

Graduate Assistantships Handbook

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Graduate teaching, non-teaching, and research assistantships at Texas A&M University-Commerce offer financial support for graduate education. Assistantships are awarded to qualified master's and doctoral students and are distributed through academic and non-academic departments. In addition to funding graduate education, assistantships also provide students opportunities for professional growth.

The University awards three types of assistantships:

1. **Graduate Assistant Non-teaching (GANT)** works in a variety of settings across campus performing such tasks as assisting with labs, offering teaching support, assisting faculty with research, preparing reports, entering data or other responsibilities as assigned.
2. **Graduate Assistant Teaching (GAT)** requires recipients to teach courses in the department in which they are assigned. Teaching Assistants are teachers of record, meaning they have primary responsibility for teaching a course for credit or noncredit and/or for assigning final grades for the course. In order to qualify for Teaching Assistantships students must have earned a minimum of 18 graduate semester hours in the field in which they will be teaching. Although they are teachers of record, they must work under the direct supervision of a faculty member experienced in the teaching field, receive regular in-service training, and be regularly evaluated.
Graduate students whose native language is other than English must demonstrate a sufficient level of oral and written proficiency (successfully pass the TOEFL) before they may be awarded a teaching assistantship.
3. **Graduate Assistant Research (GAR)** requires recipients to aid in the research with the department/professor to which they are assigned. Work may also include tasks such as assisting with labs, offering teaching support, assisting faculty with research, preparing reports, entering data or other responsibilities as assigned.

General Qualifications

Initial Requirements

To hold an assistantship, a student must satisfy both the Graduate School and departmental requirements. Academic or creative excellence, professional competence, and relevant experience or skills are the primary qualifications considered for appointments. If you are hired as a GAT and your native language is not English, you must successfully complete the TOEFL **before** you are eligible to teach. More specifically:

To hold a Master's Level Assistantship a student must:

- ❖ Be admitted (full or probationary) to a master's degree program and have an undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher;
- ❖ Maintain a 3.00 graduate GPA if already enrolled in a graduate program;
- ❖ Be in good standing with the Graduate School;
- ❖ Be enrolled for at least six hours of graduate credit;
- ❖ Teaching assistants whose native language is not English must successfully complete the TOEFL and
- ❖ Have completed a minimum of 18 graduate hours in the field to be taught if applying for a teaching assistantship.

Or

- ❖ Be admitted (full or probationary) to a master's degree program and have a graduate grade point average (GPA) of 3.25 or higher on a minimum of twelve semester hours of graduate credit.
- ❖ Maintain a 3.00 graduate GPA if already enrolled in a graduate program;
- ❖ Be in good standing with the Graduate School;
- ❖ Be enrolled for at least six hours of graduate credit;
- ❖ Teaching assistants whose native language is not English must successfully complete the TOEFL and
- ❖ Have completed a minimum of 18 graduate hours in the field to be taught if applying for a teaching assistantship.

To hold a Doctoral Assistantship, a student must:

- ❖ Be admitted (full) to a doctoral program and have a graduate GPA of 3.5 or higher;
- ❖ Maintain at least a 3.00 graduate GPA;
- ❖ Be in good standing with the Graduate School;
- ❖ Be enrolled for at least six hours of credit;
- ❖ Teaching assistants whose native language is not English must successfully complete the TOEFL and

- ❖ Have completed a minimum of 18 graduate hours in the field to be taught if applying for a teaching assistantship.

Maintaining an Assistantship

To maintain an assistantship position, students must:

- ❖ Remain enrolled full-time. The Graduate School considers you to be full-time if you are enrolled in six hours during the fall and spring semesters and three hours during each summer semester. However, the Financial Aid Office requires students to be enrolled in nine hours each fall and spring semester and a total of nine hours combined over the summer semesters to be considered full-time.
- ❖ Maintain a graduate GPA of 3.0; and
- ❖ Remain in good standing with the Graduate School.

Once you have accepted an assistantship, verbally or in writing, you are obligated to stay in the accepted position until the end of the semester.

