



CONTRACTS & GRANTS OFFICE

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93106-9490

September 12, 2013

Re: Clarification on Policy Regarding the Use of Employment Titles for Graduate Students in Research Roles

To: All-Faculty Listserv

Good morning -

Please see the attached memo from Graduate Division regarding the difference between the employment titles used for student employees, mainly GSR vs Student Assistant titles.

Note that the determination of what employment title to select is based on the nature of the work performed.

Please advise if you have any questions and keep this information in mind as you make decisions about requesting employment for students.

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Attached: Clarification GSR-Student-Assistant employment.pdf

DATE September 8, 2013

TO: Department Chairs  
Graduate Advisors  
ORU Directors  
Business Officers/ASC Directors  
Graduate Program Assistants  
ORU Program Staff

FROM: Carol Genetti, Dean  
Graduate Division

RE: Clarification of Policy Regarding the Use of Employment Titles for Graduate Students in Research Roles

In recent months, the Graduate Division has received queries about the appropriate use of two different title codes under which students can be hired in research roles: the Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) and the Student Assistant IV. While both of these positions can be used for students in research roles, they differ significantly on a number of points. This memo provides clarification on the appropriate use of each, so as to regularize campus practice and to align it with that of other UC campuses.

Using the appropriate title code is especially important as the GSR title guarantees the provision of fee remission, health insurance, and non-resident supplemental tuition for any student who works 100 hours or more within an academic quarter. The Student Assistant title does not entail payment of these benefits.

The Assistant series is a *non-academic* job series and therefore is under the purview of UCOP Employee and Labor Relations. A full description is given at this URL: [http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/employees/policies\\_employee\\_labor\\_relations/system\\_series/b/15/aa0-36.html](http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/employees/policies_employee_labor_relations/system_series/b/15/aa0-36.html). Relevant points are copied here:

The series is characterized by the generally temporary nature of appointments, the general absence of continuing responsibility for the work performed, and the diversity of duties that may be assigned. Under general supervision, Assistant IV's perform a variety of complex duties in support of academic research projects; perform clerical, manual, advising, and/or public contact duties that require the use of specialized skills, and may, in addition, coordinate the work of a group of lower level Assistants.

This language explicitly allows the Assistant title to be used for research purposes. However, the appointments are generally temporary and the work is frequently clerical or manual.

The Graduate Student Researcher is an *academic* title, so is under the purview of UC Academic Personnel. It is described in the APM (section 112-20) as follows:

A Graduate Student Researcher is a graduate student who performs research related to the student's degree program in an academic department or research unit under the direction of a faculty member or authorized Principal Investigator.

These definitions allow us to construct guidelines for when to use which title for students who are employed in research-related positions.

The Student Assistant IV title should only be used in cases where the hiring department can demonstrate that:

- i. The work for which the student is employed is unrelated to the educational objectives of the student's degree program, so the student is unlikely to participate in the production of papers, theses, dissertations, or academic presentations related to the research; and/or
- ii. The student is not expected to play a collaborative role in research production, but is supporting the research by doing routine tasks, such as preparing bibliographies, inputting data, or supervising other students who are performing such tasks.

The GSR title should be used in all cases where:

- i. The student is performing work that may contribute to the educational objectives of their degree program as described in the preceding paragraphs; and/or
- ii. The student is expected to function as an active collaborator and/or fundamental contributor to the intellectual content of the research.

Note that the nature of the funding source (e.g., extramural versus internal), the amount of available funding, and the percentage time being worked (e.g., 12% versus 35%) are *not* relevant to the selection of appropriate title.

In some cases (e.g., Academic Senate Faculty Research Grants), a funding source explicitly prohibits funds from being used to pay fees and health insurance. It is still appropriate to hire students as GSRs from such sources if the job duties are in line with the GSR guidelines above. *GSR appointments of less than 100 hours per quarter are allowed and do not entail the payment of fees, health insurance, and NRST.* However, when a GSR works *100 hours or more* in a single academic quarter (cumulatively across all appointments), he or she is legally entitled to these benefits. If the granting agency prohibits payment of these expenses, then they must be paid from another source, such as department block grant.

I hope this will be useful in allowing employers to better distinguish these positions. Please ensure that your hiring practices are in line with these policies from this point forward. If you have questions, please address them to [financial@graddiv.ucsb.edu](mailto:financial@graddiv.ucsb.edu).

cc: Cindy Doherty, Director, Office of Academic Personnel  
Cynthia Seneriz, Compensation Manager, Human Resources