

School of Graduate Studies - East Tennessee State University

Graduate Assistant/Tuition Scholar Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

Your selection as a graduate assistant or tuition scholarship recipient is a significant achievement in your graduate education. Whether your responsibilities will involve teaching, research, or service, this assignment places you in a unique organizational role within the university – often you will assume the role of faculty member in direct teaching obligations or support faculty in laboratory, research or other assignments while maintaining the balance between that of student and assistant. It is important that one’s graduate experience today shapes your professional skills and thought, and that one’s graduate program emphasizes not only research in one’s discipline, but also coursework across specialties and perhaps more importantly – teacher training.

To guide you in your assignment, this handbook has been developed to inform you of various policies, rules, issues and services in fulfillment of your obligations. It is not meant to replace the Graduate Catalog or other official university publications but to emphasize singular issues relevant to you, the graduate assistant or tuition scholarship recipient, in the performance of your duties.

Please be assured that the School of Graduate Studies is fully supportive of your educational training and advanced study. We hope that your graduate experiences at East Tennessee State University will be meaningful and challenging.

The best of success in the pursuit of your graduate and professional goals!

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I. INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

East Tennessee State University prepares students to become productive, enlightened citizens who actively serve their communities and our world. Education is the university's foremost goal. ETSU provides outstanding programs of study, enhanced access to education, and distinctive educational and research opportunities to attract students from around the region and the world. ETSU affirms that a diverse population is necessary for the intellectual, social, economic, and professional development of our campus and regional communities. Innovation and integration of educational programs, opportunities and scholarly activities enable ETSU to enrich the cultural and intellectual environment, advance economic development, and increase the level of educational attainment of our community and region. Innovation is advanced through entrepreneurial initiatives, interdisciplinary collaboration, and community and international partnerships. The research mission of ETSU advances scholarly and creative activity that enhances the teaching and learning environment and benefits the regional, national, and global communities we serve.

The mission of the School of Graduate Studies is to foster post-baccalaureate programs of scholarship that are recognized for their excellence and contributions to society. The School of Graduate Studies will provide an environment that stimulates:

- Advanced understanding of the concepts, issues and practices of a discipline;
- Independent thought and the ability to generate new knowledge;
- The ability to contribute significantly to the academic community, professions and society;
- Diversity among ideas, programs and people.

II. UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. Policy for Graduate Assistantships and Tuition Scholarships

1. Introduction

Both the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools (TCGS) maintain the position that the goal of the graduate assistantship/tuition scholarship should be to enhance the ability of the student to complete her or his graduate degree. Enhancement of the ability to complete the degree should not be interpreted such that the financial support provided by the assistantship/scholarship is the only part of the assistantship/scholarship that helps the student to achieve the goal of completing the graduate degree. The philosophy adopted by the Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools is presented succinctly as follows:

“Programs of graduate study are designed to transform the individual from student to professional scholar. When a graduate assistantship (or tuition scholarship) is well conceived and executed, it should serve as an ideal instrument to help facilitate the desired transformation. The primary goal of an assistantship (or scholarship), then, is to facilitate progress toward the graduate degree. Rather than interfere or conflict with the student's educational objective, the assistantship (or scholarship) is to aid in the prompt and successful completion of the degree program. While the student makes progress toward an advanced degree, he or she also receives work experience in a profession under the supervision of a faculty mentor.” (C.W. Minkel & Mary P. Richards, 1987, **A Model Policy for Graduate Assistantship Administration**. *Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools, Publication No. 4*, University of Tennessee, Knoxville Graphic Arts Service, p.2.)

When at all possible, work assignments made to graduate assistants and service obligations for graduate tuition scholars should reinforce their educational goals. For example, research assignments to graduate research assistants should provide experience that will be helpful in formulation of thesis or dissertation problems and teaching assistantships should help prepare the student to function independently in the classroom. The best use of the graduate assistantship provides professional growth of the student as well as benefits to the University. Courses have been designated to document these professional growth experiences on the graduate student transcript. XXXX 5019 (Supervised Experience in Teaching) and XXXX 5029 (Supervised Experience in Research) are available in nearly all academic units, and XXXX 5039 (Supervised Experience in Administration) is available in many units. Students receiving graduate assistantships or tuition scholarships should consult with their supervisor and enroll in the appropriate course for each term that they are receiving support.

2. Graduate assistantships

East Tennessee State University recognizes four (4) types of graduate assistantships: Teaching Assistants, Teaching Associates, Research Assistants, and Administrative Assistants. The duties assigned to graduate assistants will usually vary according to category and some assistants may be assigned duties in more than one of these categories.

(a) Teaching assistants:

Teaching assistants usually work to support the efforts of faculty members in specific courses. They will generally not teach a course as the primary instructor, but may be responsible for a section of a lecture course, laboratory course, or physical activity course under the direct supervision of an experienced faculty member. Responsibilities may also include grading examinations, leading discussion sections, or performing other duties related to the instructional program.

(b) Teaching associates:

The graduate teaching associate will normally have primary responsibility for teaching an undergraduate course for credit and for assigning final grades for said course. A graduate teaching associate shall not have responsibility for teaching a graduate level course. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) has specific requirements that must be met before a graduate student can be assigned responsibilities in this category. Criteria for a graduate student to be appointed as a teaching associate include:

- **prior completion of 18 graduate semester hours in the assigned teaching discipline**
- **will teach under the supervision of a faculty member**
- **will receive regular in-service training**

In exceptional cases, relevant professional experience and demonstrated contributions to the assigned teaching discipline may be presented in lieu of formal academic training. It is the duty of the department and particularly of the faculty supervisor to help the teaching associate gain skill in communicating knowledge of the discipline to students.

