Office of the Provost

Graduate Assistants & Doctoral Fellows Manual

*Revised October 2013*

Please note that the Graduate Assistants Manual has changed. This revised manual went into effect Summer 2012. Because of the many changes reflected in this updated Manual, all chairs and supervisors should read the contents carefully.

Among the new changes to be found in this manual several in particular, stand out:

1. Beginning Summer 2012, St. John’s University will award four types of Graduate Assistantships: Doctoral Fellows, Graduate Assistantships, Summer Graduate Assistantships, and University Doctor of Arts Fellowships (see descriptions below).

2. No Graduate Assistant can be made to contribute more than 20 hours per week unless approved by the Office of the Provost. Nor can GA’s be required to perform duties during University breaks and holidays unless approved by the Office of the Provost.

3. Beginning Fall 2012 all Doctoral Fellows, as well as Graduate Assistants assigned to their academic departments, will be expected to spend on average 5 hours per week engaged in the teaching or mentoring of students in some capacity. We realize it will take some time to implement this change, so throughout the 2012-13 academic year the Office of the Provost will consult with chairs, Deans, and supervisors on ways to implement this objective. (Recent evidence indicates that graduate students who teach as well as conduct research show greater improvement in research skills than those who only do research. See “Graduate Students’ Teaching Experiences Improve Their Methodological Research Skills,” David F. Feldon et al., Science 333, 1037, 19 August 2011). If GA’s are already teaching in any capacity—ie., courses, labs, or serving as tutors—they are exempt from this 5-hour requirement, although they should still be receiving professional development training in order to ensure their effectiveness as teachers.

4. The Office of the Provost wishes to emphasize that the primary purpose for all of these assistantships is that students have the opportunity to supplement coursework with relevant and practical experience. All supervisors and chairs need to keep in mind that a graduate assistantship is not unlike an internship; the GA needs to get valuable professional knowledge from the experience. *Graduate Assistants are not employees of the University.* The award of an assistantship establishes an important partnership: the GA agrees to offer academic, teaching, and/or research services in exchange for a mentoring experience above and beyond what his or her peers receive. Graduate Assistants do not lose their status as students; they remain students and should be considered and treated as apprentice professionals.

Derek Owens, Vice Provost
St. John’s University

*Revised October 2013*
1. Award Categories

**Doctoral Fellows**

Doctoral Fellows are awarded to doctoral students only; these assistantships reside only in academic departments. Doctoral Fellows teach and/or conduct research. Teaching activities might include lab supervision, serving as teacher of record for select undergraduate courses, tutoring, or in some other capacity. Research must be confined to the faculty and/or program needs of the student’s department. Doctoral Fellows commit to 18-20 hours per week, but are not permitted to contribute beyond 20 hours per week without written approval of the Office of the Provost. Doctoral Fellows should devote on average up to 5 hours per week engaged in the teaching or mentoring of students in some capacity. Beginning Fall 2012 the Office of the Provost, in consultation with chairs, deans, and supervisors, will explore ways that this 5-hour expectation might be implemented. Also, when Doctoral students are ABD (“all but dissertation”), a department might choose to hire them as adjuncts.

**Graduate Assistantships**

There are several types of Graduate Assistantships. Those assigned to their home departments are expected to teach and/or conduct research within those disciplines. They are assigned 15-20 hours per week. Teaching duties cannot include being teacher of record, although they can include teaching labs and tutoring. Beginning Fall 2012, these types of Graduate Assistants will be expected to devote up to 5 hours per week engaged in the teaching or mentoring of students in some capacity. The Office of the Provost, in consultation with chairs, Deans, and supervisors, will explore ways that this 5-hour expectation might be implemented.

Other types of Graduate Assistantships are assigned to offices and capacities throughout the University not directly affiliated with their home departments; these GA’s are not expected to teach or conduct research in those disciplines, nor are they expected to adhere to the 5 hours per week expectation mentioned above. These Graduate Assistantships also perform 15-20 hours a week.

