



# Graduate Student Hiring Rules & Procedures

As of 12.17.19

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The **Graduate Student Hiring Rules and Procedures** are George Mason University's primary resource for faculty and staff overseeing graduate programs and for Mason graduate students. Current rules and procedures are maintained by the Graduate Education Office within the Office of the Provost and can be accessed on the Office of the Provost website: provost.gmu.edu. Please direct feedback and questions to provgrad@gmu.edu.

*George Mason University is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from any discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, pregnancy status, or genetic information. George Mason University shall adhere to all applicable state and federal equal opportunity/affirmative action statutes and regulations.*

University Policy Number 1201

### Posting of Graduate Student Positions

Each academic unit or department establishes procedures to ensure that students are selected fairly and in accordance with university hiring guidelines. Hiring departments should contact the dean's office for guidance regarding procedures specific to the academic unit.

## II. GRADUATE STUDENT POSITIONS

For information specific to hiring international students, see **Section VII**.

Mason graduate students are hired under the classification best applicable to the position responsibilities. If the job responsibilities do not fit one of the Graduate Assistant (GA) classifications (Graduate Professional Assistant, Graduate Teaching Assistant, or Graduate Research Assistant) or the Graduate Lecturer (GL) classification, students may be hired as Student Wage workers. For information on the Student Wage (SW) classification, see **Section V**.

Students cannot exceed 20 hours of work per week during a terms of enrollment without written permission from their faculty advisor and associate dean. See *Maximum Hours Restrictions* under Section III for more detail.

### Graduate Lecturers (GL)

- Graduate students who serve as the instructor of record for credit-bearing undergraduate courses under faculty supervision. GL assignments are limited to 2 courses or 6 credit hours per semester.
- GL appointments are similar to adjunct faculty appointments with the exception that they are held by graduate students and are under faculty supervision.

### Graduate Professional Assistants (GPA)

- Graduate students participating in non-teaching/non-research positions performing work
  - related to their program of study,
  - commensurate with level of study, and

- providing professional experience in their field of study
- Positions must be significantly connected to the students' fields of study and career preparation.
- Students should not be hired into GPA positions for work that should be done by an employee of the university. The intent of this position is to provide students direct experience in their field of study.
- Hiring units must submit GPA position descriptions to Human Resources and Payroll and to the Graduate Education Office for review and approval prior to making a GPA offer to a student. Units should complete the *GPA Position Description Form* found on the Provost website and distribute it to approving officials per form instructions.
- GPA position descriptions must be submitted each academic year in which a unit intends to hire. If there are any adjustments to the description from a prior year, the position will be considered new and be given a new position number. If the position description does not change, the position number will remain the same.

### **Graduate Research Assistants (GRA)**

- Graduate students participating directly in research or research-support activities under faculty supervision.

### **Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA)**

- GTAs may be assigned to serve as instructors of record OR to support faculty who are instructors of record (see Eligibility and Restrictions).

#### *Instructor of Record*

- Graduate students who serve as instructor of record for undergraduate courses and are under the supervision of a faculty member but are responsible for all teaching and support activities associated with the course to which they are assigned.

#### *Classroom Instruction Support*

- Graduate students participating in classroom instruction support under the supervision of a faculty member may assist department faculty in teaching courses, including laboratory teaching assignments, or in providing other appropriate professional assistance. This may include:
  - Tutoring individuals or small groups of students
  - Holding office hours and meeting with undergraduate students
  - Assisting with the grading of homework or exams or written assignments
  - Administering tests or exams
  - Assisting a faculty instructor with a large lecture class by teaching students in recitation, laboratory, or discussion sessions
  - Helping software users in a computer laboratory
- GTAs are limited to two undergraduate lecture courses (maximum 6 credits), or six semester hours of recitation sections, or nine semester hours of laboratory per semester. Students cannot

exceed 20 hours of work per week during terms of enrollment (without written permission – see *Maximum Hours Restriction* under Section III).

- GTAs are encouraged to review information available on the Center for Teaching & Faculty Excellence website: <http://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/>.

### III. ELIGIBILITY AND RESTRICTIONS

All Graduate Assistant (GA) positions and GL appointments are intended to contribute to the graduate student's educational experience. Therefore, secretarial or clerical duties, or duties unrelated to the student's education experience, are inappropriate as part of GA or GL responsibilities.

#### Eligibility Requirements

- Students must be fully admitted to a graduate degree program at Mason.
- Enrollment is to be monitored by the hiring department.
  - GAs must be enrolled in at least 6 credits per semester during the semester they are employed in a full-time (20-hr/wk) position(s). Students holding only a part-time (less than 20 hrs/wk) position must enroll in 9 credits per the University Catalog's definition of full-time (AP.6.2).
  - GLs may be enrolled in fewer than 6 credits per semester during the semester they are employed.
  - Two exceptions may be made to the full-time enrollment requirement.
    1. Students who need fewer than 6 credit hours to complete their degree
      - Students must have permission from their department and their college/school's graduate associate dean verifying the student's remaining degree requirements.
      - Students should be made aware that they will not officially be recognized as full-time by the university.
      - Approvals should be kept on file for auditing purposes.
    2. Students have met all degree requirements, including necessary dissertation or thesis credits
      - Students must register for at least one credit of dissertation or thesis work per term.
      - Students must complete the *Full-Time Equivalent Status Form* found on the Registrar website in order to retain full-time enrollment status.
      - F-1 and J-1 international students must have approval from the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) before dropping below full-time (as defined in the University Catalog).
- Students must be in good academic standing, maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA, and not have any unsatisfactory grades both at the time of hire and for each term they are to hold an assistantship or lectureship.

