



UNIVERSITY *of*
WEST FLORIDA

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP HANDBOOK

UWF Graduate School
Bldg. 11
11000 University Parkway
Pensacola, FL 32514
(850) 473-7716
uwf.edu/graduate

Welcome

Congratulations on 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. A graduate assistantship position is 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. Assistantships are 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 or the Graduate School.

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!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. <u>INTRODUCTION</u> | 3 |
| 2. <u>TYPES OF ASSISTANTSHIPS</u> | 3 |
| 2.1. <u>Graduate Assistant (9186)</u> | 4 |
| 2.2. <u>Graduate Research Assistant (9182)</u> | 4 |
| 2.3. <u>Graduate Teaching Assistant (9184)</u> | 5 |
| 2.4. <u>Graduate Teaching Assistant – Instructor of Record (9185)</u> | 5 |
| 2.5. <u>Resident Hall Director (9189)</u> | 6 |
| 3. <u>ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS</u> | 7 |
| 3.1. <u>Eligibility for Assistantship</u> | 7 |
| 3.2. <u>English as a Second Language</u> | 7 |
| 3.3. <u>Time Limit and Number of Assistantships</u> | 7 |
| 3.4. <u>Required Training for Graduate Assistants</u> | 7 |
| 3.4.1. <u>For All GAs</u> | 7 |
| 3.4.2. <u>For GTAs</u> | 8 |
| 4. <u>PAYMENT AND FINANCIAL AID</u> | 9 |
| 4.1. <u>Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Explanations</u> | 9 |
| 4.2. <u>Stipend Minimums</u> | 9 |
| 4.3. <u>Tax Obligations</u> | 9 |
| 4.4. <u>Graduate Tuition and Fees</u> | 10 |
| 4.5. <u>Tuition Waivers</u> | 10 |
| 4.5.1. <u>Matriculation Waivers</u> | 10 |
| 4.5.2. <u>Out-of-State Tuition Waiver</u> | 11 |
| • <u>Residency Reclassification</u> | 11 |
| 4.5.3. <u>Courses Covered by Tuition Waiver</u> | 11 |
| 4.5.4. <u>Changes in Status Affecting Tuition Waiver</u> | 11 |
| 5. <u>PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES</u> | 12 |
| 5.1. <u>The Professional Role</u> | 12 |
| 5.1.1. <u>Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)</u> | 12 |
| 5.2. <u>Chain of Command</u> | 12 |
| 5.3. <u>Solving Work-Related Problems</u> | 13 |
| 5.4. <u>Graduate Assistant Evaluation</u> | 14 |
| 5.5. <u>Causes for Assistantship Dismissal</u> | 14 |
| 6. <u>RESOURCES FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS</u> | 16 |
| 6.1. <u>Student Accessibility Resources</u> | 16 |
| 6.2. <u>University Resources</u> | 16 |
| 6.3. <u>The Graduate School</u> | 17 |

1. INTRODUCTION

Graduate assistants play a vital role in scholarship and instruction at the University of West Florida. This handbook identifies and clarifies the policies governing assistantships. The goal of this handbook is to answer a number of frequently asked questions about assistantships, including the types of assistantships, eligibility requirements, the policies structuring payment and tuition waivers, and the student obligations for maintaining a graduate assistantship position.

Upon a student's appointment to a graduate assistantship position, the department should provide the student with all necessary information regarding the appointment. This information is typically defined in the Graduate Assistantship Award Letter. The letter should specify the parameters of the assistantship, including classification title and code, Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) allocation and pay rate, period of appointment, job description, and supervising faculty. The student must sign the award letter and return it to the hiring department to formally accept the offer and terms of the assistantship.

2. TYPES OF ASSISTANTSHIPS

Graduate assistants at UWF are admitted and enrolled, degree-seeking master's, specialist, 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 research. There are different types of assistantships. The student should make sure to understand the responsibilities accompanying their position.

Graduate assistantships 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 their program of study, unless the student is employed by a non-academic department. It is the responsibility of the hiring unit to ensure duties complement the student's degree program.

There are five types of graduate assistantship appointments:

- Graduate Assistant (9186)
- Graduate Research Assistant (9182)
- Graduate Teaching Assistant (9184)
- Graduate Teaching Assistant – Instructor of Record (9185)
- Resident Hall Director (9189)

One of the key distinctions among these appointment types is whether the position is paid on an **hourly** basis or a **salaried** basis.

Department heads and supervising faculty are responsible for assuring that a graduate assistant receives ample opportunities to make continuing progress toward their degree completion.

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, 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 \$15.00 per hour.

2.1. Graduate Assistant (9186)

A Graduate Assistant (GA) appointed under the 9186 designation provides 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.

A GA may be employed in a college or department that performs professional or service duties outside of teaching or research. In the case that a GA is assigned to a non-academic university office, the student's duties are not required to correspond directly to their graduate program.

