

Department of Hearing and Speech Science, Student Funding Policies

General policies on how we fund students

Departmental funding policies are based on a few guiding principles:

- we want to help as many of our students as possible (rather than concentrating funding on only a few students)
- we want to treat funded students equitably
- we do not want students to have such large work requirements that it prevents them from doing well in their coursework or in clinic

As a result of these principles, we have the following general policies :

1. HESP departmental funding for MA and CAUD students is generally for 10-hr/week appointments, not for 20-hr/week appointments (which are more typical university-wide).
2. HESP MA students who have MCPS funding (which covers tuition costs) are not allowed to simultaneously hold a GA position or hourly employment in the department.
3. The department will generally fund MA and CAUD students for a maximum of two years; if a student has already been funded from departmental lines for 2 years, he/she is expected to then find another source of funding for any subsequent years. This policy does not affect Ph.D. students, who are funded via different mechanisms. This policy also does not affect students being paid off of grants.
4. The University limits students to working a maximum of 20 hr/week, unless students submit a petition from their department supporting their working more hours; HESP generally will not support any such petitions from MA or CAUD students, even when students are funded from sources outside of the department.
5. Students are expected to inform the DGS of other employment that would have an impact on funding opportunities within the department.

General policies on which students get funded

Departmental GA positions (including positions on faculty start-up funds) are used for recruitment purposes, in addition to providing student support. This means that decisions regarding which students are offered these lines are made by the DGS and the Admissions & Financial Aid Committee. The DGS and Admissions Committee consider multiple factors when deciding which students to fund, including (but not limited to) student academic and work performance, student need, equity among departmental constituencies, etc. Even though a GA assignment may be made to a particular faculty member, the choice of which student to fund is not made by that faculty member. Thus, faculty members should not offer departmental GA lines to students of their choosing. Faculty who have particular concerns regarding assignments are encouraged to meet with the DGS in advance in order to ensure that appropriate assignments are made.

In contrast, faculty who have grant funding for GAs may select which students will be funded on their grants based on whichever factors they wish to consider. However, faculty are expected to avoid offering positions to students who have ongoing/continuing assignments with a different faculty member (who may have already trained them on the presumption that they would stay in the position). Moreover, all contracts for graduate assistants continue to go through the DGS for approval, and use the same departmental contract paperwork and meet the same funding rates as departmental graduate assistants.

General policies on removal of students from funded positions

Graduate assistantships are generally made for a minimum of a 1-semester period of time. The Graduate assistantship contract that students sign is typically for one year. However, if a student is not making adequate progress in his/her academic or clinical work, or is not performing adequately in his/her work assignment, that student may lose his/her assistantship midsemester. When this occurs, it is likely that tuition

expenses will have already been paid for the semester on behalf of the student in question. Please note, however, that the department, college, and university can retroactively remove tuition remission and demand repayment of all tuition costs. While this is typically done only in cases of gross negligence (e.g., a student lecturer who stops attending his or her scheduled classes), it may be done at any time that a student is removed from an assistantship. (Thus, it is not a safe bet to assume that because the semester is part-way over, tuition remission is no longer an issue.)

It is also important to note that while students are first awarded graduate assistantships, and then are subsequently assigned specific supervisors and duties, the funding is generally tied to the position rather than to the student. Thus, if a student does not adequately fulfill those responsibilities, he/she will not simply be moved to a different assignment with a different supervisor; rather, the position will remain in place, and the student filling that position will be replaced.

University policies on graduate assistantships are detailed on the graduate school [website](#).

A graduate assistantship may be terminated before the end of the contract duration due to a variety of reasons, such as budgetary cuts.

Full-time status

University policy states that students receiving graduate assistantships MUST maintain full-time status. The college WILL retroactively remove a GA assignment from students who are not full-time, or who drop courses midsemester such that they do not remain full-time. If this happens, students will be retroactively charged tuition remission and will lose all future salary; they may also be charged back for prior salary already received and for the loss of their in-state status. Thus, there are serious consequences to a failure to maintain full-time status status, and students who have assistantships are responsible for ensuring that this does not happen; please see http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/catalog/registration_policies.htm for determining whether you meet full-time status requirements. Most importantly, students on GA lines who wish to drop a class need to consult with their advisor or the DGS to ensure that doing so will not put their full-time status in jeopardy.