- **Maximum Hours Restrictions:**  
 Students holding assistantships or lectureships may not engage in other on- or off-campus employment, including additional assistantships, during the period they hold an assistantship without explicit written approval. Graduate students are limited to working 20 hours per week during terms of enrollment. This is applicable whether students are appointed in one or in multiple academic or nonacademic units. Exceptions for domestic students to work an additional 10 hours (for a maximum of 30 hours per week) may be granted by the faculty advisor and graduate associate dean of the local academic unit. Careful consideration must be given to the students' academic success and ability to maintain progress toward degree completion. Exceptions must be granted prior to the acceptance of additional appointments. Units should use the *Graduate Student Work Authorization form* on the Office of the Provost website to document approval of additional work hours.
  - F-1 or J-1 international students may not work more than 20 hours per week during the fall or spring semester. Full-time employment is permitted during winter and spring breaks and in the summer. Consult the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) for details.
  - The Affordable Care Act limits students to working a maximum of 1450 hours in the May 1 – April 30 calendar year. Students who approach the 1450-hour maximum before the end of the calendar year must immediately stop working from any and all positions and may not resume work before the new calendar year begins on May 1. A thorough review of a student's cumulative positions, hours worked, and hours anticipated should be conducted before authorizing additional work. For questions pertaining to a student's work history and hours worked, contact the unit's Human Resource staff.
  - Students may work more than 20 hours per week hours during spring, winter and summer breaks.
- Students must meet Mason's English proficiency requirements. Individual programs reserve the right to set higher minimum scores. Please visit the *Admissions* section of the current University Catalog for these requirements.
- GTAs and GLs must meet the following additional requirements:
  - GTA assignments for which students are instructor of record and GL assignments require that the student have at least 18 hours of graduate-level course work in the teaching discipline to be assigned full responsibility for teaching an undergraduate course. [*SACSCOC requirement*]. Requests for exceptions to this requirement based on professional experience may be made by the dean's office to the Office of the Provost.
    - Appropriate documentation to determine whether a student is academically qualified to hold these positions consists of an official transcript recording the required graduate coursework.
    - Mason students must give explicit permission for the university to use student records (transcripts) for employment purposes. Students may complete the *Transcript Release Form* granting the Office of the University Registrar the right to provide hiring departments (at no charge to the student) either their official Mason transcript or a copy of their official transcript of their highest degree earned which was submitted during the graduate application process, whichever appropriate to indicate academic qualification.

- Students who do not complete the *Transcript Release Form* are responsible for submitting official transcripts to the hiring department.
- Students cannot start their positions without Registrar released transcripts or official transcripts on file.
- International students who were required to take an English proficiency exam for admission into George Mason must participate and sufficiently perform in the CELTD language proficiency assessment administered by INTO Mason’s Learning Resource Center prior to starting instructional responsibilities. The Learning Resource Center defines and determines sufficient performance. For more information, please see Appendix C, English Language Proficiency Assessment and Support.
- Performance on the assessment will determine whether a student may assume instructional responsibilities (defined in the table below) as a GTA or GL. In addition, performance on the assessment will determine the level of English language tutoring, if any, the student is required to sufficiently complete before assuming any instructional responsibilities.

**Instructional and Non-Instructional GTA Responsibilities:**

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| Instructor of Record   | Instructional     |
| Tutoring individuals or small groups of students   | Instructional     |
| Holding office hours and meeting with undergraduate students   | Instructional     |
| Assisting with the grading of homework or exams or written assignments   | Non-Instructional |
| Administering tests or exams   | Non-Instructional |
| Assisting a faculty instructor with a large lecture class by teaching students in recitation, laboratory, or discussion sessions | Instructional     |
| Helping software users in a computer laboratory  | Non-Instructional |

- Academic units and programs may have more stringent policies requiring international students holding GTA or GL assignments to take the English Language proficiency assessment. These policies should be maintained centrally within the Academic Unit and shared with the Learning Resource Center.

## **IV. STUDENT SUPPORT PACKAGE**

The support package, which includes a stipend and any tuition being offered, is determined based on the availability of funds. Questions regarding available funding should be directed to the dean’s office.

## Offer Letter

- The support package is to be outlined for the student using the offer letter template found on the Office of the Provost website.
- Any tuition support being offered must be included in the offer letter and may be described either as a total monetary value for the term of appointment or by the total number of credits to be covered per term.
- Work expectations are to be detailed in the offer letter and are to be monitored by the supervisor. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to evaluate the graduate assistant's work performance based on the stated work expectations.
- The offer letter must specify expectations of work during university or semester breaks.
  - The supervisor may require a GRA or GPA be available to work two weeks prior to the start of the spring semester. In this situation, the supervisor is not obliged to give compensatory time off during the spring semester.
  - The supervisor may request a GRA or GPA be available at other points during the winter break. If the student is able to do so, the supervisor should give the student compensatory time off during the spring semester.
  - GTAs must be available for a planning meeting with supervisors sometime during the two-week period prior to the start of the fall and/or spring semester. GTAs who serve as the instructor of record for a course should be available at the conclusion of each semester to address questions that may arise regarding student grades.

## Term

The Office of the Provost recommends a full academic year of support be granted to students prior to the start of the fall semester.

|                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Full Academic Year: | August 25 – May 24    |
| Fall Semester:      | August 25 – January 9 |
| Spring Semester:    | January 10 – May 24   |
| Summer Sessions:    | May 25 – August 24    |
| 12-month            | August 25-August 24   |

- GAs with full-time positions work at least 20 hours per week during the academic year.
- GAs with part-time positions work less than 20 hours per week during the academic year.

## Salary/Stipend

- Compensation for GAs is determined by the level of skill and prerequisite skill requirements. For minimum compensation requirements, please reference the *Minimum Compensation Rates for GTAs, GPAs and GRAs* found on the Office of the Provost website.
  - Students who have received approval for appointments of more than 20 hours per week should have their compensation prorated appropriately.



- Students who are holding appointments of less than 20 hours should have their compensation prorated appropriately.
- Compensation for GLs is determined per didactic hour, according to the *Adjunct Faculty Matrix* found on the Office of the Provost website.

