Welcome to your appointment as a graduate assistant at the University of West Florida!

Graduate assistantships are invaluable in that they serve the needs of the University while orienting students to academic life and assisting them in career development. As a graduate assistant, you may be the first contact new students have with the University. This situation poses a great opportunity for you to shape the culture of student life at UWF. The University expects graduate assistants to maintain the highest level of academic excellence in the classroom and in scholarship. This assistantship is also intended to facilitate timely completion of your degree program and to effectively orient you to your professional community.

This handbook is intended to help you understand the policies and procedures that structure your appointment as a graduate assistant at UWF. While this handbook addresses a number of frequently occurring questions concerning graduate assistantships at UWF, you are encouraged to direct further inquiries about your position to your supervising department, the Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (CUTLA) at (850) 473-7435, or the Graduate School at (850) 473-7716.

This assistantship is an exciting opportunity for personal growth and career development. We offer many resources to assist you with this endeavor, so do not hesitate to reach out.

Good luck!
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1. INTRODUCTION

Graduate students play a vital role in scholarship and instruction at the University of West Florida. This handbook identifies and clarifies the policies and procedures governing a graduate student’s position as a graduate assistant. The goal is to answer a number of frequently asked questions about assistantships, including the types of assistantships available at UWF, the general requirements governing assistantships, the policies structuring payment and tuition waivers associated with assistantships, and the student obligations for maintaining a graduate assistantship.

Upon a student’s official appointment to a graduate assistantship, the department should provide the student with information about the position. This information might be provided through a conversation with the faculty or administrative supervisor or through documents specific to the graduate student’s program. The graduate student should ask the supervising department for all of the materials available concerning the position.

A graduate assistantship is officially offered to a student in the form of a Graduate Assistantship Award Letter, which should specify the terms associated with the assistantship. See a Sample graduate assistantship award letter. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the department to formally accept the graduate assistantship offer. The Sample Graduate Assistantship Award Letter provides a general overview of the questions that should be answered by a faculty or administrative supervisor at the beginning of the appointment. The letter should specify the parameters of the assistantship, including classification title and code, FTE allocation, period of appointment, job description, and supervising faculty. The student must sign the award letter to formally accept the offer and terms of a graduate assistantship.

There are different types of assistantships. The student should make sure to understand the responsibilities accompanying her/his position. The present document should help clarify those responsibilities.

2. ASSISTANTSHIPS

In general, graduate assistants at UWF are admitted master’s-level, specialist-level, or doctoral-level students who are employed with the University on a part-time basis for the primary purpose of assisting in classroom or laboratory instruction or in the conduct of research.

Graduate assistants serve a vital function for the University by supporting departments, programs, faculty, and personnel across the campus community. They also advance the professional development of graduate students. For this reason, the duties performed by a graduate student serving in an assistantship capacity must directly contribute to her/his program of study. It is the responsibility of the academic unit to ensure duties complement the student’s degree program.

All graduate assistants, regardless of classification, must meet the following requirements.

- The student must meet the eligibility requirements set forth by the Graduate School (see section 3).
- The student must meet any special qualifications added to the eligibility requirements as determined by and communicated at the department, college, or office level.
Unless otherwise stated, all graduate assistants, regardless of classification, must meet the following guidelines.

- The student is responsible for assisting faculty members or UWF staff with appropriate duties.
- Specific duties and roles are to be determined by the department or office, and it is the responsibility of that department or office to make the student aware of these duties.
- The student should be employed for a minimum of 10 hours per week (0.25 FTE), but no more than 20 hours per week (0.5 FTE), except for Resident Hall Directors who can be employed for 30 hours per week. Though a student may have more than one assistantship appointment, the cumulative hours of employment should not exceed 20 hours per week.
- The student is subject to select office or department employee guidelines in addition to assistantship guidelines.
- The minimum pay is $10.25 per hour.

2.1. Types of Assistantships

There are five distinct types of graduate assistantship appointments. Four of these are variations of the Graduate Assistant appointment and one Resident Hall Director appointment. One of the key distinctions among these appointment types is whether the position is paid on an hourly basis or a salaried basis.

As you will find in the following subsections, each of these appointments has a unique employment code with UWF Human Resources. This code allows academic departments and other hiring units of graduate assistants to accurately complete a Student Personnel Action Form specifying the type of appointment held and the work completed by the graduate student.

2.1.1. Graduate Assistant (9186)

A Graduate Assistant (GA) appointed under the 9186 designation is an admitted master’s-level, specialist-level, or doctoral-level student providing support for academic departments, programs, faculty, or personnel. Compensation for a student employed under this designation is hourly, so an electronic timesheet (in MyUWF) reporting the hours of work completed must be submitted on a bi-weekly basis. This timesheet is reviewed and approved by the supervisor, who maintains regular supervision of the GA.

A GA may be employed in a college or department office that performs professional or service duties outside of teaching or research. In the case that a GA is assigned to a nonacademic university office, the student’s duties are not required to correspond directly to her/his graduate program.

Department heads and supervising faculty are responsible for assuring that a Graduate Assistant receives ample opportunities to make continuing progress toward her/his degree completion.

2.1.2. Graduate Research Assistant (9182)

A Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) is an admitted master’s-level, specialist-level, or doctoral-level student assigned to research duties. A Graduate Assistant (9186) may assist with research related clerical activities but it is expected that a Graduate Research Assistant (9182) has a higher level of knowledge and skill than that required of a GA. The IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data
System) defines Graduate Research Assistant as one whose "specific assignments are for the purpose of conducting research, regardless of academic discipline, by performing duties such as preparing and conducting scientific research or engaging in original scholarship/scholarly inquiry under the supervision and mentorship of a faculty member or senior researcher."

