



**GRADUATE STUDIES  
AND RESEARCH**

**GRADUATE ASSISTANT  
HANDBOOK**

## INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on being appointed a Graduate Assistant at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. This handbook explains the benefits and responsibilities that all graduate assistants share. It also offers information that will be useful as you carry out your duties.

The Graduate School is responsible for helping to assure you comply with the terms and conditions of your appointment. The Graduate School will also help you with questions regarding your tuition waiver, course load, stipend, and any other area of your assistantship.

Your hiring unit will tell you who is responsible for supervising your assistantship activities, and will provide you with training or guidance in performing your duties.

Please feel free to contact the Graduate School for any information about your assistantship appointment:

2202 Rendleman Hall  
Campus Box 1046  
Extension 3164  
[www.siu.edu/GRADUATE](http://www.siu.edu/GRADUATE)

Stephen L. Hansen, Dean  
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## I. APPOINTMENTS

### **Eligibility**

Students must be admitted to a graduate degree program, and be enrolled in classified graduate status, in order to hold an assistantship.

Students in classification pending status may hold appointments for one academic term while completing their admission requirements. They may continue to serve as graduate assistants beyond their first term only if they are admitted as classified graduate students. Consult the [Graduate Catalog](#) for policies associated with classification pending admission status.

Undergraduates are not permitted to hold graduate assistantships. However, undergraduate students who are approved into 3 + 2 programs may be considered for appointments, provided they are in the last term of completing their baccalaureate degrees.

### **Basis of Appointments**

Under “2. Period of Appointment” on your Assistantship Appointment contract, your hiring unit has checked either Academic or Fiscal Basis.

Most graduate assistants are appointed on an Academic Basis for a nine-month academic year, or for a specific semester or term within the academic year. The department must submit a Summer appointment form if it asks you to work during Summer term.

A Fiscal Basis appointment allows a hiring unit to offer a student a contract for an entire calendar year, or for any part of a calendar year. Fiscal Basis graduate assistants usually serve in administrative rather than academic units.

### **Duration of Appointment**

Your current assistantship appointment does not automatically entitle you to additional contract terms.

If your appointment is supported by a grant or an external contract, the appointment can remain in force only as long as there are sufficient funds in the grant’s account.

## **Categories of Assistantships**

There are different types of graduate assistantships. The categories are:

**General Assistant** - Renders general service to an academic or administrative unit, which may be related to instruction, research, or administration.

**Research Assistant** - Renders research service to one or more specific faculty members.

**Teaching Assistant** - Performs instructional duties in direct contact with students in a lecture or laboratory situation.

## **Work Load**

Graduate assistants with a 50 percent appointment may work a maximum of 20 clock hours per week. They may not hold any other paid positions with the University.

Students with an appointment of less than 50 percent may hold a concurrent position elsewhere in the University as a graduate assistant or student worker, as long as the total hours worked do not exceed 20 hours per week at any time during the assistantship period.

Teaching assistants' hours include preparation and grading, as well as time spent in the classroom.

## **Stipends**

First-year stipend rates apply during the first two semesters (or academic terms) of a graduate assistant's appointment. During an assistant's third term, the department or unit may decide which rate is appropriate. Second-year rates apply in the fourth term and thereafter. The salary schedule for 2004-05 is:

	<b><u>Full-time Base</u></b>	<b><u>50%</u></b>	<b><u>25%</u></b>
<b>First-Year</b>	<b>\$1580-1860</b>	<b>\$790-930</b>	<b>\$395-465</b>
<b>Second-Year</b>	<b>\$1690-2030</b>	<b>\$845-1015</b>	<b>\$422.50-507.50</b>

### **Tuition Waivers**

As a graduate assistant, you are entitled to a waiver of tuition. You are, however, responsible for paying student fees.

As a graduate assistant on a current appointment, your waiver will automatically be processed by the Graduate School and entered into your University financial records.

You are eligible for a tuition waiver if you hold a valid assistantship appointment for at least 8-1/2 weeks of a semester (5 weeks of a Summer term).

You are not eligible for a tuition waiver if your appointment is for less than 8-1/2 weeks, or if you resign before the end of 8-1/2 weeks (5 weeks of a Summer term).

You will forfeit your tuition waiver and become liable for the full amount due if you withdraw from classes after the first two weeks of the term.

### **Summer Tuition Waiver**

When your assistantship ends, you may apply for a Summer Tuition Waiver if you have served at least two consecutive semesters as a graduate assistant.

These waivers:

- do not require you to work
- are available only one time during your SIUE graduate career
- must be used during Summer term immediately following two consecutive semesters of service as a graduate assistant
- do not limit the number of class hours for which you may register.

To apply:

- complete a Summer Tuition Waiver Authorization (available in the Graduate School)
- obtain the required signatures
- submit the Authorization form to the Graduate School for approval.

After the Graduate School approves your waiver, it will be entered into your University financial records and a confirmation will be mailed to your home address.

(Enrollment in UNIV 500 is not covered by the Summer Tuition Waiver.)

