Division of Diversity and Engagement

**Graduate Research Assistant Handbook**

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# **Introduction to this Handbook and How to Use It**

The purpose of this guide is to serve as a resource for GRAs working with the Division of Diversity and Engagement. Your work to support inclusive excellence at the University of Tennessee is critical to the Division’s success, so it is important to communicate all Division standards and practices in clear, straightforward way. This booklet is a “living text;” as the Division grows and evolves, it is expected that some expectations may change over time. For this reason, it is important that you review this document regularly to ensure that you are following all standards and expectations.

Keep in mind that this document is not all inclusive. Should you have questions and concerns related to policies involving your assistantship in general, you should also consult more complete sources of information such as the Graduate Catalog, Graduate School publications, and the plethora of web sites now available at UT. Another particularly important resource is the Graduate Assistant Handbook prepared by the graduate school. <http://catalog.utk.edu/index.php?catoid=15> . Graduate students are expected to be aware of and satisfy all regulations governing their work and study at the university.” Students should be directed to the Graduate Catalog, to Hilltopics, and to the publications on the Appeals Procedure and the Graduate Assistant Handbook available on the Graduate School website: (http://gradschool.utk.edu/GraduateCouncil/AppeComm/AppealProcedureApproved2009.pdf ) The first part of this guide attempts to present topics in the order in which a new graduate student typically needs the information.

# **General Expectations for Assistantship**

As a GRA in the Division of Diversity and Engagement, you will be expected to work at least 20 hours per week, and serve for one academic year, with opportunity for renewal. GRAs receive a monthly stipend, a tuition waiver (in-state or out-of-state, fall and spring), and health insurance while enrolled in classes. The continuation of your appointment is dependent upon your continued enrollment at the University of Tennessee, good academic standing as determined by your academic program, as well as satisfactory work performance. GRAs are expected to have regularly scheduled meetings with their supervisor to discuss work projects and performance.

## **Professional Dispositions**

As employees of the Division of Diversity and Engagement, you are expected to represent the Division during events and meetings. In addition to appropriate dress and professional demeanor, successful GRAs exhibit the following professional dispositions and skills:

* ***Promptness/Time Management***: All GRAs – to the best of their ability – must be on time for meetings and events. They must also complete all projects and assignments in a timely manner.
* ***Excellence***: All work must be completed and presented in a manner that is thorough, accurate, and as error free as possible.
* ***Initiative/Resourcefulness***: Given the Division’s scope of work, the GRAs must be able to solve problems on their own, ask questions, communicate alternatives when possible, and make decisions based on available data.
* ***Clear, Appropriate, and Consistent Communication***: GRAs must communicate effectively (verbally and in writing), consistently and professionally with others in the workplace.

# **Roles and Responsibilities**

The following details the roles and responsibilities of Division GRAs. Please note this is not an exhaustive list and it is subject to change as the Division shifts in its priorities.

## ***Biweekly Hours, Breaks, and Office Hours***

* + We expect GRAs to operate not just as a graduate student, but also as a professional staff member. We expect you to communicate with your supervisor ***ahead of time*** if you wish to take time off during your previously scheduled work hours. with the exception of administrative holidays. You must submit these requests **at least 1 week ahead of time.**
  + Making up hours should only be used under extenuating circumstances (e.g., sickness, heavy workloads with regard to schoolwork, death in the family, etc.)  and should be communicated with your supervisors **ahead of time**.
  + Everyone is expected to meet the minimum requirement of 10 office hours per week. Office hours can be completed anywhere on campus. However, they should not coincide with your time in class or at events with your home department.
  + Timesheets should be turned in on time, and should only reflect that time that you actually worked.
  + Failure to comply with these expectations will have an impact your continued employment in the Division.

## ***Communication***

* + The primary mode of communication for faculty, staff, and students at the University is email. Therefore, you are expected to check and respond to emails on a regular basis.
  + Emails must be addressed within at least 48 hours from the date of receipt. High importance emails should be addressed as emergencies and taken care of as soon as possible (within 24 hours).
  + Emails from your supervisors with a high importance symbol (!) should be addressed.

## ***Meetings, Events, and Food Orders***

* + The system for reserving rooms on campus is [AdAstra](https://www.aaiscloud.com/UTNKnoxville/Default.aspx). Before reserving a space, please make sure that your name is in the system. Note that gatherings with AV and/or food are considered events, and gatherings with no support whatsoever (without AV and food) are just regular meetings.
  + Please prepare nametags for events as far ahead of time as possible.
  + Please reserve rooms and order food as far in advance as possible. Two to three weeks ahead is ideal. This makes it easier to make changes if needed. All caterers need at least 3 days ahead of time for confirmation of numbers for small events (15 or fewer people) and one week ahead of time for larger events (16 or more people).
  + Visit the space and make sure that the setup is available that you need. Some administrators have internal support for arranging rooms. If that is not available, please contact Facilities at (865) 946-7777 for support in this area.
  + Be sure to use vendors that have a contract with the university. This makes it easier to address invoices. A comprehensive list of vendors can be found on the attached handout.
  + When ordering food, be sure to know how many people you will need to serve, location of the meeting, dietary restrictions, time of the meeting, and setup of the room.
  + When scheduling an event, you will also need to factor in time for setup and cleanup. Information re: Aramark’s catering is available on the Vol Dining website.
  + The driver/deliverer may be tipped (if appropriate, but not Aramark). The maximum tip allowed is 20% on food/beverage. Do not tip on the total if it includes fees, such as service or delivery fee.
  + At the end of the event, you will have **one week** to submit the following information via email to the designated staff person:
    - Name of event
    - Date of event
    - Time of event
    - Location of event
    - List of attendees (**everyone who attended and dined, including GA or other staff**)
    - Note if attendees are faculty, staff, students, or others outside of UT
    - Figure the per person cost of the invoice: 25 people @ $5.20/pp = $130.00 (round down if it is not completely even. PP cost may not equal the invoice total and that is fine).
    - If there is alcohol served, please note that on the email.
    - If the event is unusual (outside of typical meeting activities), note the business purpose (this may not really apply to you).
    - If you receive an itemized receipt when the food is delivered, forward that with the invoice as additional documentation.

