



# GA/TS HANDBOOK

2023-2024



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GRADUATE SCHOOL

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EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

# WELCOME

## Welcome to East Tennessee State University

Your selection as a graduate assistant or tuition scholarship recipient is a significant achievement in your graduate education. Whether your responsibilities will involve teaching, research, or administration/service, this assignment places you in a unique organizational role within the university—you are a representative of the university in dual roles, straddling the role of not-regular faculty but not a typical student either. You will assume a role akin to staff or faculty when you are involved in direct teaching obligations or support faculty in laboratory, research, or other assignments and at the same time assume the role of a student.

The experience and opportunities you will gain as an assistant can have a profound impact on your professional growth. Thus, your role as an emerging researcher, scholar, and teacher is important and to be taken seriously. Avail yourself of opportunities offered through your program and the university to grow as a teacher. We, the university faculty, are entrusting you to be the best teacher—and student—you can be.

To guide you in your assignment, this handbook has been developed to inform you of various policies, rules, issues and services in fulfillment of your obligations as a graduate assistant or tuition scholar. While the [Graduate Catalog](#) provides the policies and processes in your role as a student, this handbook is meant to guide your role as a graduate assistant or tuition scholar. However, this handbook does not replace any other official University policies or documents. The unit in which you are employed in your role may also have specific relevant policies and procedures that you must learn and follow.

Please be assured that the Graduate School is fully supportive of your educational training and advanced study. We hope that your graduate experiences at ETSU will be meaningful and challenging.

The best of success in the pursuit of your graduate and professional goals!

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## ETSU Mission

ETSU provides a student-centered community of learning, reflecting high standards and promoting a balance of liberal arts and professional preparation, and continuous improvement. The university conducts a wide array of educational and research programs and clinical services including a comprehensive Academic Health Sciences Center. Education is the university's highest priority, and the institution is committed to increasing the level of educational attainment in the state and region based on core values where:

**PEOPLE** come first, are treated with dignity and respect, and are encouraged to achieve their full potential;  
**RELATIONSHIPS** are built on honesty, integrity, and trust;  
**DIVERSITY** of people and thought is respected;  
**EXCELLENCE** is achieved through teamwork, leadership, creativity, and a strong work ethic;  
**EFFICIENCY** is achieved through wise use of human and financial resources; and  
**COMMITMENT** to intellectual achievement is embraced.

ETSU endorses the value of liberal education and provides enriching experiences in honors education, student research and creative activity, study abroad, service learning, and community-based education.

ETSU honors and preserves the rich heritage of Southern Appalachia through distinctive education, research, and service programs and is actively engaged in regional stewardship. ETSU affirms the contributions of diverse people, cultures, and thought to intellectual, social, and economic development.

ETSU offers students a total university experience that includes cultural and artistic programs, diverse student activities, a variety of residential opportunities, and outstanding recreational and intercollegiate athletic programs.

ETSU awards degrees in over one hundred baccalaureate, master, and doctoral programs, including distinctive interdisciplinary programs and distance education offerings that serve students from the region and beyond.

*(Approved by the ETSU Board of Trustees 3/24/17)*

## Graduate School Mission

The mission of the Graduate School is to foster post-baccalaureate programs of scholarship that are recognized for their excellence and contributions to society. The Graduate School will provide an environment that stimulates:

- Advanced understanding of the concepts, issues and practices of a discipline;
- Independent thought and the ability to generate new knowledge;
- The ability to contribute significantly to the academic community, professions, and society;
- Diversity among ideas, programs, and people.

## **Graduate Assistantships and Tuition Scholarships**

Graduate Assistantships and Tuition Scholarships support the institution and the student. Graduate assistants and tuition scholars enhance the research, teaching, and service mission of the university while providing graduate students with important professional experience while earning a degree.

### **Purpose of Graduate Assistantships/Tuition Scholarships**

Both the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools (TCGS) maintain the position that the goal of the graduate assistantship/tuition scholarship should be to enhance students' ability to complete their graduate degrees.

The Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools provides a guiding philosophy of graduate assistantships:

Programs of graduate study are designed to transform the individual from student to professional scholar. When a graduate assistantship (or tuition scholarship) is well conceived and executed, it should serve as an ideal instrument to help facilitate the desired transformation. The primary goal of an assistantship (or scholarship), then, is to facilitate progress toward the graduate degree. Rather than interfere or conflict with the student's educational objective, the assistantship (or scholarship) is to aid in the prompt and successful completion of the degree program. While the student makes progress toward an advanced degree, he or she also receives work experience in a profession under the supervision of a faculty mentor. (2)<sup>1</sup>

When at all possible, work assignments made to graduate assistants and service obligations for graduate tuition scholars should reinforce their educational goals. For example, research assignments made to graduate research assistants should provide an experience that will be helpful in the formulation of thesis or dissertation problems and teaching assistantships should help prepare the student to function independently in the classroom. The best use of the graduate assistantship provides professional growth for the student as well as benefits to the

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<sup>1</sup> C.W. Minkel & Mary P. Richards, 1987, *A Model Policy for Graduate Assistantship Administration*. Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools, Publication No. 4, University of Tennessee, Knoxville Graphic Arts Service.



university. Courses have been designated to document these professional growth experiences on the graduate student transcript. XXXX 5019 (Supervised Experience in Teaching) and XXXX 5029 (Supervised Experience in Research) are available in nearly all academic units, and XXXX 5039 (Supervised Experience in Administration) is available in many units. Students receiving graduate assistantships or tuition scholarships should consult with their supervisor and enroll in the appropriate course for each term that they are receiving support.

## **Types of Appointments**

ETSU offers two general categories of graduate student support: Tuition scholarships and graduate assistantships, as described below.

### ***Tuition Scholarships***

A tuition scholarship is a merit-based award available to graduate students admitted to a graduate degree program for the first time. The awards are for one academic year (fall and spring semester) and are renewable. Graduate students admitted provisionally to a degree program may hold a tuition scholarship for no more than one semester; if provisions of their admission are not met after the first term, renewal of the scholarship must be approved by the Graduate School. Graduate tuition scholarships cover out-of- state tuition and the in-state tuition (called a “maintenance fee”).

### ***Graduate Assistantships***

ETSU recognizes four (4) types of graduate assistantships: Teaching Assistants, Teaching Associates, Research Assistants, and Administrative Assistants. The duties assigned to graduate assistants will usually vary according to category and sponsoring unit; some assistants may be assigned duties in more than one of these categories.

### ***Teaching Assistants***

Teaching assistants usually work to support the efforts of faculty members in specific courses. They will generally not teach a course as the primary instructor but may be responsible for a section of a lecture course, laboratory course, or physical activity course under the direct supervision of an experienced faculty member. Responsibilities may also include grading examinations, leading discussion sections, or performing other duties related to the instructional program.

