

English Department Policy on Graduate Teaching Assistantships

Overview

Assistantships, scholarships, and fellowships are available to qualifying graduate students, both current and incoming. Graduate teaching assistantships in the Department of English are awarded at time of application to the degree program and are subject to the applicant's admission at good or conditional standing by the Graduate School.

All teaching assistantships are reviewed annually and renewed on the basis of teaching evaluations, professional conduct (inside the writing classroom and as a student in graduate courses), and satisfactory progress toward the student's degree program. This review process involves the student's academic adviser, his/her immediate teaching supervisor, the graduate program director, and the department chair.

Eligibility and Application Process

A letter of interest, outlining the student's qualifications and previous experience (if applicable), needs to be included with the student's application to the degree program. Appointments are made on the basis of the content and the quality of this letter of interest and are dependent upon available funding.

All applicants that are accepted into a graduate program in the Department of English are eligible, but preference will be given to those applicants who can clearly demonstrate an understanding of genre-based, first-year composition practices.

All teaching assistants in the Department of English are students first and teachers second. Note that an incoming GPA of 3.0 is required of incoming students to be accepted into the program at good standing; current students are expected to maintain good standing in the college and satisfactory standing in the department to remain eligible for assistantships.

Responsibilities as a Graduate Student

All graduate students are required to meet with their academic adviser once a semester to discuss their course work (current as well as upcoming), to schedule teaching observations, and to prepare an annual progress report.

- Students are required to keep their advisers updated on their academic progress and their disquisition plans and to consult with him/her about the program, its curriculum, and its opportunities.
- Students will be observed once per semester, by the Director of First-Year Writing during their first semester and by their academic adviser thereafter and until degree completion.
- Students are required to prepare, in consultation with their academic adviser, an annual progress report and submit it to the Director of Graduate Studies no later than March 15.

Responsibilities as a Graduate Teaching Assistant

- Teaching assistants are required to attend a day-long Fall and Spring writing program workshop, which typically take place in August and January.
- Teaching assistants are required to participate in end-of-semester writing program assessments, which typically take place in December and May.
- Teaching assistants are expected to hold class during their scheduled class meeting time. Rare cancelations may occur due to illness. The department needs to be notified of

cancellations prior to class time, and the instructor needs to find a substitute instructor for his/her class for the day.

- Teaching assistants are expected to hold a minimum of one conference with their students per semester. Conferences may be brief and can be in small groups or one-on-one with the student.

Stipend and Waivers

Doctoral teaching assistantships carry an annual stipend of \$14,000 per academic year and include a tuition waiver package for the duration of the student's degree program (\$20,000). The department additionally provides students with laptops and office space. Students are responsible for books and fees. In rare cases, teaching fellowships may be granted to PhD candidates who have passed their comprehensive exams and have completed their coursework.

Teaching assistantships for students enrolled in the MA in English degree program carry an annual stipend of \$10,500 per academic year and include a tuition waiver package for the duration of the student's degree program (\$10,000). The department additionally provides students with laptops and office space. Students are responsible for books and fees.

In some cases, tutoring fellowships in the Graduate Center for Writers or research assistantships in the Department of English might be made available upon recommendation by the student's adviser and in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair of English. These appointments are competitive and dependent upon available funding.

Non-renewal

Graduate teaching assistantship may be subject to non-renewal upon review and recommendation by their academic adviser, their immediate teaching supervisor (the Director of First-Year or the Director of Upper-Division Writing), and the Director of Graduate Studies. In rare cases, teaching assistantships may be terminated, in consultation with the Chair of English, during the semester.

Academic reasons for non-renewal or termination include:

- Students earn a grade of C or lower in *English 764: Classroom Strategies for Teaching Assistants*.
- Students accrue a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or below.
- Students do not make adequate degree progress.
- Students do not make satisfactory research progress.
- Students fail to maintain minimum registration requirements.
- Students are placed on academic probation by the Graduate School

Professional reasons for non-renewal or termination include:

- Teaching assistants do not abide by the appointment conditions.
- Teaching assistants refuse to follow reasonable advice and counsel of faculty in carrying out assistantship obligations.
- Teaching assistants fail to comply with responsibilities as an employee set forth in the *Graduate Bulletin*, department rules and regulations governing assistantships, or the terms of sponsored research agreements that fund the assistantship.

