



# **Syracuse University**

## **Graduate Research and Teaching Assistants Benefits and Responsibilities**

**Academic Year  
2024 – 2025**

**The Graduate School  
304 Lyman Hall  
Email: [Grad Awards](#)**

**Syracuse University  
Syracuse, New York 13244**

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## Student Checklist

The following checklist represents important actions you need to complete. The attached document provides instructions and important information regarding benefits, rules and responsibilities accompanying your assistantship.

**Check your Syracuse University (@syr.edu) email address regularly for updates.**

If you have questions regarding your award, you may contact the department that has offered the assistantship or Graduate Awards at [Grad Awards](#). **Be sure to include your name and Syracuse University ID number.**

### **Before You Begin your Assistantship:**

- A formal offer letter should be presented to you.
- Sign and return acceptance page to the appointing department.
- Enroll for classes **BEFORE** the first day of classes or you will not be able to begin your assistantship.
- Verify the tuition credits, if applicable, listed in your offer letter are correctly applied to your bill.
- FINANCIAL DEADLINE — Make sure you know this date every semester in case you need to drop courses. Search the Syracuse University Website by typing in “Academic Calendar” and the year and term.

### **When you arrive on campus, you should:**

- Understand the requirements and expectations of your assistantship by speaking with your supervising professor or faculty member.
- Understand your department’s policies regarding time off, school holidays and illness by speaking with the department staff.
- If you fail to receive funding for services you are performing, contact Graduate Awards immediately at [Grad Awards](#).

**Contact [Grad Awards](#) immediately if you have questions — don’t wait!**



# Benefits and Responsibilities for Teaching and Research Graduate Assistant Appointments

## PART 1 - RESPONSIBILITIES

### Definition of an Assistantship

Graduate teaching and research assistants provide services to an academic or administrative department of the University related to their course of study and as part of their financial aid package, as defined in their appointment letters. A full-time graduate teaching or research assistant appointment shall not require more than 20 hours of effort a week, on average. The combination of service, study, and research performed by those holding full-time, 20 hours/week graduate teaching or research assistantships constitutes a full-time assignment; it is expected that you will accept no outside work for pay.

**Collective Bargaining Agreement:** For students who are covered by the graduate assistant collective bargaining agreement between Syracuse University and SGEU, this Handbook is intended to act as a supplement to, rather than a replacement of, the applicable collective bargaining agreement. The policies contained in this Handbook do not supersede nor replace any language in any applicable collective bargaining agreement. In the event of any conflict between this Handbook and the applicable collective bargaining agreement, the collective bargaining agreement shall govern.

**First-time Teaching Assistant Orientation:** For new graduate teaching assistants, participation is required in the University's Teaching Assistant orientation held prior to the start of the semester. New graduate teaching assistants are not exempt from this requirement. Refer to your graduate assistant offer letter for more detail. You should also receive more detail about this event by email; if you do not, please speak with someone in your department prior to the start of your appointment.

PhD graduate teaching or research assistants may also be offered tuition reduction credits as specified in their appointment letters. Typically, students do not register for more than three (3) courses or a combined total of nine (9) credits of dissertation, independent study and variable credit courses in any fall or spring semester of appointment. **Graduate teaching or research assistants wishing to alter the**

**distribution of credits must consult their academic department before the semester ends (see page 6).**

### **Acceptance of a Graduate Appointment**

Syracuse University subscribes to the following Council of Graduate Schools Resolution concerning Graduate Scholars, Fellows, and Assistants. Most Council of Graduate Schools members recognize this resolution.

Acceptance of an offer of financial aid (such as a graduate scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship) for the next academic year by a prospective or enrolled graduate student completes an agreement that both student and graduate school expect to honor. In that context, the conditions affecting such offers and their acceptance must be defined carefully and understood by all parties.

Students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support prior to April 15; earlier deadlines for acceptance of such offers violate the intent of this Resolution. In those instances in which a student accepts an offer before April 15, and subsequently desires to withdraw that acceptance, the student may submit in writing a resignation of the appointment at any time through April 15. However, an acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student not to accept another offer without first obtaining a written release from the institution to which a commitment has been made. Similarly, an offer by an institution after April 15 is conditional on presentation by the student of the written release from any previously accepted offer. It is further agreed by the institutions and organizations subscribing to the above Resolution that a copy of this Resolution should accompany every scholarship, fellowship, and assistantship offer.

