



CECS Spring 2026 Go for Launch Series: Finding Funding

Presented by Heather Houser, CECS Graduate Program Manager





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Overview

1 What are Assistantships?

2 Benefits of an Assistantship

3 How to Find an Assistantship

4 Help Me Get Hired

5 Hiring Deadlines

6 Maintaining Your Assistantship

7 Questions

What is an Assistantship?

- It is an admitted, **full-time student** who works under the supervision of a faculty member or a research team, assisting with various tasks related to a course, initiative, or research project. **Online-only students cannot be on an assistantship.**

Types at UCF

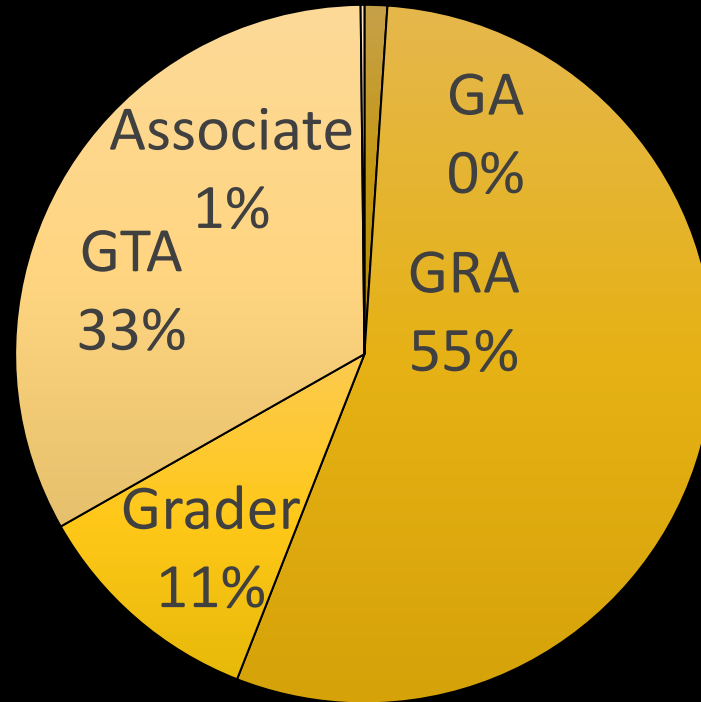
- Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA)
- Graduate Teaching Associate
- Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA)
- Grader
- Graduate Assistant (GA)



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Spring 2026 Graduate Student Hires

