

# Scholarships and Assistantships

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Mississippi State University is committed to the recognition of outstanding students whose academic credentials confirm their potential for success as university students. Outstanding students may be eligible for various scholarships and honors.

Numerous privately funded scholarships support the University Scholarship Program to recognize continued academic success. Information regarding eligibility criteria and the online resume may be obtained from the Office of Admissions and Scholarships at [www.admissions.msstate.edu/scholarships](http://www.admissions.msstate.edu/scholarships) (<http://www.admissions.msstate.edu/scholarships>) or (662) 325-3076. In addition to general university scholarships, most colleges and departments also have numerous scholarships available to qualified students. Colleges and departments can provide detailed information.

## Coordinator of Distinguished External Scholarships

The Dean of the Shackouls Honors College and the Mentor of the Distinguished Scholarships identify and assist well-qualified undergraduate students who would be strong candidates for national and international awards such as the Rhodes Scholarship, the Goldwater Scholarship, the Marshall Scholarship, and the Truman Scholarship.

Prospective applicants are encouraged to investigate the Web sites of the major scholarship programs. For information on the opportunities, contact:

Shackouls Honors College  
195 Lee Blvd. #EH  
210C Griffis Hall  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
e-mail: [shc@honors.msstate.edu](mailto:shc@honors.msstate.edu)  
Web: <http://www.honors.msstate.edu>  
(662) 325-2522

## Graduate Assistantships

Graduate Assistantships are intended to recruit quality students to graduate study at MSU and to enhance the graduate learning experience. An assistantship is a financial award to a graduate student for part-time work in teaching, research, or administration while pursuing an advanced degree. Graduate research, teaching, and service assistantships are available on an annual or nine-month basis. A graduate assistant's work schedule is a maximum of 20 hours per week. The minimum stipend rate is \$600.00 per month.

## Types of Assistantships

**Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA)** — Graduate Research Assistants perform duties in support of University research, which may or may not relate to the students' thesis/dissertation. Many University academic, research, and administrative offices employ GRAs. This opportunity provides an excellent means for students to learn new techniques and methods as well as expand their knowledge by association with research-oriented responsibilities, whether employed within the student's academic discipline or in another department. Duties

and stipends vary from program to program and are dependent upon the nature of assigned duties.

**Graduate Service Assistantship (GSA)** — These Assistants aid faculty and staff members with administrative functions, and GSA appointments are available in many academic and non-academic units. Duties vary, depending on administrative needs of the unit making the award, and stipends vary according to the nature of assigned duties.

**Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA)** — Graduate Teaching Assistants work under the direct supervision of graduate faculty members and are assigned duties related directly to instruction, such as assisting in the preparation of lectures, leading discussion sections, conducting laboratory exercises, grading papers, and keeping class records. Advanced graduate students who have completed 18 graduate credit hours in his or her teaching discipline may be given primary responsibility for teaching an undergraduate course, including student assessment and assignment of final grades. GTAs may not be assigned primary responsibilities for teaching and student assessment in courses approved for graduate credit. All graduate students planning to serve as Graduate Teaching Assistants must participate in the Graduate Teaching Assistant Certification Program prior to beginning the first teaching assignment at MSU and must satisfy all program/evaluation requirements necessary to obtain the level of certification (GTA1, GTA2, GTA3) corresponding to the duties/responsibilities of the teaching assistantship appointment. Please refer to Graduate Teaching Assistantship Certification in the Bulletin of the Graduate School for detailed requirements.

## Appointment Process

To be eligible for an assistantship a student must be admitted to a specific degree program with "regular" or "contingent" status. A student with "contingent" status must within the first award enrollment period satisfy "regular" admission requirements, and an assistantship award will be terminated if these requirements are not met. "Unclassified" graduate students or graduate students with "provisional" admission status to a degree program are ineligible to hold an assistantship. If English is not the native language of an international graduate student, the English Language Requirements for International Students apply. These requirements are found in the International Students Admission section of the Bulletin of the Graduate School.

Application for an assistantship must be submitted to the college, department, school, or support unit. The department/unit may provide its own application form or use the Application for Graduate Assistantship on the Graduate School Web site ([http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf/assistantship\\_app.PDF](http://www.grad.msstate.edu/forms/pdf/assistantship_app.PDF)). The department/unit establishes application deadlines and review procedures.

## Award Benefits

All Graduate Assistants receive a tuition exemption of approximately 71% of the assessed tuition and required fees. Graduate Assistants who are not Mississippi residents receive 100% exemption of non-resident tuition as well. The University provides a health insurance subsidy for Graduate Assistants who purchase the University-sponsored health insurance plan through the MSU Longest Student Health Center. The total subsidy is \$400 per academic year; \$200 in both the fall semester and spring/summer semesters. For more information about the University-sponsored health insurance plan, visit [http://www.health.msstate.edu/healthcenter/insurance\\_student.php](http://www.health.msstate.edu/healthcenter/insurance_student.php). IRS Code states that the tuition remission of those Graduate Service Assistants whose course of study is specifically related to assistantship duties is not taxable. For a Graduate Service Assistant whose course of study is not specifically related to assistantship

duties, tuition remission up to \$5,250.00 per calendar year is not subject to tax; however, tuition remission in excess of \$5,250.00 per calendar year is taxable.

## Responsibilities for Maintaining the Graduate Assistantship

**Fall and Spring Semesters** — Graduate assistants must be full-time students, registered in 9-13 graduate credit hours. The required full-time status must be maintained through the entire semester. Therefore, no course may be dropped if the resulting course load would be fewer than the required 9 graduate credit hours, nor may any course in the 9-hour load consist of or be converted to audit status. The 9-credit hour course load may not be composed of undergraduate courses unless the course is a program prerequisite. In such case, the minimum graduate load required will be 6 credit hours and only one undergraduate course will be permitted as part of the 9-credit hour load (per Graduate Council, March 2001). Some international students are required by the University to take ESL 5323 and/or ESL 5313. Both are considered prerequisites, and a graduate student may enroll in one of the courses and 6 credit hours of degree-program courses while holding an assistantship. ESL 5323 and ESL 5313 may not be taken concurrently.

**Full- and Half-Summer Awards** — Full-summer awards require enrollment in at least 6 graduate credit hours with a maximum allowed of 13 credit hours. Any combination of Maymester, first 5-week, second 5-week, or 10-week terms may be used for the 13-credit hour maximum; however, enrollment in either 5-week term must be at least 3 graduate credit hours with a maximum allowed of 7 credit hours. Additionally, a student holding a half-summer graduate assistantship must be registered for courses scheduled during the term of the assistantship.

## Academic Achievement

To retain an assistantship, a student must demonstrate satisfactory progress in the academic program. Failure to do so may result in termination of the assistantship. Unsatisfactory progress may be defined as the failure to maintain a B average in graduate courses attempted after being admitted to a specific program; a grade of U, D, or F in any course; more than six credit hours of C grades; failure of the comprehensive/preliminary examination; an unsatisfactory evaluation of a thesis or dissertation; failure of a research defense; or any other failure of a required component of one's program of study. Any, or a combination of these, may constitute the basis for the termination of a student's graduate study in a degree program. Individual programs have the right to establish their own criteria; however, the preceding definition must be the minimum standard for continuing in graduate programs and holding graduate assistantships. In the case of dismissal, a student's assistantship is terminated.