Statement of mutual expectations and Student evaluations

All faculty and staff with departmental assistants are expected to meet with the student during the first week of the assistantship and discuss mutual expectations. A template (that can be edited) is available on the graduate school [website](#). These are to be filed in the students' folder in the main office.

All faculty and staff with departmental assistants are expected to complete student GA evaluations each semester and provide this feedback to the student, to allow for a track record of student performance. Faculty who do not complete such evaluations may not be eligible for future departmental GA assignments.

Formal evaluations are not required for undergraduate assistants or fellows; however, faculty are still encouraged to keep written evaluations in all cases.

General policies regarding university fellowships, and fellowship/assistantship combinations

Fellowships come in a variety of types and amounts, and thus also come with different restrictions on how they can be combined with other funding sources. Here are some basic policies:

- Departmental fellowship funds are restricted to Ph.D. students only, by college policy. They are intended to provide doctoral students with additional time to focus on research, without the requirement of external work commitments. As such, most such funding is provided in lieu of (rather than in addition to) partial or full work assignments. (That is, our department generally does not provide substantive fellowships on top of 20-hr GA assignments.) However, students are still expected to spend that time on their research; fellowship funds are not meant to relieve students from time spent in the laboratory.
- Small fellowships (<~\$2000) which are not intended to serve as a primary means of support for a student, can be combined with any other funding source; thus, being awarded a small fellowship has no implications for any other funding the student might receive for the same time period.

- Students who receive Wylie or Dean's Dissertation Fellowships are not eligible to receive departmental graduate assistant funding during the same semester(s).
- Students who receive Flagship fellowships, or other "top-off" style fellowships, may combine these with other sources of funding.
- Some university fellowships (such as Summer Fellowships) require departmental matching funds. Applications for these require DGS and Chair approval, and depend on departmental financial considerations. If a student is not currently funded, he or she should check with the chair and the DGS to ensure that the department could provide matching funds before applying. If a student is already funded for that same time period, then that current funding would typically constitute departmental matching. For example, if a student has a 12-month GA assignment, it includes summer funding. If that student applies for, and receives, a summer fellowship (which is \$5000, half from the university and half in departmental matching funds), the student could either (1) opt to give up the summer portion of the existing GA (reducing the GA assignment from a 12-month appointment to a 9.5-month appointment, with the concomitant reduction in salary) or (2) could keep the GA (particularly if it was a research-GA assignment), but the GA would then constitute the departmental matching. In this case the student would receive the additional \$2500 from the university, but not an additional \$5000 on top of the GA. In short, the department would not "double-fund" the student for the same period of time. On the other hand, a student with a 9.5-month GA assignment and no summer funding would receive the full additional \$5000.
- Students who receive substantial non-university fellowships, such as the NSF pre-doctoral fellowship, or the Montgomery County Public Schools Scholarship (for MA students) may not additionally hold at GA position. University fellowships allocated to such students are typically re-assigned to another year, or in unusual circumstances (e.g., student is graduating), be assigned to another student. University fellowships need to be used up in four years from when these were first awarded to the department, or any unspent fellowship reverts to the Graduate School.

Applications for Fellowships

Many University-wide fellowships have limited numbers of departmental applicants; that is, only one or two applicants may be nominated per department. As a result, our department must select which students to nominate, necessitating an earlier departmental deadline than the posted graduate school deadline. Selections are made by the DGS, in consultation with the Admissions and Financial Aid Committee. Since the Admissions/Financial Aid committee only meets once per week, this necessitates that submissions be made far enough in advance for the committee to make such selections. **All applications are therefore due to the department's Director of Graduate Studies by the Tuesday that is at least 1 week prior to the posted university or BSOS deadline.** If changes to the application need to be made after that version, a final copy MUST be submitted to the DGS 48 hours in advance of the final due date.

Most awards for current students require an application from the student, plus a letter from his/her advisor, plus a letter from the Director of Graduate Studies. In many cases, the letter from the advisor is listed on the university's site as optional; however, these are strongly recommended. The DGS may opt not to submit a student application that does not have advisor/mentor support. Letters from advisors are likewise due to the DGS 48 hours in advance.

