Assistantship Handbook
Dept. of Educational Psychology
College of Education
University of North Texas
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How Your Assistantship Works

Congratulations! You have been selected for a competitive assistantship position within the Dept. of Educational Psychology! So, now what?!

As stated in the offer letter, assistantship positions are usually awarded for three years and cover the fall and spring semesters only. A fourth year is possible pending available funding, only if you are defending your dissertation to graduate within that (fourth) year. Summer employment is not guaranteed, but we do try to fund as many students as possible.

**Depending on availability of funds and current status in the program some positions are for less than three years**

Students will receive two 10 hour/week assignments as a Teaching Assistant, Teaching Fellow, or Graduate Services Assistant. The exact combination of these three appointments is decided each semester based on department need, while working to maximize the diversity of experiences/mentorship provided to students. Students’ personal preferences for assignments are considered, but not guaranteed, and departmental needs will take precedence.

Assistantship positions are contingent upon your status as a full-time student (i.e., enrolled in 9 hours each fall and spring semester), positive reviews by faculty mentors and Dr. Henson following each semester, and successful academic progress in the program.

Students are paid a salaried amount once a month, and this can be set up as direct deposit through Payroll Resources (https://www.untsystem.edu/hr-business-services/payroll/payroll-resources). There are three levels upon which salaries are based: (1) students without a completed Master’s degree who have completed less than 18 graduate hours towards the doctoral degree, (2) students who hold a completed Master’s degree or have completed at least 18 hours of graduate level work toward the doctoral degree, and (3) students that have successfully completed the Qualifying Exam and are considered ABD (All But Dissertation).

These levels are updated annually before each fall semester. The UNT Tuition Benefit Program covers 6 hours of tuition in both fall and spring. This is a part of your assistantship and the department sets that up for you (paper or online forms may be required of you and will be sent). Once you have successfully passed the qualifying exam and only have dissertation hours to take, you can take 3 hours instead of 9 and have tuition covered (students are allowed to take up to 9 hours each semester in consultation with major professor).

- Teaching Assistant (TA) - Teaching Assistants are graduate students who do not have primary responsibility for teaching a course for credit; they work under the direct supervision of the course instructor to whom they are assigned and provide general assistance to the instructional process, such as grading, tutoring, etc. Teaching assistants may not be listed as instructor of record. It is the student’s responsibility to work with the instructor and be prepared to teach the course in a future semester.
  - With instructor support, guest lecture or teach at least once.
• Teaching Fellow (TF) - Teaching Fellows serve as the Instructor of record for a course. Consequently, they have direct student contact in a formal instructional setting and are charged with primary responsibility for teaching a course for credit under the direct supervision of a faculty mentor or department chair, receiving regular in-service training and planned and periodic evaluations.
  o With few exceptions, students are not assigned as a TF to a course for which they have not previously served as a TA.
  o In order to TF, you must have a completed Masters in a related field or have completed at least 18 graduate hours in a related field.
  o Graduate courses are reserved for department faculty/adjuncts. However, in special circumstances and with approval, ABD (all but dissertation) students are allowed to teach a 5xxx level course.
• Graduate Services Assistant (GSA) – GSA’s are graduate students who are engaged in research or other support activities under the direction and supervision of a faculty working on research.
  o GSA assignments must be approved by the department Chair.
  o Each faculty member is different. The GSA should make sure to meet and discuss their expectations regarding schedule, when to meet, timeline, goals to accomplish to stay on track with research/project.
  o Authorship- If you submit a conference proposal or manuscript based on the work you are doing with your research mentor/major professor, it is customary (required) to include this person as an author. All authorship issues should be negotiated prior to the start of the project.
  o Students in the RMS concentration area may be assigned to work in the Office of Research Consulting (ORC).

General Expectations

• Educational Psychology has a limited number of competitive assistantship positions which are highly sought after. We fully expect students to understand this is a salaried job, and work accordingly.
• Office Presence
  o You are required to be on campus and present during your working hours. Everyone will be assigned office space in Matthews Hall (shared or individual). You will find that the more you are visible to other students and faculty/staff, the more you will get out of your experience. The Department of Educational Psychology has a very close group of scholars, and those on assistantship spend a great deal of time together (in class and out). Take advantage of the opportunities to have closer relationships with faculty and your peers! This will

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also benefit you when it is time to ask faculty to serve on dissertation committee.

