



Syracuse University

Graduate Assistantship

Policies and Procedures

2023-24

Instructions for Departments

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Departmental Checklist for Appointing Graduate Assistants

- ☐ Students must be admitted before offering a graduate assistantship
- ☐ International students: it is important to make the award offer as soon as possible to allow ample time for student to acquire VISA; includes submitting the recommendation form to OSA and gradawd@syr.edu
- ☐ Determine tuition credits student is eligible for; refer to rules in Section 1 of the Policies & Procedures manual
- ☐ Offer letter prepared – letters can be sent electronically or on paper
- ☐ Verify stipend, credits and begin/end dates are same
 - ☐ In the body of letter
 - ☐ On the signature page
 - ☐ In the recommendation form
- ☐ Recommendation form should be submitted through OnBase for departmentally funded assistantships. If the award is sponsored, it must be sent to OSA for pre-approval; include student's last name in subject line of email (SUID should not be included in subject line)
- ☐ Recommendation form and signed acceptance must be submitted to Graduate Awards BEFORE the student begins their appointment.
- ☐ Students who arrive late to campus or begin appointment late: adjust start date, stipend (see details on p. 19)
- ☐ If funding is delayed, student must be paid if they have started assistantship duties
- ☐ Student must be REGISTERED by first day of classes

Once the student arrives on campus:

- ☐ Review work responsibilities and expectations with student
- ☐ Review departmental time off policies with student (Department policies should be in writing)
- ☐ Student must complete Form I-9 and pay notice before starting appointment. International students: Must complete Social Security application process, begins with the [Verification Form](#).

SECTION 1. THE GRADUATE ASSISTANT AWARD PACKAGE

Graduate Assistantship Package:

The offer package MUST include both of the following to be considered a Graduate Assistantship position:

- **Tuition reduction credits** if the offer package is for a research or teaching assistant; tuition scholarship if the offer package is for an administrative assistant. If the student no longer needs credits, the letter should reflect this information.
- **Appointment component** for any services. Pay must be in the form of stipend. Tuition credits, grants or scholarships cannot be used for payment of services.

Assistantships Are Offered to Admitted Students Graduate assistantship awards may only be offered to students who are admitted. Note: Students cannot be forced to accept an assistantship offer before April 15th, per the University's agreement with the Council of Graduate Schools Resolution.

Graduate Aid can impact Loans: Assistantships may affect other financial aid the student is applying for, e.g., student loans, so submit awards as early as possible. Loans are usually processed during June and July.

Recommended Deadlines

MAY 1 – Recommended DEADLINE for ALL Assistantships: We strongly encourage you to appoint ALL graduate assistants as early as possible, certainly by MAY 1st (earlier for international). Aid offers are especially important for international students who need aid information to complete their admission and to secure VISA appointments. See Section 4 on NEW International students.

MAY 31 For Renewal of Assistantships for Returning Students, Review of Academic Progress:

Review of academic progress should be done by May 31st for returning students if they are being considered for renewal of an assistantship. Students need to know their award status soon enough so they can plan accordingly for the upcoming fall semester.

For international students, the University's position with the Immigration and Naturalization Service can be jeopardized if academic progress is unsatisfactory. Academic standing should be known as soon as possible after semester's end, and not be made to wait until late summer.

Determining the Number of Tuition Credits to Award:

New Students: 24 tuition credits should be awarded to new students offered assistantships, unless the department knows the student does not need 24 due to previously earned credits.

Returning Students: For graduate assistants who do not need 24 tuition credits to complete their remaining degree requirements, the department should offer only the tuition credits needed by the student to complete the degree requirements. More flexibility can be taken with PhD candidates.

Offering more credits than is required is in conflict with degree certification rules and federal regulations pertaining to loans and repayment status. When a student completes required courses for degree

completion, certification must be completed. Degree certification will set graduation dates and trigger other actions including federal loan repayment and SEVIS status change for international students.

The Assistantship Award Options table on the next page lists the suggested tuition credit hours that a graduate assistant would be eligible for based on the type of assistantship provided (full-time, half-time, etc.), either in the form of tuition reduction credits for graduate research or teaching assistants, or a tuition scholarship for graduate administrative assistants. Although the suggested tuition credit hours could vary depending upon the facts and circumstances applicable to each graduate assistant, the tuition credit hours listed in the table generally should be provided unless there is a good reason not to.

