



SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

—
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Graduate Assistant (GA) Manual

2020-2021

Supplement to the SLU Graduate Education Policies and Procedures Manuals found at:
<https://www.slu.edu/academics/graduate/current-students/information-graduate-assistants.php>

Introduction

This manual is supplemental to the University-wide policy set forth in the [Policies and Procedures Manual \(PPM\) for Graduate Assistants \(GAs\) and Fellows of the Division of Graduate Education at Saint Louis University](#) (*Revised July 2017*), and as such is subsidiary to the policies and procedures therein. This document describes the distinct requirements for the Graduate Assistantship (GA) Program at the Saint Louis University School of Social Work (SSW) within the College Public Health and Social Justice (CPHSJ) for students in the MSW, MSABA MACJJ and MSUPD programs, as stipulated in the PPM,

- (1) Description of the responsibilities and expectations of assistantships available in the SSW in the CPHSJ,
- (2) Description of the orientation, training, and mentoring activities for graduate assistants, and
- (3) An evaluation plan that includes completion of two online evaluations by graduate assistants and faculty mentors during the academic year.

Philosophy (from the PPM)

A University with a sound assistantship policy should be able to improve the educational experience for undergraduate and graduate students alike, as well as enhance the research potential of its graduate programs. Students, departments, and the University are beneficiaries of quality graduate assistantship programs when such programs are well conceived and executed.

The primary goal of an assistantship is to augment the student's educational objectives and to assist in the prompt and successful completion of the student's degree program. The student and the department share a central responsibility in the student's education. The graduate assistant is clearly a student who, while making progress in the degree program, has special opportunities to receive experiences in a profession under the supervision of a faculty mentor. Although such students serve Saint Louis University with teaching, research, and/or administrative duties, they are considered students, and not employees of the University and the tasks assigned to them must be clearly and justifiably consistent with the student's educational and career objectives. It is essential that graduate assistants be given assignments and supervision in such a way that their graduate studies and assistantship responsibilities reinforce one another. The assistant/mentor relationship is vital and the best assistantship experience will evolve from careful planning and monitoring. In this way, both the students and the University benefit from the relationship.

Categories of Graduate Assistantships in the SSW (Adapted from the PPM)

Note: *All positions are considered Graduate Assistantships*; however, duties are likely to fall into one of the following three categories:

Graduate Assistantship

Graduate Assistants (GAs) perform other duties that are not primarily teaching or research. These may include clinical or administrative responsibilities that are inherently related to the student's education and/or career objectives. Administrative roles for GAs must be identified as such and a clear need and benefit for the department or college must be documented (e.g., for admissions, research infrastructure, or accreditation). This type of position provides scholarship money towards tuition.

Graduate Research Assistantship

Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) are appointed in a department/program through the college/School budget or by the principal investigator of a funded research project. Close supervision by a faculty mentor is essential to the student's development as a researcher and scholar. GRAs are assigned a range of duties such as: performing literature searches and drafting literature reviews; compiling data and conducting data analyses; helping to prepare professional presentations, papers, and posters; drafting research related correspondence, and preparation of research reports, proposals and grants, working with the IRB, recruiting participants for research, conducting research, and supervising other students, etc. In all cases, the faculty mentor should acknowledge the student's contribution and offer attribution as appropriate. This type of position may include one or more of the following benefits: stipend, tuition remission, and health insurance.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) may support faculty mentors with the following tasks: maintain Blackboard; prepare materials needed for class; track student reflection/bloggging; monitor student participation in class, and guide in-class activity. In addition, they may help with course preparation; work with undergraduate students in small groups; lead group discussions; monitor examinations and grade assignments; help prepare and deliver lectures, or conduct laboratory sessions. In addition to classroom or lab time, they may provide office hours for students. This type of position may include one or more of the following benefits: stipend, tuition remission, and health insurance.

Funding source and benefits of Graduate Assistantships in the SSW

Full Graduate Assistantship:

- University-funded assistantships (UFA), awarded by the SSW.
 - Assigned and funded for two semesters
 - Duration of 9 months
 - 20 hours per week, working with designated faculty
- Most Full Assistantships are assigned to help faculty with research (GRA) and a small number may be assigned to assist with administrative work (GA), or faculty teaching (GTA).
 - The Full Graduate assistant works with one or two faculty, depending on faculty needs. Time is divided between both faculty mentors, if assigned two.
- Benefits include: 18 credit hours tuition remission (9 per semester), 9-month stipend (paid in 9 equal payments at the end of the month – August/September through April/May) and health insurance for those corresponding 9 months.