- Salaries cover 20 hours/week of work. **Failure to work the hours for which you are paid will result in discontinuation of your assistantship.** If you are not given enough work to satisfy the full 20 hours, contact Dr. Henson for assistance.
- TFs need to specify and keep weekly office hours for their courses, which should be posted in the course syllabus and provided to the department office.
- You are required to be available for campus meetings the week before the beginning of each semester and also through the end of finals week. A department meeting with everyone on assistantship is mandatory, and is usually scheduled the week before each semester begins.

  - **Outlook Email Account**
    - All UNT students are provided a UNT email account. In addition to this, those on assistantship have an Outlook email account (firstname.lastname@unt.edu). This Outlook account is where all important departmental communication is sent. It is also the email you should provide to students for which you TA or TF, use on syllabi, etc. In order to avoid checking multiple accounts, we strongly recommend setting up your UNT student account to forward to Outlook. Due to the sensitive nature of emails in Outlook (undergraduate student information and correspondence, etc), this address cannot be forwarded. Only other addresses can be set up to forward to Outlook.
    - Email should be checked **at least** once a day and responded to as quickly as possible. Sometimes responses or feedback are needed ASAP, especially in regards to registration or other deadline issues (check email multiple times when it is the last day to drop a course, withdraw, etc in case a student is trying to reach you and needs a response).

  - **Faculty Profile**
    - All TFs are required to create a “Faculty Profile” in the UNT system and upload their undergraduate syllabi before the first class day: [https://faculty.unt.edu/](https://faculty.unt.edu/). This profile must be updated every semester.

  - **Appropriate/Professional Attire**
• Professional Respect/Communication
  o Any communication with students, faculty and staff should carry an appropriate professional tone (whether in face-to-face or online courses, via phone/email or in individual meetings).
  o Any written correspondence can be forwarded and seen by others. Avoid emotion-laden responses. Pause and think before clicking “send.” Ask yourself if the communication may be better handled with a direct conversation.
  o If any student has inappropriate communication or actions (this could be misconduct during class, foul or offensive language, etc), contact your course supervisor immediately for guidance, and document the event in writing to the supervisor. If additional guidance or another perspective is needed, contact Dr. Henson and make sure to document the event in writing to Dr. Henson. Always err on the side of seeking guidance with possible situations (even if only anticipated) from your course supervisor and/or Dr. Henson.
    ▪ Disciplinary action may be required. If so, Dr. Henson will facilitate with the input from the course supervisor.
  o The Care Team
    ▪ The CARE Team is a collaborative interdisciplinary committee of University officials that meets regularly to discuss students exhibiting behaviors indicative of high risk. If you have a student you feel is in immediate distress, please let Dr. Henson know and he can advise you on whether contacting the Care Team is appropriate to the situation.
    ▪ For more information and recognizing students in distress: http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care
Important Meetings

- Mandatory department assistantship meeting each semester (typically the week before the fall and spring semesters begin). Plan vacations accordingly so these are not missed. This is usually scheduled the same day as the Teaching Excellence Seminar so you can attend both the same day.
  - The Teaching Excellence Seminar is an orientation for new Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows. The Center for Learning Enhancement, Assessment and Redesign (CLEAR), along with the Office of the Provost, provides this mandatory seminar to provide new instructors at UNT with access to best practices in teaching and supportive resources. These are usually scheduled the week before the fall and spring semesters begin.
    - Attending TES is required before the first semester on any assistantship (e.g., TA/TF/GSA). We strongly encourage everyone to attend each semester as there are different breakout sessions and new information shared each time.
    - Registration is required: [http://clear.unt.edu/tes](http://clear.unt.edu/tes)
- Testing for English Language Proficiency ***Only required for international students***
  - Communication is at the heart of the educational experience for students, so it is important the University verifies that those with teaching responsibilities at UNT are proficient in the use of written and spoken English. This means that the university must conduct an assessment of anyone whose first language is not English before we put them in a teaching role. The State of Texas requires any TA/TF or GSA whose first language is not English be assessed by the Intensive English Language Institute (IELI) before the department can assign that student a teaching role. Contact Michael Lioy at extension 7269 or by email at [Michael.Lioy@unt.edu](mailto:Michael.Lioy@unt.edu) to arrange for this testing. Failure to complete testing could result in loss of state funds for UNT.

- You are responsible for meeting your class at ALL assigned times. You may NOT cancel your class. If you cannot find an appropriate substitute (only when needed), contact your course supervisor for guidance. If needed, contact the department (or Dr. Henson) to help you.