- **NOTE:** a graduate **administrative assistant** whose hours have been reduced, should not have tuition reduced, since scholarships for graduate administrative assistants are not contingent upon the performance of any services.

Assistantship Tuition Reduction Credits – Usage, Policies and Reconfiguring

Unused credits from the previous academic year: Unused credits from a previous academic year award do not transfer into the next year. With college approval, new credits can be awarded in the next academic year to cover previous year tuition charges. The cost of credits will be charged to the current fiscal year. Approval is needed by the Budget or Dean's office in each college to award new credits to cover previous year tuition charges.

Reconfigure Form: Used to award unused credits from a previous year, if they are being added to a current year assistantship. Reconfigurations must be approved by the college Dean's office.

Scholarship Form: If a student is using unused assistantship credits, but no longer has an assistantship, departments should use the scholarship form.

Reconfiguring Tuition Reduction Credits or Tuition Scholarship: Students must seek permission from their academic unit to reconfigure the tuition credits. Departments must complete the Reconfigure Form. Approval is made by the Dean's office, who will submit the form to Graduate Awards.

Reconfiguring Sponsored Tuition Credits: To reconfigure credits paid by a sponsored grant, a revised recommendation form must be sent to OSA for approval. OSA will inform gradawd@syr.edu of the approved reconfiguration.

Assistantships With Zero Credit Hours: If a research or teaching assistant has completed all coursework and registers for zero hours, the following paragraph appears in all letters, and should be substituted for the credits description: **"In recognition of the fact that you have completed all coursework and dissertation credits required for the degree in our department, we are not offering you tuition reduction credits in addition to this assistantship. If you believe that the assessment of your credits earned is inaccurate in any way, please consult me as soon as possible."**

Important note regarding Zero Credit Assistantships: The student must be continuing work on his/her degree, such as a thesis or dissertation. A student cannot be offered an assistantship if they have

completed all degree requirements, and they cannot continue to be a Teaching Assistant, Research Assistant or Administrative Assistant.

Table 1: Determining the Stipend and Number of Tuition Credits to Award:

For PhD Students:

2023-2024	Two Semesters				One Semester			
	Full-time	$\frac{3}{4}$ time	Half-time	Quarter-time	Full-time	$\frac{3}{4}$ time	Half-time	Quarter-time
Hours worked	20	15	10	5	20	15	10	5
Suggested Tuition Credit Hours	24	18	12	6	12	9	6	3
Health Benefits	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FTE	1	0.75	0.5	0.25	0.5	0.375	0.25	0.125
Health Fee	Full	Full	Half	None	Full	Full	Half	None
Minimum Stipend	\$22,000	\$16,500	\$11,000	\$5,500	\$11,000	\$8,250	\$5,500	\$2,750

Minimum Hourly Rate: \$28.21

For All Other Degrees Candidates:

2023-2024	Two Semesters				One Semester			
	Full-time	$\frac{3}{4}$ time	Half-time	Quarter-time	Full-time	$\frac{3}{4}$ time	Half-time	Quarter-time
Hours worked	20	15	10	5	20	15	10	5
Suggested Tuition Credit Hours	24	18	12	6	12	9	6	3
Health Benefits	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FTE	1	0.75	0.5	0.25	0.5	0.375	0.25	0.125
Health Fee	Full	Full	Half	None	Full	Full	Half	None
Minimum Stipend	\$20,000	\$13,500	\$9,000	\$4,500	\$10,000	\$6,750	\$4,500	\$2,250

Minimum Hourly Rate: \$25.64

Reasonable Compensation:

Please note if this minimum stipend amount is less than reasonable compensation for the services being performed by a graduate assistant, the minimum stipend amount **MUST** be increased to the reasonable compensation amount for that graduate assistant. Failure to comply with this requirement could result in some or all of the tuition reduction credits/tuition scholarship becoming taxable.

