

Policy for Mentored Teaching Experiences for BBSP students

Overview

The Office of Biomedical Science Training and Research (BioSTAR) – in collaboration with the Office of Research (OUR), Department Chairs, and Center Directors – has established a competitive, universal stipend which applies to all Biological and Biomedical Sciences Program (BBSP) students who are admitted through our program, regardless of the specific graduate program they join. For 2025-26, this stipend level has been set at \$37,500*.

BioSTAR recognizes that BBSP students may seek out mentored teaching experiences (MTEs) for their own professional development purposes, particularly if this aligns with career goals in teaching or academia. Each graduate program is free to determine whether a MTEs or other professional development activity is required as part of their PhD training. MTEs take many forms, including but not limited to serving as a: 1) teaching assistant for graduate level courses, 2) bench mentor for undergraduate students or rotation students, or 3) teaching assistant for undergraduate courses (including GTAs, below). MTEs vary widely in their time commitment. It is imperative that BBSP students have discussions with their Principal Investigator (PI) about how an MTE may impact their research and progress toward degree completion *before* agreeing to participate.

One special category of MTE is graduate teaching assistantships (GTA). A GTA is a type of “service stipend” used to compensate a graduate student who – under the supervision of a member of the faculty – regularly teaches a class; supervises a recitation section; has full responsibility of a course; leads discussion sections; grades papers and exams; and/or supervises a laboratory section (see <https://gradschool.unc.edu/funding/stipends/>). GTAs typically have a requirement of ~20 hrs/week of instructional time.

The primary purpose of GTAs is to provide compensation to students for teaching services. In this way GTAs 1) serve as a source of financial support for the graduate student’s stipend, and 2) ensure that there are adequate personnel – in addition to research and teaching faculty – for undergraduate instruction. GTA funds are allocated by the University to Departments and are prioritized for graduate students within that Department (graduate program and/or labs). We recognize that BBSP students may seek to serve as a GTA because of the intensive teaching experience it provides. However, priority is given to graduate students who utilize this mechanism as a service stipend.

* Note that many graduate programs have increased this to \$38,500 to offset the requirement that students pay their semesterly unallowable fees (currently \$387.50 per semester)

Policy Summary

- BBSP students are **not** permitted to earn additional stipend through GTAs above standard BBSP levels. BBSP students who serve as a GTA will have these funds applied as part of their base stipend. This will effectively reduce the amount of the stipend paid from laboratory funds by the dollar amount of the GTA.
- BBSP students serving as a GTA must disclose this activity to their PI, student services manager, and financial manager in their home Department *and* the Department in which they will be serving as a GTA. This is to ensure that GTA funds will be correctly applied toward the BBSP stipend.
- This policy does not supersede TA policies established by graduate programs. BBSP student may continue to fill TA roles (or other MTEs) required by their programs, but may not receive additional stipends for these roles.
- This policy will go into effect for the Spring semester of 2026. Existing commitments for Fall 2025 GTAs will be honored.

Exceptions

Some stipend supplements are permissible. Known exceptions include: 1) fellowships (e.g. HHMI Gilliam, NSF GRFP) that pay a base stipend that is greater than the BBSP stipend; 2) recruitment fellowships (e.g. Royster Society); 3) BioSTAR supplements such as lead peer mentors for BBSP's First Year Group and/or guest lecturing; 4) other department-specific mechanisms such as endowed scholarships, service positions, etc. If you are uncertain whether a supplement is allowable, consult with the Assistant or Associate Dean of Graduate Education.