

Harding University

Handbook

**The Graduate
Assistantship Program**

**Harding University
Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs
Office of Graduate Programs
2008-2009**

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Introduction

The Harding University Graduate Assistantship Program is administered by the Dean of Graduate Programs, under the oversight of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Graduate assistants have long been an integral part of university life and serve a dual purpose: (1) the participating student benefits from a real-life experience related to his or her area of study and abilities, as well as receiving a scholarship and stipend; and (2) the University benefits from the work of a budding professional.

Participating in a graduate assistantship is intended to be a professional growth experience for the student. As such, there are multiple criteria which must be met before a graduate assistant position will be approved. Every application for a graduate assistantship must address these criteria, making a strong case that the position being sought is one that will benefit the student's professional aspirations.

Applications are submitted annually and are evaluated by a committee under the purview of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Assistantships may be requested for fall, spring, and/or summer terms; consideration will be given to fill requests that meet stated criteria. Once a determination has been made, colleges and departments are notified of the decision and can then begin the search for qualified students to fill these positions. Although some criteria are university-wide (see "Becoming a Graduate Assistant," page 2), other criteria for the receipt of graduate assistantships are set by the college or department.

It is important to note that if a college or department is awarded an assistantship one year, there is no assurance or commitment that future assistantships will be automatically provided. Each academic year brings a new opportunity to apply, on a competitive basis, for a new assistantship position.

It should be noted that Harding University has two types of graduate assistants:

University Level Graduate Assistantships: The graduate assistantships addressed by this handbook are those that are available university-wide on a competitive basis. These are funded through a budget managed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

College or Department Level Graduate Assistantships: There are some graduate assistantships available directly from certain colleges or departments. These are specific to the sponsoring college or department, which handles both the eligibility criteria and the funding. For information regarding this type of assistantship please contact the specific college or department of interest.

Working together, we can ensure that Harding's Graduate Assistantship Program provides mutual benefits both to recipient students and to the University at large.

Becoming a Graduate Assistant

The number of graduate assistantships available each year is based upon (1) the amount of funding available, and (2) the size of each award. In other words, if the number of assistantships is increased, the amount of funding for each award is decreased; if the award amount is increased, the number of assistantships decreases.

Currently, assistantships provide recipients with \$3,000 per term before taxes. A \$400 cash stipend is provided and the remaining \$2,600, less applicable taxes, is posted to the student's Harding account. This \$3,000 award is deemed by the IRS to be taxable income and taxes are deducted before the posting is made.

The following criteria must be met for a student to be eligible to become a graduate assistant:

- Must hold a bachelor's degree.
- Must be enrolled at Harding as a fulltime graduate student (9 hours or more).
- Must be enrolled in the following programs: Education, Business Administration, or Bible.
- Must not be currently in receipt of any other type of financial assistance from Harding. This includes but is not limited to spouse/child tuition waiver, scholarship, etc.
- Must meet the admission requirements of the program (i.e., not be on probationary admission).
- If a new graduate student, must have a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 and maintain a minimum graduate GPA of 3.0.
- If a current graduate student, must have and maintain a minimum graduate GPA of 3.0.
- Must be and remain a student in good standing with no ethical violations.

NOTE: If any of the above criteria are not met during the time a student is in a graduate assistantship position, the student will not be eligible for any future graduate assistantships.

Graduate Assistantships are available for three terms: Fall, Spring, and Summer. Receiving an award for one term does not guarantee an award for all terms.

Graduate Assistants are required to work 300 hours per term. Generally, this time will be spent on projects related to each student's area of professional interest and abilities. Graduate Assistants shall not be used as class instructors, but some instructional duties are acceptable. These include but are not limited to serving as lab assistants, compiling library materials, preparing class presentations, researching course materials, working with outcome data, and similar duties.

Graduate assistants are NOT to be used exclusively as clerical help. Most colleges or departments have funds for student workers who are hourly employees that may perform clerical duties.

Process for Allocating Graduate Assistant Slots

The Office of Graduate Programs evaluates each college or department application to determine the allocation of graduate assistantship “slots” (positions). The allocation of the slot (position) occurs at the university level, while the selection of the specific student to receive the award occurs at the college or department level. (See “Process for Selecting and Monitoring Graduate Assistants,” page 5.)

By working in advance to apportion assistantships, colleges and departments will be better prepared to ascertain their budget needs for the coming year.

Process for 2009-2010 Graduate Assistantship Program

Please note the new deadlines for submissions for the 2009-2010 school year.

October 1, 2008: *Applications Released*

Application forms are released and notification is sent to all entities that qualify for graduate assistants. Every year, there are more requests for graduate assistantships than there is available funding, so it is wise to make a strong case for receiving such a position. Each application must be approved and signed by the appropriate department head or dean before submission.

For the appropriate form for the 2009-2010 school year, see Appendix A. Only requests submitted on the appropriate form will be considered. This is to ensure that there is consistency in applications so that no college or department has what might be perceived as an unfair advantage.

Please note that being awarded an assistantship slot in the previous school year is no guarantee that another position will be awarded. Graduate assistantships do not automatically roll into the next fiscal year.

