

University of Southern Maine

Graduate Assistant (GA)

Handbook

2023-2024

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What Are Graduate Assistantships?

A Graduate Assistantship at USM is a great opportunity to gain valuable work experience and develop professional skills that enhance a student's academic and career goals, while also providing them with financial support.

USM's Graduate Assistantship program also encompasses **Research Assistantships** and **Teaching Assistantships**, depending on the focus of the work (see more on this in the next section).

Graduate Assistants (GAs) are, first and foremost, students – so each Assistantship is designed to serve the needs and cater to the lives of graduate students. But GAs are also **highly valued employees of the University**, who support faculty scholarship and teaching; serve as mentors to undergraduate students; conduct meaningful research, outreach, and analysis; and uphold USM's Service Promise of being "Student focused every day."

GA appointments are for either **10 or 20 hours per week** during the 15-week fall and spring semesters.

Our **Graduate Assistants work in a variety of University settings**, from academic departments to student services offices to research divisions. The positions are carefully allocated to the most qualified students through an application and hiring process.

This handbook is intended to provide Graduate Assistants and supervisors with answers to frequently asked questions, including information about guidelines, policies and procedures, and other resources.

What Are the Different Types of Graduate Assistantships?

Under the umbrella of Graduate Assistantships there are three categories that differ according to the type of work the student does, but are at the same level of employment and follow the same policies and procedures: Graduate Assistant, Graduate Research Assistant, and Graduate Teaching Assistant.

Graduate Assistant

Graduate Assistants are appointed to perform various types of duties other than those related directly to teaching or research. Most commonly, these duties relate to administrative functions for the school, college, and/or department, such as academic and student advising, recruiting, event planning, and data management.

Graduate Research Assistant

Graduate Research Assistants perform duties in support of college, departmental, or faculty research, which may or may not relate directly to the student's thesis or program of study. Research assistantships may be financed through funds from gifts, grants, contracts, state appropriations designated for research, or through an academic program's resources.

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Graduate Teaching Assistants work under the direct supervision of faculty members and are assigned duties related to instruction. These include activities such as assisting in the preparation of lectures, assignments, and exams, leading discussion sections, conducting laboratory exercises, holding office hours and review sessions, grading papers, and keeping class records. In consultation with the supervisor, the teaching assistant works to gain teaching skills and an increased understanding of the discipline.

How Do I Apply for an Assistantship?

There are a few ways to inquire about and apply for Graduate Assistantships:

1. When applying for graduate admission, students have the option of indicating interest in an Assistantship. This information goes to their academic department and to the Office of Graduate Studies, who will then contact the student about job opportunities.
2. Graduate Assistantship opportunities are posted on the Office of Graduate Studies website and other bulletins around campus, and can be found at:
<https://usm.maine.edu/graduate-studies/graduate-assistantship-opportunities/>
3. Interested students can contact faculty advisors to inquire about potential Graduate Assistantship opportunities in their academic area. More detailed instructions for applying to Graduate Assistantships can be found at:
<https://usm.maine.edu/graduate-studies/wp-content/uploads/sites/307/2022/07/Applying-for-a-Graduate-Assistantship-Guide.pdf>

What are the Requirements to Hold an Assistantship?

In order to maintain your GA position, students must:

- Maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0
- Enroll in six (6) graduate credits or more in each semester that they are employed as a GA
- Be matriculated in a graduate degree program at USM (students in certificate-only programs are not eligible)
- Remain in good academic standing and be making acceptable progress towards their degree

Note: University of Maine System employees, Maine Law students, and Maine MBA students are not eligible for USM Graduate Assistantships.

Students who withdraw from the University, are dismissed from their degree program, or are released from their Graduate Assistant position due to inadequate performance, will forfeit their assistantship. Should a student withdraw from their Graduate Assistantship position for any reason, the Office of

Graduate Studies must be notified in writing by the student and/or supervisor within ten (10) business days.

