

Handbook on Graduate Assistants (GAs)

Harding University
Graduate & Professional Support Office
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Introduction

The Graduate & Professional Support (GPS) Office administers the Harding University Graduate Assistant (GA) Program, under the oversight of the Provost Office.

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.

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

University-Level GAs: The GAs addressed by this handbook are competitive positions that are available to any Harding University graduate and professional students currently in good standing. Positions that are available for such students are funded through a budget managed by the Provost Office.

College or Department-Level GAs: There are some GA positions available directly from certain colleges or departments, like the Marriage & Family Counseling/Therapy program. These are specific to the sponsoring college or department, which handles both the eligibility criteria and the funding. A student who receives such a GA position will work specifically for the sponsoring program. For information regarding this type of GA position please contact the specific college or department of interest.

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

Information for Students

Criteria

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

- Must be enrolled at Harding as a fulltime graduate or professional student (nine hours or more during a standard term, six hours or more in the summer).
- Must meet the admission requirements of the program (i.e., not be on conditional admission).
- If a new graduate or professional student, must have a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 and maintain a minimum graduate or professional GPA of 3.0.
- If a current graduate or professional student, must have and maintain a minimum graduate or professional 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, the student is ineligible for a GA position. If, while serving as a GA, the student fails to meet these criteria, he or she may be removed from the position and will not be eligible for any future GA position until all criteria are met.

Limitations

Applicants for an assistantship may not receive both the faculty-staff discount or other scholarships, and a fully funded assistantship. Contact the GPS Office for additional information.

Graduate assistant awards are limited to three terms. Receiving an award for one term does not guarantee an award for three terms.

There are times when special skills or specialized training may serve as a rationale for students to serve as a GA for more than three terms. The supervisor will be asked to provide a written rationale to the director of the GPS Office for consideration.

Stipends

Currently, full GA positions provide recipients with \$3,500 per term before taxes (fall and spring) in return for 300 hours of work per semester (approximately 20 hours per week). The summer award is for \$2,500 and requires 214 hours of work. Each term, a \$400 cash stipend is provided and the remaining funds, less applicable taxes, are posted to the student's Harding account.

Half-time GA positions provide recipients with \$1,750 per term before taxes (fall and spring) in return for 150 hours of work per semester (approximately 10 hours per week). The summer award is for \$1,250 and requires 107 hours of work. Each term, a \$200 cash stipend is provided and the remaining funds, less applicable taxes, are posted to the student's Harding account.

As these awards are deemed taxable income by the IRS, applicable taxes are deducted before posting to the student's Harding account.

Responsibilities

Graduate assistants are required to work all contracted hours. 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.

A GA is responsible for keeping a timesheet to record the number of hours worked. The timesheet must be retained by the supervisor.

How to Apply

To be considered for a GA position, a student should complete and submit the [GA application](#) located on the [Graduate & Professional Studies/Resources](#) site in the "Graduate Assistants" drop-down. The form and a copy of the student's resume must be submitted to grad@harding.edu.

Selection Process

1. The GPS Office processes all applications and ensures the students meet the minimum GPA and enrollment requirements.
2. Eligible applicants are then added to a Google sheet which is available for viewing by all supervisors.
3. Once a student has been identified as meeting the criteria for a specific position, the supervisor contacts that student and arranges an interview. The supervisor will assess whether the student meets the needs of the open position, and expectations for the student will be made clear.
4. Upon selection of a student for a position, the faculty member and student sign a [contract/payroll form](#) also located on the [Graduate & Professional Studies/Resources](#) site in the "Graduate Assistants" drop-down. The executed contract is then submitted to the GPS Office by the supervisor, as noted on the contract.

Payroll

Early in the semester, each GA will receive an email notification with the estimated receipt date for their stipend. If the GA has signed a direct deposit form, the stipend will be deposited into the designated bank account. If not setup for direct deposit and the GA lives on campus, the check is sent to the student's campus mailbox; if not, the student must pick up the check at the Student Payroll Office (Ezell 142).

Other On-Campus Employment

A GA may not work concurrently as a student worker. On rare occasions, a GA may work as an adjunct, but only with prior written approval from the Provost which is requested by the supervisor.

Information for Supervisors

GA “Slots”

Graduate assistant (GA) positions are allocated as “slots,” meaning that each “slot” is a separate award. Slots are allocated to programs, departments, and colleges, and the senior executive in each such category has full authority regarding how his or her slots are (1) allocated among supervisors and (2) allocated among the fall, spring, and summer semesters as best meets the need of each individual program.

Funding

Funding for the Graduate Assistant Program is directed by the Provost Office.

Hiring

1. Prior to the start of a semester if a new GA is needed, supervisors should review the list of eligible applicants on the [GA Eligible Applicants](#) (Google sheet) which is available for viewing by all supervisors. A copy of the student’s resume can be made available to supervisors upon request to grad@harding.edu.
2. Once a student has been identified as meeting the criteria for a specific position, the supervisor contacts that student and arranges an interview to assess whether the student meets the needs of the open position and to communicate the expectations for the open position.
3. Upon selection of a student for a position, the faculty member and student sign a [contract/payroll form](#) also located on the [Graduate & Professional Studies/Resources](#) site in the “Graduate Assistants” drop-down. The executed contract is then submitted to the GPS Office, as noted on the contract.
4. A new two-page contract must be signed and submitted each semester.

Hours Worked

The supervisor is responsible for reviewing and retaining the GA’s time sheets for one year.

As the GA approaches total contract hours of time worked, one of two things must occur:

1. The supervisor may allow the GA to stop working when the hour requirement has been fulfilled.
2. The supervisor, with the GA’s consent, can continue to employ the GA at the same rate of pay, but the wages will have to be charged to the supervisor’s student worker budget.