The department chair or unit supervisor is responsible for certification of each graduate teaching assistant or teaching associate assignment and ensuring each person placed in such an assignment meets the appropriate requirements for the assignment as given above. This certification should be included in the comments section in the

electronic GA/TS contract system for review by Dr. McGee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies, or her designee.

(c) Research assistants:

The graduate research assistant will work under the supervision of a faculty mentor. The purpose of the research assistantship is to provide the graduate student with experience in research directly related to the professional and scholarly goals of the student and to advance the research program of the faculty mentor. The student should gain experience in all aspects of conducting a research project including such things as library searches, design of experiments, evaluation of information relevant to the project, and preparation of manuscripts to be submitted for publication. Development of these skills should advance the student's professional qualifications and, ideally, lead to development of a prospectus for the thesis, or dissertation, or capstone project.

(d) Administrative assistants:

The graduate administrative assistant may work at the level of a department, college, or university administrative unit. **The work assigned to the graduate administrative assistant should be relevant to the graduate program and professional and scholarly goals of the student.** This work will generally involve gathering, organizing, and evaluating information, or editorial work related to preparation and review of papers and reports. The graduate administrative assistantship should provide the opportunity for the student to use knowledge of her or his academic field while enhancing skills relevant to the student's professional goals. The ideal graduate administrative assistantship will provide the student with a broader and deeper understanding of University function and, under the supervision of a mentor, enhance the quality of information available to the University.

3. Tuition scholarships

A tuition scholarship is a merit based award available to graduate students admitted to a graduate degree program for the first time. The awards are for one academic year (fall and spring semester) and are renewable. Graduate students admitted provisionally to a degree program may hold a tuition scholarship for no more than one semester; if provisions of their admission are not met after the first term, renewal of the scholarship must be approved by the School of Graduate Studies. Graduate tuition scholarships cover out-of-state tuition and the in-state maintenance fee.

4. Qualifications for appointment

(a) Graduate assistant

Candidates for appointment as graduate assistants must meet the following criteria:

1. Only graduate students admitted to the School of Graduate Studies and accepted into a graduate degree program may hold an assistantship. Graduate students admitted provisionally to a degree program may hold an assistantship for no more than one semester; if provisions of their admission are not met after the first term, renewal of the assistantship must be requested in writing by the supervisory unit and approved by Dr. McGee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies.
2. Graduate students who have previously taken graduate level courses must have at least a

3.0 cumulative grade point average.

3. Graduate assistants must maintain a minimum cumulative 3.00 grade point average (GPA) to remain eligible for assistantship support. A graduate assistant who fails to achieve a 3.0 cumulative GPA will be allowed one (1) semester to remedy the grade deficiency.

4. International students are eligible for graduate assistantships as soon as they are unconditionally admitted as graduate students at East Tennessee State University. If the assistantship is to be a graduate teaching assistantship, the international student must demonstrate the ability to communicate clearly in English. Therefore, the School of Graduate Studies requires that all international students for whom English is a second language and who wish to be considered for graduate assistantships take an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) to evaluate fluency in English. Rating on this evaluation will determine eligibility for different categories of GA assignment. Students desiring improvement in this area are encouraged to take one or both semesters of English as a Second Language including the laboratory portion of this course offered by the Department of Literature and Language. The English Round Table in the Center for Academic Achievement also offers opportunities for non-native speakers to improve their conversational skills in English. Students may repeat the OPI in order to increase their rating.

5. Graduate assistants may be appointed for no more than two calendar years in a master's program, four years in a doctoral program for those students entering with a master's degree, or six years in a doctoral program for students entering with a baccalaureate degree. Requests for time extensions must be made by the supervisory unit in writing to Dr. McGee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies.

(b) Tuition scholarship

Candidates for tuition scholarships must meet the following criteria:

1. At time of initial appointment, candidates must be entering their first period of registration as a graduate student at East Tennessee State University. The candidate must be admitted to the School of Graduate Studies and into a graduate degree program at East Tennessee State University.

2. If the candidate has taken previous graduate work at another institution they must have a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA) on these graduate level courses.

3. Once the tuition scholarship is awarded the student must maintain a minimum cumulative 3.0 grade point average to remain eligible for scholarship support. A scholarship recipient who fails to achieve a 3.0 cumulative GPA will be allowed one (1) semester to remedy the grade deficiency.

4. Tuition scholarship contracts are renewable, but must be consecutive. If a tuition scholarship student accepts a GA and performs those duties, then they cannot change back to a tuition scholarship.

5. Graduate students may be awarded a tuition scholarship for no more than two calendar years in a master's program, four years in a doctoral program for those students entering with a master's degree, or six years in a doctoral program for students entering with a baccalaureate degree. Requests for time extensions must be made by the supervisory unit in writing to Dr. McGee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies.

5. Appointment/Renewal

Decisions regarding who shall hold graduate assistantships/tuition scholarships are made at the level of the department or unit in which the student will work. Therefore, the selection procedure varies. Some units use committees to screen applicants; in others the chair, director, or head of the unit may make the decision. Additionally, if an assistantship is funded from a grant or contract, the principal investigator or project director will typically make the choice. Regardless of the mechanism for selection or source of funding, the contract of appointment for a graduate assistantship or tuition scholarship must be signed by the department chair or unit head and Dr. McGee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies.