### **Tuition Support**

Tuition support for GAs can be provided through graduate Tuition Grants or through Tuition Waivers. While tuition support is not a requirement for offering a GA or GL position, the Office of the Provost encourages hiring departments to provide this support when financially feasible.

- The monetary value of any tuition support provided to GAs must not exceed tuition charges.
- Students holding GAs or GLs are not eligible for *Employee Tuition Waivers*.

### **Tuition Grants**

Tuition grants are funded scholarships that can be awarded to graduate students whether or not they hold an assistantship or lectureship. Tuition grants and tuition waivers may be combined in order to offer GAs full tuition support as deemed appropriate by the academic unit.

- Tuition grants must not be used as a substitute form of compensation; all compensation must be paid through HR and Payroll.
- Tuition grants may be used to fund the Educational Resource Fee.
- Students on a sponsored project can receive a tuition grant only if the student has an assistantship. For additional information, contact the Office of Sponsored Programs.
- Processing Tuition Grants:
  - Tuition grants should be processed using Banner Workflow or another method approved by the Office of Student Financial Aid.
  - The Office of Student Financial Aid will post the grant on the student's account. The workflow must be received by the Office of Student Financial Aid at least 72 hours before the payment due date for each applicable semester.

### **Tuition Waivers**

Tuition waivers are unfunded scholarships that represent revenue forgone by the university. Tuition waiver funding is approved by central administration and allocated to the academic units. Tuition waivers are awarded at the discretion of the academic unit and only to students hired by Mason.

- Tuition waivers vary depending on the amount of tuition dollars allocated to the academic unit.
- Students must hold a GA or GL appointment and earn a minimum of \$4000 from that appointment during the academic year to be eligible for a tuition waiver [*State mandated*]. An appointment does not guarantee tuition support in any or every semester.
- Tuition waivers may not be used as a substitute form of compensation; all compensation must be paid through HR and Payroll.

- Tuition waivers may be used to fund the Educational Resource Fee.
- Fellowship monies are not to be included when determining a student's eligibility for tuition waivers.
- Processing Tuition Waivers:
  - Complete and submit the *Departmental Tuition Waiver Authorization Form* found on the Student Account website or another method approved by Financial Aid.
  - The Office of Student Financial Aid will post the grant on the student's account. The form must be received by the Office of Student Financial Aid at least 72 hours before the payment due date for each applicable semester.

### **Sponsored Tuition Support**

- Whenever possible, the tuition support for GAs and GLs paid from restricted funds will be included as a sponsor cost.
- All other policies and procedures governing university funded GAs and GLs apply.
- In cases where sponsor regulations specifically prohibit the use of restricted funds for tuition support, the academic unit may provide the student with tuition support dependent upon the availability of funds.

### **Internally Funded Fellowships**

Fellowship and GA/GL funds may be combined to create a financial aid package for an individual student. However, the maximum compensation for a given student should not exceed the levels afforded other students in the academic unit(s) involved. Refer to the dean's office for guidance.

### **Subsidized Health Insurance**

This section provides a brief summary of University Policy Number 6001. For more details, refer to the policy and the Office of the Provost website.

Doctoral and MFA students holding full-time, full academic year or 12-month GA positions as well as new, incoming spring semester doctoral and MFA students holding full-time, full academic year or 12-month GA positions may be eligible to receive up to 100% subsidized health insurance coverage through George Mason's student health insurance provider.

- If the student's salary is funded through non-sponsored funds, the health insurance premium will be charged to the Office of the Provost the first three years of a student's enrollment in the program.
- If the student's salary is funded through sponsored funds, the health insurance premium will be charged to the sponsor.

### **In-State Tuition Eligibility**

This section provides a summary of University Policy Number 6003. For more details, refer to the policy and the Office of the Provost website.

International and out-of-state doctoral and MFA students holding full-time, full academic year or 12-month GA positions may be eligible to be charged tuition at in-state rates.

- Charges will be reflected on student accounts. Academic units will use in-state tuition rates when applying tuition support in conjunction with a student's graduate assistantship position(s).
- Students eligible for in-state tuition will be given the opportunity to take additional credits above those supported by their assistantship(s) at the academic unit's in-state tuition rate.
  - Charges for additional credits taken are the financial responsibility of the student.

### **Hiring Paperwork**

- Graduate students with a paid assignment must complete all hiring paperwork. Paperwork should be completed within the hiring department unless the hiring department has made other arrangements with HR & Payroll.
- Mason is an E-Verify employer. All employees may be subject to E-Verify.
- International students with paid assignments must make an appointment with the international tax coordinator, located in Fiscal Services, 4400 Alan and Sally Merten Hall.
- All employees must enroll for direct deposit via PatriotWeb. See University Policy Number 2201 for more details.
- For information on hiring documentation and on the offices responsible for maintaining the documentation consult the *Decentralized Hiring Procedures* on the HR and Payroll website.

### **Electronic Personnel Action Form (EPAF) Process**

After receiving the signed offer letter from the student, the hiring department enters the employee into the Banner HR system through the *Electronic Personnel Action Form (EPAF)* process or academic unit upload. This enables the student to receive payment each pay period.

- All assignments must be fully processed by the first day of the position's term (August 25 for Fall semester and annual appointments, January 10 for spring appointments). Noncompliance could result in students not meeting eligibility criteria for in-state tuition and subsidized graduate health insurance, if applicable. Refer to **Term** dates in **Section IV** for position begin and end dates.
- For assistance with the EPAF, please refer to HR and Payroll's *EPAF Field Requirements and EPAF FAQ* document. Consult with the unit's HR personnel for internal processes.

### **Summer Appointments**

Although units are encouraged to offer 12-month appointments, GAs and GLs hired during the summer are hired and supported according to the same guidelines as during the academic year with these additional considerations:

- Summer term can be active from one summer session to three (dates between May 25 – August 24). Compensation should be commensurate with the student's effort.
- Summer GTAs and GLs are compensated according to the *Adjunct Faculty Matrix* found on the Office of the Provost website.

