

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
POLICIES AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

POLICY NO.: IV:07:12

DATE: July 1, 2008

SUPERSEDES POLICY NO.: IV:07:12

DATED: November 17, 1999

SUBJECT: Employment of Graduate Assistants/Graduate Teaching Assistants

APPROVED: Sidney A. McPhee, President



In accordance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), institutions employing graduate assistants must provide a structure for administrative oversight at a level above that of the individual academic or employing unit to assure conformity with institutional policies and procedures.

The Dean of the College of Graduate Studies is responsible for the administration of all aspects of the Graduate Assistants Program: Graduate Teaching Assistants/Graduate Research Assistants/Graduate Administrative Assistants. This responsibility includes approving student applications, checking all credentials and Personnel Appointment Forms, notifying the Business Office and other applicable offices of student appointments, changes, and terminations, recommending stipends, and all other matters relative to graduate student appointments.

I. Types of Graduate Assistantships

A. Graduate Teaching Assistants

The specific duties may vary from department to department. The majority of Graduate Teaching Assistants are assigned one or more of the following responsibilities:

1. Teaching a classroom section of a course;
2. Teaching a laboratory or discussion section of a course;
3. Tutoring or providing other special assistance to students of the University;
4. Assisting a faculty member in grading, advising, and other duties necessary to conduct a course; and
5. Assisting directly or indirectly in instruction or supervision of MTSU students in community programs, internships, workshops, or seminars for practicing professionals.

B. Graduate Research Assistants

Duties vary according to the nature of the department and/or the specific research project to which the student is assigned. The student may assist a faculty member in his/her research or may be part of a team working on an externally funded research project. The duties of a Research Assistant are performed under the direction and supervision of members of the faculty or academic staff.

C. Graduate Administrative Assistants

Typically, assistantships are granted in the department in which the degree is to be earned; however, there are cases where exceptions are permitted. These include assistants who are assigned duties of an administrative or clerical nature in the Office of Academic Affairs, the College of Graduate Studies, the Office of Student Affairs, the Business Office, the Admissions Office, academic apartments or college offices, etc. The Dean of the College of Graduate Studies must approve all appointments of this type.

II. Stipends

All departments and offices at Middle Tennessee State University are to conform with the provisions of this policy and are to pay graduate assistants at the levels established by the College of Graduate Studies.

- A. Stipends for Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Research Assistants funded by the College of Graduate Studies are determined by the College of Graduate Studies based on a review of market factors and the availability of funds. Stipends awarded through external funds such as grants may vary in amount from other assistantships awarded by the university. Stipends for Ed.S. students are the same as those for master's students. Stipends for Doctoral students are greater than those for Master's and Ed.S. students.
- B. Stipends for Graduate Administrative Assistants will be determined by the College of Graduate Studies in consultation with the administrative unit. In no event will the stipend be less than the lowest graduate assistant stipend throughout the University. It is expected that the stipends of administrative graduate assistants will be the same in any given administrative unit, although stipends may vary between administrative units.
- C. The University pays the tuition (Maintenance fees), debt service fee, and the technology access fee for all students holding assistantships. All other costs including books, post office box fees, student auto registration fees, if applicable, and any other fees assessed, are the responsibility of the graduate student. The College of Business retracts the College of Business course fee for all graduate assistants taking courses in the College of Business. Tuition

is not paid by MTSU for students during any semester, or portion thereof, in which they do not have assistantship duties or for courses taken at other TBR institutions (except joint programs) or UT System Universities. The Dean of the College of Graduate Studies must approve payment for undergraduate prerequisites, which must be specified at the time of admission.

III. Workload Required by Contract

- A. All Graduate Assistants are to meet the workload requirements as set forth in the MTSU Standard Assistantship Contract. Failure to fulfill the terms of this contract results in a termination of the student's assistantship.
- B. Workload: Full-time Graduate Assistants will work:
 - 1. Six (6) contact hours per week in classroom or laboratory instruction in which the GTA assigns the grade;
 - 2. Eight (8) contact hours per week in laboratory supervision in which the professor assigns the grade;
 - 3. Ten (10) contact hours per week in teaching at the Campus School;
 - 4. Twenty (20) clock hours per week in supervised activities in the department or office of their employment; or
 - 5. A combination of above, not to exceed these workloads.
- C. All graduate assistants must register for at least six (6) graduate credit hours of course work per semester in order to receive an assistantship and be classified as full-time graduate students. Graduate Assistants in their last semester of study may register for only those hours remaining to complete the degree. Graduate assistants holding summer term appointments may register for less than six (6) hours but their stipends may be subject to federal withholding requirements. All catalog regulations pertaining to full-time students are applicable to Graduate Assistants.
- D. The required six (6) hours must be maintained throughout the entire semester. Courses may not be dropped if the resulting course load is less than the required six (6) credit hours. Courses may not be changed to audit.
- E. Half-time Graduate Assistants will complete the equivalent of $\frac{1}{2}$ of the work-load of Full-time Graduate Assistants. Half-time Graduate Assistants will receive $\frac{1}{2}$ of the stipend and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the tuition and fees of Full-time Graduate Assistants. Half-time Graduate Assistants are charged the balance of their tuition and fees at the resident fee level. Tuition for prerequisite undergraduate courses is not covered for Half-time Graduate Assistants.

