The Auburn CSSE Policy on Graduate Teaching Assistants

Proposed by
The CSSE Graduate Programs Committee and
The CSSE Undergraduate Programs Committee
Approved by the CSSE Faculty

1. General Information

1.1 Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and Graduate Assistants (GAs)
A graduate teaching assistant is classified as a GTA (e.g., in COMP1000 and COMP1100), if at least 50% of his/her responsibility as a teaching assistant is devoted to the direct instruction of students in classrooms or computer laboratories. If the assistant’s role is a grader (e.g., a grader for COMP3500), he or she will be categorized as a graduate assistant (GA) rather than a graduate teaching assistant (GTA).

1.2 Duties of Graduate Teaching Assistants
Graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) and graduate assistants (GAs) work with the CSSE faculty, supporting professors in a variety of ways. For example, GTAs may teach lower-level undergraduate courses; GAs may assist professors in grading homework assignments. GAs may assist course instructors with proctoring large classes, particularly when there is overflow and a few students need to be accommodated in the other places (e.g., the CSSE library).

Kickoff Meeting. GTAs/GAs have a responsibility to schedule a kickoff meeting with course instructors prior to the first day of classes of each semester. The GTAs/GAs must be present on campus from the first day of classes till the day of commencement in each semester; any absences require prior permission of the course instructor(s) of the assigned courses.

Working Hours. GTAs/GAs are expected to work up to 20 hours each week including exam weeks. GTAs/GAs should be on campus from the Monday of the first week of classes or earlier until and including the last day of the final exam or later in each semester. It is of importance for GTAs/GAs to balance educational requirements with the pursuit of the graduate degrees and teaching assistantship requirements.

1.3 Credit Hours
GTAs/GAs must maintain office hours, perform service assignments, and must be enrolled in nine (9) graduate credit course hours in the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering per Fall or Spring semester. In summer semesters, GTAs/GAs should be enrolled in at least three (3) graduate credit course hours. Although exemptions may be approved by the director of graduate programs, the minimum number of credit hours is three (3) per semester.

Please note that graduate students must be enrolled for at least 9 hours per semester. A student may be exempt from being full time in three circumstances: 1) during the summer,
if summer is not the student’s first semester at Auburn University, 2) if the student has been authorized to drop below a full course of study, 3) be certified as pursuing a full course of study. If a graduate student is an international student, the student will have to file the “Full Course of Study Gold Form” to the Office of International Programs to be exempt from being full time. The form is available here: http://www.auburn.edu/academic/international/isss/docs/full_course_of_study_instructions.pdf

1.4 Office Hours

GTAs/GAs are responsible to provide their office-hour schedules to their students, the professors, Graduate Program Director or GPD, and the departmental administrative staff. Office hours should be publicly posted on your office door by the first day of classes. Permission to hold office hours in another location should be granted by course instructors or GPD. GTAs/GAs cannot have office hours outside of normal university operation hours.

1.5 Eligibility

Graduate teaching assistantships or GTAs/GAs are available to graduate students in the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering (CSSE) on a competitive basis. All international students who apply for a teaching assistantship are required to score a minimum of 79 on TOEFL or a 6.5 on the IELTS (i.e., International English Language Testing System).

1.6 Test of Spoken English for International Teaching Assistants

If you are a graduate teaching assistant who has classroom teaching responsibilities (i.e., GTA), you will be required to pass the test of spoken English or TSE. The GTA requirements for international students are:

- TOEFL, 23 or higher on speaking section
- IELTS, 7 or higher on speaking section
- SPEAK Test administered at AU, 50 or higher

If you have any question regarding the SPEAK test, please contact Ms. Diamond – the Coordinator of International Scholars English Center. Ms. Diamond’s phone number is (334) 844-2747; you may also reach her through emails at diamoms@auburn.edu


1.7 Applications and Evaluations

CSSE graduate teaching assistantships are awarded on the basis of the undergraduate GPA, GRE scores, TOEFL (for International Students), letters of recommendation, Statement of Purpose, and interviews (optional). Assistantships can only be awarded after a student has completed their Graduate School application. All CSSE GTAs/GAs must satisfactorily pass a University background check, the cost of which is covered by the GTAs/GAs.

Teaching assistantships are required to have an annual evaluation each semester. The renewal of the teaching assistantships is contingent upon satisfactory performance as well
as GTA funds.

1.8 GTA/GA Orientations

GTAs/GAs are required to attend all graduate-student-orientation sessions scheduled at the beginning of Fall and Spring semesters by the department and the Graduate School.

All new GTAs/GAs are required to attend a new GTA orientation conducted by the Biggio Center in the semester, in which the GTAs/GAs are assigned the GTA appointments.

Vacations, internship plans, and the like aren’t excuses for nonattendance. Nonattendance can result in revoking a graduate teaching assistantship.

1.9 Business and Personal Trips

GTAs/GAs are Auburn employees and; therefore, GTAs/GAs are expected to be in Auburn and come to work from Monday to Friday every week. If GTAs/GAs plan to be away from campus due to a business or personal trip within a semester, the GTAs/GAs must obtain permissions from all professors the GTAs/GAs are working for prior to the trip.

1.10 Parking Permits

The department generally does not provide justification to the Parking Office for B zone permits for graduate students. Grad students are eligible for C zone permits. Tiger shuttles (and on-call safety shuttles during evenings and nights) are available to go to/from CSSE to the C parking lots.

2. GTA Communication

2.1 Emails

Email is Auburn University’s official form of communication. You are expected to check your email daily during each semester, in which you perform a GTA role. During working days, you are responsible to respond to student emails concerning homework or project assignments by the next business day.

GTAs/GAs are required to use their auburn's Tigermail accounts for communications regarding any GTA matter.

GTAs/GAs are Auburn University employees, who are not allowed to work more than 20 hours from Monday to Friday. University employees are not required to work on weekends or holidays. Nevertheless, it is recommended that on weekends or holidays GTAs/GAs make their best effort to be responsive to emails.

2.2 Mails

Each GTAs/GAs has a mailbox located in Shelby Center room 3101J. All the GTAs/GAs must check their assigned departmental mailboxes at least twice per week during the official university semesters. The mailing address for the GTAs/GAs is the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering, 3101 Shelby Center, Auburn University, AL 36849-5211.
2.3 Social Media

When you post comments and videos/photos on social networks (e.g., FaceBook and Twitter), you should avoid any remark about students and classes you are enrolled in. Please note that your inappropriate photos and comments on social media may reflect badly on our department and/or our graduate program.

You are strongly encouraged to interact with students through Canvas and Piazza. You should avoid interacting with students via social networks like FaceBook or Twitter; don’t be a “Friend” of your students on social networks other than Canvas and Piazza.

3. Interacting with Students

GTAs/GAs should work together with the course instructor to avoid any conflict of interest during grading. GTAs/GAs have conflicts of interest in grading any family member, close friend, boyfriend, or girlfriend. In case of any conflict of interest, GTAs/GAs should make this information known to course instructors and GPD.

One practical way of solving conflict-of-interest problems is, if there are two or more GTAs/GAs for a course, to re-balance who grades which student. If there is just one GTA for the course, the course instructor should grade those students who have a conflict of interest with the GTA.

4. Interacting with CSSE Faculty and Staff

GTAs/GAs are expected to courteously and respectfully treat our CSSE staff members, whose play a vital role in assisting the faculty and directing CSSE students.

GTAs/GAs are considered employees of Auburn University. Like the faculty and university personnel, GTAs/GAs should adhere to all the policies including a policy concerning sexual harassment and romantic relationships. Inappropriate behaviors will result in the loss of the graduate teaching assistantship. You will, of course, be treated with respect by CSSE faculty and staff.

5. Note to the CSSE Faculty

5.1 Recruiting and Supervising GTAs/GAs

To ensure high-quality GTAs/GAs, the CSSE faculty are encouraged to recommend, with justification, graduate students to the graduate program director (i.e., GPD) as GTAs/GAs for the courses the faculty members are assigned to teach. For example, a good justification might be that a student earned the A grade in the undergraduate course (or its graduate version) that he/she is being recommended for either at Auburn or another institution. Faculty members are also allowed to recommend their graduate student advisees as GTAs/GAs of their courses. Final decisions on GTA assignments will be made by the GPD and are subject to departmental approvals. Therefore, faculty members should not promise graduate teaching assistantships to students verbally or in writing. GTAs/GAs assigned to one course should not be asked to do tasks unrelated to their assigned course(s), including helping with another course the faculty member is teaching. Any additional work, if
voluntarily undertaken by the GTA, should be pre-approved by the GPD and should involve appropriate compensation for the GTA.

5.2 Teaching Assistantship Awarding Preferences

The department awards GTA positions semester by semester during the academic year. While we will make all efforts to ensure that a fall GTA award will be renewed in the following spring, that is not guaranteed. GTA awards depend on several factors including, but not limited to, the availability of positions and funds, meeting teaching and research performance expectations set by the department and applicant priority. The department prioritizes graduate students for GTA awards as follows (from the highest to the lowest):

1. Newly admitted (first-year PhD students);
   a. PhD students, hold a Master’s (thesis) degree in CS, SE or a related field
   b. PhD students, hold a Master’s (non-thesis) degree in CS, SE or a related field
   c. PhD students, hold a Bachelor’s degree in CS, SE or a related field
2. Second-year PhD students;
3. Third-year PhD students;
4. Fourth-year PhD students;
5. Second-year MS CSSE (thesis) students;
6. First-year MS CSSE (thesis) students;

PhD students in their fifth year and beyond, non-thesis MS students, those who have not met research performance expectations, and those whose assistantships were terminated are generally not eligible for GTA awards.

Note that this preference rule only applies to the award of assistantships. All qualified students will be considered for admission to our graduate program leading to MS or PhD degrees.

5.3 Courses with Large Enrollments

The CSSE faculty should discuss the possibility of assigning additional GTAs/GAs to your course if it has a large enrollment (e.g., 60+). Whether additional GTAs/GAs will be assigned or not depends on several factors, such as class sizes, availability of students, and funds. Such decisions on additional GTAs/GAs rests with the GPD in consultation with the department chair.

5.4 GTA FTE Assignment

We follow the guideline summarized in the table below to assign GTA FTE (Full-Time Equivalent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>FTE Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 - 50</td>
<td>0.17 (1 GTA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 75</td>
<td>0.33 (1 GTA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76 - 100</td>
<td>0.5 (1 GTA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 - 150</td>
<td>0.33 * 2 (2 GTAs)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5.5 GTAs for COPM1000

If a graduate student accepts a new COMP1000-GTA offer, the student should agree to serve as the COMP1000 GTA for two consecutive semesters (e.g., Spring‘20 and Fall’20). This guideline allows us to keep well trained COMP1000 GTA for at least one year.