6. Conditions of service

Graduate assistants (GA) are categorized by stipend amount as either full GA or one-half GA. A student receiving a full stipend (50% work effort) is assigned to 20 clock hours per week (or equivalent in classroom teaching or laboratory supervision) by the appropriate supervisor; a student receiving one-half stipend (25%) work effort is assigned to 10 clock hours per week. Departments, colleges, and divisions are not authorized to offer a graduate assistantship of less than one-half appointment. Half-GAs receive remission of half of maintenance fees (in-state). Tuition Scholarship recipients have a service obligation of 120 hours per semester (approximately 8 clock hours per week). A graduate assistant on an academic or calendar year appointment does not accrue annual leave or sick leave and is obligated to work each week of their contractual period with the following exception: Days of administrative closing (12 holidays annually) of the university will not be considered work days. Service obligations for Tuition Scholarship recipients are subject to the same exception.

The work requirements of a graduate assistant or service obligations of a graduate tuition scholar should be reasonable and should correspond to the contractual hours. In unusual circumstances where the weekly hour requirements are scheduled to exceed the contractual hours, there must be a similar reduction in hours in nearby weeks. Primary assignments that are predominantly office or clerically-oriented must follow contractual time limits and standard time reporting.

East Tennessee State University adheres to the Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellows, Trainees, and Assistants promulgated by the Council of Graduate Schools. Acceptance of an assistantship completes an agreement that both the student and the Graduate School expect to be honored. An acceptance after April 15 commits the student to that agreement unless they have received a written release. Acceptances before April 15 must be resigned by April 15. Without formal release by the original appointing unit, the Graduate School cannot make a subsequent appointment. Furthermore, the original appointing unit is not required to release a student when the loss of the appointment,

because of its timing and nature, will create a hardship.

(a) Graduate assistant The work load for a graduate assistant at East Tennessee State University is specified in Tennessee Board of Regents Policy No. 5.02:05:00 and is restated as follows:

1. Full-time teaching assistants and associates shall be assigned no more than six (6) contact hours per week classroom or laboratory instruction; or
2. No more than eight (8) contact hours per week of laboratory supervision.
3. A combination of the above.
4. The total work assignment for full-time graduate assistants, regardless of responsibility, cannot exceed 20 clock hours per week.

A graduate assistant may not work for East Tennessee State University more than 20 hours per week without special permission from Dr. McGee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies. This includes any job held in addition to the assistantship. Therefore, graduate students holding full-time (20 hrs/wk) assistantships may not work any additional time for East Tennessee State University without prior permission from Dr. McGee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies. Graduate students who hold halftime (10 hrs/wk) appointments may work a total of 10 additional hours without permission.

(b) Tuition scholarship

The service obligation of tuition scholarship recipients will be equivalent to eight (8) hours per week and may include instruction, research, and/or service as previously described. Graduate students who hold tuition scholarships may work a total of 12 additional hours for East Tennessee State University without prior permission.

7. Course Load Requirements for Graduate Assistants and Tuition Scholarship Recipients

Following are the course load requirements for graduate assistants (full-time and half-time) and tuition scholarship recipients:

a. Graduate assistants/tuition scholarship recipients are required to register for a minimum of nine (9) graduate credit hours per term during the Fall and Spring semesters. The required nine graduate hours must be maintained the entire semester.

b. The course load may not include undergraduate courses unless the course is a required program prerequisite, in which case one undergraduate course per semester may be taken.

c. Graduate students who have held assistantships for at least one semester, are within six semester hours or less of completing their programs, have filed intent-to-graduate petitions,

and are in their final full-time term of their graduate program are permitted to hold a graduate assistantship while enrolled in a minimum of six hours of graduate course work.

d. A graduate student holding an assistantship in the summer must be registered for a minimum of three (3) graduate credit hours during a given term or intercession and a minimum of six (6) graduate credit hours for the entire summer. These credits may be taken in intercession and/or in both summer terms. Graduate assistants may not take more than a total of nine (9) graduate credit hours during the entire summer.

e. The assistantship/tuition scholarship will be terminated if the student's academic load falls below nine graduate hours during Fall or Spring semester, or below six graduate hours during the Summer semester or their final semester.

f. Graduate assistants/tuition scholarship recipients may not enroll in more than fifteen (15) credit hours during the Fall or Spring terms without prior permission of Dr. McGee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies.

Please refer to the East Tennessee State University policy – Tuition Remission for Graduate Assistants to determine eligibility for out-of-state and in-state (maintenance fee) tuition waivers and course load requirements.

8. Resignation from the graduate assistantship or tuition scholarship

If a graduate assistant recipient decides to resign from their assistantship before expiration of the contract, the student must notify the School of Graduate Studies and their supervisor in writing two (2) weeks before the date of resignation. If the student remains enrolled at East Tennessee State University, they may be required to pay tuition *pro rata* for the part of the semester following resignation from the assistantship. Refer to Section 9 - **Reimbursement of tuition waiver** - for details. Students with tuition scholarships must also notify the School of Graduate Studies and their supervisor in writing two weeks before resignation, but will not be required to pay tuition *pro rata* for the part of the semester following resignation. However, tuition scholars who resign their scholarships or are terminated from their positions will not be eligible for further semesters of tuition scholarship or graduate assistantship awards. If a tuition scholarship recipient fails to complete the terms of their scholarship during a semester, the tuition scholarship may be terminated.

