

2019-2020 Guidelines for Graduate Assistantships

A graduate assistantship provides financial support for a graduate student for a set period of time during which the student is expected to pursue activities towards the advanced degree. To hold a graduate assistantship a student must be admitted to a department or major area with a specific graduate degree objective. A graduate assistant must be enrolled for credit during the fall and spring semesters.

General Assistantship Policies

To hold a graduate assistantship a student must be admitted to a department or major area with a specific degree objective.

- Must be registered for at least **one** credit hour during the semester corresponding to the dates of their appointment during the academic year (fall and spring semesters).
 - 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. Doctoral students may only use this form for two years from the first use; master's students may only use it for 1 year from the first use.
<http://research.unl.edu/gradstudies/fulltime/>
- **Registration during the summer in not required.** If a graduate student has a qualifying assistantship that includes a summer tuition benefit, the student may choose to register in the summer terms but is not required to do so.
- May not work more than a total of 19.6 (.49 FTE) hours per week for all appointments (on or off campus) combined, during the academic year.
- May work up to 40 hours per week during school breaks and any or all summer sessions.
- 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 semesters 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.
 - Foreign students on an F-1 or J-1 visa, who are performing employment that is consistent with the provisions of their visa status; and do not meet the substantial presence test (SPT), would be exempt from Social Security and Medicare regardless of their number of enrolled credit hours. International students should verify enrollment requirements with the International Student Scholar Office.

Graduate Assistant Offer Letters

To award a student a graduate assistantship, you must provide a written Letter of Offer. Acceptance must also be in writing, and constitutes an agreement between the student and the department that both are expected to honor.

Template letters can be found here <https://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/funding/letters>, all information contained in the template letters is required. However, departments may include additional language relevant to their specific programs, but the additional information cannot negate or supersede the required information.

- Graduate students being offered an assistantship and a fellowship must be provided separate offer letters, one for the assistantship and one for the fellowship.
- Graduate PAF's submitted to Payroll must be accompanied by an offer letter.
- 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 provide a renewal letter to extend the assistantship for another academic year.
- The University of Nebraska-Lincoln is a participant in the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) Resolution. 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: <http://www.cgsnet.org/students>.

Employment & Tuition Remission

Graduate Assistants are eligible for up to 12 credit hours of resident and non-resident tuition remission per semester plus 79% of their basic individual student health insurance premium paid by the University **if their appointment meets all of the requirements listed below:**

- The appointment must be at least 120 continuous days within the semester dates, the equivalent of four full months. Those 120 days must fall within the official begin & end dates for the semester or academic year. For a research assistantship not based on a ten equal payment structure, the 120 days must fall with the dates of August 1st through December 31st and/or January 1st through May 31st.
 - 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 inform 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 and the student will be responsible for the total tuition payment and health insurance benefits.*
 - It is the student's responsibility to pay all student fees plus the student's portion (21%) of the health insurance premium.
- The assistantship or combination of assistantships in one or more departments must total at least .33 FTE, but not more than .49 FTE, which is a minimum of 13 hours but not more than 19.6 hours per week of work.
- The stipend must be at least \$5,000 each semester or \$10,000 for the full academic year 2019-2020.
 - 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.

NOTE: Grants or self-supporting accounts (i.e., tobacco, NRI 21-32's, etc.) should calculate an additional 38% 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.

Health Insurance Benefits

- Graduate assistants and international students will be automatically enrolled in the insurance plan. All other students are eligible to apply for health insurance in MyRED if registered for at least 6 credit hours **OR** are full-time certified.
- The University offers graduate students the Student Resources Plan administered through United Healthcare Coverage details can be found here <https://health.unl.edu/studentinsurance>
 - All international students and graduate assistants who are automatically enrolled in the student insurance plan must accept or waive coverage each semester they are enrolled. Students may accept or waive coverage once the charge appears on the student account in MyRED. Instructions to accept or waive coverage can be found here <https://health.unl.edu/billing/insurancewaiverpolicy>
 - Students must waive coverage by the tenth day of the semester or they will be charged the full premium.

NOTE: International students with "F" or "J" visas registered for classes at UNL are always required to have health insurance coverage, unless proof of insurance from an outside source is provided. If they are an international student, they will automatically be enrolled and billed for the University's student health insurance plan. They also have the option of purchasing additional health insurance for family members from the same plan by contacting the business office at the University Health Center.

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.

Summer Employment

- 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.
- Eligibility for summer tuition remission can be met in one of three ways:
 - 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.
 - For Appointments beginning January 2019:* If a graduate assistantship begins in January 2019, the student will qualify for a full summer tuition waiver if the department can confirm a qualifying assistantship for the following fall semester.
 - For Appointments Beginning Summer 2019:* If a graduate assistantship originally begins in summer 2018, the student will qualify for a full summer tuition waiver if the department can confirm a qualifying assistantship for the entire 2019-2020 academic year.
- 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 4 or more credit hours, the student will be considered a half-time student, therefore exempt from FICA/Medicare withholding.
- Encourage your students to **pre-register** for summer sessions. Pre-registration helps Payroll determine whether or not to withhold FICA/Medicare from a student's first paycheck.

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

2018-2019

\$12,772 = 6 credit hours waived
\$15,875 = 12 credit hours waived

2019-2020

\$13,155 = 6 credit hours waived
\$16,351 = 12 credit hours waived

NOTE: Students beginning their assistantship spring 2019 may receive tuition remission for summer 2019 courses if the department can confirm a qualifying assistantship for the fall 2019 semester. Spring 2019 & fall 2019 stipends **combined** must meet the minimum for the 2018-2019 academic year.

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:

Summer Stipends	
Summer 2019	Summer 2020
\$977 for the pre-session	\$1,006 for the pre-session
\$2,198 for the eight-week session	\$2,226 for the eight-week session
\$1,623 for each five-week session	\$1,671 for each five-week session

NOTE: 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 the summer semester.

Appointment Dates

Summer 2019 (Term 1195)

Pre Session	May 20 – June 7, 2019
Eight-Week Session	May 20 – July 12, 2019
First 5-Week Session	June 10 – July 12, 2019
Second Five-Week Session	July 15 – August 15, 2019

Academic Year 2019-2020

August 19, 2019 – May 15, 2020

Fall 2019 (Term 1198)

Teaching Assistants	August 19, 2019 – January 5, 2020
Research Assistants	No later than September 1, 2019 – December 31, 2019

Spring 2020 (Term 1121)

Teaching Assistants	January 6, 2020 – May 15, 2020
Research Assistants	No later than February 1, 2020 – May 31, 2020