

Graduate Resident Assistant (GRA) Role Description

2026-2027

General Summary

The Graduate Resident Assistant (GRA) role is a unique opportunity for graduate students who want to make a meaningful impact on their community while gaining valuable, real-world leadership experience. As a GRA, you'll help graduate and professional students – and their families – feel at home at Northwestern by fostering a supportive, welcoming, and connected residential environment in Engelhart Hall, McManus Center, or Garrett Place.

In this 20-hour-per-week, live-in role (with a furnished apartment included), you'll take the lead on building community through creative events, offering guidance to residents and supporting students during moments when they need it most. Your responsibilities will span three main areas: community building and event planning, administrative tasks that keep the community running smoothly, and participation in an evening and weekend on-call rotation as part of a supportive team.

GRAs develop in-demand skills that employers value – leadership, communication, conflict management, crisis response, teamwork, and cultural competence. You'll learn how to support diverse communities, navigate complex situations with confidence, and collaborate with peers and professional staff.

The GRAs are supervised by a Resident Director and Assistant Resident Director, and become part of a highly collaborative, mission-driven Residential Services team. If you're looking for a role that combines community impact, personal development, and meaningful leadership experiences, the GRA position may be an excellent fit.

General Responsibilities and Duties

1. Administrative and Operational Responsibilities (25%)
 - a. Serve as a liaison to students and administrative offices and collaborate with campus partners.
 - b. Be available to educate interested applicants about the GRA position and assist with the selection process, as needed.
 - c. Attend bi-weekly GRA team meetings and meet bi-weekly individually with the Resident Director for team and individual development, community development planning, and to receive community and administrative updates.

- d. Assist with operations processes such as resident check in and check out, administer keys for lockout situations, and conduct room inspections.
 - e. Communicate regularly with the RD, ARD, RA team, and Residential Services staff.
 - f. Perform administrative tasks, including submitting duty logs, incident reports, and program planning and evaluation forms in a timely manner.
2. Safety and Security/On-Call Responsibilities (50%)
- a. Serve in a duty rotation to promote safety, security, policy enforcement, and general resident support and well-being within the residential area during nights and weekends (8:00pm-8:00am) throughout the academic year, as well as weekend day duty (8:00am-8:00pm). There will also be duty responsibilities during designated break periods throughout the academic year.
 - b. Perform duty responsibilities, including rounds of building, apartment lockouts, assisting residents with maintenance concerns, and confronting and documenting policy violations or inappropriate behavior. Enforce rules and regulations such as noise concerns, property damage, fire safety, and other potential policy violations in a consistent and professional manner. GRAs may also be asked to assist residents with these items during times when they are not on duty, as appropriate with role expectations.
 - c. Ensure the security and safety of the building by aiding with fire alarms and other emergency evacuation procedures, educating residents on security protocols for the building, and maintaining an alert and engaged community.
 - d. Submit all reports (Duty Logs, Incident Reports, and Maintenance Requests) to RD with details of incidents as needed and in a timely manner.
 - e. Appropriately handle building keys.
 - f. Respect the confidentiality of privileged information.
 - g. Build and maintain a good working relationship with all University staff.
 - h. Provide suggestions and recommendations to improve the living experience for residents and their families.
 - i. Other duties as assigned.
 - j. While on duty, the GRA will carry a university-issued cell phone and remain within the assigned area to respond to the needs of the residents. A GRA must be able to be on scene and respond to a situation within ten minutes. During normal operations, five GRAs serve on the McManus Center duty rotation, and six GRAs serve on the Engelhart Hall and Garrett Place duty rotation. This number is subject to change if there are vacancies on the GRA

team. GRAs may also be asked to assist with duty coverage at any of the graduate housing buildings (Engelhart, Garrett, or McManus) as needed.

3. Community Development Responsibilities (25%)
 - a. Develop relationships through intentional and meaningful interactions with residents in the residential area to build community, foster belonging, connection, and engagement, and create a welcoming and enriching environment within graduate residential communities.
 - b. Implement the Residential Experience Framework.
 - c. Plan and implement small- and large-scale programs to meet the needs of the residents, support department initiatives, and collaborate with university offices.
 - d. Propose, advertise, facilitate, and evaluate building-wide social and educational programs throughout the year.
 - e. Support fellow team members through attendance at programs and activities.
 - f. Publicize campus events by posting fliers, banners, posters, electronic means, and/or word of mouth.
 - g. Other duties as assigned.

