

IV. GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

In 2011-12 the Department of Statistics and Probability has 30 teaching or research assistants. Approximately 7 of these assistantships become available each year as previous holders complete their degrees. Advanced students fill assistantships for statistical consulting and research assistantships. A few students hold assistantships in other departments.

Requirements for the three levels (I, II, and III) of teaching assistantships are as determined by the MSU/GEU contract. See <http://grad.msu.edu/2011-2015GEUContract.pdf>. Research assistantships are classified in approximately the same way.

Assistants are paid in equal installments every two weeks over nine months on 9/16 and on 5/15. For international students assistantships are sufficient to satisfy the financial requirements of the University. The 2011-2012 stipends for the nine month academic year are approximately:

	Per 9 months	Per Month
Level 1	\$15,000	\$1,666
Level 2	\$15,174	\$1,686
Level 3	\$15,363	\$1,707

Teaching assistants with a master's degrees begin at Level 2 and reach Level 3 after six semesters as a teaching assistant. Students without a master's degree begin at Level 1, and reach Level 2 after 2 semesters as an assistant. Precise definitions are given in the MSU/GEU contract document for teaching assistants. For other assistants the spirit of the MSU/GEU rules is maintained, with the provision that an assistant's level is never decreased.

In recent years the Department has usually been able to provide an assistantship for students, who have passed the SPEAK test (see IV.5), for the three summer months, at the same rate of pay as their academic salary for the previous academic year. All new graduate assistants are guaranteed an assistantship for the following summer. If the SPEAK test is not passed by the second summer the student may not receive an assistantship offer for the summer.

Whenever graduate assistants pay tuition they are considered at in-state rates. For 2011-12 if a graduate assistant takes more than 9 credits he/she will pay \$531.75 (in-state) per credit hour. There is a tuition waiver for 9 credits for Fall and Spring Semesters. Students who hold summer appointments receive waivers for 5 credits. Half-time assistants are expected to take 9 credits for Fall and Spring Semesters and 3-5 credits in Summer Semester. The university requires that all Ph.D. students enroll in 24 credits of 999 (research) courses before they can graduate. The University pays for insurance for graduate assistants and part of the fees for spouse and children. See the MSU/GEU contract

IV.1 Acceptance of an Assistantship

Those offered assistantships during the period November 16 to April 15 for the following academic year are encouraged to respond as soon as possible. However, a student is not obligated to respond until April 15. A student who has accepted an assistantship should notify other universities immediately of his/her decision.

IV.2 Duties of an Assistant

The Department presently teaches 3 undergraduate courses which meet in large lectures supplemented by recitation classes that meets once each week: STT 200, STT 201, and STT 315. Our STT 315 course is for business students and STT 200 and 201 are courses for students from a variety of disciplines. STT 201 has a computer laboratory component. Graduate assistants teach the recitations during the academic year. Assistants are assigned four recitation sections in STT 200 and STT 315 and three two hour recitations in STT 201 (computer lab) per semester, are asked to grade for those recitations, hold regular tutoring sessions (office hours), and work in the department helproom at assigned times. The maximum number of hours for a half-time assistant is 20 hours per week during the semester. Assistants must pass the University English test, SPEAK, before being allowed to teach classes. (See Section IV on SPEAK). Those who have not passed SPEAK are assigned to grade for faculty members. If an assistant has not shown any improvement on SPEAK the assistantship may not be renewed for the following year.

IV.3 Criteria for Awarding Graduate Assistantships

A student's academic record, GRE scores and reference letters of professors are the principal determining factors in awarding assistantships. Particular attention is paid to the student's grades in mathematics. Students should ask those writing reference letters to comment on their impression of their mathematical ability. While students are progressing successfully their assistantships are continued for two academic years for MS candidates and for up to five years for doctoral candidates. Doctoral candidates with particularly strong preparation may be informed of a shorter expected time until completion of the degree.

IV.4 Responsibilities of a Teaching Assistant

The responsibilities of a teaching assistant are as described in the MSU/GEU contract. Suggestions are offered below.

1. The assistant will arrive at each assigned class or recitation at least five minutes before the assigned meeting time.
2. If the assistant needs to miss an assigned class or Helproom hour for reasons of illness or other personal or professional matters the assistant will arrange for a replacement and will inform a department secretary of the change.
3. The assistant will treat students with respect, and, to the best of her/his ability, teach classes and grade papers as requested by her/his supervisor.

