FIU University Graduate School

2026-2027

Graduate Assistant (GA/RA/TA) Handbook

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Overview

Welcome to Florida International University's Graduate Assistantship program. Colleges and Departments at Florida International University provide Graduate Assistantships (GAs) to qualified students on a competitive basis. GAs may teach, conduct research, or have other responsibilities that contribute to the student's professional development. This Graduate Assistant Handbook is designed to address frequently asked questions about graduate, research, and teaching assistantships at FIU.

Please visit https://gradschool.fiu.edu/students/funding/assistantships/ for all details related to Graduate Assistantships.

Eligibility

Any student that is awarded an assistantship:

- Must be **fully admitted** to a graduate degree program and under the supervision of an appropriate faculty member.
- Must meet the minimum graduate school full time registration requirement which consists of 9 graduate credits in the Fall and Spring: 6 graduate credits in Summer. If the student has advanced to candidacy, full time enrollment is considered 3 dissertation credits. Undergraduate or audited courses do not count toward these requirements.
- Must maintain good academic standing as defined in the FIU Student Handbook, by maintaining a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- Must maintain reasonable progress toward a graduate degree.

Terms and Conditions of a Graduate Assistant Contract

- A graduate assistantship may consist of a 10-hour or 20-hour contract.
- Graduate assistants are not permitted to have any additional employment without departmental approval.
- Employment is contingent upon full-time enrollment and satisfactory academic and work performance.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who do I contact if I am interested in a graduate assistant position?

- Interested graduate students should contact the academic departments to discuss assistantship opportunities, as the academic unit manages the assistantship positions.

What are the criteria to be eligible for a graduate assistantship?

To be eligible for a graduate assistantship (GA/TA/RA), students must be:

- Fully admitted to a master's, specialist, or doctoral degree program. Conditionally admitted students are not eligible.
- Employment is contingent upon full-time enrollment and satisfactory academic and work performance.
- Graduate assistants must maintain a 3.0 cumulative graduate grade point average.
- Graduate assistants must be enrolled full-time for nine (9) graduate credits for each Fall and Spring term and six (6) graduate credits for the Summer term. If the student has advanced to candidacy, full-time enrollment is considered 3 dissertation credits.

How many hours are required to work while on an assistantship?

- Graduate assistantships can either hold a 10-hour work week (0.25 FTE) or 20-hour work week (0.50 FTE).

What does the assistantship provide?

- Graduate assistants on a 20-hour contract will receive a stipend, tuition waiver and subsidized health insurance. **Please note only GAs with a 20-hour contract receive the benefit of tuition waiver and subsidized insurance.** GAs with a 10-hour a week contract will only receive a stipend and will have the out-of-state portion of tuition waived. **Students with a 10-hour contract do not receive a tuition waiver and insurance benefits.**

Are there any employment restrictions while on an assistantship?

- A student receiving a GA/TA/RA must agree not to accept additional employment without departmental approval. Any outside employment requires an approved petition from the University Graduate School. This petition process is initiated by your academic department.

Am I able to apply for financial aid as a graduate assistant?

- Yes, students who receive a graduate assistantship may also be considered for financial aid.

What are the steps to the hiring process?

- Once the hiring department offers an appointment for assistantship, the following steps need to be taken to ensure all proper documentation is submitted to the Human Resource Department:

NEW HIRES

- Graduate Assistant (GA) contracts are due online prior to the beginning of the term(s) in which students will begin employment. To do so, the hiring unit will enter and submit the GA contract online (Panthersoft HR system) within the deadlines specified by the University Graduate School.
- Prior to beginning employment, students should verify with their hiring unit regarding their GA contract so they can begin their employment sign-on with Human Resources. As part of the GA student hiring process, they must complete the New Hire Employee Sign-On Packet for Graduate Assistants.
- This is a very critical part of the hiring process. Note that to begin employment, the HR Sign-On must be approved. Please refer to the Graduate Assistants section at https://hr.fiu.edu/employees-affiliates/new-employee/#signon. In this section, the students must follow the steps as listed under New Hire.
- For HR deadlines, please refer to https://hr.fiu.edu/payroll-calendars-schedules/.
- Students must complete and sign their GA employment agreement form, listed on the UGS website, https://gradschool.fiu.edu/students/funding/assistantships/ and submit it to their hiring unit. The hiring unit is responsible for submitting the employment agreement form within the published deadlines set by the University Graduate School.

INTERNATIONAL NEW HIRES

- Graduate Assistant (GA) contracts are due online prior to the beginning of the term(s) in which students will begin employment. To do so, the hiring unit will enter and submit the GA contract online (Panthersoft HR system) within the deadlines specified by the University Graduate School.

- Prior to beginning employment, students should verify with their hiring unit regarding their GA contract so they can begin their employment sign-on with Human Resources. As part of the student GA hiring process for international students, it is imperative that they contact the Office of International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS), https://isss.fiu.edu/index.html. They will provide critical documents such as the Social Security letter, which is needed to obtain a Social Security card required for employment in the USA.

- Refer to https://isss.fiu.edu/international-students/current-f-1-students/f-1- practical-training/on-campus-employment/index.html, to review the process required for on-campus employment.

- As a Social Security Number is required for employment, please do refer to https://isss.fiu.edu/international-students/current-f-1-students/social-security/, as it provides the information needed to obtain your Social Security Number and Card.

- It is critical to take all required documents such as the ISSS letter, valid passport, FIU I-20 or DS-2019, I-94 and a completed SSN application to the Social Security Administration Office, in a timely manner. For additional information, please do review https://isss.fiu.edu/international-students/current-f-1-students/social-security/index.html.

