



COLUMBUS STATE
UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Graduate Assistant Handbook

The Graduate School
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The handbook is reviewed at the end of every academic year and updated as needed by the Graduate School based on the recommendations of the University Graduate Council.

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1. WELCOME

Columbus State University's graduate assistantships are designed to prompt the research, teaching, and service responsibilities of the university and to provide students with valuable professional development opportunities while earning a graduate degree. We are excited to welcome you to our CSU community as a Graduate Assistant (GA). This handbook has been created to specify your responsibilities and benefits while serving as a GA. We hope it will be a useful resource for you. If you have any questions about your assistantship, you may contact Human Resources, the Graduate School, your department, or your supervisor. We are certain your experience as a GA will enrich both your academic and professional career.

2. GENERAL GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP POLICIES

The graduate assistantship involves the dual responsibilities of maintaining a satisfactory academic performance and of successfully performing the assigned teaching, research, or other forms of service. In return for performing research, teaching, or service, all or part of the graduate assistant's tuition is waived and only student fees are assessed. This applies to both in-state and out-of-state students. Additionally, the graduate assistant will receive a stipend for work performed.

A student holding an appointment as a graduate assistant must:

- Be fully admitted to a graduate degree, diploma, or certificate program
- Be in good standing (program GPA \geq 3.0)
- Attend Graduate Assistant Orientation
- Earn a minimum of six semester hours of graduate course work during the period in which the assistantship is held. Students granted assistantships are not permitted to reduce their course load to less than six hours and retain the assistantship.

The length of appointment for graduate assistantships is for up to two semesters (fall and spring), or on a semester by semester basis. All graduate assistantships are awarded each year by academic units and non-academic units on a competitive basis following a highly qualified student's nomination by their graduate program and using predetermined criteria, including but not limited to the applicant's academic record, test scores, recommendations, and other pertinent information.

Duties and responsibilities of graduate assistants include but are not limited to: Graduate assistants work no more than nineteen (19) hours per week.

- Assistantships with full tuition waiver require 11-19 hours per week. Partial assistantships with half tuition waivers require 5-10 hours per week. All assistantships must be approved by the Graduate School.

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 - Assistantships with full tuition waiver require 11-19 hours per week. Partial assistantships with half tuition waivers require 5-10 hours per week. All assistantships must be approved by the Graduate School.
- The employing department supervisor sets the student's work schedule ensuring it aligns with the student's academic commitments.
- The employing department will provide specific duties and responsibilities.
- Graduate assistants will accurately report the number of hours worked each week.

3. TYPES OF GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

3.1 Graduate Administrative Assistant (GAA)

- Students in this role assist in a program or non-academic unit that requires graduate-level knowledge, skills, and dispositions. GAAs assist faculty, departments, or other units in various activities that develop transferable skills that help students get ready for professional life such as skills in communication, teamwork, time management, organization, and technology.

3.2 Graduate Lab Assistant (GLA)

- Students holding GLA appointments may not have primary responsibility for a course. Still, they may assist in laboratory sessions, prepare lectures, grade papers, keep class records, conduct discussion groups and tutorials, hold student conferences, or help the course instructor in other ways. GLAs work under the professor of record's direct supervision. The department chair or division director shall determine that a student's credentials qualify the individual to undertake the work assignment.

3.3 Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)

- The duties assigned for Graduate Research Assistantships should be relevant and add value to the student's major field of study, area of interest or expertise. The research is usually a component of the faculty advisor's research. GRAs are generally expected to carry out a specific research project that often forms the basis for a thesis or dissertation. General duties include:
 - Performing experiments, calculations, and analyzing the results and disseminating new knowledge orally or in written publications
 - Reflecting on the state of the field and proposing new research problems
 - Attending conferences to present results and collaborate with other researchers
 - Training and supervising less experienced research personnel

3.4 Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)

- Students in this role are involved in instruction, usually of undergraduates. Qualified GTAs perform instructional duties in an area of their expertise, most often within their home departments, although qualified GTAs may perform teaching duties outside their departments. Students appointed as a GTA must have a baccalaureate degree and be enrolled in a graduate program. GTAs who are primarily responsible for teaching a course for credit and assigning final grades for such a course must have earned at least 18 credit hours of graduate coursework in the teaching discipline before their appointment, be under the direct supervision of a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, receive regular in-service training, and be evaluated regularly.
- The "Faculty Qualifications Recommendation" form (located under Forms on MyCSU) needs to be completed by the department and approved by the Provost's Office before the appointment of a GTA.
- All GTAs must complete the new faculty orientation provided by the [Center of Online Learning](#) at CSU. The hiring supervisor should reach out to COOL to arrange for the training of the GTA.