University Benefits

Students who are funded as graduate assistants are eligible to enroll in the state employee health insurance plan, both for themselves, and for their family.

Students who are funded on fellowships do not have this option.

Faculty offering students graduate assistantships on grants cannot make hiring decisions based on whether a student will take or not take health insurance. Students must be offered the option of health insurance, and their decision cannot influence their employment. If the student is being funded on a grant, the grant will be charged the full costs of UMD's contribution to those benefits.

Despite being eligible for state employee health insurance, graduate assistants are not considered employees of UMD for health insurance purposes. That is, GAs are eligible for employee benefits but are not in fact employees – this is important for students who wish to remain on their parents’ health insurance plans. Many insurance plans will not allow adult children to remain as dependents on their parents’ plans if the children are employees of a company that offers health insurance; since GAs are not employees, they cannot be “kicked off” of their parents’ plans for this reason.

Health insurance is available during the summer ONLY for students who are employed both in the previous spring and the subsequent fall. Students whose GA positions end in August are not eligible for employee health insurance during the summer semester.

Graduate assistants receive a set number of credits of tuition remission. Students in 10-hr/week GA positions receive 5 credits remission each for fall and spring semesters, and 2 credits remission for the winter. If they are on a 12-month GA assignment, they would also receive 4 credits remission for the summer (which can be used for summer I or summer II). Students in 20-hr/week GA positions receive 10 credits remission each for fall and spring semesters, and 4 credits remission for the winter. If they are on a 12-month GA assignment, they would also receive 8 credits remission for the summer (which can be used for summer I or summer II). Students whose GA positions end in August are still eligible for summer tuition remission (unlike with health insurance). Students on fellowships do NOT receive summer tuition remission, even when the fellowship is for a 12-month period.

Tuition remission does not cover mandatory fees; students are still responsible for these fees.

Students who have graduated cannot be hired as students, but only as contingent I employees; this means that they incur benefits. Likewise, recent graduates in the summer between their undergraduate program and graduate program are not considered students and cannot be hired as such. If a faculty member wishes to maintain a student on a grant after they have graduated, the student will need to be re-appointed under a new contract, and the grant will be charged fringe benefits.

Student pay rates

GAs in HESP are paid at a set rate; equity issues are such that students cannot be paid at differing rates. The department funds students in either 9.5 or 12 month positions (we do not fund students using 9-month positions). Student assignments may be prorated for shorter time periods in some situations, but tuition remission may not apply in those cases.

HESP also has standard rates for student hourly positions. For graduate students, the standard rate for the 2019/2020 academic year is \$15. For undergraduate students, the standard rate for the 2019/2020 academic year is \$12. Faculty cannot opt to fund students at a different rate without providing appropriate justification with written documentation.

Grant budgeting

The set pay rate for GAs for the current year can be requested from the department financial officer; we recommend assuming a 3% cost-of-living increase for each year of a grant.

GA funding is in three different “steps”. Students in their first year as a GA are funded at step level 1. After their first year, students advance to step 2. Students who already hold an MA are also considered step 2. Doctoral students who have advanced to candidacy are eligible for step 3. Each step is 3% more than the previous step. Thus, if a grant proposal includes funding the same GA for two years, and the student has no prior GA experience, the budget for the 2nd year should be 6% higher than the first year: 3% as a result of COLA, and 3% additional because the student would advance from step 1 to step 2.

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tuition costs get charged to grants, and thus must be included in all grant budgets. Faculty cannot elect to offer fewer numbers of tuition credits, nor can they offer a position to a student based on the requirement that the student register for fewer credits.

Graduate assistants are also eligible for in-state tuition rates for all credits that are not remitted during the time of their assistantship. This expense does not get charged to grants. Thus, from a grant point of view, an in-state and an out-of-state student are equivalent.

As noted above, GAs are eligible for employee health insurance, and faculty cannot select a GA on the basis of whether they would or would not accept insurance. Thus, for the purposes of grant budget submissions, faculty should budget at the highest insurance rate, as they will be required to pay that rate if a student selects it. Information on current health insurance rates can be found at http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/ORAA/um_references/basic_references/benefits_stipends/benefits_emp.html. We recommend presuming a 4% increase in health benefits costs per year.

