

**FORMATIVE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES PROGRAM (PEAF)  
POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

**DEAN'S OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND  
RESEARCH  
RÍO PIEDRAS CAMPUS  
UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO  
Revised December 2023**

by the Assistant Dean's Office for Student Affairs

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## I. Definition and Objectives of the Program<sup>1</sup>

The Formative Academic Experiences Program (PEAF, for its Spanish abbreviation) is a competitive program that allows participating graduate students to acquire academic and co-curricular experiences that broaden their academic and professional instruction. Furthermore, this program contributes to the development of research, creative activity, erudition, and education at the Campus; core elements of its mission. The program is coordinated, managed and evaluated by the Dean's Office of Graduate Studies and Research (DEGI, for its Spanish abbreviation).

In exchange for their participation in this program, graduate students receive an economic incentive and are exempt from paying tuition fees (special fees apply) in order for them to be able to dedicate full time to their studies and successfully complete them within the established time. This incentive is principally subsidized by contributions from the Puerto Rico Legislature and institutional funds. However, there are assistantships that are subsidized by special or external funds. The same rules will apply to teaching and research assistantships subsidized by external, special or research project funds, as a condition for granting of the assistantship. All students under PEAFF must comply with the requirements stated in this manual.

## II. Eligibility Steps and Criteria

Graduate students, including those already participating, apply to participate in PEAFF for the following academic year through a call for applications published each academic year. Several requirements are taken into consideration—including GPA, progress towards the degree, academic load (see *General Criteria*), and the needs of the institution in various areas (research-creation and teaching). The suitability of the particular student for the proposed task is also considered.

DEGI certifies each student's eligibility to participate in PEAFF and allocates the available funds to the faculties, schools, or graduate programs. In turn, they are responsible of recruiting, assigning, supervising, and evaluating the different experiences of those selected from the eligible applicants. The academic units will have 30 calendar days to submit the contract documentation to DEGI once the allocated funds have been received.

First year students with regular admission qualify for PEAFF (must not have conditional admission<sup>2</sup>, transitory permit, or a study permit), thus DEGI proceeds to add their names to the list of eligible students for the units. To participate in subsequent years—the second year onwards—these students must complete the PEAFF application once the call for applications is open. If admission was conditional to completing a degree, the student must meet the condition and show evidence of having obtained regular admission in order to participate in PEAFF. In these cases, the graduate program will certify to

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<sup>1</sup> Board of Governors Certification 147, 2022-2023

<sup>2</sup> Students with conditional admission may be eligible if the only condition is to present evidence of having completed a degree. In case of conditional admission due to program requirements or pre-requisite courses, the condition must be fulfilled before starting to participate in PEAFF.

DEGI that the student has met the condition for admission.

#### **A. General Criteria**

Students eligible to participate in PEAFF must meet the following requirements at the time of application and maintain them during the assistantship:

1. Be a student with regular admission to a graduate program at the Río Piedras Campus. Students admitted to post-baccalaureate, post-master's, and professional certificates are not eligible to participate in PEAFF. Students in graduate programs that are institutionally recognized as self-sustaining are also not eligible to participate. (These programs have the capacity to sustain themselves).
2. Have a GPA of 3.00 or higher (in a scale of 4.00) for each academic session while participating in PEAFF.
3. Have academic progress that allows them to complete their studies in the established time, as evaluated and certified by their graduate program<sup>3</sup>.
4. Students with incomplete marks and/or repeating courses for more than two consecutive semesters will not be able to participate in PEAFF until the mark is removed and/or the course is passed. Thesis, dissertations, creative projects, and proposal courses are excluded. Students with incomplete marks who are already participating in the program will be allowed to continue in it as long as they have an adequate GPA, the required academic load, and are within the time to degree, according to graduate regulations.
5. Have a full academic load or its equivalent while participating in PEAFF (8 credits per semester or 6 credits per trimester<sup>4</sup> if the academic program is not self-sustaining).
6. Not have regular employment, within or outside the Institution, that paired with the assistantship exceeds 37.5 weekly hours<sup>5</sup>.
7. A student may be eligible to participate as early as their first year of graduate studies. However, it is not possible to participate in PEAFF to obtain two degrees of the same level. Nor to obtain any degree if the student already has a doctorate degree.
8. International students may participate in the program if they have a valid student visa and meet all the mentioned requirements.
9. The student cannot have a pending debt with the Institution<sup>6</sup>.
10. Other criteria are applicable, depending on the particularities of the formative academic experience (referred to as EAF throughout this document).

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<sup>3</sup> Academic progress means that the student meets a GPA of 3.00 or higher, passed 50% of the enrolled credits, is within the established time to complete the degree and is following the curricular sequence and requisites of their graduate program, according to Certification 95, 2019-2020.

