# ECE Department TA Policies

Types of TAs:

We have two types of TAs:

* Class TAs
* Lab TAs

TA workload:

A full-time TA (100%, 0.5 FTE) is expected to work 20 hours/week.

A part-time TA (50%, 0.25 FTE) is expected to work 10 hours/week.

TA Duties

Standard Grader duties:

* Run office hours
* Grade weekly homework
* Grade exams
* Help out in lecture as necessary

Standard Lab TA duties:

* Run lab sections (3 labs = 100%)
* Practice labs beforehand
* Grade lab packets
* Help out in lecture as necessary

If you have other duties a TA needs to help out with, like leading problem-solving sessions, please contact the Dept Chair (Hanseup) (with a cc to Holly) and let them know. We will try to find a way to get you the resources you need.

### Example time allotment for a full-time TA:

Grader:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Duty** | **Time per Week** |
| Grading | 15 min/student (50 students= 12.5 hrs) |
| Office Hours | 4-6 hours |
| Prep | 2 hrs |
| Enter Grades | 1 hr |
| Exam Grading |  |
| *Teaching Staff Meeting* | *1 hr* |
| *Help out in lecture problem-solving sessions* | *2 hrs* |

*Italics indicates not all classes include this*

Lab TA:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Duty** | **Time per Week** |
| Labs (3x) | 3 labs x 3 hrs + lab cleanup time = 10 hours |
| Office Hours | 1-4 hours |
| Prep | 3 hrs |
| Teaching staff meeting | 1 hr |
| *Lab Grading* | *4 hrs* |
| *Help out in lecture problem-solving sessions* | *2 hrs* |
| *Final Projects help* |  |

TA Compensation

* Graduate TAs
  + Are eligible for tuition benefits if 100% TA or 100% between an RA and TAship
    - 100% tuition paid (up to 11 credits)
    - This does not cover the engineering differential tuition
  + Are eligible for health insurance subsidies
    - Student must have 100% TA/RAship coverage
  + Stipend for 2024-2025 year:
    - $12,000 per term for 100% TA
    - $6,000 per term for 50% TA
* Undergraduate TAs
  + Are paid on an hourly basis ($16/hr in 2023-24 for first-time TAs and $17/hr for continuing TAs))
  + Are not eligible for tuition benefits or health insurance subsidies

TA Training:

All new TAs starting Fall 2022 or later must take TA training (1 credit course—counts toward degree). The student should take TA training BEFORE the term they want to TA. In dire cases, we will allow a student to co-enroll in TA training while they TA.

International grad TAs are additionally required to pass ITAP programming from the central university before they are allowed to TA.

## B.S./M.S. Year-Long TA Appointments:

In order to provide job security for exceptional B.S./M.S. students, we will offer a limited number of year-long (Fall-Spring) TA positions. Students will be chosen based on their exceptional performance in classes, interest in teaching others, and potential financial need. These positions will be particularly helpful for top-performing students who do not receive enough scholarships to support their education, and for M.S. students who completed undergraduate studies at our university and are no longer qualified for our scholarships. These students will receive an offer letter that states their appointment for Spring semester is contingent on a satisfactory performance during Fall semester. Also, the students who are retained for Spring semester will be given a $1 per hour raise. The number of students chosen for this special appointment each year will be based on the number of exceptional candidates found, but not to exceed 8 students per year.

## TA Hiring Process:

To give dedicated students the chance to know earlier whether they received a TAship, we have created a two-round process for Fall and Spring terms. There will be a priority application deadline, which allows students to get Round 1 acceptances. Students can continue to submit applications until the application window closes, but then they will be assigned a TAship in Round 2. A minimum of 10 TA slots will be saved to Round 2 decisions.

Faculty will be given a chance to give input on their choice of TAs, if they do so in a timely fashion. Faculty should encourage anyone they want to be a TA for them to apply by the deadline. Faculty should look at the applications in the TA Jobber on the COE Dashboard and request their applicants there by the Faculty Response deadline. (There is a separate document explaining how to use the TA Jobber for those who are unfamiliar.) The faculty who respond first will be given priority choice if multiple faculty request the same student as a TA. If a student who you wanted was not listed, please reach out to LuCinda to double check that the student actually applied. A failure to rank your choices indicates that you have no preference on who is your TA and the office will make a final choice.

The staff/faculty in charge of TA assignments (currently LuCinda with guidance from Amy as needed) will then collate all requests and make final TA assignments with final approval from the Dept Chair (Hanseup). We sincerely try to give every faculty their top choice of TA candidates, but there are a number of factors that may make this impossible, including but not limited to:

* Scheduling issues (TAs may have a class they are taking that conflicts with the lab time they need to TA)
* Students get a different TA assignment (either in our department or CS)
* A PhD student lost funding temporarily and needs emergency funding
* The top candidate suggested is not ITAP certified or hasn’t taken TA training where another suggested candidate has fulfilled these requirements

Table Summarizing Deadlines

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Term | Application open | Priority Application deadline | Options to Faculty | Faculty Response | Round 1 Decisions Sent | Round 1 Acceptance Returned | Application Closes | Round 2 Decisions  (leave 5 slots) |
| Fall | April 1st | April 21st | Before Finals | By grade deadline (~May 15) | June 1st | June 15th | June 15th | June 30th |
| Spring | Oct 1st | Oct 22nd | Oct 26th | Nov 15th | Dec 1st | Dec 15th | Dec 1st | Jan 1st |
| Summer | March 1st | March 10th | March 14th | March 20th | March 24th | March 30th | March 10th | None |

Please note these dates are approximate and may change by a day or two each year if they fall on a weekend.