The Internal Revenue Service has issued guidance that provides that the factors to be taken into account in determining reasonable compensation include, but are not limited to, compensation paid by:

- the University for similar services performed by students with qualifications comparable to those of the applicable graduate assistant, but who do not receive tuition reduction credits or a tuition scholarship;
- the University for similar services performed by full-time or part-time employees of the University who are not students; and
- educational organizations, other than the University, for similar services performed either by students or other employees.

Multiple Appointments:

If a student holds a full-time, 20 hours/week graduate assistantship, a second appointment is not allowed. Students with assistantship appointments of **LESS THAN 20 HOURS**, may hold another appointment.

Working Outside an Assistantship:

Students with a full time, 20 hour/week assistantship are not permitted to work outside their assistantship. Exceptions to this policy (maximum 5 additional hours) must be approved by a program director or advisor. This requirement does not apply to students who hold part-time assistantships (less than 20 hours/week). **International students are always restricted to 20 hours/week unless approved by the Center for International Services.**

SECTION 2. AWARDING ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTSHIPS

Administrative Assistantships cannot be offered with the same offer structure as Research and Teaching Assistants. They must be offered as two separate awards, an appointment offer and a scholarship offer, which are independent of each other. This is done to meet IRS requirements. The following information and instructions have been developed with this in mind.

Administrative assistantships funded by sponsored grants will continue to use the old letter and recommendation form.

Definition: Administrative Graduate Assistants are positions that support the mission of a program comparable to an entry level professional, requiring specialized knowledge or skills. Administrative assistants must receive both a scholarship for tuition charges and a stipend, both components are needed to be considered a graduate assistant. The department shall make this determination.

- Scholarships are based on academic merit, and no services are required to receive or retain a scholarship. The appointing department must contact the home college, and the home college will determine scholarship eligibility.
- If scholarships are approved by the home college, they must send an email to the appointing department approving the scholarship. The appointing department will submit the documents (see below) through OnBase once the student has accepted.
- **Notifying Students:** For students with an administrative assistantship, the appointing department must do the following:
 - Send both the appointment offer letter and the scholarship offer letters to the student.
 - No Administrative Assistant booklet will be sent at this time.
 - Students must sign and accept **BOTH** the appointment offer and scholarship letters, and return to the appointing department.
 - Once both letters have been signed and accepted, the appointing department should send the student an Administrative Assistant benefit booklet.
- After students accept both Appointment Offer and Scholarship: The appointing department will submit the following documents through OnBase:
 - Copies of both the signed appointment offer and scholarship letters
 - A copy of the scholarship form should be uploaded with the scholarship letter.

Zero Credits: Send student “Admin Asst Zero credits Scholarship Offer Letter 2023-24 ” if no credits are needed. The student must be continuing work on their degree, such as a thesis or dissertation in order to receive an assistantship with zero credits.

A student cannot be offered an assistantship if they have completed all degree requirements, and they cannot continue to be a Teaching Assistant, Research Assistant or Administrative Assistant.

Scholarship Form – For zero credits, check box on the scholarship form to indicate approval of zero credits, “Graduate Administrative Assistant-Zero Hours.”

SECTION 3. GRAD ASSISTANTS APPOINTED OUTSIDE THEIR HOME COLLEGE

Academic units who want to offer a graduate assistantship to a student enrolled in a different school/college, or a non-academic unit who wishes to offer an assistantship to a graduate student must get approval the student's home college approval. The "cross appointment" of graduate students is regarded as a benefit to both students and academic units, a result of the breadth of our institution and the availability of quality graduate students who can contribute to the mission of the University. These procedures are intended to ensure the unit of enrollment has a voice in decisions that impact their students and their revenue budget.

The appointing department must get written approval from the student's home college prior to the offer:

- Consent of the student's home college must be in an email from the authorized approver and submitted to gradawd@syr.edu prior to submission of the recommendation form in OnBase.
- If the home school is the School of Education, you may submit their recommendation form after receiving their approval – and forward the email approving the position. **SOE Form is found at <http://my.soe.syr.edu/login/index.cfm>.**

College of Law Students as Graduate Assistants: Law students can be approved to hold assistantships ONLY when the scholarship portion of the award is funded by a restricted or sponsored account by the appointing department.

Law student candidates for funded assistantships must be referred to the College of Law Dean's Office for approval before sending to gradawd@syr.edu .

