Kean University

Graduate & Doctoral Assistantship Handbook

Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

ABOUT US

In keeping with our commitment to deliver high-quality, affordable education, Kean University offers a limited number of graduate and doctoral assistantships each year. At Kean, the Graduate Assistantships are available in three categories: Graduate Administrative Assistant (GAA), Graduate Research Assistant (GRA), and Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA). Doctoral Assistantships (DA) support students enrolled in Doctoral programs. Overall, Graduate and Doctoral Assistants play a key role in supporting the University's teaching, research, and service missions while receiving financial support and gaining valuable professional experience. The program is designed to support the successful completion of the student's degree while enhancing career prospects through hands-on experience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I: Assistantship Roles & Definitions 5
Purpose 5
Graduate Administrative Assistant (GAA) 5
Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) 5
Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) 5
Doctoral Assistant (DA) 6
Eligibility 6
Section II: Administrative Guidelines 7
1. Financial Aid 7
2. Orientation & Handbook Acknowledgment 7
3. Work Schedule and Hourly Limits 7
4. Winter Break 8
5. Spring Break 8
6. Summer Sessions 8
7. Internship Policy 8
8. Payroll and Timekeeping 9
9. Direct Deposit 9
10. Position Descriptions and Duties 9
Section III: Student Expectations & Professional Development 10
1. Introduction 10
2. Assistantship Duties 10
3. Supervision and Evaluation 10
4. Assistantship Changes & Reappointment 11
5. Academic Requirements 11
6. Personal and Professional Development 11
Section IV: Graduate Assistants (GA) 13
Conditions of Appointment 13
Duration 13

Academic Registration 13
Financial Aid Impact 13
Academic Performance & Standing 14
Resignation & Termination 14
Weekly Work Hours 14
Internship Coverage 15
Final Semester Credit Load 15
Section V: Doctoral Assistants (DA) 16
Conditions of Appointment 16
Duration 16
Academic Enrollment Requirements 16
Financial Aid Considerations 16
Academic Performance 16
Course Failure or Incompletion 16
Resignation & Termination 17
Weekly Work Hours 17
Internship Coverage 17
Final Semester Credit Load 17
Section VI: Contact Information 18
Develop Good Communication With Your Supervisor 18

Section I: Assistantship Roles & Definitions

Kean University offers two types of assistantships: Graduate Assistantships, available in three types (GAA, GRA, and GTA), and Doctoral Assistantships (DA). Candidates apply for a Graduate Assistantship through the graduate admissions portal when applying to a Kean graduate program (or as a current Kean graduate student); apply by March 1 for priority consideration.

Purpose

Graduate and Doctoral assistantships are designed to provide:

- Merit-based scholarship support to help students pursue advanced study.
- Graduate-level learning experiences that build professional and academic skills.
- Direct benefits to the University, including instructional support, research productivity, and staffing for academic and administrative programs.

Graduate Administrative Assistant (GAA)

A graduate student working in any division of the University in roles that provide direct, substantive, or sustained support for teaching or research initiatives. Duties may include clinical or administrative work, but they must be inherently related to the student's graduate education and professional goals. Examples include coordinating programs, organizing events, analyzing data, campus ambassador roles, supporting special projects, peer mentoring, and supporting student services. GAA positions may not be used for roles whose primary responsibilities are purely clerical, or that provide routine secretarial, administrative, or office staffing support.

Graduate Research Assistant (GRA)

A graduate student who assists in conducting research of a scholarly nature, typically under faculty supervision. The work of a GRA may include developing specific research projects, theoretical analyses and modeling, gathering and analyzing data, literature reviews and library searches, curating exhibitions, special or independent projects that require substantive research, externally funded projects, and the production or publication of scholarly journals and research reports.

Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)

A graduate student with instructional assignments in large-size or specialized undergraduate courses, under the supervision of a faculty member who has ultimate responsibility for the course. GTAs do not replace faculty in the classroom; they enhance instruction and gain teaching experience, and doctoral candidates are encouraged to apply. GTAs may be assigned as teachers of record only for courses taught in multiple sections with the overall effort led by a faculty

course section leader, who guides and evaluates the GTA's work. Duties may include classroom support and proctoring, tutoring and office hours, leading discussion, recitation, or laboratory sessions, grading and assessment support, and lecture preparation and class correspondence.

GTA compensation differs from GAA/GRA appointments: GTAs receive one-third (1/3) tuition remission and a fixed stipend for each course section or recitation taught, with a maximum of three (3) sections per semester.

