

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP HANDBOOK



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY
CORPUS
CHRISTI

**GRADUATE
EXCELLENCE**

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Purpose of Graduate Assistantships

Graduate programs, departments, and eligible administrative units are designed to provide opportunities for graduate students to transition to professional scholars and practitioners. The appointment of a graduate student as a Teaching Assistant (TA), Research Assistant (RA), or Administrative Research Assistant (ARA) often provides necessary financial support to facilitate this transformation. Graduate students are defined by the [Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board](#) (2017) as “... student(s) possessing a baccalaureate degree or the equivalent and admitted to an approved master’s degree program at the institution.” Federal regulations define graduate students as those who are “enrolled in a program or course above the baccalaureate level or enrolled in a program leading to a professional degree” ([Code of Federal Regulations](#)).

Graduate studies and assistantship responsibilities should reinforce each other. These appointments are intended to allow students to gain valuable in-service experience in teaching, research, and administrative functions. The Office of Graduate Excellence (OGE) recognizes that providing graduate students with teaching, research, and administrative assistantships is critical to the success of graduate programs at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC). The principles that guide these assistantships are:

- Graduate assistants (GAs) are primarily students, not employees; successful completion of the academic program is the top priority for both the student and the institution.
- Assistantships are awards intended to assist students financially during their period of study. They should not interfere with a student’s timely and successful progression toward graduation. All graduate assistants are “at-will” employees.
- Assistantships must support the educational experience of the student and be related to the student’s graduate program.
 - Graduate assistant appointments (singularly or in any combination) are generally for 50% full-time effort (FTE) to prevent overloaded working conditions, which may threaten the student’s academic progress and the quality of assigned duties.

Types of Graduate Assistantships

There are three types of graduate assistantships: Teaching Assistantships, Research Assistantships, and Administrative Research Assistantships. Funding sources include but are not limited to the Office of Graduate Excellence, individual colleges, research centers, non-academic units (e.g., library, HR, IT), and external grants and contracts.

Teaching Assistantships

Graduate Teaching Assistants (TAs) are employed to help meet the instructional needs of the university. Teaching Assistants are typically responsible for directing lab sections, leading discussion sections, grading assignments, and, in some cases, teaching regular courses numbered below 5000. Teaching Assistants may not teach courses numbered 5000 or above; however, they may assist with laboratories for 5000 and 6000 level courses. They may *not* teach or assist with a course in which they are enrolled. Whatever their instructional responsibilities, TAs must be supervised by a faculty member who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating their performance. Teaching Assistants who have no prior teaching experience should be provided with training before being allowed to teach.

Teaching Assistants given full responsibility for assigning final grades for a course must have at least 18 hours of graduate coursework in the field of their teaching responsibilities. If the TA is listed as the instructor of record for a class, they must be credentialed by the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Compliance before classes are assigned to them. Individual programs/departments/colleges may have additional requirements. Teaching assistants must be under the direct supervision of a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, receive ongoing in-service training, and be regularly evaluated.

Research Assistantships

Graduate Research Assistants (RAs) are employed to assist the research efforts of the faculty in a capacity that relates to the student's educational goals. Research Assistants are responsible for working on research projects in collaboration with or under the direction of a faculty or staff member. Duties assigned to RAs may include gathering, organizing, and analyzing data, grading papers, and assisting faculty or non-academic units on campus. Duties assigned to

RAs must be relevant to the graduate program and the professional goals of the student. The supervising faculty or staff member determines the student's particular responsibilities and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating their performance.

Graduate Administrative Research Assistantships

Graduate Administrative Research Assistants (ARAs) are employed to assist the administrative efforts of the colleges and departments in a capacity that relates to the student's educational goals. Administrative Research Assistants are responsible for providing professional administrative services, including related research, in collaboration with or under the direction of a faculty or staff member. Responsibilities vary among departments. Duties assigned to ARAs must be relevant to the graduate program and/or the professional goals of the student. The supervising faculty or staff member determines the students' responsibilities and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating their performance. Depending on the specific job duties, ARAs may apply research concepts, practices, or methodologies through analyzing data, presenting findings, conducting institutional research, collaborating with co-workers and/or colleagues in preparing reports and/or presentations, and similar activities. In all cases, their duties should not be primarily clerical in nature.