- Full-time status for students enrolled during the summer term is determined according to the same criteria as for fall and spring semesters.
- Students who receive GA appointments for the summer are not required to enroll in summer classes.
  - Students not enrolled in summer courses may work up to 40 hours per week. Compensation should be increased accordingly.
  - Students not enrolled in summer courses are subject to FICA withholding (unless they are exempt under a special rule that applies to certain F-1 and J-1 students).
  - Students who hold GAs/GLs and are enrolled full-time during the summer will not be subject to FICA withholding.

### **Termination**

- GAs and GLs are hired as at-will appointments and may be terminated at any time by the university without cause by issuance of a written notice.
  - However, GPA, GRA, or GTA assignments used as proof of financial support for issuance of international students' I-20/DS-2019 forms may NOT be withdrawn absent documented cause and not without prior consultation with the Office of the Provost. Once a student has presented the offer letter at a US consular post abroad, it forms a key part of the evidence used by the consular officer in the decision to issue a US entry visa. The University is obligated to honor the financial commitment for the full term specified in the offer letter absent extraordinary circumstances.
- GAs and GLs who are terminated early, regardless of the reason, should be compensated in direct proportion to the total time worked up to the point of termination.
  - The hiring department must immediately inform HR and Payroll of the early termination to avoid overpayments.
  - Termination EPAFs must be submitted and approved 5 days prior to the end of the pay period in which the student's last employment date falls.
- Students who do not complete the assignment as described in the offer letter may be removed from the assistantship and lose tuition support in future terms.
  - Tuition charges will be subject to university tuition liability rules if the student withdraws from any classes. International and out-of-state students who were assessed in-state tuition rates for meeting University Policy 6003 requirements, will have tuition rates revert to out-of-state.
  - Visit the Office of the University Registrar website for the applicable semester's academic calendar.
  - For more information on the terms and conditions of employment see Attachment A of the *Graduate Assistant/Lecturer Appointment Letter Template* located on the Office of the Provost website.

- Students must notify the hiring department in writing if they intend to terminate a GA or GL assignment.

## V. GRADUATE STUDENT WAGE APPOINTMENTS

Student Wage (SW) workers are graduate students in pursuit of an academic degree who take part-time employment with the university.

### Eligibility & Restrictions

- Students must be enrolled in at least 6 graduate credits, not to include audit courses, each semester of employment. *[University Policy 2217]*
- Students must maintain good academic standing during employment. *[University Policy 2217]*
- The SW classification is not eligible for student support packages, the Wage Employee Tuition Waiver, or any tuition support. The SW classification does not count toward eligibility for the graduate student health insurance subsidy or the in-state tuition eligibility policy.
- Maximum Hours Restrictions:  
Graduate students are limited to working 20 hours per week. This is applicable whether students are appointed in one or in multiple academic or nonacademic units. Exceptions for domestic students to work an additional 10 hours (for a maximum of 30 hours per week) may be granted by the faculty advisor and graduate associate dean of the local academic unit. Careful consideration must be given to the students' academic success and ability to maintain progress toward degree completion. Exceptions must be granted prior to the acceptance of additional appointments. Units should use the *Graduate Student Work Authorization form* on the Office of the Provost website to document approval of additional work hours.
  - F-1 or J-1 international students may not work more than 20 hours per week during the fall or spring semester. Full-time employment is permitted during winter and spring breaks and in the summer. Consult the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) for details.
  - The Affordable Care Act limits students to working a maximum of 1450 hours in the May 1 – April 30 calendar year. Students who approach the 1450 hour maximum before the end of the calendar year must immediately stop working from any and all positions and may not resume work before the new calendar year begins on May 1. A thorough review of a student's cumulative positions, hours worked, and hours anticipated should be conducted before authorizing additional work. For questions pertaining to a student's work history and hours worked, contact the unit's Human Resource staff.

### Hiring Paperwork

- Graduate students with a paid assignment must complete all hiring paperwork. Paperwork should be completed within the hiring department unless the hiring department has made other arrangements with HR & Payroll.
- Mason is an E-Verify employer. All employees may be subject to E-Verify.

- International students with paid assignments must make an appointment with the international tax coordinator, located in Fiscal Services, 4400 Alan and Sally Merten Hall.
- All employees must enroll for direct deposit via PatriotWeb. See University Policy Number 2201 for more details.
- For information on hiring documentation and on the offices responsible for maintaining the documentation consult the *Decentralized Hiring Procedures* on the HR and Payroll website.

### **Electronic Personnel Action Form (EPAF) Process**

After receiving the signed offer letter from the student, the hiring department will then enter the employee into the Banner HR system through the EPAF process or academic unit upload. This will enable the student to receive a payment each pay period.

- All assignments must be fully processed by the first day of the position's term (August 25 for Fall and annual appointments, January 10 for spring assignments). Refer to **Term** dates in **Section IV** for begin and end dates.
- For assistance with the EPAF, refer to HR and Payroll's *EPAF Field Requirements and EPAF FAQ* document and consult with the school/college's HR personnel for internal processes.

### **Termination**

- SW positions are at will appointments, may be terminated without cause at any time, and provide no guarantee of employment for a particular term.
- Students who are terminated early, regardless of the reason, should be compensated in direct proportion to the total time worked up to the point of termination. To avoid overpayments, the hiring department must inform HR and Payroll of the early termination immediately.
- Students must notify the hiring department in writing if they intend to terminate a wage position.

## **VI. GRADUATE STUDENTS AS ADJUNCT FACULTY**

Full-time exempt (ineligible for overtime) George Mason employees who are concurrently enrolled in a graduate degree program may, with permission of their George Mason supervisor, be awarded adjunct appointments to teach. They are hired to teach as the instructor of record.

### **Eligibility and Restrictions**

- This classification must be used only for students with primary employee status.
- Students hired under this classification are subject to University Policy Number 2209, Employee Tuition Exemption Benefit.
- Students must be in good academic standing, have a minimum 3.0 GPA, and may not have any recent (as defined by the dean's office) unsatisfactory grades at the time the offer letter is created.