Non-renewal or early termination may also occur if a student's personal or professional conduct is prejudicial to the university, including violation of the NDSU Code of Student Behavior, state or federal law, and general university regulations.

NDSU Policy 100 states that “NDSU does not discriminate in its programs and activities on the basis of age, color, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, participation in lawful off-campus activity, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, spousal relationship to current employee, or veteran status, as applicable.” Violation of this policy may lead to non-renewal or early termination.

Mediation and Appeals Process

It is the department’s policy to encourage, facilitate, and seek resolution of problems at the level most closely related to the origin of specific disputes. This means:

- The first step should be an informal conference to first discuss and then attempt to resolve the problem(s) with the person(s) directly involved.
- When a mutually satisfactory resolution cannot be reached or if discussion of the problem(s) seems inappropriate because of the nature of the student's complaint, the student should seek advice from (in this order) his/her academic adviser, his/her immediate teaching supervisor, and the Director of Graduate.
- Depending on the nature of the problem(s), the graduate program director may ask the department chair or student's graduate committee chair to deal with the situation directly, advise the student to discuss the problem(s) with the appropriate academic dean, or advise the student of the appropriate grievance procedure to pursue.
- If a non-renewal or early termination decision is made, the Director of Graduate Studies will notify both the student and Dean of the Graduate School of this decision.
- If the graduate assistant wishes to challenge a non-renewal or early termination decision, a written appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School must be made within two weeks of notification of the mediation results (refer to section titled "Graduate Student Appeals").

Relevant Graduate Bulletin Information

Graduate Assistantship Policy

Graduate assistants are typically full-time graduate students who participate in teaching, research, or administrative activities in exchange for financial support at North Dakota State University. Graduate assistantships contribute to student professional development with the primary purpose of assisting students in the successful completion of their academic program. Students placed on Academic Warning may retain their assistantship. Students placed on Probation may no longer receive an assistantship.

Graduate assistantships may be awarded outside of the student's home program. These assistantships require the continued approval of the graduate program administrator of the student's program, the student's adviser and the Dean of the College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies.

Assistantship appointments may vary in length and are contingent upon the availability of funding. Some assistantships are granted for one academic term or year with reappointment dependent upon performance review. Other assistantships are for multiple years with annual performance reviews. A graduate assistantship can also involve research or teaching experiences conducted at an off-campus entity, such as a university, agency, or business. In these instances, the experience should be clearly linked to the student's program of study and involve a collaborative relationship between NDSU and the outside entity.

Fellowships may be awarded by NDSU or by an outside entity (e.g., a foundation, a government, etc.). Fellowships may require some specific activities, including work in a laboratory or teaching. If a fellowship includes specific activities, the guidelines established in this policy apply.

Eligibility for Assistantships

Recommendations for assistantships are made to the Dean of the College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies and are subject to the dean's approval. Graduate programs may have specific requirements for eligibility.

Before any assistantship can be awarded, students must be admitted to the Graduate School as a degree-seeking student. The tuition waiver may be reduced by other financial awards directed specifically to pay tuition.

- Students must be registered for credit each semester (fall and spring) they receive an assistantship, and must be in good academic standing and maintaining satisfactory progress toward their degree. In addition, international students must maintain the appropriate residency status.
- Teaching assistants whose native language is not English must demonstrate English proficiency (refer to section titled "English Language Proficiency Procedures for Graduate Teaching Assistants").
- Students offered a graduate teaching or graduate service assistantship must consent to a criminal background check.
- Students placed on Academic Warning may retain their assistantship. Students placed on Probation may no longer receive an assistantship.

Expectations of Program/Assistantship Supervisor

Each graduate program must develop a procedure for the awarding of graduate assistantships. The Graduate College requires that a contract be provided to all graduate assistants. This document

would specify expectations for the assistantship, including number of hours of work, stipend amount, activities, etc. Programs/assistantship supervisors must provide periodic oral and written assessment and feedback regarding a graduate assistant's performance. This feedback should document areas where improvement is needed, and graduate assistants should be given adequate time to improve in those areas. Feedback should be provided annually at a minimum.

Expectations of Graduate Assistant

Students must dedicate the required number of hours assigned to work each week. Graduate assistants must work a minimum of 10 hours per week for 16 weeks, and must receive at least minimum wage. Graduate assistantships cannot exceed 20 hours per week. Students on full-time assistantships are generally discouraged from having additional off-campus employment. Students receiving a graduate assistantship or fellowship are expected to maintain good academic standing and satisfactory progress toward their degrees. Please refer to the section on Graduate College Policies for more information.

