

Graduate Assistant Program Procedures

Establishing New Graduate Assistant (GA) Positions

After initial consultations including the department head or chair

1. The Department completes a Position Requisition Form (PRF) that includes a description of the GA role and expectations.
 - The Department must contact the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies for approval of the stipend amount for each Graduate Assistant.

Since GAs are not employees, Otterbein provides GAs with a tuition benefit (tuition waiver) and stipend.

- **Stipend:** The hiring Department cannot change the stipend amount without approval from the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies.
 - **Tuition Benefit:** The Otterbein GA tuition benefit is offered for one year (three semesters), with the possibility of renewal for a second year if the student has made satisfactory progress. Tuition benefits begin no earlier than the month of hire. With renewal, the benefit may be received for up to six terms.
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2. The Department forwards the PRF to Human Resources (HR) to collect electronic signatures.
 - **Required signatures:** Executive Assistant for Graduate Studies, Department Chair/Head, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs (if in Academic Affairs), divisional Vice President, Director of Human Resources, University Budget & Resource Admin, and the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies.
3. After receiving all signatures, HR (a) posts open GA positions on the Otterbein University website, Handshake, and other websites suggested by the hiring manager, and (b) sets up Hiring Committee in Neood OHC.

Selecting & Hiring New Graduate Assistants

1. Before conducting interviews, the Department confirms that the candidate
 - Has been admitted to a graduate or post-baccalaureate program.
 - Has registered for classes (or will soon register for classes).
 - Has submitted all application documents related to the posted position and has completed the Otterbein University Employment Application (available online or through the Office of Human Resources).
2. The Department interviews candidates in alignment with staff hiring guidelines.
3. The Department notifies the recommended candidate that (a) they are the selected candidate, and (b) the offer is contingent on the successful completion of the background check.
4. The Department informs HR of its recommended candidate, the offer details, and the candidate's contact information.

5. After the candidate verbally accepts the position, HR
 - Removes the posting from the websites.
 - Prepares and sends the appointment letter to the candidate.
 - Provides the candidate instructions for initiating and completing the background check.
 - Provides the candidate the Tuition Benefit Request form to be completed and returned to HR.
6. The Department provides the new GA a copy of *The Graduate School Policy Handbook* and reviews the academic standards required to maintain a GA position. The handbook may be accessed at <https://www.otterbein.edu/gradschool/graduate-student-resources/>.
7. The Department Chair completes the Personnel Action Form (PAF) for the candidate and forwards it to HR to collect electronic signatures.
 - **Required signatures:** Executive Assistant for Graduate Studies, direct supervisor (i.e., Chair/Department Head), divisional Vice President, Associate Provost for Graduate Studies, Human Resource Director, and University Budget and Resource Admin. Failure to obtain the necessary signatures at least five business days in advance will delay the start date.
 - **PAF begin and end dates:** Otterbein approves all GA positions on a rolling basis, so the begin date varies. (However, to ensure that the GA is paid the full stipend amount, the start date must be the first of the month. Otherwise, the stipend amount will be prorated.) The end date for all GA positions is May 31 of the current academic year. This end date applies even for GAs who will continue for a second year of service.
 - For a second year of service, a new PAF must be completed and approved at least 30 days before the start date for the second year.
 - If a GA continues to work without a break, the Department must submit a new PAF, indicating a new start date and May 31 as the second year's end date.

HR includes all GA names on a benefit roster shared with Student Financial Services and The Graduate School each term and when there is a change in the GA roster.

Note: The hiring process is not complete until the background check clears, and all HR paperwork is completed.

8. After the successful completion of the background check, HR notifies the candidate and provides remaining HR paperwork electronically via Neoed.
9. The candidate completes HR forms in Neoed. (The candidate must complete Form 1-9 and show acceptable identification documents in person to HR unless this form is already on file with HR.)
 - The first day of work is either the date Form I-9 is completed, or the start date identified in the appointment letter, whichever date is later.
10. Human Resources (a) sends the approved PAF and appointment letter to the Graduate School and (b) notifies the Student Financial Services Office about the new GA.
11. The Student Financial Services Office awards the appropriate tuition benefit.

Graduate Directors may contact the Executive Assistant for Graduate Studies (Terry Magas, tmagas@otterbein.edu) for information about current graduate assistants. As noted above, unfilled Graduate Assistant positions are posted on the HR website.

Terminating Graduate Assistants

If a graduate assistant is leaving the position or not returning due to graduation

1. The Department completes a termination PAF and forwards it to HR.
 - The exact last date of service for the GA should be listed on the PAF.
 - The PAF termination date should be the last day the GA works. If this step is not completed, the GA will continue to receive their stipend and tuition benefit.
2. The Department completes an Off-Boarding Checklist.
3. HR sends copy of the termination PAF to The Graduate School.

Impact on Tuition Benefit and Stipend

- **If a GA resigns or is dismissed while a term is in session but wishes to continue with their coursework**, the student will be billed prorated tuition based on the resignation date. The stipend will also discontinue upon resignation or termination, and any final payment of the stipend will be prorated based on the resignation or dismissal date.
 - **If a GA resigns and withdraws from the University**, the GA will not be billed for any tuition [and will not receive a refund for any fees paid].
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Renewing Graduate Assistantships for a Second Year

- After the GA completes their first year, the Department must initiate a new PAF. (See step 7 of the “Selecting and Hiring” section above.)
- If the GA continues to work without a break, the Department must still submit a new PAF, indicating a new start date and May 31 as the end date for the second year. (The end date is earlier if the GA will graduate after Fall term.)

Stipend Policies

- Typically, stipends are \$5,000 or \$6,000, depending on the number of months identified as one year of service.
- Otterbein pays GAs monthly. If a GA is hired after the first day of a semester, the first month’s stipend will be prorated based on the date of hire.
- Stipend costs for a GA are assessed to the respective departmental budget for all new GA positions.

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