count against this total.
 2. **Doctoral degree students**
 - a. **Regular status.** Doctoral degree students may receive up to eight semesters of graduate assistantship support. Assistantship support received during the summer semester shall not count against this total.
 - b. **Provisional status.** Graduate assistants who are beginning a new degree program at Michigan State University are expected to complete the requirements of the previous (bachelor's or master's) degree within one semester of their graduate assistantship appointment in the Department of Kinesiology.
 - B. **Graduate assistantships administered by other MSU departments.** The policy of limiting graduate assistantship support to a maximum of two units per semester is recommended for any combination of KIN and externally-administered assistantships.
 - C. **Exceptions to policies on the extent of graduate assistantship support.** Exceptions to the above policies on the extent of graduate assistantship support must be approved by the student's advisor, the KIN Graduate Program Committee, the Department faculty, and the Department Chairperson.
- IV. Application, Renewal, and Termination of Graduate Assistantship Support.** Graduate assistantships typically are awarded on an academic year basis; however, specific assignments and extent of support may vary from semester to semester. Appointments must be at least one semester in duration, except that graduate assistants paid from grant funds may be appointed for the period of the grant.
- A. **Applications**
 1. **Application for academic year graduate assistantship positions.**
 - a. **Teaching assistantships.** Interested students must complete and submit the Application for KIN Graduate Teaching Assistantship: Teaching Competency Form to the KIN graduate studies secretary. Review of applications will begin January 15 and continue until positions are filled.
 - b. **Research assistantships.** Interested students should contact the faculty member who directs the research project or assistantship for application procedures and deadlines.
 - c. **Athletic training assistantships.** Interested students must complete and submit the Application for KIN Athletic Training Emphasis to the KIN graduate studies secretary. Review of applications will begin January 15 and continue until positions are filled.
 2. **Application for positions that become available at other times during the year.** Notification of graduate assistantship positions that become available at other times during the year (as well as the application deadlines for those positions) will be disseminated in a timely way to all current KIN graduate students.
 - B. **Renewal.** Students must reapply for each additional year of graduate assistantship support. Continuation of graduate assistantship support from year-to-year or semester-to-semester is not guaranteed. Renewal of support depends upon: (a) satisfactory progress toward degree

completion (see II.A.2.); (b) satisfactory completion of prior assistantship responsibilities; and (c) availability of Department resources.

- C. **Termination.** An assistantship may be terminated at any time if the student fails to meet the responsibilities associated with the position.

V. Graduate Assistantship Responsibilities and Compensation

- A. **Status as a graduate student.** According to policies published in the current *Academic Programs* catalog, graduate assistants must be registered in each semester in which they hold assistantships.
- B. **Duties.** The primary duties of graduate assistants correspond to the types of assistantships described earlier in this document. Additional responsibilities may include, but are not limited to, participating in orientation sessions and/or professional development activities, attending meetings for graduate assistants, course preparation, office hours, and office work.
- C. **Work schedule**
1. **Dates of employment/pay periods.** According to the current Academic Programs catalog, for purposes of issuing pay checks, the dates of employment for a graduate assistant are August 16 through December 31 for fall semester, January 1 through May 15 for spring semester, and May 16 through August 15 for summer semester.
 2. **Hours per week.** Normal employment requirements are an average of 10 hours per week for a quarter-time appointment and an average of 20 hours per week for a half-time appointment. Supervisors shall give consideration to job requirements such as office hours, course preparation, collaboration with faculty members to teach a course, grading, or need for off-campus travel when determining hours per week.
 3. **Work schedule**
 - a. **Teaching assistants.** Teaching assistants shall be available from seven calendar days prior to the first day of courses (starting date) through the last day of finals week or submission of final course grades (whichever is later) (ending date) for each semester of employment.
 - b. **Research assistants.** Research assistants shall negotiate the work schedule with the faculty supervisor.
 - c. **Athletic training assistants.** Athletic training assistants shall negotiate the work schedule with the faculty supervisor.
 4. **Vacations.** Graduate assistants shall not be required to work on official University holidays.
 5. **Illness, injury and pregnancy leave**
 - a. **Notice.** A graduate assistant unable to fulfill the duties of his or her appointment because of illness, injury, or pregnancy shall notify his or her supervisor and the Department Chairperson as soon as circumstances permit.
 - b. **Adjustments to work schedule.** During the illness, injury, or pregnancy the Department shall adjust (reduce, waive, or reschedule) the graduate assistant's duties as reasonably dictated by the circumstances. If total absence from duties becomes necessary, the Department shall maintain the stipend of the appointment, provided

the graduate student is still enrolled, for a period of two months, or the end of the appointment period or of the semester, whichever occurs first.

- c. **Right to return to position.** The graduate assistant shall have the right to return to the position, within the original terms of the appointment, at such time as he or she is able to reassume the duties of the assistantship.
6. **Deviations to policies on work schedule.** Any deviations to the above policies on dates of employment, hours per week, vacations, or leaves must be approved by the Department Chairperson.

D. **Stipends, advancements, and promotions**

1. **Stipends.** Ranges for graduate assistantships stipends are established annually by the Office of the Provost, with specific stipends determined by the College of Education.
2. **Advancements and promotions**
 - a. **Levels of assistantships.** The University recognizes the following levels:

Level 1 - bachelor's degree and less than one year's experience as a graduate assistant.