2.2. Graduate Research Assistant (9182)

A Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) is 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 Graduate Assistant (9186). The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) defines a 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. Research assistantships may be financed through funds from gifts, grants, contracts, state appropriations designated for research, or through the University's internally sponsored programs.

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 who are employed conducting sponsored research (research funded by a grant) may be required to complete additional training, completion of which is tracked by the Office of Research Administration and Engagement. For more information on the ethical responsibilities related to sponsored research, see the UWF [Responsible Conduct in Research](#) (RCR) Plan.

2.3. Graduate Teaching Assistant (9184)

A Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) is an admitted graduate student 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. A GTA appointed under the 9184 designation assists an Instructor of Record but is not the Instructor of Record. 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.

2.4. Graduate Teaching Assistant – Instructor of Record (9185)

A Graduate Teaching Assistant - Instructor of Record (GTA-IOR) is an admitted graduate student who is **assigned to teach a course and is the Instructor of Record** for that course. 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**.

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.

In addition to the minimum requirements expected of all graduate assistants, 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 \(http://uwf.edu/international\)](http://uwf.edu/international). See the admissions criteria provided on the [Graduate School's Website \(http://uwf.edu/graduate/apply/international-students\)](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.
- Departments may require additional materials, so GTA-IORs should contact the department chair or program coordinator.

2.5. Resident Hall Director (9189)

A Resident Hall Director's (HD) 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.

- May be employed for a maximum of 30 hours per week
- Must be enrolled in a minimum of 9 credit hours per week in Fall and Spring semesters.
- Will supervise 6-12 Resident Assistants and other student employees in the residence hall.
- Will act as a resource person for residents.
- Will explain and adhere to University housing policies and rules for residents.
- Will provide assistance and support to students.
- 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.
- Will respond to emergencies occurring in residence halls.
- Will ensure that maintenance needs for the residence halls are effectively reported.
- Will maintain required records of student residential life.
- Will create a residential environment which is safe, secure, stimulating, and conducive to the personal growth of the residents.

3. ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

3.1. Eligibility for Assistantship

To be eligible for an assistantship, the student must meet the following minimum requirements:

- The student must be an admitted, degree-seeking student in a master's, specialist, or doctoral degree program at UWF.
- 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. If the student has fewer than the minimum required credit hours for assistantship eligibility remaining in their degree plan or has only thesis or dissertation hours remaining, then this policy does not apply.¹
- The student must be in good academic standing (maintain a 3.0 graduate GPA and not be on academic probation).
- The student must work and live in the United States during the assistantship.

NOTE: Faculty on sabbatical or leave are not eligible for GA support from department or university funds. However, a faculty member with appropriate external funding may be assigned a GA.

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

3.2. English as a Second Language

Students who wish to serve as Graduate Teaching Assistants (9184 and 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. Students may hold multiple graduate assistantship positions as long as the total number of hours worked per week does not exceed 0.50 FTE or 20 hours.

3.4. Required Training for Graduate Assistants

3.4.1. For All Graduate Assistants

¹ Note that graduate assistants at the thesis/dissertation stage of their programs must maintain continuous enrollment by registering for at least one credit hour each semester.

All graduate assistants must complete the following training requirements within one month of the start date of employment. The department's DISRep will first need to claim the student, who will then gain access to all the modules listed below in their SCOOP app in MyUWF one day after being claimed.

- FERPA Basics: This one-time training can be accessed under the Knowledge Worker section.
 - NOTE: There are multiple training modules in this section. Graduate assistants are only required to complete the FERPA Basics module.
- Anti-Harassment Associate Certificate (AHA) - Harassment & Discrimination Prevention: This training is mandatory for all university employees and must be completed every two years.
- Kognito At-Risk Training: One-time training required for all active employees.

Note: If you do not have access to these training modules, reach out to your supervisor for assistance.

3.4.2. For GTAs and GTA-IORs

There is an additional requirement for any graduate assistant classified as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) or Graduate Teaching Assistant-Instructor of Record (GTA-IOR) to complete a one-time GTA Orientation session. The Graduate School offers this as an online course available in Canvas. A student designated as a GTA or GTA-IOR will be automatically enrolled in the Canvas GTA Orientation and an accompanying course titled "Essentials of Digital Instruction," developed by UWF's IDT staff. These courses provided a wealth of resources to new student teachers. The courses are not graded and will remain accessible as a reference for as long as the student retains their teaching position. Any student who has already completed the GTA orientation is considered compliant and will not be required to retake the online course(s) but will still have access to them.

Some academic departments opt to host their own GTA orientation, which also meets the training requirement.

4. PAYMENT AND FINANCIAL AID

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).

4.2. Stipend Minimums

The minimum hourly pay for graduate assistantships is \$15.00 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 their department chair or office supervisor. For GTAs – Instructor of Record (9185), this payment is generated through a semester stipend at the equivalent of \$15.00 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. 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 have 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 the FICA tax withholding are subject to the Social Security tax of 6.2%, and the Medicare tax of 1.45%. Departments are responsible for the matching of the Social Security 6.2% and the Medicare 1.45% tax. See the Controller's Office website for more information

(<https://uwf.edu/finance-and-administration/departments/controllers-office/departamental-areas/payroll/>).

