

# The Free School



PhD free tuition - Graduate Teaching Assistantship / Fellowship programs in the United States, Canada and other countries.

Original content analysis research.

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# This is a Free School presentation



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# Aim

This research aims to:

- Define the **Graduate Teaching Assistant Program** that supports doctoral research candidates;
- Explain how international students can obtain free tuition for PhD study in Canada, the United States and other countries;
- Provide examples of universities in the USA, Canada, Australia and England that offer Graduate Teaching Assistant programs.

# Scope

This presentation does not discuss related issues such as:

- ***Financial aid*** available for international students
- ***Loans*** made available to international students
- ***Stipends*** and ***bursaries*** available for international students
- ***Scholarships*** available for international students.

These topics shall be examined in a separate forthcoming Free School presentation dated November 2016.

# Method

This research project cites 15 primary sources as evidence to support *generalisations* made in this presentation. These sources include 13 university websites, a teaching assistant handbook and an extract from a casual tutor employment contract. This presentation explicitly makes the point that Graduate Teaching Assistant programs vary between universities/colleges. Those interested in applying for a Graduate Teaching Assistant program should check the terms and conditions of the employment contract which is offered to them.

# Background and context

There is confusion in the public domain about **Graduate Teaching Assistant** schemes that fund tuition fees for doctoral research students in the USA and Canada.

Prospective international students frequently ask others to clarify this scheme on popular discussion forums such as Quora.

One of the reasons for this confusion is the lack of popularity of this model in other English speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

# Non Canadian/American universities

In most other English-speaking countries, doctoral research scholars have two main options to fund tuition fees imposed on doctoral candidates.

Option 1: Self-fund as a full fee paying international student.

Option 2: Fund via a scholarship offered by the university and/or a private donor.

Candidates may also fund partially via Option 1 and Option 2

A ***scholarship*** provided by the university, by definition, does not require the doctoral candidate to work for the university. A scholarship is a one-way *gift*.

# Australia and New Zealand

In countries such as Australia and New Zealand many doctoral candidates are offered short-term (one semester) contract tutoring/lecturing roles. Some universities/faculties prioritise these employment opportunities to doctoral candidates who have completed one year of their research dissertation enrollment.

Example: University of Queensland (2016).

These opportunities are not guaranteed from term-to-term. It is risky for international students to assume that casual teaching will fund most of their tuition fees. Few international students earn AUD\$15, 000 in one year from casual teaching.

# Tutoring contract example: University of Sydney (2014)

| Semester 2, 2014<br>(change the paycodes as required) |                  |                         | Lecturing<br>Pay/units                     |     | Tutoring<br>Pay/units |     | Demonstrating<br>Pay/units |     | Marking<br>Pay/units |     |
|---|------------------|-------------------------|--|-----|-----------------------|-----|----------------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| Teaching<br>Week                                      | Week<br>Commence | Week<br>Ending<br>(Fri) | P02  | P04 | TU2                   | TU4 | A01                        | A02 | M04                  | M05 |
| 1   | 28/7/2014        | 1/8/2014                |  |     |                       |     |                            |     |                      |     |
| 2   | 4/8/2014         | 8/8/2014                |  |     | 1                     | 1   |                            |     |                      |     |
| 3   | 11/8/2014        | 15/8/2014               |  |     | 1                     | 1   |                            |     |                      |     |
| 4   | 18/8/2014        | 22/8/2014               |  |     | 1                     | 1   |                            |     |                      |     |
| 5   | 25/8/2014        | 29/8/2014               |  |     | 1                     | 1   |                            |     |                      |     |
| 6   | 1/9/2014         | 5/9/2014                |  |     | 1                     | 1   |                            |     |                      |     |
| 7   | 8/9/2014         | 12/9/2014               |  |     | 1                     | 1   |                            |     |                      |     |
| 8   | 15/9/2014        | 19/9/2014               |  |     | 1                     | 1   |                            |     |                      |     |
| 9   | 22/9/2014        | 26/9/2014               |  |     | 1                     | 1   |                            |     |                      |     |
| Break   | 29/09/2014       | 3/10/2014               | No classes this week YOU CAN CLAIM MARKING |     |                       |     |                            |     |                      |     |

# American/Canadian Teaching Assistant Model

The Teaching Assistant model requires the doctoral research candidate to exchange labor in return for a part or full 'fee waiver' (free tuition).