You are not entitled to a second Summer Tuition Waiver, even if you serve for additional academic terms under a new appointment or begin a second degree.

## **II. TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

### **Honoring the Assistantship Contract**

By accepting the University's offer of financial support, you have completed an agreement that you, as well as the Graduate School and the unit that hired you, are obliged to honor. If you choose to resign your graduate assistantship appointment prior to the completion of the academic term, you will forfeit the tuition waiver and be liable for full payment of tuition, and will not be eligible for appointment in another unit at the university until the beginning of a new term. Exceptions to this condition may be granted upon recommendation from the original hiring unit and approval by the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.

### **Abiding by University Policies**

You are expected to operate within the general framework of University policy and practice, and to represent SIUE creditably on all occasions.

You are expected to abide by University policies governing sponsored programs. Those policies, as well as the University's Patent and Copyright Policy, may affect your rights to discoveries, inventions, improvements, compositions, or other creations made or developed or reduced to practice during your period of employment.

Federal regulations require each unit offering graduate assistantship appointments to instruct appointees about integrity in research. Graduate assistants engaged in research must comply with all legal and ethical policies on research, including those governing use and care of animals, recombinant DNA, biosafety, and human subjects.

### **Drug-free Workplace Guidelines**

All graduate assistants must comply with the Drug-Free Workplace Guidelines that appear in the *Life After Class* booklet.

### **Sexual Harassment Policy**

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville does not tolerate sexual harassment of students by faculty, staff members, or other students. Students should file complaints of sexual harassment with the Office of Assistant Provost for Cultural and Social Diversity, Room 3110, Rendleman Hall. Students may also obtain a copy of the complete Sexual Harassment Policy from the Office of Assistant Provost for Cultural and Social Diversity.

### **Retention**

In order to maintain your assistantship, you must make satisfactory progress toward the completion of your degree. The Graduate School will periodically review your academic record for:

Grade point average - If your gpa falls below the required minimum (3.0 for retention in Graduate School; 3.25 for Specialist degree students), the Graduate School may terminate your appointment.

Satisfactory Progress - You are expected to make satisfactory progress toward completing your degree. If you accumulate excessive hours of Incomplete or Deferred grades, you will not be eligible for future terms as a graduate assistant. You may not delay completion of your degree in order to prolong an assistantship appointment.

### **Term Limitation for Assistantships**

Qualified students may hold an assistantship for no more than a total of seven academic terms. The Graduate Dean may grant an exception to this policy for students who:

- complete one degree and begin a second degree program
- pursue degrees that require more than 45 semester hours for completion.

### **Name Changes**

In order to change your name within the SIUE Human Resources system, you must bring copy of your new social security card to the Graduate School Office.

### **Enrollment and Class Load Requirements**

Each semester, graduate assistants must carry:

- at least 6 hours of graduate credit
- no more than 12 hours of undergraduate and graduate credits combined.

During Summer term, the minimum and maximum are 3 and 6 semester hours, respectively.

Undergraduate courses, courses listed as “Not for Graduate Credit,” and courses taken for AUDIT do not count toward satisfying the 6-hour class load minimum. Enrollment in such courses must be authorized if it will cause a student’s class load to exceed the 12-hour maximum.

If a graduate assistant withdraws from the University, his or her assistantship appointment is terminated immediately, along with the related tuition waiver. The individual may be responsible for repaying tuition previously waived.

### **Overload/Underload Petition**

Requests to enroll in fewer or more than the required number of credit hours must be based on academic program needs, and not on assistantship appointment requirements.

Graduate assistants who want to carry an overload (more than 12 hours) or an underload (less than 6 hours) during any semester must obtain the Graduate Dean’s approval before enrolling in classes.

Students may initiate such a request by completing the “Overload and Underload Petition for Graduate Assistants and Awardees” (Petition form available in the Graduate School). After the student’s major advisor and graduate program director sign the Petition Form, it is submitted to the Graduate School for consideration. The Graduate School will notify the student by mail at his or her home address of the Graduate Dean’s response to the Petition.

### **Language Requirement for International Students**

International students who are selected for teaching assistantships must attach to the Assistantship Appointment the Certification of Oral English Proficiency form (This form is available in the Graduate School).

### **III. BENEFITS AND SERVICES**

Graduate assistants are entitled to the same official holidays as other University personnel, and are excused from work responsibilities at other times when the University is officially closed. If a supervisor requires you to work when the University is closed, you should be compensated by being relieved from your duties at a later date.

#### **Vacation**

Only students on Fiscal Basis appointments of at least 3 months' duration are eligible for vacation benefits. Graduate assistants awarded Academic Basis appointments are not eligible for vacation benefits.

Fiscal Basis assistants earn vacation time at the rate of 1 and 1/24 days per month. Fiscal Basis assistants must use their vacation time during their term of appointment; they may not carry vacation time over from one fiscal year to the next. The fiscal year ends each June 30.

Assistants are not paid for earned vacation time that has not been used.

