

# **GRADUATE ASSISTANT HANDBOOK**

College of Mass  
Communication and  
Media Arts

Southern Illinois University  
Carbondale

**2017-2018**

# MCMA Graduate Assistant Duties and Responsibilities

## How Assistantships are Awarded

Based on funding resources a limited number of graduate assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis to students within MCMA. Preference is given to top applicants and those with appropriate skill sets and who appear likely to render a high quality of service to the University through their teaching, research, or service activities.

## GA United/Union Representation

Terms and conditions of employment for all SIUC Graduate Assistants are established under the current agreement between the SIU Board of Trustees and SIUC Graduate Assistants United IEA-NEA. See the current Agreement at the Graduate School or GA United Website for specific policies. It is each GA's responsibility to be aware of all related provisions. [www.gaunited.org](http://www.gaunited.org)

## Important Points To Remember

- A Graduate Assistantship is a 50% time or 25% time academic appointment, which is available through a variety of offices and departments across campus including academic departments, research centers, administrative offices, and service units. Each provides a stipend and a tuition waiver for the period of appointment. GAs are still responsible for their student fees each semester.
- During fall or spring semester, an assistant must be enrolled as a student for at least eight (8) graduate level credit hours (three [3] graduate level credit hours if you have an assistantship for summer). Doctoral students who have achieved candidacy and master's students in their last semester shall only be required to register for six (6) graduate level credit hours. Notify the Graduate Studies office staff if enrolling for only six (6) hours in your last semester so a letter can be sent to the Graduate School assistantship office.
- Three categories of assistantship appointments exist in MCMA: teaching assistant, research assistant, and administrative graduate assistant.
- Faculty or staff supervisors will assign specific duties to their assigned GA within the guidelines of the Agreement.
- A GA appointment demands an average time commitment of 20 hours per week when the student is on a 50% appointment and 10 hours per week for a 25% appointment. Some weeks, students may be required to work more than the 20 hours for half-time appointment or 10 hours for quarter-time appointment and some weeks they may work less. Assignments vary each semester and some graduate assistants may find themselves busier than other graduate assistants with their assigned responsibilities during a given semester.

- Satisfactory progress toward degree completion coupled with a dutiful discharge of responsibilities are the major considerations when the time comes for evaluating a graduate assistant's performance.
  
- The direct supervisor will evaluate GA performance each semester, discuss the evaluation with the GA, acquire the GA's signature, provide the GA a copy of the evaluation and send to the Graduate Studies Office for filing. Poor performance will result in notification of such by the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and eventual loss of assistantship if problems are not remedied, as per the GA United contract.
  
- Each spring semester, MCMA GAs who wish to be continued on funding for the following year must turn in an updated resume highlighting skill sets relevant to potential GA assignments to the Graduate Studies Office. Failure to do this during the spring semester may result in a loss of assistantship.
  
- Continuing GAs must sign their next year contract before the end of the spring semester. You will be notified when these are ready in late April or early May. You must be registered for the following fall semester for your contract to be processed.
  
- The maximum period of award MCMA provides is four academic years (fall/spring) (36 months) of support for doctoral, three academic years (fall/spring) (27 months) for MFA students and two academic years (fall/spring) (18 months) of support for MA students. Students should not expect support beyond these time periods. Assistantships for MS students is subject to departmental need and available funding.

## **Important Points:**

- Communication with your supervisor and students is extremely important. Make sure that you clearly understand the following:
  - Dates/times of your work hours
  - Complete time sheets weekly, get supervisor's signature and turn in to Graduate Studies Office
  - Duties assigned. Instructors often have specific ways they wish some task to be accomplished, e.g., taking attendance, grading, or test preparation. Be sure you understand what you are to do and how you should do it.
  - Ask questions! We want you to succeed, so please ask us if you do not know what to do. If you are unsure how to use a podium, ask well before class starts.
  - Answer emails or telephone calls promptly. We use [xxxx@siu.edu](mailto:xxxx@siu.edu) email for communication. Be sure to check it often.
  - Do you wish to give your personal cell number to the undergraduates in your class? This is a personal choice but make a careful decision about how much contact you want when you are "off the clock". Be very careful about distributing personal information of any kind.

- Student Relations
  - Establish friendly but professional relationships with the undergraduates in your assigned class. It is sometimes difficult to strike a balance here, especially when you might be just a few years older than the students.
    - How do you wish to be addressed? Ms. Abbott, or Jean? Many students simply have not been taught how to address a college faculty member or TA so please let them know what you prefer.
    - You should dress neatly, in a casual but not sloppy way. Examples would be: no torn jeans or tee shirts. Regular jeans and nice tee shirts are acceptable.
  - Excuses, excuses! You will hear many reasons why your students' work is not complete. Talk with your supervisor to be clear about what constitutes an acceptable reason for a late paper, then follow those guidelines strictly. If a student has a problem with your grading or conduct of a discussion session, notify your supervisor at once. Keep all email correspondence with students until the beginning of the following semester, in case a grade challenge is filed.
  - The CTE workshop covered many issues that we cannot due to time constraints. Let us know what help or guidance you need.

**I hope you enjoy your assistantship!**