

Graduate Assistantship Job Description

Position Summary:

Title: Graduate Assistant**Department:** Office of Sustainability**Hours per Week:** 10 hours/week**Location(s):** Gorham, Portland, LAC**Lab (if applicable):** N/A**Duration:** Fall 2026 semester, Spring 2027 semester**Anticipated Start Date:** 9/1/2026**Total Stipend:** \$6,000 for master's-level students / \$7,000 for doctoral-level students, paid biweekly**Tuition Waiver:** up to 3 graduate credits per semester during each the Fall 2026 semester, Spring 2027 semester**Supervisor Name:** Aaron Witham**Supervisor Email:** aaron.z.witham@maine.edu**Supervisor Phone:** 207-753-6507

*** Per [CBA, Art. 38, § 7](#), graduate workers who are on approved remote work arrangement may need to physically come to campus periodically to perform work or attend meetings. Check with the supervisor for any on-campus requirements.*

Other Information:

- The University offers a GA/TA/RA health benefit plan to USM graduate workers through Gallagher Health. Additionally, effective July 1, 2026, workers have access to dental and vision insurance options and voluntary retirement savings plans; USM will not cover these costs.
- Graduate workers are also eligible for resources through the UMS Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Position Details:

Statement of Job:

The GA for Sustainability will work closely with the Director of Sustainability to help the University implement and maintain sustainability initiatives in line with its Strategic Sustainability Plan, Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan, and Carbon Neutrality Commitment. Initiatives are focused on reducing environmental impact on campus, while educating students, staff and faculty about solutions. Topic areas include energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable transportation, green buildings, water savings, and ecological health. Key tasks involve data collection, research, and outreach, as well as development and management of programs and projects.

75% of the duties can be completed remotely in an online environment, which makes this position a safe investment during this uncertain time that we live in. In the event of unforeseen factors such as weather, pandemics, etc., this position can become 100% remote.

Essential Functions:

The GA will be expected to carry out a handful of the following duties, depending on the current needs of the specific semester:

Graduate Assistantship Job Description

- Create, implement & manage Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures within the University's evolving TDM plan, including but not limited to initiatives to increase pedestrian, bike, bus, carpool & EV modes of transportation and to limit single occupancy trips to campus.
- Research sustainability solutions by reading literature, surveying programs at other institutions, and interviewing practitioners
- Conduct cost-benefit, comparative, or impact analysis on topics such as green building certifications, energy systems, transportation modes, and carbon emissions
- Collect data through surveys, parking inventories and other means. Survey topics include heating & cooling in the residence halls, and transportation patterns of commuters
- Conduct geospatial data collection and analysis on topics such as transportation and campus trees
- Produce models, graphs, tables, reports, and Powerpoints as needed
- Organize and help run sustainability events, involving undergraduates
- Assist in managing projects involving undergraduates
- Other duties as reasonably assigned

Supervisory Responsibilities:

- Assist the Director of Sustainability in providing guidance to between 10-12 undergraduate student workers.
- Supervisory responsibilities will be limited in nature, and primarily consist of running certain meetings, helping to organize some student events, and keeping an eye on certain student projects

Budget Responsibilities:

Assist the Director of Sustainability in estimating costs for initiatives, brainstorming budgets, and prioritizing projects

Public and Professional Activities Related to Job Performance:

This assistantship will provide a rich professional growth opportunity for the student, with public exposure that will help the student build their professional network.

Past students, who have worked as GAs in the Office of Sustainability, are now working as professionals in the environmental and transportation fields, and their GA position was the most relevant experience on their resume.