Partial Graduate Assistantship:

- Funded by the SSW budget and awarded by the SSW.
 - 8-16 hours per week, working with assigned faculty.
- Partial Assistantships may be assigned to assist with administrative work (GA), research (GRA), or faculty teaching (GTA).
 - The Full Graduate assistant works with one or two faculty, depending on faculty needs. Time is divided between both faculty mentors, if assigned two.
- Depending on the hours assigned, tuition benefits will differ; health insurance and stipends are not awarded with Partial Assistantships.

External Graduate Assistantships:

- Funded by external research grants and awarded by faculty members.
- Assistantships may be assigned to assist with administrative work (GA) and/or research (GRA).
- Hours and benefits are determined by faculty and grant specifications.

Unless otherwise indicated, GA positions conclude after serving for two consecutive academic semesters (typically fall/spring appointments).

Responsibilities of Faculty Mentors and Graduate Assistants

Faculty mentors are responsible for assigning graduate assistants appropriate duties in support of their scholarly research, administrative duties and/or other professional activities that encourage students' intellectual and professional development. Graduate assistants should not be asked or expected to do routine clerical work (e.g., photocopying, filing, etc.) on a regular basis.

Graduate assistants are responsible for reporting to work per a schedule agreed upon with their faculty mentor and for meeting the work requirements of their awarded assistantship. Graduate assistants should take the initiative in consulting with their faculty mentors when they do not fully understand a task assigned to them, if they have difficulty in completing a task, or if they complete their assigned work and have time remaining. Graduate assistants must also let their faculty mentors know as soon as possible if they are unable to report to work as scheduled and make arrangements to make up any lost hours. Graduate assistants must maintain good academic standing for the duration of their GA appointment.

Hour Allotments and Benefits

Full GA (20 hours/week): tuition remission for up to 18 credit hours, 9 months of health insurance and a living stipend. Because the University's Human Resources System necessitates that graduate assistants are paid monthly, the student's actual service commitment to the department may vary slightly from the payroll dates. For example, a nine-month graduate assistant's payroll start date is typically August 1, prior to the date classes actually begin. The payroll end date is typically April 30, prior to the end of the Spring semester. In such cases, ***it is clear that the graduate assistant's responsibilities correspond to the academic calendar and the appointment dates on the contract rather than to the demands of the payroll system.***

An electronic contract will be submitted to process each of the benefits listed above and, when complete, recipients will be notified and required to accept the award (instructions will be provided in the email notification). Full GAs are required to submit tax paperwork with Saint Louis University's Human Resources (more information can be found here: <http://www.slu.edu/x34550.xml>). Graduate assistants are responsible for submitting insurance paperwork within the appropriate deadlines, payment for 9 months is submitted electronically with assistantship contracts, for more information: [http://www.slu.edu/medicine/departments/university-health-plan-\(uhp\)/graduate-assistants](http://www.slu.edu/medicine/departments/university-health-plan-(uhp)/graduate-assistants).

- Questions about this assistantship after it has been assigned? Please contact Kristi Richter Kristi.richter@slu.edu or 314-977-2752.

Partial GA (16 hours/week): \$10,000 tuition remission split over the fall and spring semesters - \$5,000 tuition remission will appear on both the fall and the spring student bill; no health insurance nor stipend.

- Questions about this assistantship after it has been assigned? Please contact Kristi Richter Kristi.richter@slu.edu or 314-977-2752.

Partial GA (8 hours/week): \$5,000 tuition remission split over the fall and spring semesters - \$2,500 tuition remission will appear on both the fall and the spring student bill. No health insurance nor stipend.

- Questions about this assistantship after it has been assigned? Please contact Kristi Richter kristi.richter@slu.edu or 314-977-2752.

Externally funded GA (Hours can vary): The GA benefits will be dependent on the grant specifications and will vary. Some graduate assistantships receive their funding from external sources (e.g., federal grants, community agencies) although the student is paid through the University's payroll system. These appointments will generally carry appointment periods reflecting the funding period of the external source. For example, a student on an assistantship funded by an Office of Education grant might have an appointment for the period September 1 through August 30.

Questions about this assistantship after it has been assigned? Please contact Mary Dant Mary.dant@slu.edu or 314-977-8334.

Start Date and Orientation

Traditionally, GAs will begin their appointments the week following their attendance at the Graduate Assistantship Orientation held by the university (usually facilitated the week prior to the start of classes). GAs are required to attend this orientation.

