



Frank W. Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism Graduate Assistant Policy and Procedure Manual

The Frank W. Mayborn Graduate Institute offers employment opportunities within the Frank W. and Sue Mayborn School of Journalism each long semester. These positions provide an opportunity to learn while working closely with faculty and earning compensation to encourage the timely completion of a master's degree. The Mayborn Graduate Institute expects excellence in all aspects of work and collaboration with supervising faculty and staff members. The Mayborn and UNT expect ethical behavior in all areas of a student's life and require all students to adhere to the Mayborn Code of Conduct, signed upon admission. Student assistants will gain knowledge through research or teaching assignments – experience that will benefit the student in future jobs.

Within this manual are several documents to outline the program and to assist a prospective or enrolled student in deciding whether to apply or not. Mayborn students will have priority placement within the program, however a graduate student from another program may fill a position.

Graduate Assistantship Job Descriptions

An assistantship is offered by a department to provide financial support to a student who is pursuing graduate studies and who agrees to enter into an employment relationship with the university. The university has four types of assistantships as described below. The salary received is considered employment income and is subject to employment-related taxes.

Students with an assistantship for at least 0.5 FTE (full-time equivalent), that is, half of a full-time position, are eligible to participate in the State's Uniform Group Insurance Plan (UGIP), which is administered by the Employee Retirement System (ERS) of Texas. However, in lieu of participating in the State's insurance plan (UGIP), graduate assistants have the option of participating in the university's Student Injury and Sickness Insurance Plan. Student insurance costs will vary depending on the plan and the level of coverage selected in either plan. A student electing this plan will have to pay the UNT half and the state pays the other half. There are other options for benefits, including dental.

Teaching Fellow (TF)

Teaching fellows have direct student contact in a formal instructional setting and are charged with primary responsibility for teaching a course for credit under the direct supervision of a faculty member or chair, receiving regular in-service training and planned and periodic evaluations. Teaching fellows are listed as the instructor of record. The Mayborn does not hire Teaching Fellows.

Teaching Assistant (TA)

Teaching assistants are graduate students who do not have primary responsibility for teaching a course for credit; they perform under the instructor's direct supervision and provide general assistance to the instructional process, such as grading, tutoring, etc. Teaching assistants may not be listed as instructor of record.

Research Assistant (RA)

Research assistants are graduate students who are engaged in research activities under the direction and supervision of a principal investigator or faculty working on research.

Graduate Services Assistant (GSA)

Graduate assistants are graduate students whose responsibilities may be administrative in nature or consist of other activities that do not generally fit within the TF, TA or RA job responsibilities.

Application Process

A student applies for an assistantship position by completing an application found on the Mayborn website at <http://journalism.unt.edu/graduate/assistantships>. Those interested in teaching assignments will find UNT's Guidelines for Recruiting and Selection of Teaching Fellows and Teaching Assistants at UNT Policy [06.20](#).

Qualifications

All graduate applicants must complete the Graduate Assistant Teaching Exam (GATE) for knowledge of grammar, spelling, punctuation, basic grading and AP style. This exam is administered through Blackboard Learn and graded by news faculty. In addition, a face-to-face or phone interview with faculty may also be required. Test results and the interview will help determine placement within the program.

Deadlines

The deadlines for applications are:

- July 1 for the fall semester or until the positions are filled
- December 1 for the spring semester or until the positions are filled

The majority of positions filled in the fall carry over to the spring semester, depending on course schedules, positive evaluations and student availability for both semesters.

Tuition Benefit Program

The Toulouse Graduate School will pay for six of nine credit hours each fall/spring, currently \$2552 per semester, to students in .5 FTE graduate assistant positions. In order to receive the tuition support, the students must meet the following requirements:

- They must be enrolled full-time (nine (9) graduate credit hours) in each long semester.
- They must be employed by the census date in a benefits eligible graduate assistant position (TA, RA or GSA) for each long semester.
- They must maintain a minimum 3.0 graduate GPA every semester and comply with any departmental criteria for satisfactory performance and progress.
- The following degrees will be supported: PhD, DMA, EdD, MFA, MA, MJ, MS and MM.

The student's account will not be credited until after the 12th class day (like any scholarship) to make certain that all criteria are met and that verification of employment and enrollment is made.