If you have been given a GA tuition waiver because you are a nonresident student with a full time GA position but then fail to remain employed in the position until the end of the semester, you will lose the GA tuition waiver for that semester. You would then be required to pay the additional fees.

Applying for Assistantships

Inquiries about the availability of assistantships should be addressed to the department in which the applicant wishes to work or undertake graduate study. Each department hires its own assistants and establishes duties in accordance with University procedures.

To apply for an assistantship, consult with the department in which the assistantship is being offered and fill out an application. To download an application, apply online, or to find out which departments are offering assistantships, check out <http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/gradschool/GraduateAssistantship/asist.asp>.

General Responsibilities

Work Load

- ❖ As a full-time assistant, you will be working 20 hours per week or teaching six credit hours.
- ❖ If you hold a full-time teaching assistantship in the summer, you will be required to teach three credit hours each summer semester.
- ❖ Graduate Assistants who work full-time in the summer will work 20 hours per week.

If you need a smaller workload, talk with your department head about doing so with a reduced stipend.

Course Load

The course load for a full-time assistant is 6-12 hours for the fall or spring semester and 3-7 hours for each summer term.

A doctoral student shall not be required to register for more than nine credit hours during any long semester or summer except a doctoral student who is enrolled in nine credit hours of organized classes who is also doing research related to his/her dissertation may be required to register for up to three hours of research or dissertation for a total of twelve credit hours.

Dates of assistantships

Assistantships start on the first class day and end on the last class day of each semester unless other arrangements have been made between you and the department. Graduate Assistants have the same University holidays and official

university closings as faculty and staff. These are posted in the University calendar.

Expectations

Graduate Assistants are employees of the University and represent Texas A&M University-Commerce while on duty. You are expected to adhere to all applicable state and federal laws, University rules and procedures, and professional ethics. You must also conduct yourself in such a manner as to be courteous and helpful to students, the University community and the external public.

Telephone/Computer Use. Use of local telephone service for personal business should be kept to a minimum. Use of personal long distance phone service is prohibited.

Confidentiality. In the official performance of your duties, Graduate Assistants may have access to personal information about students, faculty and other University personnel. Personal information learned about other students, faculty members or other University personnel should be kept in the strictest confidence and should only be used when necessary to perform the duties of your job. Student records should not be accessed for any purposes other than official University business.

Academic Honesty. Academic honesty is taken very seriously at Texas A&M-Commerce. The policy of Texas A&M-Commerce on academic honesty is as follows:

Graduate students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all their scholastic work. Faculty are expected to uphold and support student integrity and honesty by maintaining conditions that encourage and enforce academic honesty. Conduct that violates generally accepted standards of academic honesty is defined as academically dishonest. "Academic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of ideas or words of another and passing them off as one's own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material. If a student is accused of academic dishonesty, the faculty member making the accusation is responsible for initiating disciplinary proceedings. The penalty assessed should be related to the severity of the infraction. If the student and faculty member agree on the penalty, assessment of the penalty concludes the disciplinary action. However, certain violations of academic honesty, such as plagiarism, infringe upon the academic community's basic tenets of scholarly inquiry. Therefore, if a faculty member believes the infraction is severe enough to warrant further action and/or if the faculty member believes the problem may be cumulative,

occurring in other classes in which the student is enrolled, the faculty member may file a report of the infraction with the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research. The student must be notified that the report has been filed with the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research so as to allow the student the opportunity to file a response. If a faculty member believes the infraction is so severe that a penalty greater than failure on a project and/or course is warranted, the faculty member may recommend to the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research through the department head and academic dean that the student be suspended or expelled.

If the student disagrees with the charge or level of penalty, he/she is entitled to due process in accordance with University policy for student appeals. The appeal process for this policy is through the following channels: department head, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research and the Administration Committee of the Graduate Council which will present its recommendation to the full Graduate Council for final disposition of the appeal. Final jurisdiction on graduate student appeals is with the Graduate Council. In addition, international students must comply with Immigration and Naturalization Statutes, for example, Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996.

Time Limitations

- ❖ Graduate assistantships may be held for a maximum of four semesters by master's students.
- ❖ Doctoral students may hold assistantships for a maximum of six semesters.

