



GRADUATE ASSISTANT HANDBOOK

The Graduate Assistant Handbook is for information purposes only. It is not intended to serve as a substitution for the IUP Graduate Catalog <https://www.iup.edu/gradcatalog> or Departmental Degree Program Handbooks which can be obtained from department offices or program websites.

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Introduction to Graduate Assistantships

Congratulations and welcome to the position of Graduate Assistant! Graduate assistants (GAs) are graduate students pursuing higher education. The GA experience is an integral part of higher education and an opportunity for graduate students to work with faculty members and students, typically undergraduate students, in forums such as teaching, research and/or administrative units. Graduate assistantships provide graduate students with the opportunity to gain further expertise in their field; develop their research skills; obtain experience in leadership and build interpersonal skills; and engage in other professional activities to help prepare them for their future.

Additionally, graduate assistantships provide graduate students with financial resources to help them pursue their graduate degrees. The financial support is two-fold: a stipend for weekly hours of work and awarded tuition dollars applied to their billing account for tuition (excluding fees). Graduate Assistantships are a part of IUP's commitment to graduate student success.

Appointment to Graduate Assistantship

Department program graduate coordinators determine the selection criteria for graduate assistants for their respective degree programs. Each department is responsible for determining and communicating its own specific criteria for assessing graduate student qualifications for an appointment and reappointment to a graduate assistantship, within the limits of the University and graduate education policies.

Appointments may be for fall term only; fall and spring terms; or spring term only. Summer tuition dollars can be included as part of a fall and or spring award, but there is no stipend during summer. Stipends are paid on a bi-weekly basis through IUP Student Payroll. Tuition dollars are applied to the student's tuition account, excluding fees, through the Student Billing Office. In cases of external funding opportunities (e.g., grant or contract funding), exceptions to the above parameters can be considered. These would need to be discussed with and approved by the Provost's Office.

Graduate Assistantship appointments and reappointments are contingent upon the availability of funds. Graduate Assistants may or may not be reappointed by their department programs. In general, reappointment is dependent upon satisfactory performance by the graduate assistant and progress towards degree completion.

Letter of Appointment

It is the responsibility of the Provost's office to notify the graduate student of the GA appointment by way of a Letter of Appointment. This communication is sent through IUP email as the official form of communication. Included with the Letter of Appointment to the graduate student is the Graduate Assistantship Agreement. Graduate students should review their Graduate Assistantship Agreement carefully noting specific terms and conditions of the appointment. The student must sign the Agreement and return it electronically via email to the Provost's Office to indicate acceptance of the appointment, within the specified deadline. Failure

to sign and return the Agreement by the specified deadline may result in revocation of the Graduate Assistant appointment.

For general questions regarding Graduate Assistantships, contact Lorie McDowell, Coordinator of Academic Personnel and Budget, Office of the Provost at lorie@iup.edu.

Performance Reviews

Each department is responsible for determining the procedures for the review and evaluation of Graduate Assistants and for informing the GA of the process. The evaluation process may vary by department and may include a written assessment of work. The results of the review and evaluation should be discussed with the GA who is evaluated.

Eligibility for Graduate Assistantship

Qualifications

A Graduate Assistant must be a registered graduate student enrolled in a degree program at IUP, maintain good academic standing (minimum GPA for the program in which they are enrolled, usually 3.0 cumulative GPA or higher for some programs), and make satisfactory progress towards degree completion.

Special Status and non-degree seeking students are not eligible to hold Graduate Assistantships.

Registration

Full-time and part-time graduate students can be a Graduate Assistant (GA) and can have an academic appointment for fall, fall and spring, or spring only terms which may be 20 hours per week, 10 hours per week, or 8 hours per week.

GAs holding 20 hours per week appointments must be full-time enrolled students at the University and registered for at least 9 credits for the full term of appointment.

GAs holding 10 or 8 hours per week appointments may be full-time (registered for 9 or more credits) or part-time (registered for at least 6 credits) enrolled students, based on conditions in their GA Agreement at the University for the term of appointment.