The work allows for leadership development through hands-on experience planning, implementing and managing various sustainable initiatives. Professional development also comes from conducting analysis that feeds directly into important University decisions. Most projects that the student will work on already have high levels of commitment from the University, so the student's work on them is for tangible benefit. For example, previous GAs have helped the Office of Sustainability successfully 1) carry-out transportation surveys of between 750-900 respondents, 2) serve as PI on a survey project, 3) publish the final draft of the University's Transportation Demand Management Plan with the City of Portland, as a condition of approval to build a \$100+ million dollar residence hall and Career & Student Success Center, 4) conduct analysis that proved the University did not need a 5-story parking garage, only a 4-story, which saved the University 137 unnecessary parking spaces and \$4 million, 5) co-author an RFP for bikeshare services with the City of Portland, 6) implement the first bikeshare program on

Graduate Assistantship Job Description

campus and 7) earn USM its first certification as a Bicycle Friendly Campus, and 8) compile and analyze data for compliance reporting requirements with the City of Portland and Second Nature, a national carbon reporting framework. The next GRA can build on these successes by continuing to implement more projects in multiple areas, not just transportation. These experiences will not only be satisfying and meaningful, but also will provide major accomplishments for the student's resume.

The academic work related to this work lends itself to clear sociological and technological research questions in the energy, building policy, transportation, ecology and carbon mitigation sectors, such as how do we shift personal behavior around commuting and how do we transition the energy use of our buildings to eliminate 10,000 metric tonnes of CO₂e emissions per year. These types of questions are essential questions of our generation, as we face global environmental challenges that are bigger than any one institution, industry or nation.

It is not just environmental skill building, the skills involved in managing, planning, analyzing, and researching these projects are highly applicable to a range of professional careers, and the Director of Sustainability will work closely with the student to cater the skill building to match the particular student's academic and career goals.

As supervisor to this position, the Director of Sustainability, brings to the table a depth of experience and education. He holds a Master's of Science in Natural Resources and a Graduate Certificate in Ecological Economics, where he studied management techniques and cost benefit analysis strategies. He also served as a Transportation Research Scholar in graduate school, which gave him the knowledge to plan and implement successful transportation and energy projects. He has over 16 years of experience developing and managing millions of dollars worth of energy projects across four different institutions of higher education.

Internal Contacts:

The GA will work with multiple departments, such as Facilities Management, Parking, Student Engagement, Residence Life, Public Safety, Dining, and the Environmental Science & Policy Department.

External Contacts:

The GA will likely interface with multiple external entities, such as the City of Portland, the Town of Gorham, the Greater Portland METRO bus service, Tandem Mobility bikeshare, The Bicycle Coalition of Maine, the Maine DEP, and various consulting agencies employed by the University.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- Reliability and punctuality
- Very detail oriented
- Broad knowledge of environmental topics
- Ability to handle several projects simultaneously
- Ability to do focused and in-depth analysis and research
- Skilled at communicating to diverse audiences
- Comfortable interacting with students at outreach events

Graduate Assistantship Job Description

Required Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree in any of the following: environmental science, environmental policy, sustainability, human ecology, economics, math, chemistry, biology, ecology, geography, geology, or similar
- If the candidate's bachelor's degree wasn't focused on environmentalism or sustainability, then the candidate must have an associate's degree, minor or certificate of some sort that focused on environmentalism or sustainability, or the candidate must have equivalent experience through a job or internship
- Basic proficiency at Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets
- Must not be a non-student University of Maine System employee.
- The use of a personal computer or laptop IS required for this position. Note: designated [on-campus computer lab workstations](#) are available on a first come, first served basis.

Preferred Qualifications:

- Experience doing energy or transportation analysis
- Experience creating maps on Google Earth or using Arc GIS
- Advanced knowledge of Microsoft Excel
- Suggested academic programs:
 - MPPM, Policy, Planning & Management
 - MS, Adult & Higher Education
 - MS, Biology
 - MSed, Educational Leadership

This position shall be covered by the University of Maine System and University of Maine Graduate Workers Union Collective Bargaining Agreement.

To Apply:

Submit your application, including your resume and cover letter, via the [Graduate Assistant Application form linked here](#) by 8/13/2026. In your cover letter, include a self-assessment about how this position relates to your academic program and professional aspirations. Candidates should receive notice of employment decisions by 8/20/2026.

Please direct any questions specific to this position to the supervisor at aaron.z.witham@maine.edu or 207-753-6507. For general questions about the GA program, or the Graduate Assistant Application form, reach out to the Office of Graduate Studies, usmgradstudies@maine.edu or 207-780-4872.