



STUDENT ASSISTANT HANDBOOK

Knight Foundation School of Computing and Information Sciences

Florida International University

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Welcome

Welcome to the teaching staff of the Knight Foundation School of Computing and Information Sciences (KF-SCIS) at Florida International University (FIU)! We appreciate your support of our mission for teaching excellence.

This handbook describes the available paid peer student assistant positions in KF-SCIS, provides a list of important policies and procedures, and gives suggestions on how to perform your tasks productively and professionally.

KF-SCIS currently has multiple student positions, including:

Graders (Undergraduate and Masters-Level Students): These student assistants grade assignments under close supervision of the instructor, who provides scoring rubrics. Graders do not have direct contact with students and remain anonymous.

Support-Intensive Course Assistants (SICAs): These are undergraduate students who assist faculty teaching support-intensive courses as defined by the KF-SCIS Differential Assignment Policy (DAP)¹. SICAs are expected to attend course sessions and be available to assist students during hands-on learning tasks, in addition to maintaining availability outside of class.

Digital Assistants (DAs): These are undergraduate or graduate students help with class materials, monitoring student progress, responding to emails, and assisting with technical content development.

STARS Assistants: These are undergraduate or graduate students with demonstrated academic success who provide in person and online peer tutoring to students enrolled in KFSCIS undergraduate courses. Assistants must commit to a fixed schedule with a minimum of 10 hours per week of online presence. They are expected to cover multiple courses each semester.

Teaching Assistants (Graduate PhD-Level Students): These students work alongside faculty and assist students in their comprehension of course material. This may involve assistance with assignments and/or labs, holding designated office hours, attending class and/or labs, proctoring exams, grading, etc.

¹ As of the release of this document, DAP course classification are available here: <https://www.cis.fiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/SCIS-Course-Classifications-as-of-2021-01.pdf>

Requirements

General

Any student assistant working for KF-SCIS must meet the following requirements:

- Must be a currently enrolled KF-SCIS student
- May not have any academic misconduct cases in which they were found responsible. *You must agree to have your FIU academic and conduct reviewed as part of the application process.*
- Must pass a background check and be eligible to work in the United States. *You will be required to provide proof of work authorization as part of the hiring process.*
- Must work no more than 20 hours across all positions at FIU during Fall and Spring
- Must be able to handle both the peer assistant work and their own studies
- Must have an interview with KF-SCIS personnel prior to selection

Additional Requirements

Additional requirements expected for each position. In this case, “corresponding course” refers to the course for which the student has been assigned their assistantship responsibilities. Note students can be assigned to more than one course.

Graders, DAs and SICAs are assigned at the beginning of the semester, by the Associate and Program Director (A/P)D. TAs are assigned at the beginning of the semester by the (A/P)D, along with the Graduate Program Specialist, Advisor and Director (GP(S/A/D)).

Position	Level	Course Level	Requirement
Grader	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	“B” or above in corresponding course
	Masters	Undergraduate	Qualifications in corresponding course deemed appropriate by (A/P)D*
		Graduate	“B” or above in corresponding course
SICA	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	“B” or above in corresponding course
Digital Assistant	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	“B” or above in corresponding course
	Masters	Undergraduate	Qualifications in corresponding course as

			deemed appropriate by faculty
		Graduate	"B" or above in corresponding course
STARS	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	"B" or above in corresponding or subsequent course, and "B" or above in the first two programming courses in your major
	Masters	Undergraduate	Qualifications in corresponding course as deemed appropriate by STARS director
TAs	PhD	Undergraduate	Qualifications in corresponding course deemed appropriate by (A/P)D and GP(S/A/D)*
		Graduate	"B" or above in corresponding course

* Qualifications taken into consideration include: relevant prior experience and performance, course enrollment, current schedule, specific skillsets requested by faculty, and availability.

GPA

GPA requirements vary by position, according to the following table:

	Graders	SICAs	DA	STARS	TAs
Minimum GPA	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0	3.3

Credit Hours

Credit hour requirements expected for each position:

Position	Level	Min. Credit Hours (AY)	Min. Credit Hours (Summer)
Grader	Undergraduate	>= 6	0*
	Masters	>= 3	0*
DA	Undergraduate	>= 6	0*
	Masters	>= 3	0*

SICA	Undergraduate	>= 6	0*
STARS	Undergraduate	>= 6	0*
TAs	PhD	>= 9*	>= 6

* Graders, SICAs, DAs and STARS assistants working over the summer must have been enrolled at least part time the previous spring and cannot have graduated the previous spring. For undergraduates part-time is a minimum of 6 credits, for Masters students a minimum of 3 credits.