## ***Maintenance of Commissions and Council Websites and Listservs***

* + Using WordPress, you will need to maintain any minor changes to commissions/ council websites. These include name changes, meeting times, meeting minutes, photos, changes in contact info, or any other adjustments that do not require a structural change.
  + Please make sure that these updates are completed in a timely manner. Meeting minutes should be made available within **one week** of a meeting.
  + Each semester, you are responsible for maintaining the accuracy of member information and listservs. Should you need assistance with this, please contact the Office of Information Technology (OIT).
  + For updated information/data for new employees and students, please consult with the appropriate staff member.

## ***Research Projects and Data***

* + Given the nature of some of the data and projects that you will be working on, it is important to understand the importance of confidentiality when using, collecting, and sharing data.
  + For information about data policies and procedures, please check out the [Data Central](https://data.utk.edu/policy/) website.
  + Please respect all commission by-laws and policies as it pertains to data and research projects.

## ***Evaluation Process***

* + At the end of the Fall and Spring semesters, you will receive evaluations from commission and council chairs, as well as any other staff you have completed projects for in the Division.
  + Each reviewer will submit to the appropriate staff member an evaluation form with the name of their reviewee.
  + Evaluations will focus on the following areas:
    - ***Quality of Work:*** The degree to which the GRA/GA’s work is accurate and thorough.
    - ***Initiative:*** The degree to which the GRA/GA demonstrates self-efficacy, self-direction and sound decision making.
    - ***Reliability and Time Management:*** The degree to which the GRA/GA completes work on schedule and contributes to the effectiveness of the Division.
    - ***Communication and Interpersonal Skills:*** The degree to which the GRA/GA communicates effectively (verbally and in writing) and interacts effectively and appropriately with others in the workplace.
  + Your supervisor will select a designated time to meet with each of you to discuss your evaluations.
  + Based on the feedback in the Fall, if needed your supervisor will work with you to create a development plan.
  + A final evaluation in the Spring will be conducted to determine whether the assistantship will be renewed. This evaluation will include any progress made on the development plan.
  + You may also have the opportunity to provide feedback regarding your experience working in the Division, and be asked for suggestions for improving processes.
  + At the end and the beginning of each semester, staff from the Division, GRAs, and commissions and council will meet to discuss the previous semester and reassess, if needed, policies, practices, and protocols.

## ***Professional Development/ Training Opportunities***

* + The Division staff view the assistantship as a mutually beneficial educational opportunity. While you are not required to attend all events supported by the Division, you may be called upon to attend occasional events to represent our Division, or be asked to participate in a professional development opportunity.
  + Your supervisors will inform you about events as far in advance as possible.
  + In addition to regular meetings, GRAs may be asked to participate in mandatory trainings and professional development opportunities to further support their work with the Division (e.g., training on Ad Astra, Canvas, Adobe products, Safe-Zone Training, etc.). Please see the resources section for links to register for these opportunities.

# **Resources**

The following is a list of resources that you may find useful. Again, this is not an exhaustive list, and more resources will be added over time.

* + Ad Astra: <https://www.aaiscloud.com/UTNKnoxville/Default.aspx>
  + Vol Catering: <https://dining.utk.edu/catering/menu/>
  + UTK Workshop Registration (this site contains all information regarding professional development workshops across campus): <https://workshop.utk.edu/login.php>
  + UTK Events Calendar: <https://calendar.utk.edu/>
  + GRA Office Hours Spreadsheet: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wNc3HUbGaG-WOkx7U5MGPk-9828mDjLimg41wEJGvRA/edit#gid=0>
  + Division of Diversity and Engagement Contact List: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1X0LCSo4Hby2kQP43d6F5zo_vaVUBme6eOVXcRHwWiNs/edit#gid=0>
  + UTK Graduate School Website: <https://gradschool.utk.edu/>
  + Office of Multicultural Student Life: <https://multicultural.utk.edu/>
  + Pride Center: <https://pridecenter.utk.edu/>
  + Mattering and Belonging Campaign Website: <https://belong.utk.edu>
  + Student Disability Services: <https://sds.utk.edu/>
  + Office of Community Engagement and Outreach: <https://engagement.utk.edu/>
  + Office of Equity and Diversity: <https://oed.utk.edu/>
  + Commission for Blacks: <https://cfb.utk.edu/>
  + Commission for LGBT People: <https://cflgbt.utk.edu/>
  + Commission for Women: <https://cfw.utk.edu/>
  + Council for Diversity and Interculturalism: <https://cdi.utk.edu/>