The majority of Graduate Assistants in both categories will be master’s students, although doctoral students are also eligible for these positions.

**University Doctor of Arts Fellowships**

UDAF’s are tuition-remission-only fellowships (no stipend) awarded to working professionals in the Doctor of Arts programs in History and English. UDAFs are granted at the discretion of the Deans in consultation with chairs and supervisors.

**Summer Graduate Assistants**

These limited assistantships are offered to select departments in the University, and cover 3-6 hours of summer tuition only. These do not have stipends, with the exception of select departments.

2. Requirements

**Eligibility**

Only matriculated, full-time students are eligible for awards. Foreign students must have an F-1 Visa or appropriate visa alternative. All awardees must complete the INS I-9 in order to demonstrate eligibility. No student may receive tuition waivers for credits beyond the number required for his/her degree program (dissertation awards may be considered separately) without approval from the Office of the Provost. No support can be given for more than one degree program at one level (graduate students, in fact, cannot be enrolled in more than one program at a time anyway.) Beginning September 2012, dependents of University employees are not eligible for any Graduate Assistantships unless they have already been promised an assistantship; in such cases, these students will be grandfathered during the 2012-13 year, but not eligible beginning September 2013. The rationale behind this is that dependents of University employees are already eligible for tuition remission. In cases where a dependent is no longer eligible for tuition remission but is seeking an additional degree, those individuals then become eligible for Graduate Assistantships.

No dependents of St. John’s University employees are eligible for any of the above Graduate Assistantships. Students who receive Graduate Assistantships are not eligible to receive compensation for other employment from the University, with the possible exception of when a principle investigator might wish to add them to their grant-funded research, or if that dependent is no longer receiving tuition remission from the University.
Academic Criteria

Awards are given on the basis of academic merit. Graduate Assistants are only expected to submit GRE or GMAT scores if they are required within their primary department of study, and only if they are assigned to that primary department. If a department or program does not require GRE scores, they are not required for consideration of an Assistantship. Minimal GMAT scores for the Peter J. Tobin College of Business are 550 or above.

All awardees are expected to have an undergraduate overall GPA of at least 3.2. Graduate Assistants will be expected to show evidence of a 3.2 GPA or above in any previous graduate work. Doctoral Fellows will be expected to show evidence of 3.5 GPA or above in any previous graduate work. GA's who do not maintain these minimum GPAs will not be eligible to keep their assistantships.

Renewals

Students must maintain the minimum GPA's to be considered for renewal. They must also have no incomplete graduate courses (INC) on their academic record at the time of initial award or renewal. A renewal is not assumed but will be determined by the best interests of the program and the student's academic merit and previous GA performance. The presumed limit for Doctoral Fellowship renewals is two years, although possibilities for extending funding into a third or fourth year are currently being explored. The presumed limit for Graduate Assistantships is two years.

3. Graduate Assistantship Duties

Purpose

The purpose of the Graduate Assistant program is to provide a graduate student the opportunity to supplement coursework with practical experience related to the student's educational course of study and career objectives. Assistantships are an extension to, and application of, classroom instruction through hands-on experience with guidance from experienced faculty, administrators, or staff. Qualified faculty members directly support the student's assistantship experience by working closely with the student and the department supervisor. GA’s are expected to gain hands-on experience and beneficial knowledge via their assistantship, which might be of help to them in finishing their degree or gaining employment upon graduation. The department is not the primary beneficiary of the GA’s output but rather assists in preparing him or her to be successful in both present and future academic and career pursuits.

Attributes of Assistantships

- provides the GA with a practical real world experience;
- promotes the discovery and application of knowledge through research;
- enables the GA to develop important experiential skills which cannot be taught in the classroom;
- improves analytical critical thinking and problem solving skills;
- enhances the ability to collect, review, and synthesize information from a variety of sources;
- enables the GA to compare theoretical ideas learned in the classroom with how certain activities work in academic and professional settings;
- introduces the GA to professional expectations and responsibilities in academic and professional environments;
- permits the GA to apply the technical skills learned in the classroom to a real world environment.

