

### **Merit Fellowship**

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences will select and award the Texas A&M University Merit Fellowships for FY24 (admission Fall 2023). The goal is to recruit and matriculate the highest quality domestic Ph.D. and M.S. (thesis option) students with a clear career objective to pursue a Ph.D. Fellows will have the potential to make unique contributions to the College’s graduate programs. Master’s students currently enrolled at Texas A&M University who have not previously received a Merit or Excellence Fellowship may be nominated for a doctoral Merit Fellowship. The offer letter must designate the recipient as a “*Texas A&M University Merit Fellow.*” Fellowship recipients must be enrolled full-time (9 hrs fall and spring, 6 hrs summer). Fellows are required to attend the New Fellow’s Socials in the Fall and Spring semesters of their first year.

### **Merit Fellowship**

In offer letters, college and department support must be denoted as a multi-year commitment.

**Year 1 (2023-2024) Merit Fellowship from the college** includes a fellowship and ~\$13,800 for tuition, required university and college fees for full-time enrollment, and insurance reimbursement. College/departments are responsible for posting commitments below using FY24 Graduate Merit (GM) allocation. The college will reimburse awardees participating in a Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) health insurance program for 12 months of medical insurance at an amount equivalent to the employer contribution cost for the same premium category on the A&M Grad Plan. For fellows participating in a non-TAMUS insurance program, the college/department will reimburse the cost of medical insurance at an amount equivalent to the employer contribution cost for the student-only premium category on the A&M Grad Plan.

- For **Doctoral students**, the fellowship will be at least \$30,000. If the department’s base stipend is \$30,000 or higher, the Merit Fellow stipend will be at least 10% higher than the base stipend.
- For **Masters students**, the fellowship will be at least \$20,000. If the department’s base stipend is \$20,000 or higher, the Merit Fellow stipend will be at least 10% higher than the base stipend.

**Subsequent years Assistantship:** Departments are responsible for posting commitments below using department/research funds.

**Years 2-4 (2024-2025 through 2026-2027) for Doctoral students** will include a 0.5 FTE assistantship at the same amount as first-year fellowship, tuition, required university and college fees for full-time enrollment, and insurance<sup>1</sup>. Except for the 60-day waiting period<sup>2</sup>, the employing unit pays 12 months employer contribution for the graduate student employee health plan.

**Year 2 (2024-2025) for Masters students** includes 0.5 FTE assistantship at the same amount as first-year fellowship, tuition and required fees for full-time enrollment, and insurance<sup>1</sup>. Except for the 60-day waiting period<sup>2</sup>, the employing unit pays 12 months employer contribution for the graduate student employee health plan.

**Department match:** a) student pursuing a Master's degree – department must fund year 2; b) student with Master's degree pursuing 64-hour Ph.D. – department must fund years 2-4; c) student pursuing 96-hour direct to Ph.D. – department must fund years 2-4.

### **Criteria and Selection**

- Applicant must be a US citizen, permanent resident, or resident alien.
- An ad hoc committee of the COALS Graduate Program Council will make the selection.
- Must be a first-time M.S. thesis option or Ph.D. graduate student admitted to Texas A&M University for Fall 2023.
- Merit Fellows cannot receive another large fellowship or assistantship of similar or greater value. Recipients may have the option of deferring additional fellowships with the approval of the college or deferring the College Merit Fellowship for one year in cases where the recipient is selected for a prestigious external fellowship or training grant.
- Preference will be given to Ph.D. students; a maximum of 15% will be allocated to MS (thesis option) awards.
- Students have until April 15 to accept/decline but will be asked to respond within two weeks.

Awards will be made on a competitive basis using an evaluation rubric that considers the following:

- **Grades** (weight 20%)
- **Other Academics** (weight 25%): Based on University or program the nominee attended, clarity of career objectives, statement of purpose, commitment to pursue a Ph.D., class rank, academic awards and honors, etc. This reflects your impression of the student's overall academic training and potential.
- **High Impact Experiential Learning** (weight 20%): Based on research experiences (REU, honors research, graduate research, independent study, etc.), study abroad, internships, special projects, etc. Emphasis is on independent research experiences that resulted in presentations, posters, abstracts, publications, etc.



## ENHANCING GRADUATE PROGRAM MERIT

*“Recruit and Matriculate the Best”*

- **Demonstrated Leadership, Unique Contributions to College, and other attributes that formulate your strong support** (weight 20%): Based on leadership experiences, involvement in societies, organizations, departments/university (e.g., clubs, scientific societies, officer positions), unique contributions to the college, other attributes.
- **Strength of letters of recommendation** (weight 15%): Based on strength of letters of recommendation. Indicate overall quantitative (e.g., top 1%, top quartile, etc.) or qualitative ranking (e.g., best, above average, etc.).

**Nomination link in AGLS InfoReady Portal:** <https://tamu-agls.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1891524>

**Due date: February 1, 2023**

<sup>1</sup>Recipients employed in a 9-month or 12-month Graduate Assistantship must remain eligible for 12 months of Graduate Student Employee health insurance.

<sup>2</sup>All Texas A&M University (TAMU-02, HSC-23) new hires enrolling in health insurance on their start date will be reimbursed (after tax) for the State Group Insurance Premium (SGIP) incurred during the 60-day waiting period.