

SCIS Graduate Assistantship Policy

Policy voted and passed by SCIS faculty on March 22, 2019

1. Graduate Assistantship (GA) consists of the following types:
 - a. *Research Assistantships (RA)*. These students are identified by faculty members who support them using research grants.
 - b. *Fellowships*. Fellowships include national fellowships (NSF Graduate Research, McKnight, and others), University fellowships (Presidential and others), and School fellowships (Director's Fellowships). These students usually have chosen their advisors. Depending on the particular fellowship types, the students may have obligations to function as either research or teaching assistants.
 - c. *Teaching Assistantships (TA)*. These students are further divided into the following types:
 - i. *Uncommitted Teaching Assistantships (Uncommitted TA)*. These students are new students, who have been selected by the School to receive TA support. They have not decided to work with any specific faculty advisors upon entering the program.
 - ii. *Graduate Assistantships with Startup Support (Startup GA)*. These students are students, who have been identified by faculty advisors and are supported using their startup funds.
 - iii. *Teaching Assistantships with Bridge Support (Bridge TA)*. These students are currently in the program (not new) and supported by the School as TAs. They either have faculty advisors who are currently experiencing a funding gap, or are changing to new advisors, who cannot support the students immediately.
2. RAs and some Fellowships may include Master's students. All other types of GA support are available only to PhD students.
3. Students with any type of TA support must maintain a GPA above 3.3. If a student's GPA is less than or equal to 3.3 during a semester, the student will be put on warning. If the student cannot raise his or her GPA above 3.3 in the following semester, the student will be removed from TA support.
4. RAs are supported by faculty's research grant. The faculty is responsible for continuing support of the students. The School has no obligation to support these students. The faculty and student can apply for Bridge TA if the faculty advisor is experiencing a funding gap and cannot support the student (see item 9).
5. Fellowships may come with a limitation in the award amount and/or a time duration. The faculty advisors working with the fellows are responsible to provide additional funds (if more financial support is needed), and continue supporting the students (if needed) when the fellowships expire. The School has no obligation to support the students beyond the commitment required by the specific fellowship programs. (For example, FIU's Presidential Fellowship is a three-year award package with two years of support from UGS and one year of TA support from the Unit.) The faculty and student can apply

for Bridge TA if the faculty advisor is experiencing a funding gap and cannot continue to support the student (see item 9).

6. Highest priority will be given to junior faculty members with startup funds. That is, the available TA slots at the School will be first reserved for junior faculty members to fulfill the promised student support.
7. Uncommitted TAs are given one year to find an advisor. After one year, the teaching assistantship will expire and the students will be removed from the support. Under rare situations shall an Uncommitted TA be given an extension to find an advisor beyond one year. Such extensions must be approved by the School's Director and the Graduate Program Director, for one semester at a time. Under no circumstances shall an Uncommitted TA be allowed to receive TA for more than two years.
8. When an Uncommitted TA chooses an advisor during his or her first year, the faculty advisor who takes such student must abide by the following rules:
 - a. An Uncommitted TA is given one year to find an advisor while his or her teaching assistantship is active. The School has no obligation to continue supporting the student beyond one year. Therefore, the faculty member must have plans to support the student using his or her own grant or startup funds after the student's first year teaching assistantship expires. The faculty with such plans either has already existing grants (including startup funds), is expecting grants, or have concrete plans to submit proposals in immediate future to obtain grants to support the student before the student's first year teaching assistantship expires.
 - b. By the end of the semester at which the faculty member starts working with an Uncommitted TA, the faculty member must formally declare him or herself to be the student's advisor with the Graduate Program Director. And the faculty should prepare transitioning the student from Uncommitted TA to RA or Startup GA upon the one year teaching assistantship expires .
 - c. A faculty member should not work with more than two Uncommitted TAs during a semester, unless the faculty member already has grants or startup funds lined up to support the students.
9. Faculty may request Bridge TA support for his or her student when there is a funding gap. The request will be considered when there are available TA slots at the School. The following rules will be applied:
 - a. Bridge TA request can be granted one semester at a time. That is, a new request is needed for student to receive Bridge TA support beyond one semester.
 - b. Bridge TA candidate must be in good standing in the program. That is, the student must have reached his or her academic milestones in expected time (including D1, Qualifying Exam, D2, and D3).
 - c. The School will not provide Bridge TA support for any particular student beyond two years cumulatively.
 - d. Bridge TA request must be submitted formally to the School at the beginning of the previous semester of the expected Bridge TA support. The request must describe the student's academic performance and faculty follow-up support plan. More specifically, the request should include the student's GPA, publication records, accomplished milestones, and plans for making academic progress. The

faculty advisor must also provide concrete plans for continuing support the student after the Bridge TA support, including, for example, proposals to write, funds expected to receive, etc.

- e. All Bridge TA requests will be reviewed by the Graduate Committee, which provides ranking and recommendation of the requests. Only faculty with reasonable plans and good funding prospects will be considered with Bridge TA support. All requests must be approved by the School's Director and the Graduate Program Director upon Graduate Committee's recommendation and availability of TA slots.
10. The list of students with current TA support and their faculty advisors will be made available to all faculty at the beginning of each semester.