9. Reimbursement of tuition waiver

If a graduate assistant recipient resigns or is terminated from the assistantship during the semester, but does not withdraw from East Tennessee State University, the student has responsibility to pay East Tennessee State University the amount of tuition *pro rata* for that part of the semester during which the student does not hold the assistantship. If the department appoints another student to the assistantship the department may request that any remaining tuition waiver be used for the newly appointed student and that student will receive an appropriate refund.

If a graduate assistant recipient resigns the assistantship and withdraws from East

Tennessee State University then the department or unit will have access to a tuition waiver for a replacement in accord with the refund of fees policies applied to students who pay tuition. These are as follows:

- a. One hundred percent of the fees will be available to the department or unit for resignations with withdrawal prior to the beginning of classes.
- b. Seventy-five percent of fees will be available to the department if the graduate assistant resigns and withdraws during a period of 14 days beginning with, and inclusive of, the first official day of classes or within an equivalent period of time for summer or other short-term courses.
- c. Twenty-five percent will be available to the department if the student resigns and withdraws following expiration of the 14 day limit given in (b.) for a period of time equal to 25% of the term.
- d. No return of fee waiver will be available beyond the 25 percent term period.

10. Responsibilities and rights

A full-time graduate assistant is required to work 20 hours per week and a half-time graduate assistant is required to work 10 hours per week. A graduate tuition scholarship recipient has a service obligation of 120 hours per semester (approximately 8 hours per week). The work assignment or service obligation is the prerogative of the supervisor, but the graduate assistant/scholarship recipient has the right to have the assignment fully explained. Such explanation may be especially important in the case of a graduate research assistant because research done on her/his thesis or dissertation may so overlap work done as a research assistant that it may be difficult to determine the amount of time spent on assistantship work and time spent on thesis/dissertation work.

Graduate assistants and scholarship recipients should become informed about departmental, college, and university regulations that are related to the responsibilities of their employment or service and follow them consistently. The faculty mentor should help the graduate student understand these regulations. Graduate assistants should keep careful records of their work and tuition scholarship recipients should keep records of their service to provide documentation for reference and evaluation.

A graduate assistant/scholarship recipient has the rights possessed by any student at East Tennessee State University. Extended to the specific instance of graduate assistants as employees and tuition scholarship recipients as ETSU representatives in their scholarship obligations, these include the right to consideration for continued contracts/scholarships without regard to age, sex, color, race, religion, national origin, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation/gender identity. The graduate assistant or scholarship recipient also has the obligation to report unethical behavior observed or experienced in the workplace, including instances of sexual harassment and has the right to be protected from retribution for reporting instances of unethical behavior. However, it is also the obligation of any person reporting such behavior to be able to present documentation of the occurrence of the behavior. In addition the graduate assistant or scholarship recipient has the right to due process in employment or scholarship terms evaluation and/or termination procedures.

11. Evaluation/Appeals procedure

In many ways the graduate assistantship is an apprenticeship. The evaluation process should begin with development of clear outcome goals for the assistantship. Because these goals will necessarily vary according the type of assistantship (teaching, research, or administration) and among the various departments and divisions that employ graduate assistant/scholarship recipients, it is the responsibility of each department or division to develop goals for each of its graduate assistants. Tuition scholarship recipients are also evaluated, not as employees, but as scholars responsible to their units for fulfilling the terms of their scholarships.

Each department/unit is also responsible for developing a method of evaluation for graduate assistants and scholarship recipients. The results of the formal written evaluation of each graduate assistant/scholarship recipient must be filed with Ms. Brown, School of Graduate Studies, at the end of each academic year and/or upon conclusion of the graduate assistant's/scholarship recipient's contract. The formal evaluation should be supplemented by periodic informal conferences/evaluations with the student's mentor. The results of all evaluations should be kept in the departmental/unit file. The methods used for both formal and informal evaluations should be explained to the student when the appointment is made.

The purpose of the evaluations is to provide a supportive process that facilitates the attainment of the student's long-range professional goals. Thus, the student should be given constructive feedback regarding the outcome of each evaluation with suggestions concerning changes that the graduate assistant might make to improve performance. Additionally, the evaluation process is to ensure fairness in reappointment to the assistantship/scholarship. Finally, as part of the process, the evaluation may include the student's assessment of the experience.

If the performance or conduct of the student is not satisfactory, the supervisor must discuss the issue with the student as soon as the supervisor becomes aware of unsatisfactory performance. If the performance or conduct of the student continues to be unacceptable and corrective measures are necessary, then the student must be notified of this possibility in writing with suggestions for improvement. If improvement is still not forthcoming, the student must be notified in writing that he or she is being dismissed. Copies of letters of dismissal from graduate assistantships or tuition scholarships must be filed with Dr. McGee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies and with the dean of the college in which the student holds the assistantship/scholarship.