Training

Training of graduate assistants occurs under the supervision of faculty mentors in a variety of contexts depending upon the primary assignment (e.g., administration, research, or teaching). However, there are the following resources and various training materials <https://sites.google.com/a/slu.edu/schoolofsocialwork/school-resources/ga-resources> that GRA and faculty members might find useful to better assist students during their assistantships.

Mentoring

A fundamental aim of the Graduate Assistantship Program in the SSW is to supplement students' learning experiences in their academic programs. The assistantship experiences should augment and broaden educational experiences. Concerted efforts are made to ensure that assistantships and associated tasks and responsibilities are clearly and justifiably consistent with students' educational and professional objectives and aspirations. Mentorship by supervising faculty is one way by which the graduate assistant's experience thoughtfully builds on the academic learning experience and assures that the assignments are in fact complementary to their academic program. This process is enhanced through ongoing, meaningful interaction between the faculty mentor and the graduate assistant, and may be implemented by means of the following specific actions, among others:

- (1) Preliminary meeting to discuss the student's assignment, expectations for performance, specific deliverables and timeline for production, and faculty mentor responsibilities, and

(2) Periodic meetings to discuss progress.

Graduate assistants (GAs) should take the initiative in scheduling and actively participating in these mentoring meetings and all assistantship-related meetings and activities.

The GA should expect to report to work in real time and work in the mentor's office or other workspace the mentor assigns, unless the GA and the mentor come to an alternative agreement.

Evaluation

During the fall and spring semesters, brief online evaluations are sent to faculty mentors and graduate assistants; different surveys are sent to each party, as noted in Appendix B. The fall (mid-year) evaluation is designed to provide feedback to both the faculty mentor and the graduate assistant about performance pertaining to agreed upon responsibilities and expectations, as well as provide recommendations to enhance further advancement and success for the remainder of the student's contract period. Faculty mentors and graduate assistants are strongly encouraged to meet before the end of the fall semester to discuss these results. Results from these surveys are reviewed internally by the College's research and/or Academic Affairs Offices. The spring (or end-of-year) evaluations collect data on specific tasks or tangible products (e.g., presentations, grants submitted, manuscripts, etc.) faculty mentors and graduate assistants completed, how the assistantship connected with the student's academic and/or career goals, and what can be improved in the future. Again, faculty mentors and faculty assistants are encouraged to meet before the end of their contract period to discuss these results, as well as debrief about the assistantship experience overall. GAs will be evaluated on the extent to which they fulfill the work obligations (including hours to be worked) associated with their assistantship.

Work, Holiday, and Vacation Hours

To comply with contractual specifications, graduate assistants are required to work the number of hours per week specified in the contract throughout the appointment period. If students wish to take vacation, they are required to make-up the work hours in consultation with their faculty mentor.

If the GA does not fulfill the requirements of the position they can be terminated and will forgo the remainder of the assigned benefits. Re-assignment to another Faculty is not to be expected.

Appendix A

Tip Sheet for Faculty Using the Graduate Assistant for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

- Expectations and responsibilities need to be established between the faculty member and GTA early on in the semester and per the SSW Assistantship Manual.
- GTAs need a full-time faculty member to give constructive criticism following guest lecturing.
- GTAs should be given the opportunity to implement changes in future guest lectures, following feedback from the faculty member.
- If the class has a designated lab section, GTAs are jointly responsible for creation of the lab syllabus, with input from the faculty member.
- GTAs are responsible for facilitating the lab.
- Once a semester, faculty members should attend the lab and provide feedback.
- Students should have the opportunity to evaluate GTAs similar to faculty/course evaluations.
- Grading is at the discretion of the faculty member and should not be the primary responsibility of the GTA.
- GTAs should be able to evaluate and submit feedback regarding their experience working with their faculty member.
- Open dialogue is encouraged between faculty members and GTAs regarding student performance.

Appendix B

Evaluations will be provided to the assistant and faculty mentor through Qualtrics.
View the following questionnaires from Fall 2020

Student Evaluation of Graduate Assistantship (for GRA) - Fall 2020

Your name:

Last Name

First Name

Your faculty or staff supervisor:

Name:

In what department, program or office was your GRA / GA or RA?

