



BOWIE

STATE UNIVERSITY

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The Graduate Assistant Handbook

**A Policy and Procedure Manual for Graduate
Assistants at Bowie State University**

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Foreword

1. Purpose

The Bowie State University Graduate Assistant handbook is prepared as a reference guide for all categories of Graduate Assistants employed at the BSU campus, whether new or returning. The Graduate Assistant plays a vital role in our academic community. The objective of this handbook is to provide , the Graduate Assistant, with information on the regulations, policies/procedures, and the resources relevant to your role as a graduate assistant.

2. Goals

A BSU Graduate Assistant is both a degree-seeking student and an employee of the University with three main goals:

- ❖ Primary goal: The primary goal of an Assistantship is to guide and lead a GA progressively toward successful and timely completion of a graduate degree program.
- ❖ The secondary goal of an Assistantship, is to assist a GA in acquiring meaningful work and professional experiences in the academic community under the direct supervision of the GAs program coordinator, faculty, staff, and/or administrator. The Graduate School Dean is the overall supervisor. This work experience provides professional preparation or development and in-service training for the student.
- ❖ The Assistantship is associated with employee relationships and the fulfillment of assigned tasks and duties. That is most specifically addressed by this handbook.

3. Questions

No handbook is prepared to address all possible or unanticipated questions or problems or to be definitive. Questions, guidance, or referrals on the interpretation of handbook sections should be addressed to the Dean of Graduate School, unless otherwise specified in the text to be addressed by a specific campus office, for instance, the Office of Human Resources for specific work-related questions.

Dean of Graduate School

Center for Business and Graduate Studies, Suite 1312

Bowie State University

Bowie MD. 20715

Voice: 301-860-3738

Fax: 301-860-3414

E-mail: graduateschooladmin@bowiestate.edu

The handbook was originally prepared and released on September 2007 by:

Dean of Graduate School

Bowie State University

14000 Jericho Park Road

Bowie MD 20715

Office of Human Resource

Sheila M Hobson

Senior Director

Robinson Hall Room 100

Phone 301-860-3451

shobson@bowiestate.edu

Who is a Graduate Assistant at Bowie State University?

BSU Graduate Assistants are matriculated graduate students who are provided with a temporary academic appointment to perform assigned tasks or duties within an academic department or unit, or respective offices on campus under the supervision of a faculty member, a department head, an administrator or director of an office or unit. 'The Graduate School Unit' will be the term used in this handbook to refer to the employing unit while the department-posted unit on campus as the work area in which the student will perform his/her tasks and duties under the overall supervision of the graduate program coordinator, department head/chair or a unit leader.

Most Graduate Assistantships are available in the Graduate School through the application from the student's program area.

Graduate Assistantships are not the only financial option available to graduate students. Graduate students may also be employed as hourly contractual employees in departments and offices through procedures of the Office of Human Resources. They can also seek work-study programs and aid available through the Office of Financial Aid and Enrollment Management.

Categories of Graduate Assistantships at BSU and Percentage of Time

'Graduate Assistantship' (GA) is the common title in the University classification and payroll system. At the preference of the employing unit, some appointments may be simply stated as 'Graduate Assistant'. Other appointments may be subtitled as the following:

1. Teaching.
2. Research.
3. Administrative.

These categories are briefly described in the section *Examples of Duties by Category of Graduate Assistants* below.

As a general rule, when the term 'GA' is used in this policy and procedural handbook, it will refer to all categories of Graduate Assistantships.

GAs are full-time students registered in 9 credits of graduate courses through the merit-based assistantship award. They are not employed full-time. A Graduate Assistant is a graduate student who has matriculated into a Bowie State University graduate program and has been provided with an opportunity to perform assigned duties relative to his/her academic discipline and to receive full-time graduate tuition up to 9 credit hours. Any graduate assistant (GA) who registers for more than 9 credit hours will pay the difference. A Graduate Assistant award only covers the fall and spring semester and does not extend through the summer or mini-semester.

Graduate students are invited to apply for graduate research or teaching assistantships through their various departments. Benefits include tuition remission and a stipend. Students may serve as graduate assistants in the master's program for up to 30-42 credit hour programs for up to two academic years. Students who enroll in counseling programs with more than 42 credits may serve as graduate assistants for up to three academic years. Students in the doctoral areas can only serve for four years during the duration of their coursework. The level of work commitment required: is 20 hours/week of service to the University, attendance at monthly Graduate Assistantship Program (GAP) meetings, and active membership in the Graduate Student Association (GSA).

Graduate Assistantship Application Process

Interested applicants should download the application online and follow the following process:

- ❖ Fill out a graduate assistantship program application and return the completed application to the graduate program coordinator in their department.
- ❖ Follow departmental directions and timeline including review and interview.
- ❖ Applications for the Graduate Assistantship Program cannot be obtained in the Graduate School.
- ❖ If recommended, student applications, each with a recommendation letter from their department will be forwarded to the Graduate School.
- ❖ A Graduate School review committee chaired by the Graduate School Associate Dean will review all applicants and recommend to the Dean for award.
- ❖ Please Note: A recommendation by an applicant's department does not guarantee an award for the assistantship. The award is strictly based on merit and the availability of funds .

Eligibility for and Retention of a Graduate Assistantship

For the Graduate School and the employing unit, a graduate student must fulfill the following:

- a. Be admitted and already in a graduate degree program at BSU in Regular (Full) or Provisional Status with evidence of recorded academic performance with a cumulative GPA of 3.5 and above.
- b. Be registered for graduate-level credit courses each semester during the period of the award. (On credits, see the section below on *Full-Time Graduate Students Status*).
- c. Should be a continuing student and in good academic standing (3.5 or above cumulative GPA) when the initial award or reappointment becomes effective.
- d. Maintain reasonable progress toward a graduate degree each semester or session as determined by the student's graduate program and the Graduate School.
- e. Be recommended for the award/re-appointment by the program department.
- f. If an international student, must have a visa status that permits employment.
- g. Current GAs cannot apply for other individuals.

