

Graduate Assistantship Handbook



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and Graduate College
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✦ This section/information is specifically helpful to students.

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What is a Graduate Assistantship

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Graduate Assistantship positions are on-campus positions that work on assignments which meet the guidelines approved by the Graduate Council, and are offered on a half-time basis (10 hours per week) or on a full-time basis (20 hours per week). A graduate assistant receives a salary for services rendered to the University.

Graduate Assistantships are available to qualified full-time students who are working toward a graduate degree at the University of Northern Iowa and who are in residence during the time of their appointment.

Graduate Assistantships are essential to University graduate programs and their students and serves these purposes:

1. Recruitment of excellent students;
2. To provide graduate students with part-time, paid work experiences that are complementary to their field of study. Working with faculty and staff mentors, these experiences allow students to develop and apply their discipline knowledge and skills; and
3. To assist UNI faculty and/or university staff in implementing projects or other assignments that require the advanced discipline skills of graduate students.

Types of Graduate Assistant Positions

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There are three categories of Graduate Assistantship positions and they are available in both academic departments and support service departments at UNI. In this handbook, the term Graduate Assistant (or GA) is used to refer to all positions. Some assistantships are funded internally and others are funded externally. Regardless of the funding source, all policies and procedures pertaining to them are the same.

Graduate Teaching Assistants (Academic Departments)

Graduate students given primary responsibility for the instruction of undergraduate courses are the exception rather than the rule. Students should only be given such responsibility under carefully defined conditions. The department and the Graduate Assistant must adhere to the *Policy on Teaching Assistant Evaluation and Training at the University of Northern Iowa* approved by the Graduate Council on April 12, 2018, which is excerpted below.

Graduate teaching assistants at UNI will be carefully selected based on qualifications of their specific disciplines. Students should also be proficient in oral and written communication. Departments that assign graduate assistants the responsibility of teaching (either as primary instructor of record, or as assistants working with students under the guidance of a professor) are responsible for ensuring that the graduate teaching assistant has the necessary preparation for the task. This may require coursework in pedagogy or other experience as appropriate to the discipline. It may also include pre-service training or orientation regarding departmental policies and procedures. The graduate teaching assistant will be held to the same requirements on oral competence, which exists for faculty. The conditions under which a student may assume primary responsibility for an undergraduate course must include the following components: a) proper training, b) supervision and instructional support, and c) teaching performance evaluation/course evaluation.

Graduate Research Assistants (Academic Departments)

Research Assistants are selected for excellence in scholarship and promise as researchers. They do research as a portion of their training under the direct supervision of regular faculty members or support the research initiatives of the institution.

Graduate Service Assistants (Support Service Departments)

Graduate Service Assistants assist in a service unit whose mission is closely related to the student's area of academic study and interest. They are responsible to a professional member of the service unit who supervises and trains the student in the service role.

A list of non-academic departments with GA positions can be found by using the links within the Graduate Assistantship application, which is located on the Graduate College website.

<https://grad.uni.edu/graduate-students-forms-resources-and-information>

Employment Restrictions of Graduate Assistants

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Graduate Assistants are not eligible for additional UNI employment as an adjunct, faculty, P&S, or merit employee and cannot be hired as a student employee within the department where their assistantship is assigned. Exceptions for a student position in the department of their assistantship require a written request to, and approval by, the Dean of the Graduate College. Graduate assistant appointments are not over the winter break. Since GA's cannot hold a student employment position in the same department as their Graduate Assistantship any department with a critical need for their GA to work during winter break must request an exception from the Graduate College Dean to hire their GA as a student employee over winter break.

Graduate students cannot work more than 20 hours per week of University employment in the combination of assistantship and hourly student employment. Note: Federal Law mandates that international students who are employed by the University are strictly limited to working a maximum of 20 hours per week. There are no exceptions to this rule. See the University Student Employment Policy. <http://www.uni.edu/policies/319>

Full-time graduate assistantships are twenty (20) hours per week and half-time graduate assistantships are ten (10) hours per week for the entire semester. Graduate Assistants do not work the week of Thanksgiving Break or the week of Spring Break.

The Graduate College has no restrictions on the hiring of students who have a Graduate Assistantship by employers outside the University. However, International Students are restricted by immigration regulations from working off-campus without proper authorization. Questions about employment/internships for international students should be directed to the International Students and Scholars Office at [\(319\) 273-6421](tel:319-273-6421).