Compensation for a student employed under this designation is **hourly**, so an electronic timesheet (in MyUWF) reporting the hours of work completed must be submitted on a bi-weekly basis. This timesheet is reviewed and approved by the supervisor, who maintains regular supervision of the GRA. Research assistantships may be financed through funds from gifts, grants, contracts, state appropriations designated for research, or through the University’s internally sponsored programs.

A student appointed as a GRA works under direct supervision. Department heads and supervising faculty are responsible for assuring that GRAs receive ample opportunities to make continuing progress toward degree completion.

In addition to the general guidelines for assistantships (see section 2), a student employed under the GRA designation is subject to the following unique guidelines.

- The student must perform research duties under the supervision of an appropriate faculty member or administrator of UWF. Such research duties may include, but are not limited to,
  - assisting in lab research,
  - reviewing and summarizing scholarship,
  - assisting in community-based research activities,
  - developing research and evaluation surveys,
  - collecting data,
  - analyzing data using software analyses programs,
  - presenting presentations, and/or
  - writing draft research reports
- The student is responsible for assisting faculty members with research related to the student’s degree program.

GRAs are required to observe ethical practices when conducting sponsored research (research funded by a grant). To comply with this policy, students must complete and provide certification for pertinent responsible conduct in research training. Certification is provided through completion of training modules of the Online Ethics Course developed with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Research Integrity (ORI) support in conjunction with the University of Montana.

- All required employees (faculty and students engaged in sponsored research) must complete Sections 1-4: Ethical Issues in Research; Interpersonal Responsibility; Institutional Responsibility; and Professional Responsibility. Sections 5 and 6, Animals in Research and Human Participation in Research, are required as applicable and determined by the Principal Investigator (the student’s supervisor).
- Certification must be completed within the first 30 days of appointment as a Graduate Research Assistant.
- Training completion is monitored by the Principal Investigator (the student’s supervisor) and UWF Research and Sponsored Programs.
• The above-stated Section 6 module does not meet the training requirements for the UWF Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Research Participants (IRB). See the IRB website for requirements when doing research using human participants.

• Principal Investigators (student supervisors) should reference the UWF Responsible Conduct in Research Plan in their statements of Broader Impact, Intellectual Merit, and Program Plan as evidence of compliance with this requirement.

For more information on the ethical responsibilities related to university research, see the UWF Responsible Conduct in Research (RCR) Plan.

### 2.1.3. Graduate Teaching Assistant (9184)

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) are admitted masters-level, specialist-level, or doctoral-level students assigned to teaching or teaching-related duties. They may be assigned as classroom assistants, lab assistants, or other roles directly related to classroom instruction. According to the IPEDS, Graduate Teaching Assistants assist faculty or other instructional staff in postsecondary institutions by performing teaching or teaching-related duties, such as developing teaching materials, giving examinations, and grading examinations or papers. Most GTAs are employed and paid by academic departments. A GTA appointed under the 9184 designation assists an Instructor of Record and must complete a time sheet on a bi-weekly basis reporting the hours and work completed. The time sheet is reviewed and approved by the supervisor.

GTAs must be supervised by at least one faculty member experienced in the discipline. Department heads and supervising faculty are responsible for assuring that GTAs receive ample opportunities to make continuing progress toward degree completion.

### 2.1.4. Graduate Teaching Assistant - Instructor of Record (9185)

A Graduate Teaching Assistant - Instructors of Record (GTA-IOR) is an admitted master's-level, specialist-level, or doctoral-level student who is assigned to teach a course. A GTA-IOR appointed under the 9185 designation, at a minimum, must adhere to the UWF Academic Credential Policy Statement below and adhere to UWF Policy AC39.02 (https://uwf.edu/offices/board-of-trustees/policies).

**UWF Academic Credential Policy Statement:**

Graduate teaching assistants serving as instructors of record: master's degree in the teaching discipline or 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline, direct supervision by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, regular in-service training, and planned and periodic evaluations. In the case of lecture courses and laboratory sections, GTAs who do not hold a master's degree will be assigned as instructors of record to lower-level, and in most cases, to freshman-level courses. Graduate Teaching Assistants may not be assigned to teach graduate courses unless they hold the terminal or a highly-related degree in the teaching field.

The primary difference between the GTA-IOR (9185) classification and the GTA (9184) classification is that the Graduate Teaching Assistant under the 9184 designation assists the Instructor of Record and is paid hourly whereas the Graduate Teaching Assistant - Instructor of Record under the 9185 designation is paid on a salaried basis and is the Instructor of Record.
Prior to teaching undergraduate courses, each prospective GTA-IOR (9185) will be required to submit to the department a curriculum vita, two letters of recommendation from department professors, and a Statement of Teaching (which includes, but is not limited to, the student’s short-term goals as a GTA-IOR as well as the relevance of the experience to the student’s long-term goals). In addition, GTA-IORs must submit syllabi prior to the first day of instruction (see the documents required of all instructors for university accreditation). Departments may require additional materials, so GTA-IORs should contact the supervising chair or program coordinator.

Department heads and supervising faculty are responsible for assuring that GTA-IORs receive ample opportunities to make continuing progress toward degree completion.