Below is a list of the authorized contacts for each school/college.

In fairness to the academic units that serve as traditional suppliers of GAs, the academic or non-academic units that routinely appoint their students are obliged to give advance notice of anticipated changes in GA appointing patterns. As well, units from which GAs are appointed should give advance notice when they are considering changes in their relationship with appointing units.

Authorized Signers – School/College Contacts:

- Architecture – Julie Larsen/Lauren Mintier
- Maxwell –Andrew London/Alicia Madden
- Arts and Sciences – Gerald Greenberg/Cassidy Perreault
- Newhouse – Joel Kaplan
- Engineering – Dacheng Ren/Mary Murphy
- VPA –Elisa Dekaney/Christina Eiffe
- Education – Michael Torak/John Beecher/Kal Alston
- Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics – Eileen Lantier
- IST – Meghan MacBlane
- Whitman – Alex McKelvie/Michel Benaroch/Kevin Coates

SECTION 4. NEW INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, GRADUATE AID and ADMISSION

I-20's and Admission: A new international applicant, if admitted, will need Syracuse University to issue a visa eligibility document to obtain a student visa. An admitted student must show evidence of having secured sufficient funding for at least the first year of graduate study to reach full admit status. Full admit status is required in order to be issued the necessary document to apply for a visa and receive an official admit letter.

Conditional Admits: If an international student has not provided evidence of sufficient funding he/she will remain in conditional admit status. The student will receive notification by email of additional requirements in order to become a full admit, but will not receive a formal letter of admission.

May 1 and Graduate Aid: Graduate aid should be issued at the time of admission by the college, preferably by May 1. The timing is important because international students have to obtain VISA appointments in their home countries, and must have all official admission and award documents for the appointment. VISA appointments can take several months to schedule, hence the MAY 1 deadline for admission and aid decisions is critical.

Sponsored Assistantships for NEW International Students

Sponsored Accounting will approve assistantships in the “offered” state for new international students, so that the I-20 can be issued when the award is in the “offered” state.

The Graduate Assistantship Tuition Remission Form should be completed and submitted to OSA, copying gradawd@syr.edu , as soon as the offer is made to a new international student.

- The subject line of the email must contain the student's last name and the term “International.”
- Submit the recommendation form to Sponsored Accounting at contact@syr.edu and copy gradawd@syr.edu.
- Put a note in the comments section that this is for an International student and the offer is pending.
- OSA will notify the Graduate School of “pending approval” and the award will be posted on GSA. As soon as the award is on GSA, Application Processing can use it to complete admission.

Student accepts the award offer:

- Once the student has accepted and a vacant PIN Chartstring form has been completed and approved, submit a revision “1” of the Tuition Remission form with the reason for revision “pending to accept”.
- This will prompt OSA to make final approval on the award and notify the Graduate School to accept the award on GSA.
 - Sponsored Accounting will not make final approval on awards until the award is accepted by the student and a vacant PIN Chartstring form has been completed and approved.

Declines and withdraws: Departments must notify gradawd@syr.edu and Sponsored Accounting of declined offers and withdraws.

SECTION 5. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS and FULL-TIME STATUS

Students holding a graduate assistantship appointment **MUST** be **registered PRIOR TO** the first day of classes. If students are in the Payroll system, and not registered, the University is not in compliance with state and federal tax laws. Graduate assistants are eligible for exemption from FICA tax deductions, if certain requirements are satisfied, but they must be registered to qualify.

It is a department's responsibility to ensure their students are registered. Students should be encouraged to take advantage of early registration in April or November and also opening weekend through the add deadline of each semester.

Failure to be registered by the first day of classes will result in students not being allowed to continue as a graduate assistant, and be removed from payroll.

Students who have completed all coursework and are working on their thesis or dissertation must still register: students should register for GRD 998, zero credit hours degree in progress. Please be sure the students understand this requirement.

Full-Time Status When Holding an Assistantship

- All graduate students holding an assistantship in a given semester will be considered full-time students for that semester by virtue of their holding the award.
- Students should consult with their advisors to determine the minimum number of credits of enrollment for any given semester.
- If all required coursework has been completed, but student is completing other requirements, he/she must register for GRD 998 ("degree in progress") for zero credits.
- Students must be registered each semester their degree is still in progress.