Hours Per Week

Hourly requirements expected for each position, with a KF-SCIS Teaching Support Unit (TSU) defined as 20 hours of student support per week. It is KF-SCIS policy that no student assistant will be allowed to collectively work more than 20 hours per week during the academic year or over the summer.

Position	Level	General Expectation
Grader	Undergraduate or Masters	0.5 or 1 TSU
SICA	Undergraduate or Masters	1 TSU
DA	Undergraduate	0.5 to 1 TSU
STARS	Undergraduate or Masters	0.5 to 1 TSU
TA	PhD	1 TSU

A student is not allowed to serve in a tutoring and grading role for the same course, with the exception of SICAs and TAs.

This implies that students are not allowed to serve as a Hardware Lab/STARS assistant and a grader for the same course in the same semester.

Additionally, undergraduate students who are employed by the STEM Transformation Institute as Learning Assistants may not be assigned grading responsibilities for the same course in the same semester.

All KF-SCIS student positions are on a contract.

General Conduct Expectations

KF-SCIS student assistants have a position of authority and respect that comes with responsibility. Student assistants serve as leaders and models in the KF-SCIS community and are expected to behave accordingly. This implies:

- Facilitating a positive learning environment
- Encouraging polite and respectful discussion
- Guiding students to developing their own solutions

Issues involving students including fellow student assistants, as well as instructors, should be shared with the instructor or faculty advisor, and not with other students nor broadcast on social media outlets. Inappropriate behavior may result in verbal reprimand, temporary or permanent suspension of student assistant responsibilities, etc. Being found responsible of academic misconduct as a student assistant will imply a permanent suspension of the role.

You are only expected to discuss the class when you are officially on duty. Additionally, you must only discuss issues where you have appropriate expertise. Please do not discuss issues pertaining to advising (i.e., course scheduling, degree requirements, prerequisites) or those that should be brought to the instructor or faculty advisor (i.e., decisions on whether to add/drop a class). Please instead refer these students to the appropriate party.

Learning Management Systems (LMSs)

As a student assistant, you may be granted access to one of our campus Learning Management Systems (LMSs, *i.e.*, Canvas) and/or other collaborative spaces. These spaces should be considered as course resources, and as University employees student assistants are expected to behave professionally within these spaces. Hostile or abusive messages are not allowed, even when provoked. Careful care should be taken to avoid potential triggers. If you ever have doubt on what constitutes appropriate behavior within these spaces, please check with the instructor.

Conflict Of Interest (COI)

As a student assistant, you will likely be acquainted with other students in your classes. As an individual with potential control over student grades, it is important that you commit no action that could suggest anything other than course performance could impact these grades (positive or negative). Relationships with students prior to the semester could be considered a COI, and you should let the instructor know if this exists prior to commencing your role as a student assistant. Steps can be taken to avoid COI with these individuals (i.e., avoiding grading specific assignments, etc.)

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law requiring that student educational records be kept confidential and private. Student grades should only be discussed through secure communication channels

with the instructor. Course-related conversations with students should likewise be kept in confidence and not shared with other students (student assistant or not).

Academic Misconduct

Particularly as a grader, you may encounter assignment submissions that suspiciously resemble one another. Additionally, as an assistant, you may encounter a student asking for help during an online quiz or exam. The appropriate course of action is to promptly report the incident to the instructor or faculty advisor. No further action should be taken on your part (this includes verbal accusations, notations on a paper, e-mailing the student, etc.). Additionally, you must not mention the issue to anyone other than the instructor. If you are assisting a student who you observe engaging in misconduct please immediately dissociate, and explain you are unwilling to participate in such practices. Report this misconduct immediately to the instructor or faculty advisor.

Specific Expectations

Grader

As a grader, you will remain anonymous to your students. Specific grading tasks will depend on your class. The general expectations of the position are:

- Attend meetings with your primary instructor to discuss grading rubrics before any work is graded
- Apply consistent grading across all student submissions, using any and all criteria from instructor rubric(s)
- Be responsible and punctual regarding deadlines set by the instructor
- Read and respond to instructor communications within one day's time

Questions regarding grading rubrics should be directed to the instructor, without modifying the rubric yourself. If the instructor has flexibility in their criteria, please keep notes where points were lost.

