

SOUTH DAKOTA SCHOOL OF MINES & TECHNOLOGY

Policy Manual

SUBJECT: Graduate Assistantships

NUMBER: Policy 2-7 (formerly Policy II-6)

REVISED: January 2025

Graduate students may be employed as teaching and/or research assistants by members of the faculty to enhance the quality of instruction or research and to provide professional development opportunities for graduate students. This policy applies to students enrolled in South Dakota Mines graduate degree programs.

1) Definitions

- A. **Graduate Assistantships:** Graduate assistantships (GA) are salaried graduate student positions that fall into two categories: a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) or a Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) depending on the type of duties performed and the type of funding used. A Hybrid GA includes a specified proportion of teaching and research duties.
- B. **Assistantship Duties:** A **GTA** serves in an instructional support capacity to the instructor of record and may be expected to lead or assist in laboratory setup and/or laboratory instruction, lead or assist in recitation sessions, hold office hours, prepare assignments or rubrics with the oversight of the instructor, grade assignments, proctor exams, lead lecture class sessions on rare occasions, or other reasonable duties that assist the course instructor. A **GRA** leads or assists researchers in conducting funded or unfunded research and may perform a wide variety of duties commensurate with their skills and academic level.
- C. **Graduate Departments:** Academic departments that offer one or more graduate degrees and are responsible for educating and advising graduate students.
- D. **Compensable and Noncompensable Work:** Compensable work for graduate assistants includes duties that do not directly contribute to completion of the degree, such as lab instruction, grading, or lab maintenance unrelated to their research. Noncompensable work includes duties that directly contribute to degree completion, such as taking coursework, doing research for the thesis/dissertation, writing the thesis/dissertation, or lab maintenance related to their own research.
- E. **Hourly Appointments:** Graduate students may also be offered hourly appointments, which differ from graduate assistantships in that they are not salaried, and students are paid only for reported hours worked.

2. Workload and Salary

- A. A GA is first a student, and the student status is the most important role. An assistantship is a salaried position designed to support a student's education. It

represents 1.0 FTE in which up to 20 hours per week may be compensable work and at least 20 hours are designated as noncompensable effort contributing to degree completion.

- B. Graduate students may be awarded a full-time assistantship, corresponding to 0.5 FTE (20 hr/wk) of compensable effort, or a three-quarter-time assistantship corresponding to 0.37 FTE (15 hr/wk) of compensable effort.
- C. A graduate student may be awarded a hybrid GTA/GRA appointment with specified proportions of research and teaching duties, provided the total FTE sums to 0.37 or 0.5.
- D. The Office of Graduate Education publishes a minimum stipend rate annually. Departments/Programs may pay more than the minimum stipend. They are encouraged to establish a standard amount for their full-time GRA stipends, so that all students in the department at the same level are compensated at a similar rate.
- E. All GAs are expected to report for work during academic breaks that occur during the contract period, unless otherwise authorized by their supervisor.
- F. Benefits: GAs do not accumulate sick leave and annual leave, nor do they qualify for health insurance or retirement benefits. This rule applies regardless of percent appointment.
- G. Graduate students may be awarded an hourly appointment for compensable work under limited circumstances. Hourly appointments are not to be used for noncompensable effort.
 - a. Pay rates for hourly positions reflect the level of duties expected. Rates for duties normally done by graduate assistants must be compensated at or above the minimum graduate hourly rate set annually by the Office of Graduate Education. Rates for other duties must reflect the campus compensation typically provided for similar work.
 - b. Hourly appointments do not include a reduced tuition benefit.
 - c. Students must be registered for a minimum of 2 credits in any academic term for which they hold an hourly appointment. Summer registration is not required, but students with a summer hourly appointment must be pre-registered for at least two credits for the fall term.
- H. Graduate departments may award hourly positions up to 0.25 FTE (10 hr/wk) to students not on an assistantship. During summer and winter break, graduate departments may supplement assistantships with an hourly appointment, provided that the duties are distinct from the assistantship duties and are compensable.
- I. Units other than graduate departments, such as Facilities, may award hourly or salaried positions without tuition remission for up to 0.5 FTE (20 hr/wk) during the academic year or up to 1.0 FTE (40 hr/wk) during the summer and winter break, subject to hiring policies established by Human Resources and the restrictions on total workload defined below.
- J. Research centers are not considered graduate departments and may hire graduate

students hourly for compensable effort. They may alternatively coordinate with a graduate department to fund or partly fund a GRA awarded by the department and supervised by a department faculty member.

- K. The total compensable effort of all positions held by a student (assistantships, salaried, hourly) may not exceed 0.5 FTE (20 hr/wk) during the fall or spring semesters and 1.0 FTE (40 hr/wk) during summer or winter break.
- L. GTAs are not appointed as the instructor of record for a course at South Dakota Mines.
- M. Assistantship or hourly appointments with conditions other than those set forth herein must be individually approved by the Dean of Graduate Education prior to opening the position.