### **To Accept your Award**

The assistantship offer letter has a section at the end for your signature of acceptance. Please review the letter and instructions on the signature page. If you have been offered tuition reduction credits with your assistantship and wish to accept them, you must sign, date and provide your University ID number on the lines indicated and return the letter by the deadline date; return the signed letter and acceptance page to the person indicated on the signature page.

### **Enrollment - Graduate Assistants Must Be Registered**

**Full-time status:** All graduate students holding an assistantship in a given semester will be considered full-time students for that semester by virtue of their holding the award.

Graduate assistants **MUST BE REGISTERED**. Students should consult with their advisors to determine the minimum number of credits of enrollment for any given semester. If you have completed all credit-bearing courses required for your degree, you must maintain your official student status by registering for **GRD 998 zero credit hours degree in progress**. **To be eligible for a graduate assistantship you must be a registered student.**

**IMPORTANT: REGISTRATION MUST BE COMPLETE BY THE FIRST DAY OF CLASSES.** Graduate assistants **will not be allowed to start their appointment if not registered**. It is recommended that you take advantage of early registration if you are a returning student.

## Verification of Eligibility to Serve in an Assistantship

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) requires that the University verify eligibility to serve as a graduate assistant. Appointments to assistantships are contingent upon the appointee's providing adequate eligibility documentation as defined by the IRCA.

**For graduate assistants being newly appointed** within Syracuse University for all or part of the 2024-2025 academic year:

Complete the required **eligibility form, Form I-9**. Close to the initial appointment start date, graduate assistants will receive an email notification from Student Employment Services that contains a unique link to complete the required online **Form I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification**. Students will be asked to complete the form, upload the documents and have the form verified as instructed. If a student is unable to upload the required documents or has questions, they may visit Student Employment Services to verify the documents in person. International graduate appointees will follow the same online I-9 process: a valid unexpired passport, I-94 and Form I-20 or DS-2019 are possible documents to upload for this purpose. If you do not already have a Social Security number or have lost your Social Security Card, you will need to apply for a Social Security number.

Please see the Center for International Services [website](#) for more details.

## Acknowledgement of Funding Information

New York State requires that all students acknowledge their funding information before starting an assistantship. A notification of your stipend rate and other relevant information (Pay Notice) will be created for you when your appointment information is accepted into the Human Resources system. You will receive an email to your syr.edu email account to notify you that the notice will be viewable within 24-48 hours. The pay notice is accessed through the View My Pay Notice link in [MySlice](#). Please follow the instructions in the email, and review and acknowledge your funding information online.

The process will take only a few minutes, so we encourage you to log in within 24 - 48 hours of receiving the email to avoid any issues on your first day. If you do not have access to a computer or need general assistance with the process, there is a computer kiosk outside of the Office of Human Resources in Skytop Office Building. A Human Resources representative will be able to assist you during normal business hours. For any questions regarding the pay notice process, please contact the HR Service Center at [HR Service](#) or (315) 443-4042 option 1.

## Funding and Taxes

**Social Security Numbers:** International appointees without a Social Security number **must** immediately apply for a Social Security number upon arrival at the University, and provide a copy of the receipt of application from the Social Security Administration to the Student Employment Office. Once you receive your Social Security card, a copy of the assigned number must be provided to the Student Employment Office. For questions on Social Security numbers, please contact the Payroll Service Center at (315) 443-4042 or [Payroll Service Center](#).

### **Weekly and Semi-Monthly Disbursement Dates:**

**WEEKLY:** Graduate assistants that receive funding disbursements weekly will receive their stipend funds on Wednesday following the week in which they performed assistantship services. For funding disbursement purposes, the week begins on Thursday and ends on Wednesday.

**SEMI-MONTHLY:** Graduate assistants that receive funding disbursements semi-monthly will receive their stipend funds on the business day closest to the 15th calendar day of the month and the last business day of the month.

### **Number of Disbursements for Semi-Monthly or Weekly:**

The number of funding disbursements is determined by both the appointment period and funding. If students do not begin at the start of a semester, the disbursement schedule may be revised by their department.

