

Graduate Student Employment: Graduate Assistants and Scholars

Graduate students may be employed in two types of positions: graduate assistantships (GAs) which are administered by the University of Hawai'i, and graduate scholar (GSs) positions which are administered by the Research Corporation of the University of Hawai'i.

I. Graduate Assistantships.

A graduate assistantship (GA) is a non-tenurable, half-time academic appointment. Appointments may be to either a 9-month or an 11-month position, depending on the duties of the position and available funds. They may be assigned to either research (GRAs) or instructional (GTAs) activities. Under special supervision, with limited latitude for independent action, GTAs assist faculty in grading, advising, administrative duties, and other instructional activities associated with a course or courses: teach a laboratory or discussion section; or teach a class under the direct supervision of a faculty member.

Senior experienced GTAs may be assigned to teach undergraduate courses. A senior GTA would be somebody who meets all the requirements of lecturer if a lecturer were to be hired or is a GTA that has been through a departmental or university teaching assistant training program. Assessment is required of all GTAs assigned as instructors.

(1) **Appointments.** Graduate assistants' appointments are made upon approval of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs as the President's designee. All GAs must first be nominated by the department or graduate program chair, and the nomination must be approved by the relevant Dean or Director. To be appointed or reappointed as a GA, the student must:

- a. be a full-time graduate student admitted to or registered in a graduate program for an advanced degree;
- b. be in good academic standing (cannot be on probation);
- c. have the minimum grade-point average required for regular admission (3.0);
- d. have the experience or other qualifications appropriate to the responsibilities of the assistantship;
- e. be appointed to the BOR approved pay scale. When a grant does not contain sufficient funds to meet a pay increase, a GA may be reappointed "below scale" as a GA-0;
- f. foreign students with any instructional responsibility must demonstrate proficiency in English, defined as a TOEFL score of at least 600 (250 on computer-based test) or its equivalent or an IELTS score of 7.0 or its equivalent; and
- g. reappointment is conditional on satisfactory performance as a GA.

Appointments are made on a competitive basis, the awards going to the most qualified students, as determined by grade-point averages, scores on special examinations, motivation, goals, experience, past performance as a GA, recommendations, and

suitability for the assignment.

A foreign graduate assistant is required to have the appropriate visa to permit employment at the University of Hawai'i.

Availability of assistantships shall be made known to eligible graduate students through appropriate internal university communication channels and posted on bulletin boards. For assistantships used to recruit new students, the graduate application is considered to be adequate notification of availability. A UII Form 17 (EEO/AA) should be completed and retained with the recruiting and selection materials for a period of at least three years. Letters of recommendation should not be forwarded beyond the departmental office,

The Payroll Notification Form (PNF) is utilized for the appointment of graduate assistants. The Dean of the School/College should not sign the (PNF) until the appointment has been approved by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Other personnel forms are processed by the personnel officers of the respective schools/colleges. Regardless of the appointment period, graduate assistants are given a yearly stipend, payable in semi-monthly installments.

Typically, new graduate assistants at the master's level who have instructional responsibilities supported by general funds are appointed at GA-I level and new graduate assistants at the doctoral level at the GA-3 level. After two semesters of satisfactory service, GAs may receive a 1-step increase. The stipend for students with research responsibilities depends on the availability of funds, the ability and experience of the appointee, and the needs of the program. Occasionally quarter-time (0.25 FTE) appointments are available.

(2) Conditions of Employment

- a. GAs are expected to contribute an average of 20 hours per week to their assigned tasks.
- b. GAs must be full-time students, defined as being registered for at least 6 credit hours, Audit hours do not count, The 6 credit hours may be at any level, 100-800, including ELI courses, but they must be relevant to their degree.
- c. All full-time GAs (0.50 FTE) receive tuition exemptions. The exemption is only for tuition, not for any other fees. Half-time GAs (0.25 FTE) receive an exemption for half of their tuition. The tuition exemption applies to the fall and spring semesters only, Summer Session tuition exemptions, if available, are issued by the Dean of CCECS. Announcements regarding such exemptions are made in the University Calender during the spring semester.
- d. Overload activity is permitted for graduate assistants only during non-instructional periods (between semesters and during the summer). One or two pay periods may be approved on an exception basis, and appointees on

less than 0.50 FTE may have overload responsibilities up to the full 0.50 FTE. Overload is permitted for students who have completed all course work and the overload is related to their thesis or dissertation research.

- e. Health benefits are available to GAs appointed at 0.50 FTE for at least 3 months. (State Health Fund Plan). GAs at less than 0.50 FTE may enroll in one of the student health plans.
- f. Graduate assistants are not eligible to accumulate vacation or sick leave.
- g. GAs on nine-month appointments begin on the first day of the faculty duty period and serve through spring commencement.
- h. Eleven-month appointees are entitled to one month of duty-free time each year. Duty-free time should be scheduled at a time mutually agreeable to the assistant and his or her supervisor.
- i. Graduate assistants wishing to register for more than nine credit hours in any one semester, excluding any audit hours, must have the prior permission of their primary academic adviser, their supervisor or PI, and Graduate Division.
- j. It is considered unethical and gross misconduct for a Graduate Teaching Assistants to accept any compensation other than their stipend for tutoring students enrolled in their classes.

