Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistantships are offered to encourage graduate-degree work, promote teaching, and promote research. Graduate assistants have a graduate degree as their primary goal, and the assistantships are part of their graduate education. Assistantships are available through various departments of instruction, under the auspices of the Graduate School. Any student qualified for admission to the Graduate School is eligible to apply for a graduate assistantship.

A student eligible for an assistantship may be appointed as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA), Graduate Research Assistant (GRA), or Graduate Administrative Assistant (GAA). Full assistantships usually require 20 hours per week service to the University, but may require more or fewer hours per week in exceptional cases. All full-time graduate assistants must be registered for a minimum of nine semester hours (six semester hours in the summer term) during any semester in which an appointment is held. Exceptions require permission of the Graduate Dean. Normally, all courses for which the student is registered shall be graduate credit courses. Exceptions must be approved by the Department Chair and Graduate Dean.

All assistantship appointments are subject to the continuing availability of funds. Appointments are made by the department only when resources to support them are assured, but students are cautioned that a variety of circumstances could cause positions to be terminated prior to the end of the appointment period. All assistantships are awarded contingent upon satisfactory progress toward a graduate degree. Assistantship support may continue through one additional semester after the semester in which degree requirements are completed.

Benefits

Tuition and Fees

A graduate assistant who holds a full assistantship (20 hours per week) appointment will receive a tuition waiver for 9 to 12 hours per semester (six hours in the summer term) and fees up to nine credit hours. Tuition and fees for students who hold less than a full assistantship appointment are prorated accordingly.

Stipend

Assistantship stipends vary in amount by type, program, and student academic progress. Students receive an offer letter indicating the amount of the stipend. Further information may be obtained in the department or in the Graduate School.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships

GTAs share the faculty's responsibility for teaching. The purpose of this assistantship is two-fold: one is to support the departmental teaching program, and the other is to aid the student's professional development. GTAs must have completed at least 18 semester hours of graduate coursework in their discipline to qualify as the instructor of record in any class.

GTAs may also qualify for other duties assigned, which do not require 18 semester hours of graduate coursework. These duties may include working as a laboratory instructor, tutor, grader, or other activities related to the educational mission of the department. Only students in good academic standing are eligible for and may be awarded a teaching assistantship. The GTA's teaching load will necessarily vary from one department to another, and the load should be proportional to the normal full-time teaching load carried by other faculty members in the department.

If a student holding an assistantship withdraws from courses during the semester such that their course load is below the minimum required hours, that student can be required to reimburse the University for tuition and health insurance prorated on the remaining course load. Students holding an assistantship that do not continue to make satisfactory progress toward their degree may have their assistantship revoked.

Graduate Research Assistantships

A GRA performs research under the supervision of a faculty member. At times, a research project to which the research assistant is appointed may eventually lead to a thesis or dissertation topic; however, a research supervisor cannot guarantee that a particular project will provide suitable material for a thesis or dissertation. All assistantship appointments are subject to the continuing availability of funds. Appointments are made only when resources to support them are assured, but a financial emergency in the University could cause positions, including those of graduate assistants, to be terminated prior to the end of the appointment period. Assistantship support normally will not continue past the end of the semester in which the assistant expects to complete degree requirements. Some contracts or grants may specify U.S. citizenship as a prerequisite for appointment.

Graduate Administrative Assistants

A GAA performs administrative duties under the supervision of a faculty/staff member. As a condition of an administrative assistantship appointment, a 20-hour per week graduate assistant must be registered for at least nine semester hours of graduate credit courses during any semester (Fall or Spring), and for at least six hours during the summer term. Minimum course loads for appointments of lesser work hours per week are prorated accordingly.
Further Information

If a student holding an assistantship withdraws from courses during the semester such that the course load is less than the minimum required hours, that student can be required to reimburse the university for tuition prorated on the remaining course load. Graduate assistants who do not make satisfactory progress towards their degrees may have their assistantships revoked.

International Students

International students must be registered for a minimum of nine graduate credit hours their first semester. This requirement also applies if the student begins their first semester during the summer session. English proficiency is a prerequisite for classroom or laboratory instruction for any non-native English speakers wishing to obtain an assistantship. Please visit the International (https://catalog.uah.edu/grad/admissions/additional-admission-requirements-international-students/) Student section of the catalog (https://catalog.uah.edu/grad/admissions/additional-admission-requirements-international-students/) for more information regarding language requirements.