

## KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

### POLICY ON ROLE AND STATUS OF GRADUATE STUDENT APPOINTEES

This document is intended for the guidance of graduate appointees and the graduate units in order to provide some uniformity in the role and status of these graduate students.

#### I. GRADUATE APPOINTEE INVOLVEMENT IN GOVERNANCE

Graduate appointees shall be represented at appropriate levels of university governance in order to insure a healthy exchange of ideas among students, faculty, and administration, and to utilize the valued counsel of graduate students. The principal guideline should be that graduate appointees participate in policy decisions and be excluded from personnel matters.

##### A. Departmental Level

###### Curriculum Committees

Graduate appointees shall be represented on curriculum committees. Those who are responsible for teaching a section of a course shall be represented by member(s) on appropriate course committees. The number of representatives, their qualifications, and their mode of selection shall be determined by the department. The committee chair shall identify those meetings or parts thereof for which attendance by these persons is not expected.

###### Department Meetings

Graduate appointees shall be invited to and included in general departmental meetings. The department chair shall identify those meetings or parts thereof for which attendance by these persons is not expected.

###### Graduate Studies Committee

Graduate students shall be represented by voting member(s) on Graduate Studies Committees. The number of such students and their qualifications shall be determined by the graduate faculty of the department. They shall be elected by the graduate students in the department. The committee chair shall identify those meetings or parts thereof for which attendance by these persons is not expected.

All departmental policies affecting graduate appointees (to include grievance procedures, programmatic specifications, and all other policy matters) shall be made available to each graduate appointee at the time of the student's initial enrollment for graduate studies. Graduate appointees shall be notified of modifications in departmental policies which occur during the course of their appointment tenure.

##### B. Collegial and Independent-School Level

Graduate appointees shall be invited to and included in college faculty and committee meetings which are concerned with graduate matters. The dean of the college shall

identify those meetings or parts thereof for which attendance by these persons is not expected.

### C. University Level

#### Faculty Meetings

Graduate appointees shall be invited to and included in university faculty meetings. The President shall identify those meetings or parts thereof for which attendance by these persons is not expected.

## II. CATEGORIES FOR GRADUATE SERVICE APPOINTMENTS

In order to be eligible for a graduate appointment, a student must be enrolled in a specific degree program. A full-time graduate assistant or teaching fellow is expected to devote 49% of the university-defined full-time work load per week (or equivalent assignment) in service and to enroll for a minimum of eight credit hours per semester (a total of six credit hours for summer) (See Appendix 1). A half-time graduate assistant or teaching fellow is expected to devote half of the service commitment expected of a full-time appointee per week (or equivalent assignment) in service and to enroll for a minimum of eight credit hours per semester (a total of six credit hours for summer).

An appointee who has tuition remission only does not have a service commitment. Such an appointee is expected to enroll for a minimum of eight credit hours per semester (a total of six credit hours for summer). An appointee who is in the combined baccalaureate and master's program will enroll for both graduate and undergraduate hours as determined by the student's advisor. Note that graduate students nearing completion of their degree who have satisfied all required coursework and that may be registered for only 2 credit hours of Thesis II or 1 credit hour of Dissertation II are considered full-time students.

### **EXCEPTIONS TO THE ABOVE PROCEDURES MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH THE COLLEGE'S ENROLLMENT PLAN AND MUST HAVE THE APPROVAL OF THE PROVOST.**

Appointments or reappointments, including tuition remission, are not automatic, but are contingent upon good degree progress and satisfactory performance of duties as determined by the grantor of the stipend.

The graduate appointments outlined below are intended to provide minimal support to enable a student to spend the maximum amount of time in the pursuit of his/her graduate studies with the objective of completing the degree in the shortest amount of time. To this end, it is considered inappropriate for a full-time graduate appointee to be engaged in substantial additional employment other than in an incidental way. Except in unusual circumstances and with the approval of the academic college Dean and the Dean of Graduate Studies, a graduate appointee may not hold an additional formal appointment through which the total commitment of service at Kent State University thus exceeds 20 hours per week.