Important Dates

- GRA Summer Term Dates: Monday, June 15 – Monday, August 31, 2026
 - Summer Term Training: Monday, June 15 – Wednesday, June 17, 2026
- GRA Academic Year Dates: Monday, August 31, 2026 – Wednesday, June 16, 2027
 - Academic Year Training: Monday, August 31 – Saturday, September 12, 2026
 - GRAs will need to work part of one or more breaks in the academic calendar:
 - Thanksgiving Break: Wednesday, November 25 – Sunday, November 29, 2026
 - Winter Break: Saturday, December 12, 2026 – Sunday, January 3, 2027
 - Spring Break: Saturday, March 20 – Monday, March 29, 2027
- Training dates listed represent the widest possible training period. Actual training dates will fall within listed ranges and will be communicated in advance.
- GRAs are required to be at all training dates during their appointment term. Exceptions will only be made for mandatory academic requirements.
- Dates are subject to change with advanced communication.

GRAs are required to assist with all major check-in and check-out processes, including on evenings and weekends. GRA presence with their residential community is critical for emergency response. GRAs should discuss plans to be away from their community for extended periods with the RD/ARD supervisor. GRAs should consult with their supervisor before making travel arrangements. This includes university dates around holiday closures and break periods.

Minimum Qualifications

GRA positions are available for graduate students enrolled full-time at Northwestern University. Incoming graduate students (new for the 2026-2027 academic year) are eligible to apply for the position if they are accepted to the university and enrolled by the time of their appointment. GRAs (including applicant candidates) must be in good academic and conduct standing with Northwestern University. Preference will be given to individuals who have prior residential life or similar experience (i.e., undergraduate Resident Assistant or boarding school leadership roles).

Kellogg students planning to participate in exchange during the fall, winter, or spring quarters are not eligible for the academic year GRA position. Students who are planning to be away from the Evanston campus for the fall, winter, or spring quarter for other reasons are also not eligible for the academic year GRA position.

A background check will be conducted for all individuals selected during the hiring process. Final acceptance is conditional upon a successful background check.

Physical Requirements

This role requires frequent overnight response to student emergencies, which includes interrupted sleep and ability to wake up from a phone call while sleeping, as well as the ability to lift up to 10 pounds, and be able to ascend and descend multiple stairs.

Compensation

Each GRA will receive a furnished, on-campus apartment within their assigned residential community. Your apartment comes with all utilities included, along with cable TV access, wireless internet, and free in-building laundry facilities, making it easy to settle in and focus on your graduate experience. In addition to housing, GRAs receive \$150 per month in compensation. Opportunities may be available to earn additional money by serving on duty during university breaks (e.g., Thanksgiving Break, Winter Break, Spring Break, etc.). GRAs are expected to live in their apartment for the duration of their appointment.

GRAs requiring a two-bedroom or larger apartment to accommodate dependents must request a larger unit at the time of accepting the role. Considerations for larger units are made based on the number of occupants and apartment availability and are not guaranteed. GRAs who are approved for larger units will be provided with rent credit comparable to a one-bedroom apartment and are responsible for the difference in rent for the upgraded unit.

International students serving as Graduate Resident Assistants, and some domestic students may be impacted by Federal Tax Guidelines. More information can be found [here](#).

GRAs who leave the position may be required to vacate the assigned apartment and relocate to a different apartment community within 48 hours of when their termination letter or verbal resignation is received.

Additional Information

Northwestern University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action educator, and employer. Northwestern University does not discriminate against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, parental status, marital status, age, disability, citizenship, veteran status, or other protected group status in matters of admissions, employment, housing, or services or in the educational programs or activities it operates.

Residential Services invites you to approach us early in the application process and to contact the [Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance](#), if you think you may require housing or position-related accommodation as a GRA.