[Minor revision: September 12, 2014]

Angelo State University
Operating Policy and Procedure

OP 42.03: **Graduate Students Employed as Teaching Assistants, Graduate Assistants, and Graduate Research Assistants**

DATE: September 12, 2014

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Operating Policy/Procedure (OP) is to define the responsibilities and procedural guidelines for teaching, graduate, and graduate research assistants at Angelo State University.

REVIEW: This OP will be reviewed in July every three years, or as needed, by the dean of the college of graduate studies with recommended revisions forwarded through the provost and vice president of academic affairs to the president by August 1 of the same year.

POLICY/PROCEDURE

1. Nature and Purpose of Teaching Assistantships, Graduate Assistantships, and Graduate Research Assistantships

In an effort to enhance the quality of the undergraduate instructional/co-curricular program, to enhance the research initiatives of the department, and to provide well-qualified graduate students with the opportunity to gain college teaching and related experience under the supervision of highly qualified faculty and staff members, Angelo State University offers three types of appointments: (1) fixed term appointments for a semester or summer session for teaching assistants who have responsibility for lecture classes, individual instruction, and/or laboratory sections for which academic credit is awarded, (2) student employment appointments without fixed term as graduate assistants who have responsibility for a wide range of duties designed to support the undergraduate instructional/co-curricular program, and (3) student employment appointments without fixed term as graduate research assistants employed to support the research mission. All graduate students who are awarded teaching assistantships, graduate assistantships, or graduate research assistantships must be regular graduate degree or graduate certification students and must be enrolled in graduate course work during the term of appointment. See Operating Policy 52.44 for further details.

2. Academic and other Regulations Applicable to Teaching Assistants, Graduate Assistants, and Graduate Research Assistants

Teaching assistants, graduate assistants, and graduate research assistants are subject to the provisions of the *Regents' Rules* and to the university regulations and policies published in the Student Handbook and University Graduate Catalog.

a. Academic Record

A teaching, graduate, or graduate research assistant must at all times maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average in all graduate work attempted to remain eligible for continued employment.

b. Course Load

The teaching, graduate, or graduate research assistant is required to enroll for six semester credit hours each long semester. With the approval of the supervising faculty or staff member and department chair, the teaching, graduate, or graduate research assistant may enroll in more than six credit hours each long semester. The teaching, graduate, or graduate research assistant holding an appointment in the summer is required to enroll for a minimum of three semester credit hours in either summer term.

c. Compensation

Compensation for teaching, graduate, and graduate research assistants is determined by the college of graduate studies. The Office of Human Resources publishes the student pay plan each year.

d. Benefits

Teaching assistants are required to participate in the federal Social Security program and are covered under the university's Workers' Compensation insurance program.

Although under the state insurance code, students employed 50 percent or more for a period of at least four and one-half months per academic year in occupations that require graduate student status as a condition of employment are eligible to participate in the state's group insurance program, it is the university's policy that graduate and graduate research assistants will work only for 17.5 hours per week (43.75 percent) and therefore are not eligible for group benefits.

Teaching assistants working at least 50 percent for four and one-half months or more are eligible to participate in the state's group health insurance in accordance with applicable rules, policies, and procedures.

Neither teaching, graduate, nor graduate research assistants are eligible to participate in the Teachers Retirement System (TRS). TRS membership excludes employees who are students as a condition of employment.

e. University Housing

Teaching, graduate, and graduate research assistants have the same eligibility for university housing as undergraduate students, although they are not required to reside on campus. Information regarding university housing can be found in the University Graduate Catalog.

f. Application Procedures

Graduate students must have regular status admission into the college of graduate studies to be eligible for a teaching, graduate, or graduate research assistantship. Applicants for an assistantship must then submit the following information to their department.

(1) Application for a Teaching, Graduate, or Graduate Research Assistantship

(2) Security Background Check Authorization Form

(3) Three letters of recommendation

Graduate students applying for a teaching assistantship must have completed 18 graduate semester credit hours in the teaching discipline.