Students who have received the \$10,000 Mayborn Graduate Scholarship are not eligible to also receive the Tuition Benefit support.

Application Review

- Selection of TAs/RAs/GSAs will be by committee to include
- Dean, Mayborn School of Journalism
- Director, Mayborn School of Journalism
- Graduate student advisor
- Faculty, as needed

Graduate Assistants

The Mayborn Graduate Institute currently has 16 graduate assistant positions, funded partially by the provost's office. A student assistant may be split between two assignments (10 hours each) and/or can be split between a teaching and research assignment. Teaching assistants will only be assigned to undergraduate classes and cannot work on graduate-level classes or with the graduate version of a "meets with" class. Research assistants can be assigned to a specific faculty member or to a research project. Note that Mayborn students will have priority placement within the program, however a graduate student from another program may fill a position.

Criteria for Selection

Criteria for classes eligible for TAs:

- Multiple-section classes with required writing labs (e.g., 2310, 3321)
- Mega classes 150+ (e.g., 1210)
- Large classes 75+ (e.g., Principles of...)
- Multiple-section classes with overall large enrollment (e.g., 3210)
- Any other request must be approved by the Mayborn dean and Graduate Institute Director

Criteria for RA assignment

- Tenure-track faculty (verified by research agenda with place of submission/publication and deadline)
- Productive associate faculty moving toward promotion to full (verified by research agenda with place of submission/publication and deadline)
- Productive full professors who continue to do research (verified by research agenda with place of submission/publication and deadline)
- Full-time faculty with verified creative/professional projects approved by the Mayborn dean and Graduate Institute Director

Criteria for assignment of GSAs

- Mayborn graduate office and Dean's office
- Faculty based on substantiated requests approved by the Mayborn dean and Graduate Institute Director

Notification Process

The graduate institute will attempt to notify students whether or not they have been placed via email by August 1 for the fall semester and December 15 for the spring semester. Placement is not guaranteed from one semester to the next. The offer letter states that "you are approved for this position contingent upon the outcome of an interview with the supervising faculty and/or passage of required test."

Once Hired

A student must maintain full-time enrollment (9 hours per long semester) throughout employment except in the summer and must maintain a 3.0 GPA. Summer positions are contingent on classes offered and available funding. The new tuition benefit program does not allow reduced course loads for writing a thesis.

Hiring Paperwork

Once hired, graduate students will be required to complete the online hiring onboarding process. Upon hiring a graduate student or undergraduate student, the department should direct the student employee to the [Human Resources site](#). The employee must have on hand their employee user identification number (EUID) and their student ID number (EMPID.) In addition, the hiring department will provide the employee with the department identification number (Dept. ID) in order for the employee to complete the onboarding process. The Mayborn School of Journalism Dept. ID is 138000. The onboarding process must be completed by a student's first day of hire, generally Sept. 1 or January 15.

Training

The [Teaching Excellence Seminar](#), sponsored by the Toulouse Graduate School, is mandatory for all new **Teaching Assistants**. Details of the time and place for this training will be sent to each TA. RAs and GSAs are not required to attend this training, but it may be especially helpful to attend if the student plans to teach after graduation. The Mayborn will also have orientation/training the week before classes begin that may include supervising faculty. This training is offered before the beginning of each semester and summer for any new Teaching Assistant.

Timesheet Requirement

Keeping a timesheet is not mandatory but some record of time worked and duties performed is highly encouraged. A graduate assistant should set up a system with the faculty member or supervisor to keep a record of hours worked. This process will keep any improprieties in hours worked and duties performed to a minimum should an audit be required. Graduate assistants are required to work an average of 20 hours a week. For example, students must justify an 18-hour week by planning to work an additional two hours at a later date. Time missed for illness or days off during regular school hours is not paid time and must be made up. School holidays are not generally worked unless you have an agreement with the supervisor. A copy of a sample timesheet may be found [here](#). Look for the Electronic Hourly Employee Timecard (UPO-23). Any easily understood timesheet can be used. A simple form can be attained from the graduate advisor.