Pursuing a Graduate Assistantship Position

Graduate students who are seeking a graduate assistantship position are encouraged to inquire with the coordinator of their graduate programs for available positions. Job postings for TAMU-CC students are also located on the TAMU-CC [HandShake](#) website.

Graduate Assistant Eligibility

To be eligible, a Graduate Assistant must:

- Have a bachelor's degree or the equivalent
- Be admitted to a graduate degree-seeking program
- Be in good academic standing

- Meet GPA requirements:
 - New students: GPA of 3.0 or higher in the last 60 semester credit hours
 - Current students: maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0
- Meet enrollment requirements for each semester:
 - Any student employed as a graduate assistant must be enrolled for at least 6 credit hours of graduate coursework during fall and spring, and 3 credit hours of graduate coursework in the combined summer term.
 - If hired or funded by the College of Engineering & Computer Science or the College of Science, students are required to enroll in 9 credit hours of graduate coursework during fall and spring semesters, and 3 credit hours of graduate coursework in the combined summer term.
 - Individual programs/departments/academic units may have more stringent credit hour requirements.

Appointments are normally given to those students who have shown superior aptitude in their fields of study and who appear likely to render a high quality of service to the university by their teaching or research activities or their administrative work in a unit.

To ensure compliance with existing policies, each employing program, unit, or university office is responsible for verifying the eligibility of every appointee at the point of appointment. Any exceptions must be for documented, demonstrably valid reasons and be approved in advance by the College Dean and the Associate Vice President (AVP) and Dean of Graduate Excellence. Appeals regarding the AVP and Dean of Graduate Excellence's decision will be reviewed by the Executive Vice President for Research and Innovation.

If a student fails to maintain any of the above requirements throughout their appointment, their graduate assistantship may be terminated.

Responsibilities of Graduate Assistants

A fundamental responsibility of all graduate assistants is to work closely with their supervisors in carrying out assigned duties and, at the same time, making satisfactory progress towards the completion of their degree programs. Service assignments for each graduate assistant will be outlined at the time of appointment. Duties may include a range of assignments; the exact duties will depend on the needs of the department, the background and qualifications of the GA, and the professional goals of the student. Work assignments should take into account both the needs of the department and the graduate student's obligation to make satisfactory progress in their chosen academic program.

Graduate Assistants are responsible for becoming familiar with this handbook, general academic procedures in the [University Catalog](#), the [Faculty Handbook](#), the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and the [University Handbook of Rules and Procedures](#).

All new GAs must complete the [TAMUS mandatory online training courses](#), including Title IX training and any safety training required by the courses. They must also undergo a period of orientation prior to beginning work. All employees of TAMU-CC, including GAs, have the right to file a grievance and/or complaint regarding conditions of employment or treatment by management, supervisors, or other employees.

Work Assignment

Graduate Assistants are required to work on average 20 hours per week (50% FTE). Appointments at 50% FTE allow students to be eligible for in-state tuition and employee benefits. The exact days and hours may vary and should be decided in coordination with the GA's supervisor prior to the start of the term. They are expected to work throughout the entire employment period except on university holidays. Graduate Assistants should work out a schedule to cover the hours missed when the university is closed.

Graduate Assistants are limited to an average of 20 hours per week, during the fall, spring, and summer semesters while classes are in session. Appointments beyond 50% during this time must receive prior approval from the College Dean and the AVP and Dean of Graduate Excellence. This threshold does not apply during breaks and summer when classes are not in

session. Employing units should be mindful of the balance of academic and professional workload. For international students, refer to the “[International Graduate Assistants](#)” section for more information regarding work assignments.

Professional Ethics

Graduate Assistants are expected to support and maintain an academic environment conducive to the positive educational development of all students and faculty members. This standard of professional conduct requires each GA to perform their responsibilities without intimidation and harassment based on sex, race, religion, politics, or professional interest. Special caution must be exercised to avoid exploitation of students or colleagues for private or professional advantage, especially those who are subject to one’s authority.