### **Direct Deposit of Funding for Services:**

Funding disbursements may be directly deposited into an individual's bank account(s). This is strongly encouraged. All graduate assistants have the capability to log on to [MySlice](#) and select the link **View/Update My Direct Deposit** under Employee Services. All graduate assistants that have direct deposit will receive an email notification of funding disbursements, in place of a paper stub.

- Graduate assistants currently receiving funding disbursements, to set up a direct deposit of their funding disbursements for the first time.
- Graduate assistants who currently have direct deposit, to view their existing distribution.
- Graduate assistants who currently have direct deposit, to add new bank account(s) and remove or make changes to their existing distribution

For more information on Direct Deposit, please contact the Payroll Service Center at (315) 443-4042 or email [Payroll](#).

### **FICA Taxes on Funding for Services Made to Graduate Assistants**

FICA (Federal Insurance Contributions Act-Social Security and Medicare) taxes will not be withheld by the University from funding for graduate assistantships or students who are registered for 6 or more credit hours or dissertation (GRD 998) per semester during the academic year or summer. **Students MUST be registered to receive this exemption.**

### **Income Taxes on Funding to Students for Service in a Graduate Assistantship**

**U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents:** Funding disbursements to U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents for services as a Graduate Assistant are taxable income, subject to Federal and New York State Income Tax withholding based upon the withholding forms completed online by the student. All students have the capability to log on to [MySlice](#) and select the links View/Update My Federal Tax or View/Update My NY Tax under Employee Services. This will allow students to view their current federal or NY state tax status and withholding allowance and to change their status and/or allowances. The University is required to report stipend disbursements and taxes withheld on Form W-2 to the recipient and to the Internal Revenue Service.

**Nonresident Aliens:** Generally, funding disbursements to a Nonresident Alien for services as a Graduate Assistant are taxable income, subject to withholding. The University is required to report these stipend disbursements and taxes withheld on Form W-2 to the recipient and to the Internal Revenue Service.

The existence of a tax treaty between the individual's country of residence and the U.S. with a provision for funding as a Graduate Assistant may result in an exception to the withholding requirement, if the individual meets the terms of the treaty. These terms may pertain to length of stay in the U.S. and/or the amount of the funding. Stipend disbursements exempt from withholding by treaty are required to be reported to the recipient and the Internal Revenue Service on Form 1042-S.

**To enable the University to determine the proper tax status for a Nonresident Alien Graduate Assistant, for each calendar year it is necessary for the individual to complete a Nonresident Alien Information Form.** Information about the form is available on the Comptroller's Office website: [Syracuse University Comptroller's Office](#). Any additional required forms will be sent to the individual for completion/signature and require to be returned to the Payroll Service Center for processing.

### **Tax Status of Tuition Reduction Credits**

The tuition reduction credits provided to PhD graduate research assistants and graduate teaching assistants at the University have been structured to satisfy the requirements for tax-free treatment under the Internal Revenue Code. Each year the University will review those tuition reduction credits and will verify that such requirements are satisfied.

### **PhD Tuition Reduction Credits and Their Use**

For PhD graduate teaching or research assistants that receive tuition credits, Tuition reduction credits may be applied to tuition charges for graduate courses. In rare cases, undergraduate courses can be approved by the student's advisor. Approval for use of tuition reduction credits for undergraduate courses must be sought **PRIOR** to registration by submitting a **Petition to the Faculty form**. Tuition will be charged at the graduate rate.

The tuition reduction credits may **NOT** be applied to the following: noncredit courses; courses of individual instruction such as applied music (with the exception of students majoring in music); workshop courses where fees normally cover expenses other than tuition; undergraduate courses (except as provided in the preceding paragraph); courses of physical education that will not count



toward degree requirements; any courses audited during summer; and courses taken at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry or SUNY Upstate Medical Center at Syracuse, unless certified as required in a degree program.

Students may alter the distribution of tuition credits by contacting their department; once approved, the academic unit will submit changes to Graduate Awards to update. Unused tuition reduction credits will become void if unused. Students should always **check their Student Bursar Account to ensure requested changes have been applied. It is a student's responsibility to be aware of other academic and financial deadlines. These deadlines may affect the use of tuition credits.**

**Credits are to be used for coursework integral to a degree program.**

**Please Note: Credits must be used in the academic year awarded.**

### **Academic Progress and Tuition Reduction Credits**

Awards of tuition reduction credits are made by academic departments under the condition that the appointee makes satisfactory academic progress in the degree program. Departments can rescind assistantships if academic requirements are not met. Consult with your department on questions of academic progress.