### A. Research Assistantship (RA)

A student receiving a Research Assistantship is expected to assist a faculty member in his or her research or other scholarly activities. No teaching or service responsibilities are assigned to full time Research Assistants.

**B. Teaching Assistantship (TA)**

A student receiving a Teaching Assistantship is expected to assist a faculty instructor of record (e.g., recitations, laboratories, grading) or be the instructor of record in their own course.

**C. Administrative Assistantship (AA)**

A student receiving an Administrative Assistantship is expected to work in service that promotes the mission(s) of the unit or university. These assistantships exclude responsibilities that would typically be assigned to current office staff, personal errands for faculty/staff etc.

**III. STIPEND/TUITION REMISSION DURING SUMMER SESSIONS PRIOR TO OR AFTER A SERVICE APPOINTMENT**

A graduate student may receive either a stipend and/or a tuition remission during the summer immediately prior to or after an academic year appointment. This may be done in consultation with the appropriate graduate dean and at the discretion of the department and is dependent upon the availability of funds.

**IV. EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE**

Departments shall establish effective means of evaluating and documenting the teaching and other duties performed by each graduate appointee, who has a service commitment, in order to aid the professional growth of the appointee. This evaluation and documentation shall be used for the purpose of counseling the graduate appointee and to assist in making decisions regarding reappointment.

**V. COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS' POLICY**

Kent State University affirms its adherence to the following Council of Graduate Schools' policy that is designed for new appointees:

Acceptance of an offer of financial aid (such as graduate scholarship, fellowship, traineeship, or assistantship) for the next academic year by an actual or prospective graduate student completes an agreement which both student and graduate school expect to honor. In those instances in which the student accepts the offer before April 15 and subsequently desires to withdraw, 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, traineeship, and assistantship offer.

## **VI. REAPPOINTMENT, DISMISSAL AND RESIGNATION POLICY**

At the time of the initial notification of appointment the department shall clearly communicate its policy on limits on the number of years of support at the master's and doctoral levels. Reappointment is determined by the student's department. Reappointment may be available, contingent upon good progress toward completion of the degree and satisfactory performance of duties. If a service appointee is not to be reappointed, he or she will be given written notice informing the student of the non-reappointment and of the reasons therefore. Notices of non-reappointment and of reappointment will be given to students no later than the last day of the semester. During the semester in which an appointee receives a master's degree, the student must apply and be accepted into a doctoral or educational specialist program in order to be considered for further appointments. A student may not simultaneously hold a graduate appointment and a full time fellowship or other appointment from a non-university source.

Dismissal is the termination of the contract for cause. Dismissal may be effected for the violation of the terms of the appointment. The department will give written notice of a recommendation for dismissal to the appointee along with the reasons for the recommendation. This recommendation is forwarded to the appropriate graduate dean for action. If a student is dismissed for academic reasons then the appointment is terminated at that time. Any service appointee who has not been reappointed or has been dismissed may appeal the decision. The appeal must be initiated in writing to the grantor of the appointment within one week of non-reappointment or dismissal.

Notification of resignation by a service appointee is expected to be early enough to obviate serious detriment to the university. An appointee intending to resign should give written notice as early as possible. The appointee may inquire into and consider the acceptance of an appointment elsewhere anytime and without previous consultation. It is agreed, however, that if a definite offer follows, the appointee shall not accept it without giving such notice, in writing, as is indicated in the previous provision (Section V).

## **VII. GRADUATE APPOINTMENT SERVICE COMMITMENT**

At Kent, a graduate appointment is granted to a graduate student in order to give that student partial financial assistance and support for graduate study and to obtain a service commitment which will be both beneficial to the student's professional needs and goals and to the University's endeavors. The role of a graduate appointee is often that of both student and instructional colleague. The question arises as to whether a graduate appointee has service responsibilities with respect to the academic year or the nine-month contractual time period agreed to by the faculty. In particular, is a graduate appointee "on duty" during the intersession between fall and spring semesters, during the spring recess, or during the time period following spring commencement and prior to the end of the nine-month calendar commitment of the faculty? This leads to additional confusion with respect to the appointment of graduate students as research assistants in that the time commitment for research assistants must be comparable to the time commitment for graduate assistants and teaching fellows.