If a GA does not work the required number of hours, his or her award will be prorated based on the number of hours actually worked. In this case, the college or department must notify the GPS Office (grad@harding.edu) and send the number of hours worked so that the student’s account can be adjusted.

Work Assignments

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.

Ideally, GAs should be involved in activities that will enhance their skills and knowledge as they prepare for professional employment.

Other On-Campus Employment

A GA may not work concurrently as a student worker. On rare occasions, a GA may work as an adjunct, but only with prior written approval from the Provost.

Information for Program Administrator

Advertising for Applicants

1. Approximately two months before each term (April, July, October), send an email reminder to the deans of the colleges with graduate and professional programs asking them to inform students of the availability of GA positions throughout the university.
2. Include a link to the GA handbook and application.

Processing Applications

1. Upon receiving an application and resume, check the applicant's eligibility (GPA and fulltime enrollment) and note the status at the bottom of the application. Note: If applicant is enrolled in the MFCT program, he/she is not eligible for a GA slot. The application should be forwarded to the MFCT program director for processing.
2. Image the documents into OnBase, indexed to the student's H#.
3. If the applicant qualifies, enter him/her into the [GA Eligible Applicants](#) (**GAEA**) Google sheet and indicate a resume is available if the supervisor would like to review.
4. Note: If the applicant is an international student (e.g., Walton Scholar, Sino-American Program, etc.), notify them that they are required to take the English Proficiency Exam through the ESL program located in University College. The results will be emailed to the GA program administrator and should be imaged into OnBase and recorded in the last column of the **GAEA** sheet.
5. Approximately two months before each term (April, July, October), remind supervisors the **GAEA** sheet is available so they can review the pool of applicants. Attach a copy of the contract.

Processing Contracts

1. Upon receiving a two-page contract, ensure that all signatures have been obtained, image into OnBase, and provide the contract to the Student Payroll office. The original contract should be placed into the student's payroll file. Newly employed students who have not submitted a payroll verification card must be sent to the Student Payroll Office (located in Ezell 142) to obtain one.
2. Enter the student into the **GA Master 20xx-xx** workbook on the "GA Assignments" tab, ensuring that he/she is placed with the appropriate supervisor. Code each student with a number to show how many semesters they have served. For example, in her first semester as a GA, Mary would be designated as "Mary Smith 1."
3. Add the student's name, H-number, and email to the term's payroll tab in the **GA Master 20xx-xx** workbook.
4. If a new hire, remove the student's name from the **GAEA** sheet.

Filing Payroll

After all the executed GA contracts have been received and added on the payroll tab:

1. Send email to the Student Payroll Office with a copy of the term's payroll tab spreadsheet and all the two-page contract PDFs as attachments.
2. The Student Payroll Office will notify you regarding the date on which the students will receive their stipend.
3. Email the students and "cc" supervisors so they will know when they will be receiving their stipend and account credit.

Special Circumstances

There are times when a GA has a special skill set (for example, fluency in a foreign languages) or has received special training. A written appeal can be made to hire such a GA for more than the allotted three semesters. The supervisor will be asked to provide a written rationale to the director of the GPS Office for consideration.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *How will a GA know when his or her account has been credited with the award?*

The GPS Office will send out an email notifying GAs the date that their stipend will be direct deposited or ready for pick up. This usually happens during the first few weeks of the semester.

2. *What if a GA works less than the required hours?*

If a GA does not work the required number of hours, his or her award will be prorated based on the number of hours they did work as documented on the timesheet. In this case, the college or department must notify the GPS Office so that the student's account can be adjusted.

3. *Can a GA work more than the required per semester?*

The supervisor is responsible for reviewing the GA's time sheets. As the GA approaches maximum hours of time worked per the contract, one of several things must occur:

- a. The supervisor allows the GA to stop working when the hour requirement has been fulfilled; or
- b. The supervisor, with the GA's consent, can continue to employ the GA at the same rate of pay, but the wages will have to be charged to the supervisor's student worker budget. NOTE: See also item 4 (below).

4. *Can a GA work more than 20 hours per week?*

Yes. On occasion a GA may work up to but no more than 27 hours per week. In such a case, the GA may not work more than the required hours, unless paid for by the supervisor's student worker budget. **Important:** No GA may work more than 27 hours per week. The institution may be subject to federal penalties if any GA or student worker exceeds this limit.

5. *Can a student be employed as a student worker as well as a GA?*

No. Due to federal regulations, this is not allowed.

6. *Does a GA have to pay taxes?*

Yes, both state and federal taxes must be collected from the award. A student who accepts a GA position must file a federal I-9 form.

7. *Why is my fall stipend so much smaller than the spring stipend?*

Changes to federal tax laws and reaching certain earning thresholds can affect tax withholdings. Any questions regarding this issue can be addressed by the Student Payroll Office at 501-279-4324.

8. *How can I get a GA assigned to me?*

Deans, chairs and program directors submit requests in the spring (around February) for GA slots in the next academic year. Those who receive GA slots have full responsibility regarding the distribution of those slots within their programs. Prior to budget planning (which begins in the late

fall/early spring semesters), speak to your dean, chair, or director if you feel you can justify the need for a GA. The person who submits your budget will make the final decision regarding a GA request; however, it should be noted that all budget requests are considered within the context of the needs of the entire university, so a strong rationale is important.

9. *Can a GA serve for more than three terms?*

There are times when a GA has a special skill set (for example, fluency in a foreign language) or has received special training. A written appeal can be made to hire such a GA for more than the allotted three semesters. The supervisor will be asked to provide a rationale to the director of the GPS Office for consideration.

10. *Can a GA also work as an adjunct?*

On rare occasions a GA may work as an adjunct, but only with prior written approval from the Provost.