

Graduate Assistant Responsibilities

Department of Philosophy

Northern Illinois University

The job of graduate assistant at NIU is a significant responsibility, and it comes with a number of expectations, duties, and rights. You should familiarize yourself with university policies concerning graduate assistants, available online at www.niu.edu/provost/policies/index.asp#IV. (You should pay particular attention to items IV.1 and IV.7). But the Philosophy Department also has its own specific expectations regarding its graduate assistants. The purpose of this document is to highlight pertinent university policies and departmental expectations.

Your Supervisor

Your supervisor is the chair of the department. While the chair may assign you to perform duties under the immediate supervision of a faculty member in the department, the chair of the department is the supervisor to whom you are answerable. It is your supervisor's expectation that you will perform your assigned duties fully and to the satisfaction of the faculty member to whom you are assigned.

Your Employment Period

Your employment period runs from August 16, 2020, to May 15, 2021. With the exception of days on which the university is officially closed, you must be available to complete any work-related responsibilities assigned to you during the employment period, and you should not make any plans that would interfere with the timely fulfillment of your responsibilities. In practice, and in the typical case, you will be released from your duties once you have completed your responsibilities for the semester, even if the ensuing period includes days the university is officially open for business.

Absences from Work

An *absence from work* is any event during your employment period that prevents you from fulfilling any of your assigned responsibilities (detailed below). An absence from work need not involve your physical absence from the DeKalb area. If you are to be absent from work, you must have your absence approved by the instructor to whom you are assigned and by the chair of the department. To obtain approval for an absence from work, send an email to the instructor to whom you are assigned, and copied to the chair of the department, containing the following information:

1. The assigned course(s) from which you will be absent
2. The date(s) of the absence
3. The reason(s) for the absence
4. The work that will be missed and the provision made, if any, to make up the work.

If the absence is planned, the approval must be obtained prior to the absence. If the absence is the result of an emergency or some other event that could not reasonably have been anticipated, the request for approval must be made as soon as possible. Being absent from work without obtaining this approval will constitute absence without leave, in consequence of which your appointment as graduate assistant may be subject to termination effective the last day you reported for work. If you are unsure whether an event will prevent you from fulfilling your assigned responsibilities, hence will constitute an absence from work, it is your responsibility to consult with your supervisor for clarification.

Your Specific Responsibilities

With but rare exceptions, your assigned role will be that of teaching assistant. Before the semester begins, you should contact the instructor to whom you are assigned to ensure that you know what the instructor expects from you and ensure that you have access to course texts and other class materials. You should also communicate regularly with the instructor throughout the semester.

Your specific duties as a teaching assistant assigned to a course will involve:

1. Attending all scheduled classes, whether they are face-to-face or online
2. Completing all the assigned readings for the course on schedule
3. Reviewing any other course-related materials, such as videos or recordings, on schedule
4. Modeling good student behavior
5. Grading student work in a timely manner
6. Holding in-person or online office hours (3 hours per week for a full-time appointment)
7. Responding to and, when appropriate, forwarding email from students in your course
8. Proctoring exams
9. Assisting the instructor in the determination of student grades.

The course instructor may also require you to assist in other ways, including, but not limited to:

1. Using the Blackboard online course tools
2. Conducting review sessions
3. Assisting students with assignments
4. Serving as moderator of classroom or online discussions
5. Assisting in constructing exams, assignments and review questions
6. Assisting in audio and visual displays
7. Taking detailed notes on lectures.

In the event of scheduled or unplanned absences by the instructor, the instructor may ask a teaching assistant to present material prepared by the instructor. However, a teaching assistant cannot be required to prepare and present new material.

Instructors to whom you are assigned submit reports each semester on your performance as a teaching assistant. These reports are kept on file in the department office, where you have the right to them, and they will be taken into consideration when decisions about assistantship renewals are made.

Your Weekly Work Hours

Graduate assistants holding a full-time appointment are expected to render not more than 20 hours of service per week, while those on half-time appointment are expected to render not more than 10 hours of service per week.

Your Academic Course Load

As stipulated by the Graduate Catalog, you are to be enrolled in 9 semester hours of course work throughout the semester. Undergraduate courses and courses that you are officially auditing count toward these 9 hours, even though such courses do not count toward completion of degree requirements. Any decrease or increase in this course load must be approved by the Graduate Advisor and the chair of the department.