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# Graduate Assistant Handbook

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This handbook contains information that we hope you will find useful in your graduate assistant position.

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GRADUATE COLLEGE

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## **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

Marshall University supports more than 450 Graduate Assistants each year in academic and service programs across the university.

To be eligible for an assistantship, a student must be admitted as a degree seeking student to a graduate degree program at MU and must have an undergraduate GPA of at least 2.75. Maintaining assistantship eligibility requires a minimum overall GPA of 3.0. Full-time assistants must register for a minimum of nine graduate credits in each semester, half time at least 3 credits. Courses must be approved by your program.

As a Graduate Assistant you will receive an assignment from your hiring unit to supplement and enhance your academic program and career goals. Please remember that a Graduate Assistant is first, a student providing a service as part of a learning experience and second, an employee of the university. Graduate Assistants are professionals and at the same time, students. It is your responsibility as a Graduate Assistant to be familiar with the policies, regulations, and benefits that relate to Graduate Assistantships, as well as the academic regulations of the Graduate College, of your academic program, and of the unit (if different from your academic program) which has hired you as a Graduate Assistant.

Assistantships are awarded on a semester basis and can be renewed. Different units offer various combinations of tuition benefits and stipends.

Please note that the Application Process, Eligibility Requirements, and the Appointment Process may vary across hiring units. You should contact as early as possible the head of the academic department in which you will be studying as well as any other area to which you may wish to apply, for deadlines, application details, and a description of responsibilities.

We hope that Graduate Assistants will become familiar with the policies related to their employment. These policies are clearly stated in this handbook.

Best wishes,

*David J. Pittenger*

David J. Pittenger, Ph.D.  
Interim Dean, Graduate College  
[www.marshall.edu/graduate/](http://www.marshall.edu/graduate/)

## **TYPES OF GRADUATE ASSISTANTS**

Graduate Assistantships are non-tenured, part-time academic appointments that are available through a variety of departments and offices including academic departments, research units, administrative offices, and service units.

There are six types of Graduate Assistants:

1. **Graduate Teacher of Record (GTR)**  
The department will assign you to teach one (half-time) or two (full-time) undergraduate course(s) or lab(s). You will be the instructor of record and responsible for assigning student grades and following all University and departmental guidelines for teaching the course(s) or lab(s).
2. **Graduate Teacher Support (GTS)**  
You will assist the faculty in the department by offering lectures or supervising laboratories under their supervision.
3. **Graduate Teacher Grader (GTG)**  
You will assist faculty by grading quizzes, homework, and other projects. You may also be required to assist faculty with other course-related duties as assigned.
4. **Graduate Research Assistant-Exempt (GRA)**  
The department will assign you to a member of the faculty who is a principal investigator on an external grant or contract. You will assist him or her on the project as directed.
5. **Graduate Service Assistant (GSA)**  
You will provide service/administrative duties for a nonacademic unit or office. This work does not constitute teaching or research.
6. **Graduate Assistant-Exempt (GAE)**  
The department will assign you specific duties.

## THE GRADUATE ASSISTANT APPOINTMENT

### Eligibility for Appointment

- Full or Conditional admission to a graduate degree-granting program at Marshall University;
- First-time graduate students must have a minimum undergraduate GPA of 2.75 on a 4.0 scale for all previously completed undergraduate course work;
- Returning GA's must have a minimum graduate GPA of 3.0;
- Must be enrolled for at least 9 hours of graduate coursework for a full-time assistantship or at least 3 hours of graduate coursework for a half-time assistantship.

Note: undergraduate hours may be covered by a tuition benefit if required by the student's graduate program.

### Acceptance of an Appointment

Please note that acceptance of an offer for a Graduate Assistantship constitutes an agreement that both the student and the hiring unit are expected to honor. If you may have reason to resign, you should submit in writing to the hiring unit a resignation of the appointment.