Completion of degree: If a student's degree has been completed, he/she can no longer be offered graduate assistant positions.

SECTION 6. THE RECOMMENDATION FORMS

There are three forms that can be used to submit graduate assistantship awards.

- Departmental Recommendation Form (via OnBase).
- Scholarship Form – for scholarship offers to Administrative Assistants.
- Sponsored Assistantship form- for sponsored assistantships where tuition is being charged to the grant.

Forms should be completed and submitted per the instructions on the forms. Please email gradawd@syr.edu or call 443-2298 with any questions.

Submitting Recommendation Forms & Revised Recommendation Forms

- **Departmentally-funded Assistantships**

The recommendation form is in OnBase. To get access to OnBase for Graduate Awards please submit a FAST request, using the **Prod OnBase Graduate Awards template**. **You will need to select your School/College and provide the department numbers you are responsible for.** Note: If all within the same department, enter asterisks. Example: 123**

- Verify recommendation form terms agree with the offer letter (credits, stipend).
- Please ensure that the job code associated with the PIN aligns with the type of GA you are hiring. For instance, for TA's you would select a PIN with job code 9999 – Grad Asst-Teach; for exempt RA's you would select a PIN with job code 9998 – Grad Asst-Res. PIN's sent with a non-GA job code will be flagged by the HR and will need to be corrected before the appointment can be entered.
- Any changes to the terms of award after it is submitted should be emailed to gradawd@syr.edu.
- **Administrative Assistantships** - See page 4 for instructions.
- **Sponsored Assistantships Offers:**
 - A department should **only use** the Sponsored Tuition Form if the **award includes a tuition chartstring with a project tail AND >0 credit hours**. If you are paying for a student's wages with a sponsored award but there are no tuition charges or the tuition charges are not being charged to a chartstring with a project tail you do NOT need to send to Sponsored Accounting for pre-approval. In these cases, please follow the departmentally funded Teaching and Research Assistantship process through OnBase.
 - If the assistantship is for a NEW INTERNATIONAL student, see Section 4.
 - SUBJECT LINE OF EMAIL must contain the student's last name
 - Sponsored Accounting will not approve awards until they are accepted by the student and a vacant PIN Chartstring form has been completed and approved.
 - At the time of acceptance, submit recommendation forms to Sponsored Accounting at [Sponsored Accounting](#) , with a copy to gradawd@syr.edu.
- See Section 4 "New International Students and Graduate Aid" for awarding new international students
- **Student Loans:** A graduate assistantship may affect other financial aid the student is applying for, so submit as early as possible. Loans are typically processed for the fall in June through August.

Table 2. Revised Awards and Recommendation Forms:

Type of Revision	Recommendation Form Action	Letter Action
Teaching -Stipend and tuition reduction credits are the same, funding changes from dept to sponsor or sponsor to dept.	Submit revised recommendation form	New letter required if changing from dept to sponsor only. Must send letter referring to intellectual property policy
Research-non-exempt - Stipend and tuition reduction credits are the same, funding changes from dept to sponsor or sponsor to dept.	Submit revised recommendation form	New letter required
Research- exempt -Stipend and tuition reduction credits are the same, funding changes from dept to sponsor or sponsor to dept.	Submit revised recommendation form	New letter required if changing from dept to sponsor only. Must send letter referring to intellectual property policy
Terms of offer change (research to teaching), stipend changes, tuition reduction credits change, etc)	Submit revised recommendation form	New letter must be sent to the student; new acceptance form required
Admin Asst/ dept to sponsor -Stipend and tuition scholarship are the same, funding changes from dept to sponsor	Submit revised recommendation form	New letter must be sent to the student; new acceptance form required. Sponsored Admin asst has 1 letter that includes the scholarship with the job
Admin Asst /sponsor to dept -Stipend and tuition scholarship are the same, funding changes from sponsor to dept.	Submit admin recommendation form to gradawd along with scholarship form, job offer letter/acceptance, scholarship letter/acceptance	New letters must be sent to the student; new acceptance forms required.

Table 2a. Changes After Awards Are Entered

How do I...