IV.5 SPEAK

Students whose native language is not English are required by the University to score 50 or more on the SPEAK examination in order to teach. This exam is given by the English Language Center at the beginning and end of each semester. Students who score 45 may also be approved upon appeal to teach in recitations. Since most department assistantships are for teaching, the Department expects assistants to be approved within a maximum of one year, preferably sooner. The assistantship of a student may not be renewed for a second year if this requirement is not satisfied. A decision not to renew for this reason is made by the Graduate Support Committee of three or more faculty members, in concurrence with the chairperson.

IV.6 Union for Teaching Assistants

Teaching assistants (those assigned to meet students in a classroom or computer laboratory) are represented by the MSU Graduate Employees Union. Teaching assistants must either choose to join the union or choose to be "represented by" the union. In either case an amount is deducted from the student's stipend. Currently that is approximately \$24/month with slightly less for those only "represented". For the specific amount see the union contract at <http://grad.msu.edu/2011-2015GEUContract.pdf>.

IV.7 Medical Insurance for Assistants

Coverage is provided by the assistantship, as described at <http://grad.msu.edu/wellness/occupational/healthinsurance.aspx>. The insurance company is Chickering.

IV.8 Renewal of Assistantships

Each February or March the graduate assistant is asked whether he/she wishes his/her assistantship to be renewed for the following academic year. As stated in the MSU-GEU contract an assistant must be informed by March 31 of each year whether his/her assistantship will be renewed. Decisions are made by the Chairperson as recommended by the Graduate Support Committee. In the case of non-renewal the student may appeal to the Graduate Support Committee, and be represented at a meeting by any person he/she wishes.

Assistantships may not be renewed if

1. The student has failed to maintain a GPA above 3.0.
2. The student has not passed a preliminary examination within the three years of entrance into the doctoral program.
3. The student has not passed a preliminary examination after two tries.
4. The student's performance as a teaching assistant has been unsatisfactory as determined by teaching evaluations and visits to his/her classroom.
5. The student has not qualified to teach within 12 months of entrance into the doctoral program as determined by the English Language Center and the Department.

IV.9 Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

Whenever a student and advisor are in conflict the student may appeal to the Department Chairperson for a resolution. The chairperson should then consult with the advisor and student, and seek advice from others, within and outside the department. The student has the right to ask for a change of advisors, and the chairperson should ordinarily make such a change within one month to accommodate the wishes of the student.

IV.10 Integrity in Research and Creative Activities

Each advisor and student should read the document "Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities," available at <http://grad.msu.edu/publications/docs/integrityresearch.pdf>, particularly pages 12-15 of that document. For example, that document states

Key Principles of Integrity

Integrity in research and creative activities embodies a range of practices that includes:

- Honesty in proposing, performing, and reporting research
- Recognition of prior work
- Confidentiality in peer review
- Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest
- Compliance with institutional and sponsor requirements
- Protection of human subjects and humane care of animals in the conduct of research
- Collegiality in scholarly interactions and sharing of resources

During orientation the Department will summarize these guidelines and will remind faculty and students periodically. Students with questions concerning these issues should consult their advisors, the graduate director, and/or the Department chairperson.

IV.11 Responsible Conduct of Research Training

The initial training of PhD students and individuals associated with research projects will consist of the following components:

1. Completion of at least 2 workshops offered by the Graduate School on Responsible Conduct of Research. The schedule and description of workshops is available at <http://grad.msu.edu/rcr/>. For individuals involved in human subjects research, one of the workshops may be substituted with MSU tutorial for Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) available at <http://www.humanresearch.msu.edu/>.

Total time: 4 hours during academic year.

Documentation: list of workshop participants from the Graduate School, HRPP certificate.

2. Completion of a 2-hour face to face training with a designated faculty member. During the training, the following issues will be addressed:
 - Authorship guidelines
 - Plagiarism
 - Conflict of interest
 - Research Misconduct
 - Questionable Research Practices

Students keep a summary RCR document outlining these issues.

Total time: 2 hours during first or second week of Fall semester.

Documentation: signed Form I below after completion of this portion of training.

3. Completion of assigned reading from the list below. This list will be updated annually.
 - MSU Authorships Guidelines available at <http://rio.msu.edu/authorshipguidelines.htm>
 - Research Data: Management, Control, Access available at http://rio.msu.edu/research_data.htm
 - Parker RA, Berman NG. Criteria for authorship for statisticians in medical papers. *Statistics in Medicine* 1998, 17:2289-2299.
 - Teaching Responsible Conduct of Research. *Lancet* 2009 Nov 7;374(9701):1568.
 - Hegyvary ST. What every author should know about redundant and duplicate publication. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 2005, 37(4): 295-297.
 - DeAngelis CD. Duplicate publication, multiple problems. *JAMA*, 2004, 292:1745-1746.
 - Froman RD. The importance of peer review. *Research in Nursing and Health*, 2006, 29:253-255.