IV. Appointment

The department shall follow standard procedures developed by the department for appointment of Graduate Assistants.

A. Contract Period

1. A contract may be issued for one (1) or two (2) semesters or for twelve months.
2. For a given Master's or Ed.S. program, students may be awarded an assistantship for no more than six (6) semesters or, for those on twelve month contracts, no more than two (2) years or the equivalent thereof. For a given Doctoral or M.F.A. program, students may be awarded an assistantship for no more than twelve (12) semesters or, for those on twelve-month contracts, no more than four (4) years, or the equivalent thereof. Students who have completed one degree while holding a Graduate Assistantship, and who are accepted into a second graduate degree program, are eligible to apply for another Graduate Assistantship.
3. Variations from the nine-month and twelve-month contracts must be approved by the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies.
4. All Graduate Assistants are students first. Teaching and workload schedules should be assigned with consideration for the Graduate Assistant's class schedule. Department/Administrative Offices are expected to provide for their taking the usual student holidays such as Labor Day, Spring Break, etc. Graduate Assistants should not be required to work on student holidays.

B. Fiscal Year Appointment: The work period is from July 1 through June 30.

C. Academic Year Appointment: The Fall semester work period will begin one day after the University Convocation and end the day before Fall graduation. The Spring semester work period will begin on the Monday preceding the day classes begin and end the day before Spring graduation.

D. Semester Appointment: The work schedule follows the appropriate semester in Section C above.

E. Failure to Comply with Contract: Assistants whose contracts are terminated because they have not complied with the terms of the contract are subject to a pro-rated charge-back of tuition.

V. Payment for Services

All stipend payments are made by direct deposit. The last payment is deposited after all obligations to the University are met.

- A. Fiscal Year Appointments: Assistants receiving fiscal year appointments are paid in twelve (12) equal installments beginning July 31 and ending June 30.
- B. Academic Year Appointments: Assistants receiving academic year appointments are paid in eight (8) equal installments beginning September 30 and ending April 30.
- C. Semester Appointments: Assistants receiving a semester appointment are paid in four (4) equal installments.

VI. Procedures in Securing Assistantships

A. Responsibilities

1. The student seeking a graduate assistantship should secure the Application for Assistantship Form from the Graduate Catalog, the academic department of his or her major, the appropriate administrative office, or the College of Graduate Studies website. The completed form should be filed with the academic department or the appropriate administrative office.
2. The Department/Administrative Office checks for the following requirements:
 - a. Overall Grade Point Average (GPA), whether undergraduate or graduate, must be at least 3.0. Currently enrolled doctoral students seeking an assistantship must have a 3.25 GPA;
 - b. All entrance requirements have been met and the student has been accepted into a graduate degree program unconditionally;
 - c. Graduate Teaching Assistants who have primary responsibility for teaching a course for credit and/or for assigning final grades for such must have earned at least eighteen (18) graduate semester hours in their teaching discipline, be under the direct supervision of a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, receive regular in-service training and be evaluated on a regular basis. The eighteen-hour requirement does not apply to Graduate Teaching Assistants who are engaged in assignments such as laboratory assistance, attending or helping prepare lectures, grading papers, keeping class records and conducting discussion groups.

3. The Department/Administrative Office shall follow its established committee procedures for appointing assistants and is responsible for obtaining any other information needed in addition to that identified in Section VI. A. 2. above.
4. When a Department/Administrative Office has made a decision to offer an assistantship, the recommendation and appointment forms are forwarded by the department to the appropriate academic dean/administrative official and then to the College of Graduate Studies. The Dean of the College of Graduate Studies is the final approval authority and if approval is granted, shall forward required forms to the appropriate offices. Any correspondence with applicants, whether written or verbal, should indicate that all approvals at the Department/Administrative Office level are tentative and that final contract approval is predicated on the availability of funds and the final approval of the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies.
5. A completed folder for an assistantship candidate, when forwarded to the College of Graduate Studies, should contain completed copies of the following:
 - a. Approved Graduate Assistant Application;
 - b. Personnel Appointment Form (PAF);
 - c. Verification of Employment Eligibility Form (I-9);
 - d. Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate (Form W-4);
 - e. Business Office form indicating budget account number to be charged for the assistantship;
 - f. Supplemental Hiring Form required by SACS, if applicable; and
 - g. Academic Preparation Certification Form, if teaching.
6. The College of Graduate Studies requires that all Assistants undergo appropriate pre-service and in service training. Such training consists of the University-wide orientation as well as Department or Administrative Office-based sessions.
7. The College of Graduate Studies requires that all Graduate Assistants be evaluated each semester while holding the assistantship.
8. Graduate Assistants who fail to maintain a 3.0 (Master's) or a 3.25 (Doctoral) for any semester while holding an assistantship will be placed on "Assistantship Probation." The Graduate Assistant will be given one (1) semester to regain the required grade point average. Failure to do so will result in termination of the Graduate Assistantship contract at the close of the probationary semester.
9. Graduate Assistantships may be terminated at any time due to failure to provide satisfactory work performance.