

MPA GRADUATE ASSISTANT MANUAL

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Administrative Overview

Graduate Assistantships are provided by the university as part of the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program to provide 1) administrative support for the MPA Director, 2) assist MPA faculty in the conduct of their research, and 3) further the student's learning and development as a scholar. Graduate Assistants may be asked to assist in the conduct of undergraduate courses; however, such responsibilities are limited.

Assistantship work should not take precedence over the successful completion of the graduate degree program by the student in a timely manner. Specifically, Graduate Assistants are provided part-time employment on a wage-per-hour basis and reduced tuition, and practical experience in fields related to his/her advanced study. However, the assistantship together with class attendance and study is a full-time undertaking, and the assistant must make sure that he/she can fulfill all responsibilities to the program without interference from outside employment.

APPLYING FOR ASSISTANTSHIP

Application Criteria

Graduate Assistants (GA) are selected by the MPA Assistantship Committee. For consideration, the individual applying for an assistantship must submit a completed MPA Graduate Assistantship Application [see Appendix 1] to the MPA Director. The application form may be found in the ASU Department of Political Science or is available electronically at the MPA website [www.aug.edu/mpa]. Incomplete applications will not be considered for an assistantship. An applicant must have unqualified admission to the MPA Program under the "Regular" (not Provisional or Probationary) classification. Applications for re-appointment must be submitted annually; however, an application for re-appointment does not require the submission of supporting documents.

In addition to meeting the requirements of acceptance in the MPA Program, other qualifications of the Assistant include,

- excellent interpersonal, written and verbal communication skills;
- computer proficiency and familiarity with basic word processing and office software programs;
- strong organizational and time-management skills;
- other qualifications as necessary to perform assigned duties.

Current GAs must compete with other applicants for a position each year; however, experience is a valuable asset. Other attractive qualities of the ideal applicant include:

- exceptional performance in the applicant's undergraduate program;
- a demonstrated interest in pursuing public service, teaching, and/or research;
- previous professional or voluntary experience in national, state, or local government; in a regional planning agency; or in a non-profit organization.

Application Process

Applicants interested in pursuing the MPA Graduate Assistantship should follow the procedures below:

1. Secure a MPA Graduate Assistantship Application in one of the following methods:

CONTACT

MPA Degree Program
 Augusta State University
 Department of Political Science
 2500 Walton Way
 Augusta, Georgia 30904-2200
Email: sreinke@aug.edu
Phone: (706) 737-1710
Fax: (706) 667-4116

DOWNLOAD

The application is available in PDF format at the following link:
www.aug.edu/mpa

2. Complete the application and return it to the MPA Director at the address indicated on the MPA Graduate Assistantship Application [see Appendix 1].
3. The deadline for application is June 30th for the Fall Semester.
4. Submit applications annually. Renewal of a previous year's assistantship is not automatic.

ASSIGNMENT OF ASSISTANTS

Once GAs are selected by the MPA Assistantship Committee, the MPA Director assigns students to a faculty supervisor. This assignment is based on the abilities of the applicant and the known needs of faculty members.

RETAINING ASSISTANTSHIP

GAs will serve in their positions for one full academic year (or 2 semesters) and no more than two consecutive academic years (4 semesters). GAs may serve over the summer term, if funds are available. Such service is at the

discretion of the MPA Director. The summer term does not count towards the 4 semester limit.

To retain an assistantship, the GA must maintain academic eligibility and may not be on academic probation. GAs must maintain a 3.0 GPA, which is reviewed every semester. Students may hold only one assistantship per academic year and must not hold other employment on campus.

Other information related to retention of assistantships may be found in the sections on “Evaluation” and “Resignation or Dismissal”.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The primary purpose of GAs is to assist faculty in the conduct of research. Typical specific activities of the GA may include:

1. providing assistance to faculty conducting research by collecting and arranging data; developing source materials; summarizing reports; searching the literature and compiling bibliographies; preparing and caring for research materials; assisting in the conduct of interviews or focus groups, etc.;
2. generally assisting faculty in evaluating undergraduate student work and examinations; preparing course materials and aids; performing other functions requiring knowledge and background beyond that generally possessed by undergraduate assistants;
3. monitoring/managing corrections, additions, and deletions on a seasonal basis of the MPA program web page; answering questions and obtaining preliminary information from prospective students via phone and email; assisting with the office’s clerical needs through copying, collating, editing, proofreading, etc. and through the use of appropriate computer programs; developing and delivering recruitment materials; participating in recruitment activities, assisting in the conduct of applied research to support management and growth of the MPA program; other duties as assigned by the MPA Director.

