Resource Guide for Hiring Graduate Assistants

The following information outlines new procedures for hiring graduate assistants. Recent changes have been made by the Graduate School and Human Resources to consolidate procedures for your convenience. For all questions regarding graduate assistants, please contact the Graduate School's Program Coordinator.

Funding and Planning

Academic departments with graduate programs may receive institutional funds annually for graduate assistantships from the Graduate School. Allocations are determined by the Graduate Dean and funded departments will receive notification yearly from the Graduate School. Note that GA budgets operate concurrent with the fiscal year - non-grant GA budgets start over beginning July 1st. Work completed by a GA after June 30th is paid from the new fiscal year GA budget.

Offices and departments not funded by the Graduate School may hire GAs using various funding sources such as grants, gifts, contracts, community service agencies or department/division funds.

Departments who exhaust all GA funding allocated by the Graduate School may continue to hire GAs using other funding sources. It is important to accurately identify the funding source on each hiring document based on your GA budget status or projected hiring plan.

Note: Graduate Teaching Assistants working during the summer will be covered by the university under summer instructional costs as long as the appointment directly supports a summer course.

Once funding is in place, you may utilize the options below for filling GA positions.

1. Graduate programs often make internal arrangements to select GAs from their own student population. Slate is able to capture and report student interest in becoming a GA during the application process. Let us know if you would like to include this question on your program's application.

2. Departments may advertise open GA positions on the UCA Human Resources careers website by using the People Admin Applicant Tracking system. Click here for information about People Admin.

Hiring units should interview students prior to selecting a candidate. If you will be including a tuition scholarship in conjunction with the GA appointment, the selection of a student should be made by a committee. During the interview, full disclosure of the duties, responsibilities, work schedule and hours, and evaluation process should be made. Offers should not be made

at this time. During the selection process it is important to be mindful of GA eligibility requirements.

Eligibility Requirements

The Graduate School carefully reviews eligibility for each prospective GA and will not approve appointments for students who do not meet all of the following requirements:

1. Admission to the Graduate School with **full** qualifications. Conditionally admitted students are not eligible for graduate assistantships. You may pursue a GA appointment for a student who is <u>contingently</u> admitted to the Graduate School, but the hiring document will not be approved by the Graduate School until the student's admission status has changed to full qualifications. Contingent admission means that the applicant meets all of the admissions requirements except for one that is currently in progress. For example, the applicant is currently completing their undergraduate degree and will receive it prior to beginning the graduate program. Upon completion of the remaining admission requirement, the applicant's decision will change to Full Qual.
2. Enrolled as a full-time student (for full time GAs - 20 hours per week) – minimum 9 graduate credit hours in the fall and spring, or one class in the summer. Students who are in their last 12 hours or those who have only thesis/dissertation hours remaining may be enrolled in less than 9 credit hours. The Graduate Dean must approve any exception to this policy.
    > **Note:** For a GA to be considered a full-time student by the Graduate School, the GA must be enrolled in 9 graduate credit hours during the fall and spring semesters. Some graduate programs offer a maximum of 6 hours per semester; therefore, students in these programs are not eligible to hold full assistantships. If you are hiring a GA enrolled in a graduate program other than your own, it is imperative to consider whether the student will be able to meet this requirement based on their program of study before a decision to hire is made.
3. Good academic standing – minimum 3.0 cumulative and major GPA.
4. Selection by the department or office.

Hiring Documents

Once you have determined that the selected applicant is qualified, or will be qualified before the appointment begins, you may initiate the hiring document. **You no longer need to submit a separate GA recommendation form to the Graduate School.** The information requested on the recommendation form is now requested on the hiring document.

The hiring status of the student will determine which hiring document you should initiate – a hiring proposal (with posting first) through People Admin or a Personnel Action Form (PAF) through DocuSign.

Hiring Proposal (People Admin) – hiring proposals through People Admin (Live Site) should be used in the following scenarios:

1. The student you intend to hire is a first-time GA. <u>All hiring proposals must have a corresponding posting</u>. If you used a posting to advertise the position, this step is complete. If you did not advertise, you will need to submit a posting prior to the proposal so the student can officially apply for the position. Making a posting "private" gives access only to the specified applicant – the posting will not appear on the HR careers website.
2. You used a People Admin posting to advertise your position, regardless of the hiring status of the student. If you begin the hiring process in People Admin, you must complete the hiring process in People Admin.

Personnel Action Form (PAF – DocuSign) – Use a PAF through DocuSign when the student has been hired before, most likely for GA reappointments. If a student has previously worked as a student worker on campus, HR requires that you hire the student using the People Admin system rather than a PAF.

Note: PAFs are also used to revise current appointments. If a new GA was hired through People Admin, salary or appointment date revisions can now be made with a revised PAF. Tuition scholarship revisions may be made on a revised PAF <u>if there is also a hiring revision included</u> (dates/salary, etc.). For changes related only to the tuition scholarship, after the original hiring document has been finalized, use the Scholarship Modification Form on the Graduate School's Forms webpage instead of a revised PAF.

Conditions of Reappointment

Graduate assistants who are performing satisfactorily in their studies and duties are eligible for annual reappointments. A GA re-hired by the same department, although the student may be hired as a different type of GA or will be supervised by a different person, is considered a reappointment. Academic and professional performance and progress are measured by the following criteria:

1. 3.0 cumulative and major GPA
2. Report of the academic advisor
3. Length of time holding the assistantship
4. Length of time in the degree program

Typically, the maximum number of years that a graduate student may hold an assistantship is two years while pursuing a Master's degree and four years in a Doctoral program. For a student pursuing the Master's and Doctoral degree in the same major field, eligibility for funding is for not more than five years.

If the department has a rotational plan for assistantships, graduate assistants may not necessarily be reappointed. It is important that the student is notified of this at the time of the original appointment.

All reappointments require an evaluation form to accompany the hiring document. Many students are re-hired by the same department multiples times within an academic year. As long as the evaluation is current within one calendar year, the same document may be attached to multiple hiring documents.

You may use the sample Graduate Assistant Evaluation Form located on the Graduate School's Forms webpage (also attached) to evaluate a GA who is eligible for re-hire, or you may use your own document. If using your own evaluation document, ensure that it includes a comprehensive assessment of the duties and responsibilities assigned to the GA. The purpose of the evaluation is to inform the growth of the graduate student – to pause, reflect, and support development as a graduate assistant. Evaluation forms should always be reviewed with the GA.

Note: A recommendation letter in place of the evaluation form is acceptable as long as the content thoroughly describes the GA's performance related to specific duties and responsibilities assigned and is reviewed with the GA. An example of a good evaluation letter is attached.

Appointing Graduate Assistants

Appointments of graduate assistants will be made by the Dean of the Graduate School upon the recommendation of the department or program. Once the hiring document is received by the Graduate School for eligibility review and the Dean's approval, the student will receive an email from the Graduate School outlining your offer. Students are directed to reply to the offer and to contact your department for further instructions. The hiring document will not be approved by the Graduate School until the student accepts the offer, in addition to meeting all other eligibility requirements. You will be notified if the candidate does NOT meet eligibility requirements.

As directed by Human Resources, the Graduate School will not approve the hiring document until the student is fully qualified. This means that although an offer was made and accepted, the hiring document may sit in the Graduate School queue for some time. You may continue preparations while the hiring status is pending by collecting documents that will be needed to complete the hiring process after the hiring document has been approved.

Note about HR documents: The I-9 verification may be completed any time before the start date AND must be completed no later than 3 days following the start date. Keep this in mind as the GA's start date approaches. Consider this scenario:

You want the GA to begin work on August 10ᵗʰ, which means you would enter the official start date of August 1ˢᵗ on the hiring document. If you are planning on having the GA

provide verification documents when they arrive to campus on their first day (August 10th), the deadline to complete verification of the I-9 will have passed since the official start date was listed on the hiring document as August 1st.

Please make every effort to collect the I-9 documents from the GA in person prior to or on the first day of employment <u>as listed on the hiring document</u>. In the rare instance that this is not possible, contact HR to discuss alternate arrangements.

Tuition Scholarships

Graduate assistants may receive a tuition scholarship in addition to a salary. A limited number of departments are authorized to award tuition scholarships funded by the Graduate School. Departments and offices that do not receive Graduate School funds for scholarships may use departmental funds or grants for these awards. If you will be awarding a tuition scholarship, specify the total scholarship amount and also the maximum for each individual term on the hiring document.

Most graduate tuition scholarships are paid from the Graduate School budget, even when the department is funding the scholarship. Scholarships awarded that are not approved for funding by the Graduate School or a grant or that are not directly pulled from the department/office budget (Housing, Athletics, Music) should be reimbursed. Please complete a [budget transfer form](#) each semester for the total amount of scholarship funding your department or office awarded to graduate assistants. (Graduate School Index/Account Code: 434500/720130).

Departments authorized to award scholarships funded by the Graduate School will receive yearly notification from the Graduate School. Please contact the Program Coordinator if you have any questions about the tuition scholarship funding source for your department.

Types of Graduate Assistants

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA): GTAs have teaching and/or teaching-related responsibilities as their primary duty. A GTA may be assigned as the instructor-of-record. Alternatively, the GTA may be assigned to support the work of a course (or courses) under the direction of the course instructor(s). In this capacity, a GTA may work with students in small groups, lead group discussions, monitor examinations and grade papers, help to prepare lectures, conduct laboratory sessions, and/or be responsible for selected teaching assignments under the close supervision of the faculty. The GTA concurrently develops teaching skills and a deeper understanding of the discipline.

Graduate Research Assistants (GRA): GRAs are involved in research or creative endeavors under a faculty member's supervision. A GRA is engaged in original, professional-level research or scholarship, as an independent or collaborative researcher. A GRA may be appointed in a department through the Graduate School budget or by the principal investigator of a funded research project. In either case, the student is assigned a range of duties such as library

searches, field work, laboratory experiences, and/or preparation of research proposals and grants so as to gain professional skills in research/creative endeavors that complement the student's graduate education. Close supervision by a faculty mentor is essential to the student's development as a researcher and scholar.

Graduate Assistants – Residential (GA-R): GA-Rs are graduate assistants that work with UCA's Housing and Residence Life. GA-Rs directly oversee their own facility or program, enhancing their development within the College Student Personnel Administration Master's Program.

Administrative Graduate Assistants (GAA): GAAs perform other duties that are not primarily teaching or research. These *may* include clinical or administrative responsibilities which are inherently related to the student's education and career objectives.
Note: *This category is not listed as exempt in the Fair Labor Standards Act. See special hiring instructions below.*

GA Salaries

	Salary Period		Total Earned (minimum)
GA Type	**Beginning Date**	**Ending Date**	**2026-2027**
GTA	Aug. 1st or 16th	May 15th	$8,600
GRA	Aug. 1st or 16th	May 15th	$8,600
GA-R	Aug 1st or 16th	May 15th	$8,600
GAA	Aug. 1st or 16th	December 15th	$4,300
	Jan. 1st or 16th	May 15th	$4,300

- The minimum stipend is based on a full assistantship (20 hours per week) and should be prorated for a half assistantship. Any other percentage of assistantship being considered for a graduate student should be discussed with and approved by the Graduate Dean.
- Graduate assistants employed between May 15th and August 1st/16th will need to be paid an additional stipend amount based on the number of hours worked using the $11 per hour minimum wage rate.
- **Important note about GAAs**: GAAs are not listed as exempt in the Fair Labor Standards Act. In order to meet the minimum wage requirement for GAAs, a full year appointment should be split into two separate appointments: Aug 1st or 16th to December 15th and January 1st or 16th to May 15th. If you are using a PAF to hire the GA, the appointment should be split by using two "from" and "to" lines on the PAF to indicate two separate appointments for the year. If you are using a hiring proposal to hire the GA, follow these steps:

1. On the <u>posting</u>, enter the full year appointment dates so the applicant understands the expectations of the work schedule.
2. On the <u>proposal</u>, also enter the full year appointment dates. When I receive the proposal, I will change the dates and salary to reflect the first part of the appointment through December 15th. Hiring proposals can only accommodate one apppointment period, while PAFs can support two. The offer letter to the student will reflect the full year appointment.
3. Once the proposal has been finalized, you will need to submit a follow-up PAF for the rest of the appointment. I will make notes at the bottom of the EPAF with the exact information to be entered on the PAF. Note that you will not need to attach an evaluation to the follow-up PAF since it will be considered part of the original appointment.

Please contact the Graduate School's Program Coordinator if you have any questions about the hiring process for GAAs.

- **Important note about summer GTAs:** Salaries for GTAs working during the summer to support a summer course will be covered by summer instructional costs instead of graduate school or departmental funds. The account code for summer GTAs is 640115. Please use this code on the hiring document when appropriate. <u>When using the summer GA teaching code, you must note the course prefix, number, and instructor of the summer course to be supported in the explanation section of the hiring document.</u>

  If you plan to hire a GTA across multiples semesters that include summer dates using one PAF and know that during the summer the GA will be supporting a summer course, separate the appointment by using different lines on the PAF. Use the GA summer teaching code (640115) for the summer dates and the regular GA teaching code (640110) for all other dates. If using a hiring proposal to hire a GTA during the summer in combination with other semesters, please contact the Graduate School's Program Coordinator for guidance.

Deadlines for submitting GA Hiring Documents

Fall (for returning GAs)	April 15th
Fall (first-time GAs)	July 1st
Spring	November 1st
Summer	April 15th

It is important to observe the deadlines above. Submission of the hiring document initiates the process to determine GA eligibility, which can take some time. GAs should not begin work before the finalized hiring document is received by the department. Hiring documents received after the deadline will be processed as quickly as possible; however, documents submitted within two weeks of the intended start date could potentially cause a delay in the GA receiving the first paycheck.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. Can a GA work more than 20 hours per week?
A1. In general, the maximum number of hours a GA can work per week is 20 hours. This is considered a normal assignment for a GA on a full assistantship. However, a GA may be approved for additional hours of work at the discretion and approval of the Graduate Dean. Overload requests can be made by emailing the Graduate Dean.

Q2. If a department receives GA funding from the Graduate School can those funds be used for tuition scholarships, if desired?
A2. It depends on whether the department is authorized to award scholarships funded by the Graduate School. Departments with GA funding from the Graduate School will receive yearly notification specifying the type and amount of funding they will receive – salary (stipend) only or salary and scholarship. If you only have funds for salaries, you may not use any portion of that for scholarships, even if your total spending stays within the allotted budget. In this case, you may still award a scholarship, but departmental funds must be used to reimburse the Graduate School if the scholarship is processed through our tuition budget account.

Q3. If a student receives a tuition scholarship, can the salary amount be reduced by the amount of the scholarship?
A3. No, the minimum salary requirement must be met independent of any tuition scholarship funds the GA may be awarded. Tuition scholarship funds cannot be used to meet any portion of the minimum stipend amount.

Q4. Is there a maximum salary that can be paid to a GA?
A4. The maximum salary a GA may receive in one fiscal year is $34,057.

Q5. Can a GA also be a student worker?
A5. No, a GA is not allowed to work as a student worker in addition to their GA duties. In general, this is due to the fact that GAs are paid as salaried employees and student workers are paid hourly. An individual cannot be both a salaried employee and an hourly employee in UCA's system.

