RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

Departments and faculty members benefit from the services provided by research assistants. However, the rationale for supporting research 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 instructional activities. The stipend received by research assistants is in recognition of their service to the university.

The following include best practices for department who have research assistants. Research Assistants support faculty research and instructional activities. Depending on the student’s experience and departmental needs, typical assistantship activities include:

- Participation in research team meetings
- Recruitment of research participants
- IRB protocol submissions
- Design of research studies
- Data collection, data cleaning, and data management
- Maintenance of data bases
- Data analyses
- Supervision/Mentoring and training of undergraduate research assistants
- Literature searches
- Manuscript preparation/writing
- Preparation of conference presentations
- Grant writing
- Developing own program of research
- Maintaining project-related web site
- Archival Research

**Mentoring**

All of these activities occur under the guidance of a mentor, typically the faculty member who is working most closely with the student on the research project(s) assigned. In addition, the graduate RA may also serve as one of the mentors to undergraduates who oftentimes work in the lab setting.

**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.
**Academic Integrity**
Research assistants are expected to learn and practice ethical research skills. To that end, assistants are expected to take the UNIV 370 Responsible Conduct in Research and Scholarship (RCRS) course at Loyola as part of the required training and/or specific ethical training from the Principle Investigator/faculty mentor who most closely works with the student. Go to www.luc.edu/ors and click the RCRS/Compliance link for more information.

**Evaluation**
Each research assistant should be evaluated in writing at the conclusion of each semester. This evaluation should be based on the observation of the RA in action. The evaluation should be shared with the RA and placed in the student’s departmental file.

**English Proficiency**
Research assistants with native languages other than American English who will be supervising undergraduates in the research area are required to take an English Proficiency test on campus during the week before school begins. Based on the results of this test, research assistants may be required to take one or two ESL courses during their first semester at Loyola. This requirement is designed to insure the ability of research assistants to communicate effectively in spoken and written English.

**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 research 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 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 research-related materials to the department.
- The assistant’s stipend will be ended upon receipt of the letter of resignation.