## ***Teaching Associates***

The graduate teaching associate will normally have primary responsibility for teaching an undergraduate course for credit and for assigning final grades for said course. A graduate teaching associate shall not have responsibility for teaching a graduate level course. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) has specific requirements that must be met before a graduate student can be assigned responsibilities in this category. Criteria for a graduate student to be appointed as a teaching associate include:

- prior completion of 18 graduate semester hours in the assigned teaching discipline
- will teach under the supervision of a faculty member
- will receive regular in-service training

In exceptional cases, relevant professional experience and demonstrated contributions to the assigned teaching discipline may be presented in lieu of formal academic training. It is the duty of the department and particularly of the faculty supervisor to help the teaching associate gain skill in communicating knowledge of the discipline to students.

The department chair or unit supervisor is responsible for certifying each graduate teaching assistant or teaching associate assignment and ensuring each person placed in such an assignment meets the appropriate requirements for the assignment as given above. This certification should be included in the comments section in the GA/TS contract system for review by the Dean (or designee) of the Graduate School.

## ***Research Assistants***

The graduate research assistant will work under the supervision of a faculty mentor. The purpose of the research assistantship is to provide the graduate student with experience in research directly related to the professional and scholarly goals of the student and to advance the research program of the faculty mentor. The student should gain experience in all aspects of conducting a research project including such things as library searches, design of experiments, evaluation of information relevant to the project, and preparation of manuscripts to be submitted for publication. The development of these skills should advance the student's professional qualifications and, ideally, lead to the development of a prospectus for the thesis, or dissertation, or capstone project.

## ***Administrative Assistants***

The graduate administrative assistant may work at the level of a department, college, or university administrative unit. When at all possible, the work assigned to the graduate administrative assistant should be relevant to the graduate program and the professional and scholarly goals of the student. This work will generally involve gathering, organizing,

and evaluating information, or editorial work related to the preparation and review of papers and reports. The graduate administrative assistantship should provide the opportunity for the student to use knowledge of her or his academic field while enhancing skills relevant to the student's professional goals. The ideal graduate administrative assistantship will provide the student with a broader and deeper understanding of university function and, under the supervision of a mentor, enhance the quality of information available to the university.

## **Supervisory Unit**

Graduate assistants and tuition scholars provide teaching, research, or service/support to the sponsoring unit. Most often, the student's academic department or program is the sponsoring unit; however, campus services or other non-degree granting units may also be a sponsoring unit. External agencies may also fund graduate assistantships with approval of the Dean of the Graduate School.

Graduate assistants and tuition scholarship recipients are responsible for satisfactorily performing the assigned duties of the sponsoring unit.

## **General Requirements**

ETSU requirements for graduate assistantships and tuition scholarships are similar to other institutions in Tennessee.

## **Eligibility to Hold a Graduate Assistantship**

Candidates for appointment as graduate assistants must meet the following criteria:

- Graduate students must be officially admitted to the Graduate School and accepted into a graduate degree program.
- Graduate students who have a graduate assistantship and are admitted provisionally to a degree program have one semester to meet the provisions stated in their offer of admission letter. If provisions of their admission are not met after the first term, the graduate assistantship contract will be canceled unless the supervisory unit requests an exception in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School.
- International students are eligible for graduate assistantships as soon as they are admitted as graduate students at ETSU.
- Graduate students who have previously taken graduate level courses must have at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average in order to be awarded a graduate assistantship.

- Current graduate assistants must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) to remain eligible for assistantship support. A graduate assistant who does not maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA will be allowed one (1) semester to remedy the GPA.

## **Eligibility to Hold a Tuition Scholarship**

Candidates for tuition scholarships must meet the following criteria:

- At the time of initial appointment, candidates must be entering their first period of registration as a graduate student at ETSU. The candidate must be officially admitted to the Graduate School and into a degree program at ETSU. In certain very unusual circumstances, a current student can be moved from a GA to a TS; the graduate coordinator should make this request with a valid justification to the Dean of the Graduate School for consideration. There is no guarantee that such requests will be granted.
- Graduate students with a tuition scholarship who are admitted provisionally to a degree program have one semester to meet the provisions stated in their offer of admission letter. If provisions of their admission are not met after the first semester, the tuition scholarship contract will be canceled unless the supervisory unit requests an exception in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School.
- International students are eligible for tuition scholarships as soon as they are admitted as graduate students at ETSU.
- Graduate students who have previously taken graduate level courses must have at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average.
- Once the tuition scholarship is awarded, the student must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) to remain eligible for scholarship support. A tuition scholarship recipient who does not maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA will be allowed one (1) semester to remedy the GPA.

## **English Proficiency**

To hold a graduate assistantship or receive a tuition scholarship, international students must demonstrate a level of oral proficiency suitable to the responsibilities assigned. International students with a graduate assistantship or tuition scholarship will receive an email with instructions on how to sign up for an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). This interview will occur upon arrival at ETSU. Rating on this evaluation will determine eligibility for different categories of assignments. ETSU provides international students with a variety of opportunities to improve English fluency during their time as students.

## **Physical Presence in the United States**

Federal and state laws require that students be physically and lawfully present in the United States in order to hold a graduate assistantship or tuition scholarship and receive the financial benefits of them.

## **Time Limit**

Graduate assistantship and tuition scholarship recipients may be appointed for no more than two calendar years in a master's program, four years in a doctoral program for those students entering with a master's degree, or six years in a doctoral program for students entering with a baccalaureate degree. Exception: Students enrolled in a single master's program with 50 or more credit hours to complete may hold a graduate assistantship for three years without additional approval (approved by Graduate Council March 22, 2022).

Tuition scholarship contracts are renewable but must be consecutive. If a tuition scholarship student accepts a GA position and performs those duties, then they cannot change back to a tuition scholarship.

Requests for time extensions must be made by the supervisory unit in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School.

## **Financial Package and Information**

### **Explanation of Full- and Half-Time Graduate Assistantships**

Graduate assistants (GA) are categorized by stipend amount as either full GA or one-half GA. A student receiving a full stipend (50% work effort or .5 FTE) is assigned to 20 clock hours per week (or equivalent in classroom teaching or laboratory supervision) by the appropriate supervisor; a student receiving one-half stipend (25% work effort or .25 FTE) is assigned to 10 clock hours per week. Departments, colleges, and divisions are not authorized to offer a graduate assistantship of less than one-half appointment. Most graduate assistantship and all tuition scholarship positions occur on an academic year appointment, which is August 16-May 15.

### **Financial Package**

Graduate assistantships and tuition scholarship recipients have differing financial packages.

## ***Graduate Assistants***

Graduate assistantships receive a stipend and tuition waiver.

**Through December 2023**, Graduate Assistants are paid monthly. Those on an academic year appointment receive checks at the end of each respective month in September, October, November, and December. Those on a fiscal year appointment will receive checks in July, August, September, October, November, and December.

**Beginning in January 2024**, graduate assistants will be paid every two weeks. The last check for academic year GAs will come in May. GAs with a fiscal year appointment will receive a check every two weeks. GAs for Summer 1 will receive checks every two weeks from May to the end of June. Summer 2 will receive checks every two weeks from July to August.