Professional behavior must be maintained in the relationships among students, peers, and faculty members. Sexual harassment, intimidation, or exploitation of professional relationships undermines the academic freedom of all. Protection of the atmosphere of trust, essential to the flourishing of an academic community, is the professional responsibility of all university personnel.

Personal Relationships with Students

Relationships between TAs and students that go beyond the platonic must be avoided. It is never appropriate for a TA to enter into a sexual relationship with one of their students. It makes no difference if the relationship is consensual. Even consensual relationships between university employees in positions of authority and their subordinates or students are not permitted and may result in disciplinary action. In fact, not only are such relationships morally suspect and professionally unacceptable, but they may also be considered a form of sexual harassment, which is illegal. For more information on Consensual Relationships, see [System Policy 07.05.01](#).

Sexual Harassment, Harassment, and Discrimination

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and the Texas A&M University System are committed to creating and maintaining a work and educational environment where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity and where all are free to participate in a lively exchange of

ideas. Each student has the right to learn, and each employee has the right to work in an environment free of all forms of harassment and discrimination--one in which ideas may be freely expressed. For information regarding Civil Rights, see University Procedure [08.01.01.C1, Civil Rights Compliance](#).

In addition, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity. Sexual harassment, which includes sexual violence, is a form of sex discrimination. Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination, including discrimination based on sex. The University provides resources to students, faculty, and staff to address concerns related to sexual harassment, sexual assault (rape), sexual misconduct, and sex discrimination. For more information, please see [Civil Rights | Title IX | Civil Rights | Employee Development and Compliance Services | Office of Risk, Ethics, and Compliance | Institutional Excellence | Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi](#).

Employee Benefits

Vacation, Holiday, and Sick Leave Time

Graduate assistantships, like other student employee appointments, are considered to be “at-will” temporary appointments and do not qualify for vacation, sick leave, emergency leave, or holiday pay. Social Security and Workers’ Compensation insurance benefits, however, are provided to all student employees.

Group Insurance

Graduate students who work at least 50% FTE for 4.5 months are eligible to participate in group insurance programs. For more information on benefits, see System Policy 31.02, Employee Insurance and Retirement Benefits, and System Regulation 31.02.02, Group Insurance Programs. For more information, see the Office of Human Resources at [Human Resources | Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi](#).

Out-of-State Tuition Waiver

According to the Texas Education Code, Section 54.212, Graduate Assistants employed at

50% FTE and their spouse and children who are not Texas residents may qualify for in-state tuition waivers and receive in-state tuition and fees at the rate charged to Texas residents for the semester in which they hold the assistantship appointment.

Students will be classified as Texas residents if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Any individual who has resided in Texas since birth.
- Any individual 18 years of age or over who has come from outside Texas and who is gainfully employed in Texas for a 12-month period immediately preceding registration in any institution of higher learning.

Out-of-State Tuition Waiver Procedure (Only applicable to TAMU-CC GAs)

Requests for out-of-state tuition waivers are processed by [authorized personnel](#) within the employing units. Requests submitted by personnel not officially designated will not be processed. The submission procedures are outlined below:

- **Verification:** Each employing unit is responsible for verifying graduate assistant eligibility and waiver requirements as stipulated in the Graduate Assistantship Handbook.
- **Exception:** Any exceptions to these established requirements must receive prior approval from the College Dean and the Associate Vice President and Dean of Graduate Excellence.
- **Submission:** Upon completion of verification and receipt of all necessary approvals, waiver requests must be submitted by authorized personnel utilizing the designated [email template](#).
- **Deadlines:** Submissions must be received no later than the 12th class day of long semesters or the 4th class day of summer semesters that students are enrolled in.

Additional Notes:

- Promptly notify the Office of Graduate Excellence (graduate.excellence@tamucc.edu) of

any changes to your unit's authorized personnel list.

- Requests must be submitted every semester.
- The employing unit is responsible for notifying the Office of Graduate Excellence and Accounts Receivable if the Graduate Assistants fail to meet or maintain eligibility requirements.