Q6. Is it possible for a GA to work for two departments?
A6. A GA may work for two departments as long as both appointments are graduate assistantships and the total hours worked for both departments does not exceed 20 hours per week.

Q7. Does a GTA have to be the instructor of record?
A7. No. A GTA *may* be assigned as the instructor-of-record. Alternatively, the GTA may be assigned to support the work of a course (or courses) under the direction of the course instructor(s).

Q8. If we hire a teaching GA, can we ask them to answer the phones or do similar tasks?

A8. Yes. The classification of a GA reflects the primary duty of the GA. To be considered the primary duty, the GA should be engaged in responsibilities related to this primary duty for at least 60% of their time. As long as this requirement is met, a GA may perform duties outside of their classification if needed.

Helpful Resources

Graduate School - Graduate Assistantships - Faculty Info
Graduate Bulletin - Assistantships
Graduate Assistant Policies and Procedures Manual
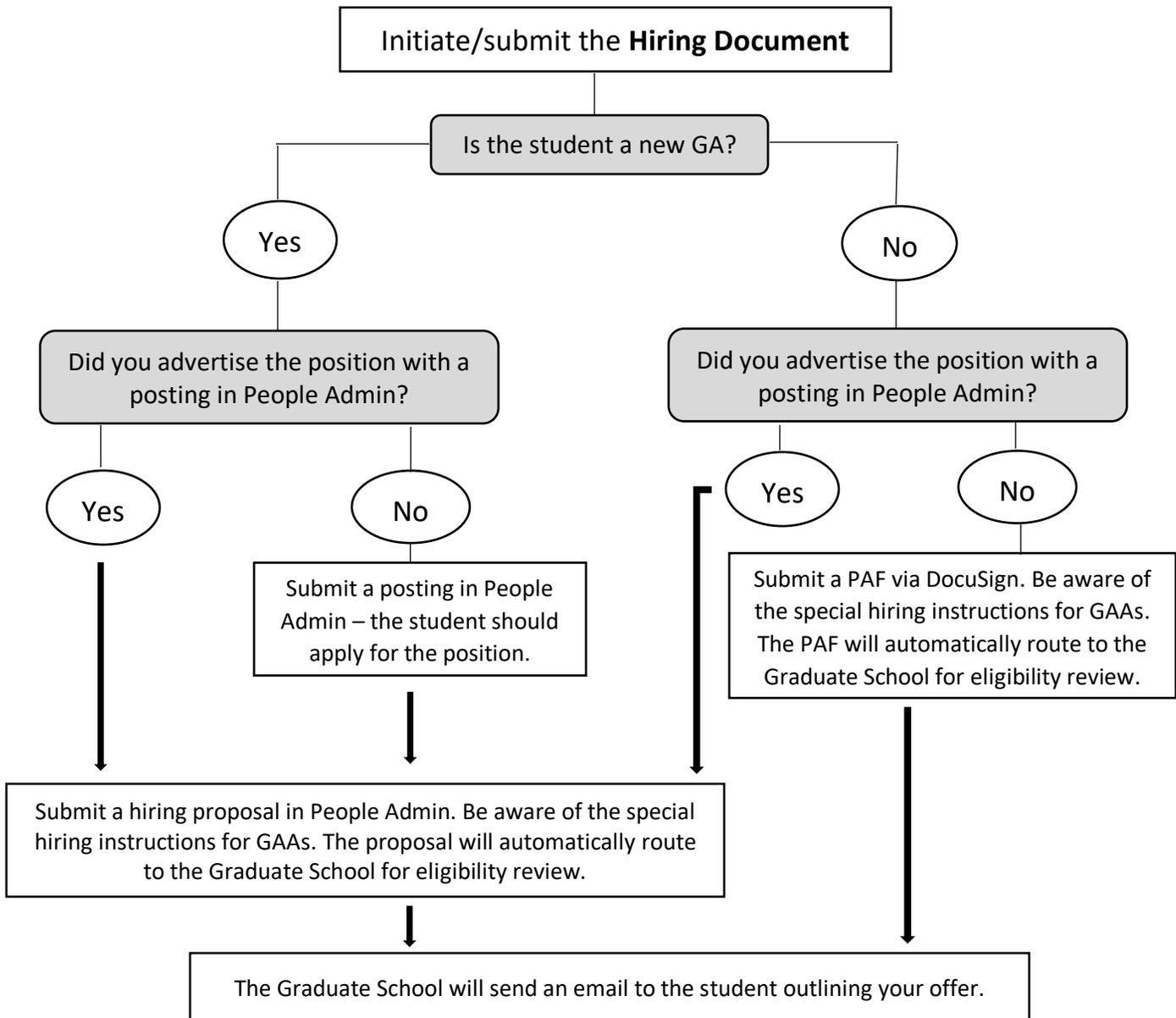
Graduate School Program Coordinator:
Leslie George
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Quick Guide for Hiring Graduate Assistants