4.4. 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.

4.5. Tuition Waivers

Eligibility requirements for receiving a matriculation waiver or out-of-state waiver are the same as the requirements for holding a graduate assistantship. However, graduate students should be aware that the eligibility requirements for financial aid and for a graduate assistantship matriculation waiver might differ. Students interested in receiving financial aid should complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and be aware the requirements to receive aid. Contact the Office of Financial Aid for more information (<http://uwf.edu/finaid>).

4.5.1. Matriculation Waivers

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, to be applied during all semesters specified in the Graduate Assistantship Award Letter. A tuition waiver does not cover mandatory fees. **Note that all graduate students are required to pay mandatory fees. Additionally, a waiver is not a scholarship and cannot result in a refund back to the student.**

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.

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.

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

4.5.2. Out-of-State Tuition Waiver

All graduate assistants who are classified as non-Florida residents for tuition purposes are awarded an Out-of-State Tuition Waiver. This award waives the out-of-state portion of the student's total tuition cost. 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. **Note that a waiver is not a scholarship and cannot result in a refund back to the student.**

- **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 [Residency Reclassification](#) page of the Office of the Registrar's website.

4.5.3. Courses Covered by Tuition Waiver

Waivers may be used to cover courses related to the student's academic degree program, including thesis and dissertation hours. Continuing education courses are not eligible for waivers.

4.5.4. Changes in Status Affecting 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 they 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 their tuition waiver removed and must pay 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.

5. PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. The Professional Role

When accepting an assistantship position 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 their supervisor about departmental expectations regarding how, where, and when the student commits their time.

Graduate assistants are strongly encouraged to adopt high standards of professional behavior. A graduate student engaging in on-campus employment will be establishing their 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.

5.1.1. 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>.

5.2. 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.

5.3. 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 their exact vantage point on the problem, so the student should strive to explain their 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 their 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 they think 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 ombudsman to assist in situations that may be difficult to resolve. Contact [UWF's Dean of Students Office](#) at 850-474-2384.

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.

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 they do 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.

Solving Problems with Supervisors

It is possible that a graduate assistant may experience some challenges with their 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, they 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.

5.4. Graduate Assistant Evaluation

At the end of each semester, graduate assistants of all classifications are to be evaluated by their supervisor. The evaluation rates performance on work assignments, in communication skills, and more. The supervisor should complete the evaluation and meet with the graduate assistant to discuss the overall performance rating and any areas that need to be improved.

Graduate Teaching Assistants – Instructors of Record (9185) are subject to an additional evaluation. GTA-IORs will be evaluated by a Student Assessment of Instruction (SAI) administered to students at the end of each semester through MyUWF.

5.5. Causes for Assistantship Dismissal

Academic Standing: All graduate assistants must maintain a good academic standing with a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 for master's-level students and 3.25 for specialist and doctoral-level students. 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, they will automatically be placed on academic probation and be ineligible to maintain or renew their graduate assistantship.

Satisfactory Progress: 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 their assistantship.

Enrollment: All graduate assistants must be registered for a minimum of 6 graduate-level credit hours in the fall and spring semesters and 3 graduate-level credit hours in the summer semester. Withdrawing from one or more courses and falling below the minimum credit hour requirement may cause the graduate student to lose their assistantship.

Incomplete Grades: If a student is placed on academic probation as a result of an "I" grade, they 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.

Job Performance: 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

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.

6. RESOURCES FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

6.1. 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>.

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>.

6.2. University Resources

There are additional resources available to graduate assistants at UWF. The following offices can provide valuable services to you and your fellow 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; and assistance with academic advising. Take advantage of these resources, and encourage others to do the same.

| UWF Student Resources | |
|---|--|
| <u>Testing Services</u> Bldg. 21, Rm. 120 (850) 473-7340 | <u>Campus Safety Services & Tips</u> Bldg. 94 (850) 474-2415 |
| <u>Writing Lab</u> Bldg. 51, Rm. 157 (850) 474-2229 | <u>Student Health Services</u> Bldg. 960, Ste. 106 (850) 474-2172 |
| <u>Mathematics Tutoring Lab</u> Bldg. 4, Rm. 321 (850) 474-2276 | <u>Counseling & Psychological Services</u> Bldg. 960, Ste. 200A (850) 474-2420 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Tutoring & Learning Resources Bldg. 52, Rm. 151 (850) 474-3176 | Office of the Registrar Bldg. 18 (850) 474-2244 |
| UWF Libraries (multiple locations) (850) 474-2414 | Academic Advising Directory |

6.3. The Graduate School

The Graduate Curriculum Coordinator in the Graduate School is responsible for the policies and procedures governing graduate assistantships. For questions or assistance, reach out to Allicyn Baldwin at abaldwin1@uwf.edu or 850-473-7717.