TA Appointment Policy
Interdisciplinary PhD Program in Urban Design and Planning
University of Washington

Approved by the UDP PhD Steering Committee 10/13/2020.

Process of TA Appointments

Every year, the Interdisciplinary PhD Program in Urban Design and Planning works with the Department of Urban Design and Planning to identify and appoint suitable PhD students as teaching assistants for courses offered by the Department. The process consists of the following steps:

1. At the beginning of Spring Quarter, information about available TA positions in each quarter of the coming academic year is made available through a spreadsheet sent from the Department Chair to all current PhD students.

2. PhD students provide information on TA needs, interests, and relevant experience by adding this information to the spreadsheet and sending it to both the Department Chair and the PhD Program Director and Staff.

3. The PhD Program Director and Staff assemble information about each student’s funding situation (the student’s academic performance and progress, availability of suitable research assistantships, and the Program’s funding commitments) based on the required annual student progress reports submitted by each student and her/his faculty advisor, as well as the Program’s records of admission offers and prior TA/RA appointments. This additional information is used to determine the priority rankings of PhD students for TA appointments. These rankings, along with related information, are provided to the Department Chair.

4. The Department Chair makes TA appointment decisions based on teaching needs and PhD students’ priority rankings. TA appointments for Autumn courses are made in late Spring; appointments for Winter and Spring classes are made in mid-Autumn.

Priority Rankings

Because available TA positions are usually insufficient to meet all TA needs and interests of PhD students, it is essential that the Program establish clear, transparent criteria for ranking TA requests.

After careful discussion, the PhD Steering Committee voted to approve the following criteria, ordered by their relative importance, for determining the general priority rankings:

1. The student, at the time of the prospective TA appointment, is still within the 2 years of funding promised by the Program in its admission letter.
2. The student started the program with 2 or 3 years of external fellowships or funding, but will be in the subsequent 3rd and/or 4th year for which the Program promised funding.

3. The student will be in her/his final year but has not yet held a TA appointment, needed to fulfill the Program’s teaching requirement.

4. The student has been funded by her/his advisor(s) for the second/third/fourth year(s), but will need TA funding for the coming year to continue or finish the program.

5. The student has not been fully funded by the PhD Program/Department for two or more years.

6. The student is still within six years in the program.

Times of Decision

Because both the Department and individual faculty members face financial uncertainty regarding the number of TA positions and faculty grant awards in the coming year, TA appointment decisions are made two times per year – first in late May, when TA assignments for Autumn classes are made, and again in late October, when TAs assignments are announced for Winter and Spring Quarter courses.