

Procedures for Securing a Teaching Fellow Position

The following is detailed information on the procedures the Department follows in the assigning of teaching fellow positions. This process is coordinated centrally with the Office for Academic Programs (which has general oversight of the assignment process and controls instructional support funds), and the GSAS Financial Aid Office, which reviews and final approves all individual appointments.

Once the curriculum for the coming academic year is finalized and it is known what courses will be offered, the chair sends a request for the guaranteed teaching fellow positions to the Office of Academic Programs for their review and approval. The requests are based on past enrollment figures of specific courses, standing agreements to have teaching fellows support certain of our courses (sociology 96, 97, 99s, 202, 203a, and 209), and our best guess for courses where new or visiting faculty will be teaching. Once the OAP gives the approval, the administrative coordinator prepares the Teaching Fellow Application and sends it to all graduate students.

Teaching Fellow Application:

Students begin teaching in their third (G3) year of the program. They should have taken the Teaching Practicum (given in the fall term) either prior to or concurrent with their first teaching assignment.

Students wishing to teach should fill out the application, listing their choices for both fall and spring terms. In order for the initial matching process to work, students ***must list six courses in order of preference for the fall and six courses for the spring.***

Students should list any other teaching they plan to do outside of the Department as well as any other funding they will receive in the academic year on the application. Thesis advising (in Sociology or other departments) is considered teaching and does count toward the 4/5 guaranteed support. It is important that the applications are turned in by the deadline requested as guaranteed positions for both the fall and spring terms will be determined at the same time. The goal is to have these decided and confirmed by Commencement.

Assigning Teaching Fellow Positions

The administrative coordinator will collect the applications and prepare a list by course of all the students who have applied to teach. Faculty will be provided a list of graduate students who applied to teach for their courses and rank students in terms of the faculty member's preferences.

The Department will match the students to the faculty using an algorithm to create the initial matches, and will adjust the matches to maximize the number of students with teaching fellowships. For the guaranteed positions, wherever possible, graduate students in G3 and G4 who are unfunded will be given first preference and every effort will be made to give students their top choices. There are certain positions for which it is necessary to hire an experienced teaching fellow (the teaching practicum and the junior tutorial which may only be taught by an ABD candidate.)

The Department (not the faculty member) will inform the student about which course they have been assigned to. Letters confirming the guaranteed positions will be prepared, signed by both the professor and graduate student.

The administrative coordinator will be in touch with the students to get any additional forms needed (an I-9 form is needed if one is teaching for the first time), and process the appointment forms. Note that once the application is entered into the system, it is sent first to at GSAS Financial Aid Office who reviews and final approves the appointment, keeping in mind any funding that the student may have.

For courses where we were unable to provide a guaranteed position, tentative assignments will also be made so that faculty and students can plan ahead, but appointments will not be able to be processed until the classes have met and enrollment is determined to be enough to merit the hiring of a teaching fellow: the “target” section size of a lecture course is 18 students.

Students are encouraged to look outside the Department to find teaching. We plan to assemble information on high-enrollment courses being taught outside of the department (in the Core, at other Harvard schools and departments) which may be in need of teaching fellows for the coming year and alert students to these opportunities. The administrative coordinator works with her counterparts in other schools/departments to find out about other teaching opportunities and regularly communicates that information to graduate students.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What should I do if I was only able to obtain one guaranteed section of a course?

Every effort is made to provide G3 and G4 students with a guarantee of two sections of the same course, but often this is not possible because we were not guaranteed more than one section for a particular course. In this instance, you should work with the administrative coordinator to try and find another section for the term, either teaching a course within the department or outside of Sociology. The other option is to secure a research assistant appointment with a Sociology faculty member for the term, to make up the difference.

What happens if enrollments fall below the expected numbers in a course for which I have a guaranteed position?

The arrangement will be honored and you receive no cut in pay, even if the enrollment drops to well below the expected number. However, the Department has the option of moving a teaching fellow from a course that is under-enrolled to one that is over-subscribed (keeping in mind the areas students are prepared to teach), or if that is not feasible, the student will be expected to do additional work for the course, the professor, or meaningful work for the Department, to make up the shortfall.

What if I was unable to get a guaranteed position?

Students will be tentatively assigned to Sociology courses for which we were not given guaranteed positions, in the hopes that there will be sufficient enrollment to hire them. Wherever possible preference will be given to G3 and G4 students who do not have

funding first, and then given to other students in the Department. You may also want to contact the administrative coordinator who can work with you to find and secure a teaching position outside of the Department.

What if I have a non-guaranteed position in a course that ends up being significantly under-enrolled?

You should contact the administrative coordinator who will know of other courses that were over-subscribed in the department and may need a teaching fellow, or will work with you to find teaching outside of the department.

What if the enrollment ends up being higher for a course where I have a guaranteed position of two sections?

If there are still other Sociology graduate students, especially those in G3 and G4 in need of funding, who are not yet assigned, they will have preference for getting the additional section, if at all feasible. Otherwise it should be given to a Sociology graduate student in need of teaching, for either financial reasons or to fulfill their teaching requirement, or to another GSAS student in need. These students should be considered first before giving the additional third section is given to the student currently assigned to teach for the course who is already being paid for two sections.

What if I have two guaranteed sections of a course, and the instructor would like me to be head teaching fellow? (this is relevant for courses that have 100+ students)

It would be best if you taught one section and received one section of pay for head teaching fellow. This would free up a section for another fellow graduate student, allowing them to get the additional pay, and/or the experience teaching.

Will I earn the same amount for my research assistantship as I would for teaching a section of a course? Yes. It is expected that you would work the same number of hours one would devote to teaching a section of a course (i.e. 15-20 hours) during the term, and GSAS will make up the difference between what you earn and your fellowship.

What is "topping off"? Because the stipend you normally receive is slightly higher than the pay you would get for teaching two sections, GSAS will pay out the difference, called a "top off", once each term. The student must be teaching either two sections of a course, or a combination of teaching and research assistantship.

What is the Department's responsibility? The Department's obligation is to provide teaching positions for all students G3 and G4 cohorts who are need of funding and were promised teaching as part of their financial aid packages. However, the department also makes every effort to provide teaching to everyone who would like to teach. In cases where it is not possible to find a teaching position for a student, the Department will find the student a position as a research assistant.

What is the student's responsibility? The student should complete the teaching fellow application and submit it by the deadline, to keep in contact with the administrative coordinator who will be working with individual students to find suitable positions for all graduate students who would like to teach, and also to keep in mind their fellow graduate students who may also be seeking to find a teaching position.

Timeline for Teaching Fellow Process and Assignment

- April-May Curriculum plans finalized and departments request Office of Academic Program (OAP) for guaranteed teaching fellow positions
- May-June: Requests for guaranteed positions reviewed, modified, & approved by OAP
Teaching Fellow application is sent to all students
Assignments made for guaranteed and non-guaranteed positions (for both fall and spring terms)
Written letters confirming guaranteed positions are sent to students, faculty, OAP, and GSAS
- September: Bok Center fall orientation for teaching fellows
First-time teaching fellows enroll in Teaching Practicum (Sociology 305)
Appointments for non-guaranteed positions are made after enrollments are known (the day after study cards are tallied).

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