



# UNM SCHOOL of PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

## SCHOOL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (developed fall 2017)

Financial support for students studying for a master's degree in the School of Public Administration (SPA) is available through graduate assistantships. Support is awarded annually on a competitive basis.

### Appointment and Selection

#### Term

Students will typically apply for a fall-spring academic year graduate assistantship (GA). Should vacancies occur for the spring semester, appointments will be made for one semester. Students may hold an assistantship for a maximum of two years.

#### Standard Deadline

Students must apply for a GA between March 1 and April 15 yearly. The appointment begins on August 15 and ends on May 15th of each academic year. A student must stay on full-time status during the period of the assistantship, i.e., registered for a minimum of nine (9) semester hours of course work.

#### Eligibility

To be eligible for appointment as a graduate assistant, students must

- demonstrate need, priority going to students who do not hold any other employment during the tenure as graduate assistants; next priority going to students who have part-time employment only; students who work full-time being considered after the first two categories of applicants are reviewed;
- be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a regular degree-seeking student in the School of Public Administration;
- have a cumulative minimum grade point average of 3.2, or, if enrolled in SPA for the first time, have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 in the undergraduate major;
- have satisfied all incomplete grades at the time of his/her appointment;
- be able to demonstrate proficiency in oral and written English if the native language is one other than English, show sufficient knowledge of the system of higher education in the United States, have some sensitivity of intercultural communication, and have good interpersonal skills to the satisfaction of the SPA.

## Award Package

A full assistantship for an academic year consists of:

- a 9-month remission of tuition or tuition waiver (students are required to pay their own student fees each semester);
- a stipend (awards supported by grants and endowed fellowships may be more or less than a Graduate School assistantship);
- health insurance if needed.

## Stipend Disbursement

Graduate assistants should prepare to receive their stipend disbursement the first payroll date in August. The last disbursement occurs the final pay cycle in May. Please note, new international graduate students should prepare to receive their first stipend check in mid-October due to the process of obtaining a social security number. However, the first stipend amount will be greater to reflect the appointment date.

## GA Duties

This policy is intended to make all graduate assistantships beneficial to the graduate student and the academic or teaching unit as represented by the faculty members. SPA receives assistance for this GA program from the Office of Graduate Studies. The GA receives experience and mentorship in research or teaching, which is intended to facilitate professional development. As a general rule, GA duties should be limited to tasks that benefit both the academic unit and advance the professional development of the GA. Precise duties should be described in the evaluation plan for each GA and the plan should not overload the GA's time commitments.

### Description of Duties:

Each graduate assistant will be randomly assigned to a full-time faculty member in SPA, or the SPA director, to assist with their current research project(s) and/or provide assistance with the courses they are teaching.

### Types of Research Responsibilities:

- assist with literature reviews, data entry, and data compilation;
- conduct library research;
- assist with the preparation of presentations at national conferences;
- assist with faculty members presentations of research;
- assist with the preparation of manuscripts to be submitted to peer review journals, e.g., tables and graphs (but not original writing of texts);
- assist in the development of research grant proposals, including preparation of supplementary materials;
- collect, code, and clean data analysis;

- assist in preparation of materials for IRB review;
- assist in designing conference presentations with the professor's guidance;
- assist in analyzing data with the professor's guidance.

#### Types of Teaching Assistance

- developing new course materials;
- posting of materials on "My UNM" and responding to students' questions posed verbally and electronically;
- tutoring of students;
- holding of regular office hours.

**Inappropriate Job Duties:** Examples of inappropriate duties for a GA include, but are not limited to:

- personal services for a supervisor (such as travel arrangements);
- administrative work that does not advance the professional development of the faculty member, such as receptionist work;
- maintaining the personal computer of a supervisor;
- grading of peer student coursework;
- original authoring of articles, proposals, and syllabi.

