PROGRAM ASSISTANTSHIPS

Program assistantships provide students with educational and professional benefits, enhancing their administrative, teaching, and mentoring skills. Departments and faculty members benefit from the services provided by program assistants. However, the rationale for supporting program assistants is centered on the role the experience plays in their professional and educational development. Students holding assistantships devote their time to a combined program of study and experiential activities. The stipend received by program assistants is in recognition of their service to the university.

The following include best practices for programs who have program assistants.

Activities
Program assistants support program-related activities. Depending on the student’s experience and departmental needs, typical assistantship duties include:

- Writing newsletters
- Maintaining websites
- Arranging/facilitating workshops
- Analyzing data
- Preparing reports
- Providing meeting support
- Reviewing theses or dissertations for final submission to the Graduate School
- Reviewing IRB proposals
- Assisting with recruitment
- Preparing program-related materials
- Advising students

Mentoring
All of these activities occur under the guidance of a mentor, typically the program director. The mentoring structure supports the pedagogical component of the program assistantship experience. Mentors need to discuss with the student how the activities translate into professional skills.

Hours
- Full-time: Assistantship duties should average between 15 and 20 hours per week. Faculty supervising assistants should develop a general plan of action with their assistants to plot out and monitor the number of hours spent over the course of the semester.

- Part-time: Students holding part-time assistantships work less hours. Part-time assistants are typically found in Master’s programs. Full-time Master’s assistantships carry stipends of $11,000-$12,000 for 15-20 hours per week. Stipend recipients receiving less than $11,000-$12,000 work proportionately less than full-time assistants.
Evaluation
Each teaching assistant should be evaluated in writing at the conclusion of each semester. This evaluation should be based on the observation of the program assistant in action. The evaluation should be shared with the assistant and placed in the student’s departmental file.

Termination
Assistants are required to keep a minimum 3.0 GPA (each semester as well as cumulatively), make progress toward their degree, and perform assistantship duties in an acceptable manner.

- Maintaining academic standing, per Graduate School or departmental academic requirements, is mandatory and failure to do so will result in the termination of an assistantship. Departments may have higher minimum GPA requirements for their assistants and, if so, these requirements trump the minimum GPA requirement of the Graduate School.
- Should an assistant’s duty performance be deemed unacceptable by the department, the Graduate Program Director should inform the student in writing that his/her performance is unsatisfactory. The letter should include information about the deficiencies and a remediation plan of action. Additionally, the letter should include a date for re-evaluation. If the student fails to improve his or her performance, the assistantship will be withdrawn.
- In very specific instances, such as violations of university policies, academic dishonesty, or violations of ethical or professional code of conduct, the assistant may have his or her duties suspended immediately and a departmental recommendation of termination to the Graduate School is in order. Termination appeals, just as all other grievances, should first be made at the departmental level before moving to the Graduate School.
- The stipend will be stopped at the date of the termination.

Resignations
Departments depend on the services of program assistants for the period of appointment. If the assistant must resign his or her position during the course of the academic year, the assistant must follow the following steps:

- Discuss the intent to resign with the Graduate Program Director/Unit Director well in advance of the actual resignation so that the department can make appropriate plans to replace the assistant.
- Submit a formal letter explaining the reason(s) for and date of the resignation. A copy of this letter should be sent to the Graduate School.
- Return of any keys and instructional material to the department.
- The assistant’s stipend will be ended upon receipt of the letter of resignation.