Students receiving a graduate assistantship are expected to complete required trainings annually (e.g., Baseline Safety Training, Sexual Harassment Prevention Training, Title IX Training) within 30 days of accepting their appointment. Failure to complete training can lead to sanctions, including revocation of the tuition waiver and termination of the assistantship.

Students receiving a graduate assistantship are expected to fulfill their responsibilities adhering to the professional and academic expectations of their discipline and in compliance with NDUS and NDSU policies. Violations of these policies and expectations may result in sanctions, including loss of the assistantship and/or termination from the Graduate College. Adjudication of these violations will occur using NDSU Policy 335.1.

Students on research assistantships may also do related research for course credit. The number of hours of work per credit may vary depending on the discipline/department.

Scholastic Standards

To be in academic good standing and to receive a graduate degree, a student must have a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0.

All courses taken by a graduate student for which grades are given will be used in calculating the GPA. Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory is assigned for research credits, and they are not used in calculating the GPA. When a course has been repeated, both grades will appear on the transcript, but only the second grade will be used in calculating the GPA. A specific course can be retaken only once, and only three total courses can be retaken.

In fulfilling graduate course requirements on any plan of study, only grades of A, B, or C are acceptable. For master's paper (797), master's thesis (798), and doctoral dissertation (899), only the grade of satisfactory (S) is acceptable. For seminar (790/890), graduate teaching experience (792/892), individual study/tutorial (793/893), practicum/internship (794/894), or field experience (795/895), only grades of A, B, C, or S are acceptable for graduate credit.

Programs and/or supervisory committees may require a higher performance than C in certain courses. While some courses may be used for graduate credit with a grade of C, courses with grades of D, F, or U may not be used for graduate credit. Acquisition of more than two grades of C, D, F or U may be grounds for dismissal upon recommendation by the program administrator. These minimal scholastic requirements apply to each student enrolled in the Graduate College.

Additional requirements may exist for certain graduate programs.

Academic Warning

Any student in GOOD STANDING whose cumulative GPA drops to less than 3.0 at any time of attendance is automatically placed on academic WARNING. Any student admitted in CONDITIONAL status because of grade deficiency is automatically placed on academic WARNING. A student on academic WARNING cannot register for the following semester until the grades for the current semester post.

If a student on academic WARNING fails to achieve a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 in the subsequent semester of attendance, then the student will be placed on academic PROBATION.

Academic Probation

A student on academic PROBATION may not continue the pursuit of a graduate degree program without a recommendation from the appropriate program administrator and a waiver from the Dean of the Graduate College. This recommendation must include a review of the student's current status and a proposed plan of remediation which provides the student an opportunity to return to a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 within one additional semester (fall or spring). The remediation plan must be submitted and approved in time for the student to register for the academic term (fall or spring) that immediately follows the term in which the student was placed on probation. If the student does not submit an acceptable plan in time to enroll for the next academic term (fall or spring), or if the cumulative GPA is not at least 3.0 after this one additional semester, the student will be dismissed from his or her graduate program.

A student on academic PROBATION is not eligible for a graduate assistantship or tuition waiver.

Dismissal from the Graduate College

Graduate students may be suspended or dismissed from NDSU as a result of failure to meet our scholastic standards, academic or professional misconduct, insufficient progress toward a degree, failure to meet professional expectations or standards or failure to submit an acceptable remediation plan. Students suspended or dismissed from the Graduate College are not eligible for admission into any degree-granting or certificate program or into non-degree status for a period of at least one calendar year from the date of their suspension or dismissal.

Suspension or dismissal does not become complete until the completion of any **appeal process**.

Stipend Levels and Tuition Waivers

Graduate assistantship stipends vary by discipline. A full-time assistantship consists of 20 hours/week. For information on the current minimum stipend level for a full assistantship, refer to graduate student handbooks for the specific department and/or departmental website information. Departments may award stipends of less than the full-time amount, but they must reduce the workload accordingly.

The responsibilities associated with a graduate assistantship may vary in nature. The hour commitment defined by an assistantship may be averaged across a given time period. For example, a teaching assistantship of 20 hours/week should total to 320 hours across the 16 weeks of the academic term. In these cases, students should be given adequate advance notice of these variable expectations so that they can adjust their schedules to meet the requirements of the assistantship. Supervisors must also remain sensitive to the academic demands faced by graduate students.