Assistantships may be extended up to two additional semesters at the discretion of the department head.

Summer term assistantships are exempted from the time limitation.

Performance and Evaluation

Any appointment is subject to satisfactory performance of assigned duties, progress toward the degree or program goal and maintenance of a 3.00 graduate grade point average. You have the right to develop to the best of your ability, both academically and professionally, and to be treated fairly and with respect. It is your responsibility to carry out, in a professional manner, such duties as may be reasonably assigned by your department head or supervisor. If you hold a teaching assistantship, you will be evaluated every semester, both orally and in writing, by your department head or faculty supervisor. Graduate assistants who are teachers of record must be evaluated by their students.

Termination Before End of Appointment

It is expected that Graduate Assistants will successfully complete their assignments. You must seek the needed supervision and support to help improve your performance when difficulties occur. The Department Head and the immediate supervisor are available for consultation and guidance. When performance does not meet expectations, the department head may initiate appropriate corrective action at any time during the semester. This may include termination. The reasons for termination may include, but are not limited to the following:

- ❖ Violation of University rules and procedures
- ❖ Professional misconduct
- ❖ Dereliction of assigned duties
- ❖ Unsatisfactory performance of duties
- ❖ Unsatisfactory academic progress

In case of termination, you will have the right to appeal through normal administrative channels.

Payment and Benefits

Signing Up for Payment and Insurance

You may sign up for payroll with Human Resources in the Social Science building. When signing up for payroll, take two types of identification, such as a social security card and driver's license.

- ❖ *Payment.* GAT and GAR are paid once a month, on the first working day of the month. GANT are paid every 2 weeks. You may have your check mailed to you or directly deposited into your bank account.
- ❖ *Insurance.* If you hold a full-time assistantship, you are eligible for the state stipend to pay health insurance and other benefits. Please contact the payroll office for details.

Stipend

Master's Level	Full-time	Part-Time
9 months (fall & spring)	\$8,000- \$14,000	\$4,000
Fall (4 1/2 months)	\$4,000	\$2,000
Spring (4 1/2 months)	\$4,000	\$2,000
Summer (3 months - both summer terms)	\$2,666	\$1,333
One summer term (1 1/2 months)	\$1,333	\$666.50

Doctoral Level	Full-time	Part-Time
9 months (fall & spring)	\$10,000- \$16,000	\$5,000
Fall (4 1/2 months)	\$5,000	\$2,500
Spring (4 1/2 months)	\$5,000	\$2,500
Summer (3 months - both summer terms)	\$3,333	\$1,666
One summer term (1 1/2 months)	\$1,666	\$833

Parking

Teaching assistant, are eligible for blue parking permits, which allow you to park in green and blue zones, and also in red zones during the summer. When purchasing a parking permit, you will need to present to the university cashier a memorandum from your employing department stating that you are an assistant in that department. Permits for the academic year will be \$22 if bought during the fall semester. Permit fees are pro-rated as follows: \$18 if purchased during the spring semester and \$13 if purchased during the summer semester. An additional fee of \$1.00 will be added for on-line purchases.

Waiver of Out-of-State Tuition and Fees

If you have not established residency in Texas but hold a full-time assistantship, you are entitled to a waiver of out-of-state tuition and fees. You must be employed by the twelfth class day of fall or spring semesters or by the fourth class day of summer terms to receive this waiver.

If you have been given a GA tuition waiver because you are a nonresident student with a full time GA position but then fail to remain employed in the position until the end of the semester, you will lose the GA tuition waiver for that semester. You would then be required to pay the additional fees.

Required Training

Orientation

An orientation is available online to all new assistants and returning assistants. The link is <http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/gradschool/GAOrientation/>.

Sexual Harassment

Any type of sexual discrimination prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, sexual harassment of students and employees at Texas A&M University-Commerce is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. There is a section on sexual harassment in the Student Handbook that defines its meaning and outlines the avenue of complaint. Complaints of sexual harassment may be made to the Immediate Supervisor, a Department Chair, a Vice President, the Human Resources Officer, or the Dean of Students. New assistants are required to participate in sexual harassment training, which is offered during the fall and spring semesters.