In addition, graduate assistants receive a waiver for up to 15 graduate level credits of the in-state portion of graduate basic tuition (called a “maintenance fee”) based upon whether the GA position is a full-time or half-time position for the Fall and Spring semesters. Full GAs receive remission of maintenance fees (in-state tuition). Half-GAs receive remission of half of maintenance fees (in-state). Out-of-state students will also qualify for a waiver of the out-of-state portion of tuition. The graduate assistantship does not cover program service or course fees.

## ***Tuition Scholarships***

Tuition Scholarships do not have a stipend; rather recipients have a service obligation of 120 hours per semester (approximately 8 clock hours per week). Tuition Scholarship recipients receive a waiver for up to 15 graduate level credits of the in-state portion of graduate basic tuition (called a “maintenance fee”) for Fall and Spring semesters. Out-of-state students will also qualify for a waiver of the out-of-state portion of tuition. The tuition scholarship does not cover program service or course fees.

## **Fall and Spring Tuition Remission for Graduate Assistants and Tuition Scholarship Recipients**

To be eligible to receive a maintenance fee waiver (also called Tuition Remission or Tuition Wavier) during the Fall and Spring semesters, a student paid as a graduate assistant from funds administered through an ETSU source<sup>2</sup> must be employed as a graduate assistant for the

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<sup>2</sup> Auxiliary Services are responsible for the tuition remission (maintenance fee) waiver in their respective units.

entire academic year, or the calendar year, or, if the assistantship is for one term only, for each month during that term.

In-state tuition (maintenance fee) eligibility is based upon the stipend level:

- A graduate assistant receiving a full graduate assistantship (.5 FTE) is eligible to receive a full waiver of the maintenance fee.
- A graduate assistant receiving a one-half graduate assistantship (.25 FTE) is eligible to receive a one-half waiver of the maintenance fee.
- A tuition scholarship student is eligible to receive a full waiver of the maintenance fee.

The tuition remission that comes with a GA or TS contract does not cover tuition for winter session courses and winter session courses do not count toward the requirement to be enrolled in 9 graduate hours for spring term.

### **Summer Tuition Remission for Graduate Assistants**

Students on a fiscal year (12-months) graduate assistantship are eligible for summer tuition remission. Tuition remission dollars are very limited for summer session; consequently, the tuition remission for Summer covers a maximum of six credits. Some programs require that students enroll in more than six credits during summer; regardless, only six credits will be covered. Tuition eligibility is based upon the stipend level for Fall and Spring.

Graduate assistantships on an academic year appointment (9 months) who enroll in courses in summer sessions are responsible for tuition. However, out-of-state tuition is waived in the summer for academic year graduate assistants and tuition scholarship recipients who have held a position both fall and spring terms of the academic year. Students who are taking courses in the summer should contact the Graduate School Office Manager and request that they be coded to pay summer tuition at the in-state rate.

### **Other Scholarships**

ETSU students who receive a graduate assistantship or tuition scholarship are not eligible for a Creative Arts Scholarship or International Merit Scholarship.

### **Federal Financial Aid**

The awarding of a graduate assistantship or tuition scholarship may impact a student's federal financial aid offer. Any questions about federal financial aid should be addressed to [ETSU's Financial Aid Office](#).

## **Working Conditions and Time Keeping**

A full-time graduate assistant is required to work 20 hours per week and a half-time graduate assistant is required to work 10 hours per week. A graduate tuition scholarship recipient has a service obligation of 120 hours per semester (approximately 8 hours per week). The work assignment or service obligation is the prerogative of the supervisor, but the graduate assistant/scholarship recipient has the right to have the assignment fully explained. Such explanation may be especially important in the case of a graduate research assistant because research done on her/his thesis or dissertation may so overlap with work done as a research assistant that it may be difficult to determine the amount of time spent on assistantship work and time spent on thesis/dissertation work.

Full-time teaching assistants and associates shall be assigned

- no more than six (6) contact hours per week classroom or laboratory instruction; or
- no more than eight (8) contact hours per week of laboratory supervision; or
- a combination of the above.

The total work assignment for full-time graduate assistants, regardless of responsibility, cannot exceed 20 clock hours per week.

The work requirements of a graduate assistant or service obligations of a graduate tuition scholar should be reasonable and should correspond to the contractual hours. In unusual circumstances where the weekly hour requirements are scheduled to exceed the contractual hours, there must be a similar reduction in hours in nearby weeks. Primary assignments that are predominantly office or clerically-oriented must follow contractual time limits and standard time reporting.

## **Leave**

A graduate assistant on an academic or calendar year appointment does not accrue annual leave or sick leave and is obligated to work each week of their contractual period with the following exception: Days of administrative closing (12 holidays annually) of the university will not be considered work days. Service obligations for tuition scholarship recipients are subject to the same exception.

Graduate assistantship and tuition scholarship recipients are responsible for making up missed hours due to illness, appointments, or other absences. If the graduate assistant or tuition scholar has a classroom, laboratory, other "time-sensitive" assignment, it is important to follow your department's or unit's protocol for absences. Keep in mind that ETSU is committed to student learning, therefore class and laboratory time is important; canceling classes should be a last resort used only in emergencies and only with supervisor permission.



## Recording Time

Each unit should have a process for graduate assistantships and tuition scholarship recipients to record and report their time. Graduate assistants should keep careful records of their work, and tuition scholarship recipients should keep records of their service to provide documentation for reference and evaluation. It is the student's responsibility to accurately and honestly report hours to the supervisor.

## Accepting an Assistantship

ETSU adheres to the Council of Graduate School's [Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellows, Trainees, and Assistants](#). Acceptance of an assistantship completes an agreement that both the student and the Graduate School expect to be honored. An acceptance after April 15 commits the student to that agreement unless they have received a written release. Acceptances before April 15 must be resigned by April 15. Without formal release by the original appointing unit, the Graduate School cannot make a subsequent appointment. Furthermore, the original appointing unit is not required to release a student when the loss of the appointment, because of its timing and nature, will create a hardship.

## Additional Employment at ETSU

A graduate assistant may not work for ETSU more than 20 hours per week without special permission from the Dean of the Graduate School. This includes any job held in addition to the assistantship. Therefore, graduate students holding full-time (20 hours/week, .5 FTE) assistantships may not work any additional time for ETSU without prior permission from the Dean of the Graduate School. Graduate students who hold halftime (10 hours/week, .25 FTE) appointments may work a total of 10 additional hours without permission.