The graduate assistant/scholarship recipient has the right to due process. If a student has reason to believe that he or she was dismissed without justifiable cause, the appeal procedure outlined below may be followed:

a. A written appeal with all supporting materials should be presented to the student's immediate supervisor within 21 calendar days of dismissal from, or nonrenewal of, the graduate assistantship/scholarship. The immediate supervisor will review the appeal, discussing it with the appropriate departmental chair or unit director, and provide the student with a decision in writing within 14 calendar days of receipt of the appeal.

b. If the immediate supervisor does not reverse the decision after reviewing the case, the appeal may be carried to the departmental chair or unit director within 7 days of receiving the decision of the immediate supervisor. If the immediate supervisor is the

departmental chair or unit director, then the student should transmit the appeal to Dr. McGee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies. The departmental chair or unit director will review the case and render a decision, in writing, within 14 days of receipt of the appeal. Copies of the appeal, the decision, and all supporting materials must be sent to Dr. McGee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies, and to the dean of the college in which the assistantship/scholarship is held.

c. If the appeal is not resolved satisfactorily by the chair or director then, within 7 calendar days, the student may appeal in writing to Dr. McGee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies who will review the case. If the dean, the student, and the student's supervisor are unable to resolve the appeal informally, the dean shall appoint an *ad hoc* committee comprised of two graduate students (selected by the council) of the Graduate and Professional Students Association and two graduate faculty members. This committee shall elect a chairperson and hold a hearing concerning the appeal. At this hearing, all material relevant to the appeal shall be presented by the student, faculty member, the department chairperson, dean of the college, and any others who may be called to assist the committee.

Within 21 calendar days of its constitution, the committee will submit to the graduate dean a written report containing a recommendation for a specific course of action. The dean will, in turn, review the committee's recommendation and reasoning. The dean may also confer with any of the parties involved. After consideration of all appropriate information, the dean shall accept, reject or modify the recommendation. Within 30 days, the dean shall notify the student, the faculty member, the chairperson of the appeals committee, the departmental chairperson, and the dean of the college of his/her decision concerning the appeal. The dean shall forward his/her decision to the Vice President for Academic Affairs/Vice President of Health Affairs.

A written appeal of the decision of the dean may be submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs/Vice President of Health Affairs within 14 calendar days from the time the dean reports his/her decision to the appropriate individuals.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs/Vice President of Health Affairs will then review the dean's report and endorse the dean's decision, reject the dean's decision, or modify the decision. The Vice President for Academic Affairs/Vice President of Health Affairs shall then notify the student, the dean, the faculty member, the chairperson of the appeals committee, the departmental chairperson, and the dean of the college of his/her opinion concerning the appeal. In the absence of further appeal, the opinion rendered by the Vice President for Academic Affairs/Vice President of Health Affairs becomes final.

B. Policy for Tuition Remission for Graduate Assistants/Tuition Scholarships

Out-of-state tuition is waived in the summer for academic year graduate assistants and tuition scholarship recipients who have held a position both fall and spring terms of the academic year. Students who are taking courses in the summer should contact the School of Graduate Studies Office Manager and request that they be coded to pay summer tuition at the in-state rate..

In-state tuition (maintenance fee) eligibility is based upon the stipend level:

- A graduate assistant receiving a full stipend is eligible to receive a full waiver of the maintenance fee.
- A graduate assistant receiving a one-half stipend is eligible to receive a

one-half waiver of the maintenance fee.

- A tuition scholarship student is eligible to receive a full waiver of the maintenance fee.

To be eligible to receive a maintenance fee waiver during the Fall and Spring semesters, a student paid as a graduate assistant from funds administered through an East Tennessee State University source* must be employed as a graduate assistant for the entire academic year, or the calendar year, or, if the assistantship is for one term only, for each month during that term.

Starting in summer 2011, there are (in-state tuition) maintenance fee waivers for graduate assistants under contract during the summer sessions. Support is limited to the minimum number of graduate credits required to be eligible to GA Support.

Out-of-state tuition is waived in the summer for academic year graduate assistants and tuition scholarship recipients who have held a position both fall and spring terms of the academic year. Students who are taking courses in the summer should contact the School of Graduate Studies Office Manager and request that they be coded to pay summer tuition at the in-state rate.

The tuition remission that comes with a GA or TS contract does not cover tuition for winter session courses and winter session courses do not count toward the requirement to be enrolled in 9 graduate hours for spring term.

Principal investigators/program directors who submit proposals to external agencies in which support for a graduate assistant is requested must request sufficient monies to pay the maintenance fees for the graduate assistant's full term of employment. Should the funding agency not pay the tuition, the departmental unit will be responsible for the maintenance fee obligation.

* - Auxiliary Services are responsible for the tuition remission (maintenance fee) waiver in their respective units.

C. Affirmative Action

East Tennessee State University is fully in accord with the belief that educational and employment opportunities should be available to all eligible persons without regard to age, sex, color, race, religion, national origin or disability.

D. Sexual Harassment

East Tennessee State University desires to maintain an environment which is safe and supportive for students and employees and to reward performance solely on the basis of relevant criteria. Accordingly, the university will not tolerate sexual harassment of students or employees.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a

term or condition of an individual's employment or academic standing; or

- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment or academic decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or academic environment.

E. Drug Free Workplace

It is the policy of this university that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, possession or use of alcohol and illicit drugs on the ETSU campus in the workplace (on or off campus), on property owned or controlled by ETSU, or as part of any activity of ETSU is strictly prohibited. All employees and students are subject to applicable federal, state and local laws related to this matter. Additionally, any violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action.

F. Smoking

Effective August 22, 2008, ETSU is a Tobacco-Free Campus, with smoking and all other tobacco usage permitted only in private vehicles. This policy applies to all university buildings/grounds; ETSU-affiliated off-campus locations, and clinics; any buildings owned, leased or rented by ETSU in all other areas; and ETSU facilities located on the campus of the James H. Quillen Veterans Affairs Medical Center at Mountain Home. Tobacco use is also prohibited in all state vehicles. This tobacco-free policy is in effect 24 hours a day year round.