<sup>4</sup> Academic Senate Certification 20, 2021-2022

<sup>5</sup> Board of Governors Certification 147, 2022-2023

<sup>6</sup> Board of Trustees Certification 101, 2000-2001

Teaching and research assistantships at the Campus can be subsidized by one of three possible sources: (1) funds distributed by DEGI that come from an allocation through legislation of the government of Puerto Rico (**PEAF Assistantships**); (2) institutional funds established in a faculty or school's budget line item (**Institutional Assistantships**); and (3) external funds (**External Assistantships**). Externally funded assistantships that have the benefit of tuition exemption will be processed under the Stipend Agreement (*Convenio de Estipendio*) and the requirements of the PEAf Assistantship Program will not apply to them.

In order to receive an assistantship the student will have to apply through DEGI's call for applications during the period of validity (November to February).

### **B. Eligibility Period**

Certification 147, 2022-2023 states that a graduate student can participate in the assistantship program until completing their degree as long as they remain in compliance with the eligibility requirements and their work is evaluated as satisfactory by their mentor.

A student who has completed a master's degree and participated in PEAf may do so again if admitted to a doctoral program. However, participating in PEAf to complete two degrees of the same level will not be allowed.

The graduate assistantship could be terminated at any time if the student's performance is deemed unsatisfactory or if the student fails to comply with the eligibility requirements. This, in turn, implies the total or partial removal of the tuition exemption benefit.

### **III. Types of Formative Experiences**

The Program provides two (2) types of formative experiences:

#### **A. Formative Academic Experience in Teaching**

An experience for graduate students who, as part of their instruction, provide auxiliary teaching services under the supervision of at least one faculty member. Academic departments or programs may assign teaching-related duties to qualifying and eligible graduate students selected by the department or program according to the budget allocated for this purpose. The department evaluates the candidates according to the criteria, knowledge, attitudes, and aptitudes required for the particular task.

A teaching assistant will be under the tutelage and supervision of a mentor or department chair listed as a faculty member of the Institution. As a teaching assistant, a doctoral student with a master's degree or its equivalent may teach and be responsible for one basic course (3000, 4000 and 5000 level) in the subject of their specialty. They may teach two sections of a single course for the 18 weekly hours required by PEAf. Meanwhile students in graduate programs with only a bachelor's degree may teach two laboratory sections. Students with a bachelor's degree who have passed their final degree exam or its equivalent may teach basic courses if approved by DEGI and recommended by the unit's Personnel Committee. The student will have duties and responsibilities similar to those of a regular

professor teaching the course. These duties are itemized below:

1. Will contribute to course teaching, give tutoring or practices assigned by the supervising professor.
2. If they are assigned courses, laboratories, or tutoring sessions, the student will be responsible of preparing, correcting, and grading tests and other related work.
3. Will meet students during office hours.
4. Will attend training, orientation, and coordination meetings for the course they are assisting with.
5. Will be responsible for ensuring the availability of materials and equipment necessary for the teaching assigned to them.
6. Will be responsible for attendance and partial grades and their submission to the immediate supervisor.
7. Will be responsible for discipline and safety in their classroom, laboratory, or any other premises in which they are performing as a teaching assistant.
8. Will be responsible for overseeing the administering of departmental examinations, as assigned.
9. Will be responsible for submitting the reports that may be deemed necessary.

Example of the tasks and time distribution for teaching assistants:

<b>ASSISTS WITH COURSES</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Full time (18 hrs.)</b>	<b>Part time (9 hrs.)</b>
3 credits course	3 credits x 2 sections	3 credits x 1 section
Preparation and Correction	7 hours	3.5 hours
Office Hours	3 hours	1.5 hours
Trainings	2 hours	1 hour

<b>ASSISTS WITH LABORATORIES</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Full time (18 hrs.)</b>	<b>Part time (9 hrs.)</b>
Laboratory 2 hrs.	2 hrs. x 3 sections	2 hrs. x 2 sections
Preparation and Correction	7 hours	2.5 hours
Office Hours	3 hours	1.5 hours
Trainings	2 hours	1 hour

### ***B. Formative Academic Experience in Research or Creation in a Professor's Research Project or Creative Activity***

An experience for graduate students who, as part of their instruction, provide auxiliary services in research or creation related to the practices, experiences, or field internships required for their degree under the supervision of at least one faculty member. In addition, they will help with the designing, planning, organization, execution, and direct participation in professional activities such as symposiums and congresses and other activities specific to the academic and professional practice of the student's field of study. Therefore, the participating student assists a professor in a specific research or creative project. The professor in charge of the research will choose the eligible graduate student that will assist them. To this end, they evaluate the candidates according to the criteria, knowledge, attitudes, and aptitudes required for the particular research. Some of the tasks permitted by this experience are:

1. Perform duties as assigned by the professor as principal investigator in the laboratory, workshop, computer terminal, or any other location where the research is conducted.
2. Attend training, orientation, and coordination meetings for the project in which they are assisting.
3. Be responsible of contributing to the training of other graduate and undergraduate students and personnel from other programs, according to their capabilities, as directed by the professor.
4. Be responsible of keeping a record, as required by the professor, of the research or project's results that allow the supervisor to make a concurrent evaluation of the tasks performed by the assistant while in turn keeping them informed of the progress of said tasks.
5. Upon culmination of the assistantship or of the research project, the student will be required to submit to their mentor a report of the tasks they performed with conclusions and recommendations, as applicable.
6. Be responsible of submitting other reports, as required of them.