We Filled
573
Positions

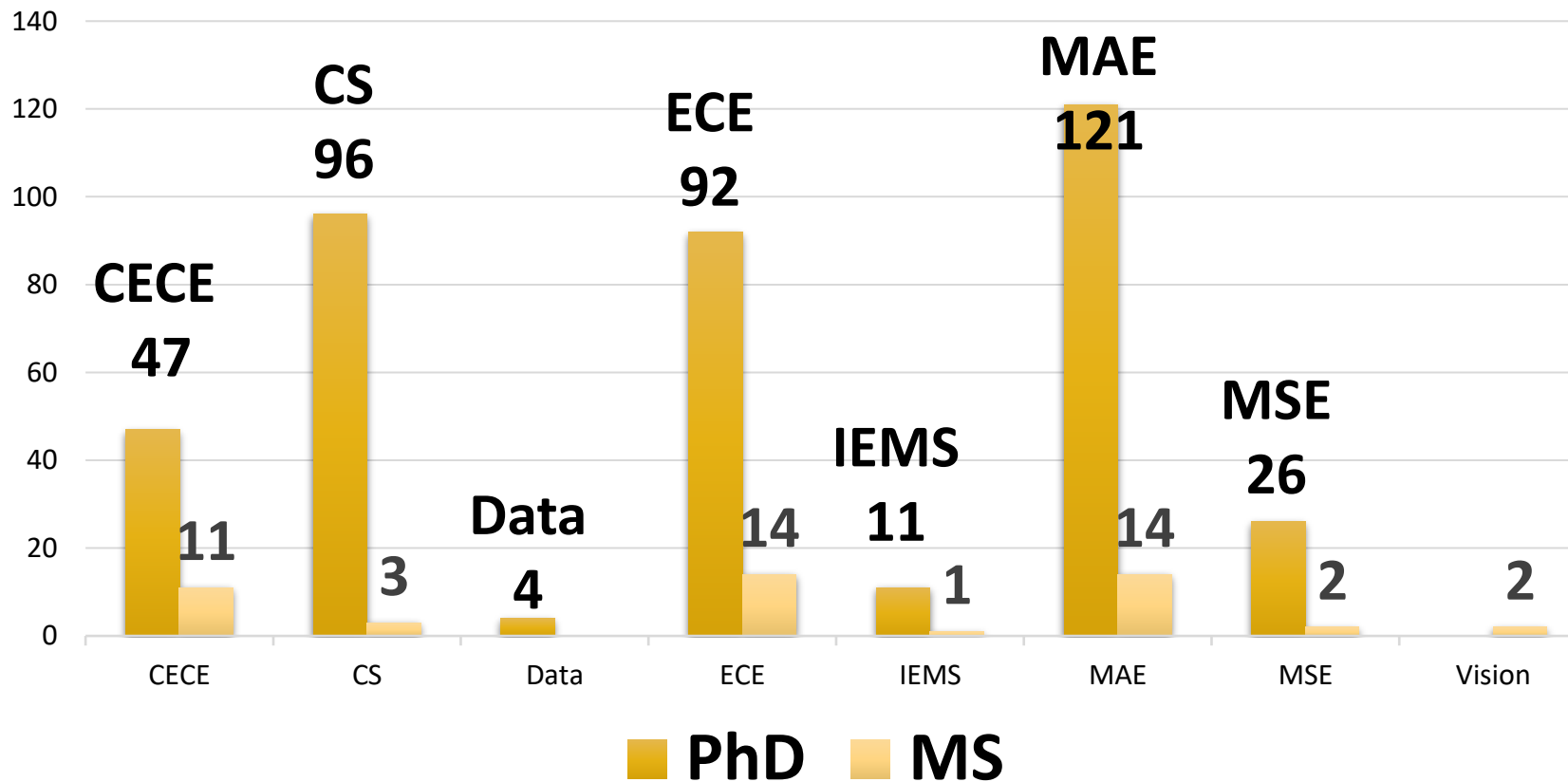


■ Associate ■ GRA ■ Grader ■ GTA ■ GA



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Spring 2026 Graduate Student Hires



Graduate Research Assistant (GRAs)

- A student who works under the supervisions of a faculty member or a research team and helps with various tasks related to a research project.

Duties

- Running Experiments
- Creating Literature Reviews
- Running Statistical Test and Analysis
- Writing Research and Conference Proposals



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Graduate Teaching Assistants/Associates (GTAs)

- GTAs are a student who works along a faculty member with a specific class or lab.
- Teaching Associates are instructors of record and handle all course's teaching requirements with limited supervision.

Duties

- Lecturing
- Office Hours
- Preparing Exams
- Grading, as Needed



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Graders

- A student that assists with grading for a course.
- Does NOT have interactions with courses' students.

Graduate Assistants (GAs)

- A student that assists in various on-campus offices, facilitates, or departments and assume different administrative or technical tasks depending on their unique role ([Indeed, 2024](#)).
- Duties may include administrative tasks like filing or answering emails. Other GA positions may help departments develop programs, perform outreach, or organize data.



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Benefits of an Assistantship (0.5 FTE / 20 Hours)

- In-State Tuition Rate (out-of-state is waived)
- In-State Tuition Rate is Paid by your Hiring Unit
- UCF Sponsored Health Insurance
- Bi-Weekly Stipends
- **Work Experience**
- **Developing your Teaching/Research Skills**
- **Networking (Faculty Research Clusters)**



Finding an Assistantship

- Use [CECS Research/Support Positions](#)
- Search **Google Scholar** for UCF Faculty in your Research Field
- Review your Best [Undergrad/Graduate](#) Course Performances
- Ask your Advisor
- Network with Professors and Students about Positions NOW



How to Email Potential PhD Supervisors and Get Replies

@emmaueltskleves

1) Excellent use of white space, with each line being a statement/argument

2) Goes straight to the point after key credentials

3) Shows specific knowledge of their work. Cites their paper directly. Proves genuine interest, not mass email.

Subject: PhD Supervision Inquiry - [Your Research Area]

Dear Prof. Emmanuel Tsekleves,

I am [Name], a [Masters student/graduate] in [field] at [University], seeking PhD supervision in [specific research area] starting [Month Year].

Reading your paper on [specific title] in [journal] changed how I think about [specific aspect]. Your approach to [specific methodology/finding] challenged conventional thinking on [topic]. I want to build on this by exploring [your proposed research direction].

During my Masters, I didn't just study [methodology], I used it to [specific achievement that solved a real problem]. This led to [concrete outcome]. Your lab's work on [their area] faces similar challenges, and I'm confident my experience with [skill] could accelerate progress on [specific aspect of their research].