### **Changes in Degree Program**

Recipients of awards with tuition reduction credits must seek the permission of their academic department (or graduate program director) and the appointing department if different, to initiate any change in degree program and still retain such an award.

### **Loss of a Graduate Assistant Position**

Graduate assistants may be subject to discipline, up to and including discharge, consistent with the collective bargaining agreement. If a graduate assistant loses his/her appointment, all future stipend disbursements, benefits, and use of tuition credits are usually lost, but students must receive a pro rata portion of such awards for the period of the assistantship that was completed. Please refer to the offer letter for requirements to be met to retain an assistantship. Contact [Grad Awards](#) for more information.

### **Complaint Procedure**

The collective bargaining agreement's dispute resolution procedures, including without limitation the grievance and arbitration article and non-discrimination article, apply to Graduate Assistants covered by the collective bargaining agreement.

For all other complaints, any graduate student with a complaint regarding improper treatment by the graduate mentor, any other faculty member should seek to resolve the complaint within the academic unit of study.

If the complaint is not resolved locally, it should be pursued through the procedures of the school or college or brought before the Dean of the school or college within which the academic unit resides. If the graduate student wishes to appeal the decision of the school or college, the appeal may be taken to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean of the Graduate School shall have the authority to investigate all relevant aspects of the complaint with the objective of seeking fair resolution of the complaint. If the findings or recommendations of the Dean of the Graduate School are not agreeable to the Dean of the school or college, then the complaint will be referred to the Provost, who will make a final decision. The authority of the Dean of the Graduate School extends to investigations of compliance with rules and procedures and shall include authority to investigate allegations of misconduct or inappropriate treatment of students, but shall not extend to matters of academic assessment. The Graduate School is not an appropriate venue for review of decisions made by the Office of Academic Integrity or through the student conduct process.

The University does not discriminate and prohibits harassment or discrimination related to any protected category including creed, ethnicity, citizenship, sexual orientation, national origin, sex, gender, pregnancy, disability, marital status, political or social affiliation, age, race, color, veteran status, military status, religion, sexual orientation, domestic violence status, genetic information, gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender, or any other basis protected by federal, state, or local laws..

**Graduate students are encouraged—and when serving in an assistantship may be required—to report incidents of discrimination or harassment to the University’s Office of Equal Opportunity, Inclusion, and Resolution Services at 005 Steele Hall, by e-mail at [equalopp@syr.edu](mailto:equalopp@syr.edu), or by phone at 315-443-4018.**

## **PART 2 - BENEFITS**

In addition to any benefits provided to Graduate Assistants covered under a collective bargaining agreement:

### **Auditing Courses**

Graduate students holding an assistantship are entitled to audit courses **during the fall and spring semesters at no charge**. Permission of the instructor must be obtained by completing a “**Grading Option Application Form**” with the instructor’s signature. The form is then returned to the Registrar’s Office at 106 Steele Hall. (Forms are available at the Registrar’s Office, or your academic department.) **Auditing courses during a Summer Session is NOT free; students will be charged 60% of graduate tuition.**

### **Barnes Center at The Arch**

The health and wellness fee is a mandatory fee for all full-time students and is included on a student’s Bursar account. Part-time students are eligible to use Health Care on a fee for service basis. The health and wellness fee is remitted for full graduate assistant appointments and prorated for partial

appointments. Payment of the health and wellness fee entitles eligible students to the following, provided by the Barnes Center at The Arch:

- Counseling services
- Flu Vaccinations
- Health Care services
- Health and wellness education, events and services
- Nutritional counseling
- Public health monitoring and oversight
- Short-term psychiatric assessment and intervention
- Syracuse University Medical Transport
- Syracuse University Ambulance (SUA)

Additional fees are charged for laboratory services, certain clinical procedures and Pharmacy items. The charge may be added to the bursar account, paid by cash, check, MasterCard/Visa at the time of service or in some instances directly billed to your insurance carrier. Charges billed to the bursar account appear as a “Health Services” charge. Itemized statements are available from the Barnes Center at The Arch Medical Records Office.

