

Stanford

Published on *Graduate Academic Policies and Procedures* (<https://gap.stanford.edu>)

[Home](#) > 7.3.1 Assistantships: Policy

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Last updated on:

Summary

Assistantships are a form of student employment, providing salary and full or partial payment of tuition in exchange for teaching or research service performed by the student as part of his or her training and education. This document presents the guidelines for the administration of assistantships.

Policy

Assistantships are a form of graduate student employment, earning a compensation package (including both salary and tuition allowance) for the performance of research or teaching services to the university as part of the student's academic and professional training and development. Matriculated graduate students may be appointed as a Research Assistant (RA) or as one of the categories of Teaching Assistant (TA).

See Administrative Guide Memo 10.2.1, [Graduate Student Assistantships](#) [1], for detailed discussion of assistantships.

Authority:

- [Vice Provost for Graduate Education](#) [2] (policy)
- Degree program staff (implementation)

Applicability:

All matriculated graduate students and programs. See [GAP 7.4 Postdoctoral Scholar Support](#) [3] for guidance related to Postdoctoral Scholars.

Jump To:

1. [Types of Assistantships](#)
2. [General Eligibility Requirements](#)
3. [Periods of Assistantship Appointments](#)
4. [Size and Scope of Assistantship Appointments](#)
5. [Tuition Allowance \(TAL\)](#)
6. [Amounts and Sources of Funding for Assistantships](#)
7. [Work in Addition to Assistantship Appointments](#)
8. [Benefits](#)
9. [Taxability of RA and TA Salaries](#)

1. Types of Assistantships

There are two broad categories of assistantship appointments: Research Assistantships (RA) and Teaching Assistantships (TA). Administrative Guide 10.2.1, [Graduate Student Assistantships](#) [1], [1] describes the responsibilities of each, including four different categories of TA appointments.

[Back to top](#)

2. General Eligibility Requirements

Only matriculated Stanford graduate students, or for Research Assistantships only, nonmatriculated students in the classification of Student of New Faculty, may hold assistantship appointments.

During the three quarters of the academic year, students must be enrolled in at least 8 units to hold an assistantship appointment. This enrollment requirement is reduced to one unit during Summer quarter. Exceptions to this enrollment requirement may be approved for students:

- with TGR status,
- who have been approved for a Graduate Tuition adjustment,
- who are enrolled for an approved Graduation Quarter,
- in an approved childbirth accommodation period, or
- with an approved disability accommodation.

All international students must be approved for English proficiency through the TA Screening process before being appointed to any teaching assistant or course assistant position (see [English for Foreign Students](#) [4] website). Note that TA Screening must be completed in advance of processing any TA or CA appointment for an international student; this screening should normally be accomplished at least one full quarter before the effective date of the teaching assistantship.

Students must have a Social Security Number and an I-9 Eligibility to Work form on file with Stanford's Payroll department before beginning an assistantship appointment.

[Back to top](#)

3. Periods of Assistantship Appointments

Assistantships are "full-quarter packages" (3 months of either teaching or research work). Employment is for full quarters with standard start/stop dates. The start and stop dates of an assistantship are coordinated with the standard pay periods for Stanford employees, as follows:

- FALL QUARTER: October 1 - December 31
- WINTER QUARTER: January 1 - March 31
- SPRING QUARTER: April 1 - June 30
- SUMMER QUARTER: July 1 - September 30.

Note that these dates are normally different from the start and stop dates of quarters on the university's academic

calendar. This timing is intended to deliver continuous salary to students appointed for multiple sequential quarters, i.e., students on assistantships are paid during the periods between quarters.

An assistantship appointment may not be started after the start date for a particular quarter. Where necessary, it may be ended early. In the case of termination of an assistantship, where the termination is not the fault of the student, salary will end as of the date of termination, but the full tuition allowance for the quarter will be paid.

For those students who begin work before the start of the standard appointment period, an "alternate quarter" is available. By choosing this option, the standard quarter dates are adjusted by one pay period for an entire year. If a student is being appointed on an "alternate quarter" basis, that schedule will apply to all assistantship appointments made in that quarter and in all subsequent quarters within that year.

[Back to top](#)

4. Size and Scope of Assistantship Appointments

The minimum assistantship appointment is 10% (4 hours per week), and larger appointments must be in increments of 5% (2 hours per week). No 45% appointments are allowed. The maximum appointment during the school year (Autumn, Winter and Spring quarters) is 50% (20 hours per week).

Students may hold concurrent multiple assistantships, subject to the limits on hours of work above. Assistantships for more than 50% time during the academic year, two concurrent assistantships totaling more than 50% time, or enrollment in more than 10 units while holding a 50% appointment, require the prior approval of the student's advisor, the department chair, and the school dean's office.

Students on assistantships do not report hours worked through the university systems used by regular staff. Instead, they are paid over the standard appointment period for an average number of hours worked per week throughout the appointment period. This permits students who are appointed for consecutive quarters to be supported continuously during the periods between quarters.

Benefits for students on assistantships, including time off, are described in section 8 below.