If the status change occurs during a semester, the student may be required to reimburse the University for any unearned stipend and scholarship benefit associated with that semester.

How Are Graduate Assistantships Funded?

Graduate Assistantships are funded in one of several ways:

- Through the Office of Graduate Studies
- Through department funds
- Grants or contracts

How Much Are Graduate Assistants Paid?

The minimum stipend (compensation rate) is:

- 20 hrs/week: \$9,000 per academic year (\$1,000/month)
- 10 hrs/week: \$4,500 per academic year (\$500/month)

Stipends are based on 15 weeks of work during each of the fall and spring semesters.

When Are Graduate Assistants Paid?

Stipend payments are monthly, and disbursed on the last business day of the month.

Does Compensation Include Scholarship?

Most (but not all) Graduate Assistants receive a scholarship or tuition assistance in addition to the monthly stipend. Scholarship amounts vary, but the recommended minimum amounts are:

- \$3,000 per academic year for 10 hrs/week positions
- \$6,000 per academic year for 20 hrs/week positions

Effective fall 2021, positions funded by the Office of Graduate Studies' academic department allocations process include scholarship funding based on the hired student's **tuition residency**. For reference, those tiers are as follows:

In-State:

- \$3,000 per academic year for 10 hrs/week positions
- \$6,000 per academic year for 20 hrs/week positions

Out-of-State:

- \$5,000 per academic year for 10 hrs/week positions
- \$10,000 per academic year for 20 hrs/week positions

E-Tuition or Master of Fine Arts (MFA):

- \$3,500 per academic year for 10 hrs/week positions
- \$7,000 per academic year for 20 hrs/week positions

New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE):

- \$4,000 per academic year for 10 hrs/week positions
- \$8,000 per academic year for 20 hrs/week positions

Accelerated Online Maine Programs

- Stipend only

Scholarships are distributed evenly between the fall and spring semesters.

The Office of Graduate Studies reports scholarships to the Student Financial Services Office. This **may impact the student's financial aid award**, so it is recommended that students notify their financial aid advisor upon receiving their GA appointment letter.

Please note: Awards will not be reflected on student accounts until bills are due (Fall-August 15, Spring-January 15, Summer-May 15).

When Do Graduate Assistants Work?

The term of a Graduate Assistantship is usually the 30-week period that school is in session from September through May. An assistantship that requires the student to work during break weeks must be on record with the Office of Graduate Studies and must include additional compensation beyond the minimum stipend rates.

Some assistantships are available during the 15-week summer term. To be eligible, the student must be enrolled in six (6) graduate credits or more for the summer term **or** the following fall semester. The minimum stipend rates apply to summer sessions.

Is an Assistantship Guaranteed for the Second Year of Graduate School?

The University does not guarantee that a Graduate Assistant appointment will be renewed at the end of its designated term. However, continuing graduate students may be offered continuation of their assistantship for a second academic year.

Graduate Assistants should discuss the opportunity for a continuation of the position with their supervisor early in the spring semester of their first year. Reappointments will be considered during the program's annual deliberations regarding student support for the following year. Typically, master's degree candidates are limited to two years of GA funding and doctoral students receive funding for up to four years.

What Are the Next Steps When an Assistantship is Awarded?

When a student is hired as a Graduate Assistant, they are sent an official letter from the Office of Graduate Studies, which includes the name of the supervisor, the length of the appointment, amount of compensation, and the type of assistantship (teaching, research, or other). They may also receive a letter from their department.

In order to secure a position, candidates must:

- Return their Confidentiality Statement to the Office of Graduate Studies
- Complete an I-9 Employment Eligibility form with their supervisor
- Review the Graduate Assistant Handbook

Original copies of the required documents for the I-9 must be witnessed by a University staff member. Note that the I-9 requires a passport or a driver's license with a social security card or birth certificate.

Are There Additional Hiring Steps for International Students With F-1 Visas?

