SW 209: Graduate Assistant Policy

Purpose: Graduate assistantships offer students hands-on experiential learning opportunities, one-on-one instruction and mentoring with social work faculty members/professional staff, and work experience to prepare them for careers as professional social workers. In turn, faculty members/professional staff are provided with the opportunity to work one-on-one with graduate assistants in order to advance their research, scholarship, teaching and mentoring agendas as well as the mission of the School of Social Work and its commitment to students. The Graduate Assistant Policy is designed to maximize the success of the graduate assistantship experience for the benefit of the student, the faculty member/professional staff, and School of Social Work. These policies and procedures supplement the information provided to the student by the Graduate School as well as provide structure and accountability in the graduate assistantship experience. The following policy includes information regarding:

- Selection of Graduate Assistants (GAs)
- Assignment of GAs
- Responsibilities of GA Supervisors
- Responsibilities of GAs
- GA Time & Attendance
- Faculty/Professional Staff Evaluation of GAs, including Dismissal
- GA Reflections on the GA Experience

Policy Statement:
Selection of Graduate Assistants (GAs)

i. The number of available graduate assistantships will be determined by the Graduate College and availability of grant or other funds within the School of Social Work designated for Graduate Assistants.

ii. Upon notification of the number available graduate assistantships, the Director of the School of Social Work shall oversee the solicitations for graduate assistantship applicants for the following academic year and shall be forwarded to all Advanced-year MSW students and incoming first-year students enrolled at the main campus social work program. Incoming and present MSW students will be notified via email no later than the third Monday of April of the preceding academic year. The solicitation shall include the scope of possible responsibilities of the assistantship, GPA requirement, the time commitment per week, as well as tuition and health care benefits. Applications for GA positions must be submitted electronically to the Director by the end of Business on May 10th.
iii. Application for the graduate assistantship position will include:

1. Demographic information (name, BSU ID #, telephone number, email address, student’s status for the upcoming academic year, as well as degrees earned, honors/awards, special areas of study (i.e., advanced certificates)
2. Unofficial transcripts
3. Resume, including degrees earned, honors/awards, special areas of study (i.e., advanced certificates)
4. A brief essay explaining the reason for applying for the graduate assistantship, as well as relevant work skills they will bring to the graduate assistantship, such as computer skills and library skills.

iv. These materials in conjunction with the admissions application will be used to determine the final selection of GAs. The following criteria shall be used to rank viable applicants:

1. Undergraduate GPA and graduate (if applicable) for incoming first-year MSW students or undergraduate and graduate GPA current first-year MSW students enrolled in their second year of study. Students must have a GPA of 3.0 or higher.
2. Financial need (obtained from the Financial Aid office by the MSW Administrative Assistant)
3. Quality of the GA application
4. Membership in underrepresented group
5. And special considerations.

v. Faculty members shall be informed by the Director of the School of Social Work as to the number of graduate assistants for the upcoming academic year no later than May 1st. If a limited number of GA precludes each faculty having a graduate assistantship, the Director of the School of Social Work shall give preference to junior faculty in assigning a graduate assistant for the upcoming academic year. Additionally, preference shall be given to tenured faculty who have an ongoing research agenda or have extenuating circumstances that require a graduate assistant for the full academic year. Assignment of full and part-time GAs will be at the discretion of the Director of the School of Social Work and/or his/her designee based on the faculty’s workload and scholarship demands.

vi. Upon receipt of all required materials from the applicants, the Director of the School of Social Work and/or his/her designee shall forward a copy of each application to all faculty members eligible to be assigned a GA, no later than May 15th.