*Special note about additional employment for international students:* International Students holding an F-1 or J-1 visa cannot work more than 20 hours per week total per federal regulations. For example, an international student who has a full GA position (20 hours per week) cannot have additional employment at ETSU; this includes employment with contractors like Sodexo. International students with a half GA position (10 hours per week) or a Tuition Scholarship (8 hours per week) can, with approval, hold additional employment but that employment cannot exceed 10 or 12 hours respectively. International students who exceed the work hours requirement risk having their visa revoked by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

## Course Load Requirements

Following are the course load requirements for graduate assistants (full-time and half-time) and tuition scholarship recipients:

1. Graduate assistants/tuition scholarship recipients are required to register for a minimum of nine (9) graduate credit hours per term during the Fall and Spring semesters. The required nine graduate hours must be maintained the entire semester.
2. A graduate student holding an assistantship in the summer must be registered for a minimum of three (3) graduate credit hours during a given term or intercession and a minimum of six (6) graduate credit hours for the entire summer. These credits may be taken in intercession and/or in both summer terms. Graduate assistants may not take more than a total of nine (9) graduate credit hours during the entire summer. (Note: The tuition waiver for Summer covers a maximum of six credits only, even if more credits are required by the program. Refer to the section "Summer Tuition Remission for Graduate Assistantships.")
3. The course load may not include undergraduate courses unless the course is a required admission provision written in the letter of admission. In this case, one undergraduate course of three (3) credit hours per semester for two semesters only may be taken to count towards course load eligibility required for a GA/TS position.
4. Graduate students who have held assistantships for at least one semester, are within six semester hours or less of completing their programs, have applied to graduate, and are in their final full-time term of their graduate program are permitted to hold a graduate assistantship while enrolled in a minimum of six hours of graduate course work.
5. The assistantship/tuition scholarship will be terminated if the student's academic load falls below nine graduate hours during Fall or Spring semester, or below six graduate hours during the Summer semester or their final semester.
6. Graduate assistants/tuition scholarship recipients may not enroll in more than fifteen (15) credit hours during the Fall or Spring terms without prior permission of the Dean, Graduate School.

## Rights

A graduate assistant/scholarship recipient has the rights possessed by any student at ETSU. Extended to the specific instance of graduate assistants as employees and tuition scholarship recipients as ETSU representatives in their scholarship obligations, these include the right to consideration for continued contracts/scholarships without regard to age, sex, color, race, religion, national origin, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation/gender identity.

## **Professional Expectations and Responsibilities**

### **Professional Demeanor**

Graduate assistants and tuition scholarship recipients are simultaneously students and professionals. As emerging professionals, graduate students and tuition scholarship recipients should adopt high standards of professional behavior. You will be establishing yourself as someone trustworthy, hard-working, reliable, and ethical. Your supervisors will be writing letters of recommendation or giving references to future employers.

Your primary responsibility as a Graduate Assistant or Tuition Scholar is to assist the faculty member or supervisor, whether you are responsible for direct instruction, supplemental instruction or lab supervision, research, administrative, or other relevant work. As a representative of ETSU, you have a responsibility to conduct yourself professionally in your interactions with colleagues, peers, students, staff, and campus visitors while performing your assignment.

Graduate assistants and tuition scholarship recipients should become informed about departmental, college, and university regulations that are related to the responsibilities of their employment or service and follow them consistently. The faculty mentor should help the graduate student understand these regulations.

Important university policies include:

[ADA and Section 504 Grievance Procedure](#)

[Consensual Relationships Policy](#)

[Discrimination and Harassment](#)

[Fitness for Duty](#)

[Sexual Misconduct](#)

The graduate assistant or scholarship recipient also must report unethical behavior observed or experienced in the workplace, including instances of sexual harassment and has the right to be protected from retribution for reporting instances of unethical behavior. However, it is also the obligation of any person reporting such behavior to be able to present documentation of the occurrence of the behavior. In addition, the graduate assistant or scholarship recipient has the right to due process in employment or scholarship terms evaluation and/or termination procedures.

### **Confidentiality**

In your assignment, it may be necessary for you to discuss student progress or grades, interact with faculty, staff, and other graduate students, and/or maintain student or client records. The discussion of grades or other confidential information should be handled with care and

discernment so as not to violate the [Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#). Discuss your obligations for confidentiality and privacy with your faculty or unit supervisor.

Furthermore, you should be aware that even when you are in the confines of a university office, laughing about, posting examples of, or ridiculing students or their work/behaviors/actions is highly unprofessional. You should also not post students' work—for either positive or negative reasons—on social media without their consent. Discuss these issues with your supervisor if you are unsure about appropriateness.

## **Training**

The Supervisory Unit ensures that graduate assistants and tuition scholarship recipients receive the training necessary to perform their duties. This training can take a variety of forms such as one-on-one training/shadowing, group training, workshops, or training courses (either face-to-face or online). Each unit will be responsible for developing, organizing, and delivering training appropriate to the needs of the duties assigned.

## **Solving Problems in the Workplace**

No working environment is without issues. To address conflicts that may arise, keep ETSU's core values in mind:

**PEOPLE** come first, are treated with dignity and respect, and are encouraged to achieve their full potential;

**RELATIONSHIPS** are built on honesty, integrity, and trust;

**DIVERSITY** of people and thought is respected;

**EXCELLENCE** is achieved through teamwork, leadership, creativity, and a strong work ethic;

**EFFICIENCY** is achieved through wise use of human and financial resources; and

**COMMITMENT** to intellectual achievement is embraced.

Framing a workplace issue to value people, relationships, diversity, excellence, efficiency, and commitment will go a long way in helping you seek a satisfactory resolution. The following sections provide guides to addressing issues with various groups you may encounter in your working environment.

## ***Solving Problems with Other Students***<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The sections "Solving Problems with Other Students," "Solving Problems with Co-Workers," "Solving Problems with a Supervisor," and "Utilizing 'Chain of Command'" are modeled heavily on the information in the *University of West Florida Graduate Assistant Handbook* 2018.

In the sometimes tense and competitive realm of graduate school, difficulties may arise with other students. These general pointers can help you find effective solutions to problems with other students and peers:

- Recognize that everyone has a unique view of the situation. Try to explain your vantage point clearly and calmly.
- Invite the other person to give their perspective. Listen carefully and try not to become defensive.
- Keep your tone measured, your voice calm, your language professional. (Being in the “heat of the moment” often causes people to interact unprofessionally such as using obscenities or inappropriate language.)
- Do not send an email when you are angry. In almost all cases, doing so will escalate a problem.
- Identify specific behaviors or actions that are problematic and frame the discussion using “I” statements. (“I” statements focus the behavior on how it makes you feel or react, rather than blaming the other person for behaving a particular way.) For example, “I am upset that I had to clean up the lab last night by myself because I missed bedtime with my child.”

If you cannot resolve the issue using these techniques, then it is time to bring it to the attention of your professor, advisor, mentor, or the Dean of Students, Dr. Michelle Byrd.

### ***Solving Problems with Co-Workers***

Your co-workers may be other graduate students or staff. Sometimes those co-workers may be your peers or they may have a higher rank than you do, which can create a power dynamic that can be challenging to navigate. To address these problems, try the techniques listed in the above section. In addition, you should

- Clarify workload assignments or responsibilities if these are the source of the tension.
- Involve your co-workers in brainstorming other approaches or solutions to address the issue.

If you are unable to resolve the issue, ask your supervisor for assistance.

