

University of Washington Department of Physics Policy On Teaching Assistant Appointments
Approved at 4 June 2003 Faculty Meeting

The TA affairs committee was charged with drawing up a document codifying procedures that will be followed for making TA appointments. This document received input from the Graduate and Executive Committees and was adopted at the 4 June 2003 Faculty Meeting.

The impetus for preparing this document was twofold: first, our present procedures needed to be brought into consistency with University regulations; second, budget cuts are reducing the number of TA positions and we may, in the coming years, not be able to support all students who apply for TAs. If so, we need a procedure in place for deciding amongst applicants.

As you read through this document, please keep in mind the following. First, it has been and remains a departmental goal to support all Ph.D. students in good standing through a combination of fellowship, TA and RA positions. We have met this goal up to now (although the situation has become progressively tighter) and we hope that this will continue to be the case. We understand that being uncertain about support could be a serious detriment to progress, and we intend to use the appointments and reappointments in a flexible manner to reduce this uncertainty to the extent possible. Second, much of the wording codifies the process that is presently undertaken, to the extent possible given the University regulations.

Members of TA Affairs Committee 2002-2003: Sam Fain (Chair), Nichole Fernkes, Daryl Pedigo, Peter Shaffer, Steve Sharpe, Eleanor Warfield

University of Washington Department of Physics Policy On Teaching Assistant Appointments

The position of Teaching Assistant (TA) is a service appointment. This policy outlines the various factors that will be considered and the process involved in making TA appointments and assignments for Autumn, Winter and Spring quarters. Summer quarter appointments are limited, and are not covered by this policy.

- 1) **A TA appointment** is an agreement to hire an individual as a TA for a specified period of time. **An annual TA appointment** covers one academic year. **A quarterly TA appointment** is an agreement only for one academic quarter. **An initial TA appointment** is the first appointment (of any duration) accepted by an individual to perform TA duties for the Department. **Reappointments** are appointments (of any duration) after the initial appointment has been completed. **Replacement appointments** are made as needed at any time during the year and generally have a duration of one full quarter or the remainder of the current quarter. **A TA assignment** is a specification of the weekly duties to be performed by a TA during a certain quarter.
- 2) **TA assignments** may involve direct student contact, such as teaching lab sections, or they may consist wholly or in part of non-contact duties such as grading or materials development. A typical assignment shall require 20 hours of duties per week, including time for training and preparation. Partial assignments may be arranged for those needing partial TA support to supplement partial fellowship or Research Assistant (RA) support.
- 3) **Initial TA appointments** shall be based on the applicant's credentials and potential as outlined in Executive Order #28 (University Handbook, Volume 4, Chapter 6, Section 2.B). All students beginning their first year of study in the PhD program are

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expected to merit an initial annual appointment as a TA. First year PhD students are awarded a full academic year (3 quarters) of support by the Department as set forth in the offer letters. Those who are not offered fellowships or RA positions shall be offered TA appointments.