The following actions will be taken in response to violations of these employment restrictions:

- Payroll will monitor University employment hours and will inform the Graduate College of any violations.
- The Graduate College will communicate in writing to the student with direction that no further violation occurs. This communication will be carbon copied to the departmental employer (non-GA position department).
- Students who violate the maximum hours after their initial violation notification could be terminated from their student employee hourly position.

Graduate Assistantship Job Descriptions

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Each Graduate Assistantship position must have a job description reviewed and approved by the Graduate College prior to its use. Each type of assistantship the department offers must be posted to the departmental website prior to accepting applications. The department must provide each student with their specific job description immediately upon starting the Graduate Assistantship position, if not earlier. A copy of the job description should be kept in the student's departmental personnel file.

Academic credit **may NOT be given** for Graduate Assistant assignments or any work or services performed as part of the assigned duties for a Graduate Assistantship.

Guidelines for Graduate Assistantship positions:

- Graduate Assistantships are to have educational value for the students and to enhance the student's academic experience, as well as enhance our campus community. They should under no circumstances detract from a student's graduate education nor from its pursuit.
- Graduate Assistants support and strengthen graduate and undergraduate instruction. The contributions of graduate assistants include teaching under careful supervision, providing teaching or research support for faculty, serving as laboratory assistants, and serving in other academically appropriate ways.
- Graduate Assistant assignments should enhance students' graduate education by exposing them to the professional activities and concerns of their discipline, involving them in university activities related to their academic and professional interests, and giving them opportunities to work closely with faculty and other university professionals.
- Students with Graduate Assistantships should provide high quality support for the academic activities of a university. Assistantships are more than a source of inexpensive labor or financial support for students.
- The department is responsible for ensuring that the work load is academically appropriate and meets maximum hour guidelines. Departments are encouraged to consult with students in making work assignments.

Application Process for Graduate Assistantship

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This section outlines the general application process for a Graduate Assistantship. Students should always contact the graduate program coordinator or the departmental contact for the specific application process for the position of interest.

An individual who wishes to apply for a Graduate Assistantship can find the application form on the Graduate College website. <https://grad.uni.edu/graduate-students-forms-resources-and-information>

This form should be submitted as an email attachment to the department in which student is seeking an assistantship. See Appendix A of this document for a sample copy of the application form. Steps in the application process are:

- The applicant must complete all items on the form.
- An applicant can apply for a Graduate Assistantship for both fall and spring semesters of an academic year or for the fall semester only or the spring semester only.
- The applicant must submit the application form to the desired department. The applicant should not submit this form to the Graduate College unless the position description directs that.
- Before an applicant can be awarded a Graduate Assistantship, the applicant must be accepted into a graduate degree program.
- Students seeking support should submit the application form by February 1st to be considered for the following academic year. *Failure to do so may prevent the student from being considered for support.* Students should consult the program of interest for more information.
- The department will decide which applicants to recommend to the Graduate College to be awarded a Graduate Assistantship.
- All offers for a Graduate Assistantship to students **MUST** come from the Dean of the Graduate College via email, copied to appropriate departmental employees. (See "Offer and Acceptance Process" section for details on these procedures). Departments should **NOT** inform a student verbally, or in writing, that they will be receiving, or will be recommended for, a Graduate Assistantship.

A student who has been awarded a Graduate Assistantship receives the award only for the duration stated in the formal letter(s) of offer from the Dean of the Graduate College. Students seeking continued support *must complete a new application* and submit the form to the department.

Eligibility for Assistantships

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Assistantships at the University of Northern Iowa are granted to excellent students. Before an assistantship can be awarded all of the following must be met by the start of the semester:

- U.S. students must possess a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution prior to the start of the assistantship appointment. International students must have graduated from an accredited undergraduate academic program.
- The student must have been admitted to graduate study at the University of Northern Iowa on a degree-track basis, either regular admission or provisional admission for departmental reasons. Students who are provisionally admitted due to a low GPA are not eligible for a Graduate Assistantship. (Admission must show on the SIS student record).
- A newly admitted graduate student must have at least a 3.00 grade point average for undergraduate or previous graduate work of at least 8 graded graduate-level credit hours. The student must maintain a minimum UNI cumulative GPA of 3.00 in order to be eligible for continued or further appointment.
- The student must be enrolled in at least 9 qualifying on-campus graduate-level credit hours for each semester during the award.
 - The following cannot be used as part of the qualifying on-campus graduate level credit hours:
 - Workshops, audit, undergraduate, CIEP or correspondence courses.
 - Repeated courses taken in a prior semester with financial support.
 - It is expected that all courses applying to the degree meet the minimum hour requirements for program completion established by the Graduate College. A student request, type F (substitute for required course) or M (declaring electives), should be done for any of these courses that do not automatically plot to the degree. Courses taken for the completion of certificates must be complementary to the degree program.
 - Students in their final semester need a minimum of 3 qualifying credit hours of required coursework to complete their degree. The remaining credit hours (6 or less) of coursework do not need to apply to the student's degree program. Students requiring only a few credits to graduate their last semester should consider financial implications of the decision in taking additional courses.
- Maximum support:
 - Master/Specialist students are allowed a maximum of four (4) semesters of support per degree. Master students who enroll in a second Master's degree can receive an additional four (4) semesters of support as long as the first degree is completed. If a student is declared in two Master's degrees, simultaneously, then progress needs to be made in both majors in order to receive the additional four (4) semesters of support.
 - Doctoral students are allowed a maximum of six (6) semesters of support (students on doctoral support have to have received their master's degree before starting doctoral support).
 - Graduate Assistantship support and/or Graduate College tuition scholarship support counts as a semester of support, even if only one of these is awarded.
 - Students who must resign their graduate assistantship before the end of the eighth week of classes due to a documented FMLA-type circumstance will not be counted as receiving a semester of support for the purposes of determining number of semesters of support. See the section on resignation for more information.
- International students may be offered assistantships but additional items need to be considered.

- Offers to International students should be made as soon as possible to allow time for the student to apply for documents necessary for attending UNI.
- International students should contact International Graduate Admissions (319-273-2281) during their admission process. <https://intladm.uni.edu/graduate-admissions>
- International students need to be aware of TOEFL/IELTS score admission requirements. International Graduate Admissions (319-273-2281) can provide information on this. <https://intladm.uni.edu/graduate-admissions>
- If an international student will be on an assistantship that involves teaching or tutoring undergraduate students, the employing unit must verify that the assistant's command of the English language is sufficient to allow easy communication with undergraduate students in a classroom.

Graduate Assistantship Appointment Process

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Graduate Assistantships, regardless of funding source, are awarded by the Graduate College and are made under the Council of Graduate School guidelines. The steps in the appointment process are:

- By mid-February, the Graduate College will notify each graduate program/department of the minimum number of Graduate Assistantships committed to the graduate program/department from Graduate College funds. (If graduate program/department determines at any time they will not use any portion of the Graduate College allocations they should notify the Graduate College so that funding can be made available to other graduate programs/departments.)
- Graduate programs/departments review all Graduate Assistantship applications received. The department must consider all qualified students; however, continuing students who have performed well should have priority for continued support. Graduate Assistantship decisions reside in the graduate program/department. The graduate program/department will need to determine who will be offered an assistantship and at half-time or full-time status. The department will also determine if the offer is for fall semester or spring semester or both.
- By recommending a student to the Graduate College for a Graduate Assistantship, the department certifies that the student meets the qualifications stated in the preceding section. Departments should NOT offer these awards verbally, or in writing, to a student or tell a student that they have been recommended for an award. At most, departments can tell students that "Recommendations for financial support are sent to the Graduate College, which sends out official offers."

Graduate Assistantship Offer Process

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The steps in the Graduate Assistantship offer process are as follows:

- The department will complete and submit an electronic offer form for each student.
- Once submitted, the form will go to the department head for approval. Once the department approves the offer form will go directly to the Graduate College. (If a GA is being funded by a Foundation account the offer form will go to the Foundation for approval before it comes to the Graduate College.)
- Departments should be sure to track remaining funding.
- All Graduate College allocations must be offered to qualifying students by April 1st. Any declined offers after April 1st may be offered to another qualified student by April 26th and must be accepted by the student by May 3rd. Unused allocations will return back to the Graduate College. Any declined Extra and Minority awards designated for a specific student automatically returns to the Graduate College. The department cannot offer to another student.
- Departmentally funded assistantship offer forms are highly recommended to be submitted by April 1st, but will be accepted up until July 1st, since these funds do not come directly from the Graduate College.
- Offer forms for students who do not qualify for the appointment or for whom funds have not been allocated should not be submitted. If a form is received for a student who does not qualify, or if the

paperwork is incomplete, or the offer is unable to be processed, the offer form will be rejected back to the preparer.