International students need to follow these additional instructions to become qualified to work as a GA:

- Meet with the Office of International Programs to obtain a Certification of On-Campus Employment Eligibility letter. Bring their I-20, Passport, Visa, I-94, or other appropriate immigration documents.
- Apply for a social security card with the U.S. Social Security Office. Instructions will be available at the Office of International Programs. The student must be in the United States for ten days before applying for their social security card.
- Meet with the Payroll office to complete tax treaty form 8233 and related paperwork. A social security card or proof of applying for one is required before meeting with Payroll.

International students are limited to 20 hours of work per week when school is in session. They may work up to 40 hours per week during school vacations. These total hours are the sum of all jobs worked on campus.

More details about these work policies can be found on the Office of International Programs Website: <https://usm.maine.edu/office-international-programs/>.

What Are the Expectations of Graduate Assistants?

A Graduate Assistant is both a student and an employee. At USM, we emphasize that a GA is first and foremost a student, which means that their priority is their academic work and participation in their program.

As employees, Graduate Assistants are important members of the USM community and are expected to satisfy the duties of their job with professionalism and commitment to University goals.

General work expectations may vary depending on the department or program in which a Graduate Assistant serves. Students should familiarize themselves with the work policies for Graduate Assistants and other employees within their respective departments.

It is expected that the work of a GA complements and enriches their academic and career objectives. Research projects, for example, should be of interest to the student, and teaching or tutoring should enhance the student's mastery of subject content and give them insight into effective pedagogy. In order to achieve this integration, supervisors and GAs need to plan and coordinate work duties and meet regularly.

What Are the Work Policies for Graduate Assistants?

Tasks Not Appropriate for a Graduate Assistant

Reception work, routine office tasks, and similar duties that do not add value to the graduate educational experience should not be the sole content of the job requirements. Only assignments that enhance or complement learning should be routinely assigned by the supervisor. As with any job, GAs may occasionally be called upon to contribute to efforts outside their job area.

Health Insurance

Graduate Assistants employed by the University are required to possess health insurance coverage. The University provides an optional student health insurance policy for our employed GA populations. For more information about UMS health care coverage and options, The Healthcare Hotline (207-581-2681) is available to answer questions.

Work Schedule

Typically Graduate Assistants are expected to work only during the weeks/days that the University is in session throughout the academic year from September through May. Weekly work schedules are to be negotiated between the supervisor and the GA at the start of each semester. As salaried professionals, GAs are paid the same monthly salary, regardless of the number of scheduled holidays or other school breaks in a particular month. If a student is normally scheduled to work on a day when their employing University facility is closed for a holiday but school is still in session, the student will not be required to work and will be paid for that day as usual. The same rule applies to unexpected official University closures.

Record Keeping

Graduate Assistants are considered professional employees of the University and are not required to submit hours worked, nor is the supervisor required to formally approve time. GAs should track work time in a personal log and make it available to the supervisor or the Office of Graduate Studies if requested.

Exit Questionnaire

At the end of their appointment, Graduate Assistants will be asked to complete an exit questionnaire. This information will be used to evaluate and improve the Graduate Assistant experience. Exit surveys will ensure alignment between position descriptions and duties performed.

Breaks

All University employees are entitled to work breaks under certain conditions. After working four (4) concurrent hours an employee is entitled to one 15-minute paid break. After working six (6) concurrent hours, each employee is entitled to a 30-minute unpaid break.

Unpaid Time

GAs are not compensated for lunch breaks, vacation time, sick time, leaves of absence, health insurance, bereavement pay, family medical leave, time off for military duty, or jury duty.

Work Commitments

Academic work should be the focus of graduate students. For this reason it is recommended that Graduate Assistants work no more than 20 hours per week and do not hold more than one position at a time unless it is two 10-hour positions.

Onboarding and Training

Each department should hold its own separate training. Specific expectations of your job performance should be explained in detail before you begin work.