Update a chartstring	After the position's start date (8/16 for fall GA's, 1/1 for spring) chartstrings can be updated in Company Directory.
Update a reports-to	After the position's start date (8/16 for fall GA's, 1/1 for spring) reports-to can be updated in Company Directory.
Change a GA pay rate (increase or decrease)	Email Grad Awards.
Terminate a GA	Email Grad Awards
Update a PIN	Email Grad Awards.

Graduate Assistantships should never be entered in SmartHR. Any changes (except those listed above for chartstring and reports-to updates) should be sent to Grad Awards and NEVER sent directly to HR.

Sponsored Grants Externally-Funded Research Appointments:

If the cost of tuition will not be requested in full in a grant proposal, the P.I. must obtain approval from his or her Dean (or designee) for any institutional contribution to the cost of tuition. This support is documented on the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) checklist during the proposal submission process. Please contact OSP for additional information, as the procedures for requesting institutional support vary by School and College. If approval is not documented at the proposal submission stage, the School or College will not be responsible for unmet needs.

Proposal Sent to the Office of Sponsored Accounting (OSA):

If a student is funded through a sponsored grant, departments should submit the appropriate forms to Sponsored Accounting as an email attachment, and copy gradawd@syr.edu. Please note, a department should **only use** the Sponsored Tuition Form if the **award includes a tuition chartstring with a project tail AND >0 credit hours**. If you are paying for a student's wages with a sponsored award but there are no tuition charges or the tuition charges are not being charged to a chartstring with a project tail you do NOT need to send to Sponsored Accounting for pre-approval. In these cases, please follow the departmentally funded Teaching and Research Assistantship process through OnBase.

SECTION 7. APPOINTMENT LETTER

Administrative Assistants: Tuition Scholarships and Assistantships are Independent:

The appointing unit should issue two letters to each graduate Administrative Assistant: one letter describing/offering the appointment, and one letter describing/offering the tuition scholarship. **See p.8 for instructions specific to Administrative Assistants.**

Importance of Following the Sample Letters of Appointment

To protect the tax-favored status of the tuition reduction credits and tuition scholarships, it is important that appointing departments follow the sample letters of appointments. While graduate assistants' stipends are payments for services rendered and therefore taxable, the tuition reduction

credits are not taxable. As long as the stipend paid to each graduate assistant is “reasonable compensation” for all services required of that graduate assistant (as that quoted term is defined by the Internal Revenue Service, described in the Stipend section on page 5), any tuition reduction credits or tuition scholarship provided to that graduate assistant pursuant to properly completed appointment documentation will be nontaxable.

Only the template letters for 2023-24 will be considered valid.

Letter Format and Language

Tuition Reduction Credits/Tuition Scholarships

- Tuition reduction credits must be offered with a graduate research or teaching assistantship
- Tuition scholarship must be offered with a graduate administrative assistantship – please see tables listed below for recommended credits.

See Section 1, Table 1 – “Determining the Number of Tuition Credits to Award “

See Table 3–“Suggested Tuition Scholarship Credits for Graduate Assistant Positions”

The table below lists the suggested tuition credit hours (either in the form of tuition reduction credits for graduate research or teaching assistants, or a tuition scholarship for graduate administrative assistants) for each assistantship award, based on a variety of factors. Although the suggested tuition credit hours could vary depending upon the facts and circumstances applicable to each GA, the tuition credit hours listed in the table generally should be provided unless there is a good reason not to (as further described in Section 1, “Determining the Number of Tuition Credits to Award”). The distribution of tuition credit hours across semesters could be revised based on student needs.

IMPORTANT: If students are nearing completion of required coursework, departments should only offer the number of credits students need.

Table 3: Suggested Tuition Credit Allocations for All Graduate Assistantship Positions:

Appointment Period	Workload Hrs/week	Suggested Tuition Credit Hours	Fall Credits	Spring Credits	Summer Credits
Full Appointment for academic year	20	24	9	9	6
Half Appointment for academic year	10	12	6	6	0
Full Appointment for FALL Term Only	20	12	9	3	0
Half Appointment for Fall Term Only	10	6	6	0	0
Full Appointment for SPRING Term Only	20	12	0	9	3
Half Appointment for SPRING Term	10	6	0	6	0

Number of Hours Assigned & Time Sheets: The department will determine how many hours (5, 10, or 20) the student will be assigned in an average week. Students should not routinely be working more hours than their appointment indicates. Time sheets must be kept as indicated in the letter sections.

