



The Graduate School RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

Research Assistantships provide students with educational and professional benefits by enhancing their research skills. While departments, faculty, and students benefit from the services provided by research assistants (RAs), the rationale for supporting research assistants through merit awards in the Graduate School is centered on the role the experience plays in students' professional and educational development. Students holding Research Assistantships devote their time to a combined program of study and research activities. The merit award received by research assistants is in recognition of their service to the university and to further support their learning.

Depending on the student's experience and departmental needs, a Research Assistantship consists of a graduate student either serving as a research assistant to a faculty member or designated project. Typical activities include:

- Participation in research team meetings
- Recruitment of research participants
- IRB protocol submissions
- Design of research studies
- Data collection, cleaning, and management
- Database maintenance
- Data analyses
- Supervision, mentoring, and training of undergraduate research assistants
- Literature searches
- Manuscript preparation/writing
- Preparation of conference presentations
- Grant writing
- Developing own program of research
- Maintaining project-related web site
- Archival Research

All of these activities occur under the guidance of a research mentor, typically the faculty member who is working most closely with the student on the research project(s) assigned. The mentoring structure supports the academic and professional development purpose of the Research Assistant experience.

Restriction on Multiple Awards

The Graduate School does not permit students to hold simultaneously more than one full assistantship or fellowship. In addition, the Graduate School does not permit students to hold a full assistantship or fellowship and hold an hourly paid position at Loyola during the academic year.

Hours and Period of Appointment

Engagement in mentored research activities should average between 16 and 19.5 hours per week. Given the rhythm of research progress, there will be some variation in the actual number of hours spent on mentored research activities per week. Faculty mentoring RAs should develop a general plan of action with their RAs to plot out and monitor the number of hours spent over the course of the semester.

During the Fall and/or Spring semesters, the University classifies Research Assistants as full-time students and they are expected to serve in this role for the sixteen weeks of the academic semester. Students cannot be expected to perform the duties of the Research Assistantships during University holidays. There may be exceptional circumstances where Research Assistantship activities must be conducted during University holidays/closures and/or immediately prior to or after the end of a semester/session and those tasks cannot be delegated to other individuals. In such circumstances, the equivalent amount of compensatory time away from the assistantship position on a non-holiday weekday during the semester/session must be arranged in exchange. In addition, Research Assistants should be made aware by their mentor prior to the start of the assistantship appointment of the schedule for the assistantship position, be informed of the amount of compensatory time away, and be able to participate in the determination of the schedule for that compensatory time away.

Academic Integrity

Research Assistants are expected to learn and practice ethical research skills. To that end, assistants are expected to take the UNIV 370 Responsible Conduct in Research and Scholarship (RCRS) course at Loyola as part of the required training and/or specific ethical training from the Principle Investigator/faculty mentor who most closely works with the student. Go to www.luc.edu/ors and click the RCRS/Compliance link for more information.

Assessment

All Research Assistants should be given formative and summative feedback by their faculty mentor while serving in this role. It is the responsibility of the faculty mentor to provide constructive feedback on a regular basis over the course of the semester. Each Research Assistant should be assessed in writing at the conclusion of each semester, and include a discussion about their strengths, weaknesses, and goals for improvement.

Accessibility

As full-time student trainees, Research Assistants on merit awards from the Graduate School may seek reasonable accommodations for documented disabilities that impact their performance as Research Assistants from the Student Accessibility Center.

Terms of Renewal of Position

Assistants are required to keep a minimum 3.0 GPA (each semester as well as cumulatively), make progress toward their degree, and perform assistantship duties in an acceptable manner. In the case of multi-year assistantships, a student may not have any more than one outstanding incomplete grade by July 15, or the assistantship will not be renewed.

- Maintaining academic standing, per Graduate School or departmental academic requirements, is mandatory and failure to do so will result in the Research Assistantship being withdrawn. Departments may have higher minimum GPA requirements for their assistants and, if so, these requirements trump the minimum GPA requirement of the Graduate School.
- Should a RA's activities be deemed unacceptable by the department, the Graduate Program Director should inform the student in writing that his/her research activities are unsatisfactory. The letter should include information about the deficiencies and a remediation plan of action. Additionally, the letter should include a date for re-assessment. If the student fails to improve their research performance in the time specified, the assistantship will be withdrawn.
- In very specific instances, such as violations of university policies, academic dishonesty, or violations of ethical or professional code of conduct, the assistant may have their research activities suspended immediately and a departmental recommendation of withdrawal to the Graduate School is in order. Non-renewal/withdrawal appeals, just as all other student grievances, should first be made at the departmental level before moving to the Graduate School.
- The stipend will be stopped at the date of the withdrawal.

Relinquish Assistantship

Departments depend on the services of Research Assistants for the period of appointment. If the RA must relinquish his or her assistantship during the course of the academic year, the student must follow these steps:

- Discuss the intent to relinquish their assistantship with the Graduate Program Director well in advance of the actual date so appropriate plans to award the RAship to another student can be made.
- Submit a formal letter explaining the reason(s) for and date of the withdrawal. A copy of this letter should be sent to the Graduate School.
- Return of any keys and research-related materials to the department.
- The assistant's stipend will be ended upon receipt of the letter of relinquishment