In addition to the minimum requirements expected of all graduate assistants regardless of classification, a GTA who serves as an Instructor of Record must:

- Submit to the department an official transcript, a curriculum vita, two letters of recommendation from department professors, and a Statement of Teaching (which includes, but is not limited to, the student’s short-term goals as a Graduate Teaching Assistant as well as the relevance of the experience to the student’s long-term goals).
- Upload a syllabus prior to the first day of instruction (see the documents required of all instructors for university accreditation). Departments might require additional materials.
- A student who wishes to serve as a GTA-IOR, but whose first language is not English, will be required to demonstrate English proficiency. Beyond meeting the minimum requirements for admission to graduate studies at UWF as well as the minimum requirements for individual departments offering graduate programs, a GTA serving as an Instructor of Record must obtain and report a minimum TOEFL iBT Listening/Comprehension score of 23 to the Graduate School. Written English proficiency training is available through the UWF Writing Lab. Spoken English proficiency training is available through International Affairs (http://uwf.edu/international). See the admissions criteria provided on the Graduate School’s Website (http://uwf.edu/graduate/apply/international-students) for a list of the English proficiency tests UWF recognizes as well as the scores required for demonstration of competency and proficiency.
- Perform all the duties regularly performed by an Instructor of Record. It is the responsibility of the department or office to make the student aware of these duties.
- Sign the appointment form in the award letter prior to beginning the assistantship. This form will indicate the student’s acknowledgement of the department’s/office’s expectations.

Department heads and supervising faculty are responsible for assuring that a Graduate Teaching Assistant receives ample opportunities to make continuing progress toward her/his degree completion.

**2.1.5. Resident Hall Director (9189)**

A Resident Hall Director (HD) is an admitted master’s-level student whose primary responsibility is toward the operation of a University resident hall or cluster of resident halls. Compensation for a student employed under the 9189 classification is salaried with an on-campus apartment and meal plan.

Students employed under this designation are subject to the following guidelines.
• A Resident Hall Director can be employed for a maximum of 30 hours per week
• An HD will supervise 6-12 Resident Assistants and other student employees in the residence hall.
• An HD will act as a resource person for residents.
• An HD will explain and adhere to University housing policies and rules for residents.
• An HD will provide assistance and support to students.
• An HD will be prepared to mediate disputes among hall residents. The student must be prepared to deal with and report inappropriate behavior or rule infractions committed by hall residents.
• An HD will respond to emergencies occurring in residence halls.
• An HD will ensure that maintenance needs for the residence halls are effectively reported.
• An HD will maintain required records of student residential life.
• An HD will create a residential environment which is safe, secure, stimulating, and conducive to the personal growth of the residents.

Department heads and supervising faculty are responsible for assuring that a Resident Hall Director receives ample opportunities to make continuing progress toward her/his degree completion.

2.2. Graduate Teaching Assistant Training and Evaluations

A graduate assistant interested in teaching undergraduate courses as a GTA-IOR while pursuing graduate work at UWF is required to take part in Graduate Teaching Assistant training. Graduate students are not eligible to become Instructor of Record until the academic department verifies that they have completed 18 graduate level semester credit hours in the academic taxonomy. Because training necessarily depends on the type of instruction to be provided, teacher orientation may be done at the department, college, and/or University level. Students may participate in teacher training and/or hold a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (9184) with an experienced instructor prior to teaching.

It is the responsibility of the supervising department to ensure that the Graduate Teaching Assistant has received the training necessary to perform instructional duties. The training style of the department could range anywhere from off-hour workshops to required coursework to one-on-one shadowing/meeting with an experienced instructor. Because teaching for each department requires different skills, knowledge, rubrics, etc., each department will be responsible for the development, organization, and execution of training sessions.

As per the policy statement, sample planned and periodic evaluation forms are in appendix B.

At the end of each semester, Graduate Teaching Assistants (9185) are subject to two different types of evaluations. At the University level, Graduate Teaching Assistants (9185) will be evaluated by a Student Assessment of Instruction (SAI) administered to students at the end of each semester through MyUWF. At the department level, Graduate Teaching Assistants (9185) will be evaluated by their department chair, program coordinator, or faculty mentor. This evaluation may take the form of a one-on-one meeting to gauge the GTA’s pedagogical experience and the quality of instruction offered by the GTA in the classroom.
2.2.1. Student Accessibility Resources

The Student Accessibility Resources (SAR) works with students and faculty to help make UWF an accessible learning environment in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act (ADAAA) of 2008. The SAR offers a variety of services for students with documented disabilities, including learning disabilities, deaf/hard of hearing, blind/low vision, mobility limitations, ADHD, psychiatric disorders, and medical disabilities. Some of the services provided by SAR include:

- Interpretive services
- Note taking services
- Testing accommodations
- Student escorts
- Readers/scribes
- Other accommodations as appropriate based on documentation

It is important for students to remember that it is their responsibility to request disability services in the post-secondary setting, and they can start the process at SAR. See SAR’s website: [https://uwf.edu/sar](https://uwf.edu/sar).

Testing accommodations are provided to students who are registered with SAR and have been approved for this accommodation. In order for SAR to provide the instructor with verification of a student’s eligibility for academic accommodations, a Semester Request Form must be submitted to SAR each semester. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to discuss academic accommodations in the course, including appropriate testing accommodations. For testing accommodation guidelines and forms, see SAR’s website: [https://uwf.edu/sar](https://uwf.edu/sar).

Student Accessibility Resources
11000 University Pkwy
Bldg. 21, Rm. 110
(850) 474-2387
[https://uwf.edu/sar](https://uwf.edu/sar)

2.2.2. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) places certain restrictions on the kinds of information about students that can be shared without explicit permission from the student. FERPA permits information sharing for emergencies and in other situations where help is needed. The U.S. Department of Education provides an overview of FERPA on its website: [http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html).

2.2.3. Teaching Resources

There are additional resources available to Graduate Assistants at UWF. The following offices can provide valuable services to you and your students, including separate testing facilities for students with special needs, one-on-one tutoring for writing and math assignments, help navigating the research process (as well as tutorials to help students avoid plagiarism), free access to health, counseling, and
psychological services, as well as assistance with academic advising. Take advantage of these resources, and encourage your students to do the same.

