COLLEGE OF LETTERS & SCIENCE

Administrative Topic of the Month

Graduate Assistants 101:
Best Practices & Resources

Laura Fisk & Lynne Prost

February 24, 2022

Welcome

Laura Fisk

Human Resources Associate Director for Graduate Assistants

Lynne Prost

Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Academic Affairs

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Reminders

- Please stay muted throughout the presentation

- This session will be recorded

- Questions may be submitted via Chat throughout the session

- We will have a Q&A at the end

- All materials are found here: https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/internal/25131

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Agenda

I.   **Resources for Grad Assistant issues**
  - How L&S Can Help You *(new)*
  - Helpful L&S KB's   *(new)*
  - Graduate Assistant Policies and Procedures
  - Paid Leave Summary

II. **Student Assistant Paid Leave - Sick Leave, Vacation**
  - Case Study/Example
  - Amount, Eligibility and Carryover
  - Using, Counting and Tracking Leave
  - How to respond to a sick TA
  - Strategies for covering for Absent TA's

III. **Q&A**
  - How can we best help you?
  - Which topics are you most interested in, for future sessions?
  - What are helpful ways to share best practices and ideas?

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How Comfortable Are You with Addressing Graduate Assistant Issues?

Self-Assessment Poll

1. I know what my options are to address a TA who is not performing well in their job.
2. I know what components to include in a comprehensive TA workload.
3. I am confident that my department provides the right kind of training at the right time for TA's.
4. When my department hires L(SA)'s, I know how to request professional development funds to support them.
5. I am familiar with the basic items addressed in GAPP (Graduate Assistant Policies and Procedures).

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Student Assistant Resources

"How L&S Can Help" *(new)*

"Helpful L&S KBs" *(new)*

GAPP (Graduate Assistant Policies and Procedures)

KB: Student Assistant Paid Leave

"Student Assistant Leave Report"

"Summary of Paid Leave"

Resource: "How L&S Can Help" *(new)*

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Student Assistants - How L&S Can Help

Laura Fisk: Graduate Assistant Employment
Human Resources Associate Director; laura.fisk@wisc.edu

Concern/Issue	Examples
Performance Issues	What steps do we need to take when a grad assistant is not performing well in their job?
	How do I verify whether a grad assistant is in their initial probationary period?
Sick Leave	How do I know how much sick leave a grad assistant has available, or how much they should use for a specific absence?
	What options do we have to help cover for a TA who is absent?
	We cannot find enough grad students to cover for our TA's – what are some other options to help provide coverage?
	How can I verify whether a specific grad student can take on additional work to help cover for an absent TA?
Changes to Grad Assistant's Job/Accommodations	What do I do if a grad assistant says they have a medical condition and need to make a change in their schedule, or work remotely?

Lynne Prost: Academic Program & Instruction
Assistant Dean - Graduate Student Academic Affairs; lprost@wisc.edu

Concern/Issue	Examples
TA Workloads	When creating a new TA position, what is an appropriate appointment %?
	What if a TA wants to teach 3 sections instead of the usual 2? How does that affect the workload and appointment %?
	What kinds of duties are typically included in workloads?
	We don't have workloads for a lot of our positions...help!?!
L(SA) PD (Professional Development)	What PD activities can we use to increase the appointment % for an LSA?
Support Guarantee Letters	What information is required?
	How do we write a good letter?
Academic Performance	Help navigating the process when considering dropping someone from the graduate program
TA Trainings & Professional Development	What information is given to TAs at the L&S TA training?
	How can our departmental trainings coordinate with/build on the L&S training?
	How can our department better support/encourage TA professional development?

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Student Assistants - Helpful L&S KB's

L&S KB's	How can this KB help you?
Student Assistant Leave: https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/24845	Of course, this KB provides you with the basics of sick leave: who's eligible, how much leave is given, and how to use/count leave for a specific person. • But, it also has a sample spreadsheet you can download and use to track leave (since SA leave isn't tracked in any formal systems right now) • it helps you strategize next steps when a TA is out sick
Standard Rates for Short-term Staff and Student Assistants https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/28638	As expected, this KB gives all STS/SA rates and titles in one easy place. • But, it also includes some basic info to help better understand the differences in these positions • And, it provides a structured overview of these positions • It also gives you the new titles in use now after TTC
Student Assistant Appointment Letters https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/22288	This KB provides template letters for SA's, but also so much more: • It helps to better describe the differences between the more complicated types of appointments • it tells you when each template letter was last revised (so you don't have to go inside the template to see that) • it gives the semester start/end instructional dates you'll need to include in your letters • it guides you through calculating gross salary and biweekly salary, and includes a link to the FLOAT tool for doing this more easily • Finally, it provides a summary of when the grad school limitations on maximum levels of appointments is in effect, and a general summary of the limitations
Undergraduate Assistants https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/93858	Of course, this KB provides you with basic information about Undergraduate Assistants acting as TA's (Teaching Assistants), but it also provides the information you need to request approval for these positions.
Grader/Reader Appointments https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/internal/page.php?id=24247	This KB helps you understand more about what Grader/Readers do, and how their duties differ from Teaching Assistants.
Spoken-English Proficiency for Teaching Assistants https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/25268	Refer to this KB when you need to understand more about how english proficiency relates to Teaching Assistant appointments, and how to interpret SPEAK test scores.
Teaching Assistant/Grader Plans https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/88882	This KB provides instructions for the annual TA and Grader staffing exercise in L&S, including instructions and deadlines.
Performance Evaluations for TAs, PAs, and UAs https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/93854	As expected, this KB provides general expectations for how departments conduct performance evaluations, with helpful tips and best practices.