Summer Quarter Assistantships

In Summer quarter, students may hold assistantship appointments up to 90% FTE (36 hours of work per week). No 55% appointments are allowed. Students must be enrolled for at least one unit in order to hold a Summer assistantship. 100% appointments are considered temporary employment, rather than as a student assistantship; they are not processed through GFS, and do not provide any tuition allowance or Cardinal Care payment.

During Summer quarter, when many courses are shorter and the between-quarters period is longer than in fall/winter/spring quarters, a teaching or research assistantship may be offered for less than the full three-month period.

Summer assistantships must begin on the quarterly start-date (July 1 unless the student is on the alternate calendar), but the end date may be set at two months or later, rather than the full 3-month period. This should be done only in the Summer Quarter, and only where the research or teaching effort is significantly less than expected in a normal quarter. In these cases, the student will earn the full tuition allowance and a specific salary per pay period (often, the degree program's standard semi-monthly salary). The student should be advised that the shorter work period will generate less total salary.

(Administratively: if a summer appointment has been offered and accepted for at least two months but less than the

GFS-standard three months, the assistantship should be entered in GFS with the earlier end date noted as the "termination date." The full TAL will be earned, and there are no negative implications of 'termination.')

[Back to top](#)

5. Tuition Allowance (TAL)

A tuition allowance payment (TAL) is part of the compensation of any student with an assistantship appointment. Students with an approved assistantship appointment will see the applicable TAL payment as a credit on their university bill at the start of the quarter.

A student with a 50% assistantship receives 10 units of TAL (or TGR tuition if enrolled in that status), and may not enroll in more than 10 units without prior approval. Students with smaller FTE appointments must still enroll for at least 8 units in the quarter in which they hold the assistantship, but will receive proportionally less TAL. Students with Summer assistantships of greater than 50% FTE will receive proportionally less TAL as the appointment approaches the 90% limit.

[Back to top](#)

6. Amounts and Sources of Funding for Assistantships

See Administrative Guide 10.2.1, [Graduate Student Assistantships](#) [1], and annual [assistantship salary and tuition tables](#) [5] for further detail about the levels of support and funding sources for assistantships.

Salaries and Fringe Benefits

[Minimum RA and TA salaries](#) [5] are set each year by the Provost, upon the recommendation of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education. Degree programs may pay a student more, but not less, than these minimums.

Teaching Assistantships are normally funded by university, school, or degree program funds, and these sources are charged for the full amount of the student's compensation, including salary plus a fringe benefit rate (to fund the Cardinal Care subsidy program).

Research Assistantships are generally funded by research grants and contracts, although university, school, or degree program funds may also be used. These sources are charged for the full amount of the student's salary, plus a fringe benefit rate (to fund the Cardinal Care subsidy program). Tuition allowance for RAs is subsidized by either university or school sources (see below).

Tuition Allowance (TAL)

The TAL payment for a teaching assistantship (any level) is generally charged in full to the same source paying the TA salary. In some degree programs, the cost of TAL for teaching assistants is subsidized by the school.

The TAL payment for a research assistant is subsidized. Effective in Autumn quarter 2013-14, for all schools other than the School of Medicine, the source of funds paying the RA salary is charged for 60% of the associated TAL; Stanford University (or the Graduate School of Business, for RAs funded by that school) pays the other 40%. For RAs funded by the School of Medicine, the source of funds paying the RA salary is charged for 81% of the

associated TAL; the School of Medicine pays the other 19%.

When graduate students are appointed as teaching or research assistants in a school other than the one in which they are enrolled, the school in which the student works is responsible for paying the TAL at the student's home school tuition rate. In the case of research assistants, the tuition sharing arrangement (either 60%/40% or 81%/19%) is determined by which school is paying the salary.

[Back to top](#)

7. Work in Addition to Assistantship Appointments

U.S. citizens and permanent residents are permitted to work an additional 8 hours per week in incidental hourly employment, unrelated to the assistantship (this additional work may not be in the form of another assistantship).

The F-1 (student) visa does not permit employment beyond 20 hours per week on campus, so international students may not be employed for any additional hours beyond a 50% assistantship. This limit on additional hours of employment does not apply to the period between the last day of exams of a quarter and the first day of classes of the following quarter, as published in the academic calendar. During this period between quarters, the student is still considered to be employed on the assistantship, but may do additional work (other than the assistantship) for hourly compensation.

Individual degree programs may have stricter limits on additional employment for their students.

[Back to top](#)

8. Benefits

See Administrative Guide 10.2.1, [Graduate Student Assistantships](#) [6], and annual [assistantship salary and tuition tables](#) [5] for further detail about the levels of support and funding sources for assistantships.

Salaries and Fringe Benefits

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When graduate students are appointed as teaching or research assistants in a school other than the one in which they are enrolled, the school in which the student works is responsible for paying the TAL at the student's home school tuition rate. In the case of research assistants, the tuition sharing arrangement (either 60%/40% or 81%/19%) is determined by which school is paying the salary.

