

Graduate Student Instructor Handbook

Certification of Credentials and Qualifications for a Graduate Student Instructor (GSI)

The Vital Role of Graduate Student Instructors

Graduate Student Instructor (GSIs) have an extremely important role in teaching undergraduate students at Tucson Theological Seminary. You are generally in charge of teaching introductory classes and tutoring. Your responsibilities frequently include grading and giving feedback on students' work as well.

Because of the teaching responsibilities that are given to graduate students, you are in a good position to:

- Provide the personal touch, the individual feedback, and the encouragement students need to succeed.
- Help students develop higher-level thinking skills through active involvement, guidance, and feedback.
- Provide a communication channel in large lecture courses between the instructor and the students, in order to help integrate the course.

Classes and one-to-one tutoring give you the opportunity to build rapport with students and get to know them as individuals. You should try to learn their strengths and weaknesses, understand how they think, and challenge them to improve. In their early years, undergraduate students need encouragement and understanding. Because you often work with students on an individual basis, you have the opportunity to provide them with the personal help and encouragement that can motivate them to do their best work.

Try to get students actively involved in your classes. You can create the climate needed for students to feel safe enough to ask questions and participate in discussions. We challenge you as a GSI to learn how to facilitate good discussions and to ask questions that require much more than learning facts. We encourage you to build a repertoire of good teaching techniques that will promote active learning, not only through discussion but also through such techniques as group work, simulations, role-playing, and projects. Student participation leads to higher-level thinking and problem-solving skills.

This Guidebook is designed to help you during your first teaching experiences. It contains ideas that will let you accomplish your objectives with greater ease. While the Guidebook is not a comprehensive teacher-training manual, we hope it piques your interest so that you will continue to seek out information to guide you along the path to becoming a good teacher.

This documents that Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) appointed to Tucson Theological Seminary meet minimum qualifications established by the Seminary.

"Graduate Student Instructor: qualified in the teaching discipline under direct supervision by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, regular in-service training, and planned and periodic meetings."

1a. The candidate holds a graduate degree and is in the master or doctorate program. The GSI can be faculty of record for undergraduate courses and assign final grades.

1b. The candidate does not hold a master's degree or higher, but has completed 18 graduate semester credit hours. The GSI can be faculty of record for undergraduate courses and assign final grades, provided that the GSI receives documented direct supervision by a qualified faculty member, training, and periodic evaluations of teaching activities. If the credit hours in the teaching discipline are from an institution that is not accredited by a regional accrediting agency, an explanation describing equivalency that has been approved by the academic unit or designee.

1c. The candidate has not completed 12 graduate semester credit hours in the teaching discipline. The GSI cannot be faculty of record or assign final grades, but may assist a qualified faculty of record.

1d. The candidate has not completed 12 graduate semester credit hours in the teaching discipline, but has exceptional alternate credentials. The GSI can be faculty of record for undergraduate courses and assign final grades. Attach an explanation describing equivalency of the alternate credentials that has been approved by the academic unit or designee. *“When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes.”*

2. Official transcripts showing graduate degrees and courses in the teaching discipline are on hand or an explanation is attached. Required if GSI will be faculty of record and assign final grades.

3. Competency in spoken and written English has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Department Chair (or other administrator initiating the recommendation).

4. GSI's will not be allowed to create new programs, curriculums or assignments of books until graduation. GSI's will be allowed to supply additional handouts, PPP, and other informational material to aid in their teachings.

Offer of Financial Support

Students offered admission to graduate programs at Tucson Theological Seminary shall be informed of the normal completion time for the program, the minimum total level of financial support that is promised, the period of time over which this support will be provided, and any special conditions concerning continuation of the support. In addition to the time limit as stated in the graduate catalog, completion time information shall include a realistic estimate of the number of terms normally required to complete the program.

The minimum total level of financial support includes amounts received from scholarships, teaching and research assistantships and lecturing duties. External scholarships and fee waivers received by the student will be *included* in calculating the minimum total level of financial support. The source of funds may vary over the period of graduate studies.

The two principal sources of financial support for full-time graduate students are research assistantships (GSIs) and teaching assistantships (GSIs). Most RAs are funded from grants and contracts controlled by individual faculty members and are subject to regulations of the external granting agency. GSIs are usually provided from the Seminary, and are allocated by departments in return for specific services in support of their teaching programs. In accepting the offer of admission and financial support, a student agrees to perform the duties required for the support provided for the entire term of the agreement.

Each prospective graduate student will be provided with this document referencing the Guidelines when a written offer of acceptance and/or financial support is made. In addition, the official mailout to graduate students will include contacts for information on fees; a welcoming letter to the Graduate Student; a description, from the student's department, of course, seminar and thesis requirements necessary to fulfill the degree.

Continuation of Financial Support

Financial support will normally continue as promised if the student maintains full-time registration in the degree program and is satisfactorily performing the duties required for the support. Performance is assessed by the supervisor for research assistants, and by the instructor, department Chair or Graduate Officer for teaching assistants.

A student whose performance is judged to be unsatisfactory will normally receive written warning and suggestions for improvement. If the student's performance does not improve sufficiently within a reasonable time period, financial support may be reduced or discontinued. Written warning and an opportunity for improvement need not be given in cases of serious misconduct or serious neglect of duties.

FELLOWSHIPS:

TTS Fellowships are awarded based on merit with the majority of these awards given to incoming graduate students. No application beyond Application for Admission is required and approval by the Graduate Committee. Fellowships provide tuition and fees, excluding ordination and commencement fees. Recipients are expected to identify an area of study and begin work with a faculty member for teaching immediately.

Graduate Student Employment and Duties

Through the Seminary, full-time students can accept on average at most ten hours of teaching per week which is related to their degree programs. The ten-hour maximum applies to the total time required for GSI and GSI duties, unless the GSI is in support of a student's thesis research. Graduate students with full responsibility for teaching courses must be appointed as Part-time Instructors.

Graduate Student Instructors are graduate students who do not have full responsibility for teaching courses, but who are appointed to carry out teaching-related duties, such as proctoring, marking, tutoring (including language tutoring), laboratory supervision, and lecturing. Other duties may be assigned with the agreement of the instructor, the department Chair or Graduate Officer, and the graduate student.

At the beginning of each term departments shall inform GSIs of their assignments and the nominal hours of work expected over the term. The nominal hours of work is an estimate of the time, including preparation, that would normally be required by a graduate student to carry out the assigned duties. It is the department's responsibility to ensure that adequate preparation time is allowed for; it is the graduate student's responsibility to be prepared.

It is the instructor's duty to meet with her/his GSIs at the beginning of the term for advance discussion of the work expected, the methods to be used in evaluating the TA's work, and the scheduling of duties throughout the term. GSI duties extend from the date lectures begin until the due date for course marks and may be distributed unevenly over the term. However, the maximum hours of work required in any one week should not normally exceed twice the nominal weekly hours. Graduate Student Instructors or Researchers shall identify to the Seminary any known academic obligations that may interfere with their duties. If unreasonable demands interfere with a student's own academic program, he/she should speak with the department Chair. Except in emergencies, Student Instructors should receive at least one week's notice of special duties such as proctoring or lecturing.

Graduate Research Assistants are usually paid from research grants and contracts for assistance with particular research projects. In many cases students receive GRA support to work on their own thesis research; in such circumstances requirements as to maximum hours of work do not apply. However, when payment is for assistance with research not closely related to the student's thesis research, the average number of hours worked per week must not exceed ten; the rate of pay should represent fair value for the services rendered.

A graduate student who is promised support from a research grant or contract for a period of two or more terms should normally continue to work on that research project over the guaranteed period.

When graduate Research Assistants are paid from research grants or contracts awarded to faculty members, questions may arise as to the ownership of the intellectual property resulting from the research. Rights of ownership are covered by Copyright Law and by Seminary regulations of right to property.

Other Employment

Graduate students may be hired by the Seminary to perform other duties subject to the ten-hour maximum for teaching. If a graduate student is asked to undertake other duties in lieu of a promised Teaching Assistantship, the rate paid shall be the normal rate for these other duties.

Safety Training and Responsibilities

It is the department's responsibility to ensure that adequate safety training is provided to all graduate students, regardless of whether they are employed as teaching or research assistants. Graduate students should not start GSI or GSI duties until they have undergone the department's safety training program. It is the graduate student's responsibility to observe and enforce safety regulations and guidelines in the classes and laboratories they supervise, and to report hazardous conditions or processes to the department Chair.

Dispute Resolutions and Appeals

This section deals with graduate student grievances directly affecting the grievor, such as level of financial support, workload, preparation time, performance evaluation of job duties, peremptory termination of support, or suitability of tasks assigned. It does not apply to disputes or appeals concerning the assessment academic performance, or to cases of sexual harassment, racial discrimination, or other unethical behavior, nor is this a mechanism for initiating changes to policy.

A grievance should be directed, initially, to the lowest level at which it can appropriately be handled (e.g., Office for concerns relating to several courses within a department, supervisor for concerns relating to two or more different departments).

A graduate student with a job-related grievance or complaint has the right to be accompanied by a support person of her/his choosing. He or she must first seek to resolve the issues informally through discussions with the faculty or staff member concerned and the Department Chair. If the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily, within ten working days, an appeal may be made to the department Chair or President, whose decision will normally be rendered within ten working days.

If the student is not satisfied with the department Chair's decision, he or she may appeal in writing to the Administration who shall investigate the matter and make a final decision, normally within ten working days.

Committees Dealing with Graduate Student Support

Financial support for graduate students falls under the jurisdiction of Administration - Graduate Student Relations and deals with matters pertaining to the initiation and review of policies governing conditions of graduate student employment. Administration meets annually and includes two graduate students, two faculty members and a member of Administration.

SCHOLARSHIPS

TTS Excellence Scholarship For Returning Full-Time Students

The TTS Excellence Scholarship is awarded annually in the fall term to a returning, full-time graduate student at either the Masters or Doctoral level. It is intended for a student who has demonstrated academic excellence while studying at Tucson Theological Seminary, but who has not received any internal or external funding.

1. The Scholarship

- 1.1 The scholarship amount is \$1000;
- 1.2 The Scholarship is normally awarded in September.

2. Eligibility

- 2.1 Applicants must be a member of the graduate program;
- 2.2 Applicants must not be receiving internal funding (i.e. fellowship, scholarship) at the time of application;
- 2.3 Applicants must not be receiving external funding (i.e. OGS, NSERC, SSHRC, or industry grants) at the time of application;
- 2.4 Applicants normally must not expect to receive either internal or external funding during the year in which a TTS Excellence Scholarship is held;
- 2.5 Applicants can receive the Scholarship only once in their academic career at TTS;
- 2.6 Applicants will have an A- average, or equivalent, at minimum;
- 2.7 Applicants must have completed twelve (12.0) full credits, or the equivalent.

3. Selection Procedure

- 3.1 The committee charged with administering the award is the GSI Scholarship and Awards Committee;
- 3.2 Under exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the Committee, the Scholarship may be divided equally (2x \$500) between two (2) students.

4. Application Procedure

- 4.1 Applicants must submit the following:
 - 4.1.1 a completed application form;
 - 4.1.2 a 1-2 page cover letter that outlines reasons for eligibility, and should emphasize academic excellence and financial need;
 - 4.1.3 Two (2) letters of recommendation
 - 4.1.4 Record of Transcripts from the Office of Records.

TTS Excellence Scholarship for Part-time Graduate Students

The TTS Excellence Scholarship is awarded annually in the winter term to a part-time graduate student. It is intended for a student who has demonstrated academic excellence while studying at TTS, but who has not received any internal or external funding.

Terms of Reference

- 1. The Scholarship
 - 1.1 The scholarship amount is \$500;
 - 1.2 The Scholarship is normally awarded in the Winter semester.

2. Eligibility

- 2.1 Applicants must be members of TTS;
- 2.2 Applicants must not be receiving internal funding (i.e. fellowship, scholarship) at the time of application;
- 2.3 Applicants must not be receiving external funding (i.e. OGS, NSERC, SSHRC, or industry grants) at the time of application;
- 2.4 Applicants normally must not expect to receive either internal or external funding during the year in which a TTS Excellence Scholarship is held;
- 2.5 Applicants can receive the Scholarship only once in their academic career at TTS;
- 2.6 Applicants will have an A- average, or the equivalent, at minimum;
- 2.7 Applicants must have completed nine (9.0) full credit, or the equivalent.

3. Selection Procedure

- 3.1 The committee charged with administering the award is the TTS Scholarship and Awards Committee.

4. Application Procedure

- 4.1 Applicants must submit the following:
 - 4.1.1 a completed application form;
 - 4.1.2 a 1-2 page cover letter that outlines reasons for eligibility, and should emphasize academic excellence and financial need;
 - 4.1.3 Two (2) letters of recommendation;
 - 4.1.4 Record of Transcripts from the Office of Records

TTS Student-Family Award

The TTS Student-Family Award was created to help alleviate the financial burdens families incur while obtaining a seminary degree. The award also recognizes academic accomplishment. The award recognizes that students with families have added financial responsibilities which make higher education less accessible to them. In establishing the criteria for this award the award congratulates all students-families in their effort to balance academic responsibilities and family.

1. The Award

- 1.1 Two awards will be given out per year (normally in the fall term);
- 1.2 The value of each award is \$500.

2. Eligibility

- 2.1 Applicants must be members of TTS;

- 2.2 Applicants must demonstrate financial need;
- 2.3 Applicants must be in good academic standing, as defined by the Graduate calendar.

3. Selection Procedure

- 3.1 The committee charged with administering the award is the TTS Scholarship and Awards Committee;
- 3.2 Applicants will be judged according to need and academic standing;
- 3.3 All applicants will be processed with strict confidentiality.

4. Application Procedure

- 4.1 Applicants must submit:
 - 4.1.1 a completed application form;
 - 4.1.2 a statement of academic aspiration (this may include projected academic and/or professional goals);and
 - 4.1.3 two (2) references (one from an academic source [i.e. a professor], and one from either an academic or an employment source.

TTS International Student Award

The TTS International Student Award was created to help alleviate the financial burdens of students from another country outside the U.S.A. while obtaining a seminary degree. The award also recognizes academic accomplishment. The award recognizes that international students have added financial responsibilities that make higher education less accessible to them. In establishing the criteria for the award congratulates international students in their effort to academic responsibilities.

1. The Award

- 1.1 Two awards will be given out per year (normally in the fall term);
- 1.2 The value of each award is \$1000.

2. Eligibility

- 2.1 Applicants must be members of TTS;
- 2.2 Applicants must demonstrate financial need;
- 2.3 Applicants must be in good academic standing, as defined by the Graduate calendar.

3. Selection Procedure

- 3.1 The committee charged with administering the award is the TTS Scholarship and Awards Committee;
- 3.2 Applicants will be judged according to need and academic standing;
- 3.3 All applicants will be processed with strict confidentiality.

4. Application Procedure

- 4.1 Applicants must submit:
 - 4.1.1 a completed application form;
 - 4.1.2 a statement of academic aspiration (this may include projected academic and/or professional goals);and
 - 4.1.3 two (2) references (one from an academic source [i.e. a professor], and one from either an academic or an employment source.

TTS Honor Award

1. The award shall:

- 1.1 be open to all members of the TTS (except as noted below);
- 1.2 consist of a plaque, framed certificate, or a donation of equivalent value to an organization of the recipient's choice;
- 1.3 be administered every June;
- 1.4 not be open to members of the selection committee;
- 1.5 not be open to members of the current GSI;
- 1.6 be awarded to a maximum of one (1) per year;
- 1.7 not be awarded to a graduate student more than once in their graduate career.

2. The recipient will have:

- 2.1 been nominated by a minimum of one (1) person from within the seminary community (including, but not limited to, students, groups of students, faculty, staff, administration, committees, and student study

groups);
2.2 maintained good academic standing.

3. Selection Committee:

3.1 The committee charged with administering the award is the TTS Scholarship Committee;

4. Nomination Procedure:

4.1 Applications will normally consist of a completed TTS Honor Award nomination form and a letter(s) outlining the contributions of the nominated student to the graduate/seminary community.

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TTS Excellence Award in Graduate Teaching

The Excellence Award in Graduate Teaching was established by TTS in order to recognize course instructors who have, in the estimation of their graduate students, provided an outstanding contribution to university teaching at the graduate level.

1. The Award

1.1 The award carries no financial component;

1.2 One award will be given out per year (normally at the end of the year);

1.3 The award consists of a certificate for the recipient, as well as a permanent plaque that hangs in the GSA office.

2. Eligibility

2.1 Faculty members (including lecturers), at the Seminary, who have spent at least one (1) year of their career teaching at the graduate level and are currently engaged in such activities are eligible.

3. Selection Procedure

3.1 The committee charged with administering this award is the TTS Teaching Award Committee,

4. Nomination Procedure

4.1 Nominations shall be invited from individuals, students or faculty or both, as well as organizations such as faculty associations, church committees, local student associations (** the Awards Committee may not nominate an Administrator*), and alumni.

4.2 Nominations and supporting documentation shall be accepted by TTS at any time throughout the year;

4.3 Nominations must include:

4.3.1 a completed application form;

4.3.2 an attached written statement that indicates how the nominated instructor meets the criteria for this award.