

2010-11 Guidelines for Graduate Assistantships

Minimum Requirements to Receive Tuition and Benefits

Graduate Assistants will have 12 credit hours of resident and non-resident tuition waived plus 79% of their basic individual student health insurance premium paid by the University during the fall and/or spring semesters if their appointment meets all of the requirements listed below.

Tuition in the summer may be covered depending upon eligibility noted in the section labeled “**Eligibility for Summer Tuition Remission.**”

- The appointment must be at least 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 31st)... **AND**
- 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**
- The stipend must be at least \$4,114 each semester or \$8,228 for the full academic year 2010-11...**AND**
- 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**
- 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 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 that 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 charged to the student and will become entirely the student's own financial responsibility.

Offer Letters

- Articulate in each graduate assistant's letter of offer the details of the appointment (e.g., contract dates, FTE, monthly stipend/salary, tuition remission, health insurance benefits, etc.), and expectations regarding specific work assignments and work schedules. Please use the wording in the sample offer letters located at:
<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/facstaff/funding.shtml>.
 - Departments may add more information to the letters as needed.
 - Departments may also use a contract instead of a letter, but the minimum information in the sample letter must be used.
 - The University of Nebraska-Lincoln is a participant in the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) Resolution, and as such, we seek your assistance in complying with its terms. Please read the Resolution carefully while considering your offer of appointment. Attach the CGS agreement to your offer also found at:
<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/facstaff/funding.shtml>
 - We recommend that you commit no more than one academic year appointment in

your letter of offer. If you wish to renew an assistantship appointment, we recommend that you extend a letter of offer for renewal of the assistantship.

General Policies Concerning Assistantships

- 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.
- Graduate Assistants are required to be registered for at least **one** credit hour during the semester corresponding to the dates of their appointment during the academic year. **GAs do not have to be registered during the summer.** If they have a qualifying assistantship that includes a summer tuition benefit, they may choose to register in the summer terms but are not required to do so.
 - 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 and 4 or more credits for all summer sessions combined. If a student chooses to be enrolled less than half-time, FICA and Medicare will be withheld at a rate of 7.65%.
- 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/>. Doctoral students may only use this form for two years; masters students may only use it for 1 year.
- Grants or self-supporting accounts (i.e., tobacco, NRI 21-32's, etc.) should calculate an additional 36% 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.
- It is always the student's responsibility to pay ALL student fees and the student's portion (21%) of the health insurance premium.

University Health Center Services

- Health insurance is available to all students. Graduate assistants will be automatically enrolled unless they fill out a waiver before the 14th day of classes. All other students must apply for health insurance at the University Health Center (UHC).
- To opt out of the plan requires completion of the Student Health Insurance Waiver Request Form by the following deadlines, otherwise a graduate assistant will be automatically enrolled in the plan and their student account will be charged.
 - **February 1, 2010 (for spring and summer 2010)**
 - **September 10, 2010, (for fall 2010)**
 - **January 28, 2011, (for spring and summer 2011).**
- The waiver form will be made available 45 days before the deadline each semester and can only be done on-line at <http://health.unl.edu>. Paper copies will not be accepted.
- 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).
- University Program and Facilities Fees (UPFF) 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.

- **TIMING IS EVERYTHING. Benefits do not start until the student is 1) enrolled and 2) has an active appointment in SAP.**

Summer Employment, Tuition Remission and Registration

- Graduate assistants are not required to register during summer sessions, but they may take advantage of the tuition benefit if they have a qualifying assistantship.
- A graduate assistant's total enrollment for ALL summer sessions combined determines whether or not they are 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 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:

1. 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 31st 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:

2009-10:	\$10,864 = 6 cr. hrs waived	2010-11:	\$10,864 = 6 cr. hrs waived
	\$13,503 = 12 cr. hrs waived		\$13,503 = 12 cr. hrs waived

2. For Appointments beginning January 2010:

If a graduate assistantship originally begins in January 2010, 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 SAPPHERE, and a copy of the offer letter to the Graduate Studies office.

For **Summer 2010**, students beginning their assistantship in January 2010 will have six credit hours waived if they earn at least **\$10,864**, and twelve hours waived if they earn at least **\$13,503** between January & May 2010 and August & December 2010.

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

3. For Appointments Beginning Summer 2010:

If a graduate assistantship originally begins in Summer 2010, the student will qualify for a full summer tuition waiver if the department can **confirm** a qualifying assistantship* for the

entire 2010-2011 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.*

Minimum Stipend Earned to be Eligible for a *Reduced* 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.

Summer Stipends	
Summer 2010	Summer 2011
\$831 for the pre-session	\$831 for the pre-session
\$1,873 for the eight-week session	\$1,873 for the eight-week session
\$1,380 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 @ 472-8670, or refer to Funding section in the *Graduate Studies Bulletin* found online at Bulletin.unl.edu.

OFFICIAL DATES FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2010-2011

APPOINTMENT DATES BEGIN/END

Spring 2010 Semester (Term 102): January 4, 2010 – May 14, 2010

Summer Sessions 2010 (Term 103):

Pre: May 17 – June 4, 2010
 Eight-Week: May 17 – July 9, 2010
 First 5-Week: June 7 – July 9, 2010
 Second Five-Week: July 12 – August 12, 2010

2010-2011 Academic Year: August 16, 2010 – May 13, 2011

Fall 2010 semester (Term 111): August 16, 2010 – January 3, 2011
 Spring 2011 semester (Term 112): January 3, 2011 – May 13, 2011

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