Being Compliant

In compliance with applicable law, St. John's will not approve a Graduate Assistantship position unless all of the following are true:

- the GA experience is primarily for the benefit of the student;
- GAs do not displace regular employees, but conduct their responsibilities under close observation of a supervisor;
- the sponsoring department or office that provides the assistantship derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the GA, and on occasion the department's operations may actually be impeded;
- the GA is not necessarily entitled to a position at the conclusion of the training period; and
- the department and the GA understand that the GA is not entitled to wages for the time spent in training—only the stipend and tuition remission they receive. The GA will be required to sign an acknowledgment to this effect.
Students engaged in activities of a religious or charitable nature in furtherance of the Mission may be subject to different guidelines than those set forth above.

**Hours**

Graduate Administrative Assistantships: 15-20 hours per week  
Master’s Assistants: 15-20 hours per week  
Doctoral Fellows: 18-20 hours per week

Unless otherwise approved or determined by teaching or supervision assignments, the duration for all Graduate Assistantship contracts are for the academic year beginning August 25 through May 10. Please note that this does not exclude any necessary orientation activities for new or returning Graduate Assistants to be conducted in the week prior to the beginning of both Fall and Spring semesters—in other words, all new and returning Graduate Assistants will likely need to attend mandatory orientation meetings near the end of August of each year.

All Graduate Assistants are expected to perform for 15 weeks each semester, and with a few exceptions approved by the Office of the Provost, are **not** expected to be present during breaks or when classes (or finals) are not in session. Details for Summer Graduate Assistants are below.

Students can, at the discretion of their chair or program supervisor, occasionally put in fewer hours in given weeks and make up hours in other weeks, but this practice cannot be customary, nor should it be imposed upon students if it risks interfering with their coursework or ability to complete their studies and make timely progress toward their degree.

**Contracts**

The term for all standard one-year Graduate Assistantship contracts is August 25 through May 10, with time off during the winter break and other normal University holidays. Actual start and end dates might vary slightly depending upon the calendar year, but Graduate Assistants need to be prepared to begin a week prior to the start of each semester and continue through finals week. The term for all one-semester Fall Graduate Assistantship contracts is for August 25 through the end of Finals week; the term for one-semester Spring contracts is for one week prior to the beginning of classes in January through the end of May 10.

In no situation should University-funded contracts be for shorter or longer periods than these. Students who are assigned lab supervision or teaching support duties are also expected to conduct their assignments for these periods, no matter what the first and last day of class dates may be in any given semester.

If a student’s determined hours fall on a day that is a holiday or the University is closed, the student does **not** need to make up those hours during that week on another day. However, if a student’s scheduled day is repeated during the same week (i.e., if the student is assigned Mondays, and on that week Monday schedules are also held on a Thursday), the student needs to be available on that “second Monday” as well. In other words, once students and their chair or supervisor determine the student’s assigned days, those days should be adhered to throughout the semester, barring normal University holidays.

GA’s who are studying abroad fall under the same guidelines and expectations for GA’s on our Queens, Staten Island, Manhattan, and Oakdale campuses.

**Under no circumstances is a Graduate Assistant to begin an assignment without a signed contract. Also, under no circumstances can a contract be modified without approval by the Office of the Provost.** Chairs and Program supervisors must make sure that students receive and sign contracts well before the beginning of the academic year.

**Duration of Award**

Unless otherwise specified in the initial letter of award (and with the exception of summer assistantships), Graduate Assistantships are for either one academic year or one semester, and may be renewed up to limits specified above provided that all requirements have been met.