In most instances, the labor supplied by the doctoral scholar relates to teaching, in particular, working as a tutor that supports one or more lecturers. Tutors perform a range of duties including: presenting tutorials, grading assessable work, supporting students via the online learning system, answering student emails, providing administrative support to the lecturer-in-charge and consulting students face-to-face by appointment.

Examples: University of Toronto (2016), University of Waterloo (2016)

# American/Canadian Teaching Assistant Model

Some Teaching Assistantship contracts stipulate that the doctoral scholar must provide a range of duties beyond supporting undergraduate coursework units. You should check with your institution on a case-by-case basis. Some Teaching Assistant contracts may require you to offer other services such as general administration duties (*e.g.* general photocopying) and providing research support (*e.g.* data analysis) for your supervisor.

Examples: Rochester Institute of Technology University (2016).

# Not all programs offer 100% free tuition

You should check with your School to confirm how much free tuition you will receive in return for your services. This will be defined in your Graduate Teaching Assistant contract. The University of San Diego's (2016) Graduate Teaching Assistantships are subject to the following terms:

Graduate students may be appointed by UC San Diego on a part-time basis as graduate student researchers and teaching assistants. Graduate students enrolled full-time (twelve units or more) may be appointed up to 50 percent time (twenty hours/week) during the academic year and 100 percent time during the summer months, although most departments limit support to 50 percent time year-round. Students enrolled for less than full-time (one to eleven units) are eligible, at the discretion of the department, for 25 percent time appointments. Appointees must remain in good academic standing, as described under "Standards of Scholarship."

# University of San Diego (2016) example continued

Graduate students who are appointed as graduate student researchers are eligible for remission of tuition and fees if they have a minimum 25 percent appointment for the entire quarter for which tuition and fees are paid, or the dollar equivalent; have an appointment effective with the first week of instruction in the quarter for which tuition and fees are paid; and are within the time limits for support described earlier in this section.

Teaching assistants and others appointed on academic titles at 25 percent time or more for the quarter are eligible for payment of partial tuition and fee remission of 100 percent of the annual tuition and student services fee and 100 percent of the Graduate Student Health Insurance fee.

# Terminology: Teaching Fellow V Teaching Assistant

A Graduate Teaching Assistantship may or may not be synonymous with a **Graduate Teaching Fellowship**. You need to check. The University of Oregon (2016) defines its Graduate Teaching Fellowship:

*Graduate Teaching Fellowship (GTF) is the term used at the University of Oregon (UO) for teaching, research, and administrative graduate assistantships. UO GTFs receive a competitive compensation package that includes a monthly salary, full-time tuition waiver, mandatory fees subsidy, and health insurance premium coverage (and subsidized health insurance premium coverage for dependents).*

# The United States Teaching Fellowship Model

“Teaching Fellow (TF): the same as a Teaching Assistant except that the Teaching Fellow is more educationally advanced or experienced, typically holding the equivalent of a master's degree.” (University of Pittsburgh, 2016)

Graduate Teaching Assistants / Fellows mostly instruct and support undergraduate students. Some Teaching Fellows may assist with teaching graduate students as a tutor or lecturer. Some Teaching Assistants may be required to conduct undergraduate guest lectures to support the lecturer-in-charge. These doctoral candidates will normally be those who have completed a coursework or research degree at Masters Level.

Examples: University of Pittsburgh (2016), Brown University (2016)

# Graduate Teaching Assistant role is optional

This model is not a mandatory requirement imposed on doctoral research candidates who are local or international students.

Doctoral research applicants may request admission as a full fee paying international student if they are not willing to apply for a scholarship/teaching assistantship, or if they apply and are not successful.

Examples of international student fee schedules for a PhD program:

University of British Columbia (2016), CAD\$36,424 *per annum*

Yale University (2016), USD\$39, 800 *per annum*

# Teaching Fellowships outside of Canada/USA

Teaching Fellowships and Teaching Assistantships exist in other countries outside of Canada and the USA . Example: Imperial College London (2016)

Most American and Canadian ranked universities have a Teaching Assistant Program. In other countries such as the United Kingdom, formal Teaching Assistant programs that offer long-term employment contracts are less common, although they are growing in popularity. Equivalent programs in other countries are generally less generous. For example, the University of Sydney's (2016) Teaching Fellowship program pays successful doctoral students 0.2 full-time-equivalent for a period of 12 months only.