3.5 Doctoral Fellows (DF)

- Doctoral fellows will typically be assigned responsibilities that overlap those of Graduate Research Assistants and Graduate Teaching Assistants. They are frequently engaged in research and may be assigned to work with one or more faculty members in the program. If they will be teaching a course, the requirements for GTA appointments described in 3.4 apply.

4. ELIGIBILITY FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

To be eligible for appointment to any type of graduate assistantship, students must meet all of the following conditions:

- The student must be fully accepted as "Regular" in an approved graduate degree, diploma, or certificate program at CSU. Students classified as "Non-degree," "Provisional," or on probation are not eligible for an assistantship.
- Students must be enrolled in at least six graduate credit hours in the semester in which they serve as a graduate assistant.
- Graduate assistantships during the summer require enrollment in a total of at least six graduate credit hours in the summer terms.
- An academic load of more than 10 hours must be approved by the appropriate dean and the graduate director.
- For the second-year student, satisfactory progress toward the degree must be evidenced by completing a minimum of 12 graduate semester hours with at least a 3.0 program grade-point average in their current degree program. Graduate Teaching Assistants

(GTA's), who will have the primary responsibility of teaching a course and assigning final grades, must have earned at least 18 graduate semester hours in their teaching discipline.

- Students must be eligible to work in the United States and cannot exceed any hourly limitations placed on them by a visa.
- International online students cannot be hired as GAs.
- Students enrolled in fully online courses can be appointed as graduate assistants if
 - the student can be on campus to carry out the duties of the appointment OR
 - their supervisor approves that the duties for the appointment can be carried out remotely. In this case, the supervisor needs to contact the Graduate School to get student access to the GA orientation materials.

5. GRADUATE ASSISTANT APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES

Typically, students apply for graduate assistant positions through the CSU's Employment portal and hiring department or unit representatives interview the applicants for the positions. In some cases, the hiring departments or units may select candidates through alternative methods, such as previous appointments or successful completion of specific coursework or training programs.

When a student is interviewed or offered a GA position they should discuss the following with the hiring supervisor to have a clear understanding of the expectations of the job 1) the scope of the project or job, 2) the specific expectations, tasks, and responsibilities, 3) the frequency of meetings with the supervisor, and 4) the methods of assessment or evaluation for the position.

To hire a student as a GA, the hiring supervisor must submit the "Graduate Assistant Appointment" form for approval. This form is reviewed by the head of the hiring unit, International Student Services (for international students), the student's department chair, college dean, Graduate School, Budget Office, and Human Resources (HR). Once the form is fully approved, HR sends an email to the GA, with copies to the hiring supervisor and the Graduate School, outlining the steps to complete the hiring process. The student must successfully complete a background check and onboarding paperwork before being officially hired. A GA cannot begin work until the background check is completed.

After the hiring process is finalized, the tuition waiver will be applied to the GA's account. If applicable, the student can then request a waiver for the health insurance fee (refer to Section 9 for details on mandatory health insurance).

Once hired, an employee account will be created for the GA. The hiring supervisor will provide the account details, including login credentials. GAs are required to regularly monitor this employee account for all work-related communications. As employees of CSU, GAs must complete mandatory training sessions each semester. These trainings are accessed through the employee account, and failure to complete them may result in the loss of CSU network access and could lead to termination of employment.

6. ADMINISTRATION OF GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

6.1 Offers of Appointment

The deadline for hiring graduate assistants is the last business day before the semester starts. Late applications may not be processed in time for the GA to timely start the work and receive full benefits, such as the waiver of health insurance fees.

Once approved, graduate assistants will receive a letter from Human Resources, indicating the following:

- type of assistantship,
- the stipend amount,
- number of hours required of work per week, and an
- explanation of how to accept the offer.