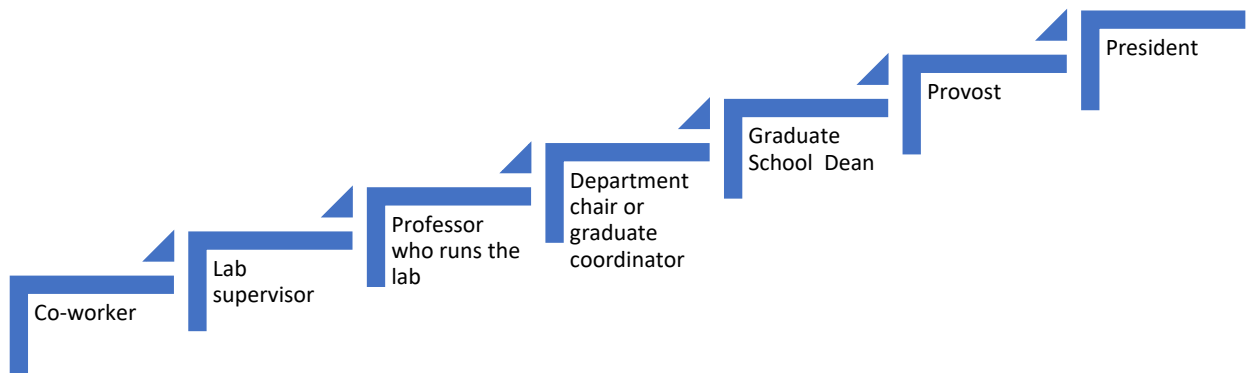
### ***Solving Problems with a Supervisor***

You may experience challenges with your supervisor such as the supervisor being unclear with expectations, not posting your work assignment consistently, placing unrealistic demands in a short time frame or not showing up for appointments. While rare, sometimes supervisors may be insulting or demeaning. The University of West Florida offers this advice for graduate students dealing with supervisor problems:

...[T]ake steps early in the process to identify the problem and seek opportunities for explanation and reconciliation. The student should keep in mind that the supervisor has greater authority and experience in the situation and stay open to the idea that there could be some legitimate explanation for the behavior perceived to be problematic. However, if the student is not able to reach an accord, s/he may want to explore whether a different assignment may be appropriate and/or available. Another option is to speak to the person who supervises the student's immediate supervisor.<sup>4</sup>

### **Utilizing "Chain of Command"**

It is typical in most workplaces, regardless of type, that employees are expected to follow the "chain of command" to resolve problems. The concept of "chain of command" means that the problem should be addressed directly with the person in the organization who is closest to the problem; if a resolution is not forthcoming, then the problem is taken to the direct step higher up. Suppose you have a problem with a co-worker in your laboratory. The chain of command would look something like this:



Skipping steps in the chain usually means that you will be sent back to the appropriate starting point in the chain of command since problems are most often able to be resolved by those closest to the issue.

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<sup>4</sup> University of West Florida Graduate Assistant Handbook 2018.

## **Appointment, Renewal, and Evaluation**

### **Appointment/Renewal**

Decisions regarding who shall hold graduate assistantships/tuition scholarships are made at the level of the department or unit in which the student will work. Therefore, the selection procedure varies. Some units use committees to screen applicants; in others, the chair, director, or head of the unit may make the decision. Additionally, if an assistantship is funded from a grant or contract, the principal investigator or project director will typically make the choice. Regardless of the mechanism for selection or source of funding, the contract of appointment for a graduate assistantship or tuition scholarship must be signed by the department chair or unit head and the Dean of the Graduate School.

### **Evaluation**

Each graduate assistant and tuition scholarship recipient will receive a written evaluation at least once each year, preferably each semester.

In many ways the graduate assistantship is an apprenticeship. The evaluation process should begin with the development of clear outcome goals for the assistantship. Because these goals will necessarily vary according to the type of assistantship (teaching, research, or administration) and among the various departments and divisions that employ graduate assistant/scholarship recipients, it is the responsibility of each department or supervisory unit to develop goals for each of its graduate assistants. Tuition scholarship recipients are also evaluated, not as employees, but as scholars responsible to their units for fulfilling the terms of their scholarships.

Each department/unit is also responsible for developing a method of evaluation for graduate assistants and scholarship recipients. The results of the formal written evaluation of each graduate assistant/scholarship recipient must be filed with The Office Manager in the Graduate School at the end of each academic year and/or upon conclusion of the graduate assistant's/scholarship recipient's contract. The formal evaluation should be supplemented by periodic informal conferences/evaluations with the student's mentor. The results of all evaluations should be kept in the departmental/unit file. The methods used for both formal and informal evaluations should be explained to the student when the appointment is made.

The purpose of the evaluations is to provide a supportive process that facilitates the attainment of the student's long-range professional goals. Thus, the student should be given constructive feedback regarding the outcome of each evaluation with suggestions concerning changes that the graduate assistant might make to improve performance. Additionally, the evaluation process is to ensure fairness in reappointment to the

assistantship/scholarship. Finally, as part of the process, the evaluation may include the student's assessment of the experience.

### **Rescinding an Offer for a Graduate Assistantship or Tuition Scholarship**

Occasionally, although not often, a program or unit finds itself in the regrettable position of needing to rescind an offer of a Graduate Assistantship or Tuition Scholarship. While this situation occurs rarely, it is sometimes necessary in situations such as: the student does not meet the academic qualifications for admission, does not have the GPA to be awarded a GA position (as described in this handbook), has a serious academic misconduct sanction, or has not demonstrated sound professional or academic judgment or behavior. When a unit needs to rescind an offer that has been, it must notify the student in writing (email) as soon as possible and cc: the Dean of the Graduate School.

To rescind an offer means that a verbal and/or written offer of a GA or TS has been made to a student but the contract has not yet been completed and/or the student has not begun work. If a contract has been completed and/or the student has started work, then the unit would follow the termination process as described below.

### **Non-Renewal of Graduate Assistantship or Tuition Scholarship Contract**

Graduate assistantship and tuition scholarship contracts are for one academic semester, one academic year, or one fiscal year (in the case of some GA contracts). A unit may choose not to renew a contract for any of the reasons listed in the "Graduate Assistantship or Tuition Scholarship Contract Termination" section or for other reasons (e.g. loss of funding support for the position, work assignment is no longer needed, etc.).

Non-renewal means that the student and supervisory unit fulfill the current contract obligations but no further contract from that unit will be offered. The unit should inform the graduate assistant or tuition scholarship recipient as soon as is reasonably possible that the contract will not be renewed. Sometimes the supervisory unit states this information at the time of hire when it is known the contract will be limited to a specific time period.

### **Future Eligibility after Non-Renewal**

The student may be eligible for a contract with another unit as long as the student has received a good evaluation(s), has not violated departmental or university policies, remains in academic good standing, and has not exceeded the time limits of eligibility.