# Teaching Assistant manual example: detailed

Many American and Canadian Universities publish open-access handbooks that discuss the details of their Graduate Teaching Assistant and Graduate Teaching Fellow programs. To learn more about these schemes, it is advisable to read some of these booklets. Not all schemes are the same. This one shown below is similar to most schemes offered at Canadian and American universities.

Iowa State University (2016), Teaching Assistant Handbook,  
[www.fau.edu/ctl/TA\\_Handbook\\_Iowa\\_State\\_University.pdf](http://www.fau.edu/ctl/TA_Handbook_Iowa_State_University.pdf)  
Accessed 2 November 2016. (69 pages)

# References

Brown University (2016), Teaching at Brown,

<<https://www.brown.edu/academics/gradschool/teaching-brown>>. Accessed 2 November 2016

Imperial College London (2016), Roles and responsibilities : Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA's)

<[www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/qa/public/good-practice/roles-and-responsibilities/Graduate-Teaching-Assistant-\(GTA\).pdf](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/qa/public/good-practice/roles-and-responsibilities/Graduate-Teaching-Assistant-(GTA).pdf)>. Accessed 2 November 2016.

Rochester Institute of Technology University (2016), Graduate Assistant job duties,

<[https://www.rit.edu/fa/controller/graduate/job\\_duties.html](https://www.rit.edu/fa/controller/graduate/job_duties.html)>. Accessed 2 November 2016.

University of British Columbia (2016), Doctoral,

<<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/?tree=14,266,773,1451>>. Accessed 2 November 2016.

University of Melbourne (2016), Part time & casual work,

<[careers.unimelb.edu.au/student/find\\_a\\_job/part\\_time\\_and\\_casual\\_work](http://careers.unimelb.edu.au/student/find_a_job/part_time_and_casual_work)>. Accessed 2 November 2016.

University of Queensland (2016), Becoming a tutor,

<<https://www.uq.edu.au/tutors/becoming-tutor>>. Accessed 2 November 2016.

University of Oregon (2016), What is a GTF?

<<https://gradschool.uoregon.edu/gtf/definition>> Accessed 2 November 2016.

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University of Pittsburgh (2016), Policy statement for Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows, and Graduate Student Assistants, <<http://www.pitt.edu/~graduate/TATFGSAPolicyStatement.pdf>>. Accessed 2 November 2016.

University of San Diego (2016), Graduate admission, <<http://www.ucsd.edu/catalog/front/GradStud.html>>. Accessed 2 November 2016.

University of Sydney (2014), Casual teaching contract - Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Sydney, Australia: University of Sydney.

University of Sydney Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (2016), Teaching fellowships, <[http://sydney.edu.au/arts/current\\_students/postgraduate\\_research/fass\\_teaching\\_fellowships.shtml](http://sydney.edu.au/arts/current_students/postgraduate_research/fass_teaching_fellowships.shtml)>. Accessed 2 November 2016.

University of Toronto (2016), Graduate student funding at the University of Toronto, <<http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/office/2015strikeupdates/UofTGradSupport.htm>>. Accessed 2 Nov 2016.

University of Waterloo (2016), Teaching assistant (TA) roles and responsibilities, <<https://uwaterloo.ca/applied-health-sciences/current-graduates/resources-opportunities/teaching-assistant-t-a-manual/roles-and-responsibilities>>. Accessed 2 November 2016.

Yale University (2016), Tuition, fees, and other expenses, <[bulletin.printer.yale.edu/htmlfiles/forestry/tuition-fees-and-other-expenses.html](http://bulletin.printer.yale.edu/htmlfiles/forestry/tuition-fees-and-other-expenses.html)>. Accessed 2 Nov 2016.

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# Call for further research

The researcher calls for other scholars to extend the scope of this project and explore Teaching Assistantship and Teaching Fellowship contracts offered at all post-secondary educational institutions such as vocational colleges and technical institutes. This extended analysis may also explore Undergraduate Teaching Assistant programs offered to international students at post-secondary educational institutions.

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