Audited courses and undergraduate courses do not count towards graduate student registration status.

Time Commitment

Graduate Assistantship appointments may be full-time which is 20 hours per week, or half-time which is 10 hours or 8 hours per week. Departments are to provide work assignments that are consistent with the number of hours per week the GA is to work. The actual number of hours required to complete assignments in any given week may vary slightly. Under no circumstances should a GA be working more hours per week than the number of hours in their Agreement (20, 10, or 8 hours per week).

GA Agreements begin the first day of classes for the semester and end on the last day of classes for the semester. Graduate Assistants are **not** to work over holidays, breaks or during the University's days of final exams.

Graduate Assistantship Duties

All responsibilities and tasks of a Graduate Assistant are carried out under the supervision and direction of an approved University faculty or staff member.

- Supporting and assisting faculty in their course related activities.
- Assist assigned faculty member with research, sponsored programs, or other scholarship.
- Assist faculty and departments in academic, professional, or service functions.
- Assist with supervising laboratories, studios, or other university facilities.
- Assist with special projects for an academic department, faculty or staff member.
- Assist with high-level office duties including preparation of PowerPoint presentations, data entry, and data analysis.
- Provide service or support functions to academic or non-academic departments and offices.

***Note:** *CBA Article 7.8 C 1 & 2:* Graduate Assistants may be assigned to regular faculty members to assist in research, instruction, and other professional duties. At no time shall graduate assistants instruct lectures or laboratories unless the faculty member assigned to teach the course is present in the classroom or laboratory.

*** Note:** No more than 10% of time spent on duties can be clerical work including but not limited to typing/processing/transferring information or documents into final form; greeting visitors and directing individuals to office locations; screening/routing telephone calls; preparing labels; sorting mail; folding letters/stuffing envelopes.

*** Note:** To avoid bargaining unit conflicts, Graduate Assistants can assist with projects but cannot lead them.

Graduate Assistant Employment Policies

A Graduate Assistant is a graduate student in good academic standing who, during their academic preparation, is employed in a student position as a graduate assistant at IUP.

Three types of background checks are required under Pennsylvania law and are mandatory:

1. **Criminal History Record Check** – From the Pennsylvania State Police indicating that the individual has not been convicted of any reportable offense.
2. **Child Abuse Clearance** – Certification from the Department of Human Services regarding whether an individual is named in a statewide database as a perpetrator in a pending child abuse investigation, a founded report, or an indicated report of child abuse.

3. **Federal Criminal History Background Check** – Includes fingerprinting and review by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for verifying the identity of the individual and obtaining a current record of any criminal arrests and convictions.

For more information, please see:

<https://iup.edu/humanresources/policies/background-investigation-policy/required-clearance-information/>

Mandatory Title IX and Protection of Minors Training

All IUP employees including student workers and Graduate Assistants and university affiliates must complete the university-offered online Title IX and Protection of Minors Training. For more information, please contact the Office of Social Equity/Title IX Office.

For more information, please see:

<https://www.iup.edu/social-equity/policies/mandatory-title-ix-and-protection-of-minors-training/>

FERPA Regulations

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) protects all student information and records. FERPA is a federal law that protects students from other persons gaining access to their student records without their permission. Graduate Assistants may interact with students and/or student records and are held to FERPA regulations. Graduate Assistants must familiarize themselves with and follow FERPA regulations. Supervisors of GAs should review any relevant FERPA regulations, provide training in handling student information, and verify the GAs understanding of and intent to follow FERPA regulations.