Appointment, Reappointment, Duration of Employment

The steps in the routing and approval process for a Graduate Assistant appointment and the GA Appointment Recommendation Form are found in Appendix A.

The offer of appointment for a GA is issued in letter format by the Graduate School Office of the Dean. The student accepts the appointment offer by signing and submitting a copy of the appointment letter by the posted date.

The offer includes the category of Assistantship (if specified), the salary/stipend level, the assigned department or office, the beginning and ending dates of the appointment, and whether tuition remission is allowable.

The beginning date is the first day on which the GA is expected to report. This date is the first day of class resumption in the Spring or Fall Semesters respectively.

Offers of appointments do not include information on fringe benefits for GAs such as health insurance. These issues are discussed with and processed through the Office of Human Resources if the individual is eligible. Information on applicable benefits to GAs is covered in the section below-titled *Benefits Available to Graduate Assistants*.

Sufficient time must be allowed for processing the appointment recommendation (approximately 14-21 working days). The requested appointee may not begin work until the Graduate School Dean has made the offer of employment and the appointee has accepted the terms of the offer by his/her signature. Appointments will not be backdated.

1. Appointment/Award Period (Every Semester)

GA appointments/award are for each semester and twice for each academic year but with per semester duration reappointment contracts. The academic year appointment begins in late August and ends in late May the following year. There is no summer nor mini-semester award.

NOTE: All academic appointments, run on the state Fiscal Year (FY) cycle (July 1 to June 30). A Graduate Assistantship during the academic year may not be an appointment of less than one academic semester unless it is a replacement for a vacated Assistantship or preliminary to the expected continuation of the GA appointment in the next FY. All academic appointments are automatically terminated at the end of the state FY for which they are effective.

2. Reappointment

GAs may be reappointed at the discretion of the Graduate School Dean at the beginning of each semester. In order to allow a larger number of qualified students to benefit from these positions, the Graduate School is monitoring the completion date for all GAs in avoidance of abuse in staying longer than the policy stipulated. In general, the BSU Graduate School Assistantship duration is for four academic semester for all Master's program with the exception of counseling programs and four years for a Doctoral student.

The present practice is that the Graduate School is responsible for determining and communicating its own specific criteria, within the limits of the University policy, for assessing student qualifications for appointment/award and reappointment to Graduate Assistantships. In general, reappointment is dependent upon satisfactory work performance, good academic standing in the Graduate School and the graduate program, and progress toward the degree. As with all University faculty and staff positions, appointment or reappointments are contingent upon the availability of funds.

Good academic standing refers to the student's course grades and cumulative grade point average. Consult the *Graduate School Catalog* for specifics on the Graduate School, and, as applicable, individual program requirements on standards for grades, the cumulative grade point average and academic probation, and satisfactory progress toward a degree.

Although in a rare occurrence, a GA might receive an academic probation notice for the immediate past semester/session. The present practice is that the GA, like any other graduate student, has the usual two successive semesters in which to remove the probation. (Read the *Graduate School Catalog* for more detailed information). **Academic probation, however, may weigh in the consideration of reappointment of the student.**

A graduate student who has been certified as having fulfilled all obligations for the degree or who has graduated is ineligible for continuation of a Graduate Assistantship in the next semester, a GA who completes the degree program for the December Commencement, may continue to complete their work assignments, if needed, up to the end of their contract period.

Supervision and Evaluation of the Graduate Assistant

1. Supervision

GAs are directly under the supervision of the department or unit where they are posted. The department/unit determines assignments, supervision of work, and evaluation of performance. They should also realize that These GAs are students and should be allowed to work within the time frame allocated for them to work according to policy and best practices. GAs are not full-time staff and should not be tasked beyond the expected workloads.

2. Evaluation

Each employing unit is responsible for determining procedures for the review and evaluation of GAs. Depending on the type of assignment, the process of evaluation might include a survey form or written assessment of work by the supervisor(s); classroom visitation by designated faculty members; student or clientele evaluations; faculty observation of research work and results, etc. The results of performance reviews and evaluations are to be discussed with the GA. The result of this evaluation is instrumental in a GAs re-appointment.

Time Commitment, Scheduling, and other Employment

1. Time Reporting/Commitment

The time commitment for GAs is based on a 40-hours per period, 20 hours per week. Please note that there will be no exceptions for on-time reporting. Work hours should be reported in a timely manner to facilitate approval on the Tuesday before the pay week. Time reporting must be completed by 12:00 noon on the reporting day. Late work time entry will result in missing pay on the pay period.

2. Scheduling

The scheduling of the time for GAs to undertake their assignments per week (20 hours) is determined by the supervisor in the academic department or leader in the unit where a GA is posted. The type of duties assigned to GAs, even if they are specific teaching or research assistants/administrative work, may vary on a case-by-case basis because of differences in the qualifications or experience brought to the position as well as differences in the demands and needs of the department/unit. Department supervisors or unit leaders are responsible for monitoring the time reporting/commitment of their GAs. GAs account for their time to the institution by completing their timesheets electronically. For more information on time commitment and reporting, see the Office of Budget for tutorials.

3. Other On-Campus Employment

During the academic semester, a full-time GA may not seek and will not be approved for any other part-time on-campus employment above the 20-hours/week limits. Any GA caught working on a second contract on campus (double dipping) will be released from his assistantship award.

4. Off-Campus Employment

A full-time GA is considered to be a full-time employee of the University and should not be seeking outside employment. The combined role and responsibilities of graduate student and graduate assistant will occupy all the time available to a student during the appointment period. The academic departments and graduate programs recommend Assistantship appointments for graduate students whose commitments are most likely to result in satisfactory progress toward completion of their degree program as well as undertaking their Assistantship responsibilities. Off-campus employment could have a negative impact on the reappointment of a GA.

