

TA Requirements for Graduate Students

This document clarifies the requirements for TAing in the Psychology Department, as well as the additional incentives available to those graduate students who take on a TAship that involves substantial teaching responsibilities.

Serving as a Teaching Assistant (TA) is a vital and important role in graduate school, and is a requirement of all graduate students in the Ph.D. program. The stipend that you receive from the university is intended to support TAs in our department. Because it is a source of your funding during your graduate school years, TAing should be a top priority for all graduate students. This means that when you are given a TA assignment, you are expected to take on that assignment (even if it is not in your area) unless it conflicts with a program requirement that must be completed that year in order for you to graduate. Thus the department asks that you not change your TA assignment for reasons such as: lab meeting, a course that you would like to take, or a course that you are required to take (if it can be taken in a later year), etc. We offer a TA swap meeting once per quarter in which TAs who have a conflict with a program requirement can arrange to switch with another TA (at this meeting, if your TA assignment conflicts with a lab meeting or class you would like to take, you may inquire about the possibility of a swap, but this would be an optional, rather than necessary, swap).

The university guarantees 20 quarters of funding to every graduate student, through the summer following Year 5. This arrangement means that graduate students could be required to TA 3 quarters per year for their funding. However, the department would like to see graduate students have enough time to devote to their research, and as a result has reduced the TAing requirement to the following:

Year 1: 2 quarters

Year 2: 2 quarters

Year 3: 2 quarters

Year 4: 2 quarters

Year 5: 1 quarter

[Clinical students are shifted, and TA 3 quarters in Year 1, and 1 quarter in Year 2.]

In Year 6 and beyond, if a student has not finished, faculty typically put that student on a research grant. If no other funding is available, funding from the department may be granted on a case-by-case basis depending on availability and plans for finishing the program. If a student receives funding from the department in Year 6 or beyond, they would typically be expected to TA.

In addition, every graduate student is required to give a class lecture at least twice during their graduate career, and to be evaluated either by the faculty instructor and/or someone at the Searle Center.

If a student receives external funding (e.g. a student is awarded an NSF, NRSA, or CIHR fellowship), that student will receive a one course reduction in the above TA requirements for the years that they have external funding. Note that the department has chosen to “smooth out” TAing responsibilities across the years with this policy in order to allow more consistent time for research across the years (i.e., requiring 2 quarters of TAing in years where there is no external funding, and 1 quarter when a student has external funding, rather than 3 quarters of TAing in years with no external funding, and 0 quarters when a student has external funding).