For more information- please visit <http://grad.unm.edu/funding/assistantships.html>

#### **Faculty Member's Duties and Evaluation Plan**

Before the beginning of each semester for which a graduate student receives a funding award, the faculty member requesting a GA will produce a Duties and Evaluation Plan (DEP) for the GA. This document will include:

- a description of the precise research or instructional duties to be expected of GA on a weekly basis;
- an estimate of how many hours per week should be needed to complete the assigned duties (estimated work hours should be equivalent to the weekly total associated with the graduate assistantship assignment);
- with rare exceptions, the duties delineated to be the only tasks the GA shall perform that semester;
- "catch-all" duties not to be included, i.e., assigned duties to be specific, measurable, and not open-ended or ambiguous (e.g. "GA completes all tasks not finished by the research group").

The DEP will be signed by the graduate assistant and the supervisor prior to the start of the semester. The director shall review, approve the assigned duties, and sign the DEP as well.

The Director will collect and review copies of DEPs for all graduate assistants at the end of each semester to facilitate the evaluation of GAs. The director, in consultation with the faculty, can use this data to analyze effective uses of GAs and monitor expenditure of graduate financial aid (GFA) funds.

In rare cases, a DEP may need to be modified mid-semester because of unforeseen circumstances, such as cancellation of a class or departure of a faculty member. All parties,

including the graduate assistant, the supervisor, and the director should agree on the new assignments and sign a modified DEP. The graduate assistant should be assessed for their work up to that point on the old DEP and assessed on their work for the remainder of the semester with the new DEP.

### **Faculty Assessments**

The faculty supervisor will file an evaluation of the graduate assistant's job performance at the end of each semester using the SPA's standard evaluation form. All assigned duties need to be performed or completed by the end of the semester. At a minimum, the supervisor should assess whether the GA did or did not complete the assigned tasks in a satisfactory manner.

Graduate assistants who do not perform their assigned duties to a satisfactory level or who are not making adequate academic progress will have their support as a graduate assistant discontinued. Prior to any discontinuation of a funded assistantship, the faculty member, in consultation with the director, shall inform the student of shortcomings in performance or academic standing. The director and the faculty member should offer suggestions for performance improvement and a timeline for addressing deficiencies, offer additional assistance, and/or mentoring, as well as recommend resources to facilitate improvement in performance. If no improvement occurs in the timeline provided, the faculty member should request that the director send the student a written notification that the award will be terminated on a specific date.

### **General Policies of Employment and Weekly Workloads**

All graduate assistantships range from 10 to 20 hours for a 16 week semester. A 0.5 full time equivalent (FTE) translates to 300 hours of work per semester. A 0.25 FTE translates to 150 hours of work per semester. All FTEs between 0.5 and 0.25 have a proportionately scaled weekly work assignment. The total number of hours a GA works in a semester should be close to the hours specified by the FTEs of the graduate assistantship.

While there may be weekly variation in the workload of a graduate assistant, the workload should not be too heavy or too light in any week. For example, a 0.5 FTE GA assignment averages 20 hours of work per week. There should be no week where the GA is expected to work more than 35 hours. Similarly, extreme underuse (less than 5 hours a week) of GA work provides evidence that GA resources may merit re-allocation by the academic unit. This example scales proportionately for FTEs below 0.5.

Graduate assistant work hours are not to be "banked." That is, no agreement is to be made that a GA is to work less during the semester so that remaining work in the assignment could be done later over winter break or during the summer. All work should be completed by the time the student is evaluated. Graduate assistants do not receive paid vacation or sick leave. They should not be required to work (or make up work) during designated University holidays or periods when the University is closed for business. In unusual circumstances, such as the assistant being involved in a medical emergency with

long-term implications, arrangements for workload modification and a change in the DEP should be arranged with the director.

**SOURCES:**

<http://grad.unm.edu/funding/assistantships.html>

<https://provost.gwu.edu/files/downloads/gtaandguidelines.pdf>

<http://www.washington.edu/admin/rules/policies/PO/EO28.html>

<http://www.policies.utexas.edu/policies/teaching-assistants>

<http://www.policies.utexas.edu/policies/graduate-and-undergraduate-research-assistants>

<https://ga.soe.ucsc.edu/sites/default/files/GradRightsResponsibilitiesFinal.pdf>