Assistantships, fellowships, and tuition scholarships can only be awarded to students or prospective students who have been formally admitted into a graduate degree program. No verbal or written commitment should be made to applicants before the appropriate graduate admissions office approves their admission.

Inasmuch as the University at Albany is a signatory to the following resolution by the Council of Graduate Schools, the policy below should be adhered to as offers are made and commitments are received from graduate students.

“Students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support prior to April 15; earlier deadlines for acceptance of such offers violate the intent of this Resolution. In those instances in which a student accepts an offer before April 15, and subsequently desires to withdraw that acceptance, the student may submit in writing a resignation of the appointment at any time through April 15. However, an acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student not to accept another offer without first obtaining a written release from the institution to which a commitment has been made. Similarly, an offer by an institution after April 15 is conditional on presentation by the student of the written release from any previously accepted offer.”

Likewise, after June 1, if a student has accepted an assistantship or fellowship in one University unit, another department at Albany should not recruit the student for a different award.

NOTIFICATION OF EMPLOYMENT
• Upon appointment of a teaching or graduate assistant to a position represented by the CWA 1104/GSEU bargaining unit, department or college designees must send each appointee a letter of notification. This letter should be issued no less than two weeks prior to the commencement of employment when practicable. Note: Any tuition scholarship award for which the prospective graduate assistant may be eligible should be referenced in a separate letter. The letter of notification should include only the following information:
  • job title
  • stipend amount
  • anticipated duration of appointment
  • eligibility for health benefits
  • general summary of duties and responsibilities of the position
  • a statement that the position is in the bargaining unit represented for purposes of collective negotiations by the CWA Local 1104/GSEU and is covered by a collective bargaining agreement between GSEU and the State
• a statement that graduate assistants on a full/half assistantship are generally expected to provide 20/10 hours of service per week. Employees in this GSEU bargaining unit are engaged in professional activities of such a nature that the output produced or the result accomplished often cannot be precisely measured in relation to a given period of time. It is therefore anticipated that there will be fluctuations above and below these general expectations.

**APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES**

• Upon receiving written acceptance of an assistantship or fellowship award, the appointing department should direct and assist the hired graduate assistant to complete the appropriate employment paperwork required by the Human Resources payroll office. Forms can be located and printed from the Human Resources website [http://www.albany.edu/hr/HRM4.php](http://www.albany.edu/hr/HRM4.php).

All new assistantship appointments require the completion of an entire student packet which contains the Student Appointment Request HRM-4 form, Federal Withholding Form W-4, New York State Withholding Form IT-2104, Form I-9, Oath of Office card, Employee Identification Questionnaire and Acknowledgement and Information on the NYS Employees’ Retirement System (ERS). Health Insurance Information, Employee Access and Compliance Agreement, and Direct Deposit Form are all considered optional forms. International students complete differing Federal NRA Form W-4 and State NRA IT-2104 forms as well as a Foreign National Information Sheet.

Continuing assistantship appointments require only the Student Appointment Request HRM-4 form with the following exceptions: (1) tax forms must be redone for those changing their tax status and (2) a new I-9 is needed for international students whose employment authorization has changed since the previous 1-9 was completed.

• Fellowship appointments require only the Student Appointment Request HRM-4 form and Employee Identification Questionnaire. Since taxes are not withheld from fellowship stipends, withholding forms are not needed.

**All graduate assistant and fellowship appointment forms should be forwarded through the appropriate Dean’s Office to Human Resources Management. All Tuition Scholarship Award forms should be processed by the appropriate Dean’s Office.**

Questions concerning administrative procedures and payrolls may be addressed to the appropriate office listed below:

• for State-funded assistants: call Office of Human Resources Management at 437-4700 or visit [http://hr.albany.edu](http://hr.albany.edu)
• for Research Foundation assistants: contact Sponsored Funds Personnel at 437-4500
• for State-funded fellows and tuition scholarships: contact appropriate College or School's Dean’s Office
• If an assistant or fellow resigns the award, withdraws from the academic program, or ceases to satisfactorily perform the assigned assistantship duties, the assistantship or fellowship should be immediately terminated.

Units should call or email the appropriate office at once (see above listing) to request that all future checks be held and then follow-up this action with the appropriate paperwork. A Change of Status Request (HRM-3) must be completed and forwarded through the appropriate Dean's Office to the Office of Human Resources Management for State-funded assistants and fellows. For Research Foundation assistants and fellows, a Change Form should be completed and forwarded to Sponsored Funds Personnel and a copy of this form sent to the Office of Graduate Education.

**TERMS OF APPOINTMENT**

• A student must enter the University in good academic standing to be considered for appointment during the initial term. Likewise, a student must remain in good academic standing and must have satisfactorily performed the assigned assistantship duties to be eligible for renewal in this appointment.

• Full-time student status is required to hold an assistantship or fellowship.