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<th>UWF Student Resources</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Testing Services</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bldg. 21, Rm. 120</td>
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<tr>
<td>(850) 473-7340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://uwf.edu/testing">https://uwf.edu/testing</a></td>
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<td><strong>Writing Lab</strong></td>
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<td>Bldg. 51, Rm. 157</td>
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<tr>
<td>(850) 474-2229</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="https://uwf.edu/writelab">https://uwf.edu/writelab</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics &amp; Statistics Tutoring Lab</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bldg. 4, Rm. 321</td>
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<tr>
<td>(850) 474-2276</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="https://uwf.edu/mathstat/lab">https://uwf.edu/mathstat/lab</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Writing Lab</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bldg. 51, Rm. 157</td>
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<tr>
<td>(850) 474-2229</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="https://uwf.edu/writelab">https://uwf.edu/writelab</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Office of the Registrar</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bldg. 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>(850) 474-2244</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://uwf.edu/registrar">http://uwf.edu/registrar</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UWF Libraries (multiple locations)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(850) 474-2424</td>
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<td><a href="https://uwf.edu/library">https://uwf.edu/library</a></td>
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<td><strong>Student Health Services</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bldg. 960, Ste. 106</td>
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<td>(850) 474-2172</td>
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<td><a href="https://uwf.edu/healthservices">https://uwf.edu/healthservices</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Counseling &amp; Psychological Services</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bldg. 960, Ste. 200A</td>
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<tr>
<td>(850) 474-2420</td>
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<td><a href="https://uwf.edu/counseling">https://uwf.edu/counseling</a></td>
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3. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

3.1. Eligibility for Assistantship

To be considered for a graduate assistantship, the student must contact the department in which s/he is seeking an appointment. To be eligible for an assistantship, the student must meet the following minimum requirements:

1) The student must be an admitted, degree-seeking student at UWF.

2) The student must be enrolled in at least 6 hours of graduate coursework during fall and spring semesters and in at least 3 hours of graduate coursework in the summer semester. Continuing Education courses do not count toward the minimum number of graduate hours required for eligibility for assistantship unless the courses count toward degree requirements. Continuing education courses are not eligible for waivers. If the student has fewer than the minimum required credit hours for assistantship eligibility remaining in her/his degree plan or has only thesis or dissertation hours remaining, then this policy does not apply.¹

3) The student must be in good academic standing (maintain a 3.0 graduate GPA and not be on academic probation).

Additional documents, such as letters of recommendation, a curriculum vita or resume, or writing sample may be required by the department or office.

¹ Note that graduate assistants at the thesis/dissertation stage of their programs must maintain continuous enrollment by registering for at least one hour each semester.
Note that the eligibility requirements for financial aid and for a graduate assistantship might differ. Students interested in receiving financial aid during the fall and spring semesters must meet the minimum enrollment requirements of the federal assistance program. See section 6 on tuition waivers and status requirements for receiving aid. Contact the UWF Office of Financial Aid for more information (https://uwf.edu/finaid).

3.2. English as a Second Language

Students who wish to serve as Graduate Teaching Assistants (9185), but whose first language is not English, will be required to demonstrate English proficiency. Beyond meeting the minimum requirements for admission to graduate studies at UWF as well as the minimum requirements for individual departments offering graduate programs, GTAs serving as Instructors of Record must obtain and report a minimum TOEFL iBT Listening/Comprehension score of 23 to the Graduate School. Written English proficiency training is available through the UWF Writing Lab. Spoken English proficiency training is available through UWF International Affairs.

3.3. Time Limit and Number of Assistantships

The time limit on assistantships depends on the type of assistantship as well as the department or office for which the student works. Although each assistantship is subject to termination at the end of the semester, students may continue the same assistantship for multiple semesters as long as the department or office has a position and appropriate funds. A new award letter does not have to be submitted for an assistantship that carries over from fall to spring semesters. Summer will require a new offer letter and Student Personnel Action Form.

UWF recognizes the increasing expense of graduate study and, therefore, makes conscientious attempts to provide financial assistance to graduate students. With that in mind, the University encourages colleges and departments to allocate no more than 20 hours per week (0.50 FTE) to a single Graduate Assistant. Exceptions may be made, and Graduate Assistants who wish to obtain Graduate Assistant positions from one or multiple offices that total more than 0.50 FTE (20 hours per week) must also obtain authorization from the dean of the college over the student’s major academic department and the Graduate School. The Authorization for GA Appointments Exceeding 0.50 FTE form to request such authorization is available in the Graduate School Forms app in MyUWF. Permission to exceed 0.50 FTE is only granted in exceptional circumstances. All Graduate Assistant appointments combined across all units, must not exceed 0.75 FTE.

4. PAYMENT

4.1. Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Explanations

Full-time assistantships (0.50 FTE) require students to perform assistantship assignments for 20 hours per week during the period of the assignment. Half-time assistantships (0.25 FTE) require students to work 10 hours per week during the period of assignment. The minimum required for an initial appointment is 0.25 FTE. Graduate students with initial appointments of less than 10 hours per week should be classified as OPS. They cannot be classified as Graduate Assistants and are not eligible for tuition waivers.
Two priorities govern the allocation of Graduate Assistantships: University recruitment and departmental teaching and research needs. The Graduate School encourages and strongly recommends that departments hire graduate students to full-time appointments (0.50 FTE or 20 hours per week) but do not exceed full-time appointments (over 0.50 FTE or 20 hours per week). All Graduate Assistant appointments combined across all units must not exceed 0.75 FTE.