- Health Management & Policy
- Social Work
- Applied Behavior Analysis
- Criminology and Criminal Justice
- Urban Planning and Development
- Behavioral Science & Health Education
- Environmental & Occupational Health
- Biostatistics
- Epidemiology
- Global Health
- Maternal and Child Health
- Undergraduate Public Health Office: BSEM, BSPH, BSHM, BSBS
- Other

How long have you had this GRA / GA / RA position?

- 1 semester
- 2 semesters
- 3 semesters
- 4 semesters

To complete your duties as a GRA / GA /RA, about how many hours a week did you work this semester, on average?

- 0-5 hours
- 6-10 hours
- 11-15 hours
- 16-20 hours
- More than 20 hours

What activities have you performed this year as a GRA / GA / RA? (Check all that apply)

- Literature Review(s)
- Qualitative Data Analysis
- Quantitative Data Analysis
- Data Coding or Cleaning
- Editing Manuscript(s)
- Writing Manuscript(s)
- Research Coordination (e.g., recruiting study participants, coordinating focus groups, etc.)
- Developing IRB Protocols
- Poster Development
- Presentation Development
- Abstract Development
- Writing and/or Editing Grant(s)
- Administrative Duties
- Teaching assistant or help with Faculty's teaching materials
- Meeting or Event Coordination
- Project Management
- Other:

Thinking about your work as a GRA / GA this academic year, please indicate the degree to which you disagree or agree with the following statements:

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither disagree or agree	agree	strongly agree
My skills were fully utilized.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My supervisor met with me regularly to talk about our work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither disagree or agree	agree	strongly agree
My supervisor respected my time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ideas were always welcomed and considered.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This position helped me further my career goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The work I did with my supervisor was really connected to my classroom learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The work I did with my supervisor was appropriate for my level of training.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My GRA/GA experience this year was an important part of my learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I had the opportunity to apply the skills I learned in the program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My GRA/GA work will really help me in the work force.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My relationship with my supervisor was important to my professional development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In what ways have you been satisfied with your assistantship?

◀
▶

In what ways has this assistantship helped to further your professional or academic goals?

How could we improve the GRA / GA experience?

Please use the space below to share any other comments related to your GRA / GA position.

Faculty Evaluations of Graduate Assistantship (for GRA)– Fall 2020

Name of faculty member completing this evaluation:

Name:

Name of graduate assistant:

Name:

Did this student just complete the **first** or **second** year of his/her assistantship?

- 1st
- 2nd
- Other:

Please share your input about the GRA/RAs performance.

ATTITUDE. This student...

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Shows a positive attitude.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accepts feedback well and uses feedback to improve performance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is willing to take risks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

WILLINGNESS TO LEARN. This student...

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Takes advantage of opportunities to learn new things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helps create positive learning environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is willing to take on hard tasks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PROFESSIONALISM. This student...

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Takes initiative.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asks for clarification when needed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assumes responsibility for his/her work and maintains accountability for his/her actions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Recognizes problem areas in his/her own performance and makes improvements.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

DEPENDABILITY. This student....

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Is working during scheduled work hours.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completes tasks in a timely manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completes tasks with accuracy, thoroughness, and neatness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plans and organizes his/her work efficiently.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

COLLABORATION. This student...

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Works well with others as part of a team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicates well with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develops and maintains professional relationships with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understands how to listen to and respond to other people's needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

Is the kind of person I want to have a colleague.

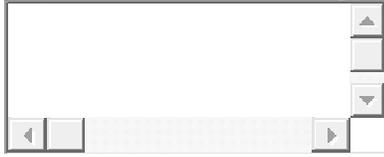
What are the primary tasks your GRA/RA has completed this year? (check all that apply)

- Literature review
- Qualitative data analysis
- Quantitative data analysis
- Data coding or cleaning
- Editing manuscript
- Writing manuscript
- Research coordination (e.g., recruiting study participants, coordinating focus groups, etc.)
- IRB Protocol development
- Poster development
- Presentation development
- Abstract development
- Writing and/or editing grant(s)
- Other:

Please describe how you worked with this student. (e.g., frequency of meetings, mentoring activities)

What has this student learned, experienced or accomplished as a GRA/GA that he/she would not have had the opportunity to do without the GRA/GA position?

Please use the space below to share any ideas you have for improving the experience of working with GRA/RAs.

A rectangular text input field with a light gray background and a thin black border. On the right side, there are three vertically stacked scroll bar buttons: an upward-pointing arrow, a gray square, and a downward-pointing arrow. On the bottom side, there are three horizontally stacked scroll bar buttons: a left-pointing arrow, a gray square, and a right-pointing arrow.