

Commonly Asked Questions
Last Updated: September 18, 2017

1. How many tuition credits come with assistantships, fellowships, and positions as Part Time Instructors?

An assistantship provides 24 credits in a year. McNair is only for the first year and it provides 30 credits that year. Fellowships are for years 1 and 4 and those carry 30 credits in both years, but in the 4th year students only get those credits if they need them. Part Time Instructors do not get tuition credits.

2. When do graduate students become members of the Adjunct United union?

Graduate students who teach a course as a Part Time Instructor *during the fall or spring semesters* (summer does not count) have to become members of the Part Time Instructor union or opt out and pay an agency fee. These fees are determined by how much you make. You will get an email about this and it is *very important* to pick one of these options and respond. If you do not, you will be put on a “Do not hire” list and you will not be able to teach at Syracuse University again.

3. Can I take additional courses after I reach the 72 credits needed for the PhD?

Yes, but there are limits to the number of additional courses that students can take for free. After a graduate student reaches 72 credit hours, they can ask to receive 3 credits during any semester *that they are funded by an assistantship*. Students are encouraged to use these additional credits to augment their training.

Once a graduate student reaches 72 credits, Janet Coria will contact them to ask if they want to use the credits to register for a course (or courses) in the upcoming academic year. If a student wants more than 3 credits per term, they need to email Janet and request this.

4. My offer letter says I will receive four years of funding. What does that mean?

The first three years of funding are guaranteed by the sociology department. During those three years you will be likely be funded as a TA for a sociology course, an RA for sociology faculty, or through a fellowship; and the type of funding and the faculty to whom you are assigned as a TA or RA may change from semester to semester. For the fourth year, funding is guaranteed *somewhere in the university*. Students are strongly encouraged to seek out the type of funding for that year which would be most beneficial for their research interests and desired career path. For example, in their 4th year, some students may want to be a Part Time Instructor; or they may want to work as an instructor in one of the three Max courses (Max 123, 132, 201), work as a TA for LGBT studies or in another department, such as WGS; or they may want to work with a faculty member on a research grant that will fund them; or

they may want to apply for external funding such as a dissertation fellowship from the National Science Foundation. The sociology department often has a few funding opportunities for fourth year students, such as TA'ing for SOC 101, although these opportunities may not be desirable to some 4th year students. Students are encouraged to talk with their advisors, the DGS, or Chair during their 3rd year to identify sources of funding for the 4th year.

5. Can I save a semester, or year, of my guaranteed funding from the department and apply it to a later year?

No. The dean's office allocates a certain number of tuition credits each year, so there is no "banking" of tuition credits. In addition, the sociology department must manage the number of tuition credits it spends each year; this would not be feasible if students could cash-in tuition credits from previous years. Nevertheless, there is still a benefit to seeking other sources of funding. For example, funding can help students focus on research or gain TA/RA experience in other departments.

6. How much travel money do we get, how long is it good for, and can I spend it on association dues?

- For AY 2017-2018, each student has access to \$700 travel money from the sociology department.
- Students must be on the conference program (e.g., with a paper, poster, discussion, or roundtable) to be eligible for the money.
- Each year the money is available from July 1 to June 30.
- It cannot be used to pay association dues or any non-travel expenses.

7. What other sources of travel money are available?

- The GSO offers a Graduate Student Grant Program for travel to conferences or travel for research. For AY 2017-2018, each student can apply for \$500. See <http://gradorg.syr.edu/travel-grant/>
- Some centers and institutes on campus offer travel money to students
- Some faculty may have access to funds to help with travel

Common Questions about Health Insurance

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General Overview

Unless students have an outside source of health insurance, such as through a parent or spouse, they must enroll in one of the university's health insurance plans. There are two types of health insurance plans available to students at SU – the Student Health Insurance Plan and the Employee Health Insurance Plan.

The SU Student Health Insurance Plan: All full-time students, regardless of funding source (e.g., TA, RA, PTI, fellowship) are eligible for the student health insurance plan. It costs \$1672 per year (in 2017-2018). Students on a fellowship receive a subsidy of about \$870 (in 2017-2018) to help pay for the plan. The SU Bursar's office bills the student for this amount **up front** but you can also sign up for a payment plan through the Bursar's office. The student health insurance covers medical but not dental or vision. Students can see providers outside the university health center and either inside or outside the US.

The SU Employee Health Insurance Plan: Full-time students *who are employed as RA's or TA's are eligible* for the employee health insurance plan. It costs roughly \$1450 per year (in 2017-2018). Instead of paying this amount up front like student health insurance, a portion of the amount is deducted from each paycheck during the academic year. The employee plan covers medical, dental, and vision. Students can see providers outside the university health center and either inside or outside the US.

More information is below:

All full-time graduate students must have one of these three types of health insurance.

1. SU student health insurance
 - a. This is for full-time grad students who are on fellowship or a Part Time Instructor
 - b. Full-time grad students employed as a TA or GA have the option of enrolling in SU student health insurance, though most enroll in SU employee insurance
2. SU employee health insurance
 - a. This is for graduate students who are employed as a TA or GA
3. Non-SU health insurance (e.g., insurance from parents, spouse, non-SU employer)

What is considered “full-time” in graduate school?

A grad student is considered a full-time student if at least one of the following applies:

1. They are enrolled in 9+ credit hours, regardless of whether they are a TA or GA or on a fellowship. Credit hours can be all coursework, all dissertation, or a combination.
2. They are employed as a TA or GA for 10+ hours a week, regardless of credit hours.

How do I enroll in, or waive out of, SU health insurance?

1. All full-time grad students are automatically enrolled in SU student health insurance when they arrive at SU
 - The student health insurance company is Aetna
 - The student health insurance covers August 1, 2017 through July 31, 2018
 - *The annual cost of the student health insurance is \$1672 (in 2017-2018).* This cost will appear on the student’s bursar bill. If the student needs a payment plan, contact the bursar’s office at 315-443-2444
 - Grad students on a fellowship receive a letter explaining they are eligible for a subsidy to help cover the cost of student insurance. For the 2017-18 year, the subsidy is \$870.
 - Here is information about the student health insurance plan:
<http://healthinsurance.syr.edu/student-health-insurance-plan/plan-details-brochure-and-benefit-highlights/>
2. If you do not want student health insurance, *you must “waive out” of it*
 - To waive out, you must provide proof of other insurance. Other insurance may include the SU employee health insurance or a non-SU health insurance plan (e.g., insurance through a spouse, parent, or other employer).
 - The deadline to waive out is September 18, 2017. If you do not waive out by that time, you will automatically be enrolled in SU student health insurance and will be charged for it.
 - To submit the waiver, go to myslice. More instructions can be found here:
<http://healthinsurance.syr.edu/student-health-insurance-plan/waiving-the-ship/>
3. If you want to enroll in SU employee health insurance and you are eligible to do so:
 - Waive out of the student health insurance before September 18, 2017 or else you will be automatically charged for student health insurance.
 - The employee health insurance company is POMCO
 - The employee health insurance covers these dates: August 16, 2017 through August 15, 2018 for grad students with a fall+spring TA or GA appointment

- The health insurance costs will be deducted from your paychecks from Aug 31, 2017 through May 15, 2018, but the health insurance coverage is good for the entire year from Aug 16, 2017 to Aug 15, 2018.
- *The annual cost of employee health insurance (for a student-only plan) is approximately \$1450 (in 2017-2018).* A portion of this will be deducted from each paycheck during the academic year.
- Eligible students will receive an email from HR explaining the enrollment process.

Important!

The coverage dates of the two SU health insurance plans are not the same. This means that students who transition from the student plan in one year to the employee plan the next year will not have any health insurance coverage between Aug 1 & Aug 15

For questions about student health insurance, you can:

- Contact SU Health Insurance at 315-443-9019, located at 111 Waverley Avenue.
- Contact Gabrielle Chapman, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, at 315-443-3425
- Go to this webpage: <http://healthinsurance.syr.edu/resources/>

For questions about employee health insurance (for TAs/GAs), you can:

- Contact SU Human Resources at 315-443-4042 and press 1.
- Contact Gabrielle Chapman, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, at 315-443-3425
- Go to this webpage: <https://hr.syr.edu/information-for/graduate-assistants>