Harassment & Other Compliance Training

All USM employees are required to complete the online compliance training program provided by USM's Human Resources department. These mandatory trainings are accessed via the MyCampus Launchpad "UMS Academy" icon, and are found within the "UMS Compliance Pathway for Employees and Student Employees" Learning Pathway. Instructions for accessing these trainings are included in the GA's appointment letter. All student employees are to complete this training before starting their job duties.

Computer Ergonomic Training

Each employing division should provide staff with an ergonomically safe workstation and Video Display Terminal (VDT) training for those who work on a computer for four (4) or more hours per day.

Resignations

A Graduate Assistant who resigns prior to the end of their appointment is liable, on a prorated basis, for payment of all tuition and fees applicable to the semester in which the resignation takes place. Should a student withdraw from their Graduate Assistantship position for any reason, the Office of Graduate Studies must be notified in writing by the student and/or supervisor within ten (10) business days. Requests for exceptions to this policy may be made to Sydney Pontau, Assistant Director of Graduate Studies at sydney.pontau@maine.edu or 207-780-4877.

Guidelines for Resolving Concerns

If a concern arises at any point during their assistantship, students should contact their supervisor right away so that they are aware of the problem and can work to address it. In the event that the concern is not resolved or the student wishes to address it with someone other than the supervisor, students are encouraged to contact the Assistant Director of Graduate Studies, Sydney Pontau, at 207-780-4877, sydney.pontau@maine.edu, or room 117 Wishcamper Center, Portland campus.

Additionally, the University provides a variety of resources to support all students. Resources include but are not limited to: USM Public Safety (Campus phone and emergency: dial 911; all other phones and non-emergency: 207-780-5211), University Health Services (207-780-5411), University Counseling Services (207-780-4050), Disability Services Center (207-780-4706), Intercultural Student Affairs (207-780-4788), and Veterans Services (207-780-4471).

Performance Issues

All graduate students hired into an assistantship are provided with an appointment letter specifying the date(s) of appointment, job description, performance expectations, compensation, enrollment and GPA requirements, and any other pertinent information.

If there are concerns about a GA's performance, the supervisor must meet with the GA to discuss them, and the GA should be provided with performance improvement objectives and a timeline for completing them.

If the supervisor concludes that the GA did not meet the objectives for improving performance, the supervisor may start the process of dismissal. Please see the dismissal policy for information on how to proceed.

Performance Evaluations

At the end of each appointment, supervisors will complete a performance evaluation for each Graduate Assistant and review the evaluation form with them. Both the supervisor and the GA will sign the form and submit it to the Office of Graduate Studies. It is also recommended that supervisors meet with GAs to discuss their performance during their first semester as a check-in to ensure that expectations are being met and that the work aligns with the student's academic and professional goals.

Dismissals

Students who do not meet their professional responsibilities may have their assistantship terminated upon departmental recommendation and review by the Office of Graduate Studies.

Students who fail to meet the academic standards required for degree progress or who fail to meet any one of the eligibility requirements stated in the GA appointment letter may be denied permission to retain their GA or to be considered for reappointment.

Graduate Assistants cannot be terminated without due process. If a student is not performing up to expectations, the supervisor must first notify the student in writing about their concerns.

Possible reasons for dismissal include but are not limited to:

- Failure to perform tasks as assigned
- Failure to abide by appointment conditions
- Failure to make satisfactory research progress
- Failure to maintain minimum enrollment and GPA requirements
- Personal conduct that is seriously prejudicial to the University, including violation of the Code of Student Conduct, state or federal law, and general University regulations

Helpful Tips for Graduate Assistants

- When working on multiple projects, GAs should ask their supervisor to prioritize the projects if they are unsure of the order of importance.
- Project deadlines and expected interim progress stages on projects should be clear and mutually understood. If a deadline seems unreasonable, the GA should let the supervisor know.
- There are times when GAs may be asked to put in extra hours to meet a deadline. These should be rare and there should be either time off given to compensate for the extra time worked, or additional compensation provided to the student by the hiring department.
- GAs and supervisors should have weekly or bi-weekly meetings. These meetings are an opportunity to ask questions, share feedback or concerns, and discuss current and future projects. Communication is key to a successful working relationship.
- Anyone having problems with projects or any other aspect of being a GA should contact their supervisor or the Director of Graduate Studies.