Observation/Feedback

- Your teaching will be observed at least once a year and feedback will be provided.
- Feedback will be solicited from the instructor/mentor if you are a TA or GSA.
• You will meet individually with Dr. Henson each semester to discuss your assignment and progress.

Academic Information/Calendar/Deadlines

In any given semester, there are multiple dates and deadlines set by UNT of which to be aware. We strongly encouraging bookmarking this page for each semester (http://registrar.unt.edu/registration-guides-by-semester) AND marking these dates in your personal planner/calendar app. Some (not all) important dates to keep in mind:

• The beginning and end of registration (be prepared to receive emails from students prior to the first day of class and check email frequently during the last few days of registration for late add requests)
  o If a student approaches you wanting to add your class after Late Registration has ended, we cannot guarantee this can be approved. Please contact Laura Coleman if this occurs. If a student contacts you wanting to add your course during an approved registration period and your course is full and closed, ask that student to place themselves on the wait list through their MyUNT page. Requests to add students over an enrollment cap may only be approved by department office.

• On the first day of class, plan to meet the entire class time. In addition to reviewing course requirements, plan activities that allow the students to interact with you and each other so you can all get to know each other. Introduce course content so they are able to know what the course is about. The first day of class is just that – the first day for the class. Use it.

• Office of Disability Accommodation:
  o Students who are registered with the ODA office may need specific accommodations in order to meet assignment deadlines, take exams, etc. Students in need of accommodation are required to advise you they are registered with ODA and provide you with an official Disability Accommodation Form for you to complete. This form will document the accommodations you will need to make on behalf of the student. Do not make accommodations unless the student provides the necessary form from ODA. Any appropriate accommodations for a student should be discussed as discretely/privately as possible and held in confidence from other students to the extent possible.

• Early Alert Response System (EARS)
- EARS is a campus-wide early notification system to identify at-risk students (those that have not attended class or have attended sporadically, are currently failing, have had no communication, etc). Instructors can put in an Early Alert through their class rosters. The goal of EARS is to actively provide students with a link to the university through academic intervention, advising, and campus resource referrals.

- Drop deadlines: this includes dropping with an automatic W (no impact on GPA), dropping with a W or WF as designated by instructor (WF counts as an F toward the GPA calculation), and withdrawing (dropping all courses in a specific semester or summer session). There are other drop dates to receive different refund amounts (this is more the responsibility of the student, but it is always good to know. Posting these dates in your syllabus is recommended)
  - You should be aware of the drop deadline and plan to be in your office on that date.
  - Tip: The week before the deadline to drop with an automatic W, alert students who are currently failing or in danger of failing individually. Sending out a general reminder is also a good idea (not to encourage dropping, but to make sure they are aware).
  - The day of any drop deadline, make sure to be in your office area and check email multiple times for last minute requests.
  - Requests to drop after the deadline has passed may only be approved by the department office.
  - Enrolled students must notify the Dean of Students Office of their intent to withdraw from the university (drop all courses in which they are enrolled in for a given semester). Procedures and deadlines for dropping or withdrawing are available in the Dean of Students Office or online at [https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/withdrawals](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/withdrawals).
  - Instructors may drop a student with a grade of WF from courses for nonattendance. A WF may be assigned from the 7th through the 13th week of classes of long terms/semesters or corresponding dates for summer sessions (specific dates are published in the online academic calendar). If you believe this is appropriate for a student, consult with your course supervisor.

- Audit rolls
  - Audit rolls are required by UNT and are completed by the instructor of record on MyUNT page- usually due around the 12th class day. Audit rolls serve to verify a student has been attending your class so you need to take attendance in every class session until the Audit Roles are submitted. Compare your Class Roster on MyUNT with any attendance forms you are using (Blackboard does not always sync up with your official class roster, so always use roster).

- Incompletes
DO NOT EVER ASSIGN AN INCOMPLETE WITHOUT FIRST GETTING APPROVAL FROM YOUR COURSE SUPERVISOR!

Incompletes should be very rare. Per UNT policy, they are reserved for students who are passing a course up until a specific date (always after the drop deadline), and an emergency has prevented them from completing the very end of the course/final assignments. Students cannot request an Incomplete before the designated date, if they are not currently passing, or do not have a documented emergency. (There are always shades of grey with who is eligible to request an incomplete. Always check with your course supervisor before responding to the student).

If an incomplete is assigned, make sure it is documented appropriately and that the plan to finish the course requirements is one that you can oversee and complete.