**Termination**

Graduate Assistants can be terminated from their positions at the discretion of the Dean, Office of the Provost, or President if at any time the student withdraws from full-time student status, does not register, is placed on academic probation, fails to perform assigned duties, or otherwise fails to maintain satisfactory academic
progress. A faculty mentor may not dismiss a student from his or her assistantship. Deans should always consult with the Office of the Provost prior to dismissing a Graduate Assistant.

If for whatever reason a GA will be leaving the University prior to the completion of his or her contract, that GA and the supervisor must contact the Office of the Provost as well as the Office of Human Resources to terminate the contract, stipend, and remaining tuition remission allocation. In such cases, students need to be aware that they are financially responsible for paying any remaining tuition after termination of their contract.

Appropriate Behavior and Confidentiality

It is the responsibility of the department or program to ensure that its Graduate Assistants are aware that the University is dedicated to creating an environment that fosters the values of diversity and pluralism, and is free from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, age and other personal characteristics. Graduate Assistants should neither engage in, nor tolerate, prejudicial attitudes and conduct, or sexual harassment, and are expected to be fully informed of the University’s policies and procedures regarding these issues. Should Graduate Assistantships have concerns over any issues pertaining to their positions, they should seek a consultation with the Office of the Provost for a confidential conference or report these concerns to the Employee Relations Officer within Human Resources.

4. Award Schedule

Ideally, the award schedule for notifying and awarding Graduate Assistant contracts will be as follows:

January – March

• This is the period during which chairs and supervisors should be collecting, reviewing, and ranking competitive applications from prospective students.

March-April

• Ideally, this is when offers of admission and support should be sent to potential Graduate Assistant award recipients. In cases where notification of awards are made available to chairs and supervisors earlier in the academic year, such awards can be granted earlier.

April 15

• This is the deadline for student acceptances of doctoral fellowship offers. See Council of Graduate Schools “Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellows, Trainees and Assistants.”


June 1

• All available positions should have been offered by this date, with the exception of programs with later application deadlines or rolling admissions.

• No fellowships can be offered to international students after this date.

Aug 1

• All Graduate Assistants which have yet to be fulfilled by this date might be revoked and reassigned to other units.

6. Summer Graduate Assistantships

A limited number of summer Graduate Assistantships are available. Most of these are tuition-remission only and come without stipends. Summer GAs can be for three or six credits but no more; credits can be taken over one or two sessions. Students must commit to seven hours per week for each three-credit course, or for fourteen hours if taking six credits. If agreeable to the chair or supervisor, and the student, students might opt to redistribute these hours throughout the summer as opposed to serving them all during the summer session during which they are enrolled. Dates of summer contracts are concurrent with the dates of the academic summer sessions unless otherwise specified by contract agreement. Teaching and tutoring expectations during the regular academic year do not apply during the summer.
Summer stipends are awarded to students in the following departments: Biology, Chemistry, Psychology (St. John’s College) and all departments in the College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions.

7. Descriptions of Graduate Assistantships

Full descriptions of all Graduate Positions have been compiled and are posted on a webpage under the Office of the Provost at [http://www.stjohns.edu/academics/provost/scholarships/position_desc](http://www.stjohns.edu/academics/provost/scholarships/position_desc)

8. Preparation of Paperwork

The following paperwork is required for all new GA’s. A newly hired graduate assistant or fellow is an individual who has either never been employed with St. John’s University or one that has not worked with the University for a period of two years.

To Be Completed by Department Office

The EPCF (Electronic Personnel Change Form) must be completed, while selecting the appropriate Dean for the college in which the student is currently enrolled. Approval of the EPCF will replace the Dean’s Verification of Matriculation Form. This will verify that the student is currently enrolled and meets the Dean’s requirements for a Graduate Assistantship. For example, an assistant pursuing a degree in Education, but seeking an available GA in Information Technology, will need to be verified by the Dean of Education. This information will be approved by Mary Cascio on the EPCF.

