Hiring Salaried Graduate Student Employees in Non-Academic Areas

Presented by Academic Resources
Agenda

• Salaried Graduate Student Employees
• Compensation Plan
• Pay Levels
• Job Codes
• Funding Sources
• Offer Letters
• Criminal History Checks
• Applicable Policy
• Workload
• ePAR Information
• Behind the Scenes Processing
• Effective Dates
• Academic Resources Contacts
Salaried Graduate Student Employees

• Graduate students are vital to the success of the research and teaching missions at the University of North Texas. The University is committed to offering competitive recruitment and retention packages.

• Graduate students are defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board as “Any student who is pursuing a program, or has a bachelor’s degree and is enrolled in courses which are normally part of a program, leading to a graduate or professional degree or certificate at an institution of higher education and has successfully completed the equivalent of at least three years of full-time study at an institution of higher education either prior to entrance into the program or as part of the program itself.”
Salaried Graduate Student Employees

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.

The salary received is considered employment income and is subject to employment-related taxes.

Students on assistantships for at least .5 FTE 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 UGIP insurance plan, they may participate in the university’s Student Insurance Plan, which is administered by UnitedHealthcare Student Resources. Student insurance costs will vary depending on the plan and the level of coverage selected in either plan.

Please note that foreign national students must comply with any specific FTE restrictions that may be in place regarding their particular work authorization.
Compensation Plan

• General information about salaried graduate student compensation is available at: https://vpaa.unt.edu/resources/retention

• Utilize the rates listed in the graduate compensation plan.

• Rates below the minimum will not be approved.

• Hires at or above midpoint require the submission of a justification statement explaining why the higher rate is being requested.

• The rates in the pay schedule are determined based on two factors: 1) the academic progression level of the graduate student and 2) academic department that closely aligns to a non-academic department for which the student is employed.

• Use the rate for Non-Academic Areas, or if more closely related to work, the rate for the department where the student is enrolled.
Pay Levels

- **Academic Progression Level 1**: Masters or doctoral students without experience in a graduate degree program and with less than 18 credits toward a graduate degree.

- **Academic Progression Level 2**: Students pursuing a master’s degree or seeking a doctoral degree with at least 18 credits toward a graduate degree. This is the entry level for doctoral students with an earned master’s degree.

- **Academic Progression Level 3**: Doctoral or MFA students who have completed all course work; have passed all their qualifying examinations; and be in good academic standing. Exceptions must be approved by the Graduate School. For advancement to Pay Level 3, departments must fill out a brief form to certify results of qualifying examinations at:

- [https://tsgs.unt.edu/sites/default/files/u63/qualifying-examination-results.pdf](https://tsgs.unt.edu/sites/default/files/u63/qualifying-examination-results.pdf)
• Progression to the next level requires meeting the minimum qualifications of the higher level at the beginning of the Fall semester only.

• Information regarding the CLE (Course Load Exception) form and process please review the information provided at:
  • https://tgs.unt.edu/course-load-exception-request

• For information regarding the TBP (Tuition Benefit Program), please review the information provided at:
  • https://tgs.unt.edu/new-current-students/tuition-benefit-program
Job Codes

• Salaried Graduate Research Assistants are graduate assistants who are engaged in research activities under the direction and supervision of a principal investigator or faculty working on research.
  • 0821 – Level 1
  • 0822 – Level 2
  • 0823 – Level 3

• Graduate Services Assistants are graduate students whose responsibilities are administrative in nature or consist of other activities that do not generally fit within the TF, TA, or RA job responsibilities, but who contribute to the overall academic progress or professional development of the student.
  • 0831 – Level 1
  • 0832 – Level 2
  • 0833 – Level 3

• **Account Coding** for RA and GSA’s
  • 0821 – 0823 RA job codes will post to Account 50165 (D5016)
  • 0831 – 0833 GSA job codes will post to Account 50167 (D5016)
Funding Sources

• The following job codes for salaried graduate research and graduate services assistant positions and appointments employed in an academic department will post to Salaries – Student budget (D5016) in COGNOS.
  • Account 50165 for RA job codes
  • Account 50167 for GSA job codes

• Generally, these jobs will be paid under fund codes 105 or 200 and fund category 800001, 805001 or 830001 depending on the type of funding your division has for these types of jobs

• Funding End Date – in almost all cases, a funding end date is not needed. Only use for sponsored projects or for funding changes that will occur prior to the appointment end date.
Offer Letters

Departments will submit offer letters for all salaried graduate students being hired or returning to Academic Resources via email: academic.resources@unt.edu or by using the automated form located on our website: https://vpaa.unt.edu/resources/retention

