SCHOOL OF MECHATRONIC SYSTEMS ENGINEERING
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

TEACHING ASSISTANT APPOINTMENT PRIORITIES

October 2018

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Introduction

This document is created based on the TSSU policy and the graduate student funding policy of the School of Mechatronic Systems Engineering. By the TSSU policy, all applicants are partitioned into different priority categories, based on their programs, schools, and total number of received TA units. In addition, applicants with merit-based scholarships equal or greater than a 5.17 base unit appointment will have lower priority.

Important Notes:

• To be considered for a Teaching Assistantship, applicants should always apply for the TA positions that are announced by the School and posted on the MSE website before the announced deadline.
• In determining TA appointments, the committee will consider the applicants’ relevant experience for each course as highlighted in the MSE TA Application Form.
• Applicants should review the course descriptions and required skills for the TA positions which they are applying for, to ensure that they meet the qualifications.
• The applicants must specify any limitations affecting their availability (e.g., being away from Surrey campus) during the appointment term and declare these in the TA Application Form.
1. Excerpts from TSSU Agreement

The priority for appointment/re-appointment as a Teaching Assistant in the School of Mechatronic Systems Engineering is in accordance with Section B.1, F.1 - F.9 and H.1 - H.2 of Article XIII of the Collective Agreement with the Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU), specially the following sections:

Article XIII. Teaching Assistants

B. Qualifications
B.1. Many departments include a wide range of specializations and, in order to be appointed, a person must have sufficient knowledge in the discipline of the course to interpret the course material.

F. Appointment Priority
F.1 Teaching Assistants may be appointed to fill teaching support positions only when faculty members are unavailable. Faculty members and full time employees of the University are not Teaching Assistants. However, no appointment of a Sessional Lecturer I may be made if there is a qualified graduate student within the first priority group (specified in F.3.) available for appointment as a GTA (graduate teaching assistant).

F.3 a. In hiring Teaching Assistants, departments shall give priority to the applicants in the following order:
(i) Graduate students registered in the department
(ii) Graduate students registered in other departments
(iii) Undergraduate Teaching Assistants (UTA) or External Teaching Assistants (ETA)

b. Prior to appointing a Teaching Assistant from applicants in (ii) or (iii), the department must have provided at least a five (5) base unit appointment to those applicants in (i). Subsequently, the same will be applied to those applicants in (ii) prior to appointing a Teaching Assistant from applicants in (iii). If any graduate students request less than five (5) base units, then fulfilling that request will be sufficient to comply with this requirement.

F.4 a) If a graduate student indicates in writing a desire to TA in their department, s/he will be deemed to have applied for all available TA positions in the relevant semester. Such graduate students will not be required to apply for specific appointments, but may indicate their preferences for particular courses.
   b) Graduate students from outside the department must apply in writing and indicate the courses to which they are applying; they may indicate any preferences for particular courses.

F.5 If Teaching Assistant positions become available after the initially posted positions in the department have been assigned, the department will notify all graduate students registered in the department, via email. In addition, the position will be posted on the central posting system in accordance with the last paragraph of Article XVI.

Qualified graduate students who have been allocated less than five (5) base units in a given semester who apply specifically for these new positions, will have priority for additional base units up to five (5). These positions shall be assigned in accordance with Article XIII F.
F.8 Failure to give timely acceptance of an offer of appointment may result in loss of priority for that semester.

F.9 The appointing department shall make all reasonable efforts to apply candidates’ stated preferences, when appointments and assignments are made.

**H. Re-employment as a Teaching Assistant**

H.1 To be considered for re-employment, a graduate or undergraduate Teaching Assistant must maintain satisfactory performance as a Teaching Assistant.

H.2 The re-employment of Teaching Assistants will also depend on the needs and budget resources of the university.

**2. TA Selection Priority Criteria in the School of Mechatronic Systems Engineering**

According to Article XIII F.3.2 of the Collective Agreement with the TSSU, when selecting TAs for a course among applicants within the same priority group as outlined in Article XIII F, the Graduate Program Committee will consider the following criteria:

(a) Instructor’s rankings: Course instructors are required to rank the applicants based on factors such as course-related qualifications, communication skills, TA ratings on course evaluation forms, and instructor evaluations of existing TAs. According to B.1, high priority is given to applicants that have sufficient knowledge in the discipline related to the course, based on the information provided in the application forms by the applicants and the required qualifications listed in the posting. The instructors may also interview the applicants to determine the rankings.

(b) Applicants’ qualifications for particular courses (e.g., discipline of prior degree(s), TA evaluations, expertise).

(c) Thesis-based graduate students (PhD, MASc) have higher priority than non-thesis based program students (e.g., Professional Master’s).

(d) Within a priority group, applicants will be given lower priority if they hold financial support with a value greater than 5.17 base units from merit-based scholarships/fellowships during the semester of appointment. Merit-based scholarships/fellowships include GF, FAS-GF, President’s Scholarship, Graduate Dean Entrance Scholarship (GDES) (previously MYF), Tri-Council awards, foreign government merit-based scholarships.

(e) Graduate student applicants who would exceed their normal completion times during the appointment (over 12 semesters for PhD and 6 semesters for Master’s) would have lower priority.
3. TA Selection Procedure

The selection of TAs will start with lower level courses that have high enrollment to ensure that the most appropriate TAs are selected for these courses first. In addition, normally no individual should be assigned TA for more than one course in a semester unless under special circumstances (e.g., when there is no required expertise or lack of number of candidates in the pool for a course).

For each course, one or more candidates will be selected based on the criteria listed in Section 2. The applicant(s) on the ranked list (a) are first considered for each course based on the number of TA base units allocated to that particular course. Each candidate is then checked against criteria (b), followed by (c), (d), and (e). If the candidate meets all the criteria, s/he will be selected. If the above process does not work out, for example due to insufficient applications meeting all the criteria, the candidate that meet most of the criteria may be selected. The position may be re-advertised if no qualified candidate can be found.