

## **GTA STUDENT SUPPORT PRIORITY SYSTEM**

The provision of support to graduate students is necessary for the continued success of our Ph.D. programs at Auburn University. The Psychology Department recognizes this. We seek to maximize the funding opportunities available to our students through a system of graduate teaching assistantships (GTA), grant funded research assistantships (RA), and external internship placements.

The average time to completion for most Ph.D.s (other than for degree programs such as Clinical Psychology and Counseling Psychology with formal predoctoral internships) is five years. It has been, and will be, the goal of the Psychology Department to support graduate students for five years. For the purpose of this document, a year of support refers to a year of support on the departmental GTA budget.

The budget for graduate teaching assistantship support is fixed by the university. This amount may fluctuate with changes in the economic climate of the state of Alabama and with funding decisions made by the administration of Auburn University. Therefore, a priority system is required for the allocation of support to graduate students for the money coming from the graduate teaching assistant budget amount provided by the university. During leaner budgetary cycles it may be necessary to make decisions about which graduate students receive support and which graduate students will not receive support. This policy is developed for making decisions related to funding from only this source of student support.

This policy is intended to allocate available funding equitably to graduate students within the Psychology Department at Auburn University. The allocation of support is based on progress towards the Ph.D. degree based on a series of milestones (thesis, general doctoral examination, and dissertation). These milestones are consistent across all three doctoral programs. These milestones represent what the field of Psychology and Auburn University recognize as the baseline outcomes necessary to receive a Ph.D. in Psychology.

All students wishing to receive support from the departmental GTA budget will be prioritize annually using performance guidelines based on a) completing their Masters' thesis; b) completing their Ph.D. qualifying examination; c) completing their dissertation proposal; and d) completing their dissertation. The assignment of this priority score will be done by the faculty of each Ph.D. program during the annual student evaluations. Priority scores should be provided to the department by June 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.

The Psychology Department recognizes that unique circumstances may arise in each student's time at Auburn University. When discussing "years" in this document, we refer to years of residency as full-time students in one of the Ph.D. programs instead of simply the number of chronological years at Auburn University. This means if a student takes a leave of absence for any reason, that the student's eligibility for support as defined by the priority system is frozen at the time at which the leave is taken. In addition, the Psychology Department understands that there may be extenuating circumstances which slow progress but do not require leaves of absence. Students may petition for reconsideration of their priority system if they feel that there are such extenuating circumstances affecting their progress. The procedure for this petition

should follow the following procedure:

1. The student should contact and discuss the extenuating circumstances with their advisor.
2. Based on this discussion, the advisor will decide whether to bring the petition to the faculty of the Ph.D. program to which the student belongs for discussion. The faculty of the program will decide if the extenuating circumstances warrant change in the student's priority score.
3. If the faculty of the Ph.D. program decide the extenuating circumstances warrant change in the student's priority score, the program director of that Ph.D. program will bring the petition forward to the full faculty.
4. The full faculty will discuss the recommendation of the Ph.D. program and vote on whether the student's petition is supported or not.
5. The student will be notified of this decision as soon as possible after this vote.

The policy has four levels. The priority difference is between levels. Students meeting these guidelines will be on pace to graduate in a timely fashion. The performance guidelines for support of graduate students from the graduate teaching assistant budget is as follows—

#### **Priority Level 1 (Highest)**

- Students in their first and second years.
- Students in their third, fourth and fifth years meeting performance expectations—
  - o Students entering their third year should have completed their MS thesis
  - o Students, who entered Auburn University with a MA or MS degree and an acceptable Master's thesis, entering their third year, should have completed their Ph.D. qualifying examinations
  - o Students entering their fourth year should have completed their Ph.D. qualifying examinations
  - o Students, who entered Auburn University with a MA or MS degree and an acceptable Master's thesis, entering their fourth year, should have completed their dissertation proposal
  - o Students entering their fifth year should have completed their dissertation proposal

## **Priority Level 2**

- Students entering their 3<sup>rd</sup> year without a completed MS thesis
- Students, who entered Auburn University with a MA or MS degree and an acceptable Master's thesis, entering their third year that have not completed their Ph.D. qualifying examinations
- Students entering their fourth year without completing their Ph.D. qualifying examinations (but with a completed MS thesis)
- Students entering their fifth year without completing their Ph.D. dissertation proposal (but with a completed MS thesis and a completed Ph.D. qualifying examination)
- Students who completed their Masters degree or doctoral prelims within the previous year. However, this does not supersede students who fall under Priority Level 4.

## **Priority Level 3**

- Students entering their 4<sup>th</sup> year without completing their MS thesis
- Students, who entered Auburn University with a MA or MS degree and an acceptable Master's thesis, entering their fourth year without completed their Ph.D. qualifying examinations
- Students entering their 5<sup>th</sup> year without completing their Ph.D. qualifying examinations

## **Priority Level 4**

- Students who have received five years of support from the department's GTA budget
- Students, who entered Auburn University with a MA or MS degree and an acceptable Master's thesis, and have received four years of support from the department's GTA budget .