- Once the Graduate College reviews the offer form, and determines the student meets eligibility requirements, a formal letter of offer for a Graduate Assistantship will come directly from the Dean of the Graduate College via email with a copy to departmental employees listed on the offer form.
- The University of Northern Iowa has supported a resolution by the Council of Graduate Schools that students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support prior to April 15; earlier deadlines for acceptance of such offers violate the intent of this Resolution. In those instances in which a student accepts an offer before April 15, and subsequently desires to withdraw that acceptance, the student may submit in writing a resignation of the appointment at any time through April 15. However, an acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student not to accept another offer without first obtaining a written release from the institution to which a commitment has been made. Similarly, an offer by an institution after April 15 is conditional on presentation by the student of the written release from any previously accepted offer. It is further agreed by the institutions and organizations subscribing to the Resolution that a copy of this Resolution or a link to the URL should accompany every scholarship, fellowship, traineeship, and assistantship offer.
- It is the responsibility of the department head or designee to notify students, in a timely fashion, who have not been recommended for an award.
- If a student declines the Graduate Assistantship offer the department can make an offer to another qualified student and an offer form should be initiated for the next selected individual. Any Graduate College funded offers declined after April 26th will automatically return to the Graduate College.

Graduate Assistantship Offer Acceptance/Decline Process

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The steps for students to accept or decline their offer(s) are as follows:

- The student should read the full offer letter to make sure they are aware of all provisions of the offer. Any questions the student may have regarding the offer should be directed to the department.
- Students must use the electronic link within their offer letter to accept or decline the Graduate Assistantship offer by the due date listed in the offer letter. When the offer is accepted or declined, an automatic email will be sent to the Graduate College and those listed on the offer form.
- If a student accepts an offer and later wants to decline, before the start of the semester, the student must go to the original offer letter and click on the link provided and then select decline.
- If a student accepts an offer and later wants to decline, after the start of the semester, then the student should follow directions in the *Resignation of a Graduate Assistantship* section of this handbook.

Process for Assistantships After Offer is Accepted

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A fall semester PAF can be initiated after July 1st for any student that has accepted their assistantship offer. (Spring semester PAF's can be initiated starting in early November). The PAF should be submitted once the student meets the following requirements:

- Has an UNI cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. Must maintain a UNI cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher for the entire semester. All grades must be posted in order for a GPA to be verified. Newly admitted graduate students must have at least a 3.00 grade point average for undergraduate or previous graduate work of at least 8 graded graduate-level credit hours.
 - If students have a missing grade it is their responsibility to contact their instructor to make sure the grade gets posted timely. Students with a missing grade will not be able to start their assistantship until a grade is posted for that course and then their GPA will be verified.

- Students with a grade of “I” (Incomplete) will not be able to start their assistantship until a grade is posted for that course and then their GPA will be verified. Students with an incomplete grade who have extenuating circumstances can request an exception. Students should send their request to the Graduate College Dean via email and carbon copy to their advisor. The request needs to include details of the extenuating circumstances as well as the timeline to make up the incomplete. The student will be contacted after a decision is made.
- Enrolled in at least 9 qualifying on-campus graduate-level credit hours for each semester during the award.
 - The following cannot be used as part of the qualifying on-campus graduate level credit hours:
 - Workshops, audit, undergraduate, CIEP or correspondence courses.
 - Repeated courses taken in a prior semester with financial support.
 - It is expected that all courses applying to the degree meet the minimum hour requirements for program completion established by the Graduate College. A student request, type F (substitute for required course) or M (declaring electives), should be done for any of these courses that do not automatically plot to the degree. Courses taken for the completion of certificates must be complementary to the degree program.
 - Students in their final semester need a minimum of 3 qualifying credit hours of required coursework to complete their degree. The remaining credit hours (6 or less) of coursework do not need to apply to the student’s degree program. Students requiring only a few credits to graduate their last semester should consider financial implications of the decision in taking additional courses.
- Has official transcripts on file in the Office of Admissions showing that bachelors (or any other required) degree has been conferred.
- Is declared in graduate degree program.
- Completed new hire paperwork in Human Resource Services.

It is the student’s responsibility to make sure these requirements are done in a timely manner. If requirements are not met in a timely manner it will result in changing the GA start date, which will result in the salary amount being reduced (prorated) based on that new date.