Rev 2.11.2022

Resource: "Helpful L&S KBs" *(new)*

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Resource: GAPP

https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/

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https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/

Resource: KB - L&S Student Assistant Leave

L&S Student Assistant Leave

This L&S KB provides important information about Leave for Student Assistants (also called "Graduate Assistants") and provides a sample spreadsheet for tracking leave.

`Highlight search terms`

New student assistant policies and procedures were established in 2019 in GAPP-Graduate Assistant Policies and Procedures (https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/). Please contact HR Manager Laura Fisk with questions.

Leave Summary

Paid Sick Leave

- TA, PA, and RA are eligible
- Eligible employees are credited with paid sick leave
- Not prorated for FTE
- Based on length of appointment
  - Full Fall or Spring Semester appointment = 48 hours
  - Full Academic year appointment = 96 hours
  - Summer Term and all other appointment lengths = 8 hours for each 30 days (or portion thereof)
- Usage: PA = 15-minute increments, RA/TA = 1-hour increments
- Carryover is allowed from appointment to appointment within the same department and the same title, from one academic year to the next, or within the same academic year as long as the break between appointments is less than 2 weeks
  - Combination of carryover sick leave and new sick leave cannot exceed 96 hours
- Unused sick leave is not paid out

Paid Vacation Leave

- A-basis PA and RA are eligible
- Eligible employees earn paid vacation
- 180 hours per fiscal year, if 100% FTE
  - Prorated for FTE
  - Prorated for length of appointment
  - Example: 50% A-basis PA 9/1/2021- 8/31/2022 will receive 90 hours of vacation

https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/24845

- general guidance on Student Assistant Paid Leave

- "Student Assistant Leave Report" (spreadsheet)

- "Paid Leave Summary"

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Resource: "Student Assistant Leave Report"

found at:

L&S Student Assistant Sick Leave KB:
https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/24845

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Resource: "Student Assistant Paid Leave Summary"

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Student Assistants - Paid Leave Summary

	Sick Leave	Vacation Leave
Eligible Employees	Project Assistant (PA) Research Assistant (RA) Teaching Assistant (TA)	Project Assistant (PA) - A-Basis only Research Assistant (RA) - A-Basis only
Earned, or Credited	Credited based on length of appointment	Earned during appointment
Amount	Not Prorated for FTE (non-FTE positions can earn sick leave) Based on length of appointment Academic year or calendar year = 96 hours Semester = 48 hours Other = 8 hours each 30 days (or portion)	Prorated for FTE (non-FTE positions do not earn vacation) Prorated for length of appointment Earned at 180 per fiscal year if 100% (prorated for FTE and length)
Carryover	Carryover allowed from appointment to appointment, within same dept and same title, from one academic year to next or within academic year (as long as no more than 2 week break between) New leave + carryover cannot exceed 96 hours	No vacation carryover allowed
Increments Used	PA: 15 minute increments RA/TA: 1 hour increments	PA: 15 minute increments RA: 1 hour increments
Unused Leave	Unused leave is not paid out	Unused leave is not paid out
Leave Used for Absence	Amount of Leave used, based on FTE and length of absence: 　Example: 50% FTE appointment (.50) 　　for 1 week absence = (FTE % x 40 hours) 　　　　= .50 x 40　　20 hours for 1 week 　　for 1 day absence = (weekly amount / 5) 　　　　= 20 hours / 5　　4 hours for 1 day	

Tracking Leave
- leave is tracked manually by the department (is not entered in timekeeping or in HRS)
- can use any tracking method that works – see sample on L&B KB

Sick Leave Coverage
- If using sick leave, the grad assistant does not need to find their own replacement

Helpful Resources
- L&S KB "L&S Student Assistant Leave": https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/24845
- Graduate Assistant Policies and Procedures (GAPP) – "Leave Benefits"
- L&S Human Resources Associate Director (laura.fisk@wisc.edu, 608-265-3333)

found at:

L&S Student Assistant Sick Leave
https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/24845

(second tab in the "Student Assistant Leave Report")

Student Assistant Paid Sick Leave

Case Study

Amount, Eligibility and Carryover

Using, Counting and Tracking Leave

How to Respond to a Sick TA

Strategies for covering for Absent TAs

Do you know what to do when a TA is sick?