I have identified [specific scholarship/funding, e.g., University Scholarship, Research Council funding] as a potential funding route and would value your guidance on whether my proposed research aligns with your group's direction.

Would a 15-minute call next week work? I'll come prepared with specific ideas on how my research could contribute to your work on [topic]. No preparation needed on your end

4) Highlights what you bring, showing value to THEIR research. Not just what you want from them

5) Shows initiative on funding. You've researched scholarships. Reduces their workload.

6) Proposes clear next step. Specific, low-commitment ask. Easy to say yes to.

Best regards,

[Your Name]

The PhD Insider

Tips for Success

Do Your Research: Show genuine interest in the professor's work by referencing specific projects or publications.

Keep It Concise: Stick to 2–3 paragraphs to respect their time.

Attach a CV: Include a professional CV with details about your qualifications and achievements.

Proofread: Ensure your email is free of grammatical or spelling errors.

Follow Up: If you don't hear back within a week or two, send a polite follow-up email.

-- [Muhammad Zunnurain Hussain](#)



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Other Tips

- Contacting via Email
 - Your Background & Academic Interests
 - **Why are you a good fit?**
 - How you handle responsibilities and time management
 - Seeking a GTA?
 - Transcripts, Course Preferences
 - Seeking a GRA?
 - Previous Experience, Your Interest in the Subject
 - Pointed Questions about their Research
- Follow up in a Week
 - Too Often? = Bad Impression



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Getting Hired

- Approve the Initial Offer
 - Approve the Final Offer
 - Complete All Graduate Teaching Associates/Assistants/Graders [WebCourse Training\(s\)](#) before Summer/Spring 2026 Begins
 - If Required, Complete [the Versant Exam](#)
- Submit Any and All Documentation to CECSHR@ucf.edu
 - #1. Influence Screening (if applicable)
 - #2 Background Check (ALL new hires)



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Summer 2026 Hiring Deadlines

- Influence Screening Students: **March 1, 2026**
- Others: **April 1, 2026**
- Offer Acceptance: **April 15, 2026**

Fall 2026 => Hire in June 2026 with Contracts in June/July

Influence Screening Students

- International MS Students Hired as GRAs
- PhD students admitted before Fall 2022 and not previously hired as a GRA



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Maintaining Your Assistantship Position

- Enroll as a Full-Time, Face-to-Face Student
 - Even During your Graduating Term
 - Even on CPT
 - Fall/Spring = 9 Hours
 - Summer = 6 Hours
 - Thesis/Dissertation Students = 3 Hours
- Termination Before a Contract Ends
 - Academic Misconduct
 - Excessive Absences
 - Misconduct in Assigned Duties
 - Breach of the UCF Golden Rule ([Code of Conduct](#))



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FAQs

How do I apply for or secure a GTA/GRA or assistantship position?

GRAs = Follow up with Professors in your Research Area

GTA's = Follow up with your department's chair or program director

Can assistantships or research positions be secured in departments other than the one a student is admitted to?

Yes, you can work for another UCF college or an outside department.



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FAQs, Continued

What happens if I can't manage funding this semester—can I defer admission or reapply?

Graduate Studies does not allow application deferment. Send a message to gradadmissions@ucf.edu to let us know you are not coming, and then reapply for a later semester.

How and when will assistantship or fellowship decisions be communicated?

Fellowship selection for Fall 2026 admits will conclude in April. If selected, you will receive an emailed offer. These are normally for PhD students.



FAQs, Continued

What types of funding are international students eligible for?

International students are not eligible for federal loans.

International students can receive all other support sources.

How long does it take to become a Graduate Teaching Associate?

They usually are PhD students who have completed their Qualifying and/or Candidacy requirements. However, every department does it differently.

Where can I find contact information for my program director or coordinator?

<https://grad.cecs.ucf.edu/contact-us/> => Scroll for Your Program



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References

What Is a Graduate Assistant? Duties, Benefits and Tips | Indeed.com, Indeed Editorial Team, 15 Aug. 2024,
www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/what-is-graduate-assistant

Spring 2026 Go for Launch Workshops

- Applying for Spring or Summer 2026 Graduation: **March 6, 2026**
- Summer 2026 Thesis Students: **March 26, 2026**
- Summer 2026 Candidates: **March 27, 2026**
- Summer 2026 Registration: **April 3, 2026**

All sessions are held via Zoom at 11 AM / [Slides](#) will be Posted After the Presentation Session



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Questions?



https://ucf.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_a5a1o7MR26vSpmK