Graduate Assistantship Duties by Category

A general, non-specific title of a GA is one in which the individual may perform a variety of tasks that could relate to a teaching, research, or administrative assistant. For the specified appointment to a category of Graduate Assistantship at Bowie State University, see the descriptions of the subtitles as follows:

Graduate Teaching Assistant: A graduate teaching assistant (GTA) is a graduate student who has received the GA award and who may perform a variety of tasks or obligations that could relate to a teaching assistant. The duties and responsibilities of a Graduate Assistant may vary from one department to another, however, for the majority of Bowie State University Teaching Assistants, the duties and responsibilities fall into one or more of the following identified categories:

- Assisting in their respective department support services as identified by their coordinator of graduate programs in consultation with the chair.
- Assisting a faculty in the classroom in such duties as proctoring examinations, taking attendance, recording grades, and other functions found necessary by the instructor.
- Teaching responsibility for a laboratory or discussion session in a classroom setting under close supervision of the faculty.
- Representing a faculty in any assigned duties outside the classroom and coordinating students' group assignments under the supervision of the faculty.

Note: All the identified assigned duties of a Graduate Teaching Assistant, particularly the aspects that deal with classroom teaching, will be determined by the student's academic qualifications and merit. All Graduate Teaching Assistants should be under the supervision of a faculty member.

Graduate Research Assistant: A research assistant is a graduate student who received a Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) Award to perform the following duties under the supervision of a faculty:

- Assist a faculty in managing grants and technical support necessary to advance faculty grantsmanship.
- Help faculty in facilitating an ongoing research project by assisting in data collection, administration of surveys, provide the necessary technical support in a computer or mathematical laboratory setting.

Note: All the duties and responsibilities of a Graduate Assistant whether as a GTA or GRA should be under the direct supervision of a faculty member or academic/administrative support staff.

Graduate Assistant with Administrative Assignments

Offices on campus may employ GAs to help with administrative support functions. Responsibilities vary, as do the durations of appointments. Supervision is provided by the administrator or staff of the Office.

Full-Time Graduate Student Status

During the appointment/award period for a full-time Assistantship, a GA must register for at least 9 graduate units of course credit (3 courses with 3 credits each) per semester to qualify concurrently as a full-time graduate student. For an explanation of the graduate unit system in relation to semester credit hours equivalency, see the current version of the *Graduate School Catalog*. Course credit includes both regular coursework and research course credits for the thesis or dissertation, Master's project, etc. The Graduate School Dean may verify the full-time graduate student status of the GA. There is a maximum number of 9 credit graduate units set for GAs. However, any excess in credit hours as stipulated will need the Graduate Dean's approval and the difference in money should be paid by the GA.

GAs should consider their assistantship workload in planning their registration for course credits.

Conduct and Resolving Problems

1. Conduct

All GAs in their teaching, research, and administrative activities are subject to the ethical precepts and code of the academic profession (e.g., American Association of University Professors), to the laws of the State of Maryland regarding its employees, and to the University System of Maryland, Board of Regents and campus policies which govern their institutional obligations. For a brief introduction to the subject of institutional policies, refer to the current version of the BSU Graduate School Catalog. See Appendix F below for a listing of selected Board of Regents and University System Policies and BSU reciprocal policies and procedures for implementing them.

GAs are expected to conduct themselves in their interactions with students, faculty, and all other members of the University community with the same sensitivity, thoughtfulness, and respect they expect to receive from others. Neither age, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation may be the subject of prejudicial actions, comments, or expressed attitudes.

2. Resolving Problems

GAs should try to resolve difficulties first at the department or office level. If a GA is having unusual difficulties with his/her assignment, it should be discussed with the supervisor(s). If issues can't be resolved, the matter may be discussed with the Chair of the department or next-level office administrator. If still unresolved at this level, the matter may be referred to the Graduate School Dean for resolution. The Graduate School Dean may appoint a committee of two tenured faculty members who serve on the Graduate Council and a graduate student to review the GAs written submission of the issue. The committee will make a recommendation to the Dean. The Dean will review the recommendation and make a determination. The Dean's decision is final.

3. Changing Supervisors

Graduate Assistantships are not transferable unless in an extenuating case. GAs funded by institutional funds are distributed to academic departments which have graduate programs and other office units. If a move is necessary, change of supervisor involves adequate notice of resignation to the current supervisor is required. On a case by case basis, the Graduate School Dean will determine what further process may be necessary for the student to be reassigned.

Termination of Assistantships

The GA appointment may be terminated before the expiration of the appointment period for any of the following reasons:

1. Documented unsatisfactory work performance, e.g., violation of policy such as misconduct that is job related, (e.g., incompetence, neglect of duty).
2. Failure to participate in the Graduate Student Association (GSA) programs and activities as clearly indicated in the GSA by-laws.
3. Reported deficiency in academic work and in meeting academic requirements for the degree, leading to a recommendation by the program for termination of graduate admission status.
4. Non-attendance at mandatory monthly GA meetings and professional development activities.
5. Failure to enroll for graduate credit during the appointment period (semester or session if applicable).
6. Financial exigency (e.g., funds rescinded or cut) or discontinuance of the work in which the appointment was made.
7. Completion of the degree program and employed full-time in an off-campus employment.
8. Medical or health conditions which interfere or limit the performance.
9. Visa status (international students) changes that do not permit employment or is revoked.
10. Voluntary mutual agreement (letter of resignation and acceptance).

In the case where a GAs contract is terminated prior to the original date specified in the offer letter, the GA will be notified in writing by the Graduate School Dean. Cases of insubordination and behaviors very detrimental to the University community and its stakeholders- holders may result in immediate actions appropriate to BSU policy. Supervisors including department and University officials may initiate actions and consult the Graduate School Dean for details.

Voluntary resignation of a GA is initiated by the GA in writing. The letter of resignation should be addressed to the supervisor. This letter should be forwarded to the Graduate School Dean and must have an effective date of resignation. The Graduate School Dean will take action on a GAs resignation and document the resignation in the GAs file.

The termination of assistantships follows the same exit procedures for leaving the employment of the University as other employees (see Appendix D for the procedures and form to be completed.)