Confidentiality Statement

Graduate Assistants sometimes have access to confidential data in their job. If so, they are required to sign a confidentiality statement before beginning work. This will be provided by the Office of Graduate Studies with the appointment letter. An additional form may be given by the supervisor.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The University of Southern Maine is committed to providing a positive educational and work environment that recognizes and respects the dignity of all students, faculty, and staff. Harassment of any form undermines this important commitment and is not appropriate or acceptable within the University community. Further, in complying with the letter and spirit of applicable laws and pursuing its own goals of diversity, the University of Southern Maine will not tolerate discriminatory harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, including transgender status and gender expression, national origin or citizenship status, age, disability, whistleblower or veterans status in

employment, education, and all other areas of the University. For more information about the University's non-discrimination policy please visit

<https://mycampus.maine.edu/group/mycampus/equal-opportunity>.

What Do GAs Need To Know About Payroll?

Direct deposit is required for all employees of the University. Graduate Assistants receive a monthly stipend based on the terms of their appointment letter. Payments are made on the last business day of each month during the term of employment.

Please note, GA stipends may be taxable. GAs are paid monthly and are subject to both state and federal income taxes, amounts depend on the information entered on the W4 and W4ME. The default is Single for Fed and Single/0 for Maine if no information is submitted.

New hire documentation must be completed before payment can be processed. Federal and State W-4 tax forms, and the 1-9 must be completed prior to the GAs first day of work. The I-9 must be filled out and verified in-person by a University staff or faculty member, or human resources representative. Arrangements should be made between GAs and supervisors to get this information submitted to Payroll.

****Failure to complete the required documentation within the appropriate timeframe will result in the termination of employment with the University.***

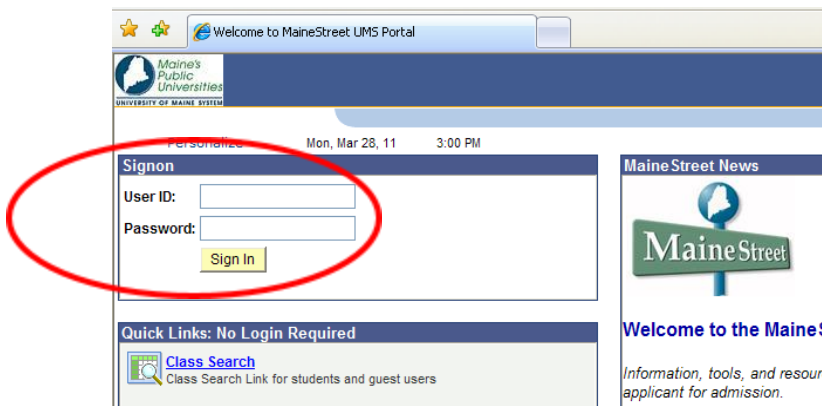
For specific questions, in regards to GA taxed wages and to determine deductions, please contact payroll@maine.edu.

Viewing/Updating Payroll Information

Graduate Assistant payroll information may be accessed through the MaineStreet portal:

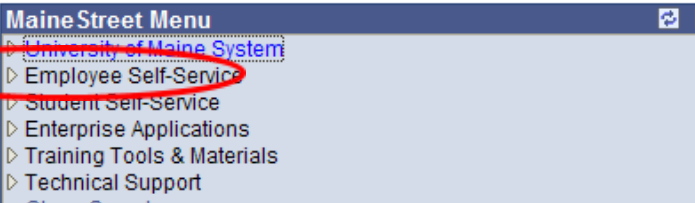
mainestreet.maine.edu

Log in to MaineStreet using your standard student username and password.