Graduate Assistants are to review the following two FERPA Online Trainings “prior” to the start of their GA work hours:

1. [IUP: Online FERPA Training](#)
2. **Protecting Student Privacy U.S. Department of Education: FERPA 101: For Colleges & Universities**
<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/training/ferpa-101-colleges-universities>

For more information, please see: <https://iup.edu/registrar/policies/ferpa/>

Graduate Assistant Stipend and Tuition Dollars

Graduate Assistants are required to receive a stipend and tuition dollars towards their tuition account as specified in their GA Agreement. Under no circumstances is a GA to receive only a stipend or only tuition dollars; they must receive both for the term(s) designated in the Agreement. Summer tuition dollars can be included as part of a fall and/or spring award, but there is no stipend during summer. Stipends are paid on a bi-weekly basis through IUP Student Payroll. Tuition dollars are applied to the student’s tuition account, excluding fees, through the

Student Billing Office. In cases of external funding opportunities (e.g., grant or contract funding), exceptions to the above parameters can be considered. These would need to be discussed with and approved by **Coordinator of Academic Personnel and Budget**.

Graduate Assistantship Termination or Loss of Support

If a Graduate Assistant is terminated from their position or terminates their agreement, they will no longer receive a stipend. Depending on when termination occurs, the student may be responsible for paying a pro-rated tuition amount from the time of termination to the end of the term. If the GA is over-compensated the stipend amount, they may be responsible for repayment to the University.

A GA's appointment may be terminated prior to the end of the GA Agreement period for cause, for academic delinquency, for violation of GA Agreement conditions, and by voluntary mutual agreement. GA Agreements may also be terminated due to loss of funding.

- a.) **Cause.** An appointment may be terminated immediately for cause including but not limited to: incompetence, inefficiency, failure to satisfactorily fulfill work assignments, including reporting, insubordination, repeated or extended absence, and misconduct related to the GA's ability, capacity or suitability to continue to perform the GA assignments/duties, violation of laws or University regulations which in the judgment of the University affect the duties or responsibilities of the GA.
- b.) **Academic Delinquency.** If a GA fails to maintain good academic standing or is not making satisfactory progress to a degree, an appointment may be terminated.
- c.) **Violation of GA Agreement Conditions.** The GA Agreement specifies the start and end date of the contract period; the number of graduate credits for which the student must be and remain enrolled; the number of hours per week the GA is to be available to work as well as the requirement to remain in good academic standing. Violation of the conditions of the GA Agreement may lead to immediate termination and loss of financial support including termination on student payroll and tuition dollars pro-rated as appropriate.
- d.) **Voluntary Mutual Agreement.** With the agreement of the GA and supervisor, a GA appointment may be terminated voluntarily by written resignation of the GA.
- e.) **Loss of Funding.** In the event there is a loss of funding for the graduate assistantship, the Agreement will be terminated.

Renewal and Non-Renewal of GA Appointment

The University does not guarantee renewal of a Graduate Assistantship appointment after the end of the designated term. Appointment renewals are at the discretion of the department's program coordinator and determined by the process established within each department for renewal. The University cannot guarantee the renewal of a Graduate Assistantship, and there can be no expectation that a Graduate Assistantship will be continued after the designated term.

Conflict Resolution

A GA who experiences problems related to work or workload should address the problems without delay by bringing the matter to the attention of first, their supervisor; second, their program coordinator; and third, the **Coordinator of Academic Personnel and Budget** may be consulted at any point in this process should the student deem appropriate. **Coordinator of Academic Personnel and Budget** has the ultimate authority to mediate and/or resolve conflict.

Financial Aid

Questions regarding the graduate assistantship and financial aid should be directed to the IUP Financial Aid Office. Please see: <https://iup.edu/financialaid/>

Hiring Process

Questions about the hiring/onboarding process should be directed to IUP's Department of Human Resources. Please see: <https://iup.edu/humanresources/>

International Students

Questions about international students and graduate assistantships should be directed to the Office of International Education (OIE). Please see <https://iup.edu/international/>

Student Payroll Procedures

Questions about student payroll procedures should be directed to the Payroll Services office. Please see: <https://iup.edu/payroll/>

Tuition Account

Questions about your tuition account should be directed to the Office of Student Billing. Please see: <https://www.iup.edu/student-billing/>