November 14, 2008: *Deadline for Applications*

All applications are due in the Office of Graduate Programs no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, November 14. Applications may be returned via campus mail to Box 10773, via fax to extension 5192. If there is concern that this deadline may not be met, hand delivery of the application to the Administration Building, Room 209C is recommended.

November 2008: *Evaluation of Applications*

A rubric will be used to objectively evaluate all applications, and they will be ranked according to their scores. The review committee will use the ranking to determine the allocation of slots (positions). Each application must be approved or disapproved unless two or more applications are tied in rankings. In that case, the committee may request additional information from such programs before making a final determination.

December 5, 2008: *Notification of Awards*

The Office of Graduate Programs will notify all colleges and departments that submitted applications as to approval status. A certification form will be attached to the letters of approved requests and must be completed and returned to the Office of Graduate Programs, Administration Building, 209 C.

December 12, 2008: *Deadline for Appeals*

Denial of applications may be appealed by a dean or department head. For a copy of the appeals form, see Appendix B. Reconsideration of a denied application will occur only if a slot becomes available.

January 12, 2009: *Certification of Awards*

Each area/office receiving a slot must certify to the Office of Graduate Programs that they acknowledge their allocation of slots. Certification forms (Appendix C) will be included with each award letter. ***Failure to certify by the deadline may result in the loss of approved slots.***

Important Dates for the 2009-2010 School Year

Action	Fall 2009	Spring 2010	Summer 2010
College or department notifies Office of Graduate Programs of student selections (see form in Appendix D.)	June 1, 2009*	October 1, 2009	February 1, 2010
Office of Graduate Programs checks transcripts to ensure eligibility.	June 1-15	October 1-15	February 1-15
Office of Graduate Programs sends letters notifying students of their award.	June 19, 2009	October 20, 2009	February 19, 2010
Classes Start	August 24, 2009	January 19, 2010	May 17, 2010

* NOTE: If you assign recipient students to assistantships for the full year, you need only notify the Office of Graduate Programs on June 1.

Important: If your graduate assistant application is approved, you *must* certify your acceptance of the award. Funds are limited for this highly competitive award, and the Office of Graduate Programs wants to ensure that all funds are allocated and disbursed. Failure to certify on time may mean that the slot you have been awarded may instead be reallocated to another area/office.

Release of Funds: The stipend is released to the selected graduate assistant within two weeks after the beginning of the semester in which the award is received. Scholarship funds, less taxes, are credited to the student's account within four weeks after the beginning of the same semester.

Process for Selecting and Monitoring Graduate Assistants

Criteria for the selection of students for graduate assistantship positions depend entirely upon the area/office making the selection, provided that the university wide criteria mentioned previously are met. (See “Becoming a Graduate Assistant,” page 2.)

Once a college or department has been informed as to how many slots it has been awarded, the following sequence of events can take place:

1. The college or department selects a graduate student whose skills match the position for which the slot has been approved.
2. The college or department notifies the Office of Graduate Programs regarding the selection by having the student complete the ***Student Application Form***. (See Appendix D.)
3. The college or department must attach a copy of the student transcript (unofficial) to the application form. The Office of Graduate Programs will confirm that the student qualifies for the award.
4. The Office of Graduate Programs notifies the student and college/department, in writing, regarding (1) their selection, (2) the details of the award, and (3) the requirements for remaining eligible for the award.
5. The Office of Graduate Programs will include a ***Payroll Form*** (Appendix E) with each award letter. This form must be completed and returned to the Office of Graduate Programs so the student can be paid.
6. The college or department monitors the student’s hours to ensure that the 300 hour requirement is met each term. Any time worked beyond the 300 hours will not be funded by the graduate assistant budget. However, a college or department may choose to pay an hourly wage from its budget if additional time is deemed necessary. Each college or department may set its own policy regarding this issue. Contact your dean or department chair for more information.
7. If graduate assistants do not work the required 300 hours, their awards will be prorated based on the number of hours they do work. In this case, the college or department must notify the Office of Graduate Programs so that the student’s account can be adjusted.

Appendix A

College/Department Graduate Assistantship Position Request Form for 2009-2010

The deadline for submitting this form is November 14, 2008. After this date, no other requests for graduate assistants will be accepted for the 2009-2010 school year.

Graduate Assistantship Position Request Form

2009-2010 Academic Year

Department/College - _____ Supervisor/Contact _____

Dean/Department Chair _____
Name Signature

Title/Label of Graduate Assistantship Position _____

1. Rationale for position: In 500 words or less, explain why you need this position. Include (1) why the work cannot be accomplished by a student worker, (2) whether prior knowledge is required, (3) why the assigned work cannot be accomplished in any other way, and (4) how the assignment provides added enrichment/learning in the graduate student's field of study. (Attach to this form.)
2. Number of Graduate Assistant slots requested per semester for this performance description:

_____	_____	_____
Fall	Spring	Summer
3. Typically, job responsibilities for graduate assistants vary greatly according to the position. Please:
 - a. Highlight all of the duties from the list below that apply to the proposed position
 - b. In the blank to the left of the descriptor, include the percentage of time allotted to that activity. (The total of percentages must equal 100%.)
 - c. On a separate page, provide an explanation for each descriptor you have selected.
 - d. This total application, including this cover sheet, the response to #1 above, and the description of the selected duties listed below, must not exceed three pages.