- Final Exams
  - You must give a final exam on the scheduled final exam day (see scheduled days/times at [http://registrar.unt.edu/exams/final-exam-schedule](http://registrar.unt.edu/exams/final-exam-schedule)). **There are no exceptions to this.** Students may request through the Dean’s office to have an alternative schedule for an exam if they document having 3 exams scheduled on the same day.
  - In Fall and Spring semesters, UNT declares a Pre-finals Week always during the week before final exams. The UNT policy regarding pre-finals week is as follows: To help students adequately prepare for their final exams, special rules apply to the 7 days preceding the final week of each fall and spring semester. On the Thursday and Friday of the week immediately preceding final exams, review classes will be held. Also, attendance at these reviews cannot be made mandatory, and there will be no papers, projects, exams, quizzes, or like assignments due on those days. This policy will not be applicable to classes that meet once a week or meet only on Thursday and Friday. Student organizations do not meet, and activities requiring student participation such as field trips; athletic events; or performances by dance, drama, or music ensembles are not scheduled unless approved in advance by the appropriate dean. Themes, reports, notebooks, research problems, or exercises of similar scope are not to be assigned during this period, but students may submit previously assigned work. Only exams covering daily assignments, make-up tests, or laboratory exams may be given. Faculty members shall not give any portion of the final exam during this seven-day period without advance approval from their academic dean.

- Grade Reporting
  - Grades are entered through MyUNT and are usually due by 1PM the Monday following exam week each term. Early submittal of grades is encouraged
(students appreciate this, and also staff who get hourly reports on which instructors have not submitted yet).

- Research
  - Students in your class may not be included as participants in any research project conducted by you or anyone else unless UNT IRB approval is obtained first, evidence of such approval provided to you, and consent letters provided to students.

Grading Issues

- W or WF
  - When students drop a course, there is a date by which they can drop with an automatic W (no impact on their GPA). After this date, the instructor may assign a grade of W or WF when a drop is requested (WF counts as an F in GPA calculation). The general rule is WF is assigned to students who are not passing the course at the time the student chooses to drop. However, it is ultimately up to the instructor. Contact your course supervisor if you need help determining the appropriate grade.

- Use A, B, C, D, or F for your grades. No plus/minus grades can be given. Your syllabus should clearly and accurately reflect your grading system and criteria.

- Incompletes- see above

- Plagiarism
  - Require your students to submit their written assignments through Turnitin and report any instances of plagiarism to your course supervisor and Dr. Henson, who will help you handle the situation. Plagiarism is a serious academic issue and must be reported every time. Include your policy regarding plagiarism and the consequences in your course syllabus. You can access Turnitin using the online Blackboard Learn system (recommended) or directly through the Turnitin.com website if you have your own account.
    - See also the UNT CLEAR website for Turnitin support: [http://clear.unt.edu/turnitin](http://clear.unt.edu/turnitin)

- Grade Appeals
  - Student grade appeals may only be filed after the official final grade has been posted. Inform your course supervisor and Dr. Henson immediately when a student contacts you regarding a grade appeal.
Familiarize yourself with appeal procedures from the catalog:

If a change needs to be made to a final grade as a result of an appeal (or grading error), a change of grade form must be completed (form in department office).

University policy requires retaining all graded assignments/exams for one year after the term/semester has been completed or return tests to students. If the tests are returned, students are responsible for producing the tests should a grade appeal be necessary.

**Syllabus**

- Syllabi for undergraduate courses must be posted on your Faculty Profile before the first day of class and available on Blackboard if taught online. You must hand out a syllabus on the first class day that meets.

- In rare circumstances an Instructor feels a need to modify a syllabus after classes have begun. Should you feel you need to make changes to your syllabus, please meet with your course supervisor immediately for guidance. However, such changes should be extremely rare because you will have thought through the entire course ahead of time and developed an appropriate syllabus, with input from your course supervisor as needed. Course syllabi used by full-time faculty from previous semesters should be used.


- Include the ODA statement below:

The University of North Texas College of Education does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the recruitment and admission of students, the recruitment and employment of faculty and staff, and the operation of any of its programs and activities, as specified by federal laws and regulations. The designated liaison for Educational Psychology is Dr. Abbas Tashakkori, Room 316, Matthews Hall. Copies of the College of Education ADA Compliance Document are available in the Dean's Office, Matthews Hall 204. The student has the responsibility of informing the course instructor of any disabling condition which will require modifications to avoid discrimination.