### **IV. Granting Periods**

The student may participate in the Assistantship Program according to the years of study indicated in the Graduate Regulations and Board of Governors Certification 147. Therefore, students must comply with satisfactory academic progress, which implies that students with extensions or exceeding the time to degree do not qualify for the assistantship.

An EAF may be granted for a period of one semester, or periods of 10, 11, or 12 months, including summer<sup>7</sup>. The assistantship under PEAf may be in effect from the beginning of the first semester until summer, within the same academic year, according to the date stipulated by the Registrar's Office and the availability of funds. DEGI will validate that the student meets the full academic load requirement

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<sup>7</sup> One (1) semester (minimum: 5 months, maximum 6 months), two (2) semesters (10 or 12 months), summer (minimum: 1 month, maximum: 2 months). The start date is expected to be in August.

each semester or trimester in order to continue participating in the program. **If the student fails to comply with the program's requirements, the assistantship and the tuition exemption benefit will be removed.**

#### **V. Required Dedication Time and Place**

Formative Academic Experiences can be granted on a full time or part time basis. A full-time EAF requires a dedication of 18 hours per week to the assigned tasks, while a part-time EAF requires a dedication of 9 hours per week. Graduate students may participate in an assistantship with the Formative Academic Experiences Program (with 18 or 9 hours per week) and the Stipend Agreement Program (*Programa de Convenio de Estipendio*) simultaneously, as long as the combination does not exceed 25 hours per week<sup>8</sup> nor the costs of study stipulated by the Institution. DEGI's authorization is required for these simultaneous experiences.

The time dedicated to this experience can be on-site or online. Requests to carry out the experience online or remotely must be discussed, analyzed and authorized by DEGI. EAF assignments must happen within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States of America. Exceptions to these regulations must be evaluated and authorized by DEGI.

Teaching assistantships may be granted at other campuses or institutional units of the UPR System with prior authorization from the corresponding deans and DEGI.

When appropriate, research assistantships may be granted at other campuses or institutional units of the UPR System or at an outside entity like agencies or companies with prior authorization from the corresponding deans and DEGI. For assistantships at outside entities, the experience must be clearly linked to the student's program of study and a collaborative relationship between the University and the entity must be established.

**Teaching and/or research assistantships that take place outside of the Río Piedras Campus are required to complete the *Orden de Viaje* form from the unit in which the PEAF Agreement originates.**

#### **VI. Benefits for Participating Graduate Students**

The graduate student under PEAF receives a monthly economic incentive determined by the president of the University. Additionally, they are exempt from paying the cost of the enrolled credits leading to degree, as long as it is requested within the determined period. This tuition exemption benefit does not cover the payment of special fees, undergraduate courses, medical insurance, or course repetitions. This allows the student to devote full time to their studies and successfully complete them within the established minimum time. The tuition exemption benefit may be granted as long as DEGI receives the documentation within the stipulated period. If the documentation is received after this period, the total or partial tuition exemption benefit may not be granted.

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<sup>8</sup>International students with an F-1 Visa who are allowed a maximum of 20 hours per week during the school term are excluded.



DOCUMENTS SUBMISSION DATE	AWARDING OF THE TUITION EXEMPTION BENEFIT
<b>SEMESTER</b>	
Within 45 calendar days after the start of semester classes	100% of study costs
Within 46 to 60 calendar days after the start of semester classes	50% of study costs
After 61 calendar days after the beginning of the semester	The benefit will not be granted, regardless of the date start the participation agreement begins
<b>TRIMESTER</b>	
Within 15 calendar days after the first day of classes	100% of study costs
Within 16 to 30 calendar days after the first day of classes	50% of study costs
After 31 calendar days after the first day of classes	The benefit will not be granted, regardless of the date when the participation agreement begins

At our institution, the economic incentive depends on the level of the academic degree the student possesses and the time dedicated to the EAF. However, this provision may change upon receiving another amount established by the president of the UPR when allocating funds for the graduate assistantship program. A part-time EAF student will receive half of the economic incentive for their academic preparation and the payment of study costs, provided that documentation is received on or before the established period. In cases where students enter doctoral graduate programs straight from a bachelor's degree, the student may be qualified as having a higher level of preparation once the Student Information System recognizes them as a doctoral student and/or when the academic unit **certifies by letter that the student has completed the degree exam or qualifying exam. When the level of preparation is recognized via certification from the graduate program, the same must be submitted along with the student's contract documents prior to beginning the EAF. If, on the other hand, a stipend adjustment due to level of preparation is requested upon passing the degree exam or qualifying exam while the student is already participating in PEAf, an amendment to the stipend must be made with the certification from the graduate program. The adjustment will take effect at the beginning of the next academic semester if the unit has sufficient funds to honor the adjustment.**