**NOTE:** If you are a newly hired Graduate Assistant you must complete and submit the required federal *Form I-9* (Employment Eligibility Verification).

*Since the completion of the I-9 requires specific documentation, you must obtain this form in person at the Office of Human Resource Services, Old Main 207.*

### Terms of Appointment and Time Commitment

You will sign and receive a copy of a **GA Tuition Benefit Form**. This form is a contract between you and the hiring unit. The form contains specific information about your appointment including term, type of assistantship, amount of tuition benefit, stipend, number of hours per week of work required and a description of primary duties.

**Full-time** Graduate Assistants must be registered for 9 graduate credit hours, work 20 hours/week, and receive a stipend plus a waiver of part of tuition.  
(Note: Fees will be the student's responsibility).

**Half-time** Graduate Assistants must be registered for at least 3 graduate credit hours, work 10 hours/week, and receive a stipend plus a waiver of part of tuition.  
(Note: Fees will be the student's responsibility).

### Academic Performance

Graduate assistants must maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA to maintain eligibility. Some programs may have more rigorous requirements.

## **Work Hour Expectations**

Full-time Graduate Assistants are expected to work 20 hours/week. Half-time GAs work 10 hours/week. At the minimum, Graduate Assistants earn the current federal minimum wage. Keep in mind that Graduate Assistants are essentially salaried employees. We ask supervisors to be very scrupulous about observing Graduate Assistant work hours to be sure that your workload is consistent with fair labor practices.

Your supervisor should make an effort to accommodate your class and examination schedules. We tell supervisors that Graduate Assistants are always students first. As a Graduate Assistant you should have the best possible opportunity to pursue your education. Work hours should not interfere with your course load or delay progress toward earning the degree.

Graduate Assistants are not expected to work when classes are not in session (e.g. Thanksgiving break, university holidays, between semesters). If hiring units need students to work during these times they must first obtain approval from the Graduate Dean and record those requirements on your *Tuition Benefit Form*.

If you have any questions about fair labor laws and policies regarding your work hours please contact the office of Human Resource Services, Old Main 207; 304.696.6455.

## **Assistantship Supervision**

Graduate Assistants are directly supervised by the hiring department or unit. The hiring department/unit determines the assignment, supervises work, and makes a recommendation on reappointment. The department/unit may assign supervision to a chair, a graduate program director or unit director, a faculty member, or a committee of faculty. Each department/unit will clarify for you its own specific criteria for your position. Generally, your satisfactory progress toward degree completion as well as your satisfactory job performance would be major considerations when the time comes for evaluating a renewal of your appointment.

## **Reappointment**

Please note that reappointment is not automatic. Graduate Assistants may be considered for reappointment if they remain eligible. Reappointment is based on such criteria as department/unit evaluation of your work obligations and academic progress, the availability of positions/funding, and department/unit needs. You must apply for reappointment through your hiring unit.

## **Other Employment**

Your responsibilities as a graduate student and Graduate Assistant should take up most of your time. It is really up to you to determine how much time, if any, you can devote to other activities and still make satisfactory progress toward degree completion and meet your work obligations as a Graduate Assistant.

**Resignation**

If you must resign during your appointment or before it begins, please do so in writing. Please give the hiring unit as much notice as possible when resigning. Indicate in your letter of resignation your last day of work. You may be responsible for paying a balance on your tuition. The Bursar will send to you an invoice for any balance due. This balance will be pro-rated based on the date of the resignation/termination PAR initiated by your hiring unit. Students who change from full-time to part-time employment or vice-versa will receive adjusted cash stipends. Students who resign will not receive cash stipends or the full benefit of the waiver. They will be expected to pay the adjusted invoice upon request.

## **STIPENDS AND BENEFITS**

### **Pay Schedule**

You will receive a stipend that will be at least the minimum wage.

