LAMAR UNIVERSITY
MANUAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SECTION: Academic Affairs **MAPP 02.03.10**
AREA: Students

Employment of Graduate Students in Salaried Assistantships

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

A. This policy addresses graduate student employment in salaried assistantship positions at Lamar University (LU). This policy seeks to provide clear information to LU students, faculty, and staff about graduate student employment in salaried assistantship positions.

B. This policy falls under the authority of the accreditation standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). This policy also falls under the authority of applicable federal, state, and Texas State University System (TSUS) statutes, rules, and regulations, including, but not limited to, the TSUS *Rules and Regulations*; Texas Education Code, Title 3, Higher Education; and Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Education.

C. Graduate students employed in salaried assistantship positions must be enrolled in an on-campus graduate degree program; graduate students enrolled in online graduate degree programs are not eligible for salaried assistantships.

D. Graduate students employed in salaried assistantship positions shall enjoy the same protections from discrimination as all other LU employees and students.

E. Individuals are ***not*** allowed to begin work as graduate student assistants until

1. All paperwork for enrollment in a graduate degree program has been completed, submitted, and approved.
2. Employment eligibility forms, including the Electronic Personnel Action Form (EPAF), have been completed, submitted, and approved by the 12th day of classes. An approved EPAF status indicates that the student is approved to begin work.

F. Graduate students who teach, conduct research, or perform other activities outside of salaried assistantship positions (e.g., students supported by external fellowships) are not governed by this policy.

II. GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP TITLES AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

A. LU graduate students may be awarded the title of Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA), Graduate Research Assistant (GRA), or Graduate Assistant Non-Teaching (GANT).

B. Graduate students employed in salaried positions of GTA, GRA, or GANT must meet the following position-specific requirements:

1. **Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA).** Students awarded the title of Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) shall be graduate, degree-seeking students enrolled in an on-campus graduate degree program in the LU College of Graduate Studies during the term of their appointment. GTAs interact directly with students and assist faculty with instructional/curricular tasks such as the following: assisting in a classroom or laboratory; creating, evaluating, administering, or grading assignments and/or examinations; tutoring; preparing course materials; providing academic support or feedback to students by answering questions and clarifying course content; leading discussion sections; or holding office hours. GTAs shall not assist faculty in a graduate/doctoral course they have not completed. Moreover, to avoid any conflict of interest, GTAs shall not grade students' work for a class in which they were enrolled during the previous semester. GTAs may serve as instructors of record for an undergraduate course. Examples of GTA duties as an instructor of record include, but are not limited to, creating and delivering lectures, designing syllabi, and assessing student performance. GTAs must complete a part-time faculty hire packet. Further, in accordance with the Credentials Guidelines in the SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation*, all GTAs are required to hold "a master's in the teaching discipline or 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline," be under the "direct supervision of a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline," and complete "regular in-service training, as well as planned and periodic evaluations." GTAs must enroll in at least nine graduate semester credit hours (SCH) in a graduate degree program each fall and spring semester of employment. GTAs whose initial enrollment in a graduate degree program is in the summer semester must enroll in at least three graduate SCH during that summer term. Enrollment in a reduced number of graduate SCH is permissible for graduate teaching assistants enrolled in the final semester of their degree program. The Dean of Graduate Studies must approve GTAs taking more than 12 graduate semester hours of course work in the fall or spring semester or those taking more than six graduate semester hours per summer session. GTAs must also maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average (GPA) in course work leading toward the completion of a graduate degree. The Dean of Graduate Studies must approve any exceptions. The appropriate Graduate Advisor, Department Chair, and College Dean must submit requests for exceptions in writing to the Dean of Graduate Studies prior to the student's first day of employment.

2. **Graduate Research Assistant (GRA).** Students awarded the title of Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) shall be graduate, degree-seeking students enrolled in an on-campus graduate degree program in the LU College of Graduate Studies during the term of their appointment. GRAs assist faculty with research. GRAs must enroll in at least nine graduate SCH in a graduate degree program each fall and spring semester of employment. GRAs whose initial enrollment in a graduate degree program is in the summer semester must enroll in at least three graduate SCH during that summer term. Enrollment in a reduced number of graduate SCH is permissible for GRAs enrolled in the final semester of their degree program. The Dean of Graduate Studies must approve GRAs taking more than 12 graduate semester hours of course work in the fall or spring semester or those taking more than six graduate semester hours per summer session. GRAs must also maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA in course work leading toward the completion of a graduate degree. The Dean of Graduate Studies must approve any exceptions. The appropriate Graduate Advisor, Department Chair, and

College Dean must submit requests for exceptions in writing to the Dean of Graduate Studies prior to the student's first day of employment.