3. Eligibility and Qualifications

- A. GAs are meritorious awards provided to graduate students who have demonstrated outstanding academic achievement and maintain a graduate GPA of 3.0 or higher. The institution will seek to award assistantships to the best qualified students available to perform the tasks required.
- B. In addition to meeting the minimum English proficiency scores as defined in the admission requirements, international students receiving an assistantship must have sufficient English proficiency to perform the duties assigned. This determination may involve assessment and observation by a department head.
- C. The Council on Graduate Education will establish the minimum or maximum number of credits for which students must be enrolled to receive a graduate assistantship.
 - a. In order to qualify for a GA, the student must register for a minimum of 9 credit hours during the academic semester in which the GA is in effect (2 hours in the summer). Graduate assistants who drop below this minimum during the semester will lose their assistantship eligibility, and the assistantship will be terminated.
 - b. A GA may register for a maximum of 10 credit hours during the academic semester in which the GA is in effect (2 hours in the summer) unless tuition/fee recovery is available from external sources, or an exemption is approved by the Dean of Graduate Education.
 - c. A GA may request a one-time exception to qualify for an assistantship with 2 to 8 credits of registration during the last semester of enrollment. If the student does not complete the degree in that semester, the student is again subject to the 9 credit (or summer 2 credit) minimum enrollment requirement.
- D. Only those courses that fulfill requirements for the GA's program shall apply toward the credit-hour eligibility requirement for reduced tuition. Remedial or supplemental courses appropriate to the graduate degree may count for reduced tuition if approved by the major professor, the assistantship supervisor, and the Dean of Graduate Education.
- E. Assistantships may be awarded to students on academic probation only in

restricted cases, under unusual and justifiable circumstances. Justification from the department head/program director for GA awards to students on academic probation is required in all cases and must be approved by the Dean of Graduate Education.

- F. Award of a GA to a student with a GPA below 3.00 does not waive the requirement that the student achieve a final GPA of 3.00 or higher to graduate from their graduate program.

4. Supervision

- A. The faculty supervisor determines the duties and responsibilities for each GA, subject to review and approval by the department head and the Dean of Graduate Education. The supervisor must clearly communicate these duties and expectations to the student at the start of each contract period or any time the duties and expectations are changed.
- B. Faculty supervisors are responsible for monitoring GA performance and for providing regular mentoring, feedback, support, and guidance.
- C. GA compensable workload shall include meetings with supervisors, office hours, and other work-related expectations concerning compensable duties.
- D. All GAs and supervisors are expected to consult with Human Resources concerning Social Security and Internal Revenue Service regulations and guidelines for graduate assistants, and with the Ivanhoe International Center for regulations regarding international students.
- E. A GA whose employment performance does not meet expectations may have his or her assistantship terminated during the contract period, with no further stipend payments and possible loss of the reduced tuition benefit. Prior to termination, the student must be notified in writing of the specific performance deficits and given a minimum of two weeks to improve performance to expected levels. This written notice must be provided to the Graduate Office and Human Resources at the same time it is given to the student.

5. GA Tuition Remission

- A. South Dakota Mines graduate assistantships include reduced [tuition](#) under the incentive graduate tuition rate authorized by SD BOR Policy 5:22. This rate covers 100% of tuition and program fees during terms in which the student holds an assistantship contract. Certain additional or special fees are not covered and must be paid by the student.
- B. The minimum stipend rate published annually by the Office of Graduate Education must be equal to or greater than the minimum semester stipend required by the BOR to qualify a student for reduced tuition.
- C. If a student's assistantship terminates prior to the semester withdrawal deadline, she/he will lose the reduced tuition benefit and be responsible for paying the full tuition bill for the semester at the applicable non-GA rate.
- D. For those students receiving reduced tuition, tuition remission must, under most circumstances, be recovered.

- a. Direct charges for reduced tuition benefits will not be made to state-appropriated funds (unless the graduate program has funds specifically designated for tuition remission) or to funds used to support teaching assistantships.
 - b. Non-state-appropriated funds, including external research grants, overhead accounts, and funds derived from the Center for Alumni Relations and Advancement (CARA), will be charged for tuition remission based on the proportion of the total stipend paid by each funding source.
 - c. Scholarships and fellowships do not require work as a condition of award, do not qualify a student for the GA tuition rate, and hence, will not be charged for tuition remission or used in the ratio for calculation of tuition remission charges.
- E. The Office of Finance will analyze the composition of the source or sources of salary funds for each graduate student receiving the GA tuition rate to determine the amount of tuition remission to be charged to each stipend source. The review will be conducted separately for each of the following three academic periods: summer, fall and spring.

Revision History: Graduate Office, July 2020, April 2022, Aug. 2022, Aug 2024, January 2025

BOR Policy/Committee References: Policy 5:5, Policy 5:17, Policy 5:22