**The tuition exemption benefit and the stipend for the externally funded assistantships will be determined as established in the approved research project proposal. However, the monthly stipend will not be less than what is established for the assistantships subsidized with DEGI or institutional funds.**

Highest preparation possessed by the student	Monthly stipend*	
	Full time (18 hours)	Part time (9 hours)
Bachelor's	\$872	\$436
Master's/Juris Doctor	\$1,090	\$545
<b>*Subject to what was stipulated by the president of the UPR when allocating funds</b>		

DEGI will process the payment of study costs under PEAf to those contracts whose income sources are as follows:

SOURCE	PAYMENT OF STUDY COSTS
DEGI distributed funds that are allocated through a legislation from the Government of Puerto Rico ( <b>PEAF Assistantships</b> )	Up to 100% of study costs
Institutional funds established in a faculty or school's budget line ( <b>Institutional Assistantships</b> )	Up to 100% of study costs
<b>Externally funded assistantships</b> without budget to cover study costs	Up to 100% of study costs
<b>Externally funded assistantships</b> that provide a portion of study costs	Amount necessary to cover up to 100% of study costs
<b>Externally funded assistantships</b> that provide full study costs that will be worked out through a Stipend Agreement ( <i>Convenio de Estipendio</i> ).	100% of the study costs through billing to the project's account.

## VII. Duties and Responsibilities of the Dean, Coordinator/Director, Mentor, and Student

### A. Responsibilities of the Dean of Faculty

1. Evaluate their unit's requests for teaching and research assistantships according to the needs of the departments and programs in accordance with the priorities of the faculty or school.
2. Submit their faculty or school's requests to DEGI's dean using the provided form (*PETICIONES-PEAF*).
3. Be responsible for ensuring that the funds allocated to their faculty or school are utilized in accordance to the established regulations.
4. Be responsible of ensuring that their faculty or school establishes and maintains a training program, as well as an evaluation system for PEAf assistantships.
5. Submit an annual report to DEGI indicating the accomplishments achieved with the assistantships received.

**B. Responsibilities of the Program Coordinator/School or Department Director**

1. Evaluate their unit's need for teaching and research assistantships and submit the corresponding request to their dean of faculty or school director.
2. Be responsible for the granting, renewal, or suspension of the assistantship. They will also handle all petitions for reconsideration or requests for change of assistantship.
3. Be responsible for ensuring that the funds allocated to their unit are utilized in accordance with the established standards.
4. Ensure that all EAF assistants participate in the training program and are evaluated by their supervisor.
5. Submit a report of the graduate assistantships' achievements during the corresponding academic period to the dean of faculty.
6. Be responsible of ensuring that the student's academic information on the forms is correct.

**C. Responsibilities of the Mentor**

1. Identify and recommend the graduate students who may receive a teaching or research assistantship.
2. Inform the student of the rules and procedures to participate in PEAf.
3. Discuss and certify with the student at the beginning of the PEAf assistantship the tasks to be performed, as stipulated in the Participation Agreement (*Acuerdo de Participación*).
4. Provide an experience with curricular and professional content that helps enrich the student's academic formation.
5. Provide training to the student so that they can carry out the tasks according to the mentor's expectations and those of PEAf. Provide DEGI with evidence of the training provided.
6. Ensure that the student complies with the agreed upon tasks, responsibilities, duties, and schedules, according to the needs of the academic unit granting the formative experience. It is requested that a weekly attendance record be kept, for which the Weekly Attendance Record Form (PEAF-007) (*Formulario Registro Semanal de Asistencia*) is recommended. In cases where the student is absent or fails to comply without just cause, the mentor must notify their coordinator and/or director about the situation with the student with the relevant evidence, and the coordinator will in turn notify DEGI. This situation could initiate an administrative severance and the cancellation of the tuition exemption benefit if fair and reasonable alternatives are not provided.
7. Ensure that the student attends the training stipulated by the Río Piedras Campus Administrative Board Certification 147, 2022-2023; and Certification 101, 2000-2001, as amended in 2016, in order to be considered for future participation in PEAf. (The student must complete a training record form along with evidence of participation PEAf-004).

8. Evaluate the student's performance once each semester or quarter and discuss the results of the evaluation with the student. At the end of the EAF, the mentor must complete the student's formative academic experience evaluation form, discuss it with the student and submit it to their graduate program's office. The unit granting the experience may have an evaluation system of their own. Satisfactory student performance is required when considering EAF renewal. The graduate program is responsible for sending a copy of the student's Formative Academic Experience Evaluation Form (PEAF-005) (*Evaluación de la Experiencia Académica Fomativa*) to DEGI and keeping a copy in the student's file. This evaluation must be completed and submitted within two weeks after the end of the formative academic experience or when requested by a DEGI representative.
9. Submit a report to the coordinator and/or department director on the assistantships under their charge within thirty (30) days following the end of the corresponding academic period.