Additionally, please remember the following:

- Graduate Assistants cannot begin work and will not be paid until a clear background check is complete.
- It takes up to two weeks for the background check to be completed.

6.2 Appointment Guidelines

Departments or non-academic units hiring graduate assistants are encouraged to establish written guidelines or policies specific to their department or unit, in addition to the university's Graduate Assistant Handbook. To conform with the requirements of due process, departments should also provide the following information to those 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
- Departmental guidelines for graduate assistantships
- Graduate Assistant Handbook

At the time departments make initial assistantship offers, each department or unit employing GAs must provide specific departmental policies of professional conduct. GAs should have the privilege of being treated as professionals-in-training in their chosen fields of study. As such, they should be provided with resources and facilities sufficient to let them meet the responsibilities of their appointment. All GAs should receive appropriate space in which to perform their duties. Departments should supply GTAs with copies of textbooks and other teaching materials related to the courses in which they are assisting. Departments employing GRAs should supply them with materials and equipment required for their research projects

or other activities. GAs of other kinds should also have access to appropriate materials and facilities.

6.3 Appointment Period

A graduate student may be appointed as a GA on a semester-by-semester basis or for both fall and spring semesters. A semester-by- semester appointment begins on the first day of classes and ends on the last business day of the final exams week as specified in the university catalog. If approved by their supervisor, GAs can carry out part or all their tasks remotely in this period. If the student is hired late, the employing department will decide whether to offer a reduced stipend.

6.4 Employment Classification

GAs that are classified as exempt from the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) include Graduate Lab Assistants, Graduate Research Assistants, Graduate Teaching Assistants, and Doctoral Fellows. Exempt work is performed by either (a) executive/administrators; or (b) professionals and is paid on a salaried basis regardless of the specific number of hours worked in each week. GAs perform work at the professional level, utilizing content knowledge that requires at least a bachelor’s degree, and as a result are paid as exempt professionals.

GAs that are classified as nonexempt are Graduate Administrative Assistants. Non-exempt work is primarily or materially clerical, service/maintenance, trades/skilled crafts, or technical/paraprofessional, since such work must be classified as non-exempt under the FLSA and must be paid on an hourly basis for all hours worked, including overtime if applicable.

Graduate assistants are allowed to work outside of the university, as long as they are able to fulfill the required hours for the graduate assistantship, meet the performance standards set by the supervisor/department, and maintain the required overall GPA of 3.0 or higher.

7. INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International students must provide all credentials required of U.S. students to be considered for a graduate assistantship. Additionally, a professional transcript evaluation of all non-U.S. accredited institutions and proof of an acceptable level of English language proficiency are required for admission to CSU. The hiring department is responsible for determining and communicating any additional language proficiency requirements, specific coursework, or minimum GPA criteria if the position demands higher qualifications in these areas.

Online international students are not eligible for GA. If the applicant will be attending Columbus State University on an F-1 student visa, a financial guarantee and original supporting bank documents are required. Application forms and detailed procedures for

enrolling as an international student can be obtained from the Admissions Office at Columbus State University or online at: <https://www.columbusstate.edu/global/international-students/>. International graduate students on F1 visas cannot hold a greater than 50% work appointment. Certain exceptions are allowed. Please contact the Center for Global Engagement. Multiple assistantships for international graduate students cannot add up to more than a 50% work appointment.

International graduate students must comply with all university, local, state, and federal regulations, including but not limited to visas, international student fees, health insurance requirements, employment, curriculum changes, and other requirements that may arise.

8. STIPEND, BENEFITS, FINANCIAL AID, AND PAY SCHEDULE

Graduate Assistants will receive a stipend. All graduate assistantship appointments must meet the minimum wage hourly pay. Graduate Assistantship stipend amounts may vary by department, work expectations, and funding source. Stipends are subject to local, state, and federal taxes. The stipend for all graduate assistantships is stipulated in the request for graduate assistantship form. Payment is made according to the classification of graduate assistantship. In summer, GAs are paid at the end of June and end of July. If the student is hired late, the employing department will decide whether to offer a reduced stipend.

Graduate assistantships are considered part-time employees; therefore, they are ineligible for employment benefits. No annual or sick leave is accrued. GAs do not earn sick or vacation hours, please consult with your department/school/office concerning their policies. Most often GAs make up the work hours they miss. When the university is closed for classes, GAs are not required to work.

