

FAQ's for Teaching Fellows at HGSE

Below please see several common FAQ's related to Teaching Fellow employment. This list is not exhaustive, and we will be updating this FAQ when new information is available.

Question: What are the typical duties of a Teaching Fellow?

Answer: The range of Teaching Fellow (TF) responsibilities and the balance of effort among them reflects the variety of content offered and pedagogical approaches employed in courses at the Graduate School of Education, as well as the personal styles, strengths and preferences of both faculty and Teaching Fellows. Teaching Fellow duties may encompass, to varying degrees, any of the following:

- Attending classes, teaching team meetings, and/or office hours
- Planning or designing sections, course sessions, or assignments/assessment standards with the instructor
- Teaching required or voluntary sections, lab sessions, or review sessions
- Presenting material in regular class sessions
- Facilitating small group discussions or projects in or out of class
- Supervising students at field placements or off-site activities
- Demonstrating, teaching the use of, or supporting the use of course-related software or technology
- Providing written feedback on student work
- Assigning grades to student assignments, exams, or class participation
- Communicating with students (via office hours or online) on course substance
- Coordinating student placements with site-based supervisors and organizations
- Updating or posting materials to a course web site
- Other academic support duties (contacting and arranging for guest speakers, preparing handouts, arranging for special media needs, obtaining readings or other materials, etc.)

Consultation and support for Teaching Fellows is available through the [HGSE Teaching Fellow Resource Site](#) and from the [HGSE Teaching and Learning Lab](#). All Teaching Fellows are invited to attend a TF orientation (mandatory for new TF's) and technical training Thursday, Sep. 1, 2:00-5:00pm, Gutman Conference Center. Please click [here](#) to register for the orientation and other training opportunity. Time for all required training is included in the paid hours of appointment.

Question: What does it mean to be an exempt employee?

Answer: Teaching fellows can either be hourly or exempt. At HGSE, hourly teaching fellow appointments are rare and are typically only for pre-course design and development-specific work (i.e., before the course has enrolled students and is actively in session). Most teaching fellow appointments are "exempt" and responsibilities happen during the course (e.g., instruction, advising, grading, etc.).

Exempt employees:

1. Do not track their hours.
2. Are expected to work to complete the tasks assigned to them.
3. Receive a set salary for the work they perform.

Question: What is a TF "slot"?

Answer: At HGSE, 35 hours per week is considered full-time. One TF slot is generally equivalent to 20% FTE over 5 months. This is roughly 150 hours of work using a 35-hour workweek. However, because TFs are exempt employees, there is no tracking of hours and some weeks can have more hours worked than others, depending on the needs of the course. In addition, the amount of time needed to complete the work may vary depending on the course and the TF. If you have questions about number of hours and how this relates to your PhD program or visa compliance, please contact [Clara Lau](#).

Because TFs do not track hours, the work ebbs and flows, and because 5 months is not always the timeframe of the work, the expected number of hours to complete the work can vary.

Question: Why does it take time to confirm my course-specific appointment, and when will I know if my TF slot is confirmed?

Answer: TF slot confirmation generally depends on two things: enrollment and credit level. For a class to have a TF approved, it must have sufficient enrollment. The standard enrollment ratio for a TF is 20:1 but some classes have lower ratios based on the pedagogical needs of the course. When there is a historical track record of enrollment that is high enough, TF slots can be “pre-allocated” to a course meaning that the TF can be hired prior to the enrollment deadline for the term. These positions are allocated conservatively since they represent a high degree of confidence that a course will have a minimum number of students. The majority of TF slots are confirmed once final enrollment numbers are known, which occurs after the enrollment deadline for a given semester. Courses can shift dramatically in their enrollments from year to year based on many factors, including who is teaching, word of mouth among students, the distribution of interests among entering students, and even the scheduling of class meeting times.

The slot level itself is typically associated with the credit level of the course. For example, a TF for a 4-credit course is typically allocated 1.0 slot. A TF for a 2-credit module is typically allocated a 0.5 slot.

Question: What if I am hired for an *approved* slot level and then the course is cancelled or doesn’t meet enrollment needs to justify a TF?

Answer: The department or unit shall notify the Teaching Fellow as soon as practicable. In such cases, the Teaching Fellow shall be offered an available alternative section that the Teaching Fellow is qualified to teach and that has not been assigned to another Teaching Fellow or other individual, or where appropriate an equivalent RA position for which the Teaching Fellow is qualified. However, if no other course or RA assignment can be made and the course or section is finally cancelled, the Teaching Fellow shall be paid 70% of the compensation they would have received had the course or section not been cancelled

Question: When is it OK to submit hiring paperwork?