The hiring department/program may request an exception for any appointments made after these specified dates, in writing, to the AVP and Dean of Graduate Excellence.

NOTE: Termination of the student's employment (voluntary or involuntary) during the semester may result in revocation of the exemption, recalculation of tuition at the nonresident rate, and the requirement for immediate payment of the tuition due.

International Graduate Assistants

The State of Texas requires international graduate students whose native language is not English to obtain English proficiency certification before serving as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. English proficiency certification can be achieved by submitting official test scores indicating [satisfactory scores](#) on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). This requirement does not apply to a student who has earned a baccalaureate or higher degree from an accredited institution of higher education in the United States, from an institution in a country where English is the only official language, or has successfully completed a university-approved English as a Second Language program. For more information regarding minimum examination scores for the TOEFL and IELTS, visit the "[Additional Requirements for International Students](#)" tab on the TAMU-CC website. Note that there are two types of IELTS examinations: the Academic and General Training examinations; only the Academic examination is accepted. For more information regarding the English proficiency certification, see the "[International Students](#)" webpage.

International students' knowledge of the specific fields in which they may work as graduate assistants and their command of the English language to a degree appropriate to the demands of the assignment should be evaluated thoroughly by supervisors before awards are

made.

Departments are responsible for ensuring TAs are proficient in the English language. International graduate students must comply with all university, local, state, and federal regulations, including but not limited to visas, international student fees, employment, health insurance, and other requirements that may arise.

International students on F-1 visas/I-20s are limited to a 50% FTE position during the fall, spring, and summer semesters while classes are in session. This threshold does not apply during breaks and summer when classes are not in session. Additionally, graduate assistants must be separated from university employment upon the TAMU-CC official graduation date, except if the student is on Optional Practical Training (OPT) or if the student finishes one program of study at TAMU-CC and starts another program of study also at TAMU-CC. The [Office of International Education](#) can provide additional information regarding visa restrictions regarding the employment of international students.

Hiring Department Responsibilities

Administrative responsibility for graduate assistantships rests within the department in which the student is employed, in consultation with all other relevant departments. In addition, departments must have a clear process for hiring graduate assistants, including but not limited to the following:

- Create and maintain a job description for each GA that aligns with the type of assistantship appointment (e.g., research, teaching, administrative),
- Ensure that all student employees comply with mandatory university training requirements within 30 days of hire (i.e., Ethics, Information Security Awareness, Orientation to the System, Reporting Fraud, Waste, and Abuse, and Creating a Discrimination Free Workplace), and
- Establish a work schedule and ensure that the job duties for each GA are appropriate for the job code and title used, train GAs on departmental procedures, and maintain adequate time records as supporting documentation for the department's payroll voucher, and

submit payroll to the appropriate office. Provide the student with an official letter of appointment using the recommended template provided in [Appendix A](#).

Departments must have the newly hired GA submit the I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification form, Criminal Background check, and other supporting documentation before they can report to work. All offers of employment are contingent upon an acceptable background investigation. It is recommended that the hiring department submit the required criminal background check forms to the Office of Human Resources prior to making an offer of employment.

Compensation

Salary ranges for graduate assistants are set by the Office of Graduate Excellence. Individual colleges or employing non-academic units will set the exact salary amount for each assistantship based on job assignment, the type of degree program, level of academic progression (e.g., pre- vs. post-candidacy for doctoral students), or other factors as determined by the hiring department and approved by the AVP and Dean of OGE. The figures provided below are based on a 50% FTE appointment. For those GAs who receive salary increases based on changes in their program progression status, the increase will go into effect the semester following a change of status.

- **Master's Students:** Monthly Salary: \$1,200 to \$1,800 - Master's students enrolled in a 30-36 SCH graduate program. *Note:* Some units may allow \$1,400 to \$2,000 for master's students enrolled in a 42- to 60-hour program.
- **Doctoral Students:** Monthly Salary: \$1,600 to \$2,200 - Doctoral students. *Note:* *With prior approval by the AVP and Dean of OGE, some doctoral students may serve in positions with a starting salary range of \$1,200 per month.*

Appointments and Reappointments of Graduate Assistants

Offers of assistantships are contingent upon available funds and admission of the applicant to a graduate program and are made by the head of the unit that will employ the GA. Graduate assistantship appointments are normally made for a 4½-month academic semester,

summer term, 9 months, or 12 months. If grant-funded, the term of an appointment for a graduate assistant may be based on the period of available grant funding as stated in their initial appointment letter.