• A student may receive a maximum of two years of support from State resources while pursuing the Master’s degree. Doctoral students who enter the University without advanced standing may be appointed to a total of four years of State-funded support. Doctoral students who enter their doctoral program with a master’s degree in the same field are limited to a total of three years. All support is contingent upon the availability of University funding. Requests for exceptions to this policy should be directed to the Dean of Graduate Education.

• Assistants and fellows cannot hold more than one full assistantship or fellowship, and should not engage in additional work beyond the assistantship or fellowship, including part-time lectureships and outside employment, during the term of their appointment. The student’s department chairperson, college/school dean, and the Dean of Graduate Education all need to authorize exceptions based on educational benefits (not financial need). Approval should be received prior to the commencement of the additional responsibilities.

• In general, assistants are expected to provide their usual services following the academic calendar and, in addition, to be available to assist during the examination period when needed. However, assistants in certain administrative offices or departments may be expected to provide services over the entire period including the intersession recess, provided this arrangement is stated in the notification letter at the time of appointment.
• For payroll purposes graduate assistants are appointed for the 2014-2015 academic year from August 14, 2014 through May 20, 2015. Stipend checks are divided into twenty equal payments and are subject to the lag payroll. The first check will be issued on September 10, 2014, and the final check on June 3, 2015. Fall 2014 semester graduate assistants are appointed from August 14, 2014 through December 31, 2014. First paychecks for those appointed for Fall 2014 will be issued on September 10, 2014 and their last paycheck will be issued January 14, 2015. Spring 2015 semester graduate assistants are appointed from January 1, 2015 through May 20, 2015. First paychecks for those appointed for Spring 2015 will be issued on January 28, 2015 and their last paycheck will be issued June 3, 2015.

Submission of appointment paperwork to Human Resources as soon as graduate students are identified is encouraged to ensure timely stipend payments.

• Fellowship appointments are generally for the period of September 1, 2014, through May 31, 2015. Stipend checks are divided into ten equal payments and are issued once a month except in March. There are two checks issued in March.

STIPENDS
• Any teaching or graduate assistant who held a State-funded assistantship during the 2013-2014 academic year or during the Spring 2014 semester and is reappointed to a State-funded assistantship line within the same department for the 2014-2015 academic year or for the Fall 2014 semester, must be reappointed at a stipend level of equal or greater value as that provided at the termination of their previous award.

• Assistantship stipends are considered to be taxable income even where there is a specific requirement for training for all students in a particular program.

TRAINING
• Each department should organize a program for the training and orienting of teaching assistants. In addition, there is a College Teaching Symposium for UAlbany Graduate Students conducted through the Institute for Teaching, Learning and Academic Leadership (ITLAL) prior to the start of the academic year.

• Ordinarily, assistants assigned to teach undergraduate courses should be doctoral students studying beyond the Master’s degree. Assistants studying at the Master’s level may assist in the teaching of a regular course and may teach laboratory sessions, but should not assume full responsibility for a regular course.

• International graduate students must have a TOEFL score of 600 or above on the paper version; 250 or above on the computer version; or 100 or above on the IBT Internet based test and be certified by the department chairperson as competent to conduct classroom or laboratory discussion where the language of instruction is English. If their TOEFL score does not meet this standard, they must pass the Test of
Spoken English with a score of 50 and be certified by the department chairperson as competent to conduct classroom or laboratory discussion. One way to meet this standard is to enroll during the summer prior to the start of fall semester in the Intensive English Language Program offered by the University at Albany. For more details concerning this program, please consult http://www.albany.edu/ielp/, with particular reference to the Summer Academic Institute.

The University at Albany also accepts the IELTS test as an alternative to TOEFL. International applicants must score 7.0 or greater. However, not all departments accept the IELTS.

**LEAVE ACCRUALS**
After the first semester of service, teaching and graduate assistants covered by the GSEU bargaining unit are eligible for a maximum of five leave days for personal illness with pay. Leave may be granted in increments of one-quarter (.25) day or greater and is subject to the approval of the supervisor. Assistants do not have any sick leave accruals during the first semester of the appointment. Should an assistant be ill, the department must either arrange for the student to make up missed time, or notify the Benefits Office ASAP that the student should be placed on leave without pay.

Subject to prior approval (such approval not to be unreasonably withheld) some or all of the 5 days provided may be used for absences due to substantiated illness or death in the graduate assistant’s immediate family (spouse, child, sibling, parent, grandparent, in-laws, or any person with whom the student has been making his or her home).

**EFFORT REPORTING**
Each assistant and supervisor must certify that the assistant has satisfactorily fulfilled the assignments and duties of the position. The *Monthly Attendance Report, Graduate and Teaching Assistants*, http://www.albany.edu/hr/schedules_timesheets.php, should be signed at the end of each month and kept by the supervisor. At the end of each semester, this card should be returned to the Office of Human Resources Management. If the service commitment of a graduate assistant is not fulfilled, stipend checks will not be issued.

**EVALUATION**
Under the terms of the *GSEU Agreement*, departments which conduct written evaluations of graduate and teaching assistants are required to notify the assistants in writing of the procedures used and allow assistants to comment upon these procedures.