- This classification does not count towards eligibility for the graduate student health insurance subsidy or the in-state tuition eligibility policy.
- All adjunct appointments must be processed based on their primary employment status and in accordance with the Supplemental Pay Procedures located on the Human Resources and Payroll website.

## **VII. INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HIRES UNDER ANY APPOINTMENT CLASSIFICATION**

The Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS) provides the following information for hiring international students:

- F-1 and J-1 students are required by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to take a full course load each fall and spring semester (excluding summer term). The student must be recognized as full-time in accordance with the definition in the University Catalog.
  - F-1 students in the final semester of study may receive permission from OIPS to carry a reduced course load if they are enrolled for all remaining credits required to complete their program of study.
  - F-1 students should work with their faculty advisor to plan their enrollment so that they can remain full-time throughout their program (except in their final semester).
- F-1 and J-1 students who are maintaining their status are permitted to work on campus for up to 20 hours per week during semesters. Full-time work (40 hours/week) is permitted during winter and spring breaks and in the summer, provided that the student is eligible and intends to continue study at Mason following the break.
- F-1 and J-1 students are admitted to the U.S. for “duration of status,” that is, to complete an educational program. If a student must remain in an educational program beyond the date originally estimated for completion of the program (as stated on Form I-20 or Form DS-2019), the student must comply with DHS or Department of State (DOS) procedures for a program extension.
  - Delay caused by academic probation or suspension is not an acceptable reason for a program extension.
  - The amount of time indicated on the I-20 for each degree program is based on normal or typical progress. An extension may be requested if the student needs additional time to complete the program, provided that the student has continued to make satisfactory progress and the reason for the delay is beyond the student’s control. Requests for program extensions require the academic advisor’s support; a student who has had one approved program extension must seek approval from the OIPS Executive Director if an additional extension is requested.
- Students may use stipends as proof of financial support for issuance of their I-20/DS-2019. A copy of the offer letter must be sent to OIPS indicating stipend amount and specific tuition benefit.



- If the student's financial support is based on a GPA, GRA, or GTA, it is assumed that the same level of financial support will be renewed in subsequent years. In some cases, the stipend will not cover all of the student's educational/living expenses and may need to be supplemented with personal or family funds, or sponsorship by an outside organization. Immigration forms cannot be issued until all financial support documents have been submitted and have met estimated expense requirements, including tuition, maintenance, books, and medical insurance. Details about the financial certification requirements are in the *Certificate of Financial Responsibility* found on the Mason Admissions website (under *Apply Now, Downloadable Forms and Documents*).
- GPA, GRA, or GTA assignments used as proof of financial support for issuance of newly-admitted students' I-20/DS-2019 forms may NOT be withdrawn. Once a student has presented the offer letter at a US consular post abroad, it forms a key part of the evidence used by the consular officer in the decision to issue a US entry visa. The University is obligated to honor the financial commitment for the full term specified in the offer letter.
- F-1 students and J-1 students whose immigration documents (I-20 or DS-2019) were issued by George Mason University and who do not yet have a Social Security Number must visit the Office of International Programs and Services (OIPS). Students should bring all immigration documents and a job offer letter or the *On Campus Employment Certification form* with them. The form can be downloaded from the OIPS website (under *Forms and Handouts*).
- F-1 Students who do not have a Social Security Number must provide enrollment to show that they are registered full-time. This document can be printed out from PatriotWeb.
- All employees in nonimmigrant status must visit the New Employee Welcome (NEW) Center for verification of employment eligibility (DHS Employment I-9 form and E-verify), registration for the online Foreign National Information Form, and assistance in scheduling a tax appointment with the International Tax Coordinator in Fiscal Services.
  - F-1 and J-1 students must bring proof of identity and evidence of their eligibility to work at George Mason for purposes of completing Form I-9.
  - Forms I-9 for nonimmigrants typically expire based on the expiration of the immigration documents from which the employment authorization derives. Forms I-9 must be updated prior to expiration to ensure students may continue uninterrupted employment.
- International students who have completed their program of study are no longer eligible for on-campus employment. They may be eligible to work based on Optional Practical Training (OPT) or Academic Training, but such employment must be both related to the student's field of study and commensurate with the degree level. These students are not eligible for GRA, GTA, GPA or Student Wage positions. Consult OIPS for advice about employing students on OPT or Academic Training following completion of the degree program.
- An International Hire Checklist for Graduate Assistants and Student Wage Employees can be found on HR's Onboarding webpage for Hiring Managers.



## VIII. EXTERNALLY FUNDED GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS

- Externally funded fellowships are awards that provide support to masters and doctoral students for research, writing, fieldwork, language study, professional development, or independent projects undertaken in conjunction with a degree program. There is no work component or employment relationship with the university associated with an externally funded fellowship. Students apply for fellowships and, when granted, these awards are distributed directly to the student, either by the organization awarding the fellowship or through the university.
- When externally funded fellowships are distributed by the university directly to the student, a sponsored fund will be established and stipends will be processed through Accounts Payable using the *Externally Funded Fellowship Payment Form*.
- Stipendiary payments to the recipient will be made in monthly installments unless the sponsor requires a different payment schedule. Each payment made requires a new Externally Funded Fellowship Payment Form to be created and sent to Accounts Payable for processing.
- Tuition support provided as part of the fellowship should be processed through Workflow.
- Expenses that involve a student reimbursement should be processed using the *Externally Funded Fellowship Payment Form*.

