

# Graduate Assistant Manual



**The Graduate School  
Minot State University  
Minot, ND 58707**

**This manual was approved by the Minot State University Graduate Council  
November 14, 2008  
*Updated August 2011***

**Exceptions to these policies must have the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School.**

In accordance with Federal statutes, it is the policy of Minot State University that no person in the United States shall be discriminated against because of race, creed, color, sex, age, or national origin in the selection as a graduate assistant provided the applicant meets the requirements for the assistantship.

The Graduate Assistant Manual provides information about policies and procedures in regard to Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA), Graduate Research Assistants (GRA), and Graduate Service Assistants (GSA) at Minot State University as overseen by the Graduate School.\* The information is intended for graduate assistants and their supervisors, as well as program directors and department chairpersons.

## **Graduate Assistantships**

Graduate assistantships provide students a learning opportunity working alongside faculty supervisors in a variety of experiences required in the field of higher education (or their related career field). Graduate students may seek assignments in teaching, research, or service, the three responsibilities required of most higher education professionals.

Graduate assistants are assigned to a faculty supervisor and have specific job responsibilities delegated prior to the beginning of the experience. The selected experience should fit the GA's background and interests and contribute to the needs of the department. Foremost, the assistantship should be a learning experience that contributes to the student's growth as a professional in or outside of higher education.

Graduate assistant applications are collected in the Graduate Office and forwarded to each program prior to the beginning of the semester. Each program is assigned a number of assistantships, based on one-eighth time commitment for the student, which they then award as needed. Programs may award eighth-time, quarter-time, or half-time assistantships each semester using their allocations.

## **Graduate Teaching Assistantships**

A graduate teaching assistant (GTA) teaches or assists in the teaching of an undergraduate course in an academic program and department. GTA's who are appointed to teach an undergraduate course must have appropriate education and experience in the particular topic of the course and will report to the department chairperson. A GTA usually also has a faculty mentor who provides teaching support and direction.

The majority of MSU's GTAs assist a faculty member teaching an undergraduate class. Typical duties may include development and delivery of selected lessons, student assessment, oversight of course projects, etc. GTAs are considered to be part of the professional departmental staff (although they are not faculty members) and should not be assigned routine clerical work. They are, however, expected to perform tasks typical to those required in teaching a university course.

GTA's must successfully complete a criminal history records check prior to commencing any teaching assignment. Please see the Human Resource Policy Manual for information or contact the Human Resource Director at ext. 4610.

*\*Various departments hire graduate students for specific tasks that are funded by each department. These graduate students are not under the jurisdiction of the graduate school.*

## **Graduate Research Assistantships**

A Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) is appointed to assist in a research project conducted by a faculty member or a department. The GRA must demonstrate qualifications for conducting research based on previous education and experience. GRAs are responsible to the principal investigator (PI) of the study, usually a faculty member, and the PI assigns the specific tasks required. Typical duties might include designing, gaining approval for, and distributing a survey; completing a literature review; or performing preliminary data analysis, etc.

Joint research opportunities between faculty and graduate students may branch off into related studies. Such studies, with faculty agreement and guidance, may develop into the student's future thesis or project.

## **Graduate Service Assistantships**

A Graduate Service Assistant (GSA) is appointed to work with a faculty member or department in a specific service activity that is central to the university environment. While qualifications for this type of appointment vary, education, experience, and interest in collegiate student services, academic administration, and faculty leadership is appropriate for a student seeking a GSA assignment. GSAs report to a faculty or staff supervisor who provides specific assignments and guidance on independent projects. Typical responsibilities might include co- or independent leadership of an academic student organization, organization and oversight of an undergraduate course service project, assistance with faculty service committee work (non-clerical), selected administrative projects such as accreditation, assessment, or enrollment planning, etc.

## **Requirements**

### **Application**

A prospective or current graduate student interested in applying for an assistantship may do so at any time; prospective students are encouraged to apply at the time they apply for Graduate School admission. Applications are available on the MSU Graduate School website under Scholarship Related Information, <http://www.minotstateu.edu/graduate/forms.shtml>

At the time of application, a prospective graduate student must have an undergraduate cumulative GPA of at least 2.75; a current graduate student must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00. Applications should be submitted to the Graduate Office (200 Memorial Hall, MSU).

Once appointed, a Graduate Assistant must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.00, be in good academic standing (not on academic probation), and complete required self-evaluations of performance in order to continue the experience and to be considered for rehiring the next semester. Students may be reappointed to assistantship positions providing they meet the enrollment and academic requirements as well as receive positive evaluations from their supervisors. Once a student is appointed to a specific position, he/she does not

need to submit a new graduate assistant application to be considered for rehiring for that position. However, a new application is required at the beginning of each new academic year.

