

Leave Recommendation for Graduate Students on Twelve-Month Assistantships
Approved by Graduate Council
October 23, 2012

All graduate students on assistantships are expected to be enrolled as full-time students, and the University of Louisville therefore considers graduate students on assistantships to be students rather than employees. Graduate students do not accumulate vacation, personal, or sick leave, and the provisions of FMLA do not apply to them. Additionally, because graduate students are offered different types of assistantships (Fellowship, GTA, GRA, GA) in different units and graduate programs, expectations regarding the responsibilities and duties of graduate student assistants vary across types of appointments and disciplines. Typically, the duties connected to the assistantship require students to spend approximately twenty hours per week in research, teaching or service related to the work of their academic program or which promotes their professional development. The Graduate School recognizes that the twenty-hour expectation is flexible, meaning that students might be asked to spend more than twenty hours some weeks and less than twenty hours other weeks, but over the course of the appointment, students should expect to spend approximately twenty hours per week fulfilling the duties connected to their assistantship.

Although graduate students are not considered employees and do not accumulate leave, Graduate School recommends that programs allow Graduate Student Assistants who are on twelve-month appointments a minimum of 20 days of leave each year (personal, vacation, sick, and university holidays are all included in this 20 days); this recommended leave cannot be carried over to the following year, and students forfeit time that they do not use (that is, there is no “payout” for unused leave). Depending on the student’s required duties, leave may or may not include all university holidays; additionally, while graduate students may not be required to attend class during academic breaks (i.e., Fall Break, Spring Break, etc.), they may be required to perform duties related to their stipend during those breaks. Additional leave beyond the 20 days may be granted at the discretion of the director of the graduate program and/or the student’s mentor/supervisor.

Arrangements for leave should be made between the student and his or her supervisor. When a graduate student on assistantship needs to be absent for personal reasons or illness, the student should consult with the supervisor, who is encouraged to accommodate reasonable needs. At the same time, the graduate student assistant should attempt to plan personal leave so that it does not interfere with or cause neglect of the duties associated with his or her assistantship. Excessive unexcused absences may serve as grounds for terminating or not renewing a graduate student’s assistantship.

Supervisors and graduate student assistants should seek to maintain a collegial but professional working environment. If supervisor and student are unable to negotiate leave requests, they should meet with the program director or chair of the department. Units are encouraged to have a mechanism for resolving conflicts when the chair is unable to do so.