Answer: If a faculty member confirms with a TF candidate that 1) the course has a slot level that has been approved and 2) the TF candidate is approved to take the confirmed slot level, then they can work with Human Resources to submit their hiring paperwork as soon as they are ready. The earlier the forms can be submitted, the better. If a faculty member wants to hire a TF candidate but the slot level has *not* been confirmed, it is recommended that they prepare all hiring forms but only submit the hiring paperwork **once the slot is confirmed**. In these cases, the slot confirmation is dependent on final

enrollment. Hiring paperwork can be found here: <https://finance.gse.harvard.edu/teaching-fellow-monthly-student-research-assistant-appointment>. If you have questions about being hired for a Teaching Fellow position, please contact Human Resources at Longfellow Hall 124 (617-495-3471 or at TF@gse.harvard.edu).

Question: When do TFs get paid?

Answer: TF's are paid on the 15th of every month. To ensure you do not miss a payment please submit your hire forms by the 26th of the prior month for the next month's payment. For example, paperwork must be submitted by August 26th to ensure a September payment. If you have questions about the timing of your payment, please contact TF@gse.harvard.edu.

Question: What happens if I miss getting my appointment approved and paperwork submitted by the 26th of the previous month? Can I still be paid on the 15th of the following month?

Answer: TFs should submit their hiring paperwork as soon as their job is approved and the slot level is confirmed with their faculty member. There are internal payroll deadlines that are determined by central payroll at Harvard. That said, the Office of Human Resources and the Finance Office do everything they can to help students get hired and paid as quickly as possible. If you are unsure about the timing of your first paycheck, please contact TF@gse.harvard.edu.

Question: There are things that need to be done to get a course up and running. Can I start working even if my slot has not received final approval?

Answer: You should not be working unless you have been told by your faculty supervisor that you are in a confirmed/guaranteed slot and have completed and submitted your hiring paperwork. There are some courses that based on historical enrollment numbers have pre-allocated slots (where formal hiring for the position on the payroll is explicitly authorized prior to the start of the term), and in those instances, assuming the TF has been hired, a TF may begin working prior to final enrollment numbers.

Question: Where can I learn about open TF slots?

Answer: A position listing with open TF slots has been shared via the Degree Programs Office and is linked [here](#). We are updating this information as soon as we know when slots have either been filled or are opening. If you have questions about the position listings, please reach out to [Brendan Russell](#) or [Kristin Foster](#).

Question: I have a guaranteed funding commitment. Will I be given hiring preference?

Answer: HGSE strongly encourages all instructors to give hiring preference to qualified students with funding guarantees. In addition, TF position listings are released first to G3 and G4 students with a funding guarantee before they are released to other doctoral students. In the event a student with a funding guarantee cannot find an open slot, HGSE is committed to ensuring that the guarantee is met. HGSE also works diligently to find matches between students with a funding guarantee and open slots. If you have concerns about meeting your TF guarantee, please reach out [Clara Lau](#).

Question: I am living out of state. Am I still able to TF?

Answer: In general, TFs are expected to be in person for residential classes. And, as the majority of classes are on campus, there are few online Teaching Fellow positions available. However, online TF positions are still possible, and must have approval from the faculty member doing the hiring and HR. Teaching Fellows working in New England (Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Connecticut), Maryland, or New York can work remotely and be paid through Harvard payroll. If you live in a state not mentioned above, but within the US, it is possible to be hired through a third-party company called Allsource. Students in their G3 and G4 guarantee years are only guaranteed slots *in-residence*.

Question: What are the terms and conditions of being a TF and how will that be communicated to me?

Answer: HGSE pay rates for [2022-23](#) have been published. You can find the terms and conditions of being a TF at Harvard in the most recent HGSU-UAW Union contract, found [here](#).

Need further help?

- For **general guidance** and **resources** for TFs, please see: <https://tf.gse.harvard.edu/>
- For questions on **hiring paperwork**, **payment timing**, and other **appointment questions**, please contact Human Resources in Longfellow Hall 124 (617-495-3471 or TF@gse.harvard.edu or Santoshi_basnet@gse.harvard.edu).
- For questions about **posted positions** and **finding TF roles**, please contact [Kristin Foster](#).
- For other questions related to the teaching fellow role, please contact [Clara Lau](#) or [Brendan Russell](#).