



MEMO

TO: School/Division HR Officers and Secondary Contacts
Business Managers
Student Services Managers

FROM: Elizabeth Mayer-Davis, Dean
Julie Montaigne, Finance
ConnectCarolina HR/Payroll Representatives

SUBJECT: Hiring Graduate Students 2025-2026

DATE: June 22, 2025

This memo contains information about hiring graduate students, including guidelines, helpful reminders, and suggested effective dates. Graduate students may be hired for a semester, academic year, calendar year, or other periods, as needed. Each campus unit may establish varying effective dates to meet its business needs.

In January 2024, a change was made to prorate partial month salaries based on the workday methodology instead of the calendar day methodology. This change means that for any partial month payments, the payroll will be based on the number of weekdays (Monday through Friday) during the partial month. Holidays and other leave types are not considered different than a worked day. The graduate student [stipend calculator tool](#) can be used to determine the monthly flat rate amount to enter on the ePAR form and has been updated to reflect this change. There is no change for employees working the full month.

For students who receive tuition and fee awards through GradStar, please use the dates suggested at the end of this memo and the calculator stipend tool to determine the correct amount of pay and to ensure the minimum stipend is met.

HIRING ACTIONS

Appointments in academic versus hiring units

While there is no formal policy on who should enter actions for students, the *usual* practice is that graduate students are hired by their academic unit, which is considered their “home” department. This practice ensures consistency and support from the student’s perspective and helps the academic department to be in a better

position to manage their students' workloads and responsibilities. However, in cases where students are funded and hired by other units, please carefully consider the following:

- Hiring units should coordinate the appointment with the academic unit before ePARs are initiated and awards are entered in GradStar.
- Is the appointment a short-term or long-term work/funding arrangement (one semester or one academic year)?
- Coordination of enrollment in and termination of the Graduate Student Health Insurance Plan (GSHIP), if applicable.
- Security is applied to the department that enters the action, and they would have access to and management of the student's position and job as well as overall management of reporting relationships, FTE changes, compensation amounts, payroll data, etc.
- Work location is important for accuracy, space planning, etc and should reflect where the student is physically located to improve reporting.

For GradStar purposes, it does not matter which unit enters the ePAR to hire the student. The department who does the award entry will see the hiring action in GradStar as "view only," and the tuition awards will apply to the department budget of the user who enters the award.

FTE and Job Titles

FTE should be based on the hours required per week relative to a typical full-time 40-hour workweek. For example, if a student is expected to work 20 hours per week in the appointment, they should be listed as .5 FTE (even if the appointment is only for one semester). If the expectation is 10 hours per week, they should be listed as .25 FTE. Please adhere to limitations on student work discussed in the [Student Employment FAQ](#) and the [Graduate Student Handbook](#), accounting for all concurrent student appointments.

Students should only be hired as a "Graduate Teaching Assistant" or "Graduate Teaching Fellow" if they will be assigned to a course in ConnectCarolina. Typically, the "Fellow" appointment is used only for those students that are listed as the only Primary Instructor on the lecture component of a course. "Graduate Teaching Assistant" is applied for those students who are assigned to lead the recitation component of a course or other support relating to grading, tutoring, or teaching for a course. "Graduate Assistant" or "Graduate Research Assistant" are other common appointments if there is no course assignment. For more information regarding instructor workload options and how they relate to instruction, staff are encouraged to review the [Instructor Role, Access, and Workload guidance](#) on the Registrar's website.

Short Work Break Information

- Students should return from a work break if they are returning to their appointment. They should be terminated if they are not returning.
- Do not check the box to bypass compensation and funding when completing the ePAR to return a student from a work break. Instead, be sure to include

compensation and funding on the action. This will allow the originator and approvers to confirm the compensation and funding are accurate.

- If a student is transferring from a work break to a new appointment, they must first be returned from the work break.
- Be mindful of payroll deadlines when submitting hires, returning from work breaks, and termination.

Multiple Jobs Summary and UNC Employee Information

- Use the Multiple Jobs Summary and UNC Employee Information pages in the HR Work Center to review the student's employment and job status prior to taking any action. These pages provide the following information:
 - HR and Payroll status, which helps determine if the employee is active or on a work break;
 - Appointments and their expected job end date; and
 - Department, job code, and FTE.
- These pages also help departments avoid hiring a student into the same job twice and avoid term/re-hires or transferring the student out of the wrong appointment.

Other

- Students who need to complete an I-9 must have a hire date that remains in compliance with Form I-9 guidelines. Section 1 of the I-9 must be completed on or before the date of the hire and completion of Section 2, which must occur within three days of the hire.
- Typically, students should not be hired before August 1 or end work after December 31 for fall semester and should not be hired before January 1 or end work after July 31 for spring semester for purposes of qualifying for tuition awards in GradStar.
- Newly hired students may receive access to Canvas for course planning but will not see their class roster until the hire action is fully executed and the effective hire date is reached. Submit a service request for questions on access.
- Students hired to teach a course may begin course planning before the first day of class, so you may adjust the ePAR dates to include that time as compensation. Use the stipend calculator tool when adjusting recommended dates.
- Adjust summer appointments as needed to reduce errors such as over/underpayments for fall or spring appointments.