#### **D. Responsibilities of the Student**

1. Know and comply with the policy and procedures to participate in PEAf.
2. Maintain eligibility criteria.
3. Certify that they do not exceed 37.5 hours per week while participating in an assistantship alongside a job, within or outside the Institution.
4. Attend the trainings required by Governing Board Certification 147 and Administrative Board Certification 101, as well as any training required by the mentor. Complete the training registration form (Form PEAf-004) and submit evidence of attendance to DEGI by means of a certificate of participation. Failure to provide evidence will affect future participation in the program.
5. Maintain close communication with their mentor.
6. Comply with all assigned tasks and the established schedule as per the Mentor-Graduate Student Participation Agreement (*Acuerdo entre el Mentor y el Estudiante Graduado*). If the student needs to be absent for a day, they must notify the mentor in writing. Afterwards, mentor and student must agree upon a time to make up for the lost hours.
7. Submit the required reports on their tasks on the agreed date.
8. Discuss and sign the form with the tasks descriptions with the mentor at the beginning of the experience. Discuss and sign the performance evaluation at the end of the EAF. In case of resignation from the experience, the student must complete the PEAf Resignation form (*Renuncia al PEAf*).
9. Keep a weekly attendance record, for which the Weekly Attendance Record Form (*Formulario Registro Semanal de Asistencia*) (Form PEAf-007) is recommended.
10. Evaluate their mentor's performance at the end of the assistantship experience (Form PEAf-008).
11. Make up for hours and services not performed when the Campus is unable to operate

normally during contract hours per the agreement between the student, mentor and program coordinator. The guidelines dictated by the Río Piedras Campus will be followed in the event of having to make up for the hours and services not performed. In general terms, the following is stipulated, without detracting from the Campus' guidelines:

Activity	Make-Up Time
Simultaneous Academic and Administrative Recesses	No PEAf tasks will be performed and no make-up hours will be required.
Holidays	No PEAf tasks will be performed and no make-up hours will be required.
Academic Recesses for Student Assemblies	No PEAf tasks will be performed during this period. The student will be allowed to make up the missed hours in agreement with their mentor and department director/program coordinator.
Recesses due to Emergencies and/or Weather Conditions	No PEAf hours will be required and no make-up hours will be required.

### VIII. Graduate Student Training (Form PEAf-004)

Governing Board Certification 147 and Administrative Board Certification 101 require graduate students with formative academic experiences to attend trainings. In addition, in its Academic Integrity Policy (Academic Senate Certification 64, 2022-2023), our institution poses participating in trainings to achieve ethical endeavors in teaching and/or research. Certification 101 states that students with teaching assistant duties must attend training designed to make them efficiently perform in the classroom when teaching a course, laboratory, or when tutoring. These trainings will count as part of the designated weekly EAF hours. The Center for Academic Excellence (CEA, for its Spanish abbreviation) and the graduate programs, among others, also offer training activities for graduate students. It is the responsibility of the student participating in PEAf to attend all required trainings, complete the form Certification of Training Hours (*Certificación de horas de adiestramiento*), and submit evidence to DEGI (certificates of participation).

- *Teaching Assistants* must take a teaching course for PEAf by the CEA or its equivalent. The course will be valid for 5 years. For subsequent years, the student must take a minimum of two workshops relating to teaching (2 hours x 2 = 4 hours) per academic year and/or formative academic experience.
- *Research Assistants* must take the Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research course under the CITI Program or its equivalent. This course will be valid for 5 years. For subsequent years, the student must take a minimum of two workshops

relating to research topics offered by the CEA or its equivalent (2 hours x 2 = 4 hours) per academic year and/or formative academic experience.

#### **IX. Evaluation of the Participating Student and the Assigned Task (Form PEAFF-005)**

The purpose of the evaluation is to foster communication between students and mentors, facilitate the formative academic experience and evaluate the results of the program. At the beginning of the EAF, each mentor or designated person will meet with the student and discuss the tasks to be performed, as well as the aspects that will be evaluated. A copy of the evaluation duly signed by the student and mentor will be submitted to DEGI once concluded the formative academic experience. This evaluation consists of five parts:

1. Student and Mentor Information.
2. Tasks of the Formative Academic Experience.
3. Mentor Evaluation of Student Performance During the Formative Academic Experience (Tasks, Skills, Abilities and Work Habits, and Field Expertise).
4. Student Evaluation of the Formative Academic Experience.
5. Comments and Certification.

#### **X. Professor Evaluation**

Board of Governors Certification 147, 2022-2023 states that each graduate student participating in PEAFF will be responsible of evaluating their mentor at the end of the experience. DEGI will provide the link to the digital evaluation form via email.

Once compiled the information gathered from the evaluations, DEGI will discuss the findings with the deans of faculty and school directors. In the event that a faculty member has been negatively evaluated by their students, it may be suggested—alongside the dean of faculty and/or school director—that they take trainings to strengthen their competencies as a mentor as a mitigation and remedial process. Depending on the case, a professor may be prohibited from participating in the program as a mentor for a period no shorter than a year. Exceptions to this rule must be approved by DEGI.