## **Terminating a Graduate Assistantship or Tuition Scholarship**

ETSU may terminate a graduate assistantship or tuition scholarship contract before the contract period ends for several reasons:

### **1. Failure to Maintain Academic Standing**

Graduate assistants and tuition scholarship recipients must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) to remain eligible for their support. Students who do not maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA will be allowed one (1) semester to remedy the GPA.

All graduate assistants and tuition scholarship recipients must make satisfactory progress toward their degrees. Satisfactory progress is determined on a case-by-case basis by the graduate coordinator and/or mentor in consultation with the Dean of the Graduate School. If it is determined that satisfactory progress is not being made, even if the student is meeting other minimum requirements (e.g. GPA and continuous enrollment status), the graduate assistantship or tuition scholarship may be terminated.

### **2. Unsatisfactory Evaluation or Performance**

If the performance or conduct of the graduate assistant or tuition scholarship recipient is not satisfactory, the supervisor must discuss the issue with the student as soon as the supervisor becomes aware of unsatisfactory performance. If the performance or conduct of the student continues to be unacceptable and corrective measures are necessary, then the student must be notified of this possibility in writing with suggestions for improvement. If improvement is still not forthcoming, the student must be notified in writing that he or she is being dismissed. Copies of letters of dismissal from graduate assistantships or tuition scholarships must be filed with the Dean of the Graduate School and with the dean of the college in which the student holds the assistantship/scholarship.

### **3. Failure to Fulfill Obligations**

If a tuition scholarship recipient fails to complete the terms of their scholarship during a semester, the tuition scholarship may be terminated.

### **4. Failure to Meet Departmental/Supervisory Unit Policies**

Departments and supervisory units reserve discretion over the retention and reappointment of graduate assistantships and tuition scholarships. Departments, units, and programs may have requirements and guidelines for graduate students; these should be outlined in a program

handbook. These guidelines may include, but are not limited to, dress code, absence/tardiness to work assignment, professional standards of practice.

## **5. Violating University Policies**

Students who violate university policies, including but not limited to consensual relationships, sexual harassment, may have their contract terminated.

### **Future Eligibility after Termination**

When a tuition scholarship or graduate assistantship is terminated, the student is no longer eligible for this scholarship or a graduate assistantship in future semesters.

### **Tuition Reimbursement Following Termination**

If a graduate assistant recipient is terminated from the assistantship during the semester, but does not withdraw from ETSU, the student has the responsibility to pay ETSU the amount of tuition pro rata for that part of the semester during which the student does not hold the assistantship.

### **Appeal Process for Contract Termination**

The graduate assistant/scholarship recipient has the right to due process. If a student has reason to believe that he or she was dismissed without justifiable cause, the student may file an appeal. (Dismissal for Failure to Maintain Academic Standing may not be appealed.) The appeal procedure is as follows:

1. A written appeal with all supporting materials should be presented to the student's immediate supervisor within 21 calendar days of dismissal from, or nonrenewal of, the graduate assistantship/scholarship. The immediate supervisor will review the appeal, discussing it with the appropriate departmental chair or unit director, and provide the student with a decision in writing within 14 calendar days of receipt of the appeal.
2. If the immediate supervisor does not reverse the decision after reviewing the case, the appeal may be carried to the departmental chair or unit director within 7 days of receiving the decision of the immediate supervisor. If the immediate supervisor is the departmental chair or unit director, then the student should transmit the appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School. The departmental chair or unit director will review the case and render a decision, in writing, within 14 days of receipt of the appeal. Copies of the appeal, the decision, and all supporting materials must be sent to the

- Dean of the Graduate School, and to the dean of the college in which the assistantship/ scholarship is held.
3. If the appeal is not resolved satisfactorily by the chair or director then, within 7 calendar days, the student may appeal in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School, who will review the case. If the dean, the student, and the student's supervisor are unable to resolve the appeal informally, the dean shall appoint an ad hoc committee comprised of two graduate students (selected by the Graduate and Professional Students Association) and two graduate faculty members. This committee shall elect a chairperson and hold a hearing concerning the appeal. At this hearing, all material relevant to the appeal shall be presented by the student, faculty member, the department chairperson, dean of the college, and any others who may be called to assist the committee.
  4. A written appeal of the decision of the dean may be submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost within 14 calendar days from the time the dean reports his/her decision to the appropriate individuals.
  5. The Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost will then review the dean's report and endorse the dean's decision, reject the dean's decision, or modify the decision. The Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost shall then notify the student, the dean, the faculty member, the chairperson of the appeals committee, the departmental chairperson, and the dean of the college of his/her opinion concerning the appeal. In the absence of further appeal, the opinion rendered by the Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost becomes final.

### **Resignation from a Graduate Assistantship/Tuition Scholarship**

If a graduate assistant recipient decides to resign from their assistantship before the expiration of the contract, the student must notify the Graduate School and their supervisor in writing two (2) weeks before the date of resignation. If the student remains enrolled at ETSU, they may be required to pay tuition pro rata for the part of the semester following resignation from the assistantship. Students with tuition scholarships must also notify the Graduate School and their supervisor in writing two weeks before the resignation, but will not be required to pay tuition pro rata for the part of the semester following resignation.

### **Reimbursement of a Tuition Waiver**

If a graduate assistant recipient resigns or is terminated from the assistantship during the semester, but does not withdraw from ETSU, the student has responsibility to pay ETSU the amount of tuition pro rata for that part of the semester during which the student does not hold the assistantship. The Financial Aid Office will notify the student of the tuition reimbursement amount.

## **Students with Disabilities**

ETSU is committed to the goal of integrating disabled individuals into the campus community to the fullest extent possible. Services are offered within a framework that stresses independence and self-reliance. Services include arrangements for access, accommodations in instruction, and provision of a variety of support services designed to enable the student to take full advantage of the university's programs. Students who have special needs as a result of a disability should contact the [Disability Support Services](#), D.P. Culp University Center Suite 309, phone 439-8346 V/TDD.

## **Affirmative Action**

ETSU is fully in accord with the belief that educational and employment opportunities should be available to all eligible persons without regard to age, sex, color, race, religion, national origin or disability.

## **Title IX**

ETSU desires to maintain an environment that is safe and supportive for students and employees and to reward performance solely on the basis of relevant criteria. ETSU complies with Title IX:

Title IX is a federal civil rights law that prohibits all sex or gender discrimination on educational campuses. Title IX protects individuals of all genders and sexual orientations and applies to students, faculty, staff, independent contractors, campus visitors, and all other participants in university educational programs and activities. All forms of sexual or gender-based harassment, including but not limited to dating and domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault, are violations of Title IX. (ETSU University Compliance).

Accordingly, the university will not tolerate sexual harassment of students or employees. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a
- term or condition of an individual's employment or academic standing; or
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment or academic decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or academic environment.

All questions, reports, or complaints about any form of unwelcome sexual conduct should be reported directly to ETSU's Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator can

provide guidance and support regarding your rights and responsibilities under Title IX. Further, ETSU's [University Compliance Office](#) website provides useful information about Title IX matters.