The Barnes Center at The Arch bills many insurances. Please visit our Pharmacy or contact them at (315) 443-5691 or [email](#) The Barnes Center at the Arch, Syracuse University Pharmacy to inquire about your insurance.

### **Health History and Immunization Forms**

Syracuse University is obligated to enforce student immunization requirements, as defined by New York State Public Health Law, which requires all students to provide proof of immunity to Measles, Mumps and Rubella. This information may be obtained by contacting your High School or Primary Care Provider. In addition, a completed response form related to Meningococcal Meningitis vaccine is required. The [Barnes Center at the Arch](#) provides a patient portal for students to securely upload required immunizations and complete needed health screenings. Use your NetID and password to access the portal at [suhsportal.syr.edu](https://suhsportal.syr.edu). Records are due prior to your arrival on campus.

## Health Insurance

All full-time, matriculated students are required to show proof of health insurance that meets the University's requirements. For information about the University's health insurance requirement or the plan, review <https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/insurance/>. The health and wellness fee is not health insurance.

Graduate assistants are eligible for a subsidy towards the cost of their Student Health Insurance Plan. Subsidized rates for the 2024-2025 year are below.

### Syracuse University Student Health Plan Rates for Graduate Assistants

	Subsidized Aetna Annual Premium Rates	Subsidized Dental (Low Plan 1) Annual Premium Rates	Subsidized Dental (High Plan 1) Annual Premium Rates	Annual Vision Rates
GA/Fellow Only	\$495.00	\$0	\$270.24	\$84.48
GA/Fellow + Spouse/Partner	\$2,924.00	\$162.72	\$772.80	\$168.96
GA/Fellow + Child(ren)	\$2,924.00	\$198.24	\$761.76	\$182.88
GA/Fellow + Family*	\$5,353.00	\$399.84	\$1251.36	\$292.32

\*Family= Student + Spouse + Child(ren)

### Graduate Assistant Health Deduction Option

Graduate assistants have the option to enroll into an installment payment plan to cover their (and their dependents') medical, dental and vision coverage. This will allow you to make gradual payments for your health care benefits with regular deductions from your stipend funding. Any payment plan deductions will be applied to your Bursar account. To enroll, log in to MySlice, go to the Student Insurance overview page, under "Insurance Payment Option for GAs" click "Graduate Assistant Health Deduction Form". The deadline to enroll is the first day of classes.

### Disability Benefits

As a Graduate Research or Teaching Assistant, you may be eligible for New York State Disability benefits.

**HOW TO APPLY FOR BENEFITS:** If you are removed from your appointment by your Physician for an illness or injury unrelated to the assistantship, contact Risk Management and obtain the appropriate paperwork and instruction.

In accordance with New York State Law, within 30 days of the date you become disabled, you must return the appropriate paperwork to the Risk Management Department. Failure to file your claim on time may result in the loss of some or all of your benefits.

It is also advisable to keep in touch with your Department while you are out.

**PAYMENTS:** When your disability is confirmed, you will be paid according to the New York State Disability Benefits Law. The statutory benefit rate is 50% of your base stipend up to a maximum of \$170.00 per week. The maximum allowable benefit is 26 weeks within a 52-week period. Please, be advised that you will be required to submit continuing medical documentation on a monthly basis, or as requested by Risk Management.

Payments are processed through the payroll system and are subject to income taxes and withholdings.

If you have any questions, please contact the Risk Management Office at (315) 443-5106.

**Department Policies** - It is important for graduate assistants to know department policies about absence from campus, or otherwise failing to perform assistantship responsibilities due to illness, traveling away from campus, etc. Check with your academic department for policies specific to them. In the event of any conflict between department policies and the applicable collective bargaining agreement, the collective bargaining agreement shall govern.

#### **Syracuse University Campus Store Discount**

Assistants who are benefits eligible receive a **10% discount at the Syracuse University Campus Store**. To obtain your discount card, you must bring your appointment letter to the customer service counter at the **Syracuse University Campus Store**.

**Please Note:** If there are any inconsistencies between the benefits described above and the formal plan, policy, contract or program that specifies the applicable requirements for such benefits, the terms of that formal plan, policy, contract or program shall control.