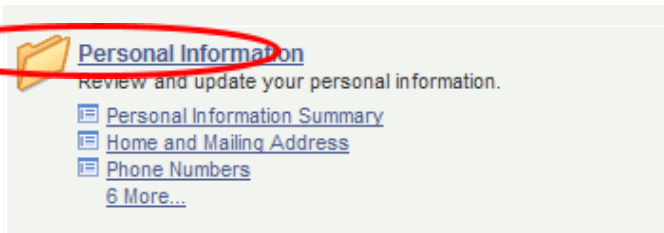


The screenshot shows the MaineStreet UMS Portal. At the top, it says "Welcome to MaineStreet UMS Portal". Below that is the "Maine's Public Universities" logo. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column has a "Signon" section with "User ID:" and "Password:" labels, each followed by a text input field, and a yellow "Sign In" button below them. This entire "Signon" section is circled in red. Below the "Signon" section is a "Quick Links: No Login Required" section with a "Class Search" link. The right column has a "Maine Street News" section with a "Maine Street" logo and a "Welcome to the Maine!" message.

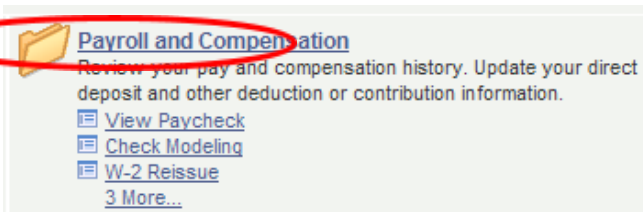
After signing in, click on Employee Self-Service:



Once you are in the Employee Self-Service section of MaineStreet, you will have access to update your mailing address, phone number(s), emergency contact information and other personal information:



You will also be able to view current and prior paychecks, adjust tax withholdings, and change direct deposit information:



USM Campus Safety Procedures and Policies

The USM Police Department is the department responsible for law enforcement, security, and emergency response at the University of Southern Maine on the Gorham and Portland campuses. The primary office of the USM Police Department is located on the Gorham campus at 28 Husky Drive. There is a branch office on the Portland campus in the Sullivan Gym. The USM Police Department is staffed by certified, professional police officers. The Department investigates all reports of criminal action and is ready to respond immediately to initiate whatever action is necessary to resolve emergencies. While the USM Police investigate reports that occur at Lewiston/Auburn College, emergency police assistance is handled by the Lewiston Police Department. Students, faculty and staff are strongly encouraged to report criminal actions or other emergencies by notifying the USM Police Department or the Lewiston Police Department immediately.

Reporting Emergencies or Crimes

Gorham and Portland Campuses:

To report a crime or emergency, members of these campus communities should call the USM Police Department:

From University phones: 911

From off-campus or cell phone: 207-780-5211

These numbers are staffed 24 hours a day by full-time and certified communications officers.

Lewiston/Auburn College:

To report an emergency call the Lewiston Police Department at 911

To report a crime USM Police should be called at 207-780-5211

Exterior Campus Emergency Telephones

Blue light emergency phones will dial immediately into the USM Police Department when the receiver is lifted. These emergency phones are located on the USM campuses for safety and security. When the receiver is lifted, the USM Police Department immediately receives the location of the caller.

Free on-campus public telephones are located in the lobbies or public areas of most Gorham and Portland campus buildings. Using these telephones, the USM Police Department may be contacted by dialing 911 for emergencies or 5211 for non-emergencies.

Sexual Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Retaliation Policy:

This policy can be accessed here:

usm.maine.edu/community-standards-mediation/university-policies. For further information, contact Sarah Holmes, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Deputy Title IX Coordinator at sarah.e.holmes1@maine.edu or 207-780-5767.