Total time: 2 hours during Fall/Spring semester for student's first year at MSU.
Documentation: signed Form II given below after completion of this portion of training.

The refresher training will occur annually and will include:

1. Review of the summary RCR document, conflict of interest and authorship issues and discussion with a designated faculty member. Total time: 1 hour.
2. Completion of assigned reading from the updated list of resources. Total time: 2 hours.
3. Completion of HRPP refresher training as required (every 2 years, total time: 4 hours)

STT GRADUATE STUDENT'S CERTIFICATION FORM I

I have attended the two hour face to face training and I understand each of the preceding standards. _____ (initial)

I certify that I am able to meet each of these standards as a graduate student at the Michigan State University Department of Statistics and Probability _____ (initial)

OR

I wish to discuss these standards and/or discuss reasonable accommodations with the appropriate individuals at the Michigan State University Department of Statistics and Probability _____ (initial)

Name (please print or type) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

STT GRADUATE STUDENT'S CERTIFICATION FORM II:

I have completed the assigned reading and I understand their content. _____ (initial)

OR

I wish to discuss their content with the appropriate individuals at the Michigan State University Department of Statistics and Probability _____(initial)

Name (please print or type)_____

Signature_____

Date_____

IV.12 Vacations, Leaves, Attendance at Meetings

To the best of its ability the department tries to accommodate leaves for illness, pregnancy, and other personal matters. It will make arrangements for temporary replacement of such assistants for up to 6 weeks with no loss in pay. The Department encourages attendance at professional meetings, and does its best to accommodate this. Vacations are ordinarily not allowed for teaching assistants during the academic year and summer sessions. See “Graduate Assistant Illness, Injury, and Pregnancy Leave Policy” in the Graduate Education section of the Academic Programs: <http://www.reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/>

IV.13 Student Files

The Department maintains two files for teaching assistants:

- (1) An academic file, maintained for all graduate students, and
- (2) An assistantship file is maintained for all teaching assistants. Any information concerning a student's role as a teaching assistant is kept in this file. That file may be read by the teaching assistant at any time. A teaching assistant may challenge the accuracy of any item in that file by submitting a letter to the chairperson. The letter will be placed in the file. See the MSU/GEU contract for more details. Students who are not teaching assistants may wish to consult “Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (GSSR), available at: <http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/graduate-student-rights-and-responsibilities> .

IV.14 Orientation

Three orientation meetings are available to new graduate students who will begin study with the Fall semester. Details are sent to new students in the early part of summer.

- (1) A university orientation for all new graduate students usually held in the week prior to the beginning of Fall semester,
- (2) A university orientation for new teaching assistants, usually held about two weeks prior to the beginning of Fall semester,
- (3) A departmental orientation held during the week before Fall semester begins. This has two parts, a session for new teaching assistants, and another on department programs and policies. A departmental meeting of all faculty and students is held a few days before classes begin. All graduate students are required to attend. Graduate assistants are expected to be on campus by August 16, 2011 or before. Appointments begin August 16, 2011.

IV.15 Outside Pay

An assistant may accept outside pay for such things as tutoring (other than the class he/she is teaching) and consulting, keeping in mind his/her responsibilities as a student and assistant. International students should always be aware of "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services" - USCIS) rules which prohibit the earning of additional amounts beyond that paid by halftime assistants. Such students should always check with the International Students Office before accepting such additional pay. Tutoring for additional pay for a class an assistant is teaching is not allowed.

IV.16 Judicial Structure

The Graduate Support Committee, which includes one student, will serve to hear student complaints at such times as this becomes necessary. This committee will hear student complaints only if the problem cannot be resolved after consulting with the graduate director, the student's major professor(s), and the department chairperson. If satisfactory resolution of a conflict is not achieved, the student may seek resolution through appropriate college/university judiciary structure (See the Graduate Student Rights & Responsibilities document, <http://grad.msu.edu/gsr/>).

IV.17 Grievance Procedure

The 56-year history of the department indicates that serious instances of disputes involving the academic life of students occur very infrequently. However, when they do, students may ask the Advisory Committee of the Department (a committee consisting of all tenure-track faculty, plus two elected students) to consider their case, keeping in mind a student's wish for privacy. If, in the opinion of the students, there is no satisfactory resolution, the student may contact the Office of the Ombudsman of the University (soffin@msu.edu).