If a Graduate Assistant is to be terminated:

- The Graduate Assistant will be notified in writing after a termination meeting with the Graduate Dean;
- The Graduate Assistant will turn in all BSU property including keys in his/her possession to any unit where the student was working prior to his/her termination.

Graduate Assistant Compensation/Stipend

Graduate Assistant (GA) Compensation/Stipend Rates at BSU for the FY July 1-June 30:

- *\$13.25 an hour for 20hrs per work week for Master's Graduate Student
9 credit hrs. per semester and a stipend totaling \$4,240 per semester*
- *\$13.50 an hour for 20hrs per work week for Doctoral Students
9 credit hrs. per semester and a stipend totaling \$4,320 per semester*

All stipends are paid through the payroll system and hence are identified as salary.

Graduate Assistants must be enrolled for a minimum of 9 credit hours, but not more than 12 credits. They must maintain good academic standing. No more than 9 credits will be waived through the Assistantship Program. Students are required to pay all fees associated with the Graduate School and for all credits in excess of 9 credit hours per semester. Assistantships do not cover tuition for the mini-semester or summer school.

Graduate Assistants must work 20 hours a week under the direction of the assigned supervisor. A timesheet must be submitted bi-weekly to the Dean of Graduate School c/o the administrative assistant.

Graduate Assistants are responsible for the payment of any credit hour registered over 9 credit hours. Fees associated with course registration by a Graduate Assistant are paid by the student.

Graduate Assistant Tuition Remission Status: BSU Graduate Assistant tuition remission is billed at the in-state tuition rate. All Graduate Assistants at BSU whether non-Maryland residents or F-1 visa holder is billed at the in-state tuition level. If a Graduate Assistant's award is terminated, the Assistant's tuition remission status will revert to the original out-of-state tuition rate. However, if the Assistant's status changed within the period of his/her termination by petition to Resident Alien, the Board of Regents Policy on Student Residency Classification for Admission, Tuition, and Charge-Differential will be taken into consideration.

Health Insurance: Bowie State University Graduate Assistants (GA's) are not enrolled in the university's health care program within their period of award. However, any interested GA who wishes to enroll the university's health care program on his/her own should consult the Office of Human Resources Management (ext. 3450) for details on health insurance coverage.

Retirement and Social Security Withholdings: Retirement and Social Security withholdings are not withheld from the stipends of BSU Graduate Assistants. For more details on Retirement and Social Security withholdings, please consult the BSU Payroll Department (ext. 3483).

Vacation and Sick Leave Hours: BSU Graduate Assistants' work hours do not entitle them to vacation or sick leave hours. For more details, please consult the Office of Human Resources (ext. 3450).

Facilities and Working Spaces: BSU Graduate Assistants who are posted in various units on campus including their departments should be provided with a working space in a suitable office or laboratory, desk space with computer and telephone access, and office accessories such as office supplies which are applicable to their respective roles and responsibilities as GAs.

On-Campus Housing: Housing is available for Graduate Students at Bowie State University. For more details on Housing, please consult the University Affiliated Housing at 301-532-1600.

Holiday and Break Periods: All employees including Graduate Assistants (GAs) at Bowie State University observe the legal holidays and break periods as indicated on the university. No GA is expected to work on a holiday or designated break period. All GA contracts end at the end of each fall or spring semester and at the completion of a GA program. Summer and winter sessions are not scheduled for any GA work nor is tuition remission granted during the summer and winter sessions. Any GA working during these sessions may be doing so due to a special arrangement with his/her the unit and will not be paid from the Graduate Assistantship budget.

Overtime: Bowie State University Graduate Assistants' (GA's) work hours do not accumulate overtime. GA working hours are 20 hours per week and should not exceed a total of forty hours/ two weeks. GA payroll is on a bi-weekly basis and for more details on payroll issues please consult Mr. Duane Williams in the Controller's Office (ext. 3483).

ID Card and Other Campus Services

Because of their responsibilities, Graduate Assistants (GAs) may obtain regular student ID cards.

GAs may be eligible for issuance of office keys and access to other University property, depending on their assigned duties and allowance by campus procedures and security.

Taxation Status, Payroll Deductions, and Queries

U.S. Federal tax code revisions will affect in some way the income tax liability of graduate students who receive stipends and tuition remission from Graduate Assistantships. The taxation issues are usually complicated. Consult the Office of Human Resources as well as your own tax counsel on your particular situation.

Payroll is on a bi-weekly basis.

GAs are not eligible for overtime.

All questions relative to payroll should be addressed to the Payroll Manager. Office located at the back of The Thurgood Marshall Library first floor.

Board of Regents, University System of Maryland, and BSU Policies and Procedures

In Appendixes attached, you will find a listing of the most pertinent policies and procedures applicable to BSU GAs. The listing is divided by function, i.e., by policies and procedures pertaining to academic affairs,. Copies of these policies are available in the Graduate School Office of the Dean. Policies and procedures are subject to change.

FORM INSTRUCTIONS - GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP

1. **NEW:** A student who has never been employed by the University, or a person who will be working in your department for the first time.
2. **AMENDMENT:** Changes to an existing signed contract. You must also indicate what changes are being made in the OTHER (SPECIFY) section of the Contract.
3. **OTHER (Specify)**
4. **REAPPOINTMENT:** A student/GA you will be rehiring.
5. **CANDIDATE:** **Title** (Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss) – **First Name** (If other nationality, please make sure that they are providing you with their first name first and not their last name) – **Middle Initial** (if appropriate) - **Last Name** (If other nationality, please make sure that they are providing you with their first name first and not their last name).
6. **MAILING ADDRESS:** The address at which the candidate receives his/her mail. If the Graduate School will renew the contract the next semester or the next year, you should check with the student to make sure their address has not changed.
7. **TELEPHONE:** A number the person would like you to contact them at. Also, request a cell phone number if available.
8. **SOC. SEC. NO:** The student must have a valid social security card that must be presented to you. A visa number or a card number cannot be used as a social security number. Please have the student report to Human Resources to begin the process to request a social security card. Once the student obtains the card, they **must** return to Human Resources so that the contract start date can be amended to indicate the date the social security card was received. The student **is not** allowed to work until the social security card is received in Human Resources. There are **no** exceptions to this policy.
9. **VISA STATUS:** A BSU GA must have an F-1 visa and be authorized to attend college in the United States.
10. **EMPLOYING DEPARTMENT/OFFICE:** The department or office in which the student will be employed.