A graduate appointee who holds an academic year full time appointment is expected to provide service to the appointing department which approximates 20 hours per week. This may include assignments during the week prior to classes and/or during exam week. The service obligation is prorated for each 5 week summer term.

The service commitment of a graduate appointee, who has been appointed by a nonprogrammatic unit, will be equivalent to the total time expectations of an appointee who is appointed through a programmatic unit. Due to specific operational requirements of nonprogrammatic units, some of the total time expectation may be satisfied during pre-semester, intersession, or post-semester time periods. Such arrangements should be understood by the appointee and the appointing unit at the outset of the appointment period.

In all instances it is expected that the appointee and the appointing unit will strive to ensure that the service commitment is beneficial to the appointee's professional growth and is commensurate with the mission and goals of the appointing unit and of the University.

## **VIII. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

- A. Purpose: To provide guidelines and methods for resolving complaints by graduate appointees of actions by faculty members or administrators which may be in violation of the "Policy on Role and Status of Graduate Student Appointees."
- B. If an issue can not be resolved through informal conversations between the graduate appointee and other interested parties following reasonable attempts to achieve resolution, the graduate appointee may initiate a formal complaint by notifying, in writing, the Administrator of the graduate unit in which the student holds appointment. The Coordinator of Graduate Studies should be copied directly with such notification. The Administrator may refer the complaint to the unit's Graduate Studies Committee for a hearing and a recommendation or may impanel an ad hoc grievance committee for this purpose comprised of graduate faculty members who are able to render a disinterested judgment. Either of these committees will make a recommendation to the Administrator as to the disposition of the complaint.
- C. If the graduate appointee is dissatisfied with the resolution decided by the Administrator, he or she may appeal the decision, in writing, to the Dean of the College or, in the case of the independent schools, to the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Dean may render a final decision based upon the record and information submitted by the complainant and the Administrator of the graduate unit or may appoint an ad hoc grievance committee which will hear the complaint and make recommendation to the Dean for its resolution. In either case the academic college Dean or the Dean of Graduate Studies is the final determinant.

## **IX. GUIDELINES FOR SHORT-TERM ABSENCES AND LEAVES OF ABSENCE FOR FUNDED GRADUATE STUDENTS**

### **A. Overview**

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a consistent benchmark across the

university in managing short-term absences and leaves of absence for funded graduate students. These guidelines are intended to serve as a minimum requirement, and do not require change to any college, school, or departmental policies that go beyond the benefits described below.

Whenever possible and academically appropriate, a student's academic standing and means of financial support should be preserved during difficult life situations. In some cases, such situations may be handled by allowing a reduced course load and/or temporarily moving a funded graduate student to a different research or instructional assignment, or allowing the student to perform his/her duties from off-campus. In other cases, these options are not appropriate or possible; in these cases, it may be most appropriate for a student to take a period of time off from his/her academic and assistantship responsibilities. Decisions regarding the most appropriate options are best made through consultations among the student and appropriate representatives from his/her academic unit. Faculty and administrative supervisors are encouraged to be flexible in working with individual students to determine the most fitting response to a particular situation.

## B. Definitions

**Funded graduate students:** Kent State University graduate students appointed as graduate associates, graduate assistants, fellows, or similar positions for which a stipend (of at least 50% FTE) and ancillary benefits are received

**Immediate family member:** Spouse, domestic partner, parent, step-child, biological, adopted, foster or legal ward son or daughter (up to age 18, except in the cases where the child is incapable of self-care)

**Short-term absence:** Absences of less than two weeks

**Leaves of absence:** Absences of two weeks or more

## C. Eligibility

Reasonable requests for stipend-protected short-term absences or leaves of absence for appropriate duration generally should be approved for reasons due to:

- Personal illness or bereavement of an immediate family member;
- Personal serious health condition or care of an immediate family member with a serious health condition; or
- Childbirth or adoption.

