

Pitt Public Health Academic Handbook Academic Year 2016-17

Pitt Public Health TA and GSR Policy

GSPH Policy on GSRs, GSAs, TAs, and TFs

The University policy statements on student assistants are the foundation for the GSPH policy. In addition, individual departments and programs within GSPH may have policies of their own, as long as those do not conflict with University or GSPH policy.

Definition of GSA/GSR

According to University policy, a Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) is a graduate student receiving financial support from research funds in return for duties performed to meet the goals for which the funds were awarded. The research performed is often an integral part of the student's research practicum experience, thesis, or dissertation, but this is not a requirement. A Graduate Student Assistant (GSA) performs duties to assist in the educational or research mission of the University, but does not teach a class, recitation or laboratory.

GSPH Enrollment

All students appointed as GSRs/GSAs/TAs/TFs through the GSPH must be enrolled in a degree program at GSPH. It is permissible for GSPH faculty to support students in other programs, as long as those students are appointed through their own programs.

Length of Appointment and Funding Eligibility

The length of any appointment may not exceed one academic year. Funding cannot be guaranteed beyond the term of the appointment.

Weekly Work Requirement and Limitations

In accordance with University policy, the workweek of a student with a full GSA or GSR appointment shall not exceed 20 hours. When the GSR assignment is an integral part of a student's practicum experience, research project, thesis or dissertation research, more hours may be required, but these should be planned in coordination with the student's other academic obligations so that the student is able to make satisfactory progress toward all aspects of completing the degree.

At any particular time, students may not hold more than one full assistantship or the equivalent of one full appointment in fractional appointments. Students with full appointments or the equivalent of a full appointment may not receive additional hourly employment positions within the University (or UPMC). In all cases, a student

may not hold any combination of assistantship appointments and hourly work appointments amounting to more than 20 hours per week.

Registration/Credit Limitations

Courses taken and covered by the tuition scholarship must be required for the degree or certified by the student's department as relevant to the degree. In no case should a student take fewer than six credits in the fall and spring terms, or fewer than three credits in the summer term (unless restricted by the department to fewer credits in the summer). Please note: foreign students must be registered full time in the fall and spring *unless prior to registration*, Office of International Services (OIS) has given them permission to register for fewer credits.

Evaluation and Reappointment

Reappointment will be conditional upon satisfactory work performance. Each student will be evaluated at least annually for performance by the project director and academic advisor. While GSPH encourages ongoing evaluation of the GSR throughout their appointment, a formal written evaluation is required once a year (please see section on evaluation). Progress must be satisfactory in order for the student to be reappointed.

Appointment Letter

Before the beginning of the term of appointment, each student shall be given a letter outlining all duties and terms of appointment. Departments may use the letter format provided by the Dean's Office.

The letter shall be signed by: 1) the student's major advisor; 2) the faculty member who will oversee the research (if not the major advisor); and 3) the chair of the department offering the appointment. Copies of the University and GSPH policy statements shall be attached, and the student shall sign the letter as an indication of acceptance of the terms of the appointment. Signed copies of this letter must be forwarded to the Office of Student Affairs and to the Director of Personnel.

Leave Policies

It is the faculty member's responsibility to define the terms of the research assignment and to convey them to the graduate student prior to the signing of the appointment letter. These terms should include an understanding of the extent of between-term and holiday leaves, observance of religious holidays and personal leaves. There is no uniform University policy on holidays. However, GSPH strongly encourages faculty to consider student needs for appropriate leaves during holidays and between terms.

Students appointed as GSRs, GSAs, TAs or TFs are entitled to parental accommodation and leave as outlined in the [University policy on graduate student parental accommodations](#).

University Research Policies

Both faculty and students must be familiar with and adhere to University policies on conflict of interest and research integrity, and any other policies relevant to the student's work.

Other Conditions

All appointments will be given both a stipend and a tuition scholarship as provided by the University policy. Tuition scholarships may not be given without a stipend. Tuition scholarships will be prorated for appointments whose start or end dates do not coincide with the official dates of the term.

Grievances

Should a student encounter difficulties with their faculty advisor for their GSR, the first recourse is to address those difficulties with that faculty member. Should they be unable to resolve the issues, a student can raise their concerns to the department chair. GSPH strongly encourages students to work out the issues within the department. If that is not feasible, the student should bring those issues to either the Assistant or Associate Dean for Student Affairs or the Associate Dean for Education.