- 4) **Students with initial annual TA appointments** shall be assigned additional training and preparation time as part of their TA duties, up to 4 hours out of a typical 20-hour-per-week assignment.
- 5) **Students in their first three quarters of TA assignment** are expected to have completed the PHYS 501-2-3 course sequence, or to take it concurrently. Up to 2 hours per week of paid TA duties will be assigned to students taking PHYS 501-2-3.
- 6) **Physics students who obtain fellowship or RA support** during their first year shall be eligible upon request for special consideration for an initial TA appointment at some time during their first five years in the PhD program.
- 7) **Reappointment as a TA** may be offered on a competitive basis to those who have satisfactorily completed at least one quarter of TA duties in the Physics Department. Reappointment is not automatic, and must be applied for. Evaluations of the TA by faculty supervisors and TA evaluations by students shall be considered along with progress in the graduate program, adherence to Departmental and University rules and procedures, a review of the student's official file, the needs and resources of the Department, and consideration of the number of quarters of TA support previously provided to the student. Generally, those satisfactorily completing an initial academic year of appointment can reasonably expect to be reappointed for the following academic year. Those beyond this first reappointment and those who entered service as replacements can expect to compete for the remaining reappointments available. Students who have been accepted by the department for studies leading toward the physics PhD shall have priority for TA appointments, but must meet reasonable performance standards in their TA duties. Students whose performance as a TA falls near the level at which they might not be reappointed shall be notified of this in writing.
- 8) **Reappointment for a portion of the academic year** may be arranged for those students who qualify for reappointment, but who wish to have TA support for only one or two quarters during the academic year. The process and timeline for such reappointments shall be the same as for annual reappointments. Applicants for reappointment must specify the quarter(s) during which they prefer to be assigned TA duties, but must realize that departmental needs for each quarter must take precedence over individual preferences.
- 9) **Replacement TA appointments** shall be made from the same applicant pool for initial appointments or reappointments, including those who applied too late for consideration for other appointments. The same criteria shall be applied to select among candidates. Selection of replacement TAs is made quarterly on an as-needed basis.
- 10) **Application for initial TA appointment** may be submitted to the Assistant to the Senior Lecturer (currently Laura Clement) or the Senior Lecturer (current Daryl Pedigo). The application form is available from either of these upon request. The application for admission to the physics PhD program shall suffice for incoming PhD students. The timeline for application is attached. Generally, full consideration is given to applications received by April 15 for the following academic year. Offers will be made according to the attached timelines for initial appointments.
- 11) **Application for reappointment and replacement appointment** may be submitted to the Assistant to the Senior Lecturer or the Senior Lecturer. The application form is identical to that for initial appointment; if none of the information thereon has changed, students who have previously applied may simply request reappointment by e-mail. It is necessary to apply each quarter for

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quarterly reappointment or replacement appointments. The timeline for application is attached. Offers will be made according to the attached timelines for each type of appointment or reappointment. Offer for replacement appointments will be made as needed.

- 12) **Decisions regarding appointments, reappointments and replacement appointments** shall be made by the Senior Lecturer, in consultation with the Graduate Program Coordinator (currently Steve Sharpe), the Chair of the TA Affairs Committee (Joseph Rothberg for 2003-04), and the Graduate Program Assistant (currently Nichole Fernkes). Appeals should be initiated with these individuals; the next level of appeal is to the Department Chair.
- 13) **Appointments, reappointments and replacement appointments must be accepted in writing** according to the attached timelines. Generally, annual appointments or reappointments must be accepted in late Spring for the coming academic year. Generally, quarterly appointments and reappointments must be accepted several weeks before classes begin. Generally, replacement appointments must be accepted within one week from the time the offer is made.
- 14) **Appointments, reappointments and replacement appointments**, once accepted, can be resigned only through written notification to the Senior Lecturer and Graduate Program Coordinator. Resignations must be received according to the attached timeline for appointments and reappointments. Exceptions to these deadlines are allowed only with written permission from the Department Chair. Those who wish to relinquish an appointment in order to accept an RA position for one quarter, but wish to retain the right to return to the TA appointment in the next quarter, must state this in their written resignation. Resignation of replacement appointments must be received within two weeks from the date of acceptance of the appointment.
- 15) **Assignment of TA duties** will occur on a quarterly basis. It is incumbent upon the graduate students to communicate their needs and preferences to the Assistant to the Senior Lecturer and Senior Lecturer. As a reminder, the Assistant to the Senior Lecturer shall make a general announcement and solicitation each quarter regarding TA support and preferred duties for the coming academic quarter. This solicitation shall occur at approximately mid-quarter (in Autumn for Winter quarter support, in Winter for Spring quarter support, and in Spring for support the next Autumn quarter). This solicitation shall establish a deadline for response at least two weeks prior to the beginning of the first pay period for the coming quarter(see timelines). The Senior Lecturer, in making TA assignments, shall give consideration to the preferences of those individuals that respond to the Assistant to the Senior Lecturer by the established deadline.
- 16) **The Senior Lecturer** shall prepare a first draft of TA assignments according to the attached timelines. Generally, this first draft of assignments will be made no later than one week prior to the first day of classes for any academic quarter. The Senior Lecturer shall announce and post this information for review by graduate students and faculty. These posted assignments will be updated periodically as needed to reflect changes in assignments.
- 17) **Students from other departments** shall be hired as TAs only if there are positions available after all physics students who requested TA support have been considered. Exceptions may be made when the physics department has an agreement with another department to support one or more of their graduate students; in these cases the student(s) from the other department shall be considered under the same rules that apply to physics students.

