

HANDBOOK
for
RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
GRADUATE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
BOX 41071
LUBBOCK, TX, 79409**

Greetings!

Welcome to the College of Education at Texas Tech University! We are excited to welcome you as a Research Assistant and look forward to supporting you in your educational journey. We believe your work as a Research Assistant puts you in a unique position to learn from a team of accomplished professionals and adds to your success as a graduate student.

We understand that as a student in the College of Education you will be focused on achieving success through your own studies and research. We believe your experiences as a Research Assistant are equally important and, in fact, will have a compounding effect on your knowledge and skills. As you work closely with faculty and research teams on projects, serving as a Research Assistant may feel like taking additional coursework. It is normal to experience a steep learning curve in these endeavors as a new Research Assistant. Fortunately, the Graduate Office has developed some resources and guidelines that are designed to demystify your work and support your success.

In addition to resources available, this handbook was created to provide you with an outline of your roles and responsibilities as a Research Assistant and answer many preliminary questions you may have regarding supervision. In addition, the handbook provides pertinent information regarding university policies and expectations for responsible conduct of research. Please be aware that your success at TTU, both as a student and employee, is ultimately linked to your personal awareness of and adherence to the policies in this handbook. Accordingly, please feel free to email, call, or stop by the Graduate Office in the College of Education for any questions you may have or assistance you may need. We are here to help you accomplish your academic goals!

Shirley Matteson, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Research

Bret Hendricks, Ed.D.
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Pam Smith
RA/GPTI/Travel Coordinator



Conditions of Employment

A student employee must be currently enrolled as a student at Texas Tech as a condition of employment and is expected to be in good academic standing and making satisfactory progress toward a degree. An individual previously enrolled as a student in the spring term, or who is expected to be enrolled in the fall term, may be employed as a student between the spring and fall terms. Note: Graduating students should be terminated at the end of the semester in which they graduate unless they are expected to enroll in the next semester or, in the case of spring graduates, the fall semester. The employing department has the authority and responsibility to determine initial and ongoing eligibility for student employment. Failure to meet the enrollment requirements will be grounds for the department to withdraw the students' appointment and termination of employment status.

[O.P. 70.27](#)

Eligibility

To become a Research Assistant, you must meet the following requirements:

1. Students must be admitted to a graduate degree program and be enrolled in classified graduate status courses.
2. Students must be enrolled for nine credit hours during each semester they are employed (three credit hours during the summer for each summer session employed or six total credit hours).
3. Students must reside in Lubbock, TX.

Duration of Appointment

The duration of appointment is determined by the following guidelines:

4. Research Assistants are appointed from September 1 – May 31 each year. Grant supported Research Assistants are usually appointed on a 12-month appointment, unless the grant funding is shorter.
5. Summer appointments are made as funding is available.
6. New Research Assistants will need to complete new hire paperwork and be processed through the system before they can begin employment. Student employees cannot begin working until all new hire paperwork has been approved by the University.
7. Employment is on a year-to-year basis. A current assistantship appointment does not automatically entitle you to additional contract terms.
8. Research Assistantships may be renewed up to a total of four years as long as funding is available and the student remains eligible for employment.
9. Appointments supported by a grant can remain only as long as the grant has sufficient funding available.



Schedule

You are expected to follow the university staff holiday calendar (found on the TTU Human Resources website). This means you receive university holidays off (e.g., Thanksgiving, Labor Day) and are expected to continue your RA duties even when classes are not in session. During times when faculty member(s) with whom you are working are not going to be on campus, follow these steps when requesting assignments for your required time:

- Ask for advance work assignments.
- If you can, work for more than one faculty member for additional work.
- Check with the College of Education Office of Graduate Admissions and Enrollment for assignments.

If you are absent due to a medical reason, you should contact your immediate supervisor or Pam Smith at the earliest practical time. If you are out due to illness for more than 3 days you should provide a doctor's statement releasing you back to work. During any extended absence, you will be placed on a Leave of Absence and cease to receive funding.

If it is discovered that that you have taken an extended amount of time off without prior coordination, you risk termination from your assigned position.

Research Expectations

At least 50% of an RA's assignment should be focused on research or research-related work. Grant supported Research Assistantships should be focused 100% on grant activities. OP 70.27 *Employment of Student Employees* states research assistants are "to assist the department's research efforts in support of the university's research mission" (OP 70.27, p. 1). If you have questions about whether the work you are asked to engage in is in accordance with this OP, please contact the College of Education Graduate Office. RA's who are being asked to teach classes or engage in primarily clerical work will be reassigned.

Appointments

Appointments will be determined in coordination with department chairs and program faculty. The selection and placement of students will be primarily focused on students obtaining a degree within the College of Education. Students pursuing a degree outside the College of Education will need to be reviewed and approved by the Associate Deans. We will try to place students with their program/track area faculty as much as is possible, but this may not always be feasible. Please contact the College of Education Graduate Office to request a change in appointment.