4.2. Stipend Minimums and Waivers

The minimum hourly pay for Graduate Assistantships is $10.25 per hour. This payment may be generated in a bi-weekly paycheck for which the student submits an electronic timesheet every two weeks to be approved by her/his department chair or office supervisor. For GTAs – Instructor of Record (9185), this payment is generated through a semester stipend at the equivalent of $10.25 per hour. For Graduate Assistants receiving a stipend, the money will be dispersed evenly throughout the weeks of the semester. No electronic timesheet is required in this case.

Part of the financial package for graduate assistants working a combination of 0.25 FTE or greater (10 hours or more per week) is eligibility for a matriculation waiver of the in-state portion of graduate basic tuition, excluding mandatory fees, (see section 6.2). Out-of-state students will also qualify for a waiver for the out-of-state portion of tuition.

The department or office granting the assistantship will initiate a request for tuition waiver either through the college dean’s office in which the student is enrolled or directly in the Graduate Assistantship app found in MyUWF.

For more information on tuition and fees, see the Graduate Catalog (http://catalog.uwf.edu/graduate/tuitionandfees).

4.3. Tax Obligations

All students must obtain a Social Security Number in order to receive payments from the University, including fellowships, assistantships, and tuition support. Students are responsible for determining their tax obligations.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) excludes certain types of student wages from the IRS definition of “employment” for purposes of FICA tax withholding. The Internal Revenue Code (IRC) 3121[b][10][B] provides that wages paid by a university to one of its student employees who is enrolled at least half-time and regularly attending classes are exempt from the FICA tax withholding. The University has the sole discretion to determine whether a student’s employment at the University of West Florida is exempt from FICA withholding taxes.

Students not exempt from Social Security/Medicare are automatically enrolled in the Retirement Plan for OPS employees. Employees enrolled in the plan contribute 7.5% of their pay, pre-tax, into an investment account in their name. They are not subject to the Social Security tax of 6.2%, but are subject to the Medicare tax of 1.45%. Departments are responsible for the matching of the 1.45% Medicare tax. See the Human Resources website for more information (http://uwf.edu/ohr).
5. RESIDENCY CLASSIFICATION

5.1. Florida Residency for Tuition Purposes

The University of West Florida is required to adhere to specific procedures in making initial determinations of residency for tuition purposes. The student’s residency classification determines the rate of tuition, and students classified as “Florida residents” pay less in tuition and fees per credit hour than students classified as “non-Florida residents.”

In accordance with S1009.21 Florida Statutes, Rules 6A-10.044 and 6A-20.003, Florida Administrative Code, and the Board of Governors Residency Regulation, the Graduate School is required to adhere to specific procedures in making determinations for establishing residency for tuition purposes as does the Office of the Registrar for residency reclassification for students who were initially classified as non-Florida residents.

To qualify as a Florida Resident for Tuition Purposes, the student (dependent, as defined by IRS regulations, or independent) must be a U.S. Citizen, permanent resident alien or a legal alien granted indefinite stay by U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services, and must have established physical and legal residence in Florida for at least 12 consecutive months prior to the first day of classes for the semester of enrollment. Students who do not meet these basic criteria cannot be classified as residents for tuition purposes.

NOTE: Living in Florida for a year or longer DOES NOT automatically qualify a student as a Florida resident for tuition purposes (in-state tuition).

The burden of proof rests with the applicant to present clear and convincing documentation that supports permanent legal residency in Florida for at least 12 consecutive months rather than temporary residency for the purpose of pursuing an education. All applicants are considered “non-Florida residents” until they provide proof otherwise. Failure to provide all relevant information and required documentation in the residency section of the admission application could result in a 'non-Florida resident' classification for tuition purposes. All documentation must be submitted no later than the first day of classes for the semester of enrollment. Judgments as to residency will be made on the basis of all information provided. No single document shall be conclusive.

For further information on establishing Florida residency for tuition purposes, see uwf.edu/graduate/apply/residency. This website also includes a list of acceptable documents for proving residency.

5.2. Residency Reclassification

Currently enrolled students who are classified as non-Florida residents for tuition purposes and wish to become Florida residents for tuition purposes should contact the Office of the Registrar for reclassification documentation and information. For further information, see the Residence Reclassification page of Office of the Registrar’s website.
6. TUITION WAIVERS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID

6.1. Status Requirements for Receiving Financial Aid

A graduate student seeking or holding an assistantship should be aware of her/his student status for three reasons: (1) eligibility for an assistantship (see section 3), (2) eligibility for a tuition waiver (see section 6.2), and qualification for financial aid. According to University policy, a graduate student is considered full-time when taking at least 6 semester hours in fall, spring, and summer semesters. For purposes of student classification with the Office of the Registrar, 6 or more semester hours constitutes full-time status in the fall, spring, and summer semesters. For purposes of student classification with the Office of Financial Aid, 6 or more semester hours constitutes full-time status regardless of semester.

The University of West Florida reports enrollment status based on the following criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Fall, Spring, &amp; Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>6 CH or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-time</td>
<td>3 CH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than half-time</td>
<td>1-2 CH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that the eligibility requirements for financial aid and for a graduate assistantship might differ. Students interested in receiving financial aid during the fall and spring semesters must meet the minimum enrollment requirements of the federal assistance program. Contact the Office of Financial Aid for more information (http://uwf.edu/finaid).

6.2. Graduate Tuition and Fees

The cost of graduate attendance is composed of two separate elements: (1) tuition and (2) mandatory fees. The cost of tuition and fees at the University of West Florida is composed of the Florida resident tuition per graduate credit hour, differentials for Non-Florida and Alabama residents, and mandatory fees. For a full presentation of UWF tuition and mandatory fees, refer to the UWF Schedule of Tuition and Fees (http://catalog.uwf.edu/graduate/tuitionandfees/).