Generic Calendar for INITIAL ANNUAL TA Appointments												
	September	October	November	December	break	January	February	March	break	April	May	June
APPLY by this date										Apr 15 for all quarters		
OFFERS made by this date											May 1 for all quarters	
ACCEPT by this date											May 15 for all quarters	
RESIGN with no penalty by this date	Aug 30 = Aut		Nov 30 = Win				Feb 28 = Spr					
1st day of pay period	Sep 16 = Aut			Dec 16 = Win				Mar 16 = Spr				
first draft COURSE ASSIGNMENTS posted	Sep 18 = Aut			Dec 18 = Win				Mar 18 = Spr				
1st day of classes	Sep 28 = Aut					Jan 3 = Win				Mar 28 = Spr		
LAST day of classes				Dec 9 = Aut				Mar 10 = Win				Jun 2 = Spr

Generic Calendar for ANNUAL TA RE - Appointments												
	September	October	November	December	break	January	February	March	break	April	May	June
APPLY by this date											May 1 for all quarters	
OFFERS made by this date											May 31 for all quarters	
ACCEPT by this date												Jun 12 for all quarters
RESIGN with no penalty by this date	Aug 30 = Aut		Nov 30 = Win				Feb 28 = Spr					
1st day of pay period	Sep 16 = Aut			Dec 16 = Win				Mar 16 = Spr				
first draft COURSE ASSIGNMENTS posted	Sep 18 = Aut			Dec 18 = Win				Mar 18 = Spr				
1st day of classes	Sep 28 = Aut					Jan 3 = Win				Mar 28 = Spr		
LAST day of classes				Dec 9 = Aut				Mar 10 = Win				Jun 2 = Spr

Generic Calendar for QUARTERLY TA RE-Appointments												
	September	October	November	December	break	January	February	March	break	April	May	June
APPLY by this date		Oct 20 = Win				Jan 21 = Spr						Jun 15 = Aut
OFFERS made by this date			Nov 8 = Win				Feb 8 = Spr					Jun 30 = Aut
ACCEPT by this date	Aug 20 = Aut		Nov 20 = Win				Feb 20 = Spr					
1st day of pay period	Sep 16 = Aut			Dec 16 = Win				Mar 16 = Spr				
first draft COURSE ASSIGNMENTS posted	Sep 18 = Aut			Dec 18 = Win				Mar 18 = Spr				
RESIGN with no penalty by this date	Sep 20 = Aut			Dec 20 = Win				Mar 20 = Spr				
1st day of classes	Sep 28 = Aut					Jan 3 = Win				Mar 28 = Spr		
LAST day of classes				Dec 9 = Aut				Mar 10 = Win				Jun 2 = Spr

Generic Calendar for INITIAL QUARTERLY TA Appointments												
	September	October	November	December	break	January	February	March	break	April	May	June
APPLY by this date	Aug 15 = Aut		Nov 15 = Win				Feb 15 = Spr					
OFFERS made by this date	Sep 2 = Aut			Dec 1 = Win				Mar 1 = Spr				
ACCEPT by this date	Sep 12 = Aut			Dec 11 = Win				Mar 11 = Spr				
1st day of pay period	Sep 16 = Aut			Dec 16 = Win				Mar 16 = Spr				
first draft COURSE ASSIGNMENTS posted	Sep 18 = Aut			Dec 18 = Win				Mar 18 = Spr				
RESIGN with no penalty by this date	Sep 20 = Aut			Dec 20 = Win				Mar 20 = Spr				
1st day of classes	Sep 28 = Aut					Jan 3 = Win				Mar 28 = Spr		
LAST day of classes				Dec 9 = Aut				Mar 10 = Win				Jun 2 = Spr