There are no benefits costs associated with hourly student employees during the academic year. During the summer, undergraduate student benefits are 8%, unless the student is actively taking summer courses.

All faculty who are submitting a grant must submit copies of the grant to the departmental financial officer and to the chair in advance of submitting the grant to ensure compliance with all departmental funding policies.

Time away from duties

Please refer to the graduate catalog for the full policy <https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/graduate/policies/policies-graduate-assistantships/>. Graduate assistants on 9.5 and 12 month assistantships are allowed 30 and 40 hours of collegially supported time away from duties respectively.

Parental Leave. According to Graduate School policy, graduate assistants who become parents are guaranteed parental accommodation of 6 weeks, retaining their full stipends and benefits; if both parents are GAs this leave is divided between them. Accommodation requests must be submitted at least 8 weeks prior to the anticipated leave. Faculty may not choose to hire or not hire any particular graduate assistant because of a perceived likelihood that the student will need to take parental leave. In most cases, the expectation is that colleagues will perform the GA's responsibilities during this absence; however, if a temporary GA must be hired during this 6 week period, the faculty member may petition the Dean of the college for the required financial support. More information is available on the graduate school assistantship policy page, http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/catalog/assistantship_policies.htm.

Student schedules/calendars and university closures

Graduate assistants are paid either on 9.5-month or 12-month contracts. Fall appointments begin approximately August 15 of each year (the Monday closest to that date, generally 2 weeks before classes begin). Spring appointments begin immediately after January 1. Spring appointments end (and summer appointments begin) at approximately the end of May/beginning of June. Specific dates for any given year will be indicated in student contracts.

This means that graduate assistants who are graduating in May continue to have a work assignment beyond the date of graduation; their work assignment continues through the end of the month. Students who wish to leave immediately after graduation must make arrangements with their supervisor to work the owed hours in advance; this is entirely at the supervisor's discretion, and students should not assume that they will be able to leave their position upon graduation. In no case will students be allowed to retain their salary without putting in the agreed-upon hours.

Most GAs on departmental funding will have 9.5 month contracts (mid-August to end of May) for each year of their funding. In the intervening summer, they will either have a 2.5 month summer GA contract (with benefits) or, if they are appointed to summer position, a 2.5 month hourly contract, before their next academic year contract becomes effective in mid-August.

Hourly students are expected to submit hours only for the hours they actually work on a project. If a student submits a pay statement listing hours that they could not actually be working (e.g., they list as their working hours times when the university is closed, or when they are scheduled to be in a class) or they list overlapping times for two positions (including listing times for an hourly position that overlap with hours they are listed as teaching), their pay will be blocked.

Please note that the university remains open during finals weeks, spring break week, and during January winter term; graduate assistants are expected to work during these time periods. Students who wish to be away during these time periods must make arrangements with their supervisors in advance to make up these hours; this is entirely at the supervisor's discretion.

The university occasionally closes; such closures may be scheduled in advance (as for holidays) or unscheduled (as in weather emergencies). Faculty supervisors have two choices of models for addressing these closures with their graduate assistants:

Model 1: Students who would normally be working on a closure day have that day off; students who would normally not be working that day are unaffected by the closure. Thus, if the university is closed Monday and Tuesday, but open Wednesday through Friday, students who work on Tuesday would have time off, but students whose hours fall on Wednesday would not. This model is most appropriate for students who have set hours when they are normally working, and will not be as appropriate for students who have flexible schedules.

Model 2: Students are expected to work the same percentage of their weekly hours as the proportion of time the university is open. Thus, if the university is closed 3 days during a 5-day work week, each 10-hr GA would owe 4 hours that week, but would have 6 hours off.

HESP Procedures for GA appointments

Faculty who are appointing a GA through their research funds should use the Student payroll form to make the request. Please inform the Director of Administrative Services and Director of Graduate Studies after you have filled out this form. For both summer and fall appointments (starting around June 1), the request needs to be made by the end of April. GA contracts for summer appointments are finalized in early -mid-May, while contracts for Fall appointments are finalized in early July.

Please do not assign students any work before they have been added to the payroll.