Note that the Florida Legislature, the Florida Board of Governors, and the UWF Board of Trustees periodically review tuition and fees, so these figures are subject to adjustment. In addition, certain academic programs may require additional differential tuition to cover unique programmatic costs. Students should contact the Office of the Registrar for the most current figures.

6.3. Qualifying for a Tuition Waiver

The cost of graduate education is composed of two separate elements: tuition and fees. See the Schedule of Tuition and Fees for the University of West Florida for a full presentation of the current cost of graduate education per credit hour. The cost of graduate education at the University of West Florida is composed of base tuition, differentials for out-of-state residents, and student fees. The Florida Legislature, the Florida Board of Governors, and the UWF Board of Trustees periodically review tuition and fees, so these figures are subject to adjustment. In addition, certain academic programs may require
additional differential tuition to cover unique programmatic costs. Students should contact the Office of the Registrar for the most current figures.

All graduate students with qualifying graduate assistantships may be eligible to receive a matriculation waiver (also referred to as a “tuition waiver”) toward a portion (50% or 100%) of the Florida resident tuition per credit hour, excluding mandatory fees (see section 6.2). be applied during all semesters specified in the Graduate Assistantship Award Letter. In addition, non-Florida residents receiving a graduate assistantship will receive a full waiver of the out-of-state differential of tuition (see section 6.3.1).

Continuing Education courses are not eligible for tuition waivers. Department chairs and advisers should make students aware of this exclusion. **Note that all graduate students are required to pay mandatory fees.** A tuition waiver does not cover mandatory fees.

Students who begin work as graduate assistants after the beginning of the term receive a pro-rated waiver for the length of the term remaining. Students may not start a new appointment after the first day of classes in Term C in any semester. Exceptions and special circumstances can be sent to the Graduate School for approval.

For a student who has multiple assistantships, each awarding department or unit should specify in the Graduate Assistantship Award Letter if a tuition waiver is being awarded by that department/unit, and if so, the waiver amount being awarded. Each of these departments should process the waiver as specified.

In some instances, nonacademic departments who award graduate assistantships are also allotted tuition waivers by the Graduate School, which can be awarded to the graduate assistant. The nonacademic department is responsible for submitting the award letter to the Graduate School who will process the tuition waiver.

The awarding of waivers is subject to school or college approval. Note that a student on assistantship in her/his last semester and having applied for graduation with fewer than 6 semester hours of required coursework for degree completion is still eligible for fee waivers.

### 6.3.1. Qualifying for an Out-of-State Tuition Waiver

To qualify for an out-of-state waiver, a graduate student must be awarded a graduate assistantship.

These waivers apply only to out-of-state tuition. Out-of-state students may also qualify to receive the in-state matriculation waiver and be responsible for the balance of in-state tuition and fees. Out-of-state and matriculation waivers are typically awarded and processed by the department or unit from which the graduate assistantship has been awarded. Note that a waiver is not a scholarship and cannot result in a refund of dollars back to the student.

For more information on funding opportunities, contact the [Graduate School](#).
6.3.2 The Alabama Differential Tuition Plan

Graduate assistants who meet all the requirements for an out-of-state waiver (as enumerated in section 6.2.1) and are residents of Alabama will be eligible for a waiver of the Alabama differential portion of their tuition.

For more information, contact the Graduate School.

6.4. Courses Covered by a Tuition Waiver

Waivers may be used to cover courses related to the student’s academic degree program, including thesis and dissertation hours.

Note that Continuing Education courses do not count toward the minimum number of graduate hours required for eligibility for assistantship unless the courses count toward degree requirements. Continuing education courses are not eligible for waivers.

6.5. Changes in Status Affecting a Tuition Waiver

If a student drops or withdraws from a course to which a tuition waiver has been applied, the student must repay a prorated amount for the remainder of the course tuition for the semester. If a student falls below the required number of credit hours for waiver qualification (under 6 credit hours in the fall and spring and under 3 in the summer) as a result of dropping or withdrawing from a course, then the full tuition waiver will be removed and the student must repay a prorated amount for the remainder of the semester’s tuition. Note that a student has the right to appeal the fee that is assessed, but only for the amount that s/he paid for the tuition. The student cannot appeal the amount of the waiver.

A student with a tuition waiver who is dismissed from the University or resigns from a graduate assistantship at any point during the term will have her/his tuition waiver removed and the student must a prorated amount for the remainder of the semester’s tuition.

Financial holds on student records will prevent students from registering for classes, receiving transcripts, or receiving grade reports until payment is received by the Cashier’s Office.

6.6. Qualifying for Financial Aid

According to federal policy, a graduate student is considered eligible for financial aid when taking at least 6 credit hours. For further information, please refer to the Office of Financial Aid.
7. CAUSES FOR ASSISTANTSHIP DISMISSAL

University policy requires that graduate students maintain good academic standing in order to keep their graduate assistantships. Being placed on academic probation is cause for dismissal of a graduate assistantship.

7.1. Maintenance of Academic Standing

All Graduate assistants must maintain a good academic standing with a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 or higher each term. Inability to maintain good academic standing with the University may result in academic dismissal.

If a Graduate Assistant’s overall GPA falls out of good academic standing, s/he will automatically be placed on academic probation and be ineligible to maintain or renew the assistantship. Exceptions to this policy will be made in only very rare circumstances on a case-by-case basis, with final approval made by the Graduate School.

All Graduate assistants must make satisfactory progress to their degree. Satisfactory progress is determined on a case-by-case basis by the graduate assistant’s program director or coordinator. If it is determined that satisfactory progress is not being made, even if the student is meeting other minimum requirements (i.e., GPA and continuous enrollment status), the graduate assistant may lose her/his assistantship.

