

# THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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## RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

Departments and faculty members benefit from the services provided by research assistants (RAs). However, the rationale for supporting research assistants is centered on the role the experience plays in their professional and educational development. Students holding research assistantships devote their time to a combined program of study and research activities. The stipend received by research assistants is in recognition of their service to the university, and to further support their learning.

The following include best practices for departments who have research assistants that support faculty research, research activities, and instructional activities. Depending on the student's experience and departmental needs, typical assistantship activities include:

- Participation in research team meetings
- Recruitment of research participants
- IRB protocol submissions
- Design of research studies
- Data collection, data cleaning, and data management
- Maintenance of data bases
- 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

### Mentoring

All of these activities occur under the guidance of a mentor, typically the faculty member who is working most closely with the student on the research project(s) assigned. In addition, the graduate RA may also serve as one of the mentors to undergraduates who oftentimes work in the lab setting.

### Commitment

- Full Research Assistantship: Engagement in research activities should average between 16 and 19.5 hours per week. Faculty mentoring RAs should develop a general plan of action with their RAs to plot out and monitor the number of hours invested in this applied learning over the course of the semester.
- Partial Research Assistantship: Typically engagement is less than 16 hours per week of research activities. Faculty mentoring RAs should develop a general plan of action with their RAs to plot out and monitor the number of hours invested in this applied learning over the course of the semester.

### 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](http://www.luc.edu/ors) and click the RCRS/Compliance link for more information.

### Assessment

Each research assistant should be assessed in writing at the conclusion of each semester. This assessment should be based on the observation of the RA in action. The assessment should be shared with the RA and placed in the student's departmental file.

### English Proficiency

Research assistants with native languages other than American English who will be supervising undergraduates in the research area are required to take an English Proficiency test on campus during the week before school begins. Based on the results of this test, research assistants may be required to take one or two ESL courses during their first semester at Loyola. This requirement is designed to insure the ability of research assistants to communicate effectively in spoken and written English.

### Non-Renewal

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 research 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 his or her research performance, 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 his or her 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 should 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.