Emergency/Storm Hotline Numbers:

Portland and Gorham: 207-780-4800 or TTY: 207-780-5034

These phone numbers provide updated cancellation information due to an emergency or inclement weather.

The University of Maine System uses a third-party service, Blackboard Connect, to provide emergency phone, text, and email notifications. Users can choose to receive messages related to campus emergencies, safety information, storm closings (including closings at the Lewiston campus), and outreach messages. On the USM campuses, the service is an “opt-out” program: all students and employees are automatically entered into the system and may opt out of the service or message subscriptions if they choose. Manage USM ALERT enrollment and update/add contact information here: <https://usm.maine.edu/public-safety/sign-up-for-campus-alert/>

For complete campus safety information, visit: <https://usm.maine.edu/public-safety/>

What If a Student is Injured While Performing GA Duties?

If a student is injured while engaged in assigned GA duties they are covered by USM's Workers' Compensation plan. For their protection, and to comply with the Workers' Compensation Act, they are required to immediately report the injury to their supervisor or the next appropriate person in the place of work. The supervisor will provide assistance in immediately seeking the appropriate medical attention for the injury. The supervisor should also submit a work injury report (<https://gojira.its.maine.edu/jira/servicedesk/customer/portal/25/create/280>) to UMS Risk Management as soon as possible. The supervisor may reach out to Human Resources at 207-780-5989 if they need assistance completing the form).

Portland Graduate Assistants

For non-life threatening injuries, contact Bayside Employee Health at 207-780-6631 for treatment. For more serious injuries, contact the University Police at 911 from a University phone or 207-780-5211 from a cell phone or from off-campus.

Gorham Graduate Assistants

For non-life threatening injuries, contact Bayside Employee Health at 207-780-6631 for treatment. For more serious injuries, contact the University Police at 911 from a University phone or 207-780-5211 from a cell phone or from off-campus.

Lewiston Graduate Assistants

For non-life threatening injuries, contact WorkMed Occupational Health Services at 207-753-3080 for treatment. For more serious injuries, contact Lewiston Police at 911.

All Campuses

UMS Risk Management asks that, for any incident that occurs, whether or not the issue seems to be trivial, an incident report be completed. The Risk Management Department tries to investigate all incidents, identify causes of the incident and ensure that a corrective action is planned if necessary. In addition to the [work injury reporting](#) form, additional types of incident report forms can be found with USM's Dean of Students: <https://usm.maine.edu/dean-of-students/incident-reporting/>.

What Other USM Employment Policies Are Applicable To My Position?

Business Related Travel

As a student employee, GAs may be required to travel for University business. Permission to travel and reimbursement for expenses associated with travel must be pre-approved by the supervisor. Procedures for making travel arrangements, documenting expenses, and submitting expenses for reimbursement are detailed by USM policy. Funding for all travel must be paid by the employing department. For travel and expense procedures, visit: <https://www.maine.edu/apls/apl-iv-b/>.

Use of Own Vehicle

With prior approval, employees may use their own car for University business and receive mileage reimbursement. However, liability rests with the Graduate Assistant.

Use of University Vehicles

The University has some vehicles available through Facilities Management, which may be reserved by the employing department.

Use of Rental Vehicles

With permission from a supervisor, a GA may be able to be reimbursed for a rental.

Traffic Violations

The employee/student will be responsible for all traffic violations and fines incurred while on University business.

Intellectual Property

The University of Maine System Statement of Policy Governing Patents and Copyrights details the principles of the ownership of intellectual property as it applies to research and scholarly work created by USM students and employees. The purpose of this policy is to provide incentives and protections to encourage the discovery of new knowledge and its application and transfer for the public benefit.

