

THE
GRADUATE ASSISTANT
HANDBOOK



SAVANNAH

STATE UNIVERSITY

2015-2017

Dear Graduate Assistant:

Congratulations on your appointment as a graduate assistant at Savannah State University. We, in the Office of Graduate Studies, are proud of our graduate assistants and are confident that you will represent both the University and your discipline with distinction.

Graduate study at SSU combines quality instruction with challenging research experience to create a stimulating learning environment. Attention to your studies and your assistantship responsibilities will enhance your professional growth and development. The contacts and relationships that you establish during this time in your life will prove to be invaluable as you continue your career.

Again, welcome to the corps of graduate assistants at SSU.

Sincerely,

The Office of Graduate Studies

GRADUATE ASSISTANT SUMMARY

1. The graduate assistantship serves two purposes:
 - a. to facilitate the professional growth and development of the individuals through supervised work experience, and
 - b. to contribute to the teaching and research endeavors of the institution.
2. An applicant must have complete admission to a graduate program under the "*regular*" (not provisional) classification.
3. The graduate assistant must maintain a 3.0 cumulative grade point average.
4. A graduate student holding an appointment as an assistant must register and earn credit for a minimum of nine (9) semester hours of graduate course work leading to the degree each semester in which he or she holds the assistantship.
5. Each graduate assistant must work 15 hours per week as designated by the assigned unit.
6. Each graduate assistant receives a stipend. The stipend is not tied to an hourly rate. Students are paid on a monthly basis in four installments on the last working day of the month (September, October, November, December) (February, March, April, May).
7. Assistantships are rarely offered during the Summer Semester.
8. Applications for re-appointment must be submitted annually.
9. A graduate assistant choosing to resign or terminate his/her employment must submit a letter of resignation to the coordinator of their program and the Office of Graduate Studies.

THE GRADUATE ASSISTANT HANDBOOK

The Graduate Assistantship Program at Savannah State University is designed to promote the research and teaching responsibility of the university and to provide students with valuable professional development opportunities while he or she earns a degree. Therefore, the graduate assistantship involves the dual responsibilities of maintaining a satisfactory academic performance and of successfully performing the assigned teaching, research, or other responsibilities.

The handbook is designed for the benefits of both the beginning and continuing graduate assistant and should provide answers to many of the questions that may arise regarding the privileges and responsibilities of a graduate assistant. If answers to specific questions are not provided, please make use of the resources discussed in this booklet or contact your program coordinator.

The Graduate Assistant Handbook does not replace the University bulletins-graduate and undergraduate, or the Student Handbook. All of these publications provide valuable information not found elsewhere. It is the responsibility of the student to keep abreast of the policies and procedures set forth in campus publications.

APPLICATIONS, PROCEDURES AND STIPULATIONS:

In order to apply for an assistantship, students need to:

1. Secure a Graduate Assistant Application from the Office of Graduate Studies (Office of Academic Affairs).
2. Carefully complete the application and return it along with the application for admission to the Office of Graduate Studies (Office of Academic Affairs) in Colston Building, Room 221.
3. Submit applications by the deadline (Fall-May 15; Spring-October 1).
4. Submit applications annually. Renewal of a previous year's contract is not automatic. Each year the student must compete with other applicants for a position; however, experience is a valuable asset.
5. The Office of Graduate Studies works with the individual programs in the assignment of assistantships, employment contracts and other information. For answers to questions concerning graduate assistantship, call (912) 358-4195.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

1. The student must be accepted to graduate program as a "*regular*" (not provisional) degree-seeking student.
2. For the second year student, satisfactory progress toward the degree must be evidenced by the completion of a minimum of eighteen (18) semester hours and at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average.

ASSISTANTSHIP APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES:

1. Upon receipt of the Graduate Assistantship Application, the Office of Graduate Studies screens applicants for appropriate admission status (i.e. "regular").
2. The Program Coordinator and the selection committee review the application. If the Program elects to employ the student, the application and a recommendation for employment are returned to the Office of Graduate Studies by the Program Coordinator.
4. The Office of Graduate Studies sends a Graduate Assistant Appointment letter (contract) and other required employment forms to the student. The contract contains information such as starting and ending dates, stipend amount, payment dates, required duties, etc. **
5. If the student chooses to accept the assistantship, he or she should complete the forms accurately, sign the contract, and return them to the Office of Graduate Studies.
6. Any questions regarding completion of the forms should be addressed to the Office of Graduate Studies.