- Offer letters can be issued for an entire academic year, to include summer, if desired.
- Academic Resources will respond to confirm receipt of the offer letter and if a CHC is needed; if needed, CHC will be ordered accordingly (see next slide).
- Departments are advised to use the Salaried Graduate Student Offer Letter Template to draft and send to all their salaried graduate students. Letters should be issued from and returned to the department.
- The offer template is located on the website listed above.
- Signed offer letters must be attached to the ePAR before it will be approved.
Criminal History Checks

A new process for criminal history checks on salaried graduate students was effective in 2019. Some of the highlights of the procedure include:

- Departments will submit signed offer letters to Academic.Resources@unt.edu utilizing the dynamic form process (link to form found in section above).
- Academic Resources will respond confirming offer letter received and will let department know if CHC is needed.
- If CHC is required, Academic Resources will initiate the request to Accurate.
- Accurate will email the student invitation to complete CHC request online.
- Student will complete CHC request online.
- Accurate will run the CHC and report the results back to Academic Resources.
- Academic Resources will forward results to the department contact.
- Department will submit ePAR with signed offer letter attached. An ePAR without a signed letter will not be approved.
- NOTE: Onboarding & Form I-9’s are handled by the Career Center.
Criminal History Checks

• Departments should inform their graduate students to expect a criminal history check if one is required. An email request from Accurate Background, Inc. will be sent to the preferred email listed on the offer letter.

• As requests are valid for one week only, students will need to complete and submit this request as soon as possible.

Dept submits offer letters to Academic. Resources @unt.edu  
AR responds to confirm offer letter received and if CHC is needed  
AR submits necessary information to Provider to initiate CHC request  
Provider emails student invitation to complete CHC request online  
Student completes CHC request online  
Provider runs check (typically 1-3 business days)  
Provider reports results to AR  

Results Clear?  

Dept submits ePAR with signed offer letter attached  
ARs forwards clearance email to Dept  

AR=Academic Resources  
Spreadsheet =Graduate Student CHC Dept Requests Spreadsheet  
Provider = CHC Provider (Accurate)
Graduate students who hold a research assistantship or graduate services assistant of half-time (20 hours per week) or greater, or other appointment designed for the support of graduate study, must be enrolled in a minimum of nine (9) semester credit hours (SCHs) during long semesters. These minimums apply to positions supported by state, federal, and private sources of funds. Academic units may set higher requirements. A load greater than 12 SCHs must be approved in advance by the appropriate college/school dean or their designee and the vice provost for graduate education and dean of the Toulouse Graduate School or their designee.

Academic Resources in conjunction with TGS will audit enrollment each long semester.
Workload

To ensure compliance with the Affordable Care Act and UNT Policy, salaried graduate students will be limited to a combined .5 FTE (20 hours per week).
ePAR Information

• For step-by-step instructions for submitting salaried graduate student ePAR’s go to: https://vpaa.unt.edu/resources/training

• To assist with ePAR preparation, each Fall (early August) and Spring (early December) Academic Resources distributes spreadsheets for reference purposes only.

• Departments will be required to prepare ePARS for hires, changes or terminations.

• Note: In order to have allow ample time for ePAR’s to complete processing before the payroll deadline, please have them submitted 2 business days prior to the deadline. The payroll calendar is available at: https://finance.untsystem.edu/payroll-deadlines
Behind the Scenes Processes

• August- FY (fiscal year) rollover for September 1st
  - Spreadsheets submitted by academic departments and loaded by ITSS
    - Appropriate/separate instructions sent at that time
• December- Spreadsheets sent out for reference
  - Used for reference and verification of current status only
• Mass Short WorkBreak Termination Process
  - Twice yearly, mid/late September and mid January
    - Eliminates unnecessary active records
    - Keeps unnecessary benefit premiums to ERS at a minimum
Effective Dates for Appointments

- Standard dates include
  - Fall: 9-1-XX with an appointment end date of 1-16-XX
  - Spring: 1-16-XX with an appointment end date of 5-31-XX
  - To place on appointment for both fall and spring, use 9-1-XX with an appointment end date of 5-31-XX
- Fall appointments cannot begin prior to 9-1-XX
- Spring appointments cannot extend past 5-31-XX
- Summer appointments must be separate and dated between 6-1-XX and 8-31-XX
Academic Resources Contacts

Brandi Everett  
Faculty and Academic Administrators, ext. 3951

Tami Patterson  
Additional Pay items, Tasks, Academic Staff, FDL and Modified Service ePAR’s, ext 3953

Melissa Holland  
New Faculty job postings, onboarding, and records ext. 2673

Davelyn McCartney  
Salaried Grad Student ePAR’s and Criminal History Checks, and questions, ext. 3512

Chance McMillan  
Adjunct job postings, hiring and ePAR’s, ext. 2138