In addition to offices already mentioned herein, other campus offices of interest to graduate students are the Office of the President, Office of the Provost, Office of the Registrar, Controller's Office, Office of Budget and Finance, Student Accounts, Office of Financial Aid, Henry Wise Wellness Center, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the Career Development Center, the Office of Counseling Services, the Academic Computing Center, the Office of Public Safety and Security (vehicle registration and parking permits), the Student Center, Thurgood Marshall Library, Entrepreneurship and Innovation Center, The Maryland Center at Bowie State University, and the bookstore. Information on these offices can be found in the Graduate Catalog, which may be found on the BSU website under the administration and services links.

11. **Does the individual have or anticipate concurrent employment in another department or unit?** A GA is not required to have concurrent employment in another department or unit on campus. Any GA working in two units at the same time will be released of their assistantship award.
12. **STIPEND/COMPENSATION RATE:** The amount you will be paid. A graduate assistant receives a stipend rate of \$4,240 for master's students and \$4,320 for doctorate students per semester. **EXACT:** This amount could be found on the GA contract. Questions may be directed to payroll.
13. **BUDGET INFORMATION:** The budget number and object code **must** be included.
14. **SIGNATURES:** The form should be submitted for signature as indicated on the form. There are no exceptions to the signatures required.

08/25/2023

Bowie State University

III– 7.11 Policy on Graduate Assistantship (Approved by the Graduate Council, September 6, 2011)

I. Purpose and Scope

A. Graduate Assistantships at Bowie State University (BSU): The purpose of the Graduate Assistantship program at Bowie State University is to support graduate students who are awarded the assistantships by:

1. Advancing the student's graduate education through practicum-based experiences, including the development and application of teaching, research and other skills, while also advancing the mission of the institution.
2. Providing financial support, including stipends and tuition assistance, to aid degree-seeking students enrolled in master's level or doctoral programs at the university and appointed as graduate assistants in the pursuit of their graduate degrees.

B. Policy Goal: This policy is intended to establish baseline standards for the administration of graduate assistantships, with a commitment to continuous improvement in the status of graduate assistants.

C. Institution Policies and Procedures: BSU will develop a graduate assistant handbook that will include policies and procedures, and graduate assistantship application processes, as well as duties and responsibilities of graduate assistants.

II. Appointments:

A. Length: Appointment of graduate assistants may last for two years for all master's degree graduate assistants, except in the counseling program, where the length of the assistantship may extend to three years and four years for a doctoral student.

1. Full-time Assistantship: A graduate assistantship shall require a full-time commitment of 20 hours per work week. Exceptions must be submitted in writing by the graduate assistant's supervisor; approved by the student's

advisor and department chairperson, and submitted to the dean for approval before any additional time is allotted.

2. Graduate assistants on full-time assistantships at BSU are not allowed to work in any other capacity at the university.

C. **Renewal of Appointments:** An appointed graduate student shall be re-appointed after the end of each academic year based on the following criteria:

1. Satisfactory academic performance and progress toward a degree with a minimum 3.0 GPA;
2. Satisfactory performance of assigned assistantship responsibilities and duties as defined by the various departments;
3. Availability of funds;
4. Limitation of length of appointment has not expired;
5. Student's adherence to the university code of conduct, observance of state or federal law, and compliance with general university regulations; and
6. Specific departmental needs, as identified by the program chair and graduate school coordinator.

D. **Notice of Appointments:** Except under justifiable circumstances, graduate assistants whose appointments are for more than one term will be notified of their appointments, and of decisions not to renew appointments, at least 60 days before the date upon which the appointment is to begin.

1. If a decision to renew an appointment cannot be made within that time line, the graduate assistant will be informed at least 60 days in advance of the assistantship's start date of an estimated date for the renewal decision.
2. Circumstances which may justify fewer than 60 days' notice include, but are not limited to, uncertainty in departmental funding and course enrollments.
3. Nothing in this section shall prevent the graduate school from making an appointment to a graduate assistant on short notice based on changed circumstances in class enrollments, the availability of resources, or other factors.

E. **Appointment Letters:** Upon appointment, each graduate assistant will receive an appointment letter that contains detailed information concerning the terms and expectations of the assistantship. The appointment letter shall include, at a minimum:

1. The length of the appointment
 2. The starting and ending dates of the appointment, including the dates during which the graduate assistant is expected to be on campus to perform the duties of the assistantship;
 3. The average weekly time commitment of the assistantship;
 4. The basic responsibilities of the assistantship;
 5. The economic benefits of the assistantship, including stipend and tuition assistance amounts, and any access to health and other benefits;
 6. The department or office to which the student will report, including the name of the faculty member or other individual who will supervise the assistantship, when feasible;
 7. An affirmation that the provisions of the graduate assistant handbook apply to the assistantship;
 8. Any special requirements of the assistantship related to summer and winter class scheduling, or other terms (e.g., coverage over breaks, summer/winter classes and weather emergencies) that may vary from the provisions of the university's graduate assistant handbook; and
 9. Contact information where the graduate assistant may obtain additional information and advice concerning the appointment, the provisions of the handbook, and graduate assistant grievance rights and processes.
- F. Assignments: To the extent feasible, graduate assistants shall be given a written description of their teaching, research or other assignments, duties, and responsibilities at least two weeks before the beginning of the semester. However, departments retain the flexibility to adjust assignments as necessary due to loss of funding, course enrollment fluctuations, or other unanticipated events, even after the semester has begun.
- G. Termination of Assistantships: An assistantship may be terminated within the term of the appointment under unusual and compelling conditions, for causes specified in the BSU graduate assistant handbook.