7.2. Policy for Grades of Incomplete (“I”)

If a student is placed on academic probation as a result of an “I” grade, s/he will not be eligible for a graduate assistantship. It is imperative that faculty and graduate assistants are aware of the policies regarding the consequences of not resolving “I” grades, and take measures to resolve Incompletes before they convert to “Fs.” An “I” grade may adversely affect the graduate assistant’s GPA and may result in ineligibility for the assistantship.

For more information, see the Office of the Registrar’s Policy on Incomplete Grades.

7.3. Departmental Policy Concerning Dismissal

In addition, departments reserve discretion over the reappointment of graduate assistantships. Each department or office offering graduate assistantships should provide the following information to graduate students receiving assistantship offers, whether through the letter of appointment, a separate document, or a departmental orientation session:

- Evaluation procedures
- Procedures and criteria for reappointment
- Conditions under which an assistantship could be terminated

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2 Doctoral-level students must maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.25 or higher each term.
Every department or office is responsible for forming its own guidelines for graduate assistants. These guidelines may include, but are not limited to, dress code, absence/tardy policy, and causes for dismissal. Here is a sample GA evaluation form.

8. PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1. The Professional Role

When accepting an assistantship position in the academic enterprise at the University of West Florida, graduate students may find that some aspects of the role are new and unfamiliar. Graduate assistants are considered to be professionals at the beginning of their discipline-based careers in an academic setting. As such, they must recognize that they are agreeing to contribute time and intellectual effort to help with program or faculty needs in exchange for a paycheck, stipend, or tuition support and for opportunities commensurate with the role.

Although the demands of any given graduate assistantship vary according to the specific context of employment, assistants are likely to have specified duties, a set number of hours per week in which the student is expected to work, and a supervisor who will oversee the student’s work. Supervisors should be able to communicate with assistants regarding the number of assigned hours per week. For example, some supervisors may encourage assistants to work extra hours during the early weeks of the semester in exchange for reducing obligated time during final exams. However, a graduate student appointed as an assistant should have a formal discussion with her/his supervisor about departmental expectations regarding how, where, and when the student commits her/his time.

UWF’s strategic plan articulates several values that are geared toward producing the kind of campus experience for students and employees alike. The University expects student employees to demonstrate these values in their work. These values include the following:

**Caring:** Providing a safe and dynamic learning environment that encourages the development of individual potential.

**Integrity:** Doing the right things for the right reasons.

**Quality:** Dedication to uncompromising excellence.

**Innovation:** Dedication to exploring and expanding the boundaries of knowledge.

**Teamwork:** Working together to achieve shared goals.

**Stewardship:** Managing and protecting our resources.

**Courage:** Daring to be different by design.

In addition, UWF identifies several “virtues” to clarify behavior that contributes to high quality service delivered by the academic and support staff. These include the following: Ambassadorship, Communications, Courtesy, Flexibility, Helpfulness, Knowledge, Ownership, Professionalism, Responsiveness, and Safety. It may sound like a tall order, but commitment to these principles will help
UWF live up to its mission of “empowering each individual we serve with knowledge and opportunity to contribute responsibly and creatively to a complex world.”

Graduate assistants are strongly encouraged to adopt high standards of professional behavior. A graduate student engaging in on-campus employment will be establishing her/his professional reputation as someone who is reliable, ethical, and trustworthy. The student will attract new opportunities, build a strong résumé, and develop relationships that will help him or her achieve strong letters of reference for future professional opportunities.

8.2. Solving Work-Related Problems

UWF hopes employment as a graduate assistant will be trouble-free; however, sometimes interpersonal problems will complicate the job. Some general pointers can set the stage for effective solutions:

- The student should recognize that no one will have her/his exact vantage point on the problem, so the student should strive to explain her/his position clearly and without being defensive.
- The student should listen carefully to the position of the person raising the complication.
- The student should avoid raising her/his voice, using inappropriate or obscene language, or fueling even worse outcomes by other unprofessional behavior.
- The student should focus on the specific behavior that is problematic rather than attributions or motives that s/he thinks contribute to the behavior.
- The student should not use email when angry. It generally makes a situation much worse when people cannot rely on body language to clarify real meaning.
- If tempers flare, the student may wish to seek the assistance of an appropriate mediator. UWF provides an ombudsperson to assist in situations that may be difficult to resolve. Contact UWF’s Dean of Students Office at 850-474-2384.

8.2.1. Solving Problems with Students

Although a Graduate Teaching Assistant serving as the Instructor of Record may not be much older than the undergraduates in the classroom, the graduate student holds authority in this setting. UWF trusts GTAs to carry out the specific assignments related to serving as a classroom instructor. If a student challenges a GTA’s authority, it helps if the GTA can point to the syllabus or class notes to identify the instructor’s obligation to serve the class. If an informal conversation does not appear to solve the problem, the GTA should confer with a supervisor for assistance regarding the most appropriate course of action.

8.2.2. Solving Problems with Peers

Occasionally, difficulties with peers can surface, particularly in competitive contexts. In shared work assignments, a graduate student may find that coworkers may not work as hard as s/he does toward task completion. To prevent such problems, a graduate assistant should try to clarify workload assignments from the outset. The student should inquire early about what may be happening that could contribute to disappointing performance from peers. The student should express disappointment directly to the individual who is generating the problems and ask for cooperation. The student should be prepared for the possibility that the peer may share similar feelings of resentment or that the peer may have mutual disappointments in the contributions or style of another peer. If the graduate student is
unable to come to terms on a more productive and satisfying means of interacting, the student should ask for assistance or mediation from the supervisor.