## **Substance Policies**

### **Drug Free Workplace**

It is the policy of this university that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, possession or use of alcohol and illicit drugs on the ETSU campus in the workplace (on or off campus), on property owned or controlled by ETSU, or as part of any activity of ETSU is strictly prohibited. All employees and students are subject to applicable federal, state and local laws related to this matter. Additionally, any violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action

### **Tobacco Use**

ETSU is a Tobacco-Free Campus, with smoking and all other tobacco usage permitted only in private vehicles. This policy applies to all university buildings/grounds; ETSU-affiliated off-campus locations, and clinics; any buildings owned, leased or rented by ETSU in all other areas; and ETSU facilities located on the campus of the James H. Quillen Veterans Affairs Medical Center at Mountain Home. Tobacco use is also prohibited in all state vehicles. This tobacco-free policy is in effect 24 hours a day year-round.

## **Resources for Graduate Students**

### **Graduate and Professional Student Association**

The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) is the representative body for students enrolled in the Graduate School. The executive board of the GPSA is elected from representatives of the various graduate programs. Two graduate students from the GPSA are elected members of the Graduate Council. The GPSA encourages social, athletic, cultural, and other extracurricular activities, promotes closer relations between graduate students and faculty outside the formal academic settings, and provides a voice for ideas and concerns of graduate students. It is open to all graduate students; graduate assistants are especially encouraged to join.

## **Graduate Council**

The Graduate Council is the faculty governance body for graduate education at ETSU. Graduate Council approves curriculum, graduate faculty status, and establishes policies related to graduate education.

## **Graduate Student Success Specialists**

The Graduate School provides the services of the Graduate Student Success Specialist to graduate students who need assistance in finding campus or off-campus resources to help them in meeting their daily living needs. The Graduate Student Success Specialist is located in Room 462 in Sherrod Library, 439-7062, [gradsuccess@etsu.edu](mailto:gradsuccess@etsu.edu).

## **Center for Academic Achievement**

The [Center for Academic Achievement](#) is a one-stop shop to help students be academically successful in college. The CFAA is home to three academic support programs: The Tutoring Center, Supplemental Instruction (SI), and Academic Coaching. Located on the first floor of the Charles C. Sherrod Library, the CFAA's free services include: individual tutoring for many ETSU courses and writing consultations, Supplemental Instruction, and Academic Coaching.

## **Other Campus Resources**

Graduate students have access to a wide array of campus resources and activities, many of which are paid for by student fees. A [comprehensive list of resources](#) is available on the Graduate School website.

## **Appendix 1: Additional Information for Those with Teaching Responsibilities**

Students who attend ETSU should have an educational experience that provides the opportunity to deeply engage with academic pursuits free from bias, discrimination, harassment, and capricious evaluation. As a teaching assistant or associate, you will be responsible for maintaining a supportive academic environment.

### **Developing Your Course**

Your supervisor and department will guide you as you develop a syllabus and course policies for the classes in which you have primary responsibility. As you create your syllabus, you will want to address the following topics, among others:

1. **Class attendance.** Attendance is a contract between faculty and students. It is expected that students will attend classes regularly and provide faculty members with a reason for any absence.
2. **Academic Integrity and Misconduct.** Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. Students guilty of academic misconduct, either directly or indirectly, through participation or assistance, are immediately responsible to the instructor of the class. In addition to other possible disciplinary sanctions which may be imposed through the university's academic misconduct policy as a result of academic misconduct, the instructor has the authority to assign an "F" or a zero ("0") for the exercise or examination, or to assign an "F" in the course.
3. **Grading Policy.** Each course should have a statement about grading and how grades will be calculated.
4. **Handling Disruptive Behavior.** Disruptive behavior in the classroom may be defined as, but not limited to, behavior that obstructs or disrupts the learning environment (e.g., offensive language, harassment of students and professors, repeated outbursts from a student which disrupt the flow of instruction or prevent concentration on the subject taught, failure to cooperate in maintaining classroom decorum, etc.), text messaging, and the continued use of any electronic or other noise or light emitting device which disturbs others (e.g., disturbing noises from cell phones, lap-top computers, games, etc.).

### **Some Important Teaching Policies**

The following includes important teaching policies. Your supervisory unit should provide you with other relevant policies.

#### ***Posting Student Grades***

In order to comply with provisions of the "Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974" (Buckley Amendment), the posting of student grades at ETSU is prohibited. Interpretations of

the Buckley Amendment have also prohibited the use of any codes such as Social Security numbers and other devices that might make identification of a student and his/her grade possible.

### ***Retention of Papers, Tests, and Records***

Unless the papers are returned to the students, ETSU faculty members will retain papers (including but not limited to tests, examinations, and research papers) on which grades are based at least until the period for grade challenge has expired (one calendar year from the time the grade was issued). Any student who challenges a grade must provide returned papers if they are to be used as evidence for the challenge.

### ***Academic Integrity and Misconduct***

Instructors are responsible for maintaining academic integrity. ETSU's [Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy](#) outlines the policy and procedures related to academic misconduct.

### ***Grade Appeals***

Students who believe a course grade has been assigned in a malicious, capricious, erroneous, or arbitrary manner may appeal a grade. Policies for Undergraduate Grade Appeals and Graduate Grade Appeals outline the policies and processes involved.

[Undergraduate Policy](#)

[Graduate Policy](#)

### ***Early Attendance Reporting***

In week 2 of the term, instructors should enter attendance reporting for students in the course. "Attendance" can mean different things—such as logging in regularly to an online course, being physically present in a face-to-face course, turning in work, and the like. The university must comply with federal financial aid requirements to report early attendance; therefore, it is important that you do so. The Provost will send an email alerting instructors to record attendance in Goldlink.

### ***Early Semester Progress Reports***

Instructors are to provide undergraduate students with a [midterm grade](#). The Provost will send announcements via email reminding instructors to assign the midterm grade. Reporting the



midterm grade is important for all students, but especially those who are struggling. Academic advisors will be able to reach out the student to help them so that they can (hopefully) improve their success.

### ***Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)***

[FERPA](#) protects students' personally identifiable information, including their progress in courses, from being shared without their consent; this includes sharing information with parents, spouses, or others who are not university faculty or staff. Students can provide permission using the First Mate system. Your department chair will be able to give you information on finding whether or not a student has a First Mate with whom information can be shared.

The exception to FERPA is that information can be shared with university officials who have a legitimate need for student information in order to fulfill their professional responsibilities. These officials may include, but are not limited to, the Registrar, advisors, athletic staff, counselors, etc. If you have any questions about to whom you can share information, consult your department chair or direct supervisor.

### ***ETSU Email for Communication***

When communicating with students via email, instructors only use students official [ETSU email](#) addresses.

### ***Other Teaching Information***

Some resources and information for instructors are highlighted below.

### ***Responsibilities for Course Instruction***

All students should have a full 15 weeks of academic instruction in a regular term. Instructors should cancel class rarely and not without approval of their supervisor or department chair. When possible, instructors should provide an alternative instructional assignment via D2L so that students receive a full instructional experience.

