



## **Frequently Asked Questions for HESP Graduate Assistantships (GAs)**

### **Where can I find information on Graduate Assistantships?**

The most comprehensive information is here:

<https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/policies/policies-graduate-assistantships/>

### **Timeline and Responsibilities**

#### **When will I know what my position is?**

Generally, the financial aid offers are made between the end of March and end of April. However, this offer does not include any specific information about your GA placement. Your specific contract that indicates your supervisor, term of employment, compensation, and general description of your duties will be sent to you near the end of July or beginning of August. Contact information for your supervisor will be included – you will reach out to them to determine your first day as well as get additional details about your position.

#### **What are my start and end dates?**

Graduate Assistantships begin BEFORE the start of classes in Fall semester, typically in mid-August, and end AFTER the end of classes in Spring semester, typically the end of May. GAs follow the university staff calendar, which includes work days when classes may not be held, as in January and spring break. Please consult with your supervisor about specific dates.

#### **What will my specific duties be?**

The GA contract will provide a brief outline of your duties. During the first two weeks of your assistantship, you will meet with your supervisor for a mutual expectations meeting and go over details and logistics.

#### **If I am working in a lab, will all of my work be related to the lab's research?**

GA positions are assigned to faculty supervisors. Often, most of the GA responsibilities will be related to the faculty member's research. However, the supervisor may assign other tasks or responsibilities that are not directly related to the lab's research.

#### **Can I do a full-time GA in the HESP department?**

M.A. Program: The HESP department only offers half-time GAs (10 hours of work per week) to students in the M.A. program. While there are some full-time GAs outside of the HESP department, the department recommends against taking these positions. Some students in the M.A. program have worked a full-time GA while in the program, but it is difficult to fit in 20 hours of work per week with the program requirements.

AuD Program: The HESP department may offer half-time GAs (10 hours per week) and full-time GAs (20 hours per week) to students in the Au.D. program.

**What is the difference between a 9.5-month GA and a 12-month GA?**

9.5 months GAs extend from mid-August to the end of May, with no GA responsibilities over the summer. There are also no employee benefits or tuition remission over the summer for 9.5 month GAs. 12-month GAs extend for the full year and include employee benefits and tuition remission over the summer.

**What is the duration of my GA? Will my GA be continued for the next year? Can my GA be terminated before the contract?**

GA assignments are typically made for one year. The GA may be renewed for another year, which is contingent upon performance in the first year, academic performance and availability of funding. As noted in UMD's Policies for Graduate Assistantships, a GA could be terminated due to loss of funding, academic delinquency, or unsatisfactory performance.

**Paperwork & Payroll**

The employment eligibility verification (I9) Form requires you to submit original and current documents. A digital I9 form needs to be signed on or before the first day of employment (typically August 17). The link will be sent to you. Other original documents should be presented to the HESP administrative office within 3 days of the first work day.

Other forms include a direct deposit form and W4 for state and federal taxes. All documents must be original and signed in pen.

The forms can be found at:

<https://uhr.umd.edu/forms/>

<https://uhr.umd.edu/wp-content/uploads/I-9-and-E-Verify-FAQs-v715.pdf>

**Benefits**

**How does tuition remission work?**

For half-time GAs, tuition remission includes 5 credits for fall, 2 credits for winter, and 5 credits for spring. For those in a 12-month GA, there are 4 credits included for the summer semester. There are no tuition remission benefits for the summer semester for those working a 9.5-month GA. Occasionally, a student on a 9.5-month GA may be appointed for the summer, then 4-credits of summer tuition remission are available.

For full-time GAs (Au.D. or outside HESP department only), tuition remission includes 10 credits for fall, 4 credits for winter, 10 credits for spring, and 8 credits for summer (12-month GA only).

**How do I indicate my tuition remission benefits when registering for winter term?**

Winter term tuition is handled differently from other semesters; payment is due at the time of registration and the website includes some scare tactics. When you register, first click "I am entitled to an immediate payment exception" and then select the option "tuition remission."

Then, refresh the page and click "I am submitting payment" to pay for the mandatory fee (not covered by tuition remission).

There is no need to pay tuition that is covered by your tuition remission. It will post on its own, generally around the middle of November. You can log into your student account and see if it has been posted. Your registration should not be affected by this lag in payment posting.

### **Do my GA benefits extend to the summer between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year?**

For 12-month GAs – yes. For 9.5-month GAs – no. If you have a 9.5-month GA position and will be losing health coverage over the summer, contact the department to see if there are any open summer positions. It is possible (but not guaranteed) you may be able to work and retain benefits over the summer.

### **Does the GA cover my health insurance?**

Graduate assistants are provided health insurance through the university employee health program; details of available plans and benefits are available at the University's Human Resources Benefits website.

If a 9.5-month GA's assistantship is renewed for another year (ie. you are coming back in the following Fall), you will receive health benefits in the intervening summer months.

If a GA is terminated in early June (which is the typically end-date for GAs), then they will receive health benefits until June 30 of that year.

### **Why was my loan package reduced?**

If you get a letter indicating that your student loan amounts have reduced, get in touch with the financial aid office as soon as possible. When you fill out financial aid paperwork, you will be asked to list your existing financial aid. If you list your GA stipend and tuition remission, the financial aid office may reduce your loans by too much because they are subtracting your stipend and tuition remission twice (once from their records and once from yours). This error is easily fixed but may require a trip to the financial aid office.

### **Leave and Absence**

#### **What if I am sick?**

Contact your supervisor as soon as possible. Policies for making up hours missed due to illness will be provided by your supervisor.

#### **Do I get vacation time?**

UMD GAs are guaranteed "time away from duties," as per university policies (<https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/policies/policies-graduate-assistantships/#text> – see "Time Away from Duties"). This is time that does not need to be made up and varies by assignment. 9.5-month GAs working half-time are guaranteed 15 hours per **calendar year**. 12-month GAs working half-time are guaranteed 20 hours of time away from duties per **calendar year**. For full time GAs, the guaranteed time is twice as much (30 hours/calendar year for 9.5-

month GAs and 40 hours/calendar year for 12-month GAs). As noted above, this time resets every calendar year, rather than academic year.

**What if I don't get a HESP GA position?**

If you aren't granted a HESP GA position, you can still secure a GA position outside of the department. As noted above, the department strongly recommends half-time positions for M.A. students to accommodate all the responsibilities of the program. GA opportunities are posted here: <https://careers.umd.edu/students/student-employment/graduate-assistantships>

Additionally, if you don't get a GA position, you can complete an application for funding on the HESP website. Click "Application for new or renewal of departmental funding for already-enrolled students" <https://hesp.umd.edu/undergraduate/apply-funding>. Submit this application to the HESP Director of Graduate Studies. Once your application has been submitted, and any new GA positions open up, the department will contact you about opportunities to work for funding.

**Can I resign from my GA after I start work?**

Yes, this requires a written resignation that is given to your supervisor and copied to the Director of Graduate Studies (Dr. Yasmeen Faroqi-Shah) and Director of Business Services (Ms. Rachelle Beasley). Please note that, because the GA-ship has tuition benefits associated with it, you may owe tuition back to the Graduate School if you resign before the last day of classes for the semester. Please review the UMD's Policies for Graduate Assistantships link for details.