

ECE TA Positions at NCSU

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This document explains how Teaching Assistant (TA) positions are filled in the ECE department. It is meant as a clarification for students, not as binding policy.

TA positions have two roles in the department:

- 1) to support the teaching mission by assisting faculty and students in undergraduate and graduate courses, and
- 2) to provide financial support for graduate students who are contributing to the research mission of the department.

For the most part, the students in part (2) are PhD students with a confirmed faculty advisor, who are working on research but who do not have a Research Assistant (RA) appointment.

TA positions are funded by the ECE department, not by individual faculty. Hiring decisions are made by the department, not by individual faculty. The associate department head (ADH) with advice from the director of graduate programs (DGP) decides who is hired, and the ADH assigns TAs to courses.

There are two types of TA positions:

- “Regular” TAs are paid a stipend for the semester, and tuition and health insurance are paid. They are expected to work either 10 or 20 hrs/week. Fees are not paid directly, but the stipend has been set with the acknowledgement that fees must be paid by the student. Depending on the funding source, some TAs must be assigned to graduate courses.
- Hourly TAs are paid according to the number of hours they actually work per week. Hours are recorded using an electronic time tracking system. Tuition, fees, and insurance are not paid for these positions.

Though we refer to both of these as “TAs,” they are completely separate from an employment point of view. Most PhD students will fall into the regular category, while most MS students (and all undergraduate students) will fall into the hourly category.

The Hiring Process

The following sections describe the process for hiring TAs. It is a complicated process, which usually does not get completed until the first week of the semester. (All regular TAs must be hired no later than the census date, which is two weeks after the beginning of the semester.) As mentioned above, all hiring decisions are made by the ADH. Even if a faculty member has said that you will have a TA, it is not official until you have received notification from the ADH.

TA positions are filled in the following priority order:

1. New students recruited with TA positions

As part of the recruitment process in the Spring semester, some new graduate students are offered financial aid in the form of a TA appointment. This appointment is typically guaranteed for two semesters. The actual number of TA slots that are filled from this pool will depend on the number of students who accept the offer and enroll. This number is not known until the middle of summer, which means the number of slots available in the other categories is uncertain until then.

2. Continuing students requested by faculty

Faculty members who are already working with a graduate student, but who do not have research funding for that student, may request a TA position from the department. We try to honor as many of these requests as possible. Students in this category must complete a GradWatch TA application, to assist with matching them to suitable courses.

3. TAs to fill needs for particular classes

If there are still classes that need support, after the previous two categories are filled, we will seek qualified applicants from the pool of applicants in GradWatch. Several factors are considered in this search, such as: previous TA experience, confidence in being a TA for specific courses, course grades and overall GPA. Most MS TAs are hired in this way on an hourly basis.

4. Undergraduate hourly TAs

We generally have some funds to pay for undergraduate students to act as TAs for labs and problem sessions, and to assist with grading. This is done on a per-course basis, mostly for 100- and 200-level courses, depending on the availability of funds.

When a hiring decision is made, the appointment is initiated by the ECE Graduate Office or the HR staff. A contract is sent by email and signed electronically.

Students are responsible for paying fees, and for making sure that tuition is paid on time. For students who are on the request list (2), the ECE Graduate Office submits a list to Registration to indicate that tuition may be paid by the department. This avoids registration from being cancelled. However, if a TA position is not offered, then the student is responsible for paying tuition. If you pay tuition, and later get a regular TA appointment, the payment will be reimbursed.

Under no conditions will University and/or College fees be paid by the department. Each student is responsible for paying fees by the appropriate deadline.

How to Request a TA

The TA application on GradWatch is tied to a particular semester. If you go to the TA system on GradWatch and it shows the current semester, do not apply. Wait until the system rolls over to the next

semester. **You have to re-apply each semester**; applications do not automatically carry over between semesters.

PhD students: If you are a current PhD student, working with a faculty advisor on research, ask that advisor to add you to the TA request list. You must also apply for a TA on GradWatch, so that you can be matched to a suitable class.

MS thesis students: If you are a current MS thesis student, working with a faculty advisor on research, ask that advisor to add you to the TA request list. Though TA slots are primarily offered to PhD students, some hourly slots may be available. You must also apply for a TA on GradWatch, so that you can be matched to a suitable class.

MS non-thesis students: If you are an MS non-thesis student, apply for a TA on GradWatch. Do not send an email to the instructor of a course, or to the ADH. If there are class needs that cannot be filled with research-active students, your application will be considered.

Undergraduate students: At the beginning of each semester, an email will go out to undergraduate students to apply for TA positions. Wait for that email, and complete the application form.

Summer Session TAs

Only a few TA slots are available over summer. Please do not assume that you will be supported as a TA over summer if a request is made. It is recommended that instead you seek an internship with a company for financial support.