Adding Additional Departmental Requirements/Contingencies

The contingencies listed in the letters are there to provide protection for departments and the University, and should NOT be removed. The contingencies help to explain the student’s responsibilities while holding an assistantship.

For Sponsored Accounts, a separate signed IPA form from the student is not needed. The obligation has been met by adapting the language of the appointment letters to read that the student agrees to abide by the intellectual property policy by signing the signature page of the appointment letter.

You may substitute GPAs that are specific to your department, but other additional criteria for specific departmental requirements should appear in an addendum sent with the letter.

Please note: At least a 2.8 average GPA is required in the first 30 credits of graduate study. If this is not achieved, the student's matriculated status may be cancelled by the Graduate School, upon recommendation of the academic unit. Certification for an advanced degree requires a minimum average of 3.0 for work comprising the program for the degree, and a 2.8 average for all credit courses.

Enclosures with Appointment Letter

The following publications should be enclosed with every appointment letter for RA and TA's:

- **Graduate Research and Teaching Assistants Benefits and Responsibilities**
- **EVS List of Acceptable Documents for Employment Eligibility Verification (Form I-9)**
- **Recommended: Department Policies**

Graduate Administrative Assistant Benefits and Responsibilities should be sent to students by the hiring department once it is determined the student is accepting both the job offer and scholarship offer.

SECTION 8. TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP APPOINTMENTS

Any graduate student receiving a **first-time Teaching Assistantship appointment**, or any form of first-time appointment involving instructional duties related to courses offered at Syracuse University, for all or part of the 2023-24 academic year must complete **the August 16-18, 2023 (August 14-18) for international students] Teaching Assistant Orientation Program** hosted by the Graduate School. **This requirement is not subject to waiver by the Graduate School or by individual schools, colleges, or departments.** New TAs who are forced to miss the orientation due to illness, family emergencies, or delays in gaining entry to the U.S. are ineligible for positions involving direct instructional contact with students. They may be reassigned to Research Assistantships or Administrative Assistantships, or their Teaching Assistantships may be organized so as to entail non-instructional duties only (i.e., grading, setting up labs, proctoring exams, operating equipment, and so forth, but not lecturing, leading discussion or recitation sections, or holding office hours).

Language assessment for international Teaching Assistants

New international Teaching Assistants (ITAs) are required to undergo language assessment by the Graduate School in coordination with the ESOL Program. International graduate students whose

English proficiency is judged inadequate for classroom instruction will be issued a zero-credit English course requirement, upon completion of which their English skills will be reassessed. In the interim they should be assigned to Research Assistantships or Administrative Assistantships, or to Teaching Assistantships that entail non-instructional duties only (i.e., grading, setting up labs, proctoring exams, operating equipment, and so forth, but not lecturing, leading discussion or recitation sections, or holding office hours). **For this reason, departments should refrain from offering TA appointments to international students in their first year of graduate study whenever possible, but should refer such students to the Graduate School for language assessment if they are likely to hold TA appointments in later years. Please note that the assessment of ITAs' English skills for teaching purposes is the responsibility of the Graduate School, and cannot be waived by virtue of departmental admissions procedures or scores on exams such as the TOEFL or English Language Assessment Exam (ELAE).**

Detailed information regarding the August 2023 TA Orientation Program will be forthcoming under separate cover from the Graduate School Programs Office of the Graduate School.

Exemption Procedures for the International Portion of the TA Orientation Program

Please note that international students (including permanent residents) may apply for exemption from some or all of the international portion of the Orientation. Exemptions will be granted to students who:

- Have lived in the United States and studied at a U.S. institution of higher education for at least one year.

AND/OR

- Demonstrate oral English language proficiency to the satisfaction of ESOL program language specialists.

All new international and permanent resident TAs will receive information about exemption procedures directly from the Graduate School Programs Office.

SECTION 9. PAYMENT INFORMATION

PRIOR to the Start of Appointment:

Before the appointment begins, a graduate assistant must have a signed offer letter AND acceptance form submitted to Graduate Awards. A signed letter makes the position a valid graduate assistant position.