III. Grievance Procedures

- A. Informal Resolution of Concerns: Graduate assistants are strongly encouraged to attempt to resolve grievances informally with their mentor(s) and/or supervisor(s). BSU shall establish a mediation process or an ombudsperson function to facilitate informal resolution of graduate assistant grievances.
- B. Grievance Policy: To address concerns that cannot be resolved informally, BSU shall develop a formal, written graduate assistant grievance policy that provides the graduate assistant with the opportunity to present grievances to:
 - 1. The student's department chair/unit head or the specific graduate program coordinator will form a grievance panel:
 - A. The panel will consist of a graduate student, as well as faculty members or administrators, who have no direct relationship with the department at issue or the individual parties to the grievance.
 - B. Either party to the grievance may request that a panel member be substituted on the grounds that the panel member has a conflict of interest.
- C. Content of Policy: BSU's grievance policy shall include fundamental due process protections and other minimum elements, including:
 - 1. The opportunity for graduate assistants to provide the facts and evidence that support their grievances and to explain their positions to the grievance decision makers;
 - 2. Any minimum information requirements and formats for presenting grievances, which shall not require adherence to complex procedures or evidentiary standards;
 - 3. A clear statement that reprisals against graduate assistants for filing a grievance are prohibited;
 - 4. Specific timelines for the phases of the grievance process;
 - 5. The right to appeal any departmental/ unit head decision to the dean of the Graduate School.

Application:

1. The grievance policy will apply to disputes concerning:
 - A. Workload volume and scheduling;
 - B. Inappropriate work assignments;
 - C. Termination of a graduate assistantship within the term of appointment; and
 - D. Non-renewal of an assistantship for arbitrary or capricious reasons, including reprisal for filing a grievance.
2. If a graduate assistant believes that an assistantship was not renewed because of unlawful processes, the graduate assistant may pursue available institution processes, such as access to the campus Equal Employment Office (EEO).
3. Graduate assistants may raise concerns regarding suspected on-campus fraud or fiscal irregularities through the confidential University System of Maryland hot-line mechanisms established in USM Policy VIII-7.10, "Policy on Reporting Suspected or Known Fiscal Irregularities," the university's fraud reporting policies, and any relevant state or federal "whistleblower" laws.
 - E. Access to Policy: BSU's graduate assistant grievance policy shall be published on the campus website and included in its graduate assistant handbook.

IV. Professional Development

- A. Orientation and Information: BSU shall have a fall and spring orientation for graduate assistants each academic year. During the orientation, graduate assistants will be presented with various information regarding the assistantship program, which will include a description of their duties and responsibilities, eligibility requirements, durations of their assistantships and all relevant policies and procedures applicable to the graduate assistantship program.
- B. Professional Development Opportunities: Graduate assistants at BSU shall be invited to participate in various on-campus and external professional development programs, including professional conferences, educational and discipline-related seminars, as well as departmental, institutional, and other faculty development events.
- C. Information for Graduate Assistant Supervisors: Faculty and staff who supervise graduate assistants shall be required to know and understand the university's policies and procedures for graduates.

1. Each department chair, and graduate program coordinator who supervises a graduate assistant shall have access to the Bowie State University graduate assistant handbook and shall receive a copy of the graduate assistant's appointment letter.

2. The Graduate School Dean shall hold department and unit heads who supervise graduate assistants accountable for adherence to the terms of the student's appointment letter and the requirements of the graduate assistant handbook.

D. Changes to Policies and Procedures: Graduate assistants shall be apprised of any changes to relevant policies and procedures on a timely and ongoing basis.

V. Financial Assistance and Benefits

A. BSU shall seek to pay stipends at levels that are competitive with peer institutions, to the extent allowed by available fiscal resources.

B. BSU shall have the discretion to use a variable scale for the rate of pay for master's level and doctoral students.

C. Time Away from Duty: BSU shall provide paid "time away from duty" for graduate assistants as follows:

1. The minimum paid time away from duty for a full-time, 12 month graduate assistant is 20 hours per year. Such leave:

- A. Is in addition to institution holidays and other days that the institution is closed; and

- B. May be scheduled, with the permission of the graduate assistant's supervisor, at times that do not conflict with the duties of the assistantship.

2. For graduate assistants with appointments of less than 12 months or 20 hours per week, the institution shall establish policies for time away from duty that may include breaks and holidays in the academic year, any specified total hour commitments in the graduate assistant's appointment letter, and other campus-specific factors.

3. Requests for paid time away from duty must be approved by the graduate assistant's supervisor and department chair or unit head, with consideration given to the personal needs of the graduate assistant for such leave.

- D. Leave for Illness and Emergencies: BSU's graduate assistant policies shall provide collegial support for short-term illnesses and emergencies.

VI. Shared Governance Participation

- A. Communication with Administration: BSU shall provide periodic, formal opportunities for graduate assistants to participate in shared governance through its Graduate Council which serves as policymaking and advisory body to the Graduate School Dean in consideration of all program matters and degree regulations and procedures at the graduate level.
- B. Meetings with Administration: The graduate assistant representatives shall have the opportunity to meet with campus administration, including the university's graduate dean and vice presidents for academic affairs and administration and finance, at least twice annually.
- C. Role of Graduate Assistant Representatives: As part of their participation in shared governance, the graduate assistant representatives will be:
1. Consulted in the development and implementation of institution policies and procedures related to the administration of assistantships; and
 2. Invited to participate in university-wide graduate assistant orientations.

VII. Implementation: The provisions of this policy as recommended by the Graduate Council and approved by the University Council at Bowie State University shall be implemented in the fall semester (AY 2011-2012).