The week before finals is to be used for classroom instruction. ETSU policy states "Under no circumstances will this week be used for final examinations. Exceptions shall be made for laboratories." More details about expectations for pre-finals week activities can be found [here](#).

## **Academic Calendar**

ETSU publishes its [academic calendar](#) on its website. Key dates for the semester are indicated. Instructors should familiarize themselves with each semester's academic calendar.

## **D2L**

D2L is ETSU's LMS (Learning Management System). Teaching Associates will have access to a course shell to develop. Teaching assistants will usually be added as an instructor to D2L. Consult with your department about how course shells should be developed. Many resources for learning D2L are available for [instructors](#).

### **[GRAD 5110: Teaching Pedagogy for the Graduate Teaching Assistant](#)**

This one-credit hour course is taught by ETSU faculty and is designed to help new graduate assistants develop effective classroom management and effective communication strategies. It is offered each Fall and Spring semesters; students enroll through Goldlink.

## **Center for Teaching Excellence**

The [Center for Teaching Excellence](#) provides support for faculty, including graduate students with teaching responsibilities, to develop their teaching practice.

## **The Importance of Your Teaching Role**

In addition to guiding students to learn content and skills in the course you teach, instructors of first year courses play a significant role in students' success during their entire time at the university. Extensive research has shown that the first-year experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, are crucial to student success. In their large-scale longitudinal study, Chambliss and Takacs found several key factors in student success, one of those factors being personal connection. They posit, "Faculty-student interactions...have dramatic effects on student learning" (4)<sup>5</sup>. They go on to say that in addition to friends, faculty can make or break the student experience: "When good teachers are encountered early, they legitimize academic involvement, while poor teachers destroy the reputation of departments. ...Relationships are important because they raise or suppress the motivation to learn" (155).

Chambliss and Takacs note that when instructors do "small things" such as using students' preferred name in class, treating students with respect, inviting them to office hours, the impact is significant.

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Chambliss and Christopher Takacs. *How College Works*. Harvard University Press, 2014.

## Establishing Boundaries as an Instructor

While building relationships with students in your course has an important impact on their learning, at the same time, instructors need to establish clear boundaries with students. Oftentimes, graduate students who are teaching or assisting with a course struggle to find the appropriate way to interact with undergraduate students who may not be much older than they are—or who may be quite a bit older. A good rule of thumb is to “be friendly, but not familiar.” In other words, treat your students with respect, but do not share the details of the party you attended over the weekend. You are their instructor, not their buddy.

Students appreciate it when their instructor says “hi” to them in the Culp Center. Yet, friendliness can sometimes be interpreted in ways that can pose risks. Some students may think that they can take advantage of a teacher’s friendliness for their advantage to “bend the rules” for the student or “give the student a break” with grading. The University of West Florida advises graduate teaching assistants that

Befriending a student can result in the GTA [Graduate Teaching Assistant/Associate] finding it difficult to enforce equitable grading practices. Situations such as this set the stage for challenges with discriminatory practices. Graduate Teaching Assistants should have a clear understanding of the issues that can arise in the absence of fair treatment with regard to grades and learning opportunities. (20)

Be mindful that you are treating all students equitably.

Friendliness can also sometimes be interpreted as flirtatious. As an instructor, you should be aware of the power dynamic. Even though you may feel like a student yourself, in your role as an instructor, you are in a position of authority and your behavior could easily cross the boundary of acceptable to unwanted. Keeping in mind that your students are not your buddies, sexual jokes or innuendo, suggestive nicknames or physical items (stickers on your laptop, a calendar on your office wall) could be viewed by a student as sexual harassment. ETSU does not condone [sexual harassment](#). Concerns about sexual or other harassment or discrimination of any kind can be reported to [University Compliance](#).

If the Graduate Assistant receives unwelcome attention from a student in your course, a peer, a faculty or staff member, or another person, you are encouraged to tell the person that the attention is unwanted and request that it stop. Use direct language such as “I don’t like the language you use to describe women. It is offense, and I do not want you to continue using that language in my presence.” If the behavior or unwanted attention continues, it is acceptable to skip the chain of command and move directly into filing a complaint with University Compliance.

## **Appendix 2: Additional Information for Supervisory Units**

### **Contracts**

GA and TS contracts must be entered into the contract system. The Office Manager will train new Executive Aides or others who enter contracts on using the system.

### **Training**

Each unit must provide training in the duties assigned to the graduate assistants or tuition scholarship recipients so that they can perform their jobs appropriately and safely. Training should include clear expectations for performance, work schedule, safety, unit rules, applicable university rules and policies, professional behavior, and the like.

### **Evaluations**

Each unit must develop a plan for providing a formal, written evaluation to graduate assistants and tuition scholarship recipients. At a minimum, the evaluation should occur at the end of the academic year. Preferably, informal evaluations should occur at least once a semester. Each unit's evaluation plan must be filed with The Office Manager in the Graduate School. The results of the formal written evaluation of each graduate assistant/scholarship recipient must be filed with The Office Manager, Graduate School, at the end of each academic year and/or upon conclusion of the graduate assistant's/scholarship recipient's contract. The results of all evaluations should also be kept in the departmental/unit file. The methods used for both formal and informal evaluations should be explained to the student when the appointment is made.

### **Funding for Assistantships**

Each supervisory unit is responsible for funding the stipend for the graduate assistantship. Non-grant funded assistantships are eligible to use the general tuition pool to cover tuition remission. Requests for new assistantship positions should be discussed with the Dean of the Graduate School.

### **Grant-Funded Assistantships**

Principal investigators/program directors who submit proposals to external agencies in which support for a graduate assistant is requested must request sufficient monies to pay the maintenance fees for the graduate assistant's full term of employment. Should the

funding agency not pay the tuition, the departmental unit will be responsible for the maintenance fee obligation.

### **Tuition Remission Availability Following Termination/Resignation**

In the event a student resigns from the graduate assistantship or tuition scholarship, or is terminated, the student has the responsibility to pay ETSU the amount of tuition pro rata for that part of the semester during which the student does not hold the assistantship. The Financial Aid Office will notify the student of the tuition reimbursement amount.

If the department appoints another student to the assistantship the department may request that any remaining tuition waiver be used for the newly appointed student and that student will receive an appropriate refund.

If a graduate assistant recipient resigns the assistantship and withdraws from ETSU then the department or unit will have access to a tuition waiver for a replacement in accord with the refund of fees policies applied to students who pay tuition. These are as follows:

1. One hundred percent of the fees will be available to the department or unit for resignations with withdrawal prior to the beginning of classes.
2. Seventy-five percent of fees will be available to the department if the graduate assistant resigns and withdraws during a period of 14 days beginning with, and inclusive of, the first official day of classes or within an equivalent period of time for summer or other short-term courses.
3. Twenty-five percent will be available to the department if the student resigns and withdraws following the expiration of the 14-day limit given in (b.) for a period of time equal to 25% of the term.
4. No return of fee waiver will be available beyond the 25 percent term period.