Employment must not begin until the PAF has been approved by all parties in the Graduate College and must not begin before the first day of classes of each semester. If new hire paperwork is not completed and received within three days of the effective employment date, by Federal regulations, steps will be taken to terminate the appointment.

Students need to have all requirements met before August 10 in order to be guaranteed they will receive an August pay check and before January 10 to be guaranteed they will receive a January pay check. These dates assume the PAF is submitted and comes to the Graduate College in a timely manner.

Assistantship Salary

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Graduate Assistantship salary amounts vary based on the graduate student’s degree and these rates change from year to year. The official GA offer letter to the student provides them the salary amount for their GA assignment. For the current year’s salary amounts contact the Graduate College.

Salaries are based on 16 work weeks for the semester. Salaries are paid through payroll the last day of the month and are evenly distributed over 5 months directly to the employee. (August-December for fall and January-May for spring). Assistantship salaries do NOT get applied to a student’s ubill. It is the student’s responsibility to pay their ubill.

Benefits

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Graduate Assistantships **must cover the entire semester** in order to qualify for benefits.

All graduate assistants, with at least a half-time appointment for an entire semester, receive the following benefits:

- Tuition billed at resident rates
- Spouse billed tuition at resident rates (must be requested on the assistantship application form)
- Can purchase an “A” parking permit (“A” permit rates will apply)

If an out-of-state graduate assistant with a half-time appointment starts the assistantship late or takes a leave, the student will be billed at the non-resident rate.

Graduate Assistants are not eligible for University-sponsored insurance benefits, sick or vacation days. Graduate Assistants are covered by Worker’s Compensation. For information on how to purchase health insurance contact the Student Health Clinic.

Work Hours

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Graduate assistants with a half-time assistantship should work ten hours per week and those with a full-time assistantship should work twenty hours per week. Under no circumstances should a graduate student be required to work more than 10 (half-time) or 20 (full-time) hours per week. If a student worked less than their required hours during one or more weeks, that student should not be asked to make up this time during any other time period.

Graduate assistants do not submit time cards but the student and supervisor should track hours worked.

Graduate assistants should begin work the first week of classes, if the student meets qualifications and PAF has been approved by the Graduate College. The appointment extends through final exam week. The exact dates are specified in the student’s offer letter. GA’s do not work Thanksgiving week during the fall semester and Spring break week during the spring semester. Graduate assistant appointments are not over the winter break.

Summer-only appointments for graduate assistants are rare and are usually funded by the department. Summer graduate assistants are offered as a 4 week summer appointment and the student must be enrolled in at least 2 graduate-level credit hours during the same time frame and have a UNI cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher.

Absences

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Jury Duty/Subpoenaed as a Witness– If a Graduate Assistant is called to serve on a jury or as a witness, and is not excused/released, the department must allow the GA to adjust his/her work schedule accordingly. Proof of jury duty services or subpoena showing dates and times of service will be required to turn into their supervisor and should be kept in the student’s personnel file in the department. Any jury duty pay received other than reimbursement for travel, meals, or parking should be surrendered to the University through the cashiers in the Office of Business Operations.

Military Service – If a Graduate Assistant is called to Active Military duty the student is eligible for a withdrawal from the semester without F’s and without revocation of their tuition scholarship, if they have one. A copy of the student’s military orders will need to be provided in order to not have their scholarship revoked. The student would need to resign their Graduate Assistantship since they will no longer be enrolled and they are unable to fulfill their Graduate Assistantship duties.

National Guard – Supervisors/departments are expected to allow a GA to adjust his/her work schedule to accommodate National Guard duty/training.

FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) – Graduate Assistants do not meet the eligibility criteria for leave under the Family Medical Leave Act. However, students who must resign their graduate assistantship before the end of the eighth week of classes due to a documented FMLA-type circumstance will not be counted as receiving a semester of support for the purposes of determining number of semesters of support.

Pregnancy, Birth or Adoption of a Child - See *Parental Support and Relief for Graduate Assistants* below.

Other leave - If a Graduate Assistant cannot work their on-campus assistantship hours for reasons out of their control, the student shall provide their employer and the Graduate College with written notice as soon as possible, preferable prior to the dates of the requested leave. The notice needs to include the reason for the absence and dates gone and any backup documentation to support the reason for taking a leave, if applicable.

When a student takes a leave from their assistantship for any reason, their salary will be prorated based on the duration of their leave. The department should contact the Graduate College for information on how to process paperwork.