vii. Each faculty requesting a graduate assistant may request an interview of two or more candidates to ensure a satisfactory match between the faculty and the applicant. Except under extraordinary circumstances (i.e., removal of the GA will cause harm to a project) students may be appointed to only one GA position during their time in the MSW program. During the interview, the faculty are encouraged to discuss with the candidate the faculty members’ current research, scholarship and teaching/curriculum
needs for the upcoming year as well as information about the skill sets they are looking for in a GA. Upon review of the candidates’ application and/or interview, each faculty requesting a GA shall complete a Faculty Request for Graduate Assistant Form, requesting two possible candidates and ranking each candidate as their first and second choice.

viii. Requests shall be submitted to the Director of the School of Social Work no later than June 15th. Upon reviewing all requests, the Director of the School of Social Work or his/her designee shall notify each faculty via email of the assigned graduate assistant, considering the faculty’s request. Faculty notification of assigned graduate assistants shall be done no later than July 1st.

ix. Upon receipt of the notification of the assigned graduate assistant, each faculty has two weeks to accept or decline the offer of the graduate assistant candidate. Faculty are not required to accept the proposed assignments.

x. Students will be notified regarding GA assignments no later than one week prior to the start of the fall semester.

Responsibilities of GA Supervisors (Faculty members assigned a GA)

xi. GA Supervisors are expected to:

1. Establish work schedules with students that takes in to account the students course and field placement schedule as well as their GA needs;
2. Establish weekly supervision meetings in-person, by phone, or through e-mail communication, to assign projects, discuss progress of projects, provide necessary instruction for projects, and offer mentoring;
3. Provide clear instructions for all assigned tasks, activities, and projects and the needed training and resources to complete the work;
4. Provide ongoing supervision, instruction, and mentoring;
5. An in-depth explanation of GA benefits and responsibilities may be found on the following website: https://policy.boisestate.edu/human-resources/graduate-assistantships/

Responsibilities of GAs

xii. The responsibilities described here supplement those outlined in The Graduate School and Human Resources Forms that GAs complete when they accept graduate assistantships.

1. GAs are expected to commence their GA during the first week of classes.
2. Establish work schedules that accommodate their course and field placement schedules as well as the needs of the GA supervisor (faculty member). Students can be required to work at the SOSW, or may be able to work off campus, depending on supervisors’ needs and required resources to complete tasks;
3. Arrive to work on time and dressed professionally. Changes in work schedules and expected absences must be approved by the GAs’ supervisors.
(4) Each GA will be responsible for entering their time worked directly in the Boise State University payroll system according to the payroll schedule that will be provided no later than the first week of the semester.
(5) Unexpected absences must be immediately reported to the GA supervisor and the MSW Administrative Assistant.
(6) Complete tasks, activities, and projects on time and as instructed;
(7) Ask for direction and further clarification from GA supervisors when necessary;
(8) Attend all scheduled meetings with the GA supervisors;
(9) Complete and submit the Graduate Assistant Reflections on GA Experience form each semester of the graduate assistantship.

Faculty/Professional Staff Evaluation of GAs

xiii. Each semester, GA supervisors will complete evaluations of their GAs’ performance using the Social Work Department’s Graduate Assistant Evaluation Form. The forms will be completed by GA supervisors and discussed with GAs at an agreed upon time during the last two weeks of each semester of the GA work commitment period. GAs and GA supervisors will formally meet to discuss the evaluations. After discussion, the evaluation forms should be signed by both GAs and GA supervisors. Then, the forms are submitted the Director of the School of Social Work or his/her designee NO LATER than the last day of class.

xiv. If the GA receives an evaluation that reflects inadequate performance, excessive absences, or concerns for future performance, the GA supervisor shall submit the form to the Director of the School of Social Work and/or his/her designee to evaluate the GA’s continued assignment to his/her faculty supervisor. In most cases there will be a performance improvement plan implemented.

GA Reflection on GA Experience

xv. At the end of each semester, GAs will complete the Social Work Department’s Graduate Assistant Reflection on Experience form. GAs are encouraged, but not required, to share these forms with GA supervisors. Forms are submitted to the Director of the School of Social Work NO LATER than the last day of class.