At the end of the semester, instructors will have the opportunity to evaluate a grader's performance. This evaluation will provide useful feedback for both the department and the student and can potentially play a role in future hiring by the department.

Support-Intensive Course Assistants (SICAs)

As a SICA, you will be assigned to specific KF-SCIS courses designated as support-intensive according to the KF-SCIS DAP, to work with students alongside the primary instructor. Duties will include:

- Completion of a required online training course and orientation
- Attending weekly (or as directed) meetings with the instructor
- Attending course sessions to facilitate active learning
- Facilitating class projects and labs, and ensuring students complete assignments within an assigned session
- Holding office hours
- Constructing study guides, including notes and practice problems
- Leading study and review sessions
- Assisting in test proctoring
- Grading course assessments consistent with instructor-specified rubrics and time requirements
- Maintaining timely communication with the instructor

Questions regarding grading rubrics should be directed to the instructor, without modifying the rubric yourself. If the instructor has flexibility in their criteria, please keep notes where points were lost.

At the end of the semester, instructors will have the opportunity to evaluate a grader's performance. This evaluation will provide useful feedback for both the department and the student and can potentially play a role in future hiring by the department.

Digital Assistants (DAs)

Digital Assistants support faculty with online courses by assisting with course content, communicating with students via email and virtual office hours, and monitoring progress on assignments and projects. Responsibilities include:

- Assisting faculty with online classes and responding to discussion board posts
- Monitoring student progress on class projects and offering guidance
- Responding to student emails, holding virtual office hours to help with test preparation, advising on writing assignments, and addressing Canvas-related issues
- Helping faculty prepare materials and develop technical content for online courses

Students in Technology, Academia, Research and Service (STARS)

STARS (stars.cis.fiu.edu) is a student organization within KF-SCIS and a chapter of the [STARS Computing Corps](#), whose mission is to broaden participation in computing. STARS offers in person and online, near-peer tutoring for students enrolled in KF-SCIS courses. Assistants are expected to support multiple courses, as outlined in the published schedule for each semester.

Responsibilities include:

- Joining the STARS organization
- Attending a mandatory training session at the start of the semester
- Committing to a fixed weekly schedule of online tutoring hours
- Logging all tutoring sessions using a designated activity log
- Tutoring students on assigned coursework
- Using student-centered teaching techniques
- Assisting with exam proctoring

Teaching Assistants (TAs)

TAs will be on annual contracts, which include tuition plus a stipend. There are three possibilities: (1) An uncommitted TA, (2) A startup GA, and (3) A bridge TA. For complete definitions of each of these positions, please view the KF-SCIS Graduate Assistantship Policy. TAs typically last a maximum of two years and then should be converted to a Research Assistant (RA, please see KF-SCIS Graduate Assistantships Policy).

Responsibilities include:

- Assisting students in comprehension of course material
- Assistance with assignments and/or labs
- Holding designated office hours
- Attending class and/or labs
- Proctoring exams
- Grading assignments, exams, and/or labs

Application Process

Becoming a student assistant will require a two-step application process: once through the KF-SCIS department (Departmental), and a second through FIU Human Resources (University).

Departmental

The departmental application process will vary based on the position:

Position	Application
Grader	Submit KF-SCIS Grader Application Form
SICA	Must be explicitly requested by faculty in TSU Request form
DAs	Must be explicitly requested by faculty
STARS	Respond to invite at beginning of semester, complete registration and initial training session
TA	None*

* All PhD admits are considered for assistantship positions. Nothing else is needed from the student. Some may be recruited explicitly by faculty through startup funds, in which case there is no application process.

Faculty will request a certain number of TSUs (Teaching Support Unit) every semester by completing a TSU Request form. This form allows faculty to request specific students as graders, SICAs, DAs and/or TAs.

Students taking a course with a particular faculty member and performing well are encouraged to contact that faculty member and inquire about these opportunities. Faculty can then request that student on their TSU Request Form. Note for SICAs, this is actually a requirement.

Be sure to note your job code on the KF-SCIS application. You will use this to apply with the University (see below).

University

To apply with the University*, please visit the FIU Human Resources Careers site (as of this release, <http://hr.fiu.edu/careers>) and click *Prospective Employees*. Perform a search using the appropriate job description and/or job code from the KF-SCIS application. You must obtain an account and complete the application, answering all questions. You must remember your account information, as you will later use it to accept an offer if granted. You will receive a notification once everything has been submitted successfully.