** A sample contract is in the appendix

ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Graduate Assistant is expected to enroll and earn credit for a minimum of nine (9) graduate hours per semester during the semesters in which an assistantship is held. If a graduate assistant drops below the nine minimum hours, the student will be assessed the full amount of tuition and the assistantship may be in jeopardy. An overall grade point average of 3.0 (B) must be maintained in order to continue as a graduate assistant. After all degree requirements for the planned program of study are met, a student is no longer eligible to receive a graduate assistantship.

Overloads (more than 12 semester hours) are granted rarely and only after approval by the advisor and the Program Coordinator.

If the graduate assistant receives an incomplete "I" grade, the "I" must be removed during the semester following the semester in which the "I" was recorded in order to continue the assistantship. If the "I" is not removed during this period, the student must relinquish the assistantship.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

A graduate assistant is required to work fifteen (15) hours per week. Graduate assistants are expected to begin work the first day of classes and continue through the week of finals. The exact schedule of hours should be determined by the Program Director or the person designated by the Program Director. The specific expectations and duties will be provided by the employing Program. Uncertainties about job expectations can be answered by the appropriate supervisors.

STIPEND, PAY SCHEDULES, AND BENEFITS:

The stipend for all graduate assistants is stipulated in the contract. Payment is made monthly on the last working day of each month beginning late September. Graduate assistants are part-time employees; therefore, they are ineligible for employment benefits. No annual or sick leave is accrued. Insurance options are available to assistants as students, not as employees. For health and hospitalization insurance information, visit www.studentinsurance.com to enroll in the Pearce and Pearce student health insurance program.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES:

Consult the SSU student handbook for procedures to be followed regarding grievances.

RESIGNATION:

A graduate assistant choosing to resign or terminate his/her employment must submit a letter of resignation to the Program Coordinator and Office of Graduate Studies. If a graduate assistant resigns any time during the semester he/she receives an assistantship, the student will be assessed the full amount of tuition for the number of hours registered at the beginning of the semester.

TERMINATION:

Failure to satisfactorily perform the duties assigned by the supervisor could result in the termination of the assistantship.

RECOMMENDED CHANGES:

The Handbook is intended for students' use; however, to insure its value, input is welcomed from graduate assistants. The student should submit any suggestions for changes or additions to the Administrative Assistant of the Office of Graduate Studies.

Appendix A

GRADUATE ASSISTANT CONTRACT

TO: John F. Doe

DATE: August 1, 2015

Please be advised that Savannah State University has approved your appointment as a graduate assistant in the MPA Department/College.

The period of your appointment is for the 2015-2016 academic year of two semesters beginning August 2015, and ending May 2015.

You must register and earn credit for nine (9) semester hours of graduate course work leading to the degree during each and every semester in which you hold the assistantship. After all degree requirements for the planned program of study are met, a student is no longer eligible to receive a graduate assistantship. If you drop below the minimum nine hours, you will be assessed the full amount of tuition and your assistantship may be in jeopardy.

If you relinquish your assistantship any time during a semester, the tuition waiver for that semester will be considered void, and you will be assessed the full amount of tuition.

You must render services to the university, school, or program to which you are assigned during the period of the appointment. The service as set forth by your immediate supervisor is to equal fifteen hours per week during the appointment period. Your duties will be assigned by your immediate supervisor in consultation with the graduate dean. You are not eligible for additional employment on campus except as an institutional or work-study **and only then with the written permission of your advisor.**

Your total compensation will be **\$5,555.00** for the academic year. Students are paid in four installments on the last working day of the month (September, October, November, December) (February, March, April, May). Should the appointment be terminated at the end of fall or spring semester, the final check will be adjusted for the amount due to complete the semester compensation.

<u>SEMESTER</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>PERIOD OF SERVICE</u>
Spring	\$2,777.50	August 2015 –December 2015
Fall	\$2,777.50	January 2016 – May 2016

The payment of compensation provided for herein is contingent upon the continued availability of funds for personal service under the General Appropriation Ad and may be increased or reduced according to the availability of funds. **FAILURE TO SATISFACTORILY PERFORM THE DUTIES ASSIGNED BY YOUR SUPERVISOR COULD RESULT IN THE TERMINATION OF YOUR ASSISTANTSHIP.**

Director/ Chair of Employing unit Date

Signature of Employee Date

Director of Graduate Studies Date

Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs Date