#### **Sick Leave**

All graduate assistants on 50 percent appointment are eligible for a sick leave benefit of 20 hours for each month covered by their appointment. (Assistants on 25 percent appointment are eligible for 10 hours.)

After missing 7 consecutive assigned work days because of illness, a graduate assistant must provide his or her supervisor with a physician's statement that verifies the illness. Graduate assistants are not entitled to extended sick leave benefits.

Assistants are not paid for accumulated sick leave that has not been used.

#### **Health Insurance**

Informational brochures for purchasing health insurance are available in Health Services (Rendleman Hall, room 0224). International students with graduate

assistantships are required to purchase health insurance or to show evidence of current coverage.

### **Parking**

As a graduate assistant, you are entitled to purchase a Green parking permit through Parking Services (1113 Rendleman Hall, 650-3680). As a graduate student, you remain eligible for the Red student parking permit.

### **Lovejoy Library**

All graduate students are entitled to the same library privileges. General stacks books may be checked out for a period of eight weeks. Periodicals do not circulate. Unlimited renewals are permitted provided no “recalls” or “holds” have been placed on the item.

Graduate assistants may check out books for faculty members if the faculty member completes a proxy borrower authorization form that is available at the Library Circulation Desk.

### **Audio Visual Services**

Audio Visual Services provides complete audio visual assistance, including the development of new media using up-to-date technology to meet the needs of SIUE faculty, staff, and students. Audio Visual Services maintains a collection of more than 2,900 items including films, CD-ROMs, laserdiscs, and videotapes.

Teaching assistants have the same user access to Audio Visual Services as faculty members. General assistants and research assistants have access to production services through their supervisors.

## **IV. AWARDS AND SUPPORT**

Fellowships, grants, scholarships, and other awards are available through the Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA). To find out if you are eligible for additional financial assistance, schedule an appointment with a Financial Aid Counselor in OSFA (2308 Rendleman Hall, 650-3880).

Further information on scholarships, fellowships, and grants is available in Lovejoy Library and in the Graduate School.

### **Graduate Student Fellowships**

Competitive Graduate Award (CGA) -- This Graduate School program supports a limited number of outstanding graduate students each year, providing a tuition waiver and a monthly stipend. CGA recipients may not be employed during the term of their award. For guidelines and application go to: <http://www.siu.edu/GRADUATE/award/cga1.html>.

Diversifying Faculty In Illinois (DFI) -- The Diversifying Faculty in Illinois (DFI) program, administered through the Illinois Board of Higher Education, provides awards of \$12,500 or more per year for students from traditionally underrepresented groups to pursue graduate degrees at Illinois institutions. An applicant must be an Illinois resident to be considered for this award, which is renewable up to four years. An award recipient must agree to accept a teaching or nonteaching full-time appointment at an Illinois institution of higher education or a position at one of the higher education governing or coordinating boards in Illinois for a period equal to the number of years of the award. Applications are available in early November. Applications are due to the Graduate School on February 15, and awards are announced in late March for the following academic year. Information is available through the Graduate School, Rendleman Hall, room 2202, box 1046, Edwardsville, IL 62026, or online at [www.siu.edu/GRADUATE/award](http://www.siu.edu/GRADUATE/award).

Graduate Scholar Award (GSA) -- This Graduate School program awards tuition waivers to a limited number of highly qualified students from nationally underrepresented groups who are recommended by their departments. GSA recipients may not hold any paid position at SIUE, and must carry a minimum of 9 semester hours during each term of their award. Contact the Graduate School for information.

### **Graduate Student Awards**

The Graduate School invites SIUE faculty to nominate graduate students for these two awards, which are given at the Graduate School Recognition Luncheon in October. Nominations are reviewed by the University Fellowship and Scholarship Committee. Each award includes an honorarium of \$250.

Outstanding Thesis Award -- Each academic unit may nominate one thesis. The Graduate School submits the winning entry to the regional competition sponsored by the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools.

Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award -- This award honors a teaching assistant who demonstrates the highest standards of performance in meeting the responsibilities of his or her assistantship.

### **Graduate Student Travel Support (Attendance at Professional Meetings)**

SIUE encourages graduate assistants to attend professional meetings. Your academic unit may be able to pay some of your expenses.

For students who are invited to present major papers at significant professional conferences, or to exhibit or perform at major juried events, the Graduate School contributes financial support, on a matching basis with the student's sponsoring academic unit. Applications are routed through your department chair, then through your School or College dean to the Graduate School.

Students who receive any reimbursement or compensation for participating in a professional event are not eligible for this program.

### **Research Grants for Graduate Students (RGGS)**

The Graduate School makes funds available on a competitive basis to graduate students engaged in research leading to the development of a research project, final project, or thesis for completing degree requirements. An RGGS award can be used to cover the cost of data collection, specialized laboratory supplies, and other justified expenses.

The maximum award is \$500. An SIUE student may receive no more than one RGGS award. You will find the guidelines and application for this award at <http://www.siue.edu/ORP/GSFUND/index.html>