### **Tuition Benefit**

The tuition benefit amount varies by the hiring unit. The *GA Tuition Benefit Form*, which notes your tuition benefit, originates with the hiring unit. The amount of your tuition benefit should be reflected in your online statement (accessible through *myMU*), several weeks before the first day of class. Any remaining amounts after the tuition benefit has been applied will be your responsibility.

### **Time Sheets**

Graduate Assistants whose stipend is paid through their hiring unit do not submit time sheets. Graduate Assistants whose stipend is paid through Work-Study funds must submit weekly hours to their supervisor, or their department/unit administrative secretary designee, who will then submit the time sheet to the Payroll Office. This will initiate your paycheck. The time sheet should reflect total hours worked for each day of the week, but should not exceed your required weekly work hours. It is good practice to keep a copy of your time sheets.

### **Tax Liability**

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) usually treats stipends paid to Graduate Assistants as taxable income and the University is obliged to withhold income taxes. Please check with your tax advisor, the Financial Aid Office and the IRS for details that apply to your specific circumstances.

### **Health Services**

The Student Health Service provides health care services for acute illnesses to students. Facilities are located at the Cabell-Huntington Hospital. For complete information:  
<http://www.marshall.edu/studenthealth/>

Marshall University also offers an optional *Student Health Insurance Plan*. Please go to this site for complete information:  
<http://www.insuranceforstudents.com/index.php>



**Sick Leave**

As a part-time employee, you are not eligible to accumulate vacation time or sick leave. You should make up any work hours that are missed because of illness and you should notify your supervisor of your absence. If you have responsibility for teaching a class/lab and cannot be there because of illness or some other reason, please notify your faculty supervisor or the department administrative secretary before the time of the class/lab meeting.

**Vacation**

The academic calendar details the days that classes are in session. All official vacation days and holidays are listed there:

[www.marshall.edu/calendar/academic/](http://www.marshall.edu/calendar/academic/)

Graduate Assistants observe the same holidays as regular faculty members and students unless other arrangements have been agreed upon before your Graduate Assistant position begins. Be sure to check with your supervisor at the beginning of the semester so you understand the work expectations for your position.

**Travel Funding**

Travel funding is available on a limited and competitive basis to support travel to attend professional conferences and to present research at professional conferences. For information see:

[www.marshall.edu/graduate/costs-and-aid/travel-support/](http://www.marshall.edu/graduate/costs-and-aid/travel-support/)

**Thesis Support**

The Graduate College awards several Summer Thesis Research Grants for the period covering the end of the Spring semester to June 30 of each year. Graduate students who have approved thesis projects may apply for a \$500 grant to support their thesis research. Please note that grant recipients may *not* hold a graduate assistantship simultaneously. Please see:

[www.marshall.edu/graduate/costs-and-aid/summer-thesis-awards/](http://www.marshall.edu/graduate/costs-and-aid/summer-thesis-awards/)

**Financial Aid and Scholarship Opportunities**

For financial aid information, funding opportunities, information about assistantships and tuition waivers, and deadlines, see:

*How to Finance Your Education:*

[www.marshall.edu/graduate/costs-and-aid/how-to-finance-your-graduate-education/](http://www.marshall.edu/graduate/costs-and-aid/how-to-finance-your-graduate-education/)

**Health Care**

As a part-time employee, you are not eligible for the university's healthcare benefit.

## **INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

Please note that international Graduate Assistants must obtain a social security number during their first semester of employment.

International students and their dependants are also required to have health insurance coverage and are responsible for purchasing health insurance upon arrival at the University.

There are many resources available to help international students serving as Teaching Assistants to better understand their American students.

One book we recommend is:

Sarkisian, E. (1997). *Teaching American students: A guide for international faculty and teaching assistants in colleges and universities*. Cambridge, MA: Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning.

The best source of information on campus for international students is:

[Center for International Programs](#)  
**Old Main 320**

**GET CONNECTED**

**Network**

Network with other graduate students:



FACEBOOK: [www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=93981763038&ref=nf](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=93981763038&ref=nf)

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

As a Graduate Assistant you may work with sensitive material such as student records, college and university information, and possibly research data. This information should be kept confidential and should not be discussed outside of work without the permission of your supervisor.

Marshall University regulations on the protection of student records comply with the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974* (FERPA). This federal law was designed to protect the privacy of educational records, to establish the rights of students to inspect and review their educational records and to provide procedures for the correction of inaccurate or misleading data through informal and formal hearings.

As a Graduate Assistant, in particular a Graduate Assistant who has responsibility for a class/lab, please be familiar with and observe these guidelines:

- Never reveal test grades, homework grades, course grades or other information about a student's progress to anyone other than the student to whom the grades are assigned.
- Never read grades aloud, post grades outside of your office, disclose grade information over the phone or return exams by placing them in a public place.
- Never return a paper or exam to anyone but the student unless the student has given you specific written permission.

Please see the brief *Introduction to FERPA* slide presentation below:



[www.marshall.edu/graduate/ferpa-introduction/](http://www.marshall.edu/graduate/ferpa-introduction/)

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Please be sure to read and understand the Marshall University Board of Governors official policy on sexual harassment, approved on November 13, 2002. The policy is available here:

<http://www.marshall.edu/board/files/policies/MUBOG%20GA-%201%20Sexual%20Harassment.pdf>

**FORMS**

[Tuition Benefit Form](#)

For a complete list of forms you may need please see:

[Forms Library](#)

**IMPORTANT CONTACTS**

**David J. Pittenger**

Interim Dean, Graduate College

Old Main 113

304.696.2818

[pittengerd@marshall.edu](mailto:pittengerd@marshall.edu)

**Jan Parker, Administrative Assistant**

304.696.2816

[jparker@marshall.edu](mailto:jparker@marshall.edu)

QUESTIONS: applications for graduation/graduation status/assistantships/waivers

**Denise Lawhon, Records Officer**

304.696.6607

[lawhon@marshall.edu](mailto:lawhon@marshall.edu)

QUESTIONS: Plan of Study/course validations/transfer credits/academic probation

**Sandee Lloyd, Administrative Associate**

304.696.6606

[lloyd@marshall.edu](mailto:lloyd@marshall.edu)

QUESTIONS: Due dates/scholarship tuition waivers, scheduled events, all other questions

**Office of the Registrar**

Old Main 106A

304.696.6410

[www.marshall.edu/registrar/](http://www.marshall.edu/registrar/)

**Parking and Public Safety**

1801 Fifth Avenue

<http://www.marshall.edu/parking/>

**Student Health Services**

Cabell-Huntington Hospital

<http://www.marshall.edu/studenthealth/>

**Center for International Programs**

Old Main 320

[www.marshall.edu/cip/](http://www.marshall.edu/cip/)

## **PREPARING FOR GRADUATION!**

### Applying for Graduation

The application for graduation must be completed and submitted BEFORE or at the beginning of the student's final semester/term, but NOT LATER than the date printed in the University Calendar. Please note that the application includes a diploma fee.

For diploma fee information, see "Special Student Fees" at: the Bursar's site:

[www.marshall.edu/bursar/](http://www.marshall.edu/bursar/)

*Application for Graduation* form can be obtained online at:

[www.marshall.edu/graduate/files/2012/02/APPLICATION-FOR-GRADUATION062010.pdf](http://www.marshall.edu/graduate/files/2012/02/APPLICATION-FOR-GRADUATION062010.pdf)

### Commencement

For information on graduation dates (the official date noted on your diploma) and commencement dates (the date of the Commencement ceremony), please see:

[www.marshall.edu/graduate/graduation-and-commencement-timetable/](http://www.marshall.edu/graduate/graduation-and-commencement-timetable/)

Information about location, time, academic regalia, etc. is always available at the Registrar's site:

[www.marshall.edu/registrar/](http://www.marshall.edu/registrar/)