GRADSTAR CONSIDERATIONS

To be eligible for tuition and fee awards, graduate students must be appointed to a qualifying Job Code and earn the minimum stipend. The Graduate Assistant job code is not eligible for these awards. The hiring and academic units should coordinate to ensure tuition and fee awards are provided to eligible students. Instate and remission funding are provided by The Graduate School to the academic home of the student; however, if the hiring unit is not the academic department, the hiring unit should initiate conversation with

the academic unit BEFORE an offer is made to ensure funding is available. See [The Graduate School website](#) for more information.

The GradStar system uses the same methodology as the stipend calculator tool to determine the stipend amount that shows on the award entry screen. The recommended stipend dates are used in GradStar as the “semester dates” to define each semester so when the HR information is downloaded to GradStar, the system ensures the student is earning the minimum stipend for that semester.

If the ePAR dates are different than the recommended ePAR/GradStar dates, then the stipend will show up as a different amount on the GradStar page.

EXAMPLE: The fall dates are 8/18/2025 – 12/31/2025. If the department needs to hire the student early and uses 8/11/2025 as the start date on the ePAR, GradStar will continue to use 8/19/2025, and a **lower amount** will display on the GradStar Maintenance page. If the student is paid above the minimum stipend, there will be no issue with entering tuition awards in GradStar. If the student is paid the exact minimum stipend amount, an error (“minimum stipend not met”) will be displayed and prevent tuition award entry. To solve this problem, the user should adjust the ending date on the ePAR to 12/24/2025. The correct minimum stipend will then show on the GradStar award entry page, and the student will still receive the correct amount in the semester.

HELPFUL REMINDERS AND TIPS

- If you are transitioning a student from “Graduate Assistant” to “Graduate Research Assistant” or “Graduate Teaching Assistant,” you can either submit a hire ePAR and transfer the student into a position with a GradStar qualifying job code OR update the current position’s job code via the Position ePAR. Once executed, submit a hire ePAR and transfer the student into the same position.
- For more information, please view the [Tips and Tricks for GradStar Load Success](#) microlearning and visit the [Student Employment](#) website for more information for hiring supervisors, managers, and students.
- Online training materials for [student originators](#) exists on the ConnectCarolina User Information website.
- The expected job end date for the Hire or Edit Existing Job ePAR should always be one day greater than the Pay-through date.
- Be sure to review the instructions on placing and/or returning EHRA students from short work break.
- Lump sum payments for graduate students are not allowed. Lump sum payments do not allow reporting officers to get an accurate count of student employees and the hours they work for Affordable Care Act (ACA) requirements for tracking benefits eligibility.
- The EHRA student auto term process runs daily from the 1st through the 14th of the month. During this timeframe, anyone with an Expected End Date of that day or before will be auto-terminated. On the 15th of the month, the catch-all for the whole month is run with dates within that same month. The process continues to run daily to terminate anyone with an expected end date within the month (except during payroll lockout).

- Use the **Job: Expected End Date** to report to manage reappointments for students and other available reports.

HR/Payroll Dates and Deadlines Calendars

- [HR/Payroll Calendars](#): Calendars are subject to change. Please review on a regular basis to ensure you have the most up-to-date information.
- TIP: You can pull the [Payroll Deadline calendar](#) into your Outlook calendar and view it side-by-side or as an overlay to your personal calendar.

SUGGESTED DATES FOR ePAR

Note all dates must fall on a weekday and not a weekend due to the workday method of calculating payroll.

9-Month Appointments

The dates below are recommended for standard 9-month appointments. You may use different dates but are strongly encouraged to use the [stipend calculator tool](#) to ensure the intended amount of pay and to ensure the student receives the minimum stipend amount for tuition purposes.

| | Start Date | Pay-Through Date | Expected Job End Date |
|----------------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Fall Only | 8/18/2025 | 12/31/2025 | 1/1/2026 |
| Spring Only | 1/1/2026 | 5/12/2026 | 5/13/2026 |
| Academic Year | 8/18/2025 | 5/12/2026 | 5/13/2026 |

12-Month Appointments

Units who choose to pay graduate students at an annual rate may also use varying dates to meet their business needs. The best practice is to align hire dates to coincide with the insurance policy year, which is August 1 through July 31.

Summer Appointments

Refer to the [Summer Handbook](#) for students teaching through the Summer School program for date information. Appointment dates for summer terms are provided for guidance only.

Note that graduate students teaching during Summer Session II should not have an expected job end date before 8/5/2026 to allow for grading access so you may need to adjust the end date in these cases.

| | Start Date | Pay-Through Date | Expected Job End Date |
|--------------------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Summer I Only | 5/13/2026 | 6/22/2026 | 6/23/2026 |
| Summer II Only | 6/22/2026 | 8/18/2026 | 8/19/2026 |
| Summer I & II | 5/13/2026 | 8/17/2026 | 8/18/2026 |

QUESTIONS

For **process** related or technical questions, submit a [service request](#).

For **policy** questions:

- Contact your dean's office or business office first for policies specific to your school/division.
- You may also contact The Graduate School contacts listed below:
 - Julie Montaigne, director of finance, julie_montaigne@unc.edu
 - Tyler Ritter, associate dean of administration, tyler_ritter@unc.edu
 - Alicia Rogers, director of human resources, alicia_rogers@unc.edu