Doctoral Assistant (DA)

A doctoral student who provides general administrative or academic support and assists faculty with teaching, research, and clinic-based work as part of a doctoral program. The work is defined by a formal contract. Doctoral Assistantships are administered separately by the individual doctoral programs, and cover tuition and fees for the Fall, Spring, and Summer sessions.

Eligibility

To qualify for a graduate or doctoral assistantship, students must meet the following criteria:

Requirement	Details
Education	Hold a Baccalaureate Degree
Credit Load	Be enrolled for no more than 12 credits per semester, but no less than 9 credits per semester of graduate study in their program at the University
Academic Standing	Consistent with the expectations for the role of Graduate or Doctoral Assistant
GPA	Minimum 3.5 graduate GPA at Kean after completing at least 12 credits.

Section II: Administrative Guidelines

The following guidelines apply to all Graduate and Doctoral Assistants.

1. Financial Aid

If you apply for Financial Aid and are later awarded an assistantship:

- You may keep your aid to cover additional expenses or cancel it.
- To cancel aid, contact the Office of Financial Aid (FinAid@kean.edu) immediately.
- If you keep the aid, it is applied to tuition and fees before the assistantship waiver, which may reduce your aid eligibility.

2. Orientation & Handbook Acknowledgment

Before the assistantship begins, all new Graduate Assistants (GAs) and Doctoral Assistants (DAs), as well as their supervisors, must complete the GA/DA orientation, which is delivered online and may be completed asynchronously.

Handbook Acknowledgment: Acknowledgment of this handbook is collected electronically. When accepting the assistantship offer, the student confirms the acknowledgement that they have received, read, and agree to abide by the terms, conditions, policies, and procedures in this handbook. This electronic acknowledgment is recorded with the offer of acceptance and applies to all GAs and DAs.

3. Work Schedule and Hourly Limits

Your weekly work hours are stated in your appointment letter and set in collaboration with your supervisor. Schedules vary by department but must follow these limits:

Rule	Details
Maximum daily hours	7.5 hours per day
Mandatory break	30-minute break after 5 consecutive hours of work
Maximum weekly hours	Based on assistantship type (see Weekly Work Hours in Sections IV and V)
Time tracking	All hours must be clocked in/out via Workday
Supervisor approval	Hours must be approved by your supervisor

Remote and off-hours work: Remote work and work outside standard business hours (evenings, early mornings, or weekends) are permitted only with prior supervisor approval.

You may not exceed your assigned weekly hour limit. GA/DAs are not required to work when classes are not in session, including University holidays (listed on kean.edu); they may work during these periods only with supervisor approval. Supervisors and GA/DAs should review work records regularly for accuracy.

4. Winter Break

Work over Winter Break is optional and voluntary and must be approved by the supervisor and Human Resources (HR).

- Full-Time GA/DAs may work up to 10 hours per week; Half-Time GA/DAs up to 4 hours per week.
- Winter session tuition is not covered by the assistantship.
- Any hours worked during winter break will be deducted from the remaining GA budget allocated for the spring term.

5. Spring Break

As with Winter Break, work during Spring Break is optional and voluntary, and must be approved by the supervisor and HR.

6. Summer Sessions

Graduate Assistants (GAs): GAs who wish to work during the summer may be hired separately pending HR and Budget office approval; the supervisor submits the request to studenthiring@kean.edu, copying ga@kean.edu. GAs are not eligible for tuition or fee waivers during the summer coursework.

Doctoral Assistants (DAs): The summer session is part of the Doctoral program and is covered by the assistantship. DAs must be enrolled in coursework to be eligible for summer work.

7. Internship Policy

Internships (including externships, clinical, practicum, and fieldwork courses) may be eligible for assistantship tuition waivers if they are required for the degree program. Eligibility is evaluated case-by-case, based on the student's ability to fulfill GA hourly responsibilities and the internship's hour requirements. Internship and academic courses both count toward the 9-credit minimum and 12-credit maximum required for assistantship eligibility.

Doctoral Assistantships do not include tuition coverage of internship courses.

8. Payroll and Timekeeping

Students are responsible for entering their own hours worked in Workday. Supervisors review and approve those hours. Learning to enter time correctly is essential.

Common errors to avoid: submitting time after the payroll deadline, entering hours under the wrong position, exceeding the approved weekly limit, and recording hours that do not match the approved schedule.

Supervisors monitor reports to ensure GA/DAs do not exceed the maximum allowable hours.

9. Direct Deposit

- All assistantship payments are made via direct deposit.
- GA/DAs must complete a Direct Deposit Form during onboarding with studenthiring@kean.edu.

10. Position Descriptions and Duties

Each GA/DA receives a position description from their supervisor outlining expected responsibilities, which may include ongoing or project-based duties. Students should seek clarification on duties as needed and offer ideas for improvement once oriented to departmental needs.