Office of the Graduate School
Center for Business and Graduate Studies, Suite 1312
Graduate Research/Teaching Assistantship Application Form

Name: _____ Date:-----

Address: _____

City/State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: (work) _____ Cell: _____

Student Identification Number:-----

E-mail:-----

EDUCATION

Degree Earned	Major	Date	Institution	GPA
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

I have been admitted to the graduate program I have not been admitted to the graduate program

EMPLOYMENT

Employer	City/State	Date	Nature of Duties
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

RESEARCH/TEACHING SKILLS: Please list specific research/teaching experience, computer languages, or other skills that would qualify you for research/teaching assistant position

REFERENCES:

Name/Position	Address	E-mail
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

I certify that the information on this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge. Signature: _____



USM REQUEST FOR TUITION REMISSION

Each USM Employee or Retiree seeking tuition remission for self, a spouse or child shall complete this application and accompanying certification to provide the information necessary to comply with both the USM-BOR Tuition Remission policies (VII-4.10; VII-4.20) and Internal Revenue Service regulations regarding the income tax law status of the tuition remission benefit requested by the employee. This page provides the information necessary to ascertain eligibility and process the request; additionally the employee/retiree is also required to complete and sign the Affidavit for tax status of the tuition remission recipient.

Upon obtaining departmental authorization, the employee/retiree must present this request to the employing Institution Human Resources Office for approval. A new request must be completed for each semester/session. If the student is registering at multiple Institutions, a separate request must be completed for each Institution.

1. Calendar Year: 20 _____

Semester for which tuition remission is requested (enrollment term) ☐ Fall ☐ Winter ☐ Spring ☐ Summer _____
(include summer session # if institution has more than one Summer Session) ☐ Other _____

2. Employee Name: (Last Name, First Name)

10. Student Name (Spouse/Child): (Last Name, First Name)

3. Employee SSN:

11. Student SSN (Spouse/Child):

4. Employee Date of Hire:

Month/Day/Year ____/____/____

Do you have prior USM Service/dates? Yes No

12. Student is Employee's:

☐ Opposite Sex Spouse ☐ Child

☐ Same Sex Spouse

5. Complete if employee is retired or deceased:

Month/Day/Year

☐ Retired

____/____/____

☐ Deceased

____/____/____

13. Student's Date of Birth: (Required for a child - if employee or spouse of employee, leave blank)

Month/Day/Year ____/____/____

6. Active Employee is Employed: ☐ Full time ☐ Part time

Enter % employed if less than full time _____%

Retired or deceased employee was employed:

☐ Full time ☐ Part time

Enter % employed if less than full time _____%

14. Student Enrollment Status:

☐ Undergraduate

☐ Freshman

☐ Sophomore

☐ Junior

☐ Senior

☐ Graduate

7. Employee Status:

☐ Nonexempt ☐ Contingent Catg. II ☐ Grad. Asst.

☐ Exempt ☐ Retiree ☐ Grad. Research Asst.

☐ Faculty ☐ Fellow ☐ Grad. Teaching Asst.

15. Academic Program: student - spouse/child of employee must complete this section if employee began USM employment on or after 1/1/1990)

8. Employee's Home Institution:

☐ BCCC ☐ BSU ☐ CSU ☐ FSU ☐ MIANR-AES

☐ MIANR-UME/CES ☐ MSU ☐ SU ☐ SMCM

☐ TU ☐ UB ☐ UMB ☐ UMB-MIEMSS

☐ UMBC ☐ UMBI ☐ UMCES ☐ UMCP ☐ UMES

☐ UMUC ☐ USMO

16. Institution where employee/student is registered:

☐ BCCC ☐ BSU ☐ CSU ☐ FSU ☐ MSU

☐ SU ☐ SMCM ☐ TU ☐ UB ☐ UMB

☐ UMBC ☐ UMCP ☐ UMES ☐ UMUC

☐ For Grad Assistants: Check box if your course is held at a different Institution from where you registered for the course (ie: an inter-institutional course).

☐ Check if student applied, but was not admitted to, the Home Inst.

9. Employee's Institution Work Address:

Employee's Work Phone #: _____

Employee's Institution E-mail Address:

17. Number of credit hours to be remitted: _____

List account number(s) from which employee is paid:

18. Institution transfer of funds: Yes _____ No _____
(To be completed by Institution HR Benefits Coordinator)

Please continue on to the TR Affidavit - complete and sign. This TR Request shall not be processed without the completed and signed TR Affidavit.



USM REQUEST FOR TUITION REMISSION – AFFIDAVIT (A) TAXABILITY FOR SELF, SPOUSE OR CHILD

EMPLOYEE NAME: _____ DEPENDENT CHILD/SPOUSE NAME: _____

This affidavit must be completed by all employees and retirees requesting TUITION REMISSION (TR) to determine whether the Institution must treat the requested TR as taxable income to the employee or retiree under Federal Internal Revenue rules. In most cases, TR is **not** taxable for undergraduate courses taken by an employee, retiree, spouse or child who qualifies as the employee's dependent under federal tax law standards. In addition, specific IRS rules govern the taxability of TR for graduate education, same sex spouses and their children, and children of divorced and separated parents. Those rules are summarized on a Tax Chart on the USM's Website at:

<http://www.usmd.edu/usm/adminfinance/tuitiontax.pdf>.

This affidavit is necessary to comply with federal tax law and to protect you and the USM Institution from potential tax liabilities and penalties. To complete the affidavit, **read the statements below and INITIAL any statement that applies to you.**

1. UNDERGRADUATE TUITION REMISSION FOR A SPOUSE - If you are seeking TR for your spouse, initial ALL applicable statements:

- _____ I certify that the person for whom I am requesting TR: (a) is my spouse and that we have entered a legally effective marriage, **and** (b) that we are not estranged, and that he/she does not maintain a separate domicile.
- _____ I am seeking TR for my same sex spouse whom I do not intend to claim as my dependent on my federal tax return for the 20__ calendar year, and I understand that the value of the TR is taxable income to me.
- _____ I am seeking TR for my same sex spouse whom I intend to claim as my dependent on my federal income tax return for the 20__ calendar year. If I do not claim my spouse as a dependent for this tax year, I will **notify** my HR Office as soon as possible and no later than 15 days of filing my tax return, and I understand that the value of my spouse's TR will be considered taxable income to me.

