

8.E Graduate Student Employees

8.E.1 Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs) and Graduate Student Staff Assistants (GSSAs)

Graduate students in good standing at the University may be employed as Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs, also referred to as teaching assistants) or as Graduate Student Staff Assistants (GSSAs). Most GSIs have instructional duties. Their responsibilities vary depending on the needs of the department and range from teaching their own courses to assisting faculty with various aspects of a class, including meeting with students, running lab or discussion sections, or occasional lecturing. Some GSIs have predominantly grading duties and assist faculty in grading homework, tests, and final exams in some schools and colleges. However, they do not take over all the grading in the course nor do they replace faculty office hours. GSSAs are non-instructional, non-research-based graduate student support positions and are used primarily in the libraries.

GSIs and GSSAs are represented by the Graduate Employees Organization – American Federation of Teachers, Local 3550 (GEO). The University recognizes the GEO as the sole and exclusive representative for the purposes of collective bargaining in respect to wages, hours, and all other conditions of employment. Complete definitions of GSI and GSSA are found in the Agreement between the University and the GEO. Questions about hiring graduate students in these various capacities or requests for a copy of the current GEO Agreement should be directed to Academic Human Resources.

Although there may be situations in which the preferences and goals of faculty conflict with the limited flexibility of the labor contract for GSIs and GSSAs, nevertheless, the University of Michigan is bound to adhere to the terms of the contract. It is therefore extremely important for faculty who work with GSIs or GSSAs to understand that faculty do not have the authority to enter into direct negotiations with individual graduate students, and that they must refrain from doing so because of the risk that they might, albeit inadvertently, attempt to specify terms or conditions that, if followed, could lead to violations of the GEO contract.

Every teaching department or unit that employs GSIs has appointed one faculty member (such as the department chair, a “graduate director,” “associate chair,” or “undergraduate chair”) to be responsible for GSI matters. Faculty who require the assistance of a GSI should first contact this individual. Only this individual has the power to make GSI appointments. This same individual is responsible for filling out and certifying workload calculation forms. Similarly, faculty should inform GSIs that in the event of a problem or concern with any teaching appointment, this individual must be informed of the nature of the problem and be given an opportunity to deal with it well before the end of the term.

8.E.2 Graduate Student Research Assistants (GSRAs)

GSRAs perform personal research (including thesis or dissertation preparation) or assist faculty in performing research that is relevant to the faculty member’s academic goals. GSRA positions are non-instructional and are typically supported by existing research contracts. GSRAs are not represented by GEO and therefore are not subject to the provisions of the Agreement with GEO.

A section entitled *The Graduate Student Research Assistantship Program: Reference for Appointing*

Departments may be helpful to faculty who expect to hire a graduate student research assistant. It is available from [Academic Human Resources'](#) website.

8.E.3 House Officers

House Officers include all residents, and fellows employed in research or clinical care in any of the specialties or sub-specialties by the University of Michigan Medical Center. The house officers are represented by the House Officers Association (HOA) for the collective bargaining of the employment contract, which covers both salary and working conditions. For more information, contact the associate dean and director for graduate medical education.