Level 2 - relevant master's degree (30 semester credits or equivalent) and/or one year's experience as a graduate assistant.

Senior - relevant master's degree (or equivalent) and at least two year's experience as a graduate assistant (or equivalent experience at the faculty level).
 - b. **Advancement.** Graduate assistants will advance from Level 1 to Level 2 by completing the relevant requirements. Decisions about Senior Level assistantships depend in part upon Departmental resources, and are at the discretion of the Department Chairperson.

VI. **Performance Evaluations**

A. **Teaching assistants**

1. **SIRS evaluations.** Graduate assistants who are assigned to teach either activity or lecture courses are expected to administer SIRS evaluation forms per Department policy.
2. **Satisfactory Teaching.** Satisfactory teaching is defined as: (a) having SIRS ratings that are consistently average or above; (b) receiving student comments on SIRS forms that support teaching effectiveness; (c) consistent attendance at staff meetings; (d) using syllabi that meet the requirements of the Code of Teaching Responsibility; and (e) job performance that meets the requirements of the Code of Teaching Responsibility.
3. **Evaluations by the assistantship supervisor.** All graduate assistants who are assigned to teach either activity or lecture courses will be observed at least once during the semester. A written evaluation must be provided to each student. Evaluation criteria may include knowledge of activity/content being taught, methodology employed, ability to relate to all students in the class, teaching strengths and weaknesses, and interpersonal skills. Performance evaluations should be conducted by a faculty member, and, where possible, within the first half of the semester. Any teaching assistant who receives a below-average rating in any category shall be provided instruction on how to improve performance in that category with a follow-up evaluation occurring before the end of the semester. Following

the supervised period, failure to meet satisfactory performance will result in the teaching assistant being placed on probation for a period specified by the department chairperson. Continued failure to meet satisfactory performance will result in termination.

- B. **Research assistants.** All graduate assistants who are assigned a research responsibility will be evaluated at least annually by the professor to whom he or she is assigned. The written evaluation must be provided to the student. Evaluation criteria include fulfilling the duties of the assistantship, compliance with research ethics policies and regulations, and professional demeanor. Performance evaluations should be conducted by the professor of the research project.
- C. **Athletic training assistants.** All graduate students who are assigned an athletic training responsibility will be evaluated at least annually by the professor to whom he or she is assigned. The written evaluation must be provided to the student. Evaluation criteria include fulfilling the duties of the assistantship, maintaining athletic training skills and certifications, and professional demeanor. Performance evaluations should be conducted by the professor who supervises the athletic training assignment.

VII. Rights of Graduate Assistants

A. KIN policies

1. All graduate assistantship positions offered by the Department shall be publicized in appropriate locations (e.g., the Department web site and the Department office).
2. Graduate assistants have the right to supervision by a qualified faculty member or administrator.
3. Graduate assistants have the right to be notified of teaching and/or research responsibilities in a timely manner, and to negotiate a work schedule that does not interfere with the student's course work.
4. Graduate assistants have the right to participate in professional development activities conducted for faculty and staff in the Department.
5. Graduate assistants shall be informed of evaluation criteria to be used in judging their performance of assigned duties.

B. Policies from the 1984 Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities document

1. Graduate student representatives shall participate in the development of Departmental policies covering, but not limited to: (a) criteria for selecting new graduate assistants; (b) criteria for renewing and/or continuing graduate assistantships; (c) procedures for evaluating performance; (d) extent of graduate assistantship support; (e) work load, duties, and vacation schedules; and (f) grievance procedures.
2. Current information regarding inclusive dates of employment, stipends, stipend advancement and promotion, tax status of stipends, and Departmental policies related to graduate assistantships shall be made available to all graduate assistants.
3. By March 31 of each calendar year, the Department shall advise each graduate assistant in writing of the status of his/her assistantship for the next academic year. If the assistantship is not renewed, the reasons shall be indicated.
4. Graduate assistants are entitled to such clerical-secretarial help and supplies as are commensurate with their assigned responsibilities and the resources of the Department.

5. Within the constraints of their training, experience, and responsibilities, graduate assistants have a right to the same professional respect as that accorded to regular faculty.
6. Graduate students shall be informed of all employment policies when a position is tendered.

VIII. Due Process Procedures. A graduate student who has a question, concern, or grievance about his/her appointment should first consult with his/her academic advisor about procedures for conflict resolution. If the advisor is part of the perceived problem, the student may consult with the KIN Coordinator for Graduate Studies. Ordinarily, the following steps will be followed in resolving problems.

- A. **Step 1.** Questions, concerns, or grievance about a student's graduate assistantship appointment should be discussed with the faculty member or administrator responsible for supervising that assistantship.
- B. **Step 2.** Questions, concerns, or grievances about a student's graduate assistantship that cannot be resolved by Step 1 should be discussed with the Department Chairperson.
- C. **Step 3.** Questions, concerns, or grievances about a student's graduate assistantship that cannot be resolved by Steps 1 and 2 should be adjudicated per Article 5 of the *Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities* document.