Evaluation

Each term, the faculty member you were assigned to work with will evaluate you. These evaluations are confidential and the records are maintained in the Office of Graduate Admissions and Enrollment. If you receive a poor evaluation, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs will contact you and if warranted place you on a personal improvement plan or change your placement. If you work for a grant the Associate Dean for Research will work with the Grant PI to determine if this situation warrants placing you on a personal improvement plan or change of placement. Depending on the severity of the situation, the Associate Dean may revoke your assistantship.

Workload

Assistantships can be granted for 10 hours per week or 20 hours per week. Students with appointments of 10 hours per week may hold a concurrent position elsewhere on campus as a research assistant or student worker as long as the total hours do not exceed 20 hours per week at any time during the assistantship period.

Tuition Waivers

As a full-time research assistant (20 hours per week), you are entitled to a waiver of certain tuition and non-mandatory fees. You are responsible for taking care of fee deadlines until the waivers are posted to your account. Some fees are not covered by the tuition and fee waivers and these will be the responsibility of the student.

- Employment as a Research Assistant must be effective by the 20th class day to be eligible for tuition and fee waivers. If employment occurs after the 20th class day, the student is responsible for tuition and fees for that semester.
- You will forfeit your tuition/fee waivers and become liable for the full amount due if you withdraw from your classes after the first two weeks of the term.

Assistantship Contract

The following are conditions of your contract as a Research Assistant:

- By accepting the assistantship, you enter into an agreement you are obliged to honor. If it becomes necessary for you to leave this position during the course of the year please give the College at least two weeks advance notice. Please be aware that you will forfeit your tuition and fees waiver and be liable for the full payment of tuition and fees.
- You will be expected to operate within the University guidelines and follow University policy and practice at all times.
- Assisting with research requires you to comply with all legal and ethical policies including those governing the use and care of animals, biosafety, and human subjects.
- You will adhere to the University policy regarding research conduct, including but not limited to, research ethics, authorship, and conduct. Additional information can be found at the [Office of Research & Innovation](#), Responsible Conduct of Research Resources.



- All correspondence will be through your TTU email, please check your TTU email at least once a week.
- You are expected to work 10 hours or 20 hours per week according to your employment contract. Work is to be conducted during regular business hours of Monday – Friday, 8:00 am. – 5:00 p.m. Failure to comply with work expectations could result in verbal counseling and repeated offenses could lead to termination.
- It is your responsibility to check in on a regular basis with the program or faculty you are assigned to. Failure to check in may result in a poor evaluation.

Drug Free Workplace

It is the policy of TTUS and TTU to be a drug-free workplace and to prevent and eliminate drug abuse from the workplace. The TTUS and TTU have the obligation to:

- Ensure a safe work environment for all employees;
- Protect the students and other members of the public against endangerment resulting from the impairment of employees' physical or mental capabilities;
- Protect its property and equipment from unnecessary damage; and
- Assure that all TTUS and TTU business is conducted with efficiency and quality.

The TTUS and TTU require, as a condition of initial and continued employment, that employees be free from the influence of alcohol and controlled substances while performing their duties as TTUS administration or TTU employees.

[OP 70.35](#)

Smoke-free and Tobacco-free Environment

- In the interest of providing a smoke-free environment, smoking is prohibited in all campus academic, administrative, and athletic facilities.
- Smoking areas must be located 25 feet from any facility with LEED designation and pedestrian entrance (ingress or egress) or public place. This includes entryways or walkways leading to entrances.
- There will be no smoking above the first floor of any building.
- Electronic cigarettes will not be permitted other than in the areas already mentioned in this O.P.

[O.P. 60.15](#)

Retention

To maintain your research assistantship, you must continue to make **satisfactory progress** toward the completion of your degree and be in good academic standing with the university. The Graduate School will periodically review your academic status for the following:

- You must maintain a grade point average of 3.0. If your grade point average falls below the required 3.0 your employment may be terminated.
- You are expected to make satisfactory progress toward completing your degree in a timely manner. If you accumulate excessive hours you may not be eligible for future terms as a

research assistant. **The completion of your degree may not be delayed in order to prolong your assistantship appointment.**

If you meet the employee, satisfactory progress, and GPA requirements, we commit to providing you with an assistantship for four years or through 99 hours of coursework, whichever comes first. However, renewal of appointments is not automatic. Reappointments are based on the availability of funds, department determination of satisfactory performance and department needs. Graduate assistants, who fail to meet eligibility requirements, will be denied renewal.

