

Tuition Benefits Policy for Graduate Students

(Formerly: *Eligibility Guidelines for Graduate Assistants to Receive Tuition Benefits*)

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Throughout this document, the term *graduate assistant(s)* is used generically to represent a graduate student who is receiving tuition benefits related to employment as a graduate research assistant, graduate teaching assistant, graduate research associate, graduate teaching associate, or graduate student worker.

Graduate assistants are eligible to receive tuition benefits for up to 27 credit hours in a given academic year, provided **all requirements** listed below are met:

1. The appointment period must be continuous within the official beginning and ending dates of the academic semester or summer session.
2. The level of tuition benefit available to students is driven by the FTE of the appointment.
 - a. To receive 100% tuition benefits in the fall and spring semesters, students must have a 0.5 FTE appointment (20 hours per week) and be classified as full-time graduate students. (Refer to the *Full-Time Graduate Student Classification Status* section below.)
 - b. For students who have met the conditions in (a) above during the previous fall or spring semester, a minimum FTE appointment and enrollment status during the summer term are not required to receive 100% tuition benefits.
 - c. Students with FTE employment conditions between 0.25 and 0.5 receive a tuition benefit percentage equal to two times the FTE appointment provided they are enrolled full time.
 - d. Except as provided by (b) above, students with an enrollment status less than full time (as defined by the *Full-Time Graduate Student Classification Status* below) are eligible to receive 50% tuition benefits provided their appointment is at least 0.25 FTE.
3. All credit hours paid by this tuition benefit must be necessary to complete the graduate degree.
4. The number of credit hours for which graduate students can receive tuition benefits is set at 10% above the published credit hour total for the degree program. Courses taken to remove deficiencies as indicated on the Plan of Study are allowable and do not count toward the 10% limit.
5. An approved Plan of Study is required to receive tuition benefits beyond the second semester of the assistantship. Students receiving tuition benefits as part of an assistantship are required to file a Plan of Study and obtain final approval from the Graduate College by the end of the second semester of the assistantship.
6. Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.00 based on the degree requirements as stipulated on the approved Plan of Study.

All graduate assistants receiving tuition benefits for the first time in fall 2013 or beyond will be subject to this policy. Graduate assistants who received tuition benefits prior to the fall 2013 term will not be held to this policy until fall semester 2015. Their benefits will be governed by the 2009 *Eligibility Guidelines for Graduate Assistants to Receive Tuition Benefits*.

Graduate assistants who resign or terminate their assistantship prior to completing the continuous employment period will forfeit all their tuition benefits for the term in which they were employed and must repay the university the full amount of tuition paid by this benefit.

Programs requiring enrollment in 30 credit hours in an academic year (as indicated in the university catalog) will be granted tuition benefits to cover these credits.

The last day to receive tuition benefits in any given semester is the “last day to drop/add courses without consequences” as indicated in the FAU academic calendar. After this date students will not be eligible to receive tuition benefits in that semester.

To use tuition benefits for graduate research assistants, prior approval by the Dean of the Graduate College is required. If allowed by the funding source, the Principal Investigator(s) shall budget for research assistants at the in-state tuition rate. Should a non-Florida resident be employed, the non-resident fee will be funded by the university’s tuition waiver budget.

To use tuition benefits to support graduate assistants employed in non-academic offices, prior approval by the Dean of the Graduate College is required.

To use tuition benefits to support graduate teaching assistants and graduate assistants employed in the academic colleges, the College Deans will be provided tuition benefit budgets each year by the Provost based on past use and projected needs prior to budget construction.

In order to award an assistantship, both the stipend and accompanying tuition benefit must be available. The amount of the tuition benefit cannot be manipulated, reduced, or eliminated to fulfill this requirement.

Graduate assistants may not work more than a total of 20 hours per week for all appointments combined during the fall and spring semesters. However, graduate assistants may work additional hours with prior approval by the Dean of the Graduate College using Form 10 – Request to Waive a University Requirement.

Graduate assistants in their last semester of study are to enroll only in the number of credit hours necessary to fulfill their degree requirements. Graduate assistants who have completed all degree requirements as listed on their Plan of Study but must remain enrolled in order to complete their thesis or dissertation are to enroll only in one thesis/dissertation credit hour. Graduate assistants who take reduced credit hours under these conditions can petition to be classified full-time graduate students using the procedure as outlined in the section below entitled *Full-Time Graduate Student Classification Status*. International students affected by this policy must submit the Reduced Course Load form in the ISSS Office in order to remain in compliance with U.S. Immigration laws.

A reduced enrollment status can impact disbursement of financial aid and qualification for health insurance, depending upon the rules of the lending institution and insurance provider. It is the responsibility of the student to know the enrollment status requirements of individual lending institutions and insurance providers.

It is the student’s responsibility to pay **all** student fees.

Exceptions to these requirements may only be made with prior approval by the Dean of the Graduate College.

Full-Time Graduate Student Classification Status

A full-time degree-seeking graduate student must be enrolled in at least 9 credit hours during the fall and spring semesters (6 credit hours during the summer term). A half-time graduate student must be enrolled in at least 5 credit hours during the fall and spring semesters (3 credit hours during the summer term).

As stipulated below, graduate students may petition to take fewer credit hours and maintain full-time graduate student status. Students must meet the eligibility guidelines to submit the petition (Form 10 – Request to Waive a University Requirement) and satisfy at least one of the four conditions below:

1. Master's degree students who have completed all required course work as listed on their approved Plan of Study, and are only enrolled in thesis credits, may petition to be classified as full-time graduate students with an enrollment of at least 3 credit hours.
2. Doctoral degree students who have advanced to candidacy and have completed all required course work as listed on their approved Plan of Study, and are only enrolled in dissertation credits, may petition to be classified as full-time graduate students with an enrollment of at least 3 credit hours.
3. All graduate students who have completed all course work and thesis/dissertation credits as listed on their approved Plan of Study, and are only enrolled to satisfy continuous enrollment requirements to complete their thesis or dissertation, may petition to be classified as full-time graduate students with an enrollment of at least 1 credit hour.
4. Under exceptional circumstances, graduate students in their last semester of study, as verified by their approved Plan of Study, may petition to be classified as full-time graduate students with an enrollment of the remaining credits hours needed to complete their degree.

The following eligibility guidelines must first be satisfied prior to submitting the petition to seek full-time graduate student status. A separate petition must be submitted for each term in which this status is being sought. The student must have:

- a. an approved Plan of Study on file in the Graduate College.
- b. maintained continuous enrollment during the previous 12-month period.
- c. enrolled in the minimum number of credit hours as stipulated by one of the four applicable conditions above.