(3) Supervision and Guidance

The work of graduate assistants is supervised by the graduate program offering the appointment. This unit determines the assignment, recommends appointment at the appropriate step, supervises the work, and can recommend continuation or renewal at the end of the initial appointment period. Appointment and reappointment must be approved by the Graduate Division. Within the unit, the specific duties of the graduate assistant are determined by the chair, duly appointed executive committees, and the faculty member assigned to supervise the particular course or laboratory section or the principal investigator of the research project.

(4) Performance Reviews

Each graduate program is responsible for developing procedures for the review and evaluation of its graduate assistants. Therefore, the process of evaluation will vary. It may include written assessment of work by faculty, classroom visits, and written student evaluations. For those with instructional responsibilities, formal assessment is mandatory. The results of reviews and evaluations should be discussed with the graduate assistant concerned.

The procedure for review and evaluation is provided in writing to each assistant by the graduate program making the assistantship appointment, on or before the date on which duties commence. If disagreements occur concerning the evaluation, the steps outlined in section (6) of this policy titled "Conflict Resolution" may prove useful.

(5) Termination.

An assistantship shall be automatically terminated when an incumbent completes his/her degree program (at the end of the semester of such completion) or upon the complete withdrawal of a student from his/her program (as of the date of such withdrawal).

Termination may occur before the end of the appointment period because of:

- incompetence or neglected studies;
- misconduct related to the assistantship;
- failure to maintain 3.0 GPR;
- failure to maintain full-time status;
- financial exigencies;
- failure or inability to complete assigned tasks; or
- mutual agreement. GAs who resign before serving at least three-quarters of a semester are liable for full tuition.

(6) Conflict Resolution.

A graduate assistant or intern/ may grieve any aspect of his or her position (e.g. conditions of service). The grievance must be initiated within six months of the event. Academic grievance may not be pursued using these procedures, but must use the regular Academic Grievance Procedures.

Preliminary. The assistant should first try to resolve the problem informally. The issues should be discussed with the faculty supervisor. If this fails; to produce a prompt solution (within 10 working days) the following formal grievance procedure should be followed:

Stage 1 - Department Chair or Graduate Program Chair. The grievance should be submitted in writing to the department or graduate chair. The chair will obtain oral or written testimony from the concerned parties and then review the grievance in the presence of the parties. A written decision will be rendered within 10 days of the completion of the information gathering.

Stage 2 - the Dean or Director- if the assistant is not satisfied with the ruling at stage 1, he or she may appeal the ruling within 10 working days to the relevant dean or director. The dean or director, after reviewing the evidence, will render a written opinion within 10 working days.

Stage 3 - the Graduate Division. Formal grievances filed by graduate assistants that have proceeded through stages 1 and 2 of this procedure without satisfactory resolution may be appealed to the Graduate Division. The VCAA (or designee) will announce his or her decision as soon as possible, usually no more than 10 days after the conclusion of information gathering. The VCAA's decision is final within the University.

(7) Tuition Awards

- (1) **Tuition Waivers** are a waiver of all tuition charges. A half waiver, however, will only waive the tuition on three credits. Only tuition is

waived. Students must pay all the remaining registration fees. To be eligible, the student must:

- a. Be nominated by the graduate program;
- b. Be a regular graduate student in good standing.

Awards are for one semester. Normally, students seeking master's degrees are eligible for four awards and doctoral candidates for eight awards, Tuition waiver awards are monitored by the Graduate Division.

II. RCUH Graduate Scholars

Graduate scholar positions are appointments on extramural grants or contracts. The appointments are usually 50%-time, but may be for smaller percentages. These positions are normally for research positions, but also may involve instructional activities, depending upon specific requirements of the grant or contract.

(1) **Appointments.** Graduate scholars (GS) positions are filled on a competitive basis based upon the recommendation of a search committee under the direction of the principal investigator (PI) of the grant/contract. All GSs must first be nominated by the department or graduate program chair, and the nomination must be approved by the relevant Dean or Director.

To be appointed or reappointed as a GS, the student must:

- a. be a full-time graduate student admitted to or registered in a graduate program for an advanced degree;
- b. be in good academic standing (cannot be on probation);
- c. have the minimum grade-point average required for regular admission (3.0);
- d. have the experience or other qualifications appropriate to the responsibilities of the ship;
- e. remuneration is based upon RCUH pay scales, grant requirements, and experience level of the graduate student;
- e. foreign students with any instructional responsibility must demonstrate proficiency in English, defined as a TOEFL score of at least 600 (250 on computer-based test) or its equivalent or an IELTS score of 7.0 or its equivalent; and
- f. reappointment is conditional on satisfactory performance as a GS.

Appointments are made on a competitive basis, the awards going to the most qualified students, as determined by grade-point averages, scores on special examinations, motivation, goals, experience, past performance as a GS, recommendations, and suitability for the assignment.

A foreign graduate is required to have the appropriate visa to permit employment at

RCUH.