Checklist

The following may serve as a checklist to make sure that your assignment is properly made:

- ❖ Submit the online application form to the department you wish to obtain the assistantship with and any other documents they request.
- ❖ If the department hires you, then the department will submit a Personnel Action Form (PAF) through channels to Human Resources/Payroll.
- ❖ Sign up for payroll with Human Resources/Payroll. Full-time Graduate Assistants are eligible for the faculty/staff insurance program. You must enroll in the program; it is not automatic. There are several plans to choose from.
- ❖ Complete Online Assistantship Orientation
- ❖ Purchase a parking permit from the University cashier if you plan to park your vehicle on campus. GA/TAs attending orientation for new assistants will have the opportunity to purchase their parking permit during orientation. Parking regulations are always enforced.
- ❖ Establish an e-mail account if you do not have one. To apply, fill out a form at the Computing, Telecommunications and Information Services (BA156). A current student ID is required for this purpose. GA/TAs attending orientation for new assistants will have the opportunity to sign-up for campus Pipeline.

Campus Resources

Campus Safety

The University Police Department provides police services and all security functions for the university. This office also provides many services for the faculty, staff, students and visitors on campus. The department is responsible for the investigation of criminal activity, crime prevention programs, safety awareness, public service assistance for motorists, event security, and parking enforcement. The department is responsible for the enforcement of University parking regulations as well as motor vehicle laws. All motor vehicles parking on the Commerce campus must be registered with the department and the parking permit properly displayed. The University Police Department offers its services to campus motorists by boosting stalled cars and opening locked cars. There are also many emergency phones throughout campus, which are marked with a blue light and can be used to alert the University Police Department in an emergency.

Officers of the department are certified by the State of Texas as commissioned peace officers, the same as other Texas municipal police officers, and have full law enforcement authority.

The University Police Department is open 24 hours a day for assistance. The office is located on the first floor of Henderson Hall on Monroe Street. Emergency—911; Non-Emergency—903-886-5868.

Student Services

Areas of student services and activities at A&M-Commerce are organized and administered by the Dean of Student Affairs. Services included are:

The Assistant Dean of Students (903-886-5153) is responsible for withdrawals, class absence verifications, excessive unexcused absences, student personnel records, the student services fee advisory committee, Golden Leos, and discipline.

Clarence G. Allen Student Health Center (903-886-5853). Medical services are available at the Student Health Center to those students who are currently attending classes at A&M-Commerce. Services include diagnosis and treatment of minor illnesses, minor injuries, minor surgery, x-ray, and lab procedures. Students are seen only during regular clinic hours. All after hours illnesses or emergencies may be seen at the local hospital at the student's expense. The Student Health Center is located on the first floor of Henderson Hall.

Department of Residence Life (903-886-5797). A&M-Commerce can accommodate many single students and families in campus housing. The costs for these accommodations are reasonable, and the facilities are varied to meet a number of different lifestyle alternatives. Single student housing includes utility services, double occupancy rooms, central heat and air-conditioning, and continuous maintenance service. The halls designated for family housing include 170 air-conditioned and centrally heated, furnished apartments. Utilities are furnished by the Department of Housing. The Department of Residence Life is located on the first floor of Whitley Hall, a modern high-rise residence hall.

Licensed Day Care (903-886-5769). A licensed Day Care/Learning Center is located on campus. Care is provided for children six weeks to five years of age. The Center provides the latest in curricula and educational play equipment in a consistent learning environment. Rated a Four-Star Facility in 1995, the Children's Learning Center prides itself on exceptional quality care and academic environment.

Counseling Center (903-886-5145). The Counseling Center offers a wide range of programs and services to assist students in accomplishing their personal, academic, and career goals. The staff provides both individual and group counseling. Other services include relaxation training to help alleviate stress-related problems and career assistance facilitated by use of various computer delivered career guidance systems; and legal advice is available by appointment with the student attorney. Numerous groups, seminars, and workshops are presented each semester. Educational materials may be checked out from the center's information library. All programs and services are free to university students and the staff respects each student's right to confidentiality and privacy. The Center is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Sam Rayburn Memorial Student Center (903-886-5808). The MSC provides recreational and cultural programs for the A&M-Commerce student body. Housed in the student center are the campus post office, a full-service professional salon, a cafeteria, the University Book Store, Offices of Student Organizations, Leadership and Student Development (Synergy Lab), student government offices, two ballrooms and meeting rooms, television rooms, lounges, a candy corner, a video arcade, a recreation room, an information service, and the Commuters Corner.