Self-Assessment Poll

Rank each on a scale of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree":

- If a TA is sick, I can quickly and accurately determine how much leave they have available.

- I know how to respond if someone starts to share their medical information with me, or indicates there might be a medical concern (including mental health) related to an employment issue.

- I have a plan to cover for sick or absent TAs.

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Case Study

Teaching Assistant James Barlowe emailed his supervisor Sunday night.

Hi,
I was in an accident this weekend and went to the ER. My doctor told me I have to be on bed rest this week, and not do any work. I'm sorry but I won't be able to lead my discussion sections this week, since they're done in person. What should I do? I can't afford to take time off without being paid. I can check to see if I can do some remote work, and I can try to find someone to replace me in my sections. Let me know what I need to do.
- Jim Barlowe

The supervisor forwarded the email to you and asked what to do next.

You help employees with questions about this, and track sick leave for the unit.

What do you do next?

L&S Student Assistant Leave KB: https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/24845

Amount, Eligibility and Carryover

Step 1:

Verify AVAILABLE SICK LEAVE

A Carryover

B   New Sick Leave

C <u>(-) Sick Leave used</u>

D = Sick Leave Available

Amount, Eligibility and Carryover

A Carryover

- can carry over any unused sick leave from Fall, if TA with your dept in Fall

    - TA with your department in Fall? Yes, so carry over Fall unused sick leave

    - semester appointment in Fall? Yes, so he was awarded 48 hours

    - did he use any of that? No, so his carryover = **48 hours**

B   New Sick Leave Awarded

    - new award for a semester appointment = 48 hours

    - he has a semester appointment in Spring 2022, so he's awarded **48 hours**

C   Sick Leave Used

    - he has not used any sick leave in Fall or Spring

L&S Student Assistant Leave KB: https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/24845

Amount, Eligibility and Carryover

Step 1:

Verify AVAILABLE SICK LEAVE

A	Carryover	48 hours
B	New Sick Leave	48 hours
C	(-) Sick Leave used	-0 hours
D	= Sick Leave Available	96 hours available

L&S Student Assistant Leave KB: https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/24845

Using and Counting Leave

Step 2 Confirm how much sick leave James will use if out all week

<u>Weekly Sick Leave Used</u>

(FTE % x 40 hours) =

(.50   x   40   ) = 20 hours

James has an FTE of .50

He will use 20 hours sick leave for the week

(Hint: matches his "standard hours")

Using and Counting Leave

Step 2   Extra Credit questions:

How much sick leave would he use if out just one day?
Daily Sick Leave Used
   (FTE x 40 hours) / 5 =
   (.50 x 40 hours) / 5 =
   (20) / 5 = <mark>4 hours</mark>

How much sick leave would he use if his FTE was .334?
Daily Sick Leave Used
  (FTE % x 40 hours) / 5 =
  (.334 x 40 hours) / 5 =
  (13.36) / 5 = 2.672 hours
          = <mark>3 hours</mark> (round to nearest full hour, since
                 1 hr is minimum increment for TA's)

How to Respond to a Sick TA

Step 3 Respond to the Sick TA
    (via supervisor or you)

Hi James,

Thanks for letting us know. We're sorry to hear that and hope you have a speedy recovery. You have 96 hours of paid sick leave and you'll use 20 hours for the week. Sick Leave replaces your pay, so there's no effect on your pay, benefits, or tuition.

Since your doctor has said you should be out all week and not working, that's what we should plan on. You do not have to find a replacement. We'll plan that you'll be back next week unless you tell us otherwise. Being out longer than just this week will likely require a doctor's note but if that's the case I'll get HR involved, because any medical information is confidential and goes to them.

Track the Use of Sick Leave

Step 4 Track the Use of Sick Leave

download "Student Assistant Leave Report" spreadsheet

fill it out for Jim's use of sick leave and save it at the department

- we track sick leave manually; it is not entered into timekeeping or absence systems like other staff

- while the student is using sick leave, they continue to be paid or report hours as they normally would, just as if they were working as usual

L&S Student Assistant Leave KB: https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/24845

Strategies for Covering for Absent TA's

After you've helped James with his immediate issue what do you do next, to help the department cover for James?