Pay rates may vary by student experience, funding source, discipline, and responsibilities specific to the appointment. For each term, fall and spring, GAs are to be paid a minimum of \$2,100 per term. Because the summer term is shorter and GAs may work a variable number of weeks, the GA stipend should generally be at the same rate of pay rather than the same total pay for the term. Departments and/or colleges should establish fair pay scales. Units should monitor their pay practice for consistency across the unit to ensure that individuals are paid in accordance with that pay scale and that there is no disparate impact on individuals based on protected factors such as age, race, or gender according to the EEOC, ADA, and EEOA.

Salaries acquired as a part of the graduate assistantship appointment may affect federal student financial aid. Students are encouraged to speak with financial aid and FAFSA to determine what effect the assistantship might have on federal loans and financial aid.

9. TUITION RATES AND WAIVERS

Tuition: Graduate Assistants pay a special tuition rate of \$25 per semester as mandated by BOR policy. This rate is applicable to both in-state and out-of-state students. The graduate assistant tuition waiver covers 10 credit hours of graduate courses. Tuition for additional credit hours as well as all other University fees and the health insurance fee are paid by the student. Students who have part-time assistantships (1/2 time) must pay for half of their tuition.

To be eligible for a **full tuition waiver**, a student must:

- Have an appointment total of at least 25% FTE (10 work hours/week) and less than 50% FTE (19 hours/week)
- Meet an enrollment minimum of 6 credit hours per semester
- Be offered total earnings of at least the minimum GA stipend (minimum stipend for the next year is to be established by the Graduate Council at the Graduate Council meeting in September). Minimum stipends can be accomplished through appointments in more than one unit
- Enroll in mandatory health insurance program or provide proof of insurance.

To be eligible for a **partial (50%) tuition waiver**, a student must:

- Have an appointment total of at least a 12.5% FTE (5 work hours/week) and less than 25% FTE (10 hours/week)
- Meet a part-time enrollment minimum (6 credit hours per academic term)
- Be offered at least the minimum GA stipend for part-time appointment (minimum stipend for the next year is to be established by the Graduate Council at the Graduate Council meeting in September)
- Enroll in mandatory health insurance program or provide proof of insurance.

Tuition for Undergraduate courses: Graduate assistants can register for undergraduate courses that are required by their programs and have the tuition paid. Some graduate programs include requirements for undergraduate hours. Students who enroll in undergraduate courses as electives should ensure that this does not jeopardize any financial aid they might be receiving.

Mandatory Health Insurance: All graduate assistants are required to have health insurance as employees of CSU. They are automatically enrolled in the [Student Health Insurance Program \(SHIP\)](#) provided by the USG when they are hired. Students who have their own insurance may be eligible to apply for a health insurance waiver. The standards for the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP), including eligibility requirements and the

waiver process for both domestic and international students, are available on the [USG SHIP](#) website, which students are responsible for reviewing.

The waiver application may only be submitted after the student has been hired in the system. If a graduate assistant's appointment is not completed before the start of the semester, the student may miss the waiver application window and be required to pay the health insurance fee. Waivers are valid for one semester only and must be submitted each semester.

10. SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND PERSONAL MISCONDUCT

Columbus State University is committed to creating and maintaining a university community in which all persons can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of all forms of harassment. Therefore, sexual harassment within the Columbus State University community is expressly prohibited. Furthermore, Columbus State University is opposed to sexual assault, and such behavior is prohibited both by state law and by university policy.

Thus, all campus members should refrain from any conduct that could give rise to a charge of sexual misconduct. Persons who engage in sexual misconduct shall be subject to disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion when warranted.

The university affords certain rights to campus members who have been sexually harassed and/or assaulted. These rights include assistance in reporting the crime and in securing counseling and health services. Accused persons are subject to arrest, incarceration, and prosecution through the court system. Accused persons are also subject to university judicial proceedings that may result in suspension or permanent expulsion from Columbus State University.

Students will conform to the policies and procedures governing sexual harassment and misconduct outlined by the current Student Handbook and the current employment policies governing Columbus State University employees.

11. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The university recognizes honesty and integrity as central virtues of academic life and as fully necessary to its very existence. The university also recognizes and accepts that cooperation, discussion, and group studying outside of the classroom are essential elements of the academic experience, and that students may seek assistance in their studies, such as tutoring and peer review. However, while such practices are acceptable and even encouraged, students must understand the parameters of accountability in their academic performance and need to respect the academic freedom of the faculty. Students are responsible for adhering to the

regulations pertaining to academic misconduct published under Student Rights and Responsibilities in the Student Handbook at <https://www.columbusstate.edu/student-life/resources.php>.

12. RESIGNATION AND TERMINATION

12.1 Resignation

A graduate assistant choosing to resign or terminate their employment must submit a letter of resignation to the hiring supervisor. A termination Personnel Action Request form must be submitted to Human Resources by the supervisor to avoid overpayment. The Graduate School should also be informed of the resignation via email by the supervisor.

12.2 Termination

Students may be terminated from their appointment for the following reasons.

- Failure to perform satisfactorily the duties assigned by the supervisor
- Academic misconduct as determined by the university and department
- Violations of the student code of conduct
- Students submitting falsified transcripts or letters of recommendation when applying for an award
- If a student's GPA falls below 3.0 (academic warning), the department may determine to withdraw the award, or the student may receive one semester to improve and return to academic good standing before the assistantship is terminated
- Should a student fail to return to good academic standing after one semester, or should a student receive academic exclusion and be dismissed from the degree program, the assistantship would be terminated at once
- Students who fail to meet satisfactory degree progress as outlined by the department administering the award
- Students who do not meet the academic requirements or the requirements of the job may be terminated

A termination Personnel Action Request form must be submitted to Human Resources by the supervisor to avoid overpayment. Compensation and tuition waivers will cease upon termination of the contract. The Graduate School should also be informed of the resignation via email by the supervisor.

13. GRIEVANCES

Students seeking redress of grievances are encouraged to seek counsel and support from those within the university. In addition to their rights as students at Columbus State University, all GAs have certain other rights as assistants and as employees. First, they have the right to receive written notification of all decisions, actions, or contingencies that will

affect their assistantship. For example, they should receive in advance an account of the procedures by which they will be evaluated as assistants. They should also receive notice of reappointment procedures well in advance, so that they can prepare their requests or applications. Students will also receive notifications regarding potential changes to their appointment affecting salary or tuition waivers, or termination or suspension of the appointment. Second, graduate students have the right to seek a resolution of assistantship-related grievances through the Student Academic Grievance Policy outlined by Academic Affairs (<https://www.columbusstate.edu/academic-affairs/appeals/>). Since the duties of many GAs are intertwined with their academic work, those who believe that they have a grievance should carefully consider which process to initiate. The process outlined here for GAs applies only to grievances arising specifically from their work as GAs.

Finally, just as assistants may encounter problems in carrying out their duties, so too may they become the subject of complaints or grievances brought by others. When the assistant's supervisor, academic advisor, or department head or chair receives such complaints, the GA has the right to receive prompt notification and to be offered the opportunity to respond to the complaint, presenting evidence in defense. Here, too, the burden of proof should rest on the person making the complaint.

Purpose:

The GA Grievance Policy is not designed to encourage or provide for formal adjudication of difference or to create a bureaucracy of review. Instead, the policy is intended to provide a fair and uniform set of guidelines by which the grievances of GAs may be heard and resolved. All grievances should be resolved at the lowest possible administrative level and in the most equitable way. Those seeking redress of grievances have the right to appeal to successive levels of administration. At every level of consideration, the assistant is entitled to fair and impartial review. Those considering the grievance should make every effort to act with proper regard to the GA's welfare and confidentiality, as well as to sound academic policy.

Process:

Before filing a grievance, GAs should first inform their immediate academic advisor or supervisor of the problem and seek their help in solving the issue. If necessary, the assistant may then appeal to the graduate coordinator or department chair for help. Only if a satisfactory resolution of the problem cannot be achieved at these levels should an assistant appeal to a higher administrative level.

If the problem cannot be resolved at the department level or if the nature of the problem or the personalities involved would make it too awkward or embarrassing to begin the grievance process at that level, the assistant may present the grievance to the academic dean of the college in which they are enrolled or, in a unit without an academic dean, to other appropriate administrative officer(s).