## Hiring Priorities:

* PhD who wants a TAship and applies by the priority deadline will be given priority consideration within the department budget constraints and offered a 50% TAship in combination with a 50% RAship (new policy initiated by Hanseup for Fall 2024).
* Year-Long B.S./M.S. TAs who were offered a year-long position by the department are given priority. (max 8)
* Priority will be given to students who complete TA training
  + Any student who has not taken TA training needs to enroll concurrently
  + Students who got an A in the course will be given higher priority
  + Amy and LuCinda have a list of what class each TA trained for if you would like to check
* International TAs must have passed ITAP to be a TA. Legally we cannot make exceptions.
* For Lab TAs, we prefer to hire talented undergraduates (or grad students who were previously undergrads here) who have taken the course whenever possible.
* If in dire circumstances a PhD student needs full 100% funding, Dept Chair (Hanseup) must grant permission for this exception (should be less than 5 students per term). Please note this is not a regular way to supplement funding, but rather to only be used in emergency circumstances. Students MUST pass proficiency requirements (as stated in the TA Certification Document) to be eligible for this.

Hiring Priorities by student status:

* PhDs who applied by the deadline
* PhDs in special circumstances as worked out with the head of the department
* Undergrads
* Masters who went to the University of Utah for undergrad
* Other masters students

## TA Allotment System:

The department currently uses the following system to determine how to allot TAs. Allotments depend upon funding, so when the central university reduces funding, we must similarly reduce TA hours. This allotment system is designed to balance, while staying in the budget, between two contradicting goals: (1) maximization of the total TA numbers (UGs are the preferred choice in this respect) vs (2) maximization of the support for PhDs whose funding is recently terminated or can have an extended use.

We take the money allotted by the central University and calculate how many 100% Grad TAs we can support. Each 100% Grad TA (~$12k as of 2024) is equivalent to 2.5 Undergrad TAs (~$5k of as 2024).

Based on the funding, we tabulate the possible combinations of the UG and Ph.D. TA numbers. The below is an example of $300k TA funding availability.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| UG  ($5k) | 0 | 0 | 12 | 24 | 24 | 36 | 48 | 60 |
| 50/50 G TA  ($6k) | 0 | 50 | 40 | 30 | 24 | 20 | 10 | 0 |
| 100% G TA  ($12k) | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total TAs** | **25** | **50** | **52** | **54** | **51** | **56** | **58** | **60** |
|  |  |  |  |  | **F24 Choice** |  |  | **Max. TAs** |

After assigning all PhDs who applied by the deadline into 50% TAships and any PhD students with 100% exceptions (granted by the head of the department), attempt to use all remaining funding to hire qualified undergrad TAs, so we get as much class coverage as possible. In case the number of the applied PhDs is excessively high and leaves only limited slots for undergraduates, the TA assignments staff/faculty (Hanseup, LuCinda, Amy) will discuss to make a decision on which combinations should be used for the better goods of the department.

Classes are broken into 3 categories:

* non-lab classes
* lab classes
* seminars (2 credit hours or less)

Classes are assigned TAs in the following priority:

* Lab classes
* Undergrad classes (lowest level first)
* Grad classes

### Lab Classes

1 Lab=33% 2 Labs=67% 3 Labs=100%

This is based off our standard labs, which require a student to be in lab 3 hours per week. Labs that are shorter in length may receive less TA hours per week.

Lab classes that do not have a separate lab section in the course catalog need to contact the TA assignments staff/faculty (Hanseup, LuCinda, Amy) if they want TA support like a Lab Class.

Lab sizes are limited by the number of lab benches in the lab space. A traditional lab has room for ~20 students. If your lab class has significantly smaller or larger lab sections than this, we may adjust the formula slightly to reflect the change in grading hours for the TA.

Lab classes additionally get a grader. Graders follow the non-lab class allotment rules. For small classes (<30), we can combine grading and lab into 1 TA.

Non-Lab Classes

In Fall 2024, it ended up being that a class needed >20 students to receive any kind of TA. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, that minimum number changes from term to term depending on funding from the central university and number of PhD students interested in TAing.

For a detailed list of lab classes and edge cases see the TA Allotment document.

### Seminars

Will rarely receive a TA.

List of classes: 3900, 3991, 3992, 7951, 6900, 6910, 3970, 3980, 3990, TA Training

## TA Expectations

These allotments are based on the expectation that TAs will be thoroughly engaged in the class and properly preparing before sessions with students. Therefore, if you think a TA is not working up to the standards of the department or not fully utilizing the time we are paying them for, please address the situation as soon as possible. If you do not feel comfortable confronting the TA, please report the situation to the TA trainer Amy Verkler ([amy.verkler@utah.edu](mailto:amy.verkler@utah.edu)) to be addressed.

## Nondiscrimination & Diversity Clause:

It is against university policy to make hiring decisions based on race, color, sex, national origin, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy & pregnancy related conditions, genetic information, and protected veteran’s status. Therefore, if your class consistently has TAs of the same race, color, or national origin as you, you may be in danger of violating this policy. We encourage faculty to consider TAs from all backgrounds when hiring. The resulting diversity by considering all types of candidates can increase the chance that any student in the class will have a teaching staff member they can connect with.

## Who to talk to if you have questions:

TA applications & scheduling—LuCinda Cole (Lucinda.Cole@utah.edu)

TA training & TA issues –Amy Verkler (amy.verkler@utah.edu)

HR paperwork for TAs—Bob Knudsen (robert.knudsen@utah.edu)