Background: The university promotes a healthy, sanitary environment free from tobacco smoke and tobacco-related debris. The ETSU community acknowledges that long-term health hazards may accrue to people who use tobacco products or who are subjected to second-hand smoke. The failure to address the use of tobacco products on campus would constitute a violation of the American with Disabilities Act, the Vocational Rehabilitation Act and Tennessee law.

Support: Understanding the addictive nature of tobacco products, ETSU will make every effort to assist those who may wish to stop using tobacco. The university offers current information about available resources via

<http://www.etsu.edu/humanres/smokingcessationresources.htm>.

Compliance: It is the responsibility of all members of the ETSU community to comply with this Tobacco-Free Campus Policy. Violations of the policy will be dealt with in a manner that is consistent with university procedures. There shall be no reprisals against anyone reporting violations of this policy.

G. Grading System

Letter grades are assigned for graduate credit. Students will not be granted credit for

grades of less than **C**. The letter grades of **S** (satisfactory), **SP** (satisfactory progress), and **U** (unsatisfactory) are given for Readings and Research, Thesis, and Dissertation. A grade of **S** carries graduate credit and a **U** means no credit earned. A second **U** grade earned in Readings and Research or Thesis or Dissertation would be equivalent to an **F** grade. A grade of **I** (incomplete) indicates that a student was passing the course at the end of the semester, but due to circumstances beyond the student's control, was unable to complete the course requirement. The **I** grade cannot be used to allow a student to do additional work to raise a deficient grade or to repeat a course. An **I** grade must be removed no later than one calendar year from the time the grade is awarded. Time extension requests for removal of **I** grades must be submitted to and approved by Dr. McGee, Dean, School of Graduate Studies before the allotted time expires. An **I** grade not removed under the guidelines noted above will be converted to an **F**.

H. Other Procedures

1. Grade appeal process for students

A student may appeal a course grade if the student has evidence that the grade was assigned in a malicious, capricious, erroneous, or arbitrary manner. All persons concerned with this process should make every attempt to adhere to the time schedule outlined in the following description of the appeals process. No appeal will be initiated more than one year following the date the grade was assigned.

In the case of all graduate students (including those graduate students enrolled in the Ph.D. program in Biomedical Sciences within the College of Medicine) the appeal shall be directed to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. If the dean, the student and the faculty member are unable to resolve the appeal informally, the dean shall convene an *ad hoc* committee, comprised of three members of the graduate council and three graduate students, all of whom shall have voting privileges. This committee shall elect a chairperson and hold a hearing concerning the appeal. At this hearing all material relevant to the appeal shall be presented by the student, the faculty member, the department chairperson, the dean of the college in which the course was taught, the Dean of the Graduate School, and any others who may be called to assist the committee. See the online Graduate Catalog, Policies and Procedures, for information about the grade appeal process:

<http://catalog.etsu.edu>.

2. Add/Drop

(a) **Adding a Course** - A course(s) may be added through the late registration/late add period without special permission unless the course has reached the established maximum enrollment. To add any class that has reached the enrollment limit requires permission of the instructor and department chair. After the late registration/late add period, special permission must be obtained from the instructor, the department chair, the dean, and the registrar.

(b) **Dropping a Course** - A course(s) may be dropped during the first eight calendar weeks of a regular semester. Courses dropped during the first four weeks will not appear on the student's permanent record. Students who drop a course after the fourth full week of classes through the eighth calendar week will receive a grade of **W**.

3. Withdrawal

Students withdrawing from the university--discontinuing matriculation in the university--during the first eight weeks of classes will receive a grade of **W** in all courses.

Withdrawals from the university after the eighth week will be recorded with **W** or **WF** at the discretion of the instructor. All requests for withdrawal must be received in the Office of the Registrar no later than 4:30 p.m. two days before the last day of classes of any academic term. Under no circumstances will a student be permitted to withdraw from the university after that time. A student who does not withdraw by the official procedure will receive an **F** for each course. (See the Schedule of Classes Bulletin for more details.)

4. Class attendance

Class attendance is a contract between faculty and students. It is expected that students will attend classes regularly and provide faculty members with a reason for any absence. A complete policy statement regarding class attendance appears in the student handbook, *Spectrum*, and is available from the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

5. Academic and classroom misconduct

(1) The instructor has the primary responsibility for maintenance of academic integrity and controlling classroom behavior, and can order the temporary removal or exclusion from the classroom of any student engaged in disruptive conduct or conduct that violates the general rules and regulations of the institution for each class session during which the conduct occurs. Extended or permanent exclusion from the classroom, beyond the session in which the conduct occurred, or further disciplinary action can be effected only through appropriate procedures of the institution.

(2) Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. Students guilty of academic misconduct, either directly or indirectly, through participation or assistance, are immediately responsible to the instructor of the class. In addition to other possible disciplinary sanctions which may be imposed through the university's academic misconduct policy as a result of academic misconduct, the instructor has the authority to assign an "F" or a zero ("0") for the exercise or examination, or to assign an "F" in the course.

(3) Students may appeal a grade assignment associated with a finding of academic misconduct, as distinct from a student disciplinary sanction, through the university's academic misconduct procedure. Courses may not be dropped pending the final resolution of an allegation of academic misconduct. (See online Graduate Catalog, Policies and Procedures, Part 6 Disciplinary Procedures, Paragraph (6) Academic Misconduct Procedures).

