

GRADUATE EMPLOYEE FAQs

APPOINTMENTS AND APPOINTMENT DATES

Am I required to appoint a graduate assistant for the entire academic year or can I make the appointment on a term-by-term basis?

It is the expectation that a graduate assistant will be appointed for the full academic year or fiscal year, depending on appointment basis. However, there are situations where that may not be possible. For example, a research grant only has enough funding left to provide a stipend and tuition remission for Fall Term. In exceptional situations where a shortened appointment supports the business need and is appropriate, the reason for the shortened appointment will be noted on the graduate employee's appointment letter. *CGE CBA Article 9, Section 4.*

Can a GRA begin their appointment October 1st and end their appointment June 30th?

No, Graduate Assistant appointments must adhere to the following term dates:

Fall:	September 16 th to December 15 th
Winter:	December 16 th to March 15 th
Spring:	March 16 th to June 15 th
Summer:	June 16 th to September 15 th

Why can't I use the appointment dates of October 1 through June 30 for GRAs?

In recent history, most Graduate Research Assistants were not originally included in the bargaining unit. This changed with the 2014 – 2016 contract. The 2014 – 2016 contract recognized all graduate students with a Graduate Teaching Assistant and/or Graduate Research Assistant appointments as being members of the bargaining unit. The 2016 – 2020 contract went further by providing units with the ability to appoint as a Graduate Assistant (without the teaching or research designation) and recognized that graduate students might change from an assignment as a Graduate Teaching Assistant to a Graduate Research Assistant between terms and over the course of an appointment. *CGE CBA Article 9, Section 2.*

In order to accommodate the appointment changes without financial hardship or undue burden to the graduate student, it requires that all graduate assistantships follow the same appointment calendars (i.e, the academic calendar dates). In conjunction with the Coalition of Graduate Employees, OSU has agreed that appointment dates for graduate assistants will follow the academic term dates.

What if I have a new GRA or GTA who is beginning work several weeks prior to the start of the term? For example, I want to start the graduate assistant on September 1, but the official academic term does not start until September 16.

If a unit wants to employ the graduate assistant prior to the first day of the academic term, the student would be hired on a Student Suffix 55 position.

In the situation above, why can't I just start the assistantship early?

There are several reasons why this would not be appropriate or recommended:

- Starting an assistantship early could mean that the student is now eligible for health insurance and other benefits they would not normally be eligible for in the month of September.
- Offering added benefits to some graduate assistants and not all graduate assistants creates inequities.
- Providing an additional month of health insurance puts added, and possibly unexpected, financial burden on the unit or grant paying the costs of the assistantship.
- Non-traditional dates may require “special handling” and manual tracking by several different university units and offices. This increases the risk of errors, which could have unintended financial and other impacts to the students and units involved.
- Dates of assistantships follow the calendar dates set for academic term appointments. If an assistantship for Fall Term begins during Summer Session appointment dates, it would technically be a Summer Term appointment and all the rules applying to graduate assistantships would then be applied to the Summer Term portion of the appointment.

For example: If a unit offered an assistantship that started September 1 and ended June 15, the portion of the assistantship between September 1 and September 15 would be considered Summer Term. To qualify for a Summer Term appointment, the student would have to be accepted into a graduate degree program, registered for 3-credits, and meet the minimum work requirement of 156 hours in a term, effective 9/16/17 (or 104 hours in a term prior to 9/16/17). *CGE CBA Article 11, Section 3.*

There may be unique exceptions considered for starting an assistantship early. Exceptions will be reviewed and may be granted on a case-by-case basis. To request an exception, please send an email to Employee.Relations@oregonstate.edu.

I want to hire a graduate student but my grant will not pay for tuition and fees. What should I do?

The graduate student should be appointed as a Graduate Research Assistant on the grant. Work with the HR and Finance teams serving your business center to process the cost of benefits (tuition, fees and health insurance) to the departmental cost share index. See ["Initial guidance on changes in CGE hourly appointments"](#) document dated 3/13/17.

What if a GTA is needed to finish grading after the term, but they don't have an appointment beyond June 15th? For example, the term ends June 17th and they need to work until June 30th to complete grades. Or a GRA may be needed to stay an additional 2 weeks to finish a lab project?

To pay for additional work beyond the end of the assistantship, the graduate student could be appointed to a Student Suffix 55 position from June 16 – June 30.

If the student is graduating Spring Term but the work will continue beyond June 30, contact the HR team in your business center to discuss other employment options.

FINDING MY BUSINESS CENTER

How do I find my business center?

To find the business center that serves your unit, go the Shared Services website and [Find Your Business Center](#).

HEALTH INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENTS

I have a graduate assistant in my unit who is graduating in June 2017. The GA has been contributing to the Summer Session insurance coverage throughout the year and will need to be reimbursed for the unused summer 2017 portion. Does this reimbursement happen automatically?

NO, this does not happen automatically. A prorated amount is deducted from GA pay during the academic year in order to cover the following summer's health insurance benefits. To be reimbursed for the unused summer 2017 benefit, a **graduate assistant must complete the "Graduate Assistant Summer Opt-Out Form" no later than May 1, 2017**. This form is located on the [Student Health Services](#) website. *CGE CBA Article 29, Section 4.*

HOURLY GRADUATE STUDENT APPOINTMENTS

Can I still hire a graduate student as an hourly employee?