- You will also need to include some type of notice regarding SPOT (Student Perceptions of Teaching). Sample below:
  - The Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) evaluation is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you online at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider the SPOT to be an important part of your participation in this class.
Office of Disability Accommodation:
  - See above.

Blackboard Learn

- Blackboard Learn is a web-based learning environment. In an online course, students login to a virtual classroom (http://learn.unt.edu) to complete lessons and other activities.
- It is recommended that you post to Blackboard any handouts, assignments, or other materials you want to provide to students (i.e., instead of making paper copies of everything, you need to post these materials to Blackboard for students to download). MS Word files are easy to post and download. Students may also submit assignments to you via Blackboard if you prefer.
- View information on Blackboard, resources to help navigate it, and a survival guide for teaching online courses at http://clear.unt.edu/teaching-online.
- The course content will be added by the department. Prior to the first day of the term, go through and update/check all dates, deadlines, and website links.
- In cases of traditional courses that employ Blackboard as a resource, the role of Blackboard in the class should be outlined in the syllabus and explained to the class.

Course Text Books

- If you need a copy of the text for a course you are teaching, please contact your course supervisor as soon as possible for assistance.
- Copies can be provided for TAs if needed and upon request.
- All books MUST be returned at the end of each semester.

Office Information

- The support staff is available to assist you with materials you need for your course. In that the staff works with faculty in several programs, we ask you adhere to the following guidelines:
Work Orders: For those materials that must be copied for your class, you need to submit your request at least 24 hours in advance. There are two ways you may request copies for your class: (1) complete a Work Request Form available in the Matthews Hall 316 workroom and the document you would like copied with complete instructions. You may also make your copies yourself (in MH 304 only), but please be aware it is not always a good idea to plan on making them just before your class as the machine stays busy much of the time. Please limit those materials you copy and instead post to Blackboard as much as you can. Students may print these materials in any UNT computer lab at no additional cost to them.

Mail: Mail or student materials delivered to the department boxes will be distributed as needed.

FERPA – Family Education Rights & Privacy Act

- FERPA protects students from having their personal or educational information shared. You should protect students’ information from others to the extent possible. For example, you cannot require students to post their home addresses or phone numbers publicly, perhaps as a “getting to know you” activity. However, you can make such information completely optional for those that wish to share. As another example, you cannot start a sign-up sheet in your class with personal information that you then copy and distribute to the class so everyone will have other’s contact information for study purposes.
- FERPA also protects educational information such as grades and feedback to students. Reasonable efforts should be made to make sure this information is given only to the student and not made public. For example, when handing back assignments or exams with grades/comments on them, hand them back upside down with the grade hidden.

Resources

- Teaching Online- Support: http://clear.unt.edu/teaching-online
- Teaching Excellence Seminar: http://clear.unt.edu/tes
- Registration/Academic Dates: http://registrar.unt.edu/registration-guides-by-semester
- GSTEP (Graduate Student Teaching Excellence Program): http://clear.unt.edu/gstep
- First Day of Class Resources and Best Practices: http://clear.unt.edu/first-day-class
- Assistantship Benefits: https://tsgs.unt.edu/new-current-students/assistantship-benefits

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- Tuition Benefit Program: [http://tgs.unt.edu/new-current-students/tbp-eligibility-criteria-and-requirements](http://tgs.unt.edu/new-current-students/tbp-eligibility-criteria-and-requirements)
  - This handbook is created for everyone at the university. The EPSY handbook was created so that you have information specific to the department.

### Helpful Books to Read

- *McKeachie’s Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers* (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2013)
- *What the Best College Teachers Do* (Bain, 2004)

### Tips

- Check your Outlook email account daily
- When in doubt - ask!
  - Your course supervisor – contact info varies.
    - Dr. Robin Henson:
      - [robin.henson@unt.edu](mailto:robin.henson@unt.edu)
      - 940-369-8385
      - Matthew Hall 304-J
  - Dr. Abbas Tashakkori:
    - [Abbas.tashakkori@unt.edu](mailto:Abbas.tashakkori@unt.edu)
    - 940-565-2162
    - Matthew Hall 316-B
  - Laura Coleman:
    - [Laura.coleman@unt.edu](mailto:Laura.coleman@unt.edu)
    - 940-565-3486
    - Matthews Hall 316-C
- Take advantage of your time in the office -- make friends with as many faculty, staff, and fellow students as possible. Talk about your teaching, including your successes and challenges. Talk about research or articles you’ve read. Talk about possible research projects/papers you can collaboratively pursue. Building a strong community of scholars in our department is the ultimate goal!