- Upon applying for the Social Security card and prior to beginning employment, the student is then able to complete the New Hire Employee Sign-On Packet for Graduate Assistants.

- This is a very critical part of the hiring process. Note that to begin employment, the HR Sign-On must be approved. Please refer to the Graduate Assistants section at https://hr.fiu.edu/employees-affiliates/new-employee/#signon. In this section, the students must follow the steps listed under New Hire.

- For HR deadlines, please refer to https://hr.fiu.edu/payroll-calendars-schedules/.

- Students must complete and sign their GA employment agreement form, listed on the UGS website, https://gradschool.fiu.edu/students/funding/assistantships/ and submit it to their hiring unit. The hiring unit is responsible for submitting the employment agreement form within the published deadlines set by the University Graduate School.

Is there additional documentation I need to complete?

- Yes, all GAs must complete and sign their employment agreement form (listed on the UGS website under Graduate Assistantships) and submit it to their hiring unit. The hiring unit is responsible for submitting the employment agreement form within the published deadlines set by the University Graduate School.

How much is my stipend?

- Your hiring unit determines your stipend amount.

What do I need to do to enroll in the Graduate Assistant health insurance plan?

- UGS will automatically enroll you into the health insurance plan. This subsidized health insurance is provided to all graduate assistants holding an appointment for 20 hours (0.5 FTE) per week. All Graduate Assistants are **required** to participate in this health insurance plan and are responsible for paying a portion of the health insurance premium. The premium will be deducted from their paycheck throughout the semester; more details can be found on the GA Program Summary Chart listed on the UGS website.

- Graduate Assistants may opt out of this plan if their own health insurance company demonstrates equivalent coverage. For more information regarding the GA insurance, please visit https://fiu.mycare26.com/ . International students on an F-1 or J-1 student visa who wish to opt-out of the University's health insurance plan must complete the International Student Health Insurance Compliance Form provided by FIU's Student Health Services.

- You may obtain the form at https://dasa.fiu.edu/student-support/wellness/immunization-insurance/health-insurance-at-fiu/index.html. Graduate Assistants who opt out of this coverage will not receive a subsidy for their own insurance plan.

What type of insurance plan will I receive?

- GA's will receive the FIU student health insurance plan, provided by Aetna, and serviced by Academic Health Plans (AHP). The details of the plan are available on the Academic Health Plan (AHP) website, https://fiu.mycare26.com/ .
- For additional information or assistance regarding your insurance plan, you can contact AHP Customer Service at (855) 440 – 9222 or through the Live Chat offered on their website, https://fiu.mycare26.com/.

When will I receive information about my health insurance coverage and my health insurance card?

- Once you are enrolled by UGS, you will be able to view additional information on your coverage directly through the AHP website, https://fiu.mycare26.com/.

Will I be able to add my dependents to the plan?

- Yes, an individual who meets the eligibility criteria as an eligible dependent may apply for coverage under the Plan. The details on how to enroll your dependent are available on https://fiu.mycare26.com/ .GA insurance does not cover dependents.

Does my insurance coverage plan cover vision or dental care?

- No, the plan does not include vision or dental coverage; however, additional coverage is available. The details on how to enroll are available on https://fiu.mycare26.com/ .

How many credits does the tuition waiver cover?

- The tuition waiver covers 9 graduate level credits in the Fall and Spring semesters and 6 graduate level credits in the Summer semester. If the student has advanced to candidacy (Application for Candidacy or Application for Candidacy/Dissertation Proposal depending on program's requirements approved by UGS) the tuition waiver will cover 3 dissertation credits. If the student registers for more than 3 credits, s/he will be responsible for paying the extra credits. An exception will be made for a student in her/his graduating semester that needs to register for more than 3 dissertation credits to meet the minimum dissertation credits requirement of the program. The tuition waiver will cover as many dissertation credits required to meet the program's minimum requirement.

- The waiver covers the tuition portion of the tuition charge. The GA is financially responsible for the per credit fees, semester fees, online and lab fees. Please refer to the Graduate Assistantship Program Summary Chart for 2026-2027 listed on the UGS website for more information regarding your charges for the academic year.

- Tuition waiver total amount for Graduate Enrollment ($379.95 per credit)

9 credits = $3419.55
6 credits = $2279.70
3 credits= $1139.85
1 credit *(thesis-bound who have completed coursework and an approved proposal)* = $379.95

- The tuition waiver only covers courses that are state-funded. If you register for a course outside of your department, you must contact the department in which you will be taking the course from and verify that the course is not a "market rate" course. The same applies to online courses. The GA is responsible for charges not covered by the tuition waiver. Check your student account at https://my.fiu.edu to ensure the charges are reflected correctly.

What happens if I decide to take a job elsewhere or quit my assistantship before the end of my contract period?

- If this occurs before the end of your contract period, then your contract will be cancelled, and the tuition waiver will be reversed. If you are an out-of-state student, your charges will be adjusted to reflect the out-of-state rate. Also, your health insurance will be cancelled.

Do I have to work in between semesters when classes are not in session or during holidays?

- There are no breaks during your contract period. Therefore, any time off will need to be discussed with your supervisor.

What do I do if I miss work due to illness?

- You would need to speak to your supervisor to discuss how you would make up the hours missed.

Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns regarding my assistantship?

- You may contact the University Graduate School at (305) 348-2455 or ugs@fiu.edu for additional assistance.