3. **Graduate Assistant Non-Teaching (GANT).** Students awarded the title of Graduate Assistant Non-Teaching (GANT) shall be graduate, degree-seeking students enrolled in an on-campus graduate degree program in the LU College of Graduate Studies during the term of their appointment. GANTs assist faculty and/or staff with non-instructional/non-curricular duties. These duties may include, but are not limited to, assisting with administrative/clerical duties; providing technical support; offering support for professional development events; and conducting activities that do not generally fit within the job responsibilities for GTAs and GRAs. GANTs' responsibilities also may include limited research-related activities. GANTs' responsibilities do not involve teaching-related activities such as the following: offering classroom or laboratory instruction; assisting a faculty member in a classroom or laboratory; creating, evaluating, administering, or grading assignments and/or examinations; tutoring; preparing materials for instructors; and holding office hours. GANTs must enroll in at least nine graduate SCH in a graduate degree program each fall and spring semester of employment. GANTs whose initial enrollment in a graduate degree program is in the summer semester must enroll in at least three graduate SCH during that summer term. Enrollment in a reduced number of graduate SCH is permissible for graduate assistants enrolled in the final semester of their degree program. The Dean of Graduate Studies must approve GANTs taking more than 12 graduate semester hours of course work in the fall or spring semester or those taking more than six graduate semester hours per summer session. GANTs must also maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA in course work leading toward the completion of a graduate degree. The Dean of Graduate Studies must approve any exceptions. The appropriate Graduate Advisor, Department Chair, and College Dean must submit requests for exceptions in writing to the Dean of Graduate Studies prior to the student's first day of employment.

C. Graduate students employed in salaried assistantships in the fall and spring semesters may spread out their required fall-spring enrollment hours (18 graduate SCH) over both semesters pending approval by the Department Chair, College Dean, and Dean of Graduate Studies.

D. Graduate students entering their graduate degree program in the fall term are not eligible to work as graduate student employees in salaried assistantships until the first day of classes of the fall term.

E. Only GTAs who have fulfilled the credential guidelines outlined in accordance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) *Principles of Accreditation* are authorized to serve as graders and have access to the learning management system (i.e., Blackboard) for the courses they teach or related courses within their designated program.

F. GRAs or GANTs, who are employed for purposes other than instructional/curricular duties, are ineligible to act as graders or have access to the learning management system (i.e., Blackboard) unless they have also been verified through the SACSCOC credentialing requirements applicable to teaching assistants.

G. In adherence to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99), all graduate students employed in salaried assistantship positions who have access to any information protected by FERPA must undergo FERPA training facilitated by Lamar University's Office of Human Resources. The responsibility for ensuring that FERPA training and any other relevant training are completed successfully lies with the home department where the graduate student is employed.

H. Students employed as graduate student assistants who will have access to patient records must complete the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) training and sign a confidentiality agreement.

I. GTAs must provide evidence of in-service training and faculty must submit evaluations of all GTAs to LU's Office of Accreditation and Assessment by the last day of final exams each semester. Failure to submit evaluations and proof of in-service training is a violation of SACSCOC standards and will result in the student being ineligible to serve as a GTA in the subsequent semester.

III. ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR SUMMER EMPLOYMENT

A. Graduate student employees in salaried assistantships who were enrolled in 18 graduate hours at LU during an academic year (fall and spring semesters) and are enrolled as a full-time graduate student in the upcoming fall semester may work in the summer with no enrollment requirement.

B. Graduate student employees in salaried assistantships who entered their graduate degree program in the spring semester and were enrolled in nine graduate hours at LU during the spring semester must enroll in at least three graduate SCH during the summer, unless they were fully enrolled and employed as undergraduate assistants at LU in the previous fall semester, in which case they may work in the summer with no enrollment requirement.

C. Graduate student employees in salaried assistantships entering their graduate degree program in the summer term must enroll in at least three graduate SCH during the summer.

IV. ALLOWABLE WORK HOURS AND LIMITS

A. **Fall and Spring Semesters.** Graduate student employees (GTAs, GRAs, and GANTs) may work up to 49 percent FTE (19.5 hours per week) during the fall and spring semesters. Exception requests for employment over 49 percent FTE are only approved under the most exceptional circumstances by the Dean of Graduate Studies. The appropriate Graduate Advisor, Department Chair, and College Dean must submit requests for exceptions in writing to the Dean of Graduate Studies prior to the student's first day of employment. Requests for exemptions shall identify a funding source and include a rationale for increased employment.

B. **Summer.**

1. For GTAs and GANTS, summer employment is restricted to 49 percent FTE (19.5 hours per week). In exceptional circumstances, the Dean of Graduate Studies may allow an exception for employment over 49 percent FTE during the summer. The appropriate Graduate Advisor, Department Chair, and College Dean must submit requests for exceptions in writing to the

Dean of Graduate Studies prior to the student's first day of employment. Requests for exemptions shall identify a funding source and include a rationale for increased employment.