If the problem cannot be resolved there, the student may appeal to the provost of designate. A student may appeal to the University Graduate Council if they are denied an appeal from the college graduate appeal process. The student will complete and provide the council with a Graduate Appeal Policy and Procedure Form and all the required documents described in the form. Note: The Graduate Council will not consider appeals for an academic grievance, medical withdrawal, or grade appeal. The University Graduate Council will provide a record recording the follow up of the appeal. The University Graduate Council's decision will be final.

14. DUE PROCESS

The student's graduate coordinator or department monitors each graduate student's progress toward a degree, and issues of professional and personal development may be considered. While failure to maintain academic standards merits automatic dismissal, a student also may be dropped from the Graduate School if progress is unsatisfactory in other areas.

In such cases, the graduate coordinator or department will prepare a statement of grievance and discuss it in a meeting with the student. The student will be warned that corrective measures must be taken within a specified time to avoid action that might result in dismissal. The committee determines the period allowed for correction. Copies of the statement of grievance and summary of the meeting will be provided to the student, the department head or chair, the academic dean, and the graduate dean.

If the deficiency is not corrected within the time allowed by the committee, a statement reiterating the grievance and recommending dismissal should be sent to the student, with copies sent to the department head or chair, and the dean of the college.

The student maintains the right to appeal any decision made against them regarding dismissal as outlined by Academic Affairs and discussed in the current Student Handbook. The graduate coordinator and department chair will be notified if the student appeals to Academic Affairs.

The action taken will not appear on the student's official transcript, and release of information is restricted under the university's policy on the confidentiality of student records.

15. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Columbus State University is dedicated to teaching, research, and the extension of knowledge to the public. Its personnel recognize as two of their primary objectives the creation, development, and production of new knowledge and the dissemination of both old and new knowledge. Inherent in these objectives is the need to encourage the development of new and

useful materials, devices, programs, processes, and other inventions and creations, some of which may have potential for commercialization, and/or the production and publication of creative and scholarly works and educational materials. GAs are bound by the policies governing intellectual property outlined in the [current Student Handbook](#).

16. HUMAN AND ANIMAL RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Human Research:

Columbus State University promotes and supports human research. Basic tenets of human research are voluntary participation and the ethical treatment of the subjects in the research process. The basic ethical principles are defined in the Belmont Report. The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) defines the basic rules by which research should be evaluated (45 CFR 46).

Position Statements:

- All research involving human subjects will undergo preliminary evaluation by the University Institutional Office for Human Research.
- Neither the amount of funding nor source of the research funds will interfere with or influence the review process of human research subject protocols.
- All research will adhere to the federal codes, state laws and university rules and regulations regarding the use of human participants in research. (Note: This includes FERPA and HIPAA regulations).
- A full Institutional Review Board (IRB) will review proposals that do not meet the federal guidelines for “exempt” or “expedited” status. Exempt research qualifies for streamlined review process; however, it must still be submitted to and approved by the IRB. Use this link to determine if your research project is exempt or expedited: <https://www.columbusstate.edu/academic-affairs/research/irb/>.
- All researchers that use human subjects must complete human subject research training.

Animal Research:

Research that involves the use of animals as research subjects must get approval from the Institutional Animal and Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Columbus State University requires compliance with the Animal Welfare Assurance negotiated with the Office of Laboratory Animal Health/National Institutes of Health (OLAW/NIH). All activities, whether teaching, research, production or display of vertebrate animals, and whether or not the activity is funded, must be approved in advance by the committee. The use of animals for any purpose that is not approved in advance by the IACUC may involve severe penalties for non-compliance with institutional policy and could jeopardize the University’s Animal Welfare Assurance filed with the OLAW and the NIH. Information may be obtained from the Legal Affairs, Ethics and Compliance Division [at https://www.columbusstate.edu/legal-affairs/](https://www.columbusstate.edu/legal-affairs/).

17. POLICIES GOVERNING GRADUATE ASSISTANTS INVOLVED IN TEACHING

17.1 FERPA

There are strict guidelines and laws governing student privacy. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended, is a federal law that protects the privacy of student educational records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. Disclosure of information contained in the education records of a student to individuals and organizations other than those specifically covered by FERPA shall be limited to items designated as directory information, except upon written, signed and dated consent of the student. Directory information will be treated as public information and generally be available on all students and former students, at the discretion of the institution. Additional information concerning FERPA and the release of directory information can be found at the U.S. Department of Education website at <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/ferpa>.