Graduate Assistant Supervisor Responsibilities

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Graduate assistant supervisors are required to perform many responsibilities, some of which are outlined below. Please note, there may be other supervisor responsibilities or duties not included in this listing:

GA supervisors are required to:

- Meet with the GA on the first day of work to review (a) the student's job description in detail, (b) discuss the expectations of both the student AND the supervisor.
- Work closely with the GA during the entire semester to assure GA is carrying out assigned duties and goals.
- Work with the GA to set up a work schedule to assure GA will meet the required weekly hours of work.
- Have regular weekly contact with GA.
- Be aware of the hours the GA is working and GA's performance.
 - If a student is not showing up for work, or not putting in required work hours, or not performing duties at a satisfactory level, the supervisor should document this in detail. Conversations, emails or feedback the supervisor provides to the GA regarding these issues should also be documented. Detailed documentation is essential for unsatisfactory performance/work and if a change needs to be made.
 - Contact the Graduate College for direction on how to proceed with problems related to unsatisfactory performance and/or insufficient work hours.
- Review University and departmental rules and regulations with the graduate assistant.
- Conduct the performance appraisal process (see next section for details)

Graduate Assistant Performance Appraisals

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Evaluation is a crucial part of the Graduate Assistantship experience. It should be a supportive, constructive, and on-going process that helps identify strengths as well as weaknesses and develops a plan for improvement. All Graduate Assistants must receive a formal performance appraisal by their supervisor each semester as follows.

- The student must be provided a job description and be given clear information by the supervisor about job expectations at the beginning of the employment period and must be informed of the ways in which progress will be measured.
- An informal performance appraisal conducted 3 weeks after the student's start date.
- A formal performance appraisal conducted at the end of the semester.
- At any point during the semester, additional performance appraisals may be conducted at the request of the graduate assistant or their supervisor.

The department must use the Graduate Assistant Performance Appraisal form, which is located on the Graduate College website. <http://www.grad.uni.edu/assistantships>

The formal performance appraisal process involves the student and the supervisor discussing a written evaluation and is intended to be constructive and to serve as an aid to the graduate assistant in correcting any cited performance problems. Following the review, the performance appraisal form will be signed by the Graduate Assistant, Supervisor, and Graduate Program Coordinator or Department Head. Both the student and the supervisor share responsibility for ensuring that the evaluation process is carried out.

The performance evaluation should be kept in the Graduate Assistant's personnel file in the department. Any evaluations that are not satisfactory or with discipline issues, and all related documentation, need to be sent to Human Resources immediately. A copy of these should also be kept in the GA's personnel file for at least 3 years once the student is no longer a graduate assistant in the department.

Note: HRS offers supervisor performance appraisal training in the spring of each year or HRS has online training available on their website. http://www.vpaf.uni.edu/hrs/training/perf_appraisal.shtml.

Academic Integrity

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Whether working in a laboratory, classroom, office, or other setting, graduate assistants must maintain standards of academic honesty and integrity and report any violations of these to their supervisor. Students must also keep well informed of departmental, college, and institutional regulations and follow them consistently.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

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If a graduate assistant's UNI cumulative GPA goes below 3.00, their assistantship will be discontinued. If their UNI cumulative GPA returns to 3.00 or higher the student would qualify for an assistantship offer and would need to complete and submit a Graduate Assistant application form.

Parental Support and Relief for Graduate Assistants

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(Approved by Graduate Council 2/27/14)

Graduate assistants who wish to suspend their academic responsibilities because of pregnancy, the birth or adoption of a child may request parental support or relief during the semester in which the pregnancy, birth or adoption occurs. This policy applies to graduate students who are current graduate assistants and who are/will be related to the child as mother or father, including domestic partners. If both parents are graduate assistants, this policy applies to both. This policy is not

mandatory – if the graduate assistant chooses not to suspend academic responsibilities during the semester of the pregnancy, birth or adoption of a child, no action is warranted.