#### **XI. Administrative Aspects and Procedures**

##### ***A. Faculties and Schools Will Survey and Publish Their Needs***

1. The Deans of Faculty and School Directors will assess the needs of all the programs and professors assigned to that unit.
2. The faculties and schools receive, evaluate, and organize the petitions according to their priorities and hold them for potential PEAFF assignation.
3. The Deans and School Directors will publish their list of needs through an internal call for assistantships, so that eligible students may indicate their preference to the faculty for a particular task, either in the area of teaching or research.
4. All petitions will be handled through the faculty or school.

5. The faculties, schools, and deans' offices will submit their list of needs to DEGI for consideration. (PEAF Petitions)
6. DEGI will use a formula to allocate funds to the faculty or school taking into consideration the total budget available, the need for those PEAf for the particular task, the number of graduate students, and the number of professors and their productivity. In the absence of such information, DEGI will use the previous year's budget as the basis for the allocation.
7. If the funds designated for these purposes change or decrease, the allocated budget may change.
8. The faculties and schools must submit the participation agreements within 30 calendar days from the date DEGI allocates the funds to the unit.
9. Notify DEGI of who will be the person in charge in the faculty or school of forwarding the agreements of the students under PEAf to the Assistant Dean's Office of Graduate Student Affairs and keeping record of the subsidiary according to the funds allocated to the unit.

#### ***B. PEAf Candidates***

1. Every academic year, from November to February, a call for applications to participate in PEAf is opened. The application must be completed digitally.
2. First year students with regular admission are included in the list of eligible students for PEAf during that academic period.
3. Any student who wishes to participate in PEAf the following year must complete the PEAf application once the call for applications is open.
4. Only students certified eligible by DEGI may be hired under PEAf.
5. DEGI evaluates the eligibility of applicants and sends the list of eligible candidates to the deans and directors of the academic units.
6. It is compulsory to complete the application in order to participate in PEAf.

#### ***C. Participant Registration Data (Form PEAf-001)***

The Participant Registration Data document (*Datos para el Registro de Participantes*) is strictly for administrative use only. This document collects the information of the student and the unit that grants the assistantship for registry in the human resources system. The student's full name and Social Security Number<sup>9</sup> must be legible and correct. The beginning and end date must be clearly stipulated and discussed with the student. The University Financial Integrated System (UFIS) account number, FRS account number and position number must be complete and correct. The document must contain all required authorized signatures. If the assistantship is covered by external funds, the document must be signed by the project's principal investigator. **The academic unit is responsible for**

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<sup>9</sup> The full Social Security Number is required to process grant payments. For international students who do not have a Social Security Number, the documents to participate in PEAf can be processed with the provisional social security number assigned by the Institution. If, on the other hand, the student applied for an official Social Security Number, they must send the form T-001 Personal Data History from the Human Resources Office (*Historial de Datos Personales de la Oficina de Recursos Humanos*) with a copy of the new Social Security Number to DEGI in order to update the data.



**completing the corresponding administrative process with the dean of faculty and the unit's administrative assistant.**

***D. Mentor-Graduate Student Participation Agreement, Certification of Eligibility and Commitment (Form PEAFF-002)***

The Mentor-Graduate Student Participation Agreement is the document that includes the important elements contained in the Manual. The administrative staff of the academic unit granting the experience must complete the Mentor-Graduate Student Participation Agreement. The student's signature on this document commits them to comply with all the stipulations contained herein and with PEAFF rules set forth in this Manual. The mentor's signature means they are aware of their responsibilities as a mentor and are committed to fulfilling them. The signature of the corresponding university officials signifies that they have verified the information contained in the document and certify it is correct, according to available records.

The Certification of Eligibility must be completed by the graduate program's coordinator and will certify that the student meets the requirements of being a full time student, having a GPA of 3.00 or higher, and having academic progress, has the correct academic degree and is within the curricular sequence.

The Certification of Commitment is another stipulation within the form that must contain both the student and mentor's initials. There the student agrees to perform the duties and responsibilities in a satisfactory manner, as well as complying with the program's participation requirements. **The academic unit is responsible for completing the corresponding administrative process with the dean of faculty and the unit's administrative assistant.**

***E. Covering Tuition Costs for Students (Form PEAFF-003)***

Board of Governors Certification 147 (2022-2023) sets forth the payment of courses leading to degree in tuition as a benefit for assistantships, therefore the application must be completed in full. The application must include all the courses the student is enrolled in during the academic session and must be submitted within the established period. Students who continue in PEAFF during the second semester are not required to submit a new application to cover study costs. Nevertheless, DEGI will check that the student meets all program requirements. This full or partial benefit will be available to students whose documentation is received within the established time frame, (for more details please refer to the table contained in Article VI under Benefits for Participating Graduate Students). EAFs that are processed within the enrollment period per the academic calendar will have a memo reflected in their tuition bill for the cost of the enrolled credits leading to the degree. For those contracts received within 60 calendar days of the beginning of the semester and after the enrollment period, the invoiced tuition fee will be refunded. Contracts received outside this period (60 days from the beginning of classes) will lose this benefit.