Enrollment and Class Load Requirements

Graduate student employees must meet the following enrollment criteria:

- RA's must enroll in at least 9 hours of graduate credit during Spring and Fall appointments
- RA's must enroll in at least 6 hours of graduate credit if employed during the summer.
- Enrollment must be within the College of Education unless an exception is approved by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs or the Associate Dean for Research.
- Courses listed as "not for graduate credit" or courses taken as an audit do not count toward the enrollment requirement.
- If a graduate student withdraws from the University, their assistantship appointment is terminated immediately along with any related tuition/fee waivers. Student employees withdrawing from the University may be responsible for repaying any tuition/fee previously waived.

Training and Supervision

Departments employing graduate assistants conduct the regular supervision and evaluation of the graduate assistant's performance. Research Assistants provide valuable support to faculty within the College of Education and are involved in various levels of gathering research information. CITI training is a requirement of the University and will need to be renewed every three years. Research Assistants are required to complete FERPA training through the Human Resources website ([click here to access training](#)). Periodic development workshops are offered throughout the year from the College of Education and the Graduate School. You will be notified of any required trainings along with the time and place. The Graduate School and College of Education will send out an email of any workshops/trainings that would be beneficial to you please watch for these opportunities. In general, you will be expected to participate in two development workshops each semester and town hall meetings as they are offered. There will be a research assistant meeting once a month that will require your participation.



Workspace

The College of Education has two graduate research labs available for graduate student employees (rooms 217 and 261) and access can be requested through the Department of Operations located in the College of Education, room 114. The labs are open seating except for spaces around the perimeter assigned to students in 8000 level coursework. This workspace in the College is considered professional office space and as such, graduate students will be expected to:

- Maintain a clean work area.
- Be respectful of others who work in the space.
- Assist in the care of common equipment within the room.
- Keep trash, boxes, and other items from accumulating in the space. Do not place items on top of the workspaces.

*Guidelines regarding Covid-19 procedures are at the end of this handbook.

Keys

Office keys will be assigned through the Department of Operations (EDUC 114). Research Assistants are expected to work during regular work hours of Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and will not be issued keys to the building. You will need to return keys to the Operations Coordinator on the last day of employment.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action

All appointments of student positions shall be based on qualifications, suitability, and student status without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, or Vietnam veteran status, and in keeping with the laws and regulations of the State of Texas and the Board of Regents.

[Division of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion](#)

Benefits

Texas Tech makes an employer contribution toward the employee's health insurance. Insurance-eligible graduate student employees will receive an employer contribution of 50 percent of the premium cost for the employee health coverage. The employer contribution toward dependent health coverage is 25 percent of the additional premium cost.

Effective September 1, 1995, *HealthSelect* coverage for eligible graduate students is NOT automatic. Eligible graduate students must complete insurance enrollment forms in the Personnel Benefits Office to obtain insurance coverage.

Enrollment in optional insurance coverage's must be completed during the first 31 days of employment. Enrollment in the health insurance must be completed during the first 90 days of employment.

[O.P. 64.11](#)

Additional Resources

Travel

[Graduate Student Travel Application Guidelines](#)

[Graduate Student Travel Application](#)

College of Education Student Organization

[Education Graduate Student Organization](#) (EGSO)

[Student Handbook](#) (Code of Student Conduct)

[Title IX](#)

Texas Tech University is dedicated to providing a safe and equitable learning environment for all students. Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to The Student Resolution Center: (806) 742-SAFE (7233). The TTU Counseling Center (<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/scc/>) provides confidential support (806-742-3674) and the Voices of Hope Lubbock Rape Crisis Center has a 24-hour hotline: 806-763-RAPE (7273). For more information about support, reporting options, and other resources, go to:

<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/sexualviolence/>

[Texas Tech University Operating Policies & Procedures:](#)

Section 34 – Academic Policies (Students)

Section 34.12 – Academic Integrity

Section 64 – Graduate Programs, Faculty, and Students

Section 70.27 – Employment of Student Employees

Section 74 - Research



All Research Assistants working in the College of Education Building are to follow these guidelines:

- Research Assistants should not work on campus if they feel ill or have any of symptoms associated with COVID-19.
- Graduate Labs located in the College of Education in rooms 217 and 261 are open from Monday through Friday only during the times of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- No one will be allowed to work weekends as we have no custodial staff assigned to the building.
- Special work accommodations/hours will need to be cleared through both Associate Deans.
- Anything in the refrigerator must be clearly marked with the RAs name.
- EATING IS PROHIBITED IN ANY WORKSPACE.
- There is a breakroom located on the 1st floor east. Please check with the Operations Coordinator or Office of Graduate Admissions and Enrollment for the door code.
- Do not congregate or loiter in public areas (e.g., hallways, restrooms, stairwells).

If you, a family member, a person in your household, or an acquaintance tests positive for COVID-19, follow the directions given in the **Employee Guide for COVID-19 Positive Test**

or Symptoms: <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/hr/documents/EmployeeGuideCOVID19.pdf>. Please inform your supervisor by phone call and/or an email as soon as possible as other individuals may need to be informed for their own health and safety. We would also ask that you inform the Associate Deans.