To be eligible for the absences described in this document, funded graduate students must:

- Have completed at least two consecutive semesters as a funded graduate student paid through the Kent State payroll prior to the date a leave of absence is to begin;
- Be in good academic standing and making reasonable progress toward the degree; and
- Maintain enrollment at the level required to hold the appointment during their absence.

Graduate students funded by external agencies are also subject to the guidelines established by these agencies.

#### D. Short-term Absence

A funded graduate student may request a short-term absence to recover from a personal illness or to bereave the death of an immediate family member. "Short-term" is generally considered to be one to three days. There may be circumstances in which a short-term absence might extend to two weeks, but these situations are unusual. The length of the absence should always be proportionate to the needs of the situation. Reasonable requests for short-term absences will generally be approved and stipends will be maintained without requiring the funded graduate student to make-up missed time. Options for coverage might include temporarily shifting responsibilities or creating alternative work assignments or work locations.

#### E. Leave of Absence

There may be circumstances when funded graduate students will require a leave of absence for a personal serious health condition or to care for an immediate family member with a serious health condition.

A serious health condition is defined as "an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition" that involves one of the following:

- Inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility, including any period of incapacity or any subsequent treatment in connection with such inpatient care;
- Continuing treatment by a health care provider that consists of (1) a period of incapacity and (2) treatment multiple times by a health care provider or treatment at least once by a health care provider that results in a regimen of continuing treatment and continuing incapacity;
- A chronic serious health condition is one that may cause episodic rather than continuing periods of incapacity, but requires "periodic visits" for treatment by a health care provider and continues over an extended time period.

A funded graduate student may apply for a leave of absence if any of the above conditions apply to the student him/herself or to the student's immediate family.

A funded graduate student also may apply for a leave of absence from appointment responsibilities for childbirth or adoption. A funded graduate student may apply for a childbirth-related leave of absence if he/she is the birth mother, father, adoptive parent, or domestic partner.

A funded graduate student who requests a childbirth/adoption leave of absence may not also request a medical/family leave of absence for the same birth or adoption event. An eligible funded graduate student on a leave of absence from appointment responsibilities receives 100% of his/her stipend and other benefits for up to SIX weeks, or until the last day of the appointment, whichever comes first. The same appointment status will be available after a leave of absence has been taken, provided the appointment or reappointment would normally have been available. Assigned duties, however, may be subject to change.

## F. Extension of Leave of Absence

In some cases, it may be appropriate to extend a leave of absence beyond six weeks. Leaves of absence that need to be extended beyond the initial appointment may be stipend-protected (in whole or in part) at the sole discretion of the appointing unit.

## G. Coverage of Responsibilities

Funded graduate students who are requesting short-term absences or leaves of absence must comply with procedures established by their appointing units to cover responsibilities in cases of absence.

When making arrangements for coverage of responsibilities for an absent funded graduate student, appointing units must be sensitive to the load of other graduate students. Responsibilities may be temporarily assigned to another funded graduate student, if the additional responsibilities are accompanied by a temporary increase in that graduate student's appointment percentage or a special payment to that student to compensate for additional effort over a stipulated period of time. Units should not ask or permit a graduate student to serve as a "volunteer GA" for the duration of a leave of absence; that is, graduate students who serve must be compensated with a stipend commensurate with the expected load, and with appropriate payment of tuition and fees.

## H. Procedure

### 1. Approval Process

Any requests for short-term absences and leaves of absence should be handled at the level of the appointing unit. If a funded graduate student needs a short-term absence or a leave of absence, he/she must make a request as soon as possible to his/her immediate academic or administrative supervisor. For short-term absences, the supervisor will make the decision. For leaves of absence, the supervisor must consult with the student's advisor and Graduate Coordinator. Each appointing unit may designate additional individuals who must approve requests for leaves of absence; in the case that a student is supported by an external funding source, that agency may need to be consulted as well.