## IX. GRADUATE STUDENT SUPPORT FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

### Fulbright Fellowship

- The Office of the Provost will provide tuition support to students who have been admitted to degree programs and who have also been awarded Fulbright Fellowships.
  - Master's-level fellows are eligible for up to 9 credits of tuition support per semester for one academic year (2 semesters).
  - Doctoral-level fellows are eligible for up to 9 credits of tuition support per semester for 2 academic years (4 semesters).
- The Office of the Provost will prepare an offer letter describing the terms of the support. The Fulbright Fellow will be required to sign and return the letter to indicate acceptance of the letter's terms.
- Renewal of a doctoral-level award is contingent upon the student's remaining in good academic standing, the availability of funding, and renewal of the Fulbright Fellowship.
- Restrictions on tuition grants for Fulbright Fellows:
  - Tuition grants will not be awarded for courses taken in any summer term.
  - Tuition grants may not be used for noncredit courses, undergraduate courses, or course work taken through audit.

- The Fulbright Fellow will be responsible for paying for course work taken in excess of 9 credit hours in a given semester.
- Tuition grants do not cover the new student fee, course fees, or lab fees.

### **Graduate Student Travel Fund**

George Mason University recognizes the importance of professional development for graduate students. The Graduate Student Travel Fund (GSTF) was created for the purpose of facilitating students' development outside the classroom. The GSTF is funded by the Office of the Provost. For more information, visit the GSTF website: [gstf.gmu.edu](http://gstf.gmu.edu).

### **Muskie Fellowship**

The Office of the Provost will provide tuition support for graduate Muskie Fellows not to exceed a maximum amount regardless of the number of fellows supported. Email [provgrad@gmu.edu](mailto:provgrad@gmu.edu) for details.

### **Open Society Institute (OSI) Fellowship**

George Mason University will provide 75 percent tuition support for OSI graduate students for each semester enrolled. For that 75 percent, if the academic unit agrees to fund 50 percent of the tuition amount, the Office of the Provost will fund 25 percent. OSI will fund the remaining 25 percent of tuition. Email [provgrad@gmu.edu](mailto:provgrad@gmu.edu) for details.

### **Presidential Scholarship**

The Presidential Scholarship is a program of support for first-time PhD students intended to assist Mason in recruiting doctoral students of the highest caliber. Email [provgrad@gmu.edu](mailto:provgrad@gmu.edu) for details.

### **Subsidized Graduate Health Insurance**

Eligible graduate students can receive up to 100% subsidized health insurance coverage through George Mason's student health insurance provider. Please review the information on the Office of the Provost website as well as University Policy 6001: Health Insurance for Graduate Students. Email [provgrad@gmu.edu](mailto:provgrad@gmu.edu) for details.

### **In-State Eligibility for Doctoral and MFA Students**

Eligible nonresident doctoral and MFA students may be charged at the in-state rates for tuition and fees. Review University Policy 6003: In-State Eligibility for Doctoral and MFA Students. Email [provgrad@gmu.edu](mailto:provgrad@gmu.edu) for details.

## Appendix A: Definitions

*Note: The current University Catalog definitions may differ from what is listed below. Current Catalog definitions supersede the definitions provided in this document:*

**Affordable Care Act (ACA) Guidelines:** The ACA limits work hours for students to 1450 hours in the May 1 – April 30 calendar year. Students who approach the 1450 hour maximum before the end of the calendar year must immediately stop working from any and all positions and may not resume work until the new calendar year begins on May 1.

**Academic Units:** George Mason University's 10 schools/colleges: College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), College of Health and Human Services (CHHS), College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS), College of Science (COS), College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA), School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR), School of Law (SOL), School of Business (SBUS), Schar School of Policy and Government (SCHAR), and The Volgenau School of Engineering (VSE).

**Local Academic Unit:** The academic unit where the student's primary program of study is managed, and from which the student's degree will be conferred.

**Academic Year:** August 25 through May 24 (of the following year). This includes only the fall and spring semesters.

**Externally Funded Fellowship:** Student funding provided by a source external to the university (e.g., NSF, NIH, DOJ, etc.). Funding details for each specific fellowship vary. Funding is allocated through the Office of Sponsored Programs. For details, see **Section VIII**.

**Good Academic Standing:** A graduate student without an Academic Warning or Academic Termination standing.

**Graduate Assistantship (GA):** A form of student employment for admitted, full-time master's and doctoral students that involves a supervised, educationally appropriate experience, stipend, and possibility tuition support. The university offers three types of assistantships: Graduate Professional Assistantship (GPA), Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA), and Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA). For details, see **Section II**.

**Full-Time Graduate Assistantship:** An assistantship of at least 20 hours of work per week. Prior approval is required for GAs to work more than 20 hours per week.

**Part-Time Graduate Assistantship:** An assistantship of less than 20 hours of work per week. These appointments are commonly 10 hours per week.

**Graduate Course:** A course numbered 500 and above.

**Graduate Degree Program:** A master's, doctoral, or graduate certificate program of study. Nondegree status is not included as a graduate degree program.

**Graduate Lectureship (GL):** A form of graduate student employment for admitted, full-time or part-time, master's or doctoral students for which they are instructor of record for a credit-bearing course. GL appointments are similar to adjunct faculty appointments with the exception that they are held by graduate students and are under faculty supervision. GLs are paid according to the *Adjunct Faculty Matrix*. For details, see **Section II**.

**Graduate Student:** A student enrolled in a doctoral or master's program.

**Full-Time Graduate Student:**

- Enrolled in at least 9 graduate credits per semester, **or**
- Holds a full-time assistantship (20 hours a week) and is enrolled in at least 6 graduate credits, **or**
- Master's student enrolled in 1 credit of 799 if 3 credits of 799 have already been completed and the student, advisor, and department chair have certified that the student is working full-time on thesis,
  - Student must complete and submit the appropriate forms to the Office of the University Registrar prior to the first day of classes for the term. The student is responsible for following the applicable procedures to ensure that the Office of the University Registrar has approved the full-time status.
- Doctoral student enrolled in dissertation credits (either 998 or 999) if enrolled in at least 6 credits, regardless of assignment to an assistantship, **or**
- Doctoral student who has advanced to candidacy and has completed the minimum number of credits required by the university and the degree program, including the minimum number of credits of 998 and 999, if registered for at least 1 credit of 999 and the student, advisor, and department chair have certified that the student is working full-time on the dissertation.
  - Student must complete and submit the appropriate forms to the Office of the University Registrar prior to the first day of classes for the term. The student is responsible for following the applicable procedures to ensure that the Office of the University Registrar has approved the full-time status.