Decisions regarding the reappointment of graduate assistants will be based on the needs of the institution and the past performance of the graduate assistant. To be reappointed, graduate assistants must have demonstrated satisfactory progress in their academic programs and satisfactory performance of their employment duties at the university.

Graduate Assistant appointments are “at-will,” which means that the university or the graduate assistant may terminate the employment at any time. A GA’s continued employment may be at risk for reasons including, but not limited to, failure to meet requirements, loss of funding, unacceptable performance/conduct, or academic delinquency. All involuntary dismissals must be reviewed by Human Resources prior to implementing a dismissal.

Request for Leave

Graduate Assistants are paid a salary and therefore required to work the number of hours based on their percentage of effort. Graduate assistants are not eligible for paid sick leave, and absences must be without pay; however, time taken off may be made up within the work week with supervisor approval. Title IX regulations also require the university to treat pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, and recovery therefrom as a justification for a leave of absence for so long a period of time as is deemed medically necessary by the student’s physician. Students requesting leave of absence under this provision should contact the Title IX Coordinator (361-825-5826) for information.

Training and Support

All new GAs will complete Texas A&M University System mandatory TrainTraq online courses, including Title IX training and any safety training required by the courses, and undergo a period of orientation prior to beginning work. This orientation will be conducted by the employing department and include an overview of procedures, facilities, duties, and university rules and procedures. The nature of training activities will vary from department to department, but each unit is responsible for a plan that ensures each GA such the support to provide maximum

opportunity for professional development. The academic unit responsible for a GA will provide them with such support (access to office space, computers, telephones, supplies, etc.) as appropriate to their activities.

Graduate Assistant Performance Evaluation

Each department is responsible for determining procedures for the review and evaluation of GAs and for informing GAs of these procedures. The process of evaluation will vary by department and type of assistantship and may include a written assessment of work by an individual faculty member or supervisor, classroom visitation by designated faculty members, and student evaluations. The results of reviews and evaluations should be maintained by the department and discussed with the GA.

In cases where remedial measures are indicated to improve the GA's performance, the GA must be informed of the performance deficiencies and the required changes to resolve the problem. Situations leading to the recommendation of dismissal for cause should be described in writing to the GA, with a copy sent to the college dean or appropriate administrator.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Graduate Assistants have the right to file a grievance related to employment. Complaints must be made in accordance with the provisions of System Regulation 32.01.02, Complaint and Appeal Process for Non-faculty Employees and University Procedure. However, a complaint alleging discrimination, sexual harassment, and/or related retaliation must be filed in accordance with System Regulation 08.01.01, Civil Rights Compliance and University Rule 08.01.01.C1, Civil Rights Compliance. Contact the Office of Employee Development & Compliance Services for more information.

Dismissal and Termination

Graduate Assistant appointments are "at-will," which means that the University or the GA may terminate the employment at any time. A GA's continued employment will be in jeopardy for failure to meet work/academic/enrollment requirements, loss of funding, unacceptable performance/conduct, or academic delinquency. All involuntary dismissals must be coordinated with Human Resources for legal sufficiency.

Loss of Funding

A graduate assistantship may be terminated due to loss, reduction, or reallocation in appropriation, grant, contract, gift, or other funds which support the appointment. Subject to the fiscal priorities of the unit, programs will make a good faith effort to find alternative funding for the full term of the appointment for a GA who is in good standing and making satisfactory progress towards a degree.

Unacceptable Performance/Conduct

A GA may be terminated as a result of unacceptable performance or conduct. Examples of unacceptable performance or conduct include, but are not limited to, incompetence, inefficiency, carelessness, neglect of duty, insubordination, repeated or extended absence, and misconduct related to the GA's suitability or capacity to continue to perform assignments. A GA may be suspended from responsibilities without pay pending the investigation regarding the suitability of continued employment.

