Financial Information

Financial assistance to support graduate students is available in the form of teaching assistantships, research assistantships, fellowships, internships and loans. Entering students awarded either teaching or research assistantships or fellowships will receive official notification pertaining to the type and level of financial assistance from the Graduate Studies Office.

The academic standing of students holding awards for teaching and research assistantships is reviewed annually. To remain eligible for a graduate assistantship, a student must demonstrate acceptable progress toward degree requirements, be registered continuously, and maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 in courses and research work (A = 4.0).

Teaching Assistantships
Teaching assistantships are awarded to graduate students on a competitive basis. They include tuition support for a maximum of 10 credit hours per semester and a monthly stipend. Teaching assistants (TAs) are generally assigned duties that support faculty in their teaching responsibilities. Typical duties of TAs include (but are not limited to) grading of undergraduate and graduate student course paper work, supervision of undergraduate science and engineering laboratory course sections, as well as individual and small-group conference sections associated with faculty lecture courses.

TAs are required to be on campus and available for TA duties from August 15 through May 15 of each academic year. These dates correspond to the employment dates for TAs. On or before August 15th of each year, the TA should report to the department or program head to receive their TA assignments for the fall semester. The TA should report to the faculty instructors to discuss their TA assignments including the dates that they need to be available for course preparation and grading. The faculty instructors should be prepared to explain their TA expectations and the dates that the TA needs to be available. In early B term the TAs should receive their assignment for the spring semester and meet with the faculty instructors to determine their schedule and expectations. In general, TAs should be available every day the university is open. TAs are expected to work approximately 20 hours per week.

During the fall and spring breaks as well as the New Year’s break between semesters, the TA may be required to be on campus for part of the break to assist in course preparation or grading. It is the responsibility of the faculty instructor to clearly communicate with the TAs well in advance of the break when this work is required. However, the department or program heads and the faculty instructors should work to provide a break in the TA assignments to allow the opportunity for focused research work as well as a holiday for rest and recreation. The Academic calendars are available on the registrar’s web site. http://www.wpi.edu/calendars/

Research Assistantships
Research assistants (RAs) are selected by the faculty to participate in sponsored research projects in connection with their academic programs. Typical duties of RAs include (but are not limited to) conducting laboratory experiments and assisting in the development of theoretical advances related to faculty research projects. Research projects are typically supported by grants and contracts awarded to the university by government agencies, industrial firms or other private organizations.

RAs who perform research directly connected to their thesis/dissertation must recognize that research is a full-time professional commitment.

The financial support provided to graduate students who have been selected for an assistantship varies depending on the specific nature of the coursework, project and student’s status.

Fellowships
Fellowship assistance for graduate students is available in a number of areas. Some departments offer fellowships provided by corporate gifts or philanthropic agencies. The university also directly supports graduate research programs through fellowship awards as well as Research Assistantships. Fellowship awards are administered through the Graduate Studies Office.

Completed fellowship applications are due in the Graduate Studies Office no later than January 15 for the class beginning the following fall. Criteria for eligibility is available in the Graduate Studies Office.

Internships
Graduate internship programs are offered in several disciplines. A graduate internship is a short-term work assignment (3 to 9 months) in residence at a company or other external organization that forms an integral part of a student’s educational program.

Students participating in graduate internships must be registered in a specific course. An internship will appear on the transcript either with or without credit. Students may not participate as interns at their place of employment.

Special Notes for International Students:
An international student on an F-1 visa must maintain full-time status for the duration of their graduate program. If the student is participating in a full-time graduate internship (one that is not administered through the Office of Cooperative Education), the student must be registered for nine credits. International students with F-1 visa status may apply for two types of practical training:

1. Curricular Practical Training (CPT): CPT is used for internships and cooperative education while students are pursuing their degrees. CPT is authorized by the university and the requirement is that the internship or co-op is an integral part of an established curriculum. Internships should be for credit.
2. Optional Practical Training (OPT):
 OPT is typically used by students for one year of employment after completion of degree. It can also be used in part for summer jobs or part-time employment during the academic year if employment is in the student's field of study. OPT requires approval by U.S. Customs and Immigration Services.

Student Loans

Financial assistance is also available through the WPI Financial Aid Office in the form of through the Federal Stafford Loan and Graduate PLUS loan programs. To qualify, students must be enrolled in a degree granting program or certificate on at least a half-time basis and must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident of the United States.

Private student loans are also available for students enrolled in certificate programs or for students that are not enrolled on an at least half-time basis. Non-Citizen's may qualify for some private loans if they have a U.S. citizen as a coapplicant.

For information on loan programs contact WPI’s Financial Aid Office at 508-831-5469, or at www.wpi.edu/+finaid/Grad.