Yes, but it depends on the situation and the work. There are situations where hourly positions are appropriate. Those situations could include work that is temporary, limited in duration, episodic (a couple weeks per term), total funding available would be significantly less than a 0.30 FTE appointment for a given term, or is unrelated to academic work typically performed by a graduate assistant. *CGE CBA Article 9, Section 5 and See "[Initial guidance on changes in CGE hourly appointments](#)" document dated 3/13/17.*

To hire an hourly student employee, you may be required to post the student position through a competitive process for a minimum of 3 days. Hourly rates for student positions are not based on graduate assistantship rates. Rates are determined by type of job/work, minimum requirements of the job, and not by the type of student (undergraduate vs graduate). You can find additional information about student positions and rates by referring to the [Student Job Categories and Rates](#). To post a student job and/or to reappoint an hourly student to a prior position, contact the HR team serving your business center.

3-CREDIT ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENT FOR SUMMER SESSION

I understand that there is a 3-credit enrollment requirement for Summer Session. Do all graduate students need to enroll for 3-credits over Summer Session?

To clarify, this is a **Graduate School** requirement and not a requirement of the Office of Human Resources. The following is the **Graduate School** policy governing all graduate programs:

"Graduate students who use facilities or faculty/staff time during summer session to engage in academic or research activities in support of their thesis/pursuit of degree are required to register for a minimum of 3 credits during the summer session. Graduate students who use facilities or faculty staff time during summer session purely in service to the university and not to

engage in academic or research activities in support of their thesis/pursuit of degree are not required to register during the summer session. “

Questions about the 3-credit enrollment requirement should be directed to the **Graduate School** at 541-737-4881 or Graduate.School@oregonstate.edu. This policy was approved by the Graduate Council and Provost and is located here: <http://catalog.oregonstate.edu/ChapterDetail.aspx?key=38#Section1804>.

I am still having trouble determining whether a graduate student should enroll for 3-credits over the summer. Can you help me make that determination?

Here are some scenarios that may help you make that determination:

- 1) A graduate student who is registered for classes and working towards their degree **AND** is on a **graduate assistantship** must be registered for at least 3-credits in the summer. Any graduate student **on an assistantship** over Summer Session must be registered for a minimum of 3-credits to receive tuition remission and the associated stipend. Note that pay may be impacted as enrolling in the 3-credits will make the graduate employee subject to Medicare and social security taxes.
- 2) A graduate student employee (**not on an assistantship**) is **not** required to register for 3-credits if he/she is performing work in service to the university and the work is unrelated to pursuit of their academic degree.
- 3) If a graduate student (**not on an assistantship**) is using university resources over the summer for the pursuit of their degree, whether they are working or not, should be registered for 3-credits.

Why did the summer enrollment criteria for graduate assistantships drop from 9- to 3-credits with the 2016 – 2020 contract?

The University and CGE agreed to reduce the enrollment criteria for graduate assistantships over Summer Session to encourage units to provide this option to their graduate students. This option is beneficial to graduate students by providing them with all the benefits associated with an assistantship, continued progress towards their degree, and full access to university resources. *CGE CBA Article 12, Section 5.*

SUMMER EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Can I set up a Student Suffix 55 appointment for summer?

Yes, graduate students who will have an assistantship during the next/upcoming Fall Term and who will not have an assistantship over the summer can be placed on Student Suffix 55 appointments to bridge an employment gap during summer session.

What are my options for employing graduate students over the summer?

If you have a current graduate student on an assistantship and want to continue to employ him/her over the summer, these are some of your options:

1) Continue the graduate assistantship

- Student must be registered for 3 credits during Summer Session
- Includes tuition remission and stipend

2) Continue to pay monthly stipend based on working FTE (this is referred to as a Student Suffix 55 position)

- Student is continuing the same, similar or other graduate level work
- Pay rate is based on spring term graduate assistantship salary
- Student continues to receive a monthly stipend following the current pay cycle
- Students can work up to 100% or 1.0 FTE if not enrolled or enrolled in four or less credit hours
- Students on “55” positions who are registered for Summer Session courses will be required to self-pay summer tuition and fees

3) Pay as an hourly student worker

- Student must meet student employment eligibility requirements
 - See [Student Employment Manual](#) for more information
- Pay reporting schedule will change from monthly (1st-31st) to mid-month (16th-15th)
- Hourly timesheet must be submitted through EmpCenter on the 16th of each month
- Hourly rates are not based on graduate assistantship rates. Rates are determined by type of job/work, minimum requirements of the job, and not by the type of student (undergraduate vs graduate).
 - Refer to [Student Job Categories and Rates](#)
- May require posting a student job via a competitive search. Contact the HR team serving your business center for more information.

In all situations listed above, please work with the HR team serving your business center. If you have other questions about the options, you may also contact Employee.Relations@oregonstate.edu.

To view the full text of the articles mentioned above, please see the [CGE Collective Bargaining Agreement 2016-2020](#).

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