**Note:** External funding agencies and/or employers providing funding may have different definitions and/or additional criteria to determine **full-time enrollment status**. Contact the Student Accounts Office, the Office of Financial Aid, or the Office of the University Registrar for more information.

**Part-Time Graduate Student:**

- Enrolled in at least one graduate credit, **and**
- Student does not meet or exceed criteria for the full-time definition.

**International (Non-Immigrant) Student:** An individual who has come to the United States from his or her permanent country of residence for the primary purpose of study. These students typically hold F-1 (student) or J-1 (exchange visitor student) status. Certain other non-immigrants also study at Mason, most typically dependents of those in A (diplomatic), E (treaty trader), G (international organization employees), H (skilled workers in specialty occupations), and L (intracompany transferee) status.

**Scholarship:** Funding given to a student by a school or agency to cover part or all expenses associated with attending school, for which neither work nor repayment is required. Funding and eligibility details for each scholarship vary. For information on scholarships, visit the Financial Aid website.

**Unsatisfactory Grade:** A course grade of “C” or below, or a course grade of “Incomplete” (IN).

## Appendix B: Relevant Links

- Academic Calendar: [registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/](http://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/)

Adjunct Faculty Matrix: [https://provost.gmu.edu/faculty-matters/faculty-appointments#adjunct\\_faculty](https://provost.gmu.edu/faculty-matters/faculty-appointments#adjunct_faculty)

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- Admissions, Certificate of Financial Responsibility: <http://admissions.gmu.edu/ApplyNow/forms.asp>
- Banner Workflow: [workflow.gmu.edu:4443/wfprod/logon.jsp](http://workflow.gmu.edu:4443/wfprod/logon.jsp)
- Center for Teaching and Faculty Excellence: [ctfe.gmu.edu](http://ctfe.gmu.edu)
- English proficiency requirements: [catalog.gmu.edu](http://catalog.gmu.edu) (*Graduate Admission Policies* section)
- Fellowship Opportunities: [gradfellows.gmu.edu](http://gradfellows.gmu.edu)
- GPA Position Description Form: <https://provost.gmu.edu/academics-and-research/graduate-education/graduate-student-appointments-fellowships>
- Graduate Student Compensation Rates: <https://provost.gmu.edu/academics-and-research/graduate-education/graduate-student-appointments-fellowships>
- Graduate Student Travel Fund: [gstf.gmu.edu](http://gstf.gmu.edu)
- In-State Tuition Eligibility for Doctoral and MFA Students: [universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/in-state-eligibility-for-doctoral-and-mfa-students](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/in-state-eligibility-for-doctoral-and-mfa-students)
- English Language Proficiency Assessment Scheduling with the Learning Resource Center: <https://intomason.mywconline.com>
- Hire Checklist for International Graduate Assistants and Student Wage Employees: <http://hr.gmu.edu/welcome/docs/NewIntlEmployeesChecklist-GAStudentWage.pdf>
- Offer Letter Template (GA/GL): <https://provost.gmu.edu/academics-and-research/graduate-education/graduate-student-appointments-fellowships>
- Offer Letter Template (Adjunct Faculty): [https://provost.gmu.edu/faculty-matters/faculty-appointments#adjunct\\_faculty](https://provost.gmu.edu/faculty-matters/faculty-appointments#adjunct_faculty) Office of International Programs and Services: [oips.gmu.edu](http://oips.gmu.edu)
- PatriotWeb: [patriotweb.gmu.edu](http://patriotweb.gmu.edu)
- Senior Approving Officials: [fiscal.gmu.edu](http://fiscal.gmu.edu) (*Important Links*)
- Subsidized Graduate Health Insurance: <https://provost.gmu.edu/academics-and-research/graduate-education/subsidized-graduate-health-insurance>
- University Catalog: [catalog.gmu.edu](http://catalog.gmu.edu)
- University Policies: [universitypolicy.gmu.edu](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu)

## Appendix C: English Language Proficiency Assessment and Support

INTO Mason's Learning Resource Center (LRC) administers all oral English language proficiency assessments and language interventions for Mason's International Graduate Teaching Assistants (ITAs). International students who are required to take an English proficiency exam for admission into George Mason must participate and sufficiently perform in the English language proficiency assessment administered by the LRC prior to starting instructional responsibilities. .

In fulfillment of this requirement, the LRC administers the **Classroom English Language and Teaching Demonstration (CELTD)**. This assessment requires students to provide a 15-minute lecture – and respond to questions – on a topic of their choice that is related to their proposed GTA assignment. English language specialists evaluate each presentation based on clarity, comprehensibility, grammatical/lexical range and accuracy, and ability to communicate effectively overall. As outlined in the *Oral English Proficiency Assessment and Support Table* (below), ITAs who are required to participate in the oral assessment will receive one of four proficiency labels: *strong*, *sufficient*, *somewhat limited*, or *limited*. Only students who demonstrate *strong* or *sufficient* oral English proficiency may be assigned instructional responsibilities, while students who demonstrate *somewhat limited* or *limited* proficiency may be assigned only non-instructional tasks. (See *Section III Eligibility and Restrictions* for examples of instructional and non-instructional responsibilities).

**Strong:** Students who receive a label of *strong* may be assigned instructional tasks. It is recommended that some departmental monitoring and/or follow-up be provided to these students, particularly with regard to English for classroom instructional purposes. As always, students may also choose to receive tutoring in the LRC free-of-charge in order to further improve English language skills and enhance communicative effectiveness.

**Sufficient:** Students who receive a label of *sufficient* may be provisionally assigned instructional responsibilities, though they must concurrently complete six hours of language instruction offered through the LRC during their first term as a GTA or GL.

