

FUNDING

Assistantships

A graduate assistantship provides financial support for a graduate student for a set period of time during which the student is expected to pursue activities towards the advanced degree.

Responsibilities

Work required by an assistantship and not directly related to the student's degree program cannot exceed **13-19.6 hours per week (.33 to .49 FTE)**.

Although students on graduate assistantships may not have employment exceeding 19.6 hours per week from all sources both on and off campus during the period of the assistantship, there is no limit to time spent on studies and research relating to the advanced degree.

Because of the potential for exploitation of graduate students, any assignment of responsibilities, such as teaching a course, must be associated with a fair and reasonable compensation. Graduate students may not volunteer for any significant service to the department without an appropriate stipend.

Types of Assistantships

In each case, the student is expected to continue working towards the advanced degree while a graduate assistant.

- A **teaching assistantship** provides a stipend to a student who is typically assisting in an academic department's teaching program, i.e., grading, assisting a professor with a course, etc.
- A **research assistantship** provides a stipend to a student who is typically assisting a professor with a research project, enabling the graduate student to work towards an advanced degree.
- **Other graduate assistantships** provide a stipend to a student who is assisting an academic or nonacademic department with a wide variety of functions.

Eligibility

To hold a graduate assistantship a student must be admitted for a specific graduate degree objective and enrolled for credit during the tenure of the assistantship.

Individual departments make assistantship appointments. Students who wish to be considered for assistantships in their major should direct inquiries to the graduate chair of their department. All **international** graduate students who are to be teaching assistants at UNL must attend the Institute for International Teaching Assistants (<https://graduate.unl.edu/institute-international-teaching-assistants/>).

Benefits

Benefits Offered

Tuition remission of up to 12 hours per semester is provided as a benefit of eligible assistantships. Students holding eligible assistantships are provided basic individual **student health insurance** coverage with related benefits. The University subsidizes part of the student health insurance (<https://studentaccounts.unl.edu/tuition-fees/student-health-insurance/>) premium for eligible graduate assistants.

Within departments and within each level of differentiation (master's or doctoral, new or experienced, number of work hours), stipends should

generally be equivalent. Guidelines used to determine stipend levels should be available to students through the department.

Assistants may be given **@unl.edu email addresses**; those accounts close at the end of the assistantship.

Eligibility For Benefits

Eligibility for assistantship benefits requires meeting all of the following criteria:

- A continuous appointment for four full months within the semester dates.
- The stipend meets the minimum salary level set by the University.
- The assistantship or combination of assistantships in one or more departments totals at least 13.33 hours per week employment.

Resignation or Termination

If a graduate assistant resigns or their assistantship is terminated during the semester **before four full months** of consecutive service (e.g., 120 consecutive days within the semester dates, August-December or January-May) **all benefits will be lost** and the student will be responsible for the total tuition payment and health insurance premiums.

Summer Tuition

If a graduate assistant, while on an appointment during both semesters of the preceding academic year, was paid a stipend meeting the **minimum qualification** for summer tuition, the student is not charged tuition for the first 6 hours during the summer sessions. If such a stipend met the **next level of qualification**, the student is not charged tuition for the first 12 hours during the summer sessions. Specific dollar amounts are available each year in the Guidelines for Graduate Assistantships (<https://graduate.unl.edu/funding/assistantships/>).

Non-Benefits-Eligible Assistantships

A student on a non-benefits-eligible graduate assistantship may qualify for reduced summer tuition if the stipend received is equal to, or greater than, the total of the amount set by the University for the relative summer session.

Hiring and Renewal

The responsibilities of the graduate assistant and the method by which the student will be evaluated should be provided in writing to the student by the immediate supervisor at the beginning of the assistantship.

General Responsibilities

Each department or unit shall establish its own documented procedures for recruitment, selection, retention and dismissal of graduate assistants in accordance with UNL graduate policy and Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity guidelines. These procedures shall be made available to each graduate student and posted in the department. Individual departments may establish a required minimum course load (<https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/policies/registration/>) for funded students.

Departments must provide students with an official signed offer letter (<https://graduate.unl.edu/funding/letters/>), informing them of assistantship expectations, responsibilities, and compensation. A graduate assistant's duties are assigned by the departmental chair/head, graduate committee chair, administrative supervisor, or others.

Graduate assistants are expected to be assigned relevant professional work that may include, among other tasks:

- teaching or assisting in a course (under the supervision of a director or mentor)

- grading for a course
- working in a department-sponsored laboratory or instructional center
- assisting a professor on a research project, professional conference development, tutoring, or development of administrative skills

No graduate assistant should be assigned to a project which is primarily clerical or housekeeping. A portion of any project may have clerical elements, but all projects should incorporate decision-making, judgment, analysis and evaluation skills. All projects must be supervised by a member of the graduate faculty or administrative staff.