### 2. Documentation

For short-term absences and leaves of absence, appropriate documentation, such as medical certification establishing the health condition, is generally required, although it may be waived for short-term absences. All documentation of short-term absences and leaves of absence are maintained at the unit level. Every effort should be made to protect the student's privacy, although, in the cases of leaves of absence, the information must also be shared with the student's advisor and Graduate Coordinator.

### 3. Appeal Process

A request for a leave of absence without requiring makeup time may be denied for

several reasons, including (1) an inappropriate or unreasonable request, including inadequate documentation; (2) repeated requests for short-term absences or leaves of absence; (3) documented unsatisfactory performance; and/or (4) incompatibility with funding agency or other institutional guidelines (such as requirements applying to international students). If a request is denied, the graduate student should follow the appointing unit's appeal guidelines.

#### I. Funding for Leaves of Absence

Appointing units at Kent State University should manage the financial aspects of GA leaves of absence within their departmental budgets, seeking assistance from their colleges or other offices in cases of hardship. It is also recognized that principal investigators with externally funded research grants may have issue with the requirements of particular grants, where flexibility may be limited. If such concerns arise, appointing units should contact their academic college offices or Graduate Studies.

### X. RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMPLIANCE

Academic College Deans will be responsible for assuring compliance with this document within their respective units, with the Dean of Graduate Studies having overall university responsibility.

*Revised 1975*

*Approved by Graduate College Council – 11/05/75*

*Approved by Graduate Student Council – 11/13/75*

*Approved by Graduate School of Business Administration Council – 11/18/75*

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## **APPENDIX I A GRADUATE APPOINTEE SERVICE COMMITMENT**

Traditionally, a graduate appointment has been granted to a graduate student in order to give that graduate student partial financial assistance for support in graduate study and to obtain a service commitment which will be both beneficial to the student's professional needs and goals and to the University's instructional endeavors. The role of a graduate appointee has been that of both student and instructional colleague. This has resulted in a good deal of confusion with respect to the intent of the appointment. In particular, the question has often arisen as to whether a graduate appointee has service responsibilities with respect to the academic year or the nine-month contractual time period agreed to by the faculty. The question as to whether a graduate appointee is "on duty" during the intersession between fall and spring semesters, during the spring recess, or during the time period following spring commencement and prior to the end of the nine-month calendar commitment of the faculty remains essentially unresolved. This has led to additional confusion with respect to the appointment of graduate students as graduate research assistants in that the time commitment for graduate research assistants must be comparable to the time commitment for graduate assistants and teaching fellows.

In an attempt to clarify the service commitment question of a graduate appointee, the intent of the graduate appointment with respect to the needs of the University has been reviewed. The following observations pertain to this matter (based upon this review):

A graduate appointee who has a full-time appointment for an academic year in the graduate programmatic department has service responsibilities to the appointing department which encompass each academic semester (including the one week prior to a semester for preparation of instruction, the traditional time for class work participation, and the final exam week). An average service commitment defined to be 49% of the University defined full-time workload per five-day week to the University during this instructional time is considered appropriate for a full-time appointee.

The aforementioned definition of service commitment by a full-time appointee should be reasonably prorated for summer session appointments. In particular, given this definition and the current summer session calendar period, a service commitment defined to be 59% of the University defined full-time workload per week for a five-week summer session would be appropriate for a full-time appointee during that session.

The service commitment of a graduate appointee, who has been appointed by a nonprogrammatic unit, will be equivalent to the total time expectations of an appointee who is appointed through a programmatic unit. Due to specific operational requirements of nonprogrammatic units, some of the total time expectation may be satisfied during intersession or post-semester time periods (such arrangements should be understood by the appointee and the appointing unit at the outset of the appointment period). In all instances it is expected that the appointee and the appointing unit will strive to ensure that the service commitment is beneficial to the appointee's professional growth. In addition, it is expected that the service commitment will be commensurate with the expectations and goals of the appointing unit and the University in the achievement of the unit's mission.