Cardinal Care Subsidy

Students who are enrolled in the Cardinal Care insurance program, and who are appointed to at least a 10% assistantship, are eligible for a Cardinal Care subsidy as described in [GAP 7.1 General Funding Guidelines and Definitions](#) [7].

A fringe benefit rate is charged to the salary of all RAs and TAs to fund the Cardinal Care subsidy program. The rate is negotiated annually by the Cost and Management Analysis office (part of the Office of Research Administration).

Time Off

Assistantship appointments do not accrue vacation leave.

Students with research or teaching assistantship appointments will receive a lump sum of 24 hours of paid sick time per calendar year, which is available for use during any period of assistantship appointment during the year. Sick time does not carry over from one calendar year to the next.

Arrangements for any variations in work hours, including time off for vacation, jury duty, illness, or related use of sick time should be made individually with the faculty sponsor. To the extent possible, students are encouraged to make arrangements outside of their working hours and faculty sponsors are encouraged to offer flexibility in work hours.

Regular semi-monthly salary is paid during periods when sick time is used. When sick time is used, the student notifies Payroll using a [Stanford Services & Support](#) [8] request. Sick time accrued for an assistantship appointment is paid only when used to replace work hours during the course of employment as a research or teaching assistant. Otherwise, sick balances are not paid out. Graduate students who have student hourly employment, either concurrently or at different times of the year, will see a separate accounting of sick time accrued for the student hourly employment (see Administrative Guide Memo 10.3.1, [Sick Time for Student Hourly Employees](#) [9]).

Students with research or teaching assistantship appointments may use sick time for themselves or a family member: for absences due to illness; for preventive care or diagnoses, care, or treatment of an existing health condition; or for purposes related to domestic violence, sexual assaults, or stalking.

[Back to top](#)

9. Taxability of RA and TA Salaries

Student employee pay is subject to federal and state income tax withholding and is reported on Form W-2. Work performed in California is subject to withholding and reporting to California, regardless of the residency status of the student. Registered degree-seeking students do not pay FICA (Social Security and Medicare) taxes and California Voluntary Disability Insurance.

Tuition Allowance associated with assistantships is not subject to tax.

For further guidance related to taxes, the student should consult the [Student Services Office](#) [10] website.

[Back to top](#)

10. Unpaid Teaching Experience for Fully Funded Students

In the circumstance where a graduate degree program requires its students to have teaching experience as part of their academic and professional training, and where that student is simultaneously funded at a level that meets or exceeds the defined assistantship minimum by another appropriate source of funding, the student may be engaged in a mentored teaching experience without appointment to a TA position. This policy also applies to graduate students supported on funding that meets the criteria above and for whom the faculty advisor or degree program strongly recommend a teaching experience as part of the student's academic and professional training.

In providing mentored teaching experiences, degree programs should ensure that the same treatment is applied to all students in the program (regardless of work location) who are undertaking similar teaching assignments.

Some sources of external fellowship funding have defined restrictions on what the recipient of their support may do by way of additional employment or service to the university. In all cases, any student receiving external funding must comply with the requirements of the source of that funding.

[Back to top](#)

Related Content:

Related Policies

- [GAP 6.1 Graduate Tuition Categories](#) [11]
- [GAP 6.2 University Fees](#) [12]
- All other documents in [GAP 7 Graduate Student Funding](#) [13]

Related Bulletin Sections

- [Graduate Financial Aid](#) [14]

Related Information and Forms

- [GFS Policy Manual](#) [15]
- [Graduate Student Assistantships](#) [1], Administrative Guide Memo 10.2.1
- [Sick Time for Student Hourly Employees](#) [9], Administrative Guide Memo 10.3
- [Assistantship Salary and Tuition Allowance Tables](#) [5]
- [English for Foreign Students](#) [4] (for TA screening)

Source URL: <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-7/subchapter-3/page-7-3-1>

Links

[1] <https://adminguide.stanford.edu/chapter-10/subchapter-2/policy-10-2-1>

[2] <mailto:vpge@stanford.edu?subject=GAP%20Inquiry>

[3] <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-7/subchapter-4/page-7-4-1>

- [4] <https://language.stanford.edu/programs/efs/languages/english-foreign-students/screening-international-teaching-assistants>
- [5] <https://gfs.stanford.edu/tables>
- [6] <http://adminguide.stanford.edu/chapter-10/subchapter-2/policy-10-2-1>
- [7] <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-7/subchapter-1/page-7-1-1>
- [8] https://stanford.service-now.com/services?id=services_portal_home
- [9] <https://adminguide.stanford.edu/chapter-10/subchapter-3/policy-10-3-1>
- [10] <https://studentservices.stanford.edu/my-tuition-bill/1098-t-tax-overview-and-faqs>
- [11] <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-6/subchapter-1/page-6-1-1>
- [12] <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-6/subchapter-2/page-6-2-1>
- [13] <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-7>
- [14] <https://bulletin.stanford.edu/academic-policies/admission-and-financial-aid#financial-aid>
- [15] <http://gfs.stanford.edu/>