### **Eligibility**

Students eligible for graduate assistantships are those who are *admitted*; students admitted with provisions or conditionally admitted are not eligible until their status changes to ‘admitted.’ Applicants must enroll in at least six semester hours during the fall or spring or at least three semester hours during the summer session. Students enrolled in 598, 599, or 589 who are working on their final project or thesis are also eligible.

### **Hiring and Hours of Work**

Each program should establish procedures for matching assistantship positions with their applicant pool. Applications received in the Graduate School will be forwarded to the program directors prior to the beginning of the semester.

**The hiring process must occur no later than the end of the second week of the semester.** You are encouraged to complete the hiring process **during the previous semester** when possible. GTAs responsible for teaching an undergraduate class should be hired no less than two weeks before the semester begins. Once an assistant is selected, the faculty supervisor should visit with the student and discuss the position responsibilities, hours required, and start date. The Graduate Assistant Position Description (Appendix A) will be completed and signed by the graduate assistant, faculty or staff supervisor, and program director.

The program director will share the Graduate Assistant Position Description with the department chairperson, who will, in turn, complete appropriate items on the Contract Request (<http://www.minotstateu.edu/academic/contracts.shtml>).

### **The following items will be forwarded to the Graduate School:**

- Signed Graduate Assistant Position Description
- Contract Request
- Copy of Graduate Assistantship Application

The Graduate School will forward the necessary paperwork to Human Resources and will follow with a letter to the newly appointed Graduate Assistant (via email). Assistants should not begin working until they receive the letter/email from the Graduate School.

Graduate assistants may be hired eighth time (5 hours a week), quarter time (10 hours a week), or half time (20 hours a week). Graduate teaching assistants who teach undergraduate courses may be contracted from quarter-time to half-time. During summer school the hours are 6.5 for eighth time, 12.15 for quarter time, and 25 for half time. When determining full-time enrollment status, an eighth-time assistantship is equivalent to 1.5 semester hours, a quarter-time assistantship is equivalent to 3 semester hours, and a half-time assistantship is equivalent to 6 semester hours.

A student may have only one MSU Graduate School Assistantship assigned to him or her in any given semester.

Graduate assistants are paid a salary rather than a per-hour rate. Each graduate program is allocated funding to be used for graduate assistants for the fiscal year. The funding for each program's allocation is based on the previous academic year's data. Graduate assistantship salaries are subject to income tax, thus tax will be withheld.

The pay scale for 2011-2012 is as follows:

Eighth time	5 hours per week	\$1,370 per semester
Quarter time	10 hours per week	\$2,740 per semester
Half time	20 hours per week	\$5,580 per semester

Pay day is the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. MSU has a two-week lag time, meaning that payroll is two weeks behind actual weeks worked.

International students may work a maximum of 20 hours per week.

Graduate Assistants will receive a Letter of Appointment from MSU. This notification completes an agreement that MSU, the Graduate School, the academic program/department and faculty supervisor, and the graduate student expect to honor. If a student who has accepted an assistantship has a change of plans, he or she must submit a written resignation of the assistantship to the Graduate School office. During the fifth week of the semester (third week in the summer session), the graduate student and his/her supervisor will complete a performance evaluation. If performance is not meeting expectations, after consultation with the program director and the graduate dean, the graduate assistant may be dismissed from his/her position at this time.

Students who withdraw or are dismissed from the Graduate School are ineligible and may not continue as graduate assistants. If a student is placed on probation, he or she will lose the assistantship.

### **Graduate Assistant Rights and Responsibilities**

Graduate assistants are expected to abide by policies regarding professional behavior. They are subject to the ethical standards of their academic profession, through the laws of the State of North Dakota and through Minot State University's policies, which govern the institution and its employees. Violation of these policies will be the basis for disciplinary action and possible dismissal from the graduate assistantship.

Graduate assistants are first and foremost graduate students and they must meet the demands of that role by fulfilling course requirements and by maintaining at least a 3.00 GPA.

GTAs are teachers, and as such are members of a departmental staff, but are not faculty members, of Minot State University. They are accorded the rights and responsibilities of academic freedom as outlined in the MSU Faculty Handbook.

## **Evaluation of Graduate Assistants' Performance**

Graduate Assistants' performance will be based on the position description, focusing on quality of work and meeting of expectations. The assistant will participate in two levels of performance evaluation: self-evaluation and supervisory evaluation. Written evaluations will be completed during the fifth week of the academic term (third week of the summer session) and at the completion of the semester. The primary purpose of the Initial evaluation is to ensure the fit of the assignment for both the student and the supervisor and/or position. Completion of this Initial evaluation provides feedback to both parties as well as the Graduate School and allows for any necessary guidance or revision of the assignment. At this time, the graduate assistant may be subject to dismissal if job expectations, per the position description, are not being met. Appendix B is the Graduate Assistant Initial Self-Assessment; Appendix C is the Supervisor Initial Assessment.