Section III: Student Expectations & Professional Development

1. Introduction

As a Graduate Assistant (GA) or Doctoral Assistant (DA), you support the University's teaching, research, and service missions while receiving financial assistance and gaining applied professional experience that supports your degree and career goals.

This section sets out the expectations that apply to every assistant: your duties and scope of work, supervision and evaluation, academic and enrollment requirements, and your responsibilities for professional conduct and growth.

Your success depends on understanding these expectations, communicating openly with your supervisor, and meeting the standards outlined in this handbook. Questions may be directed to the Graduate Assistantship Office at ga@kean.edu.

2. Assistantship Duties

Scope of Responsibilities: Graduate and Doctoral Assistants support university-related activities only. Your tasks must relate directly to University projects, academic programs, or institutional initiatives.

Prohibited Activities:

You may NOT be asked to...
Run personal errands for your supervisor
Perform non-university or personal duties
Complete off-campus tasks unrelated to your assistantship

If you are asked to perform duties outside the scope of your role, report it to the Graduate Assistantship Office immediately at ga@kean.edu.

3. Supervision and Evaluation

Oversight: Your assigned supervisor, typically a senior professor or administrator, oversees your assistantship activities. Two formal performance evaluations are completed each semester.

Milestone	Details
Job Description	A written job description must be provided at the beginning of your appointment
Midpoint Evaluation	Completed at the midpoint of the semester
End-of-Semester Evaluation	Completed at the end of the semester
Record Retention	Evaluations are to be retained by the University for the full duration of your assistantship

4. Assistantship Changes & Reappointment

Mid-Semester Changes: Mid-semester changes in assignments are not permitted unless there is a serious, unresolved conflict with your supervisor; your supervisor raises a significant performance concern (which may lead to termination); or your skills do not align with the position. Changes from part-time to full-time are not allowed during the academic year.

Reappointment: During the spring semester, the GA Coordinator distributes forms to you and your supervisor to assess performance evaluation results, the supervisor's recommendation, and your completed and remaining credits. Reappointment is contingent upon a minimum 3.5 GPA, a satisfactory supervisor evaluation, and timely submission of all forms. Failure to return forms will result in removal from the program.

5. Academic Requirements

Course Registration: You must register for a minimum of 9 credits and a maximum of 12 credits each semester.

Academic Progress: Maintain a minimum of 3.5 GPA each semester. If you face academic challenges in your first semester, consider withdrawing from the assistantship the following term after consulting your supervisor and the Graduate Assistantship Office.

Withdrawal: Withdrawing mid-semester without an extreme, documented circumstance (e.g., serious illness) results in full tuition liability. To withdraw, notify your Supervisor, the Graduate Assistantship Office, Student Hiring, and the Registrar (ga@kean.edu, studenthiring@kean.edu, regme@kean.edu).

Note: notifying the Graduate Assistantship Office does not automatically withdraw you from your courses.

6. Personal and Professional Development

Professional Conduct: Demonstrate professional behavior and communication with your supervisor and colleagues and build meaningful relationships across departments.

Confidentiality: You may access sensitive information, including student academic records and faculty or department activities. All actions must comply with University policy and legal standards. Consult your supervisor about confidentiality expectations specific to your role.

Campus Engagement: We encourage involvement in campus activities, including:

- University committees seeking graduate student inputs.
- GA/DA mixers and training and professional-development events hosted by the Graduate Assistantship Office.

Career-Related Development: Not every role aligns perfectly with your academic field; be proactive in making the most of your experience (for example, writing newsletters, assisting with university-wide projects, analyzing data for self-studies, or developing student surveys).

Career Services (required): All GAs and DAs must visit the Office of Career Services at least once during their appointment to review their résumé and discuss future career plans.

Section IV: Graduate Assistants (GA)

This section applies to Graduate Assistants. Doctoral Assistants should refer to Section V.

Conditions of Appointment

- The assistantship is in effect for a full academic year (Fall through Spring) unless otherwise stated; assistantships that begin in Spring are valid for the Spring semester only.
- Reappointment for additional semesters depends on credit requirements and the availability of funding.
- Renewal of this position is contingent upon your supervisor receiving a GA award for the following academic year.
- If your supervisor does not receive an award for the following academic year, you remain eligible to apply for a GA position and may be considered for placement with another supervisor or department.
- GAs are not required to work during Winter or Summer sessions.
- If a GA is asked to work during winter, the department must obtain approval from the Budget Office, Graduate Assistantship Office, and HR by emailing studenthiring@kean.edu and copying ga@kean.edu and budget@kean.edu; approved winter hours are deducted from required spring hours.
- Winter and summer session tuition is not covered for GAs. In the summer, GAs may be hired as student workers through HR (subject to departmental funding); wages are hourly and tuition is not covered.
- GAs who wish to work during the summer may be hired separately pending HR and Budget office approval; the supervisor submits the request to studenthiring@kean.edu, copying ga@kean.edu. GAs are not eligible for tuition or fee waivers during the summer coursework.