** University records are maintained for one calendar year. If you have previously applied for the same position with the University within the past calendar year, you do not need to reapply with the University.*

Hiring Process

After completion of both the KF-SCIS and University applications, you will receive an offer letter assuming you have been approved for your position.

After that, all the steps below must be completed before you can officially start working. Please review each carefully. If you miss a step, you are not likely to be notified by HR and you will be infinitely waiting for each other.

Step 1: Visit HR Site

You will begin by visiting the FIU Human Resources Careers site (again, as of this release, <http://hr.fiu.edu/careers>) and clicking *Prospective Employees*. Sign in using the account and password you used when applying to the position and select *My Job Notifications*.

Step 2: Accept Offer

To accept the offer, first click the appropriate job offer, review terms, and accept. You will then be directed to complete a New Employee Sign-On Packet. There are multiple steps necessary to complete this packet, you will need to take your time and complete each carefully. Once completed and submitted, you will receive a notification that it was successful.

Step 3: I-9 Form

The application will provide a link to Guardian (for USCIS Form I-9 completion), which you need to click and upload copies of acceptable forms (as of this release, they are available here: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-9-central/form-i-9-acceptable-documents>). For first-time FIU employees or rehires separated 1 year or more, completion of the I-9 will require a physical visit to the Human Resources office. You should submit, within 3 days of your start date, the required supplemental documents (I-9, W4, & Loyalty Oath) and all original work authorization documents, including your original Social Security Card, to the HR office located in PC224 (between 8:30am to 4:30pm). Be advised that due to the University's Red Flag Policy, confidential documents, such as these forms, or any other items containing Social Security numbers cannot and will not be accepted via email or fax. The onboarding process can take 1 to 3 weeks depending on department approvals, grant approvals (if applicable), pre-employment clearance, and the candidate's diligence in following all email instructions. If not submitted within 3 days of your start date, the offer will need to be revised and reissued, delaying the hiring process at least two weeks.

Step 4: Hiring

Once Human Resources has fully verified and approved your hire, the College of Engineering will be notified, who will in turn notify KF-SCIS. New hires will receive an e-mail with their employee credentials. At this point, your work will commence as of the official start date provided by the department. All students (including those returning) will be issued a new contract, which can be found on the FIU employee portal. It is the students' responsibility to stay on top of their application until they are officially hired.

Appendix

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Question	Answer
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I am a returning grader. Do I need to fill out an application?	Returning graders do not need to apply through HR. Note: If you have not worked for KF-SCIS during the past academic year, you are considered a new hire and must reapply.
Can I be both a grader and an assistant for the same class in the same semester?	No. KF-SCIS does not allow students to serve in two different capacities for the same course in the same semester. *
How many hours can I work?	Students can only work a maximum of 20 hours a week per semester, and 30 hours a week during semester breaks (winter break, spring break, and summer break).
Can I work in more than one department?	Yes. As long as hours worked do not exceed the maximum 20 hours a week collectively.
I am an International Student; can I apply to a position with KF-SCIS?	On-campus employment is a benefit available to all students maintaining valid F1 status. It is not necessary to obtain special work authorization from USCIS to work on-campus; however, you must obtain an ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT CERTIFICATION signed by an ISSS (International Student and Scholar Services) advisor to submit to Human Resources. This is in addition to the Social Security Number (SSN) requirement specified in the next row below. Visit the Office of International Student & Scholar Services website for more information.
As an International Student, can I work without having been issued a Social Security Number (SSN) from the Social Security Administration?	No. An International Student who has not been issued an SSN may not begin working until they receive an SSN and card in hand. However, one can apply to any student Assistant posting on the Careers site. If selected as a finalist, it is the responsibility of the student to immediately initiate the process for securing an SSN with the International Student & Scholar Services Office. The KF-SCIS Program Director has a letter that can confirm employment for ISSS. Note the On-Campus Employment Certification requirement (row directly above this one) is also necessary for International Students.