17.2 Contacting Students Through Email

GAs must use their Columbus State University employee accounts when communicating with students. Students asking questions about their grades, enrollment status, course information, or other official information must contact their assistant using their work Columbus State University account. Contact made via a non-Columbus State or student account must be responded to politely, advising the student that for privacy reasons all correspondence must go through their official employee - accounts. GAs must preserve all correspondence with students.

17.3 Disposal of Student Work

Student work is to be kept for a calendar year. Before disposing of materials, GAs should remove all identifying marks, such as names and IDs and shred all documents with names, grades, and other private information.

17.4 Students in Distress

Refer all students to the professionals at the Counseling Center (706-507-8740) (<https://www.columbusstate.edu/counseling-center/>). Advise the department chair immediately of the situation and work with faculty to help the student.

If the student is in danger of harming themselves or others, first contact the Campus Police (706-568-2022). Immediately contact the department chair and the Counseling Center.

The website for the Counseling Center includes information for helping students who have been the victim of sexual or domestic violence, drugs, alcohol, who may be suicidal, or who suffer from post-traumatic stress. Guidelines for faculty in making appropriate referrals to the Counseling Center can be found at <https://www.columbusstate.edu/counseling-center/>.

17.5 Disruptive Students

GAs should discuss with faculty how to diffuse disruptive situations with students as part of their training. Assistants will be non-confrontational but firm with disruptive students. If disruption continues in a tutorial, lab, or classroom, the assistant will contact Campus Police (706-568-2022) calmly and discreetly to have the student removed. The departmental chair must be immediately advised of any such situation and conclude with the chair whether or not a report should be submitted. More information can be found at <https://www.columbusstate.edu/student-affairs/create-care/>.

It is the responsibility of faculty, staff, and students to immediately report any situation that could possibly result in harm to anyone at the university. These reports may be directed to the Behavioral Assessment and Recommendation Team or the Counseling Center depending on the nature of the concern. However, when there is an active or immediate risk of violence to self or others the University Police should be contacted at (706-568-2022).

17.6 Academic Advisement

GAs should not advise undergraduate students. If necessary, they should refer undergraduates to their academic advisors on campus.

17.7 Academic Misconduct

GAs must advise the department chair and overseeing instructor about any instance of academic misconduct that they witness. The GA will follow the university, college, departmental, and course policies regarding academic misconduct and do so with all consideration to timeliness and due process as described by Academic Affairs and the Student Handbook.

18. STUDENT RESEARCH AND CONFERENCE TRAVEL

Graduate students conducting research away from CSU or presenting work at a conference need to complete a Student Travel Application with their department two weeks prior to their departure whether or not CSU is funding the research trip or conference presentation.

Students must also complete a Travel Expense Statement within five business days of their return to CSU and include all travel receipts and documents for reimbursement from the institution. Students should discuss all travel with their departmental administrator and graduate coordinator prior to their departure and familiarize themselves with the University System of Georgia regulations: https://www.usg.edu/business_procedures_manual/section4.

19. EXPECTATIONS FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

1. Attend orientation training prior to the start of the academic year
2. Ask questions and seek a mentor
3. Understand that some transitions will be challenging
4. Seek resources and information that will be helpful for your growth and development
5. Serve as a positive role model for other graduate students and undergraduates
6. Express concerns and provide feedback in an appropriate manner. Think through solutions beforehand.
7. Keep an open mind and be open to new suggestions and ways of doing things.
8. Understand and uphold the mission statement of CSU, the program, and your individual department.
9. Find ways to balance work, academics, and personal issues. Reach out to your supervisor if you are struggling.
10. Learn and grow from mistakes and successes.
11. Represent your department and the university in a professional manner.
12. Follow the dress code policies or guidelines of your hiring department.
13. Always try your very best.
14. Be flexible - the graduate assistant position is ever changing and issues are rarely black and white.
15. Keep a positive attitude and remember that everything is a learning experience.
16. Offer support to fellow graduate assistants.
17. Be timely to events and with administrative responsibilities.
18. Maintain confidentiality between other graduates, supervisors, and students.