Since the GA is first and foremost a student, his/her workload should entail no more than 10 hours per week. Work may be done in the offices of the MPA program or independently as needed to perform tasks. It is the responsibility of the GA to work with supervising faculty in scheduling this workload, and ensuring it does not conflict with the GA’s academic progress.

Assistants’ Role in Coursework

It is generally not appropriate for GAs to perform work related to the delivery of MPA coursework. It is appropriate, however, for the GA to aid

the assigned supervisor in tasks related to undergraduate instruction, unless the GA is enrolled in a course that has been cross-referenced to include both graduate and undergraduate students. Appropriate duties involving undergraduate courses include:

- assisting the primary instructor in training undergraduate students in the use of equipment or other resources;
- proctoring examinations;
- assisting faculty with research and preparation of course materials;
- participating in the evaluation of undergraduate students' work;
- and other related work.

GAs MAY NOT select or structure course content, select student assignments, plan examinations, determine the term grade for students, or provide the entire instruction to a group of students enrolled in a course.

COMPENSATION AND TUITION WAIVER

GAs are paid at a rate set by the university, for a maximum of 10 hours per week. In addition, tuition is waived with the exception of the processing fee. GAs are still liable for fees and books.

EVALUATION

Faculty who are assigned a GA are responsible for providing supervision and evaluating him or her at the conclusion of each semester of work. Evaluation is a crucial part of the Assistantship Program. Supervision and performance reviews should be an ongoing process of communication between the GA and the assigned supervisor.

At least one formal evaluation of all GAs will occur each semester. Upon completion of a written evaluation, the supervisor will discuss the results with the GA, and then forward the evaluation form to the MPA Director. The MPA Director will maintain a file record on all current GAs. In addition, informal evaluations and observations should be conducted throughout semester. These evaluations supply additional feedback to the GA and make the evaluation a supportive process that helps the GA to identify strengths and weaknesses and to plan for improvement. [See Appendix 3—MPA Assistant Evaluation.]

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The GA will be notified in writing of all decisions that affect his or her status as an assistant. This includes advance notification of evaluation procedures and a summary of the evaluation by the MPA Director (or other assigned supervisor).

It is important to resolve, as early as possible, any disagreement that may arise between GAs and the or assigned supervisor. Should a problem arise in the work assignment, the GA has the right to initiate a grievance or to appeal a decision through the specified channels.

After first attempting to solve the issue with the assigned supervisor, the GA shall inform the MPA Director of the problem and, if necessary, appeal to the Chair of the Department of Political Science. If the matter cannot be resolved in an informal manner, the following formal grievance procedure is to be followed:

- If the grievance is not resolved in discussion with the assigned supervisor, formal written complaint is filed with the Chair of the Department of Political Science within five (5) working days after the conference described above. The Chair must give a written decision on the grievance within five (5) working days after receipt of the complaint.
- If the grievance is not resolved by this decision, a written appeal may be filed with the Dean of Arts and Sciences not later than ten (10) working days of receipt of the Chair's decision on the grievance.

If a faculty supervisor is not satisfied with a GA's performance, the supervisor should contact the MPA Director as soon as possible to discuss appropriate actions to either correct the performance problem or dismiss the GA. Dismissal procedures are discussed in the next section.

RESIGNATION OR DISMISSAL

Voluntary Termination

GAs may resign from their positions during the course of a semester. Any hours worked prior to resignation must be recorded on the student payroll and paid to the student.

GAs who resign will have their tuition waiver prorated based on the number of hours actually worked (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Tuition Repayment Schedule

Hours worked by GA	Tuition Repaid by GA
80-90 percent	10 percent
70-79 percent	20 percent
60-69 percent	30 percent
50-59 percent	40 percent
less than 50 percent	50 percent

Involuntary Termination

GAs who withdraw from classes, or no longer meet the academic load or performance requirements will be dismissed from their assistantships. A GA may be terminated at the discretion of the MPA Director prior to the end of the appointment period for any of the following reasons:

- The student is no longer enrolled in the MPA Program.
- The student is registered for fewer than nine graduate semester credit hours during a regular semester.
- The student is placed on academic or disciplinary probation.
- The student's performance is determined to be unsatisfactory by the MPA Director (or other assigned supervisor).

The MPA Director must notify the GA in writing of the decision and the reasons for termination. Any GA who is terminated for any reason will be responsible for repaying tuition on a prorated basis for that semester. Compensation and tuition waiver policies are the same as those for a resignation [see Figure 1].

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