## **F. Resignation or Administrative Severance from the Formative Experience (PEAF-006)**

### 1. Resignations

The student may request the cancellation of the assistantship if they find themselves unable to comply with the commitments made with the institution. To proceed with the resignation, they must complete the PEAF Resignation or Severance form (*Renuncia o Separación de PEAF*) and submit it to the graduate program coordinator or director. The academic unit is responsible for completing the corresponding administrative process with the dean of faculty and the unit's administrative assistant. They must submit the form to DEGI duly signed by all parties involved for the corresponding administrative process.

If the EAF receives the tuition exemption benefit, it will be removed upon the resignation and the costs will be charged depending on the time of the resignation. The student may be required to pay part of the tuition fees or pay in full. **DEGI will determine each case on its merits for full or partial removal of the tuition exemption benefit.**

PERIOD IN WHICH THE RESIGNATION OR SEVERANCE OCCURS	CHARGE TO BE BILLED FOR TUITION COSTS
<b>SEMESTER</b>	
The resignation is received within 30 calendar days after the start of semester classes	100% of the tuition fees will be billed
The resignation is received after 31 calendar days from the start of semester classes	50% of the tuition fees will be billed
<b>TRIMESTER</b>	
The resignation is received within 15 calendar days after the start of the trimester	100% of the tuition fees will be billed
The resignation is received 16 calendar days after the start of the trimester	50% of the tuition fees will be billed

### 2. Administrative Severance

The department director and/or coordinator and DEGI may suspend the assistantship in case of student physical injury or mental breakdown, when their work performance is not satisfactory, or when the student stops complying with the required eligibility criteria.

The administrative severance happens when the student's mentor presents evidence that the student is not complying with their duties and responsibilities. To carry out this procedure, the mentor must verify the evidence and present it to the graduate program coordinator and/or PEAf coordinator in their academic unit. The mentor will complete the PEAf Resignation or Severance form (*Renuncia o Separación del PEAf*) and submit it to their coordinator for processing. The coordinator will then notify DEGI of said non-compliance and submit the resignation or severance document signed by the mentor, coordinator and dean of faculty. DEGI will make the corresponding arrangements with the academic units concerned to separate the student from the program, suspend stipend payments and proceed to collect tuition costs in those cases where applicable.

## **XII. Other Regulations**

1. Two types of formative academic experiences may be combined as long as the time dedicated to them does not exceed 18 hours per week on top of the student's academic work. In addition, students under PEAf may participate in Stipend Agreements authorized by DEGI, and the combination of assistantships may not exceed 25 hours per week, nor may it exceed the study costs established by the Institution.
2. The maximum number of credits in lecture courses that a graduate student may teach is 6 credits (2 sections of the same 3-credit course). This student must have a master's degree or its equivalent and will teach only one course per semester. Exceptions to this rule must be previously authorized by DEGI.
3. Only the students with regular admission, academic progress, and without a full-time job within or outside the Institution are eligible for PEAf. The student may have a part-time job as long as the hours dedicated to PEAf and the job combined do not exceed 37.5 hours a week.
4. The time dedicated to PEAf by the students may not be lesser than half-time (9 hours per week).
5. The student will receive a fixed monthly economic incentive and tuition exemption (if applied for in time). However, the student will have to pay the special fees and the medical insurance, where applicable.
6. EAF agreements must reach DEGI on or before the established dates to ensure eligibility for the tuition exemption benefit under PEAf.
7. If at any moment the student does not comply with any of the requirements or eligibility criteria to participate in PEAf, the agreement may be terminated immediately and the tuition exemption benefit will be removed.
8. DEGI may grant or condition a PEAf even if the student has not met the eligibility criteria (Item II) established in this manual, when written justification is provided regarding the reasons for the student's failure to meet such requirements. The justification must include the approval from the graduate program's coordinator or director or from the Dean of Graduate Studies at the graduate program's faculty in which the student is enrolled.