Summary of Policy

1. The Graduate Assistant must be currently enrolled in an academic program, and in good academic standing.
2. The Graduate Assistant shall provide the employer with written notice not less than thirty days prior to the date of the requested leave, if practicable. In the case of unforeseen/emergency circumstances only, to the extent reasonably possible the graduate assistant must give a verbal notice to the employer at least twenty-four hours prior to taking leave.
3. The Graduate Assistant must provide medical or legal documentation of the birth or adoption to the supervisor.
4. Prior to taking the leave, to the extent reasonably possible, the Graduate Assistant must make all arrangements with course instructors regarding making up coursework during the time of the leave.
5. Students who take a leave from their assistantship due to Parental Support leave will have their salary prorated based on the duration of their leave.
6. Students who must resign their graduate assistantship before the end of the eighth week of classes due to Parental Support leave will not be counted as receiving a semester of support for the purposes of determining number of semesters of support.
7. If a student is receiving a tuition scholarship, the scholarship will be retained by the student, who will complete all course requirements as determined in item #4 above. If the student withdraws from courses, the student may be required to repay the scholarship amount, as described in current Graduate Assistantship policies.
8. The graduate student who remains enrolled shall retain full access to UNI library services, computing services including e-mail and MyUniverse, health center, sports and performing arts activities, and on-campus housing during the semester of leave, provided the necessary financial obligations are satisfied. If the student withdraws from all courses, the student will lose access to some of these services.
9. Students may request one extension for a total of up to 24 months during their studies, but time limits may be extended for active military service or other extenuating circumstances, at the recommendation of the program and the approval of the Dean of the Graduate College or designee.

Special Considerations

- All graduate students are responsible for determining the implications for eligibility of student loans and loan deferment privileges.
- All graduate assistants are responsible for discussing with their research advisor how a leave would affect time-sensitive research projects and reporting, and the feasibility of resuming the same research project on return from leave. A graduate student may not necessarily be able to resume the same research project after a leave, but will have the opportunity to engage in similar research projects on return.
- International graduate students are responsible for determining the implications of a leave for fulfilling visa requirements.

Resignation of a Graduate Assistantship

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A graduate student may elect to resign their Graduate Assistantship. To resign an assistantship after a semester begins the student must send an email to the Graduate College (gradcollege@uni.edu) and carbon copy their departmental secretary and supervisor. The email subject line should include their UID, name and indicate “resigning assistantship.” The email body should state that they are

resigning the position and provide the effective date and the hours worked (will work) the last week of their assistantship. The GA's salary will terminate on the day the resignation is effective, or the last day worked if prior to resignation, and salary will be prorated. Payroll will contact the student if any overpayment has been made to the student to work out repayment of these funds.

VERY IMPORTANT: If the student is a non-resident and resigns from their Graduate Assistantship early they will be charged tuition at the non-resident rate.

To decline an assistantship before the start of a semester the student should find their original offer letter received via email from the Graduate College. Use the link within the offer letter to access the electronic system. The student should click on "decline" for the semester(s) they want to decline. Note: Once a semester begins the "decline" button is disabled for that semester and the student will need to follow the above instructions on how to resign after the semester begins.

If student is carrying a full-time load in their program of study and is maintaining a 3.00 grade average or higher, they may retain their Graduate Tuition Scholarship, if applicable, even if they elect to resign their Graduate Assistantship. Full-time students in good academic standing cannot be forced to resign their tuition scholarship, even if their Graduate Assistantship is terminated because of their failure to perform the work assignments required of their assistantship. However, Tuition Scholarships awarded under an externally funded grant may be terminated as well, if required under the terms of the grant.

VERY IMPORTANT: If the student who also has a scholarship resigns because they are dropping all classes or dropping below a full-time load in the program of study, the scholarship will be revoked and the student will be required to pay the entire tuition charges for that semester.

Termination of a Graduate Assistantship

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The Graduate Assistantship cannot be terminated without appropriate procedures.

Suspension or dismissal of a graduate student from the University for disciplinary reasons will terminate a student's Graduate Assistantship.

Any member of the University who is found to have engaged in discrimination or harassment that violates University policy or the law will be subject to disciplinary action, including termination or dismissal. Faculty and graduate students should familiarize themselves with the University Discrimination and Harassment Policy. <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1302>. Suspension or dismissal of a graduate student from the University for violation of this policy will terminate a Graduate Assistantship. Other disciplinary actions against a graduate student resulting from a discrimination or harassment complaint may also lead to termination of a Graduate Assistantship.

A Graduate Assistantship may also be terminated for any one of the following reasons: a) the UNI cumulative GPA falls below 3.00, b) the semester course load falls below the minimum full-time load of 9 qualifying graduate credit hours in the program of study, or c) an allegation of academic or scientific misconduct such as cheating, plagiarism, or falsification of data, has been investigated and verified. Departments need to monitor the GPA and enrollment requirements closely.