Once you have selected a candidate:

Initiate/submit the Hiring Document

Is the student a new GA?

Yes / **No**

Did you advertise the position with a posting in People Admin?

Yes / No

Submit a posting in People Admin – the student should apply for the position.

Did you advertise the position with a posting in People Admin?

Yes / No

Submit a PAF via DocuSign. Be aware of the special hiring instructions for GAAs. The PAF will automatically route to the Graduate School for eligibility review.

Submit a hiring proposal in People Admin. Be aware of the special hiring instructions for GAAs. The proposal will automatically route to the Graduate School for eligibility review.

The Graduate School will send an email to the student outlining your offer.

Helpful Links:

People Admin Info

PAF Info

The Graduate School will approve the hiring proposal or PAF once all of the following requirements are met:

- Student has accepted the offer
- Admitted with full qualifications
- Fully enrolled
- Good academic standing

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Please monitor the status of the PAF/Proposal. GAs should not begin work until the hiring process is finalized.

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Graduate Assistant Evaluation Form

GA's Name: _____ **Supervisors Name:** _____

Department: _____ **Semester: Fall/Spring 20_____ Review #:_____**

Instructions: Use this form to evaluate the Graduate Assistant's performance. Once completed, schedule a meeting with the GA to discuss the evaluation. This evaluation is meant to be used as part of a supportive process that helps the GAs identify their strengths and weaknesses and plan for their improvement. Submit the completed and signed copy to the student's departmental chair.

Tasks, Duties, Responsibilities	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	N/A
General duties				
Works well with others				
Cooperative and supportive of coworkers				
Understands job duties				
Completes duties on time				
Reports possible delays in advance of deadline				
Prioritizes duties				
Works independently				
Manages work duties and school work efficiently				
Manages personal life and work load efficiently				

Attends to detail in work				
Asks questions when necessary				
Asks for assistance when needed				
Works efficiently to accomplish tasks				
Complies with all University and Department policies and procedures				

Teaching (if applicable)

Designs syllabi, coursework, and supplies according to department course guidelines				
Prepares for classes ahead of time				
Follows syllabus for all coursework and assessment throughout the term				
Familiar with and utilizes structural technology effectively in the classroom				
Grades work and posts grades by the next class period				
Performs lab duties and test monitoring appropriately				
Is approachable and willingly assists students				
Understands and adheres to FERPA policies when interacting with students				
Interacts with students appropriately				
Completes all required University professional developmental courses				

Research (if applicable)

Performs literature reviews efficiently				

Correctly performs data collection and field work				
Completes data entry in a timely fashion				
Is conscientious in the research work				
Prepares research proposals well				
Writes grant proposals correctly				
Collaborates with supervisors on projects effectively				

Areas of Strength

Areas for Growth

Evaluation completed and discussed with student on _____

_____   _____
GA's Signature   Supervisor's Signature