



School of Education PhD Student Advising and Funding FAQ

We provide full funding for all of our qualified full-time School of Education (SOE) PhD students for four years through graduate assistantships or teaching assistantships. Further, each of our PhD students has at least one faculty advisor who provides ongoing mentoring and support throughout their time in the program.

How will I be matched with my PhD advisor?

Your PhD advisor will help you guide your development as a scholar and your coursework choices, as well as provide career advice and general guidance. PhD student-advisor matches are made based on common research interests. In some of our programs, a temporary advisor is assigned in the first year until the student's research interests are more developed. In other programs, advisors are assigned at the time of admission. Some students come to UD to work with a particular professor, while others share research interests with multiple faculty. All of these considerations are taken into account in the assignment of an advisor. While all of our students have a primary advisor, several of our specializations also provide secondary advisors, who serve as an additional resource and support. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, we have designed our programs to allow individual flexibility to meet the needs of each of our PhD students.

How will my assistantship placement be decided?

Our priority in making assistantship assignments is student development across their time at the University of Delaware (UD). Assistantship placements are designed to provide a variety of research and/or teaching experiences throughout students' careers. We seek to match students with experiences that will help develop their research skills and that align with their content area interests. In making PhD assistantship placements, the priorities of student interest and skill-building are balanced with project opportunities provided by faculty with and without research grants. In making placement decisions, we consider the student's development as a scholar and seek to provide the combination of experiences best matched to the student's needs, given funding constraints and the balance of needs across faculty and students.

If a faculty member has funding to support a student that they are advising, that student will likely be placed with their advisor for their assistantship. In other cases, students are not automatically assigned to work with their advisors, including students who have been awarded Dean's scholarships, Fontana and university-funded assistantships (such as Graduate Scholars). All PhD students engage in the same assistantship assignment process. Placements may be made within or outside of a student's specialization area or within one of our College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) research centers.

All full-time CEHD PhD students are guaranteed four years of funding provided they meet the requirements indicated in the contract and funding letter and are typically funded through research grants, teaching assistant (TA) lines, placement in research centers or by the department or college. For Dean's Scholars, CEHD pays for summer support. For Fontana Scholars, the donor pays for summer and professional development. The tuition and stipend for Dean's and Fontana Scholars are paid by a faculty grant, TA line or research center.

Students funded through a university award, such as Graduate Scholars, may be assigned either to grant-funded or non-grant funded projects. In making placement decisions, your advisor will work with the faculty in your specialization, the specialization coordinator and the administrative team to balance the multiple priorities listed earlier. Students take an active role in sharing their goals and objectives with their advisors in shaping placement decisions, but students are not expected to find their own assistantships. Placements are made throughout the spring and early summer of each year. We try to make all placements by July, though there are typically a small number of placements that are delayed until August due to grant award announcements.

Who should I talk with about my research interests and assistantship placement?

Typically, you and your advisor will discuss your research interests and skill development. For incoming students, we rely on your application essay to describe your research interests, and additionally, faculty from your specialization may contact you to discuss your interests. Your advisor will consider your interests and skill development in seeking an assistantship placement for you. If an assistantship is not available in your specialization area, your advisor will work with the SOE administrative team to find a placement for you. One of the strengths of CEHD is our collaborative, integrative approach to research, which affords students opportunities to work with different faculty.

The administrative team who works closely together to assist with placements is the Associate Director of Graduate Studies, the Director of the SOE, the Director of Research for CEHD and the Assistant Dean of Graduate Services. The point of contact for SOE students is Dr. Teomara Rutherford, the Associate Director of Graduate Studies (teomara@udel.edu).

How many years will I be in the same assistantship placement?

Some students serve in the same assistantship with the same faculty member for multiple years, while others participate on different projects with various faculty. Some students split time on multiple projects, while others work on different projects every couple of years. Your advisor will work with the SOE administrative team to find the best placement for you, given funding opportunities, your research interests and your skill development trajectory.

Are all students required to have a teaching experience as part of their assistantship?

Students must develop skills in university teaching. This requirement can be fulfilled in multiple ways such as teaching as an instructor of record, either as part of a teaching assistantship or s-contract; co-teaching or apprentice teaching with a faculty member for credit through an independent study; or through a teaching practicum associated with a course on teaching in higher education. Students should consult with their advisor to develop a plan consistent with their career goals to fulfill this requirement. Students also are encouraged to participate in workshops offered by UD's Center for Teaching and Learning as part of fulfilling this requirement.

Each year, the SOE receives a limited number of teaching assistantships (the number is determined by the university and college). Assignment of the teaching assistantships is determined at the same time as all other funding decisions and is dependent on undergraduate course staffing needs in consultation with advisors, specialization coordinators, program coordinators and the administrative team. PhD students are assigned to teach existing undergraduate courses only when sections cannot be covered by faculty. Students receiving 9-month teaching assistantships are typically required to serve as an independent instructor of record for one course in the fall and one course in the spring and to complete other duties as assigned in January. Single-semester teaching assistantships are sometimes available (e.g., students may receive a 50% TA and 50% research assistant placement).

Students interested in obtaining teaching experience through an assigned teaching assistantship should plan with their advisor and the faculty member in charge of staffing for the course(s) they could teach well in advance (1-2 years). There should be a demonstrated need for a teaching assistant. TA requests should be sent to the Associate Director and Director of the SOE at least one year in advance of the requested assistantship. Students must have the requisite experience necessary to teach assigned courses, and they must meet all program/specialization requirements for apprenticeship and preparation prior to receiving a teaching assistantship.

How do I find out about summer research opportunities?

Ideally, we want all of our PhD students engaged in research over the summer. Some students will continue working on the same grant-funded projects in the summer that they were participating in during the academic year. Others will take on new research projects over the summer. CEHD has a process that helps to match faculty with PhD students for summer research opportunities. Summer opportunities will be shared with you in February. Then, there will be a 3-week period that allows you to meet with faculty to discuss whether the work is a good fit for you. Applications for summer work are then submitted and decisions are made by March. CEHD, in collaboration with the SOE, funds several research placements every summer. Additionally, the university supports [summer doctoral fellowships](#).

If I am working 20 hours during the summer on a grant-funded project, or on a university-funded fellowship, am I allowed to work additional hours on a second project?

Yes. You may work for pay for up to 29.5 hours per week during the summer. There is no requirement to work during the summer, but students often use the summer to continue working on the research projects they participate in during the academic year and/or to explore new projects that allow them to deepen their methods training, broaden their exposure to related substantive areas and/or gain expertise in new areas, such as grant-writing. In the summer, students may participate in projects both at UD and outside of UD.

What funding sources for conferences and my dissertation are available to me?

The SOE and the university have several streams of funding to support graduate students. In addition, there are many external sources of funding. You should work with your advisor to determine which [funding opportunities](#) are most appropriate for you.

I know that I am fully funded for 4 years. But what if I take 5 years to finish?

We have thoughtfully designed a program that students can complete in 4 years. In cases when students need a fifth year, they may apply for a fifth year of funding. For students in good standing making progress toward their dissertation, these fifth-year requests are typically granted. If you would like to be considered for a fifth year of funding, let your advisor know by February of your fourth year.

Other questions?

Don't hesitate to reach out to the Associate Director of Graduate Studies, Teomara Rutherford, teomara@udel.edu.

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