Duration

- Awarded for one academic year during your master's degree study (September through June).
- May be renewed for one additional academic year if the student has 18 or more remaining credits, funding is available, and is contingent upon your supervisor receiving a GA award for the following academic year.
- Minimum 9 and maximum 12 credits per semester. Students receiving a full tuition waiver must enroll in at least 9 credits; those enrolled in fewer are not eligible to maintain the assistantship.

Academic Registration

- Register for a minimum of 9 graduate credits each semester; the University waives tuition and fees based on assistantship status.

- Do not register for more than 12 credits per semester (students in the DPT, PsyD, or Physician Assistant programs may register for up to 18 credits). Contact ga@kean.edu for extenuating circumstances.
- If a course is dropped or withdrawn, university-wide withdrawal policies apply.

Financial Aid Impact

- Assistantship awards may affect financial aid eligibility.
- Consult the Financial Aid Office (FinAid@kean.edu) before accepting the assistantship.

Academic Performance & Standing

- Maintain a minimum 3.5 GPA each semester; falling below this results in termination of the assistantship.
- To be reconsidered, submit a written appeal to the Graduate Assistantship Office at ga@kean.edu.
- A grade of "F" or "NC" results in full financial liability for the course.
- A grade of "Incomplete" must be resolved by the 11th week of the following semester.

Resignation & Termination

Resignation: If a GA resigns before the end of the appointment, at least two weeks' written notice must be provided to the supervisor. **If effective before the end of a semester, the GA is liable for all tuition and fees for that semester**; if effective at the end of the semester, tuition coverage for the completed semester is honored.

Supervisor-Initiated Termination: A supervisor who wishes to end an assistantship must:

- Document the performance or conduct concerns and discuss them directly with the student.
- During the mid-year review, the student should be provided with an opportunity to improve, including a clear outline of required improvement measures. If sufficient improvement is not demonstrated within two weeks, you may proceed with the termination steps outlined below.
- Notify the Graduate Assistantship Office (ga@kean.edu) and Student Hiring (studenthiring@kean.edu) of the intent to terminate, with supporting documentation.
- Provide the student with written notice and a clear explanation of the reason for termination.
- Send a formal termination letter to the student, copying ga@kean.edu and studenthiring@kean.edu, stating the effective date.
- Apply the same tuition rules as resignation: liability for the semester if termination is effective before the semester ends; tuition coverage honored if effective at the end of the semester.
- If you decide not to renew your GA at the end of the fall semester for the spring term, you must provide at least two weeks' notice to both the student, ga@kean.edu, and studenthiring@kean.edu, in accordance with the steps outlined above.

Weekly Work Hours

GRA and GAA appointments are compensated by fixed hourly-rate. The workload expectations and the corresponding tuition waivers are:

GRA & GAA	Hours per Week
Full-Time (full tuition waiver)	15-20 hours per week
Half-Time (half tuition waiver)	7.5-10 hours per week
Quarter-Time (quarter tuition waiver)**(for Dept. of Physical Therapy Only)**	3.75-5 hours per week

GTA appointments are compensated per course section taught (one-third tuition remission and a fixed stipend per section, maximum three sections per semester) rather than by weekly hour ranges.

GTA	Hours per Week
Full-Time (full tuition waiver)	15-20 hours per week
Two-third (Two-third tuition waiver)	10-13 hours per week
One-third (One-third tuition waiver)	5-6.5 hours per week

Internship Coverage

- Tuition for internships is evaluated case-by-case; contact the GA Coordinator at ga@kean.edu to determine eligibility.
- Internships that prevent fulfillment of assistantship work hours, or that are not required by the academic program, are not eligible for tuition coverage.
- Given evidence that the student can continue to fulfill their appointed hourly GA requirements while on internship (including externships, practicum, clinical and fieldwork courses), students who have internships that are degree requirements for the student's program can be covered under the GA allocation tuition waiver. Decisions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if a given student will be able to fulfill their GA responsibilities while on internship. Eligibility for internship coverage is based on hourly requirements of the internship, which varies by program. Internship courses and academic

courses that are degree requirements will both be counted towards the credit requirement for GAs (minimum 9 credits, maximum 12 credits).