**Somewhat Limited or Limited:** Students who receive a label of *somewhat limited* or *limited* are **not** allowed to assume instructional responsibilities but may only be assigned non-instructional tasks (e.g. grading, administering exams, assisting software users in labs) under direct supervision of faculty. They are required to complete 10-16 hours of language instruction and successfully (i.e., receive a grade of Strong or Sufficient) retest through the LRC before assuming any instructional responsibilities.

Note: Assignments used as proof of financial support for issuance of newly-admitted students' I-20/DS-2019 forms may NOT be withdrawn. Once a student has presented the offer letter at a U.S. consular post abroad, it forms a key part of the evidence used by the consular officer in the decision to issue a U.S. entry visa. The University is obligated to honor the financial commitment for the full term specified in the offer letter even if the student is not permitted to assume instructional duties until the student demonstrates *strong* or *sufficient* oral English proficiency. For those candidates that undergo a CELTD assessment prior to being given a GTA or GL offer letter and do not receive a Strong or Sufficient proficiency label, the hiring department has the option of not extending a GTA or GL assignment to the candidate. Faculty and/or departments are urged to communicate as early as possible with potential GTAs or GLs the necessity of demonstrating oral English language proficiency if instructional duties will be required. One-on-one tutoring may be arranged through INTO Mason, free-of-charge, in the LRC, by using the <https://intomason.mywconline.com> scheduling system. Upon successful completion of the required hours, the LRC will either retest the prospective ITA (as required per table below), or provide notification to the sponsoring department that the student may assume instructional duties.

*Oral English Language Proficiency Assessment and Support Table*

| Proficiency labels      | English language proficiency test score | Language Instruction     | Re-testing Requirements <sup>1</sup> | Allowable GTA Assignment           |
|-------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Strong</i>           | 44+ overall<br>80% min subsections      | None                     | None                                 | Instructional Responsibilities     |
| <i>Sufficient</i>       | 40-43 overall<br>75% min subsections    | 6 hours <i>required</i>  | None                                 | Instructional Responsibilities     |
| <i>Somewhat Limited</i> | 30-39 overall<br>60% min subsections    | 10 hours <i>required</i> | Post-language instruction            | Non-Instructional Responsibilities |
| <i>Limited</i>          | 29 or below                             | 16 hours <i>required</i> | Post-language instruction            | Non-Instructional Responsibilities |

For additional information, contact: [support@intomason.gmu.edu](mailto:support@intomason.gmu.edu).

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<sup>1</sup> If the INTO Mason LRC Coordinator deems that an ITA has made substantial progress during the course of targeted language instruction, the ITA may be retested prior to completion of the required hours. If the student receives a label of *strong* upon retesting, he or she will receive an optional waiver for future required tutoring.



## Appendix D: Hiring Checklist

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <h3 style="margin: 0;">Graduate Assistant and Lecturer Hiring Checklist</h3> | <p>What is the appropriate position?</p>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The position to be hired is:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Graduate Assistant</b> (GPA, GRA, GTA)</li> <li>○ <b>Graduate Lecturer</b> (GL)</li> <li>○ <b>Student Wage</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• The term dates of the position are:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Full</b> academic year: August 25 – May 24</li> <li>○ <b>Fall</b> semester: August 25 – January 9</li> <li>○ <b>Spring</b> semester: January 10 – May 24</li> <li>○ <b>Summer</b> Session: May 24 – August 24</li> <li>○ <b>12-month: August 25-August 24</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• The position is:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Part-time</b> (less than 20 hours/week)</li> <li>○ <b>Full-time</b> (at least 20 hours/week)                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>GTA:</b> 20 hours/week; limited to 6 credits of lecture courses <b>or</b> 6 credit hours of recitation sections, <b>or</b> 9 credit hours of labs per term.*</li> <li><b>GL:</b> 20 hours/week; limited to 6 credit hours of lecture courses per term.*</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>*Refer to HR EPAF Manual to determine hours per day and per pay by number of credit hours. Full-time is equivalent to 43.33 hours per pay.</i></p>   |
|  | <p>Does the student meet eligibility for this position?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Offer can be made only to admitted graduate students.</li> <li>○ GA offers can be made only to students enrolled full-time:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Full-time position:</b> Students must be enrolled in at least 6 credits.</li> <li><b>Part-time position:</b> Students must be enrolled in at least 9 credits.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ GL offers can be made to students enrolled full-time or part-time.</li> <li>○ Students must be in good academic standing, maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA, and not have any unsatisfactory grades for each term they are to hold an assistantship or lectureship</li> <li>○ <b>GTA Instructor of Record and GL positions:</b> Students must have at least 18 credit hours in the relevant field. International students must meet Mason’s English proficiency requirements, and must take and sufficiently perform on the proficiency assessment through the Learning Resource Center prior to starting their first GTA Instructor of Record position or GL assignment.</li> <li>○ Students are limited to working 20 hours per week. Exceptions can be granted to domestic students for 10 additional hours (for a maximum of 30 hours) by the student’s faculty advisor and the graduate Associate Dean of the student’s local academic unit by using the <i>Graduate Student Work Authorization</i> form.</li> <li>○ Students must <b>not</b> hold any other on- or off-campus positions without explicit written permission.</li> <li>○ <b>Important:</b> Students must not work more than 29 hours/week <i>on average</i> and cannot exceed 1450 hours in the May 1–April 30 calendar year in order to maintain compliance with the Affordable Care Act. This requires a review of the prospective hire’s comprehensive positions <b>before</b> an offer is made.</li> </ul> |
|  | <p>What is the appropriate offer for this position?</p>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Stipend:</b> GAs must be paid according to the <b>Minimum Compensation Rates</b> posted on the Office of the Provost website. GLs must be paid according to the <b>Adjunct Faculty Matrix</b>.</li> <li>○ <b>Tuition:</b> GAs and GLs are eligible for tuition grants and tuition waivers that may be offered at the discretion of the hiring unit.</li> </ul>   |