Academic Delinquency

An appointment may be terminated if the GA is not making satisfactory academic progress towards a degree or is otherwise not in good academic standing. The termination shall be in writing and may be immediate or with such notice as the University believes compatible with the GA's academic situation. An appointment may be terminated for any reason by delivery of written or electronic notice to the GA.



Appendix A: Sample Graduate Assistantship Offer Letter

College Letterhead

I am pleased to inform you of your selection as a Graduate [TYPE OF GA- TEACHING/ RESEARCH/ADMINISTRATIVE RESEARCH] Assistant (GA) in the College of [INSERT COLLEGE or DEPARTMENT] for FY 20XX.

The stipend for each semester will be \$x,xxx/month. Additionally,

- Your actual employment period is MM/DD/YY to MM/DD/YY.
- Stipends will be paid to you in monthly installments beginning MM/DD/YY.

To be appointed as a GA, you must:

- Have a bachelor's degree or the equivalent
- Be admitted to a graduate degree-seeking program
- Be in good academic standing
- Meet minimum GPA requirements:
 - New students: GPA of 3.0 or higher in the last 60 semester credit hours
 - Current students: maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0
- Meet minimum enrollment requirements for each semester
 - Any student employed as a graduate assistant must be enrolled for at least 6 credit hours of graduate coursework during fall and spring, and 3 credit hours of graduate coursework in the combined summer term.
 - If hired or funded by the College of Engineering & Computer Science or the College of Science, students are required to enroll in 9 credit hours of graduate coursework during fall and spring semesters, and 3 credit hours of graduate coursework in the combined summer term.

These requirements are conditions of employment, and your appointment can be terminated if you fail to meet or maintain any of them.

All new employees are required to complete a successful criminal background check before assuming this appointment and TAMUS mandatory online training via TrainTraQ within 30 days of your appointment. Your college will assist you with these requirements and any further administrative processing as appropriate. The university offers health insurance benefits to eligible graduate assistants and will provide more information about this and invite you to attend a benefit orientation.

April 15 Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellows, Trainees, and Assistants: By signing this letter of offer, you affirm that you have not accepted any such offers from other

academic institutions. Similarly, acceptance of this offer after April 15 commits you not to accept an offer from another university without first formally rescinding your acceptance decision to Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. For details, see: [April 15 Resolution - CGS](#).

To indicate your acknowledgement of these conditions and intent to commit to this Graduate Assistant appointment, please sign and return this letter as soon as possible to:

INSERT NAME, GA Coordinator,
Department of **XXXX**,
6300 Ocean Dr., Unit **XXXX**,
Corpus Christi, TX 78412

Please retain a copy of this letter for your own files. If you decide to decline this appointment, please notify **INSERT NAME** immediately via e-mail at **XXXX.XXXX@tamucc.edu** or via telephone at (361) 825-**XXXX**. You are also welcome to contact **INSERT NAME** with any questions. I look forward to working with you throughout the semester. My best wishes to you as you pursue your graduate studies.

Sincerely,

INSERT NAME,
Dean College of **INSERT COLLEGE**

*All offers of employment are subject to the Regulations of The Texas A&M University System. As part of compliance with I-9 regulations, a representative of the university is required to view original employee eligibility document(s). For a PDF of acceptable employment eligibility documents, select the "List of Supporting Documents" bullet on <https://www.tamucc.edu/human-resources/resources/assets/documents/new-hire-checklist.pdf>, and bring your chosen document(s) with you on your first day of work. Offers to foreign nationals are contingent upon the employee obtaining and maintaining valid work authorization from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. The graduate assistant (GA; i.e., teaching assistant—TA, or research assistant—RA) is a security-sensitive appointment, and employment is contingent upon an acceptable background investigation. All graduate assistant appointments are offered pending final confirmation of all conditions listed in the text of this letter, final determination of departmental needs, and approval of funding. **This offer is not a guarantee of employment for any specified length of time by either party; graduate assistant appointments are "at-will," which means that either you or the university can terminate your employment at any time, with or without cause.***

Signature of GA Appointee

Date

Print Name