- ____ Supervises undergraduate students
- ____ Works with program assessment
- ____ Creates instructional materials
- ____ Staffs a lab
- ____ Teaches undergraduate classes on a substitute basis
- ____ Performs regular office operations
- ____ Assists a professor with duties related to teaching a class
- ____ Works with program accreditation
- ____ Works with publications
- ____ Works as a research assistant
- ____ Mentors or tutors undergraduate students
- ____ Supervises a program
- ____ Other - Explain
- ____ **Total** (Must equal 100%)

Appendix B

Appeal Form

If you are informed that you have not been awarded a graduate assistant slot for 2009-2010, you may file an appeal no later than December 12, 2008.

Graduate Assistant Position Appeal Form

College/Department: _____

Dean/Chair _____

Directions:

1. Attach a copy of your original submission.
2. In 300 words or less, explain why you believe your request should be reconsidered. Attach that statement (not to exceed one page) to this form and submit to:

Office of Graduate Programs
Harding University
Box 10773
Searcy, AR 72149--0773

3. You will receive a response within 30 days of the deadline for appeals.

Appendix C

Certification Form

This form will be included with all letters sent to colleges/departments informing them of the award of graduate assistantship slots. Failure to complete and return this certification may result in the loss of approved slots.

Graduate Assistant Certification Form

This form will be attached to every letter awarding a graduate assistantship and must be completed and returned before the assistantship is officially assigned to your college/department/program. Failure to complete, sign, and return this certification may result in the loss of assigned assistantships.

Within one week of the date listed below, please complete this form, sign, and return to:

Office of Graduate Programs
Harding University
Box 10773
Searcy, AR 72149--0773

Date _____

College/Department: _____

Dean/Department Chair: _____

I have received and reviewed the graduate assistantships assigned to me/my department. I understand that the approved assistantships are as follows:

Term	Year	Number of GA slots assigned
Fall	2009	
Spring	2010	
Summer	2010	

Signed _____
Dean/Department Chair

Date _____

Appendix D

Student Application Form

Harding University provides up to sixty assistantships per academic year to qualifying students. Students receiving this award are required to work 20 hours per week (for a total of 300 hours). The assistantship pays \$3,000.00 before taxes per semester for a maximum of three semesters.* A limited number of assistantships may be available for the summer term(s).

(*Note: Speech and Communication Disorder recipients may have an assistantship for five semesters.)

To qualify for an assistantship, a graduate student:

- Must hold a bachelor's degree.
- Must be enrolled at Harding as a fulltime graduate student (9 hours or more).
- Must be enrolled in the following programs: Education, Business Administration, or Bible.
- Must not be currently in receipt of any other type of financial assistance from Harding. This includes but is not limited to spouse/child tuition waiver, scholarship, etc.
- Must meet the admission requirements of the program (i.e., not be on probationary admission).
- If a new graduate student, must have a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 and maintain a minimum graduate GPA of 3.0.
- If a current graduate student, must have and maintain a minimum graduate GPA of 3.0.
- Must be and remain a student in good standing with no ethical violations.

NOTE: If any of the above criteria are not met during the time a student is in a graduate assistantship position, the student will not be eligible for any future graduate assistantships.

Note: If you qualify for a faculty/staff tuition discount or any other tuition discount at Harding University, you are **not** eligible for a graduate assistantship. Also, students in the Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) and Master of Science in Mental Health Counseling (MSMHC) degree programs are not eligible for a graduate assistantship.

Please complete the application on the next page and return it to:

Office of Graduate Programs
Harding University
Box 10773
Searcy, AR 72149--0773

Appendix E

Graduate Assistant Payroll Form

This will be sent to selected applicants, along with an acceptance letter, upon their being chosen to receive this award.

Graduate Assistant Payroll Form

Print Name: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Mark Term(s) during which you commit to work:

Fall 2008
 Yes No

Spring 2009
 Yes No

Summer 2009
 Yes No

I certify that I will work 300 hours during each of the above stated terms for a total of \$3,000 per term.

I understand that I must complete federal form I-9 and verify my tax status in the Office of Human Resources prior to starting to work.

I authorize the payroll department to apply the balance of my paycheck, after withholding federal and state taxes, to my Harding University business office account.

Graduate Assistant (Signature)

Supervisor (Name)

Date

Supervisor (Signature)

**To ensure that you receive this position, this form must be received by the
Office of Graduate Programs no later than 5:00 p.m. on _____ (date).**

Office of Graduate Programs
Harding University
Box 10733
Searcy, AR 72149-0773

Fax: 501-279-5192

Harding University Handbook on Graduate Assistants
September 2008
Office of Graduate Programs
Information in this handbook supersedes all previous information.