9. The student must complete the weekly hours established in their PEAf agreement. Mentors must take into consideration the academic calendar when establishing the schedule with the student and respect the agreed upon schedule.
10. The student must comply with the responsibilities, duties and tasks set forth in their PEAf agreement.
11. Students awarded scholarships by DEGI do not qualify for PEAf during that period. It is important to note that the benefits that the student receives shall not surpass the costs of study, including student loans alongside PEAf.
12. UPR employees on leave without pay or with financial aid that does not exceed the institution's costs of study are eligible to participate in PEAf.
13. Students participating in PEAf who meet the master's degree requirement during the course of the semester and are admitted to a doctoral program **will receive the increased economic incentive at the beginning of the following semester, if the unit has the necessary funds.**
14. The economic incentive amount for PEAf or institutional assistantships will be as authorized by the president of the University of Puerto Rico, as stated in Certification 147. Externally funded assistantships may offer a higher incentive than PEAf or institutional assistantships.
15. PEAf assistantships may be granted to international students who meet the eligibility and visa criteria. These students may combine assistantships through the Stipend Agreement (*Convenio de Estipendio*) alongside PEAf, but must not exceed 20 hours per week during the school period.
16. The Dean of Faculty or DEGI may suspend the economic incentive when the work performed by the student is not satisfactory or when the student no longer meets the eligibility criteria established in Certification 147 and in the institutional certifications that regulate graduate programs (Certification 72 [1991-1992], 38 [2012- 2013], 51 [2017-2018], 95 [2019-2020]). The student may resign from PEAf when unable to fulfill the contracted commitments.

### **XIII. Program Evaluation**

Certification 147 states that a report will be submitted annually to the President's Office with recommendations regarding the status of the program. To comply with this stipulation, DEGI collects information on the performance of the program through the student's evaluation of their academic formative experience, the use of funds according to the allocation granted, and compliance with established regulations.

### **XIV. Procedure for Complaints and Grievances**

The Formative Academic Experiences Program is a space for academic development that fosters a relationship between the student and the mentor and/or supervisor. Because of this, in situations of

complaints and/or grievances, the basis of respect for students' conscience and their freedom of thought and expression are followed, as stipulated in the General Regulations of the University of Puerto Rico (*Reglamento General de la Universidad de Puerto Rico*). Furthermore, the University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus' Student Rulebook (*Reglamento de Estudiantes del Recinto Universitario de Río Piedras de la Universidad de Puerto Rico*)<sup>10</sup> poses that the right to freedom of discussion and expression does not exempt the student or the professor from the responsibility to comply with the pertinent requirements. In this case, the requirements of the Assistantship Program.

**The student will always be in their right to go to the Student Procurator's Office for guidance and conflict mediation.**

**Complaints or cases of harassment and discrimination will be handled at the Title IX Compliance Office at Plaza Universitaria.**

- **Procedures for Students**

Any student participating in PEAf who has a complaint or grievance, must act following the steps indicated in Academic Senate Certification 53 (2016-2017)<sup>11</sup>, since it is the closest regulation to the type of formative experience given in the program. Therefore, the student must:

1. First, address their mentor in writing explaining the situation they are experiencing.
2. If no solution is found, the student may turn to the director of the academic unit to which their PEAf mentor is assigned.
3. If that unit does not reach a solution, the student may refer the case to their faculty's Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable. The units that do not have a Dean of Graduate Studies will refer the situation to the Dean of the Faculty.
4. In the event that the parties involved do not reach a solution, the situation will be referred to DEGI.

- **Procedures for Mentors**

If, on the other hand, the mentor is the one with the complaint:

1. First, the student must be informed of the situation in writing.
2. The professor/mentor must go to their unit's director and/or coordinator to notify them of the situation with the student. The unit must look for a solution alongside their PEAf coordinator and/or Assistant Dean of Administrative Affairs.

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<sup>10</sup> Board of Governors Certification 85 (2020-2021).

<sup>11</sup> *Procedimiento Uniforme para la Revisión de Calificaciones en el Recinto de Río Piedras.*

3. If a solution to the situation is not reached, the mentor must go to their faculty's Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable. Units that do not have a Dean of Graduate Studies, will refer the situation to the Dean of Faculty.
4. Lastly, DEGI must be notified of the changes made or actions taken in response to the situation.

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Revised by Dr. Ivelisse Acevedo Moreno and DEGI personnel in December 2023.  
Evaluated and approved by the Council of Graduate Studies and Research (CEGI, for its Spanish abbreviation), in December 15, 2023.  
Translated from Spanish in April of 2024.

## ANNEXES

- 1) Table for Petitions (*Tabla para las peticiones*) (PETICIONES-PEAF)
- 2) Certification of Training Hours (*Certificación de horas de adiestramiento*) (PEAF-004)
- 3) Formative Academic Experience Evaluation Form (*Evaluación de la Experiencia Académica Fomativa*) (PEAF-005)
- 4) Participant Registration Data Form (*Datos para el Registro de Participantes*) (PEAF-001)
- 5) Mentor-Graduate Student Participation Agreement (*Acuerdo entre el Mentor y el Estudiante Graduado*) (PEAF-002)
- 6) Form to Cover Tuition Costs (*Formulario para cubrir costos de matrícula*) (PEAF-003)
- 7) Weekly Attendance Record Form (*Formulario Registro Semanal de Asistencia*) (PEAF-007)
- 8) PEAFF Resignation or Severance (*Renuncia o Separación de PEAFF*) (PEAF-006)
- 9) Mentor Evaluation by the Students (*Evaluación de los mentores por los estudiantes bajo PEAFF*) (PEAF-008)