Number of Hours Assigned: The department will determine how many hours (5, 10, or 20) the student will be assigned in an average week. Students should not be assigned more than 20 hours.

Rate Per Hour – Weekly Appointments only- Contact the Human Resources Service Center for assistance in calculating the rate per hour.

Pay Notice Must be Acknowledged - A graduate assistant should not be allowed to perform any services for the University until Pay Notice is Acknowledged.

New York State requires that all students acknowledge their pay information before starting an assistantship. A notification of the graduate assistants' pay rate and other relevant information (Pay Notice) will be created for the student when their appointment information is accepted into the Human Resources system. The student will receive an email to their syr.edu email account to notify them that the notice will be viewable within 24-48 hours. The pay notice is accessed through the View My Pay Notice link in MySlice.

Verification of Eligibility for Appointment

It is the departments' responsibility to confirm international students are on a VISA that enables students to hold an assistantship while studying at SU. Appointment letters must contain the provision that employment is contingent upon documentation of eligibility. All appointment letters contain this language. Graduate assistants cannot begin their assistantship prior to the date of appointment.

Social Security Numbers: International appointees without a Social Security number must immediately apply for a Social Security number upon arrival at the University. Please see the Center for International Services [website](#) for more details.

I-9 Forms: Close to the initial appointment start date, graduate assistants will receive an email notification from Student Employment Services that contains a unique link to complete the required online **Form I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification**. Student will be asked to complete the form, upload the documents and have the form verified as instructed. If a student is unable to upload the required documents or has questions, they may visit Student Employment Services at 210 Steele Hall to verify the documents in person. International graduate appointees will follow the same online I-9 process: a valid unexpired passport, I-94 and Form I-20 or DS-2019 are possible documents to upload for this purpose.

Assistantship Start Dates

- **Assistantship appointments made PRIOR to September 1 for fall:** The START DATES outlined in the following Payroll Start and End Date table are standard dates; they assume assistantship appointments are made prior to September 1, or January 1 for spring, and students begin work before September 1.
- If students begin work AFTER Sept 1, their start date & stipend should be adjusted.
- **Assistantship appointments made SEPTEMBER 1 or LATER:** Students who are offered assistantship appointments after September 1, or who arrive late to campus, cannot use an August 16th start date for fall.
 - Start dates should be aligned with the first day of work, and should be consistent with the details in the offer letter. Number of pays also need to be adjusted.
 - Letters should reflect an accurate start date, as well as adjusted number of payments and prorating of stipend.
 - **Please make Graduate Awards aware of start date or end date that differs from the standard dates.**

Please Note: The Comptroller's Office has specifically stated, if a graduate assistant is not assigned duties for the entire semester appointment period, the start date and stipend should be adjusted accordingly.

Spring only appointments

- The standard start date for spring only appointments is January 1. For graduate assistants **appointed after the first pay (Jan 15)**, or who arrive late to campus for a January 1 start date, start dates should be changed to the actual start date, just as for fall semester.

Graduate Assistants MUST BE PAID If Serving in an Assistantship.

If a graduate student is serving in an assistantship, the department must ensure he/she is being paid on a timely basis. A graduate assistant's pay should not be delayed for any reason.

If there is a delay in a sponsored award that is intended to be used to pay the graduate assistant, the department must pay the student out of departmental funds and request a reallocation when the delay is corrected, if so allowed by the sponsored award.

Time Off for Graduate Assistants

It is expected that assistantship responsibilities will revolve around the student academic calendar, unless otherwise communicated by the sponsoring department. Graduate assistants are generally not required to serve on days in which student classes are not in session.

In cases where the nature of the agreed upon responsibilities requires a graduate assistant to work outside of the academic calendar (for example, to attend to critical laboratory functions), this should be communicated in writing and reviewed in person with students. Graduate assistants are encouraged to take time off during these time periods. However, alternate dates for time off may be requested and are subject to approval by the graduate assistant's supervisor.

Department Policies – It is important for graduate assistants to know department policies about missing assistantship responsibilities due to illness, traveling away from campus, etc. Please make sure this information is communicated.