2. For GRAs, employment is usually restricted to 49 percent FTE (19.5 hours per week) in the summer. However, pending availability of resources, the Dean of Graduate Studies may approve exceptions for employment over 49 percent FTE if GRAs are funded by a grant and/or conducting research or creative activities directly related to their degree program. The appropriate Graduate Advisor, Department Chair, and College Dean must submit requests for exceptions in writing to the Dean of Graduate Studies prior to the student's first day of employment. Requests for exemptions shall identify a funding source and include a rationale for increased employment.

C. **GTAs and Course Limits.** GTAs may be assigned as a graduate assistant to ***no more than two courses per semester*** (the equivalent to 0.49 FTE). This limit must be applied consistently across all departments. To ensure that workloads remain fair, reasonable, and consistent across the University, any EPAF listing a GTA assignment of more than one course must include, in the EPAF's comments, a breakdown of the FTE allocation or expected hours for each course and estimated student enrollment for each course. EPAFs that lack this information and EPAFs that indicate a GTA workload beyond .49 may be rejected and returned to the submitting department.

V. BENEFITS

A. To be considered eligible for full-time benefits, including health insurance, the State of Texas generally requires employees to be reasonably expected to work at least 30 hours per week for 90 days or more. In general, graduate student employees in salaried assistantships are not benefits-eligible due to work hour and employment limitations.

B. Before a graduate student is employed in a salaried assistantship for any term (fall, spring, summer), the position will be reviewed to ensure that the student is not working over the work hour and/or duration (90 days) limits set by the University and indicated in this policy. In most cases, a position that exceeds the work hour and/or duration limits will not be approved. Nevertheless, if a student is hired into a position that meets the full-time and duration criteria, he/she may be eligible for benefits, and for eligible positions, and benefits may be effective on the first day of employment.

C. LU faculty and staff who need guidance on whether a graduate student employed in a salaried assistantship is eligible for benefits are strongly encouraged to contact LU's Office of Human Resources for assistance. Faculty and staff employing international students as graduate assistants are especially encouraged to contact Human Resources as work hours and employment duration may affect an international student's Visa status.

VI. OUT-OF-STATE TUITION AND FEE EXEMPTION

A. According to the Texas Education Code, Sec. 54.212, a graduate assistant, graduate teaching assistant, or graduate research assistant of any institution of higher education, as well as the spouse and children of such an assistant, are entitled to register in a state institution of higher education by paying the tuition fees and other fees or charges required for Texas residents under

Section 54.051 of the Code, without regard to the length of time the assistant has resided in Texas, if the employee is employed at least one-half time in a graduate assistant, graduate teaching assistant, or graduate research assistant position that relates to the employee's degree program under rules and regulations established by the employer institution.

B. Graduate student employees in salaried assistantships and LU department staff are responsible for submitting the required paperwork for the out-of-state waiver to the appropriate LU offices (e.g., Student Business Services, Admissions, Human Resources, etc.) by the deadline designated on the exemption paperwork.

C. Questions about the out-of-state waiver should be directed to the College of Graduate Studies.

VII. INSTITUTIONAL WAIVER FOR TUITION AND SELECTED FEES FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

A. Full-time doctoral students awarded a graduate teaching assistantship or graduate research assistantship in the amount of at least $6,000 (per calendar year) and enrolled in eligible graduate programs can apply for an institutional doctoral waiver for tuition and selected fees.

B. Each academic college shall be responsible for submitting its list of recommended students in the spreadsheet format provided by the College of Graduate Studies at least 10 days prior to the first day of class of each semester. A copy of each student's approved EPAF shall accompany the list.

C. The College of Graduate Studies shall inform each academic college of the students who received an institutional doctoral waiver no later than the 12th day of class each semester.

D. Doctoral students who receive an institutional doctoral waiver are not eligible to receive a Competitive Graduate Studies Scholarship within the same semester. Information on Competitive Graduate Studies Scholarships is available through the College of Graduate Studies.

E. Questions about the institutional doctoral waiver should be directed to the College of Graduate Studies.

VIII. REVIEW SCHEDULE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Review Schedule: Every three years on or before the date the policy was last revised and/or approved.

Responsible Party: Academic Policy Advisory Council

IX. APPROVAL

04/24/2024
Dr. Daniel A. Brown
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

04/24/2024
Dr. Jaime R. Taylor
Lamar University President

POLICY LOG

Version 1

01/18/2024
Policy draft completed.

01/18/2024
Policy approved by President.

Version 2

04/18/2024
Policy updated to clarify responsibilities of Graduate Assistants Non-Teaching (GANTs), especially as these relate to SACSCOC requirements for performing teaching-related activities.

04/24/2024
Policy approved by President.

10/27/2026
Policy edited - benefits eligibility clarified & benefits moved to its own section; summer work hours clarified; limit of two course set for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs).