

## 2008-2009 Guidelines for Graduate Assistantships

### 1. Minimum Requirements to Receive Tuition and Benefits:

Graduate Assistants will have up to 12 credit hours of resident and non-resident tuition waived plus 79% of their basic individual student health insurance premium paid by the University if their appointment meets all of the requirements listed below:

- A. The appointment must be 120 continuous days, the equivalent of four full months. (If the teaching or research appointment is to be paid out in ten equal payments, those 120 days must fall within the official begin/end dates for the semester or academic year as indicated on page four of this memo. For a research assistantship not based on a ten equal payment structure, the 120 days must fall within the dates of August 1st through December 31st and/or January 1st through May 31<sup>st</sup>)... **AND**
- B. The assistantship or combination of assistantships in one or more departments must total at least .33 (but not more than .49) FTE, which is a minimum of 13-15 hrs but not more than 19.6 hrs per week of work. . . **AND**
- C. The stipend must be at least \$4,114 each semester or \$8,228 for the full academic year 2008-09...**AND**
- D. The student must be registered for at least one credit hour per semester (3 credit hours if they enroll in the student health insurance)...**AND**
- E. The student must be admitted into a degree program (non-degree students are ineligible for assistantships and fellowships).

#### Notes:

- Non-resident students who earn the minimum stipend listed in “C” above, whose appointment is less than .33 and/or who do not work for at least 120 days within the semester dates will be charged tuition at the resident rate.
- Graduate assistants who do not work 120 days within the semester dates will be charged the full semester’s tuition and the full cost of the health insurance premium for that semester. *Please remind your graduate assistants if they resign or terminate their assistantship before they have completed four full months of employment (120 consecutive days) within the semester dates, all tuition & health benefits will be **retroactively** forfeited.*

### 2. General Policies Concerning Assistantships:

- A. Graduate Assistants may not work more than a total of 20 hrs per week *for all appointments combined*, during the academic year. Students may work up to 40 hrs per week during school breaks and any or all summer sessions.
- B. Graduate Assistants are required to be registered for at least **one** credit hour during the semester or summer session(s) corresponding to the dates of their appointment. However, to be exempt from FICA (Social Security) and Medicare withholding, GAs must be enrolled for at least 4 or more credit hours in the academic semester or 3 or more credits for all summer sessions combined, which is considered half-time status. If a student chooses to be enrolled less than half-time, FICA and Medicare will be withheld at a rate of 7.65%.
- C. Doctoral students granted candidacy and thesis-seeking masters students are eligible to submit the *Certification of Full Time Graduate Status* form **each** semester and if enrolling for summer sessions, one for the entire summer. The form is located on the Web at <http://research.unl.edu/gradstudies/fulltime/>.
- D. Grants or self-supporting accounts (i.e., tobacco, NRI 21-32's, etc.) should calculate an additional 32% of the student’s stipend to cover tuition benefits, **PLUS** the University’s portion (79%) of the student’s basic health insurance premium. Tuition and health insurance charges for students paid from state-supported accounts will be charged to a campus-level tuition remission account.

- E. It is always the student's responsibility to pay ALL student fees and the student's portion (21%) of the health insurance premium.

### 3. University Health Center Services

- A. Health insurance is available to all students. Graduate assistants will be automatically enrolled unless they fill out a waiver before the 14<sup>th</sup> day of classes. The waiver form is found on the UHC web site during the waiver period. All other students must apply at the University Health Center (UHC).
- B. Students who want to purchase the University health insurance must be enrolled for at least 3 credit hours (unless eligible to be certified for full-time status).
- C. University Program and Facilities Fees (UPFF) fees are based on enrollment. If enrolled for less than 7 credit hours (even if full-time certified) for any semester or the summer, the health center fee is deducted from the UPFF fees. This means that the student will be charged for their visits. If the student is enrolled for 7 credit hours or more for any semester, the University Health Center fee is included in the UPFF fees.
- D. **TIMING IS EVERYTHING. Benefits do not start until the student is 1) enrolled and 2) has an active appointment in SAP.**

### 4. Summer Employment, Tuition Remission and Registration

Graduate assistants who are employed during the summer must be enrolled for the session corresponding with their appointment. For example, a teaching assistant employed during either the Pre or First Five-week summer session **MUST** be enrolled for at least 1 cr. hr during that same session. A research assistant employed during June and July must be registered in either the 8-week **AND** the second 5-week **OR** both Five-week sessions. A student's total enrollment for **ALL** summer sessions combined determines whether or not a graduate assistant is exempt from paying FICA & Medicare taxes. If a student's enrollment for all summer sessions combined is 3 or more credit hours, the student will be considered a half-time student, therefore exempt from FICA/Medicare withholding. Please advise and encourage your students to **pre-register** for summer sessions as that will help Payroll determine whether or not to withhold FICA/Medicare from a student's first paycheck.

**Eligibility for summer tuition remission can be met in one of three ways:**

#### A. For Appointments from the Preceding Academic Year:

To determine the number of credit hours a student is eligible to have waived during the summer, a department/unit may only consider the salary earned as a graduate assistant between August 1st and May 31<sup>st</sup> of the preceding academic year. If the original assistantship is a 12-month appointment, the department may still only consider the salary earned between August and May to determine eligibility for a summer tuition waiver.

**Minimum Stipend Earned (the preceding academic year) to be Eligible for Summer Tuition Waiver:**

<b>2007-08:</b>	\$10,507 = 6 cr. hrs waived	<b>2008-09:</b>	\$10,864 = 6 cr. hrs waived
	\$13,059 = 12 cr. hrs waived		\$13,503 = 12 cr. hrs waived

## **B. For Appointments beginning January 2008:**

If a graduate assistantship originally begins in January 2008, the student will qualify for a full summer tuition waiver if the department can confirm a qualifying assistantship\* for the following Fall semester. The department must also sign and forward a *Summer Tuition Waiver Form*, available on SAPPHIRE, and a copy of the offer letter to the Graduate Studies office.

Because the 2008-2009 Minimum Academic Year stipends are higher than the 2007-2008 Minimum Academic Year stipends, we calculate the average of those two stipends for both years to determine eligibility for a summer tuition waiver. For **Summer 2008**, students beginning their assistantship in January 2008 will have six credit hours waived if they earn at least **\$10,685**, and twelve hours waived if they earn at least **\$13,281** between January & May and August & December 2008.

*\*A qualifying assistantship meets the criteria outlined earlier in this memo.*

## **C. For Appointments Beginning Summer 2008:**

If a graduate assistantship originally begins in Summer 2008, the student will qualify for a full summer tuition waiver if the department can confirm a qualifying assistantship\* for the entire 2008-2009 academic year. The department must forward a *Summer Tuition Waiver Form* and a copy of the letter of offer to the Graduate Studies office.

*\* See qualifying assistantship statement above.*

## **5. Minimum Stipend Earned to be Eligible for a Reduced (Resident) Summer Tuition Waiver**

Non-resident students will have their summer tuition reduced to the resident rate if they are employed as a graduate assistant (not student hourly) during the summer, and the stipend they earn equals or exceeds the minimum stipend corresponding with the session as indicated below.

Also, a non-resident student who earned enough as graduate assistant between August 1 and May 31 of the preceding academic year to have 6 credit hrs of summer tuition waived, will have any additional tuition reduced to the resident rate for credit hours between 6 and 12, if they are employed as grad assistants during one of the sessions listed below and earn the minimum stipend corresponding to that session.

<b>Summer 2008:</b>	\$ 804 for the pre-session	<b>Summer 2009:</b>	\$ 831 for the pre-session
	\$1,811 for the eight-week session		\$1,873 for the eight-week session
	\$1,335 for each five-week session		\$1,380 for each five-week session

Please be aware that health insurance benefits are not automatic for a GA whose original assistantship appointment begins in the summer. The student must visit the health center and apply.

For questions regarding assistantships, please contact the Office of Graduate Studies @ 472-8669, or refer to Funding section in the 2007-08 *Graduate Studies Bulletin* found online at [Bulletin.unl.edu](http://Bulletin.unl.edu).

## **OFFICIAL DATES FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2008-2009**

### **APPOINTMENT DATES BEGIN/END:**

<b>Academic Year:</b>	August 18, 2008 – May 15, 2009
Fall semester (Term 091):	August 18, 2008 – January 4, 2009
Spring semester (Term 092):	January 5, 2009 – May 15, 2009

**Spring 2008 Semester (Term 082):** January 7, 2008 – May 16, 2008

### **Summer Sessions 2008: (Term 083)**

Pre:	May 19 – June 6, 2008
Eight-Week:	May 19 – July 11, 2008
First 5-Week:	June 9 – July 11, 2008
Second Five-Week:	July 14 – August 14, 2008

Send Grad PAFs directly to Payroll Services. Payroll Services will have the PAF submission deadline dates available through their office.