2. UNDERGRADUATE TUITION REMISSION FOR A CHILD -

- a. **If you are seeking undergraduate TR for a child whom you will claim as a dependent on your income tax return for the year 20__, initial the following:**
 - _____ I certify that the person for whom I am requesting TR is my biological child, stepchild or legally adopted child and that I intend to claim the child as my dependent on my federal income tax return for the **20__** calendar year. If I do not claim my child as a dependent on my income tax return for the **20__** calendar year as indicated above, I will **notify** my HR Office as soon as possible and no later than 15 days of filing my tax return, and I understand that the value of my child's TR will be considered taxable income to me.
- b. **If you are seeking undergraduate TR for a child whom you will NOT claim as a dependent on your income tax return for the year 20__, initial ONE applicable statement:**
 - _____ (i) I certify that the person for whom I am requesting TR (a) is my biological child, stepchild or legally adopted child, and (b) I do **not** intend to declare my child as a dependent on my federal income tax return for the **20__** calendar year, and (c) I understand that the value of my child's TR will be considered taxable income to me. OR
 - _____ (ii) Although I do not intend to declare my biological child, stepchild or legally adopted child as a dependent on my federal income tax return for the **20__** calendar year, (a) I am currently divorced or separated from the child's parent (b) the child's other parent will claim the child as a dependent on his/her federal income tax return for the **20__** calendar year, and (c) my marriage to the other parent was one that is recognized under federal law, (i.e., not a same sex spouse). If the child's other parent does not claim my child as a dependent for this tax year, I will **notify** my HR Office as soon as possible and no later than 15 days of the filing of the tax return of the child's other parent, and I understand that the value of my child's TR will be considered taxable income to me.

3. TUITION REMISSION FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION - If you are seeking TR for graduate education for yourself or a family member, initial ONE applicable statement:

- _____ I am applying for TR for my own education in courses at the graduate level, and the courses qualify as a “working condition fringe benefit,” which means: the courses are required by law or the Institution for me to keep my present job OR maintain or improve skills required for my current employment, AND the courses will not qualify for the minimum educational requirements for my current position, AND the courses will not qualify me for a new trade or business.
- _____ I am applying for TR for my own education in courses at the graduate level which do not qualify as a “working condition fringe benefit” as that term is used in the Internal Revenue Code, and I understand that I will be taxed for the value of the TR that may exceed **\$5,250**.
- _____ I am applying for TR for the education of my spouse or child in courses at the graduate level, and I understand that I will be taxed for the full value of the TR.

4. GENERAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS - All applicants must INITIAL EACH of the following:

I understand that the following requirements are applicable to my application for and receipt of Tuition Remission:

- _____ a. I have read and I understand the relevant USM-BOR TR policies (VII-4.10 and VII-4.20), which appear at <http://www.usmd.edu/regents/bylaws/SectionVII/> and the USM Tuition Remission–Deadlines And Restrictions Chart, which appears at: <http://www.usmd.edu/usm/adminfinance/tuitionchart.pdf>
- _____ b. To the extent that any TR is taxable income under IRS regulations, the value of the TR will be added to my salary for taxation over designated pay periods during the semester when TR is used, according to the schedule set by the State Central Payroll Bureau.
- _____ c. I understand that the Institution where student registers for courses has final approval authority for my TR request.

5. I HEREBY SOLEMNLY AFFIRM UNDER PENALTIES OF PERJURY THAT:

- a. The information given above is true and accurate;
- b. I understand that willful falsification of information in this Affidavit can result in referral for investigation and prosecution, full disciplinary action by the Institution, and civil action by the Institution to recover any costs that it may incur because of such a false statement; and
- c. For compliance and audit purposes, I agree to provide to the Institution a copy of any documentation (including relevant tax returns) that the HR Office deems necessary to ascertain my eligibility or the tax status of my spouse or child. I understand that failure to timely provide all requested information will result in the Institution treating the value of the TR as taxable income to me.
- d. I understand that I must notify the HR Office no later than 15 days of my first becoming aware of any change in the information that I have provided in this Affidavit and as a result, I understand that the value of the TR may be taxable income to me and applied retroactively to the appropriate taxable year. I further understand that failure to notify the Institution of any changes may be considered willful falsification, to be treated as described in item b. of this section.

Signature of Employee: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Department Head/Designee: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Human Resources Representative at Employing Institution: _____ Date: _____

Sample Award Letter for Graduate Assistants

Graduate Research/Teaching Assistantship Award Letter

Date

Dear _____:

I am happy to inform you that you have been accepted into the Graduate Assistantship program through the Graduate School for the ____ (Year) semester. The Graduate Assistantship award includes tuition remission for nine credit hours per semester and a stipend totaling \$3,300 per semester for masters and \$3,630 for doctoral students.

The following terms govern the Assistantship Program:

- Graduate Assistants must be enrolled for a minimum of 9 credit hours, but not more than 12 credits. They must maintain good academic standing. No more than 9 credits will be waived through the Assistantship Program. Students are required to pay all fees associated with the Graduate School and for all credits in excess of 9 credit hours per semester. Assistantships do not cover tuition of the Mini-Semester or Summer School.
- Assistants must work 20 hours a week under the direction of the assigned supervisor. A contractual timesheet must be submitted bi-weekly on-line.
- Graduate Assistants are expected to serve as representatives for their graduate programs in the Graduate Student Association (GSA).

If you would like to accept this position, please sign below and return this letter to our office immediately, so that we can submit the necessary paperwork to secure your contract.

If you have any questions about the Graduate Assistantship Program (GAP), please contact the Graduate School. On behalf of the faculty and staff of Bowie State University, congratulations and we look forward to a productive semester.

Cosmas U. Nwokefor, Ph.D. Dean

Graduate Assistant