In addition to the above reasons, a student's assistantship may be terminated when there is substantial written documentation that a student consistently has not carried out work assignments which fall within the description of the assistantship position. Graduate Assistants are employees of the University for the duration of their appointment. During the appointment period, they have similar protection against unlawful termination afforded other University employees. If a student holds both a Graduate Assistantship and a Graduate Tuition Scholarship, the failure to perform assistantship work

assignments normally cannot lead to termination of the Graduate Tuition Scholarship. However, Tuition Scholarships awarded under an externally funded grant may be terminated as well if required under the terms of the grant.

Before a department recommends termination, it must: a) notify the student of the specific nature of the problem or problems, with documentation of non-performance or poor performance of duties, b) allow the student a reasonable opportunity to be heard, whether the student wishes to respond orally or in writing, c) if possible, attempt an informal resolution to avoid termination, d) give the student written notification of the department's reasons for recommending termination if an informal resolution cannot be achieved.

After the above steps have been followed, the department shall forward its written recommendation, including the reasons leading to the recommendation, to the Graduate College for review and approval. The Graduate College and the department to which the graduate student is assigned have a joint responsibility to ensure that appropriate procedures are followed before the termination. A department cannot terminate an award without the review and approval of the Dean of the Graduate College, even if the funding is not provided by the Graduate College.

If a student elects to file a grievance under the Graduate Assistant Grievance Procedure, then the procedures therein take precedence over all of the above.

VERY IMPORTANT: If the student is a non-resident and is terminated from their Graduate Assistantship early they will be charged tuition at the non-resident rate.

Grievance Procedures and Appeals for Graduate Assistants

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When complaints or disagreements arise concerning a student's Graduate Assistant assignment, efforts should be made to resolve problems informally. However, if such efforts fail, graduate assistants have the option of filing a grievance.

Students who hold, or have held, a Graduate Assistantship, and who have a complaint or disagreement concerning their Graduate Assistantship, may file a grievance according to the steps outlined in the Graduate Assistantship Grievance Procedure in Policy 12.05-Graduate Assistantship Grievance. <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1205>

Such grievances are restricted to interpretation or application of established policies and procedures governing assistantships; the grievance procedure does not apply to tuition remission and salary adjustments.

For academic grievances, graduate assistants may use the procedure which is available to all students, Policy 12.01. <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1201>

Copies of both grievance procedures are available from the Graduate College.

Appeals arising from suspension or dismissal for disciplinary reasons will be processed under the University's Student Conduct Code. <http://www.uni.edu/policies/302>

Appeals from either party in a discrimination or harassment complaint will be processed according to the appeal procedures specified in the University's Discrimination and Harassment Policy. <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1302>.

* Approved by the Graduate Council

UNI Mission Statement[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

The University of Northern Iowa at Cedar Falls is recognized as having a mission of sufficient scope to enable it to be a distinguished arts and sciences university with outstanding professional programs in education and business. It provides leadership in the development of programs for the preservice and in-service preparation of teachers and other educational personnel for schools, colleges, and universities. The institution offers undergraduate and graduate programs and degrees in the liberal arts and sciences, including selected areas of technology. It offers pre-professional programs and conducts research and community outreach programs to strengthen the educational, social, cultural, and economic development of Iowa and the larger community. For more information, please visit: <https://policies.uni.edu/102>

Drug-Free Workplace and Schools Policy[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

It is the policy of the University of Northern Iowa and the Board of Regents to provide for a drug-free work place and learning environment. Alcohol and drug abuse pose a threat to the health and safety of University faculty, staff, students, and visitors. For the University policies, please visit: <http://www.uni.edu/policies/413> and <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1318>

Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Policy[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

The University is committed to achieving fairness and equity in all aspects of the educational enterprise and therefore prohibits discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, and retaliation under this policy. For the University policy, please visit: <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1302>.

Equal Opportunity & Non-Discrimination Statement[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

It is the policy of the University of Northern Iowa that no person shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in employment, any educational program, or any activity of the University, on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, political affiliation, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran or military status, or on any other basis protected by federal and/or state law. For the University policy, please visit: <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1303/>

Accommodations of Disabilities Policy[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

It is the policy of the University of Northern Iowa that no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to unlawful discrimination by the University. This policy applies to all aspects of campus activities including employment, education, student programming, and services provided to the community at-large. For the University policy, please visit: <http://www.uni.edu/policies/1315>