Availability of ships shall be made known to eligible graduate students through appropriate internal university communication channels and posted on bulletin boards, and/or through RCUH notices. For ships used to recruit new students, the graduate application is considered to be adequate notification of availability. Letters of recommendation should not be forwarded beyond the graduate program office.

(2) Conditions of Employment

- a. GSs are expected to contribute up to 21 hours per week to their assigned tasks, with the number of work hours per week specified for each position.
- b. GSs must be students accepted into, or currently enrolled in, a graduate program at UH Hilo.
- c. Health benefits are available to GSs as specified in RCUH regulations.
- d. Graduate s are eligible to receive vacation or sick leave as specified in applicable RCUH policy.
- e. GSs on nine-month appointments begin at the same time as the faculty duty period begins and serve through spring commencement.
- f. Eleven-month appointees are entitled to one month of duty-free time each year. Duty-free time should be scheduled at a time mutually agreeable to the assistant and his or her supervisor.
- g. Graduate s wishing to register for more than nine credit hours in any one semester, excluding any audit hours, must have the prior permission of their primary academic adviser, their supervisor or PI, and Graduate Division.
- h. It is considered unethical and gross misconduct for a Graduate with instructional duties to accept any compensation other than their stipend for tutoring students enrolled in their classes.
- i. GSs will be subject to applicable RCUH policies and procedures.

(3) Supervision and Guidance

The work of graduate scholars is supervised by the graduate program offering the appointment. This unit determines the assignment, recommends appointment at the appropriate step, supervises the work, and can recommend continuation or renewal at the end of the initial appointment period. Appointment and reappointment must be approved by the Graduate Division. Within the unit, the specific duties of the graduate are determined by the chair, duly appointed executive committees, and the faculty member assigned to supervise the particular course or laboratory section or the principal investigator of the research project. Principal Investigator will be responsible to submit all applicable RCUH personnel forms (i.e., online personnel actions, employment documents, timesheets, termination of employment forms, etc.) to ensure GSs are employed and compensated in accordance to applicable RCUH policies and procedures.

(4) Performance Reviews

Each graduate scholar will be subject to an performance evaluation for each term of

employment. The performance evaluation may be the standard RCUH Performance Evaluation Form or an evaluation form devised by the Principal Investigator and approved by the RCUH Human Resources Department. The process will be consistent with the RCUH Annual Performance Evaluation Policy or one that UHH and/or Principal Investigator devises that is approved by the RCUH Human Resources Department. The evaluation may include written assessment of work by faculty, classroom visits, and written student evaluations. For those with instructional responsibilities, formal assessment is mandatory. The results of reviews and evaluations should be discussed with the graduate concerned. A copy will be provided to the GS and placed in their personnel file at the RCUH Human Resources Department.

The procedure for review and evaluation is provided in writing to each by the graduate program making the assistantship appointment, on or before the date on which duties commence. If disagreements occur concerning the evaluation, the steps outlined in section (6) of this policy titled "Conflict Resolution" may prove useful.

(5) Termination.

Termination of GS will be consistent with RCUH Termination of Employment Policy. A ship shall be automatically terminated when an incumbent completes his/her degree program (at the end of the semester of such completion) or upon the complete withdrawal of a student from his/her program (as of the date of such withdrawal). Termination may occur before the end of the appointment period because of:

- incompetence or neglected studies;
- misconduct related to the ship;
- failure to maintain 3.0 GPR;
- failure to maintain full-time status;
- financial exigencies;
- failure or inability to complete assigned tasks; or
- mutual agreement.

(6) Conflict Resolution (UH Policy).

The Conflict Resolution process is an internal UH procedure that the GS must utilize to address any work-related grievance (outside of EEO issues). EEO complaints must be processed through the RCUH EEO policy. A graduate may grieve any aspect of his or her position (e.g. conditions of service). The grievance must be initiated within six months of the event. Academic grievances may not be pursued using these procedures, but must use the regular Academic Grievance Procedures.

Preliminary. The should first try to resolve the problem informally. The issues should be discussed with the faculty supervisor. If this fails; to produce a prompt solution (within 10 working days) the following formal grievance procedure should be followed:

Stage 1 - Department Chair or Graduate Program Chair. The grievance should be submitted in writing to the department or graduate chair. The chair will obtain oral or written testimony from the concerned parties and then review the grievance in the presence of the parties. A written decision will be rendered within 10 days of the completion of the information gathering.

Stage 2 - the Dean or Director- if the is not satisfied with the ruling at stage 1, he or she may appeal the ruling within 10 working days to the relevant dean or director. The dean or director, after reviewing the evidence, will render a written opinion within 10 working days.

Stage 3 - the Graduate Division. Formal grievances filed by graduate scholars that have proceeded through stages 1 and 2 of this procedure without satisfactory resolution may be appealed to the Graduate Division. The VCAA (or designee) will announce his or her decision as soon as possible, usually no more than 10 days after the conclusion of information gathering. The VCAA's decision is final within the University.

(7) Program Amendments & Termination:

The RCUH and UHH reserve the right to amend the program without notice. Termination of the program will occur with sufficient notice to complete the current semester.