One original of the Agreement should be forwarded to Mary Cascio in the Office of Human Resources. The Department may keep a copy on file and forward the original to Human Resources.

Additionally, a background check is required for student workers (includes GA/DF’s who are Teachers of Record) who work with minors on any of our campuses. For more information, refer to Policy #711 Minors on Campus; and if you have any questions about whether or not a background check is required for your student worker, please call the Student Employment Supervisor.

Important Information Regarding Banner Access

Please note the following information regarding Banner Access for Hiring GA/DF Students

For students who need access to Banner or shared network drives: Banner access is granted only to those students who must access the system’s records and information to perform their job functions. Upon hiring a GA/DF, if the supervisor determines the student will need limited access to the Banner system and/or to shared drives on the network, he or she should discuss these needs with the appropriate Banner data owner. Authority to grant and limit user access is the sole responsibility of the University’s Banner data owners.

Terminating a GA/DF

Terminating Access to Banner and Shared Network Drives:

To ensure the security of the University’s data and information systems, supervisors are responsible for notifying their Banner data owner of the need to terminate a GA/DF’s access to Banner and/or shared network drives when students no longer work for the department, or any time that access is no longer required. Supervisors should conduct access reviews within their department at the end of each semester and modify or remove access to any user who no longer requires it.

To Be Completed by the Student

Students must sign the Assistantship Agreement Form (“contract”) which needs to specify the title and source of the Graduate Assistantship. (If the department or office wants to keep an original on file, it should ask the student to sign two Agreements.)
For new Graduate Assistants: to begin the employment process, students are required to present in person the necessary forms listed below. This information must be provided within three business days. Please note: original documents (not a photocopy, fax or scanned copy) are required and must be presented to Human Resources (University Center, Queens Campus) prior to beginning employment. (Graduate Assistants hired for the Manhattan, Staten Island, Oakdale, and Rome/Paris campuses must complete all necessary new hire forms with their department Supervisor.)

Proof of Employment Eligibility

The US Department of Homeland Security I-9 Form requires you to present original documents as proof of citizenship and residence: See instructions on the form for additional information and a list of acceptable documents. The I-9 Form is located online:
http://www.stjohns.edu/media/3/4947ddadb5fa4df1802b728ed4662b67.pdf?d=091103_i9-rev-8-7-09

New York State Withholding IT-2104

Students must also print and complete this form, found here:
http://www.stjohns.edu/media/3/5ef6ebd87218492b86ca0837b4d31657.pdf

If a student is unable to furnish this information, his or her employment processing cannot be completed and they cannot begin their assistantship.

Questions? Please contact Mary Cascio at casciom@stjohns.edu, 718-990-2331, or at the Office of Human Resources in the University Center, Queens's campus.

Information regarding training or approval of the EPCF should be directed to Marilyn Thode, HRIS Manager, in the Payroll department. She can be reached at 718-990-6374 or thodem@stjohns.edu.

Returning Graduate Students

Returning GAs will need to provide one Assistantship Agreement form, as well as a Dean’s Verification of Matriculation on the EPCF electronic system, if required (see above). Students can submit the Agreement form to the Dean of the School of College. The Dean’s office will approve as necessary and forward one original to the Office of Human Resources.

9. Health Insurance Benefits

Students studying/working on the Queens or Staten Island campuses and need assistance with Health Insurance Benefits should contact:

Bursar Assistant
Student Financial Services
Tel: (718) 990-8019
Fax: (718) 990-8284
crawforp@stjohns.edu
www.stjohns.edu/services/financial/bursar/health.stj

Students studying/working abroad and who need assistance with Health Benefits Insurance should contact:

Coordinator of Academics & Program Development
St. John's University, Rome Campus
Via Markantonio Colonna, 21A
00192 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06 39384277
Fax: +39 06 39384200
insuranceabroad@stjohns.edu
www.stjohns.edu/rome