Typically, USM maintains ownership of some works including those created:

- As an assigned University duty
- For the University's use
- With the significant use of University resources

The University does not claim ownership of

- Instructional materials
- Traditional works of scholarship including publications, journal articles, and books

For specific questions about the work that may be involved through an assistantship, refer to USM's Office of Research Integrity and Outreach: <https://usm.maine.edu/orio/contact-us/>.

Acceptable Use of Computers and Technology at USM

Those authorized to use USM computing equipment as part of their assigned responsibilities should familiarize themselves with the following policies:

Preamble

The University of Southern Maine (USM) endeavors to develop and provide access to collections, services, facilities, equipment, and programs which meet the information and educational needs of the University community, and to advance the research, instruction, and service missions of the University.

In fulfillment of this purpose, and in response to advances in technology and the changing needs of the community, USM supports open access to information resources, including the Internet, to the greatest extent possible. In return, the University expects users of information resources to be aware of and act in compliance with all relevant federal and state laws, local ordinances, and University policies. It further expects its users to be familiar and to behave consistently with the several general principles which together constitute appropriate, responsible, and ethical behavior in an academic environment, particularly in regard to the use of the University's information resources. Those principles include: Freedom of Expression, Respect for Privacy, Respect for Property Rights, Respect for Personal and Cultural Differences, Freedom from Harassment, Respect for and Compliance with Intellectual Property Rights and Copyright Law.

The University affirms that it will be a partner with users in promoting education and understanding of the appropriate, efficient, and successful use of information resources.

Responsibilities

All users of University of Southern Maine information resources are expected to behave responsibly, legally, and ethically in their use of electronic resources. To that end, it is the responsibility of those users to:

- honor all state and federal laws, copyright provisions, Board of Trustees policies, and software licensing agreements to which the institution is a party;
- be aware of and comply with University and the University's agencies' procedures and regulations for accessing and operating computer and related hardware, software, and other information resources;
- cooperate with legitimate requests by University staff;
- take precautions to protect accounts and passwords by selecting obscure passwords, changing them frequently, and not sharing such information or the use of the accounts with others;
- download information from computers to disk whenever possible, photocopy multiple copies, and otherwise limit printing to what is directly needed in order to conserve paper and to make the most efficient use of resources; and
- properly logout whenever leaving a computer in an area which is accessible to others; treat others with dignity and respect; respect the privacy and confidentiality rights of others, including their files and accounts; use USM's information resources only for purposes which are legal and consistent with the University's mission.

Consistent with the above, unacceptable uses and behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- violating, or attempting to alter computer equipment;
- violating, or attempting to violate, computer system security;
- violating, or attempting to violate, software license agreements;
- incurring unauthorized or unreasonable costs for the University;
- accessing files, data, or passwords of others without authorization;

- disrupting or monitoring electronic communications without authorization;
- harassing other computer users or University staff;
- violating the privacy of others;
- libeling or slandering others;
- using any University workstation for any illegal purpose;
- copying or distributing copyright-protected material without legal right or authorization; and
- intentionally and unnecessarily exposing others to material they may find personally unsuitable.

Results of Inappropriate Behavior

It is important to recognize that inappropriate behavior has an adverse effect on the work of others, on the ability of University staff to provide good service, and/or on information resources themselves. Thus it is expected that users of information resources at USM will be constructively responsive to others' complaints, and receptive to University staff's reasonable requests for changes in behavior or action.

University staff will attempt to resolve differences and problems among information users by asking for the cooperation of those involved, and for compliance with University policies.

The University will pursue infractions or misconduct that cannot be resolved informally with the general means it has available to it within the University and with law enforcement, as appropriate.

Serious infractions or misconduct may result in temporary or permanent loss of access privileges.

Community Standards

All members of the University community share a responsibility for maintaining an environment where actions are guided by mutual respect, integrity, and reason. All members of the University are governed by University policies, local ordinances, and state and federal laws.

Office of Graduate Studies

For more information about Graduate Assistantships, or to ask any questions, please contact the Graduate Studies Office.

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