Renewal and Performance Evaluation

Assistantships without a fixed term specified in the initial letter of offer may, at the discretion of the department, be renewed if the following criteria are met:

1. Funding is available.
2. The student is making satisfactory academic progress.
3. The student's assistantship performance is judged to be satisfactory by his or her supervisor.

Where the number of years of funding is within those specified in the initial letter of offer, an assistantship must be renewed if these three criteria are met.

The faculty member or staff person who supervises the assistant's work should conduct a timely written evaluation of the student's performance (<https://graduate.unl.edu/funding/assistantships/assistantship-forms-and-documents/>) and provide a copy of that evaluation to the student and to the chair/director for placement in the student's file.

Evaluations of performance shall not be influenced on the basis of sex, age, disability, race, color, religion, marital status, veteran's status, national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation, nor shall they be influenced by students' exercise of their First Amendment freedoms of expression and association.

Academic Freedom of Graduate Teaching Assistants

The academic freedom of graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) is not necessarily coextensive with that of faculty. All GTAs are engaged in supervised teaching or instruction. Supervisors are responsible for defining the nature, scope and manner of instruction to be used for each course. Supervisors should communicate the extent to which GTAs have discretion to introduce additional material. Graduate teaching assistants should follow the instructions of the supervisor. Graduate teaching assistants may not be penalized for expressing their own views on matters within the scope of the course, provided they adequately represent these views as their own.

In interpreting teaching evaluations, supervisors shall make every effort to distinguish legitimate critiques of the course from negative evaluations due to

- a. prejudice against the GTA on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, religion or other protected status, or
- b. disagreement with viewpoints expressed by the GTA or by students in the class.

Fellowships

Fellowships are awarded on a competitive basis in recognition of a student's demonstrated scholarship, scholastic and creative promise, and/or financial need. There is no service or work requirement associated

with fellowship awards. A student holding a fellowship or a traineeship must be a full-time student during the period of appointment.

See also: fellowships for current students (<https://graduate.unl.edu/funding/fellowships/>).

Types of Fellowships

Tuition Fellowships remit tuition for the full or partial cost of graduate courses according to the specific fellowship guidelines for the term of the award. Recipients of tuition fellowships are responsible for university program and facilities fees unless specifically included in the award announcement. Recipients must be admitted to a graduate program with a specific graduate degree objective.

Full Support Fellowships from Graduate Studies (Presidential and Fling Fellowships) provide stipend payments for recipients of these awards. Fellowship recipients are required to be full-time students (at least 9 credit hours or full-time certification) during the period of appointment and may hold another major fellowship. They may not engage in remunerative employment, including a graduate assistantship or traineeship.

Partial Support Fellowships allow students to hold other fellowships and assistantships.

External Fellowships such as those from NSF-GRFP, AAUW, or the Smithsonian are not awarded by UNL but recipients should notify the Fellowship Specialist in Graduate Studies.

Eligibility

To be eligible for a fellowship a student must be admitted to a department or area with a specific graduate degree objective and enrolled in graduate academic coursework.

- Students enrolled in certificate-only programs with no degree objective are ineligible.
- International students must have completed one year of study at a US institution of higher education to be eligible.
- Employees of the University of Nebraska, other than graduate assistants, are ineligible.

Continuation

Continuation of graduate fellowships may be denied to recipients under any of the following conditions:

- Failure to satisfy Scholastic Grade Requirements (<https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/policies/grades/>).
- Violations of the Code of Conduct (<https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/policies/governance-and-responsibilities/student-conduct-and-responsibility/>).
- Failure in qualifying examinations, preliminary examinations, comprehensive examinations or failure to make satisfactory progress as defined by the graduate program.

Impact on Other Funding

Fellowship awards cannot have any impact on the amount of a graduate assistantship stipend unless there is an accompanying decrease in the teaching or research assignment and the corresponding FTE.



Loans and Need-Based Funding Scholarships and Financial Aid

The Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid (OSFA) (<https://financialaid.unl.edu/>) does not participate in the granting of fellowships or assistantships but does maintain current information on **other forms of financial support** available to students.

Satisfactory Progress

Satisfactory progress toward a degree is a requirement for receiving financial aid. Maintaining satisfactory progress requires:

1. Successful completion of a minimum number of hours and
2. Completion of the degree prior to reaching the maximum credit hour limit.

For details refer to the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid: Satisfactory Academic Progress (<https://financialaid.unl.edu/maintaining-eligibility/satisfactory-academic-progress/>).

Tuition remission of up to 12 hours may be provided to graduate assistants who are paid the minimum qualifying salary in the preceding academic year. Graduate assistants who start in the spring or summer semester and have a qualifying fall appointment may receive tuition remission in the summer. Specific dollar amounts are available each year in the Guidelines for Graduate Assistantships