(4) Disruptive behavior in the classroom may be defined as, but not limited to, behavior that obstructs or disrupts the learning environment (e.g., offensive language, harassment of students and professors, repeated outbursts from a student which disrupt the flow of instruction or prevent concentration on the subject taught, failure to cooperate in maintaining classroom decorum, etc.), text messaging, and the continued use of any electronic or other noise or light emitting device which disturbs others (e.g., disturbing noises from beepers, cell phones, PDAs (personal digital assistants), palm pilots, lap-top computers, games, etc.). . . .

This policy is promulgated pursuant to, and in compliance with, TBR Rule 0240-02-03-.03 Academic and Classroom Misconduct. To the extent that a conflict exists between this policy and TBR rule, policy and/or applicable law(s), the TBR rule, policy and/or law will control. History – Adopted by TBR: 12/8/11. Effective: 1/29/12

6. Buckley Amendment

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended (“FERPA” or the “Buckley Amendment”), is a Federal Law which states (a) that a written institutional policy must be established and (b) that a statement of adopted procedures covering the privacy rights of students be made available. The law provides that the institution will maintain the confidentiality of student education records.

The purpose of the Buckley Amendment is to ensure the accuracy, integrity, and confidentiality of “education records” maintained by colleges and universities concerning students. Under the Buckley Amendment:

- A student is entitled to know what education records the university maintains.
- A student is entitled to inspect most education records containing the student’s name or personally identifiable information.
- A student is entitled to correct erroneous education records.
- A university is obligated to use education records only for their intended purposes. A university may relinquish education records to third parties only under prescribed circumstances.
- University employees who maintain education records are obligated to take reasonable precautions to prevent misuse or unauthorized disclosure of education records.

7. Posting student grades

In order to be in compliance with provisions of the “Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974” (Buckley Amendment), the posting of student grades at East Tennessee State University is prohibited. Interpretations of the Buckley Amendment have also prohibited the use of any codes such as Social Security numbers and other devices that might make identification of a student and his/her grade possible.

8. Retention of papers, tests, and records

Unless the papers are returned to the students, East Tennessee State University faculty

members will retain papers (including but not limited to tests, examinations, and research papers) on which grades are based at least until the period for grade challenge has expired (one calendar year from the time the grade was issued). Any student who challenges a grade must provide returned papers if they are to be used as evidence for the challenge.

9. Students with disabilities

East Tennessee State University is committed to the goal of integrating disabled individuals into the campus community to the fullest extent possible. Services are offered within a framework that stresses independence and self-reliance. Services include arrangements for access, accommodations in instruction, and provision of a variety of support services designed to enable the student to take full advantage of the university's programs. Students who have special needs as a result of a disability should contact the Director for Disabled Student Services, D.P. Culp University Center, phone 439-8370 V/TDD.

10. Fee Adjustment (Refund) Policy

East Tennessee State University adheres to The Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) system-wide policy for calculating fee adjustments and refunds. This refund policy primarily affects full-time students who adjust their schedules to part-time status, including complete withdrawal, after the conclusion of the 100% fee adjustment/refund period. Students will be assessed a pro-rated fee for the dropped hours.

Students are encouraged to better plan their schedules and retain their full-time status on their way to a timely and successful graduation. The fee adjustment policy provides for three fee adjustment periods and is based entirely upon the official date of withdrawal or change of course which would result in a recalculation of fees. Students who need to drop any courses or withdraw from the University should do so before the start of classes for the term to ensure that no registration fees are owed. Please see <http://www.etsu.edu/fa/fs/bursar/tuitioninfo/calendar.aspx> for specific refund/adjustment periods for each part-of-term.

Full-time students benefit from a reduced fee assessment rate for tuition, and out-of-state fees calculations during the Fall and Spring Terms (full-time is considered 10 hours for graduates). Other fees, such as course fees, material fees, Regents Online Degree Program (RODP) are assessed at a per-hour rate, with no maximum, and are not subject to any reduced rates. **Note:** Summer tuition and out-of-state fees are assessed at the full per-hour rate, with no maximum.

The fee adjustment calculations are based on the courses dropped; therefore, not all schedule adjustments will result in a reduced fee assessment after the fee adjustment calculation. Fee adjustment estimator calculations are approximate. Actual adjustment amounts may vary based on individual student enrollment. For more information about calculation of refunds, see http://www.etsu.edu/fa/fs/bursar/tuitioninfo/Fee_Adj_Refund_Policy.aspx.

11. Academic probation/Dismissal

To remain in good standing, a graduate student (**degree or non-degree**), must maintain an overall grade point average of 3.0 (B) or better on all graduate work attempted. An overall average of 3.0 is required for graduation. A graduate student, when his/her cumulative grade point average falls below 3.0, will be placed on academic probation the following semester. If the student does not achieve a 3.0 cumulative grade point average at the conclusion of the probationary semester, Dr. McGee, Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and appropriate college/departmental/ program officials will determine if the student should be dismissed from graduate study at East Tennessee State University or continued on probation. **No student will be allowed more than two probationary semesters, whether consecutive or cumulative. At the end of a second probationary semester a student whose cumulative grade point average is still below**

3.0 will be dismissed from graduate study. Students whose performance results in a GPA so far below 3.0 as to make it mathematically impossible to attain an overall GPA of 3.0 after one semester may be subject to dismissal without a probationary term. A student will be removed from probationary status upon attaining a cumulative 3.0 grade point average.