Faculty Role – Pre-Semester Meeting

Faculty will be sent a form each semester to request a graduate assistant. Deadlines are June 1 for the fall semester and December 1 for the spring if any change is requested. A faculty or staff member who does not submit a form will not be assigned a graduate assistant. Faculty should specify skills needed in a TA/RA/GSA. For an RA request, a clear proposal must be submitted including the research agenda with place of submission/publication and deadline. The request should also incorporate a job description for the RA, which will include how the RA will be used, what will be accomplished and the number of hours needed per week. The request should also indicate if there is a potential for the student as a co-author in the publication.

The selection committee will work with the faculty to assign the best possible student to them. Faculty may request or recruit a student, but assignment is not guaranteed placement if the student would better serve another position. Such requests, however, will be given serious consideration for placement.

Faculty will determine if their assistant should have a key to specific rooms in Sycamore Hall. A key request cannot be completed if there is no faculty/supervisor key request on file (email to the graduate advisor.) Evening TA's may benefit from having a key to the copy room. The SYC 263 graduate assistant room is available to graduate assistants if they are required to meet with students or have scheduled office hours. The office is open every work day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Under no circumstance would a student use university property for personal use. Office machines (copy machines, fax) or all supplies are for class use only.

Evaluation and Assessment of Positions

Faculty will evaluate graduate student assistants assigned to them each semester. The selection committee will review faculty evaluations to determine if their student assistant should be placed with them again for the next semester. Students may be reassigned to another position or terminated at the end of a semester. Students are highly encouraged to have open, honest and ongoing dialogue with their supervising faculty or staff members especially if they don't understand any part of the duties assigned. Evaluations will be emailed to faculty and staff supervisors near the end of each semester and are due by the end of the semester.

Reasons for placement change are often simply because the class or faculty member has a reduced number of sections or is not offered every semester. The committee will do their best to reassign a student in this position if at all possible – especially if they have performed well. Sometimes that is not possible, however.

Faculty evaluations of student assistants are required and will be reviewed by the selection committee for future assignment. Again, continued assignment from semester to semester is not guaranteed.

Payroll and Benefits

Graduate students are salaried employees at UNT and will be paid monthly over a 4.5 month schedule for each long semester. A student who has completed fewer than 18 hours by the beginning of the academic year (fall) will be paid at the level 1 minimum rate. A student having completed 18 hours (by the academic year, even if they are hired in January) and above is hired at the level 2 minimum rate. All student assistants (and staff) at UNT are required to receive their paycheck via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT -- direct deposit).

Full-time graduate assistants (20 hours per week) are benefits eligible. The Business Services Center (BSC) Benefits Office will notify graduate assistants of their eligibility and how to register. This is not an automatic registration. Graduate assistants must apply for health benefits during the first 30 days of employment as there is a 60-day waiting period before benefits become active. All graduate assistants who pay for UNT coverage are covered through the summer even if they do not have assistantship duties. Students may elect to find their own policies.

Non-Resident or International Students

Non-resident students (out-of-state or international) hired as graduate assistants are eligible for a tuition waiver to receive in-state tuition. These must be signed by the employee and sent to the Toulouse Graduate School before the 12th day of class of any long semester.

International students are required to be covered by a health policy. However, they may elect the university health insurance during the 60 day waiting period. They are notified like resident students as to their eligibility but they must complete a waiver of their mandatory health insurance requirement before the 60 day waiting period is complete or they will be required to pay the international student rate. Information for international health waivers may be found on the [Student Health Center website](#).

More information about health insurance waivers and a link to the health benefit waiver request is on this site: <http://healthcenter.unt.edu/forms>. Please contact the Health and Wellness Center for complete information.

International students who are assigned as Teaching Assistants and who do not speak English as a first language must complete a language assessment before they can be put on payroll. This language assessment will be with an instructor in the Intensive English Language Institute in Sycamore Hall, and students will be hired only after demonstrating English facility. See the Guidelines for Recruitment and Selection of Teaching Fellows and Teaching Assistants at [06.20](#). All non-native English-speaking **TAs** must have a verification of English proficiency on file by the end of the first week of classes. Teaching assistants placed before taking this exam will only be hired permanently if they pass this proficiency speaking exam. A phone or Skype interview might be required if the student is in another country.

Revised: 7/11/17