If I am not enrolled for the summer, can I continue working as a student assistant?	Yes. As long as you were enrolled at least part-time for the spring and did not graduate.
How long does the hiring process take?	The hiring process may take up to 4-6 weeks depending upon the candidate carefully following each step and staying on top of any updates sent to them by their supervisor, KF-SCIS or HR.
What is the hourly rate for the grader position?	The hourly rate aligns with Florida's minimum wage.
Do graders have to input hours worked on their time sheets?	No. Graders are placed on a contract and do not need to submit hours.
I have another job at FIU, can I apply for the grader position?	You may apply, however, if you currently work 20 hrs at another department KFSCIS will be unable to hire you. You will need to resign from your current job and ask your supervisor for ePAF# or Transaction ID # of the termination before the hiring process can take place.
How often will I get paid as a grader?	Graders are paid on a biweekly basis. Please see payroll calendar for pay dates.
Will I need to complete timecards?	No. Graders, SICAs, Hardware Lab/STARS assistants and TAs are on contract.
Can I be a grader for more than one course or professor?	Yes. As long as hours worked do not exceed the maximum 20 hours a week collectively.
How do I apply for an assistantship as a graduate student?	You don't. Assistantships are awarded to selected students, and there is no formal application process.
How do I find on-campus positions, in general?	Positions mentioned in this document are available through the department. You can also visit the Human Resources website (as of this release, http://hr.fiu.edu) to view all on-campus student positions.
How do I obtain a social security number (SSN)?	The application process for an SSN requires you to have a job offer. You cannot obtain an SSN without a job. This process is facilitated by the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS), and Human Resources (HR).
Can I receive a departmental assistantship (TA, or GA) as a master's student.	No. As of this release, master's students are not eligible for school funded financial support. Your best option for assistantships is to reach out to KF-SCIS faculty to inquire about available RA

	positions funded through their external research grants.
What kind of support do Digital Assistants provide, and how is their role different from other student assistant positions?	Digital Assistants primarily support online courses by helping faculty with course content, responding to student emails, hosting virtual office hours, and monitoring student progress. Unlike Graders, DAs interact directly with students and assist with technical content development, making their role more dynamic and student-facing.

** At the time of this release, the FIU STEM Institute has a Learning Assistant (LA) Program that extends to all departments, including KF-SCIS. This requirement extends to this program as well. A student may not serve as any type of KF-SCIS Student Assistant and a STEM Learning Assistant for the same course in the same semester.*

Teaching Assistant Evaluation Form

Instructors directing Graduate Teaching Assistants (TA) will complete a copy of this evaluation

for each TA at the end of the semester. The form will be submitted to the Graduate Program Director and be used as part of the annual student evaluation, selection of future TAs, and selection of teaching awardees.

Name of TA: _____ Semester: _____

Course/Lab/Duty Assignment: _____

Evaluation Grades: E = Excellent, S = Satisfactory, I = Improvement Needed,

U = Unsatisfactory, N/A = Not Applicable

GRADE PERFORMANCE MEASURE

_____ Technical background and skills for this assignment

_____ Technical performance

_____ Dependability, including attendance and punctuality

_____ Cooperation

_____ Written communication
_____ Oral communication
_____ Motivation and attitude
_____ OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Would you consider this TA deserving of the Annual KFSCIS TA Award or any other College-/FIU level award (e.g., top 10% of TAs that have worked for you)?

Comments & suggestions for the TA:

Printed Name of Instructor: _____

Signature of Instructor: _____ Date: _____

Student Assistant Grader/SICA Evaluation Form

KF-SCIS would like to ask any instructors overseeing student assistant graders and/or support-intensive course assistants (SICAs), for any feedback regarding their student assistants at the end of the semester. This information is useful for the department to understand your experiences, both positive and negative, with particular graders/SICAs that we provide - so that we can take appropriate measures to optimize this experience in the future. All responses will be kept confidential to the student assistant, with the exception of Q11 (which you can choose not to answer).

Student assistant's full name and PID:

Course assignment:

Please rate the student's technical background and skills for this assignment:

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Satisfactory
- ☐ Improvement Needed
- ☐ Unsatisfactory

Please rate the student's technical performance:

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Satisfactory
- ☐ Improvement Needed
- ☐ Unsatisfactory

Please rate the student's dependability, including attendance and punctuality:

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Satisfactory
- ☐ Improvement Needed
- ☐ Unsatisfactory

Please rate the student's written and verbal communication:

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Satisfactory
- ☐ Improvement Needed
- ☐ Unsatisfactory

Please rate the student's motivation and attitude:

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Satisfactory
- ☐ Improvement Needed
- ☐ Unsatisfactory

Please rate the student's overall performance:

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Satisfactory
- ☐ Improvement Needed
- ☐ Unsatisfactory

Would you consider this student assistant deserving of a KF-SCIS award for their efforts? If so, please elaborate:

Any other comments or suggestions for the student assistant?

Instructor's full name and PID: