



Financial Support of Ph.D. Students IST_FN-03 Administrative Guideline

Guidelines for Financial Support of PhD Students

Broadly speaking, the College of IST expects that all of its Ph.D. students will receive funding in the form of assistantships for at least four years. Such support will often be a mixture of funding that comes directly from the College (e.g., teaching or graduate assistants) and funding provided by a faculty member (typically research funds from the student's advisor).

In general, the College expects to directly support students for a total of two years or less during their studies. Further, the College expects that its direct support will be used primarily to develop a pool of Ph.D. students from which faculty will be able to identify individuals for new RA positions and to help ensure that students making good progress toward the completion of their degree are not suddenly left without support if there is a gap in the external funding available via their advisor. As a result, direct support from the College will most often support:

- New incoming Ph.D. students who have yet to develop a relationship with a faculty advisor.
- Current Ph.D. students, who have been supported by external funding via their advisor, where there is a gap in the external funding such that the student would be left without support for a semester or perhaps a year.

Teaching fellowships are intended to provide Ph.D. students with an opportunity for hands-on teaching experience prior to graduation. As such, these fellowships represent an exception to the expectations summarized above in that they do not count toward the two-year limit and they may be made available even if there is no gap in external support.

Often, new Ph.D. students will arrive with the skills needed to be productive members of a research team, and thus they may be recruited directly as research assistants (GRAs). For the most part, these arrangements will be made through direct negotiations between the student and the research supervisor. The expectation is that such students will be funded as GRAs throughout their time in IST, and that the supervisor will prioritize supporting these students over recruiting more junior students.

Some Ph.D. applicants may have attractive characteristics that make them good candidates for Ph.D. study, but do not yet have the knowledge and skills that would qualify them as a GRA. A limited number of such candidates will be offered financial support directly from the College. The number of such positions will be driven primarily by the anticipated need for teaching support or the College's courses. Most often, these individuals will initially support the College's teaching mission (e.g., GTA). Part of the admission evaluation for such students should be to assess whether an applicant is likely to be fundable as a GRA after certain research skills are acquired, generally after no more than two years of Ph.D. study. Most often, bridge funding becomes an issue after a student has been supported via external funds, but occasionally it is necessary when a student begins his/her studies close to the time an award is expected but has yet to be finalized. Bridge funding will be handled on a case-by-case basis, but is generally

expected to last for one year or less. Alternative methods of addressing bridge funding may be introduced, in which case such responsibility may be shifted to faculty.

When research funding does not exist – and is not anticipated – advisors should help the student(s) to investigate other options including fellowships or assistantships available through other Penn State or external sources.

Approved by: Dr. Andrew Sears, 01.21.2018