For information regarding assistantships, please call the college of graduate studies at (325) 942-2169.

g. Recommendation for Employment

Once the student receives regular status admission into the college of graduate studies, the department chair recommends the employment of the applicant, the dean of the college/administrative head must approve the recommendation. A completed "Departmental Recommendation for a Teaching/Graduate/Graduate Research Assistant" form is sent with the applicant's application and letters of recommendation to the dean of the college of graduate studies. A completed Contract Offer Recommendation form is required for teaching assistant applications only.

h. Security Background Checks

Candidates for teaching, graduate, and graduate research assistantship positions are subject to security background checks in accordance with university policy and procedures. A security background check must be completed before the assistantship is approved. The Security Background Check Authorization Form is used to obtain the candidate's permission to conduct the background check. This form is submitted along with all other paperwork to obtain the approval of the dean of the college of graduate studies. Reappointments do not require a security background check.

i. Equal Employment Opportunity

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

3. Teaching Assistants

a. Appointments

The employment or reemployment of teaching assistants requires approval at the beginning of each semester or summer session. In order for the applicant to be awarded a teaching assistantship, the application must be approved by the dean of the college, the dean of the college of graduate studies, and the provost and vice president for academic affairs. Graduate students who are approved for teaching assistantships will receive an appointment letter for a designated term of appointment. Completion and submission of the Security Background Check Authorization Form must accompany all other appointment paperwork.

The recommendation for the reappointment of a teaching assistant upon expiration of the term of appointment must be initiated by the department chair and processed through the same administrative channels for approval as specified for the initial appointment.

b. Responsibilities

The teaching assistant may have the responsibility for lecture classes, physical activity classes, individual instruction, or laboratory sections. The teaching assistant is expected to deal seriously and conscientiously with the teaching assignment whether it be lecturing in the classroom, teaching applied music or physical activity classes, providing individual instruction, leading discussion groups, or directing undergraduate students as they conduct laboratory experiments. The academic assignment and the students have first call on the teaching assistant's time and commitment, and the teaching assistant is expected to consider these his/her primary responsibilities. Performance of these obligations must take priority over other interests and activities.

Each teaching assistant, upon accepting his/her appointment, must accept the following professional obligations and responsibilities:

(1) Responsibility for the careful preparation of lectures and other materials for the designated courses, laboratories, or seminars; regularity in meeting all scheduled classes; clearly informing students of course requirements; maintaining accurate records of student attendance; and fair and impartial grading according to standards established by the university.

(2) Recognition that students deserve respect as individuals and have certain rights that must be protected. This responsibility encompasses an active interest in the academic problems of students, giving mature professional advice, and treating students courteously at all times.

(3) Recognition that a college teacher serves as a model and exercises a great influence in shaping the minds of his/her students. Consequently, each teaching assistant must maintain high standards of scholarship, personal appearance and integrity, professional ethics, and communication with students in the classroom.

(4) Recognition that in his/her influential classroom role the teaching assistant is obligated not to introduce into class discussion subject matter outside the scope of the course and not within his/her field of professional competence.

Teaching assistants who are in charge of a lecture class or laboratory are required to attend all class meetings of the courses to which they are assigned.

c. Supervision

The department chair is responsible to the dean of the college for the supervision of all teaching assistants in his/her department. The department chair will assign a faculty member the direct responsibility of supervising each teaching assistant who is not to be directly supervised by the department chair.

The primary responsibility for presenting the subject matter, assigning grades, and fulfilling other course responsibilities rests with the teaching assistant, subject to the review of the supervising faculty member, department chair, or dean of the college. In fulfilling these responsibilities, the teaching assistant will be expected to follow the textbook, syllabus, and other guidelines approved by the department chair for each course and to use only such instructional materials as are authorized for the course by the department chair. The teaching assistant will be expected to discuss any problems or concerns which may arise in connection with these and related matters with the supervising faculty member and, where appropriate, with the department chair, and the teaching assistant will be expected to follow the advice or counsel provided in connection with such matters.

Each teaching assistant in charge of a lecture or laboratory class is required to attend on a regular basis the class of the supervising faculty member which will be similar to the course being taught by the teaching assistant in order to observe teaching methods, to understand the nature of the assignments, and to be aware of the subject matter to be presented to the class. The supervising faculty member is required to attend the lecture class being taught by the teaching assistant at least twice during the teaching assistant's first semester of appointment. Each department will provide regular in-service training of teaching assistants, including the preparation of tests, the grading of tests and papers, and the assignment of grades in the course.

d. Workload

In addition to pursuing full-time graduate studies, the teaching assistant will normally have responsibility equivalent to one-half or one-quarter of a full-time teaching load. For example, in the humanities the workload for a half-time teaching assistant would be two 3 semester hour lecture courses and related responsibilities in connection with teaching these courses.

The workload assigned by the university, along with the academic courses which they are taking toward the fulfillment of their degree requirements, is expected to require the full-time attention of teaching assistants. Students who are employed as one-half time teaching assistants are ordinarily not allowed to accept additional employment while holding the teaching assistantship. Students who are employed as quarter-time teaching assistants may, with the written approval of the department chair and the dean of the college of graduate studies, accept up to ten (10) hours of additional employment while holding the teaching assistantship. Teaching assistants found to be in violation of this policy may be required to relinquish their assistantships.