Morris Recreation Center (903-886-5778). The Morris Recreation Center provides outdoor heated pool, outdoor hot tub, 35-foot climbing rock, 3-lane jogging track, 4 racquetball courts, 2 full-size basketball courts, large fitness room with cardiovascular machines and weight equipment, aerobics room, classroom, snack area, and locker rooms. The facility is the focal point of the A&M-Commerce campus and will serve as the “heartbeat” of student life.

International Student Office (903-886-5097). The ISO, located in room 349 of the Business Administration building, assists all foreign born students with Federal Immigration documents and helps them to adapt to new surroundings.

Disability Resources & Services. Each division within the University is aware of the needs of the disabled student and is ready and willing to work with each student to solve problems as they arise. The Supervisor of Services is located in the Gee Library, RM 132 (903-886-5150). Services for the disabled are provided through student support services/Trio Programs (tutoring, mobility assistants, readers, interpreters, etc.), the Counseling Center, the Communication Skills Center, and the Mathematics Skills Center. Learning disabled students must file an application for eligibility for assignment to the Academic Support Committee during the first semester of enrollment at the university. Applications are available through Trio Programs or Academic Advisement. Other campus services are available to the disabled through the Department of Residence Life, the University Police Department, the Clarence G. Allen Memorial Hospital and Student Health Services, the James G. Gee Library, and the Morris Recreation Center. The Texas Rehabilitation Commission and the Texas Commission for the Blind work closely with the university to offer support to students who qualify.

Gee Library

The *James G. Gee Library* (903-886-5717), named for A&M-Commerce's fifth president, is the academic center of campus. The online catalog, which is Internet accessible, provides access to the library's collection containing over 1.8 million monographs, periodicals, microforms, and other processed materials such as videotapes, sound recordings and films. This total includes collections of juvenile and young people's literature, archival materials, curriculum guides, and maps. The university has been a selective depository for federal government publications since 1937 and for Texas state documents since 1963.

In support of undergraduate and graduate programs, the library provides Internet access to over 50 databases, some containing the full text or full images of articles, plus access to several CD-ROM databases on the Gee Library and its Metroplex branch or via the campus wide area network. Internet access to other library catalogs is also available.

An interlibrary loan service delivers publications to Gee Library from libraries throughout Texas and the world. Viewing machines are available for microform items and reader-printers enable students to obtain hard copy of microform materials. The library's microform collections include ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) documents. Photocopy machines are also available throughout the library.

The library computer laboratory containing IBM PC compatible computers is located on the second floor, and is available to all students. A&M-Commerce Gee Library is a member of the Phoenix Group of North Texas research libraries, TexShare, and AMIGOS Library Services, the OCLC regional support organization. TexShare membership gives students and faculty access and borrowing privileges to most academic institutions statewide. The Library has daily courier service to selected TexShare institutions, supporting a rapid interlibrary loan service.

Computing, Telecommunications, and Information Services

Computing, Telecommunications, and Information Services (CTIS) (903-886-6000), located in the Business Administration Building, room 156, is responsible for the integrity, security and reliability of administrative computing, academic computing, academic research and telecommunications services that support and enhance Texas A&M University-Commerce and its affiliations. Student Information System and application programming staff provide systems analysis, programming, data preparation and computer processing for all divisions. The telecommunications personnel are responsible for:

- *Installing and maintaining university computers, printers and telephones.*
- *Installing and maintaining the copper and fiber-optic cable plants and equipment that provides voice, video and data service to the core campus and student housing.*
- *Resolve computer, software and network issues for faculty, staff and students.*

CTIS is responsible for establishing authorization accounts for the following systems: Faculty, Staff and Student E-Mail, Internet Dial-Up Service (TACACS), BANNER, FAMIS, and TP.