III. UNIVERSITY RESOURCES/SERVICES

A. Graduate and Professional Student Association

The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) is the representative body for students enrolled in the Graduate School. The executive board of the GPSA is elected from representatives of the various graduate programs. Two graduate students from the GPSA are elected members of the Graduate Council. The GPSA encourages social, athletic, cultural, and other extracurricular activities, promotes closer relations between graduate students and faculty outside formal academic settings, and voices ideas and concerns of graduate students.

B. Office of International Programs

Assistance is available to meet the special needs of international students. The international student advisor acts as a liaison between the university, the local community, and the international student and provides special opportunities and activities through the international student organization and selected community agencies. The student advisor for international programs is Chasity Drew and Danielle Olmo and their office is located in Room 122, Yoakley Hall, phone 439-7737.

C. Services

1. Counseling/Graduate Student Success Specialist

In addition to Counseling Services at the Counseling Center, the School of Graduate Studies provides the services of the Graduate Student Success Specialist to graduate students who need assistance in finding campus or off-campus resources to help them in meeting their daily living needs. The Graduate Student Success Specialist is located in Room 462 in Sherrod Library, 439-7062, gradsuccess@etsu.edu.

2. Veterans Affairs

The Office of Veterans Affairs responds to the needs, problems, and questions of students eligible for educational assistance benefits under all chapters of the G.I. Bill, Title 38, United States Code. The Office of Veterans Affairs is located in room 101 of Burgin E. Dossett Hall, phone 439-6830 or 439-6819.

3. Clinics

The Student Health Clinic provides acute care services for students at no cost. The full-time professional staff includes physicians, a family nurse practitioner, and two registered nurses. The clinic is able to provide most acute care medications at no charge to the student. Simple laboratory tests may also be performed for a nominal fee. When problems require specialty treatment, students are referred to a physician of their choice or a specialist in Johnson City. Students are advised to purchase the student group health insurance offered by the university if they are not covered by other insurance plans. A valid student ID card must be presented for each clinic visit. The operating hours are 8 a.m.- 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday, when school is in session. For after-hour emergencies, students should report to the Johnson City Medical Center Emergency Room. The clinic is located in Room 55, Lamb Hall, phone 439-4225.

4. Center for Early Learning and Development

The Center for Early Childhood Learning and Development operates several demonstration programs in Warf-Pickel Hall. Two of these programs provide direct child-care services to young children. The Infant/Toddler Center serves children ages three months to three years in a full year, full-day program. The Early Learning Center serves children ages three to five years of age on a regularly scheduled full- or part-time basis. Students who are interested in enrolling their children in either center can obtain more information about making application and about fees by calling 439-7555. Enrollment is on a limited basis, and applications are accepted on a first-come, first serve basis.

5. Computer Resources

Computer resources at East Tennessee State University are available to authorized students, faculty, staff, and off-campus constituents. Access to these resources is obtained from the Information Technology Services (ITS) and is granted with the understanding that the computer resources will be used as stated in the request.

6. Public Safety

The Department of Public Safety is located at the entrance of the university on University Parkway and has personnel on duty 24 hours a day for assistance. The telephone number is 439-4480 or 9-911. The telephone number for the administrative offices is 439-6900.

7. Research Facilities

The University's central library opened in January 1999 with a book capacity of 800,000 volumes. The Archives of Appalachia serves the community by preserving and providing access to records pertaining to the political, social, historical, and cultural development of the southern Appalachian Mountains. The library also has a law collection. The complete electronic information distribution system in the library is connected to the campus wide fiber-optic backbone and distributes all electronic media throughout the building to 1,200 potential connection points. Instructional areas are equipped to support state-of-the-art multimedia instruction techniques, and all reader, study, office, and public areas have multimedia distribution points for the connection of various equipment including PCs and laptop computers. The largest open-access computer lab in the Tennessee Board of Regents system is located in the D.P. Culp University Center.

8. Libraries

East Tennessee State University provides library services through Sherrod Library on the main campus, Quillen College of Medicine Learning Resources department on the Veterans Administration campus, and the small branch library at ETSU Kingsport. The Archives of Appalachia is housed within the Sherrod Library facility, as well. All of the libraries provide full-service reference, instruction, and interlibrary loan. Instructors may request librarians to guest lecture on library topics, create course-specific finding tools, or embed themselves in online course sites in order to support students' information-seeking needs. Distance education and online students and instructors have access to the full range of services available on campus, and can have materials delivered to them as needed. The library collection consists of approximately half a million print volumes, but the majority of the collection is held online and is accessible 24/7 through the library website. Approximately 22,000 e-journals, 100,000 e-books, 100 full-text bibliographic databases, and 20,000 streaming videos are available online to all ETSU students, faculty, and staff. Electronic theses and dissertations, both from ETSU and other institutions, are also available through the library's website.

9. Online Graduate Student Liaison

The Online Graduate Student Liaison, Ms. Rebecca Loyd, assists online graduate students in completing applications and provides other students to online graduate students. She is responsible for facilitating completion of applications and providing student services to online graduate students. She is the:

- Contact person for students pursuing online/blended graduate programs
- Contact person for students interested in pursuing online/blended graduate programs
- Co-Advisor for GPSA (Graduate & Professional Student Association)

She is available at 423-439-6164 or loydr@etsu.edu.