

**Plan of Governance
Appendix E**

**Department of Environmental Science and Technology
University of Maryland**

Policies Regarding Graduate Assistantships

Approved October 4, 2009

Graduate assistantships are awarded by the Department on a competitive basis to highly qualified students who have been admitted to the ENST Graduate Program for either the MS or PhD.degree program.

Expectation of Time Commitment

The assigned duties of a Graduate Assistant (GA) should be consistent with the teaching and research missions of the university, and as such, should be educationally productive for graduate students. Workload responsibilities for GAs are generally assigned by the Department through the student's Advisor and should be explicit and clear and may include research and/or teaching activities. Graduate Assistants should be able to satisfactorily complete these work assignments in no more than a 20-hour average work week, and advisors are to ensure that GAs spend no more than 20 hours per week on average throughout the term of appointment, on work unrelated to the GA's thesis or dissertation research. The actual number of hours required to complete assignments in any given week may vary. The remainder of the GA's time is generally occupied by course work and thesis or dissertation research, or related activities.

Teaching Expectation

Because teaching is considered a valuable and integral component of the graduate education experience, all GAs in the ENST program, regardless of funding source, will be expected to undertake a teaching assignment for one semester during their graduate program. The teaching load expected from each GA should be the equivalent load of a TA for one semester¹. Although the specific teaching duties required of a student may vary, our goal is that each student would have a significant teaching experience². The teaching assignment for each GA will be coordinated by the student through their academic advisor in consultation with the Undergraduate Coordinator and the Directors of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies. In determining the teaching assignment, the experience and academic qualifications of the student should be utilized to the degree possible³, but will also depend

¹The expected teaching level would be the equivalent of two periods of a lab or discussion section for one semester. In many cases it will be most efficient for the GA to complete this during a single semester. Some students, however, may find it advantageous or desirable to spread this responsibility over two semesters and may thus choose to do so.

² The types of teaching assignments and responsibilities commonly include either teaching responsibility for laboratory or discussion sections of a course, or in courses without multiple lab or discussion sections, to assist the faculty member in various aspects of the course including grading, advising, development of lessons, leading study sessions, and occasionally giving lectures. Assisting with grading assignments, driving for field trips and preparing classroom handouts, study materials, slideshows, etc. are necessary tasks associated with teaching any course and may be a component of a GA's teaching responsibility but such tasks do not constitute a meaningful teaching experience in and of themselves.

³ The purpose of including both the student and their advisor during the planning and assignment of teaching responsibilities is to help ensure that the student will be as effective and as comfortable as possible teaching in a course

upon the department's needs for TA support⁴. Each student should seek to complete the planning and scheduling of their teaching experience as soon as possible (not later than the end of their second semester in the program) to ensure optimal coordination with the student's class schedule and research plan. The time spent by a GA in teaching and preparation for teaching is considered part of their assigned duties and therefore is counted as part of their average weekly (20 hr) obligation.

Time Away from Duties (Excerpted from the UMD "*Policies for Graduate Assistantships*"³)

The objective of graduate assistantships is education. Stipends are an acknowledgment both of the expense and need for support during graduate education and of the contribution made by the GA to the mission of the University. While an appointment as a GA shares some attributes of employment, these are secondary. Time away from duties is foremost time away from class, not time away from the office. It is for this reason that GAs do not earn paid annual, personal, or sick leave. Nevertheless, GAs working full-time on 12-month appointments may have time-away from their duties. A full time (20 hours per week), 12-month assistantship carries the expectation that the GA will be allowed five workdays (20 hours) of collegially supported absence. This time away from duties must be taken during the current appointment. It may not be accumulated or transferred. It does not include time when the University is closed. Because colleagues must perform the GA's responsibilities during an absence, reasonable notice and prior approval by the GA's supervisor are required. Time-away from duty may be used for such purpose as the GA elects and is, therefore, distinct and separate from allowable absences for illness, maternity, or adoption. For information related to Absence due to Illness or for Absence due to Maternity or Adoption, one is referred to the University of Maryland's "*Policies for Graduate Assistantships*"⁵.

Duration of Support

Offers of Department-funded graduate assistantships are made on a 12-month basis. We realize, however, that for students to successfully complete degree requirements in a timely manner, it is important that they receive ongoing financial support during their program. As with all university faculty and staff positions, appointment and reappointment are contingent upon the availability of funds. Therefore, given this contingency, assistantships are renewable annually, provided that students continue to make acceptable progress toward their degree, achieve established benchmarks for progress and exhibit satisfactory performance in their assigned duties. In order to encourage efficient completion of degree requirements, the duration of Departmental funding of graduate assistantships will be limited to two and one-half years (5 semesters plus two summers) for MS students and four years (8 semesters plus 3 summers) for PhD students. These appointments will be reviewed annually and reappointment or renewal is subject at all times to the satisfactory performance of assistantship duties.

where the department has a particular need, and that the particular teaching responsibilities assigned to the student will provide the student a beneficial educational experience.

⁴ In addition to TAs needed for courses with multiple labs and discussions (currently ENST105 and 200), a significant portion (35-50%) are expected to be available to support other departmental courses. Principles remain to be developed to guide priorities in determining which courses would receive TA support.

⁵ From the UMD Campus *Policies for Graduate Assistantships*:
http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/catalog/assistantship_policies.htm