Students receiving graduate assistantships also receive tuition waivers to cover base tuition for regular NDSU graduate credits only. Students are responsible for any differential tuition, student fees, and tuition for other types of credits taken, such as undergraduate credits, Distance and Continuing Education credits or Cooperative Education credits. To be eligible for a tuition waiver, the assistantship must be at least 160 hours per semester and must pay at least the federal minimum wage. Partial tuition waivers are not given when a graduate assistant works less than 160 hours in the semester. Students who, for any reason, do not complete a minimum of 160 hours in a given semester will not be eligible for that semester's waiver and will be billed for the tuition. The tuition waiver may have limitations depending on the assistantship appointment.

Students eligible for a graduate assistantship waiver may not also receive other NDSU tuition waivers. If a student is eligible for more than one waiver, the waiver which results in the highest tuition to be waived will be applied.

Additional Employment at NDSU or in the NDUS

Graduate assistants on full assistantships are not allowed to work on a second assistantship, as part-time instructors, as student workers, or in any other capacity for NDSU, any other campus in the North Dakota University System, or State of North Dakota agency or office while working as a graduate assistant, unless an exception is approved by the Dean of the College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies ***prior to the work being performed.***

Exceptions may be granted for up to six (6) additional hours (a total of no more than 26 total hours for the assistantship plus additional work). Additional work performed during the winter or spring breaks is allowed. Additional hours may also be appropriate during the summer term, depending upon the student's credit load for the summer term. Any of these exceptions must be recommended in writing by the student's supervisor, approved by the student's adviser and the student's department or program administrator, and forwarded to the Graduate College PRIOR to submission of the payroll form. The approval should then be attached to the payroll form. These steps must be completed in the order described and before the student begins work.

Rights and Privileges of Graduate Assistants

Graduate assistants have certain rights and privileges specific to the assistantship experience:

- The right to be notified in writing of all decisions that affect their status as a graduate assistant. This includes advance notification of evaluation procedures and a summary of their performance evaluation.
- The right to be notified of any complaints received by a supervisor or department chair concerning their performance of duties.
- The right to respond in writing to such complaints.
- The right, depending on the availability of departmental and university resources, to be supported in pursuing additional activities that pertain to their professional development.
- The right to balance their assistantship responsibilities with their responsibilities to their academic program so that they can complete their degree in a timely manner.
- The privilege of being treated as a professional in their chosen field of study.

Termination

Graduate assistants may have their assistantship terminated by the Dean of the College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies, upon recommendation by their supervisor, with documentation of probable cause. Early termination for cause may occur when:

- A student does not abide by the appointment conditions.
- A student fails to perform tasks as assigned.

- A student does not make adequate degree progress.
- A student is placed on Academic Probation.
- A student does not make satisfactory research progress.
- A student fails to maintain minimum registration.
- A student persistently refuses to follow reasonable advice and counsel of faculty in carrying out assistantship obligations.
- A student fails to comply with responsibilities as an employee set forth in the *Graduate Bulletin*, department rules and regulations governing assistantships, or the terms of sponsored research agreements that fund the assistantship.
- A student's personal conduct is seriously prejudicial to the university, including violation of the NDSU Code of Student Behavior, state or federal law, and general university regulations.

Appeals Process

The North Dakota State University philosophy is to encourage and seek resolution of problems at the level most closely related to the origin of the specific disputes. This means:

- The first step should be an informal conference to first discuss and attempt to resolve the problem(s) with the person(s) directly involved.
- When a mutually satisfactory resolution cannot be reached or if discussion of the problem(s) seems inappropriate because of the nature of the student's complaint, the student should seek advice from the director of the program, chair of the department, or the graduate coordinator.
- Depending on the nature of the problem(s), the department chair or student's graduate committee chair may deal with the situation directly, advise the student to discuss the problem(s) with the appropriate academic dean and/or the Dean of the College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies, or advise the student of the appropriate grievance procedure to pursue.
- If the graduate assistant wishes to challenge the termination decision, a written appeal to the Dean of the College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies must be made within two weeks of notification of the mediation results (refer to section titled "Graduate Student Appeals").

Students should not carry more than a full-time load. Individual departments will determine a minimum and a maximum number of credit hours.