Once the Initial evaluations are completed, the supervisor will review his/her evaluation with the graduate assistant. The graduate assistant and the supervisor will sign the evaluation and submit it to the Graduate School. The graduate assistant has the option of sharing his/her self-evaluation with the supervisor prior to submitting it to the Graduate Office. \*Failure to submit the Initial evaluation forms in a timely manner to the Graduate School may result in discontinuance of further assistantship experiences for either the student or the supervisor or both.

Prior to Final Examinations, the graduate assistant and the supervisor will complete Final evaluations of the experience (see Appendices D and E). The graduate assistant will assess the overall learning experience, while the supervisor will focus on the overall performance and quality of work provided by the graduate assistant. As with the Initial evaluation, the Final evaluation provided by the supervisor will be shared with the graduate assistant, and both parties will sign the form. The graduate assistant has the option of sharing his/her evaluation with the supervisor before submitting it to the Graduate School.

### **The Graduate Assistant's Role in Publication of Research Findings**

The graduate assistant who is involved in the research and writing of manuscripts to be submitted for publication should be given full credit as co-author for his or her contribution to the work.

## Appendices

**Graduate Assistantship Position Description**

*Directions: The supervisor of the graduate assistant will complete this form and review its contents with the graduate assistant. The graduate assistant, supervisor, and program director or department chairperson will sign to indicate approval of the assistantship. Please submit this form along with the Contract Request and copy of the Graduate Assistantship Application to the Graduate School by the end of the second week of the semester.*

**Today's Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Program:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Semester of assistantship:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Graduate Assistant's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ID #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Faculty Supervisor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Assistantship:**

- Teaching
- Research
- Service

**Appointment FTE:**

- Eighth time
- Quarter time
- Half time

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ **Criminal History Records Check Requirement.**

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**Description of Assistantship--include specific responsibilities, tasks, and timelines where applicable. You may attach additional pages.**

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### Approvals

*I agree to perform the above listed activities in my role as a Graduate Assistant at Minot State University this semester.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Assistant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*I agree that the above listed activities are those for which I will supervise the above Graduate Assistant this semester.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*I approve of this Assistantship.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Director's or Department Chairperson's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***International Students only***

*I understand that I may work no more than 20 hours each week during the time of my assistantship.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
International Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please Note: If additional duties are assigned during the semester, the supervisor and student should agree in writing to these additional duties and convey this agreement, along with the duties, in a memorandum to the Program Director and to the Dean of the Graduate School. The memorandum will be attached to this agreement as an addendum.

**Graduate Assistantship  
Initial Self-Evaluation**

*Directions: Graduate Assistant completes this form during the 5<sup>th</sup> week (3<sup>rd</sup> week summer) of the semester. **Completed evaluation remains confidential**; graduate assistant may share with his/her supervisor if he/she wishes to do so. Submit to the Graduate School by the end of the week.*

**Today's Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Assistantship:**

- Teaching  
 Research  
 Service

**Appointment FTE:**

- Eighth time  
 Quarter time  
 Half time

**Program:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please rate each of the following based on your experience to date as a Graduate Assistant. Place a check mark (✓) in the appropriate box at the end of the line.  
 E =Excellent; G = Good; F = Fair; P = Poor**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P</b>
Responsibilities agree with the Position Description				
Hours are consistent with Position Description				
Supervisor's expectations of me are reasonable				
Compensation is appropriate for responsibilities				
Supervisor provides direction and guidance as needed				
Time commitment is appropriate for responsibilities				
Experience is meeting my expectations				
Work is adding to my learning experience as a graduate student				

**Please provide comment or further explanation for any of your ratings above, especially if you have concerns.  Please contact me to discuss my assistantship.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Graduate Assistant's Signature**

**Supervisor's Initial Evaluation  
of Graduate Assistant Performance**

*Directions: Graduate Assistant's supervisor completes this form during the 5<sup>th</sup> week (3<sup>rd</sup> week summer) of the semester. Supervisor reviews the evaluation with the graduate assistant, both sign, and a copy is submitted to the Graduate School by the end of the week.*

**Today's Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Assistantship:**

- Teaching
- Research
- Service

**Appointment FTE:**

- Eighth time
- Quarter time
- Half time

**Program:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Graduate Assistant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please rate each of the following based on the performance of this graduate assistant to date. Place a check mark (√) in the appropriate box at the end of the line.**

**E =Excellent; G = Good; F = Fair; P = Poor**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P</b>
Attendance/dependability				
Overall performance				
Quality of work completed				
Professional attitude				
GA meets my expectations for this assistantship				

**Please provide comment or further explanation for any of your ratings above, especially if you have concerns.  Please contact me to discuss this evaluation.**

**Please describe your supporting evidence for ratings/comments (formal observation, review of completed work, student self-evaluation, etc.)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Supervisor's Signature**

**(To be developed—Appendix D and Appendix E, Final Evaluations)**