8.2.3. Solving Problems with Supervisors

It is possible that a graduate assistant may experience some challenges with her/his supervisor. Examples could include a supervisor having unrealistic work expectations or placing too many demands in too short of a time frame. Adversely, supervisors may neglect their assistants by not showing up for appointments or not fulfilling commitments. Although rare, supervisors may also be insulting or demeaning. Should a negative situation develop with a supervisor, the student should take steps early in the process to identify the problem and seek opportunities for explanation and reconciliation. The student should keep in mind that the supervisor has greater authority and experience in the situation and stay open to the idea that there could be some legitimate explanation for the behavior perceived to be problematic. However, if the student is not able to reach an accord, s/he may want to explore whether a different assignment may be appropriate and/or available. Another option is to speak to the person who supervises the student’s immediate supervisor.

8.2.4. “Chain of Command”

When attempting to solve problems, most organizations subscribe to the concept of “chain of command.” In general, this principle entails a first attempt at resolving a problem by directly addressing the person in the organization who is thought to be responsible for the problem. If such an attempt does not result in an amicable resolution, the student seeking to address a problem should go up the chain of command to that person’s supervisor, and so forth. In an academic setting, a student in the classroom would have the following entities to deal with in the academic chain of command.

Graduate Peer->Instructor->Program Director/Department Chair->College Dean->Provost->President

Attempts to skip some links in the chain of command when solving problems will most likely be met with resistance. The student can expect to be sent back to the level that was skipped as individuals higher up in the chain of command do not wish to undermine the authority of those whose job it is to address and resolve problems.

8.3. Dealing with Boundary Issues

One challenge that Graduate Teaching Assistants may face is finding a comfortable stance in how to relate to their students. Following the dictum, “Be friendly, but not familiar,” is recommended to establish an appropriate relationship with students. Academic professionals strive to establish friendly relationships with the graduate assistants with whom they are assigned to work. Often, this model of behavior is then emulated to the students with whom the graduate assistant works. However, familiarity and friendliness can be interpreted in a way that poses risks. For example, some students see a familiar and friendly teacher as one who can be manipulated for their own gain. Befriending a student can result in the GTA finding it difficult to enforce equitable grading practices. Situations such as this set the stage for challenges with discriminatory practices. Graduate Teaching Assistants should have a clear understanding of the issues that can arise in the absence of fair treatment with regard to grades and learning opportunities.
Discrimination is a serious matter in an environment that prides itself on fair treatment. Demographic variables, such as age, color, disability, gender (including sex and gender identity), marital status, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status, should have no bearing on judgments regarding quality of performance. When students suspect their rights are being violated on the basis of protected class, they have a right to file a complaint with Human Resources alleging the specific nature of the discriminatory treatment. Taking great care to treat students with equality and respect is not only expected of persons working on behalf of the University of West Florida, but it will also help avoid disciplinary action.

Similarly, if a graduate assistant suspects inequitable treatment, s/he should identify the problem with the faculty member and work toward reaching a resolution. If that approach is unsuccessful, or if the student believes that discrimination based on a protected class is the basis for the inequitable treatment, the student may contact the Equal Opportunity Programs (EOP) for assistance and/or to file a complaint. In this situation, students need not follow the normal problem-solving chain of command. Refer to the University’s Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation policy for more information.

Boundary issues become more complicated when romantic entanglements become part of the landscape. Such relationships with students are a conflict of interest for the GTA. UWF actively discourages GTAs from becoming romantically involved with students for several reasons:

1) It potentially compromises objectivity in grading. Even if grading remained strictly objective, close relationships provide an appearance of bias that could make students question the teaching assistant or instructor’s integrity.
2) The person in authority has power over the student. As such, it could later be argued that the person in authority pursued the relationship as an abuse of that power.
3) Our current regulations require employees to report romantic entanglements to their supervisors so that appropriate steps can be taken to protect both parties from accusations and disappointments. It is simply smarter to avoid entanglement socially until the power relationship (e.g., the class) is officially over.

The same principles apply to romantic entanglements with professors. What seems like a good idea when sparks get ignited at a conference may turn out to be a career-challenging move over the long run. It is best for students to avoid romantic entanglements with individuals in positions of authority in the workplace or the educational environment. Such relationships can result in career disruptions or other problems.

Harassment is another potentially challenging source of turmoil. Technically, sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct that unreasonably interferes with academic performance or creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive climate. Graduate assistants could be accused of sexually harassing students by asking a student for a date. Graduate assistants could also be the target of someone who harasses.

As an authority figure, Graduate Teaching Assistants will be held to a standard of those in authority. Flirtatious behavior can easily cross the line of acceptability for some students into unwelcome attention. Sexual jokes, suggestive nicknames, and suggestive display items (e.g., a large calendar of nude photos on the wall) serve as examples that could help to build a case that the Graduate Teaching Assistant engages in harassing behavior or expects favors in return for special treatment. As a
supervisor, it is the responsibility of the Graduate Teaching Assistant to know and comply with university policy and procedures, to avoid behavior that could be construed as discriminatory, and to serve as a good example. Upon receiving any complaints from students or other employees or upon witnessing inappropriate behavior, graduate assistants should immediately report that activity to the Equal Opportunity Coordinator in Human Resources.

If a Graduate assistant becomes the target of unwelcomed attention, s/he is encouraged to let the offender know that the behavior is unwelcomed and to request that the behavior stop. For example the graduate assistant can state, “I don’t appreciate the joke you just told. It offends me, and I’d like you not to do that again in my presence.” If the problem continues, the student should call the Equal Opportunity Coordinator in Human Resources or others listed in the Discrimination policy to discuss concerns and options. It may be possible to resolve these concerns informally, or the student may elect to file a formal complaint. This is an instance in which the student need not follow chain of command in problem solving. In most cases, an investigation will unfold, and the individual under investigation will be warned against any potential retaliatory practices. After reporting such an episode, it is also important to maintain confidentiality about the report to ensure that the investigation is a fair one.