- ***Raise your hand*** *in Zoom if you've had to cover for a sick/absent TA in the current semester.*

- *If you've had to quickly cover for a sick/absent TA, what worked well for you?*
  - *What did you learn from that, that you'd like to share?*

- *What steps does your department take ahead of time to help cover for TA's?*
  - *What ideas would you like to share?*

Strategies for Covering for Absent TA's

- Colleague/Peer coverage
    - use other TA's; include "colleague coverage" into TA workload to make it an expectation
    - find other TA's and pay them a lump sum payment for the work
    - hire additional TA's (helpful if longer term; or as 'float' staff)
    - shift work around among available staff
        - ex: shift more grading to grader/readers temporarily
        - ex: shift in-person vs remote work among staff temporarily

- Other options if not enough qualified grad students
    - Undergraduate Assistants
    - Academic staff

Considerations:
    - length of time coverage needed
    - specific duties of the TA
    - visa and grad school limits on appointments
    - other considerations? ideas or best practices to share?

Questions on Student Assistant Sick Leave?

Interactive Q&A

Please rate how much you gained from this session

Poll

I gained a lot because I didn't know any (or much) of this

I knew some things, but it was helpful to learn some more

I didn't gain anything because I already know this material

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Of what we covered today, what has been most helpful?

Poll

- Discussion of how Lynne and Laura can help
- Discussion of paid sick leave
- Strategies for covering for sick/absent TA's
- Review of GAPP - Graduate Assistant Policies and Procedures
- Reference documents provided

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What topics would interest you in a future session?

Poll

- TA performance issues
- TA workloads
- TA training
- Other grad appointments: Undergrad Assistants, Grader/Reader, LSA
- Overview of GAPP: Graduate Assistant Policies and Procedures

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How would you prefer to get new grad-related info?

Poll

- Admin Topic of the Month
- session/workshop
- Community of Practice discussion/meeting
- email
- website/KB
- my supervisor/other

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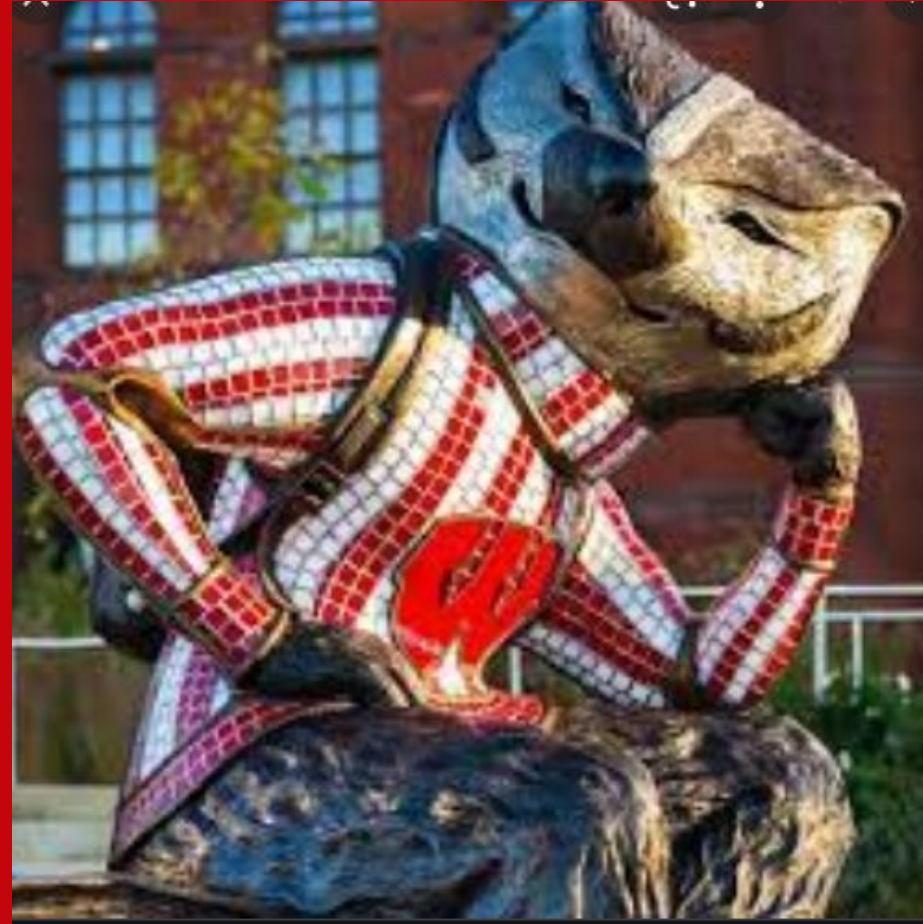
How can we best help you?

- Provide more of this type of training
- Provide more reference sheets (specify which topics/issues)
- Be available for one-on-one consultation as needed
- Provide presentations or information at department meetings
- Offer "drop in" office hours

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Questions?

Thank you for attending

All materials are found here:
https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/internal/25131

Reference documents include:
- How L&S Can Help
- Helpful L&S KBs
- Paid Leave Summary
- Leave Report

Please contact us:

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