

**Departmental Policy  
for the Distribution of  
Graduate Laboratory Assistantship (GLA) Support**

This policy sets forth the rules for the distribution of GLA support in the Department of Physics and Astronomy. Although incoming students are almost always guaranteed GLA support through the first year, it is important to stress that GLA support is a privilege and is never automatic. GLA support for any student is always contingent on satisfactory progress throughout the student's academic career. These rules are designed to ensure that incoming graduate students in the PhD program will have sufficient support while they go through the bulk of the coursework and select a research group to join. Guidelines are also adopted to ensure that each senior student will be supported in as equitable a way as possible if funds are available and if the student is making good progress towards his/her degree as judged by the criteria defined by his/her graduate advisory committee, jointly with the graduate coordinator. It is understood that the teaching mission of the Department cannot be compromised by the implementation of these rules.

**(1) Policy Principles, Objectives and Boundary Conditions**

First-year graduate students that are admitted to the PhD program are generally guaranteed full support at a level of at least 4/9<sup>ths</sup> (hereafter, just 4/9) during their 1<sup>st</sup> year of study. This holds strictly for PhD students. First-year students in the MS program may be supported or not via GLA funds contingent on what was promised in their particular offer letters.

Currently (as of Spring 2019), the Department typically receives about 96-100 ninths of GLA support from the University each semester. The Department's recruitment goal is to have 10-12 incoming students admitted and enrolled each year. If each new student is to receive departmental GLA and/or GRA support at a guaranteed level of at least 4/9 (GLA and GRA combined) during his/her 1<sup>st</sup> year, new student support is estimated to require 40-48 ninths of GLA funds, minus any GRA support that some new students may be able to obtain already during their 1<sup>st</sup> year.

The annual distribution of any remaining ninths of GLA support will be prioritized on the basis of the number of GLA funding years each student has received, starting with and including his/her GLA support received as a first-year student. A student's GLA funding time is hereby defined as follows:

One (1.00) GLA funding year is defined as two academic year (AY) semesters of GLA funding at the 4/9 level. For AY semesters with GLA funding levels less than

4/9 level, GLA funding time is to be down-weighted in proportion to the funding level received. Thus, for example, one semester of GLA funding at the 3/9 level is to be counted as 0.375 GLA funding years. GLA funding exceeding the 4/9 level, *e.g.*, at a level of 4.5 ninths, is to be counted as 4/9-level funding in case the student is taking on GLA funding in excess of 4.0 ninths level at the request of the department, in order to meet exceptional department needs of GLA services. GLA funding during summer semesters is not to be counted towards GLA funding time.

The remaining ninths are to be distributed according to the following guidelines: (1) Second-year students in the first semester of their second year are still taking core courses and are entitled to 4/9 GLA support for that semester. However, by the end of the first year, most of these students should have selected a research group and ~~they~~ are strongly encouraged to seek GRA support. (2) Any ninths that remain will be distributed to eligible graduate students in GLA funding years 1.5 and higher (hereafter defined to be Senior Students) on a cohort-by-cohort basis (*i.e.*, for the cohorts of 1.5 GLA funding year students, 3<sup>rd</sup> GLA funding year students, *etc.*), with a priority decreasing with increasing GLA funding time seniority. Within each cohort, GLA funding should be allocated so as make the GLA funding level close to uniform across the cohort, with a cap on the GLA funding coming into effect if the total GLA + GRA support would otherwise exceed 4.5 ninths. Deviations from this uniformity rule are at the discretion of the graduate coordinator. It may be the case that the number of 0.5 ninth GLA tasks that can be assigned in any given semester is limited by practical considerations and these will override the balancing of GLA support within each cohort. Specific GLA eligibility requirements for a senior student to receive GLA support are stated in section (2) below.

## **(2) Senior Student GLA Eligibility Criteria**

A senior student must have joined a research group and be under formal thesis research supervision by a specific faculty member in order to be eligible for GLA support after completion of his/her first three semesters of graduate study.

The student must have been making satisfactory progress towards his/her degree as recently as during the semester before the preceding semester, as certified by student's thesis supervisor and advisory committee, on the basis of the student's annual progress report if the student had a thesis advisor at that time. The student must submit his/her annual progress report, including certification of satisfactory progress towards his/her degree, before the end of the spring semester of each academic year.

In certifying the student's satisfactory progress towards his/her degree, or lack thereof, the student's thesis supervisor and advisory committee must clearly state

in writing the criteria upon which this certification was based. This written certification statement must also set forth the future criteria for the student's satisfactory progress for the upcoming academic year, as well as any required remedial action, in case satisfactory progress was not achieved during the current academic year. Students whose progress is deemed unsatisfactory in the annual report will be evaluated the following semester and if that report is satisfactory, the student will be considered to be making satisfactory progress. Further regulatory details concerning annual certification of progress towards degree are stipulated by separate, overriding departmental policy.

The student's progress report, including certification of satisfactory progress towards his/her degree, is to be retained in the students' academic folder in the Front Office. Students without up-to-date progress reports and progress certification will not be considered for GLA support.

Deficiencies in past performance of duties as GLA will be taken into account in awarding future GLA support.

### **(3) Faculty expectations**

Major advisers are expected to ensure students have the infrastructure and advisement to be able to fulfill the eligibility criteria for GLA support. All research-active faculty are allowed to take on up to two GLA supported graduate students, where research active status is to be established by the faculty member's yearly evaluations. If a faculty member has more than two students on GLA support, due to an unexpected funding gap, he/she may not take on any new students until his/her total number of GLA supported students drops below the two student maximum. This two-student limit can be overridden by the Graduate Coordinator in case sufficient GLA funding is available, in excess of what is needed to cover GLA allocations to all other students, as stipulated in section (2) above.

### **(4) Implementation, Discretion, Conflicts of Interest, Future Revisions**

The responsibility to implement this policy, including any discretion in its implementation and any discretion in the interpretation of its rules, rests with the Graduate Coordinator.

Exceptions to the above rules may be granted by the Graduate Coordinator in special cases where these rules would impose an undue hardship on the student, in those cases where the teaching mission of the Department may be compromised, or in cases where implementing the policy would be incompatible with the number and type of GLA tasks to be carried out.

In exceptional circumstances that cannot reasonably be dealt with under the rules set forth in the sections above including, but not limited to circumstances of severe GLA funding shortages or a faculty member leaving the department, said rules may be substantially modified or suspended at the discretion of the Graduate Coordinator, in consultation and with approval from the Department Head. The faculty shall be notified in a timely manner by the Graduate Coordinator of any such substantial modification or suspension of the rules.

In cases where the Graduate Coordinator finds him/herself to be in a conflict of interest relative to the exercise of the foregoing responsibilities, the Graduate Coordinator shall transfer said responsibilities to the Department Head or to the Associate Department Head.

This policy should be reviewed by the faculty for possible revision in Fall 2021.

Respectfully Submitted for Faculty Review  
by the Graduate Curriculum Committee

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