Final Semester Credit Load

- Students enrolled in fewer than 9 credits in their final semester are ineligible for a graduate assistantship. Contact ga@kean.edu for extenuating circumstances.
- Coordinate with your department to ensure credit loads meet requirements throughout the program.

Section V: Doctoral Assistants (DA)

This section applies to Doctoral Assistants. Graduate Assistants should refer to Section IV.

Conditions of Appointment

- Valid for the designated duration of the student's academic program, including winter and summer sessions, until the student begins a full-time internship or enrolls in fewer than 9 credits in a semester.
- If classes continue as part of an annual program, summer courses are covered at lower credit hours.

Duration

- Doctoral Assistantships are offered for the full duration of the doctoral program, based on program structure and available funding.
- Renewal and continuation depend on satisfactory academic progress and funding availability.
- Doctoral assistantships do not include tuition coverage of internship courses.

Academic Enrollment Requirements

- Register for and complete a minimum of 9 credits per semester in the doctoral program; tuition and fees are waived based on assistantship status.
- Withdrawal from any course is subject to university-wide withdrawal policies.

Financial Aid Considerations

- Assistantship awards may affect financial aid eligibility.
- Consult the Financial Aid Office (finaid@kean.edu) if you plan to apply.

Academic Performance

- Maintain a minimum 3.5 GPA at the end of each semester.

- If the GPA falls below 3.5, the assistantship is terminated. To be reconsidered for future assistantships, submit a written appeal to the Graduate Assistantship Office at ga@kean.edu.

Course Failure or Incompletion

- A grade of "F" or "NC" makes the student financially responsible for the full cost of the course.
- A grade of "Incomplete" must be resolved by the 11th week of the following semester.

Resignation & Termination

Resignation: If a DA resigns before the end of the appointment, at least two weeks' written notice must be provided to the supervisor. **If effective before the end of a semester, the DA is liable for all tuition and fees for that semester**; if effective at the end of the semester, tuition coverage for the completed semester is honored.

Supervisor-Initiated Termination: A supervisor who wishes to end an assistantship must:

- Document the performance or conduct concerns and discuss them directly with the student.
- During the mid-year review, the student should be provided with an opportunity to improve, including a clear outline of required improvement measures. If sufficient improvement is not demonstrated within two weeks, you may proceed with the termination steps outlined below.
- Notify the Graduate Assistantship Office (ga@kean.edu) and Student Hiring (studenthiring@kean.edu) of the intent to terminate, with supporting documentation.
- Provide the student with written notice and a clear explanation of the reason for termination.
- Send a formal termination letter to the student, copying ga@kean.edu and studenthiring@kean.edu, stating the effective date.
- Apply the same tuition rules as resignation: liability for the semester if termination is effective before the semester ends; tuition coverage honored if effective at the end of the semester.
- If you decide not to renew your DA at the end of the fall semester for the spring term, you must provide at least two weeks' notice to both the student, ga@kean.edu, and studenthiring@kean.edu, in accordance with the steps outlined above.

Weekly Work Hours

Doctoral Assistantship work hours must fall within the following ranges:

Type	Hours per Week
Full-Time	15-20 hours per week
Half-Time	7.5-10 hours per week

Quarter-Time (quarter tuition waiver)**(for Dept. of Physical Therapy Only)**	3.75-5 hours per week

Internship Coverage

- Tuition coverage for internships is determined case-by-case; contact the GA Coordinator to determine eligibility.
- Full-time internships that prevent fulfillment of required hours, or internships that are not a required component of the degree program, are not eligible for coverage.
- Doctoral assistantships do not include tuition coverage of internship courses.

Final Semester Credit Load

- Students enrolled in fewer than 9 credits during their final semester are not eligible to continue as Doctoral Assistants.
- It is the student's responsibility to work with the department coordinator to ensure credit-load compliance throughout the program.

Section VI: Contact Information

Office / Resource	Contact
GA/DA Program Office	ga@kean.edu
Human Resources - Student Hiring	studenthiring@kean.edu
Billing / Tuition Waivers	billing@kean.edu
Financial Aid	FinAid@kean.edu
Registrar's Office	regme@kean.edu
GA Program Website	Kean GA Program
Kean Workday	Workday Login

Develop Good Communication with Your Supervisor

- Maintain a positive and professional relationship.
- Establish clear communication and discuss any issues that arise.
- After a direct discussion, if either party feels an external mediator is needed, contact the GA Coordinator at ga@kean.edu.

Thank you for your commitment to the Graduate and Doctoral Assistantship Program. We are here to support your academic and professional success. Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

© Kean University. All rights reserved.