

MPA GRADUATE ASSISTANT MANUAL



Current as of December 2008

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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

For consideration, the individual applying for an assistantship must submit a completed MPA Graduate Assistantship Application to the MPA Director. The application form is available electronically at the MPA website [www.aug.edu/mpa] or can be picked up from the MPA Program office.

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;*
- *and other qualifications 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;*
- *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

DOWNLOAD

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

MPA Director may be reached at:

E-mail: sreinke@aug.edu

Phone: (706) 667-4420

Fax: (706) 667-4083

MPA Degree Program Specialist may be reached at:

E-mail: mcorkrin@aug.edu

Phone: (706) 729-2256

2. Complete the application and return it to the MPA Director at the address indicated on the MPA Graduate Assistantship Application, or to the MPA Degree Program Specialist, Allgood Hall, E309.
3. Submit applications annually. Renewal of a previous year's assistantship is not automatic.

ASSIGNMENT OF ASSISTANTS

Once GAs are selected, 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 serve in their positions for one full academic year (or two semesters) and no more than two consecutive academic years (four 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 four semester limit.

To retain an assistantship, the GA must maintain academic eligibility and not be on academic probation. GAs must maintain a 3.0 GPA, which is reviewed every semester.

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 undergraduates;
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 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; or 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 various student service fees, athletic fees and technical fees related to computer usage.

In addition to books and any coursework fees, all Gas are required to have health insurance coverage, either under a family policy, or one administered by Pearce and Pearce, Inc. Each GA is responsible for providing proof of health insurance coverage through applying for a waiver at www.studentinsurance.com. If not covered by parents or spouse through a recognized insurance plan, the GA must pay the cost of a policy for each semester. This cost is added to the ASU bill of tuition and fees and must be paid each semester (spring and summer count as one semester), unless a wavier is on file.

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 the semester. These evaluations supply additional feedback to the GA and make the evaluation a supportive process that helps the GA identify strengths and weaknesses and improve performance.

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/or the 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 be responsible for **repaying the total amount of tuition waiver.**

Involuntary Termination

GAs who withdraw from classes, or no longer meet the academic load or performance requirements will be dismissed from their assistantships, and will be responsible for repaying the full amount of the tuition waiver. The MPA Director must notify the GA in writing of the decision and the reasons for termination.

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:

- Student is no longer enrolled in the MPA Program.
- Student is registered for fewer than nine semester hours in the fall or spring terms or less than six semester hours in the summer term. There is one exception: GAs taking the capstone course (PADM 7050) must be enrolled in a minimum of seven to eight semester hours, as approved by the MPA Director.
- Student is placed on academic or disciplinary probation.
- Student's performance is determined to be unsatisfactory by the MPA Director (or other assigned supervisor).