4. Graduate or Graduate Research Assistants

a. Appointments

(1) Academic Departments

The recommendation for the initial employment of a graduate or graduate research assistant must be initiated by the department chair and approved by the dean of the college, the dean of the college of graduate studies, and the provost and vice president for academic affairs. Graduate students who are approved for graduate or graduate research assistantships are notified in writing by the graduate dean at the time the initial appointment is made. The recommendation for the reappointment of a graduate or graduate research assistant must be initiated by the department chair and forwarded to the dean of the college of graduate studies for approval. Each graduate or graduate research assistant must maintain a daily time record of hours worked for approval by the department chair and submission on a monthly time record.

(2) Non-academic Departments

The recommendation for the initial employment of a graduate assistant must be initiated by the department director/head and approved by the appropriate administrative head, the dean of the college of graduate studies, and the appropriate vice president. Graduate students who are approved for graduate assistantships are notified in writing by the graduate dean at the time the initial appointment is made. The recommendation for the reappointment of a graduate assistant must be initiated by the department director/head and forwarded to the dean of the college of graduate studies for approval. Each graduate assistant must maintain a daily time record of hours worked for approval by the department director/head and submission on a monthly time record.

b. Responsibilities of Graduate Assistants

(1) Academic Departments

The graduate assistant's responsibilities include a wide range of duties designed to support the undergraduate instructional program, including grading, clerical functions, storekeeping, preparation of class or laboratory material, or other subordinate functions under a supervising faculty member. Regardless of the task, certain aspects of the teaching role apply to any graduate assistant who comes into contact with undergraduate students. The ability, enthusiasm, and dedication of the graduate assistant may well make the difference between success and failure for many undergraduate students.

The graduate assistant, with the exception of the technician and office assistant, will work directly with the faculty member responsible for the course instruction. The tutor, the grader, and the demonstration assistant are required to attend every appropriate class meeting to observe teaching methods, to understand the nature of the assignments, and to be aware of the subject matter presented to the class. The duties of the technician and the office assistant will vary and depend upon the specific needs of the department.

Graduate assistants must accept the same professional obligations and responsibilities as those defined for teaching assistants in connection with the duties which are assigned to them.

(2) Non-academic Departments

The graduate assistant's responsibilities will vary according to the specific needs of the department. Duties may include, but are not limited to, the following: marketing, student personnel supervision, facility management, program supervision, inventory management, office assignments, preliminary budget development, data collection and analysis, etc.

Graduate assistants must accept the professional obligations and responsibilities associated with the duties that are assigned to them.

c. Responsibilities of Graduate Research Assistants

Graduate research assistants have the major function of assisting faculty with scholarly activities and research projects. Because the type of research conducted is very diverse, the specific tasks assigned to the graduate research assistant will vary based on the particular discipline involved and the nature of the specific grant, contract, or funding source supporting the graduate research assistant position. However, all graduate research assistants, regardless of discipline, assist with all aspects of the research process, including but not limited to:

- Library research (e.g., conducting literature searches, obtaining copies of published articles, reports, books, or government documents; information gathering from the Internet)
- Work in a variety of laboratory environments
- Assistance with proposal writing and grant submission
- Construction of research measures (e.g., surveys, questionnaires, interviews, scales)
- Development of research protocols
- Data collection and management
- Data analysis
- Preparation of articles for publications, and papers or posters for presentation at professional meetings

Graduate research assistants may not be assigned activities that support course or curriculum development, or any type of teaching/training function.

d. Supervision

The supervision of the graduate or graduate research assistant will be the responsibility of the faculty or staff member to whom the student is assigned, subject to such review as may be necessary or required by the department chair or dean of the college.

e. Workload

The graduate or graduate research assistant's workload will be on an hourly basis, and the number of hours which the graduate or graduate research assistant works each week must be approved by the department chair and reported on the monthly time record. The

workload assigned by the department chair shall not exceed 17.5 hours of work per week during any monthly pay period.

5. Notice

These policies and procedures are subject to change by Angelo State University without notice.

Attachment A: *Application for a Teaching, Graduate, or Graduate Research Assistantship*
Attachment B: *Departmental Recommendation for a Teaching/Graduate/Graduate Research Assistantship*
Attachment C: *Security Background Check Authorization Form*
Attachment D: *Contract Offer Recommendation Form*