

# Information Letter for New Graduate Students, Fall 2015

I am pleased to welcome you to graduate study in the Department of Mathematics at West Virginia University. I am the Department's Graduate Director, and I am writing to provide you with some information on the upcoming fall semester and pre-semester activities. Please familiarize yourself with the information below, the Department's [Graduate Handbook](#), and the linked information. Classes begin on Monday, August 17. In the weeks preceding the start of classes, the Department and the University will be having some activities for new graduate students. There are different items to be aware of, depending on whether or not you are a graduate assistant, an international student, or an M.S./Ph.D. student. A table at the bottom summarizes the information.

Some essential activities, described in more detail below, are as follows: For **all new graduate students**, the Mathematics Department will have its **graduate student** orientation activities beginning on Thursday, August 13. **Graduate Teaching Assistants** must attend a University workshop on Monday, August 10, from 8:00-1:30 PM, as well as complete an online tutorial. **New M.S. students** will take the Basic Exam on Friday, August 14. This exam is used for course placement and program recommendations as explained further below. More information follows. International students need to check in with the Office of International Students and Scholars and attend the international student orientation on August 12.

All graduate students should regularly check their Mix email which is the primary means of communication. Go to the website [mix.wvu.edu](http://mix.wvu.edu) and login using the directions. You will also need to activate your Master ID, as explained at the website. Also, please make sure to register your Mix email with the department by filling out the [computer account application](#) at the link. You can fill this out and email a scanned copy to me from your Mix email, or just bring a filled-out copy when you get to campus. Your Department computer account will ensure you get emails addressed to graduate students and will also give you file storage on the Department's server. You can configure most email software (gmail, hotmail, Thunderbird, etc.) to gather your MIX email. The Department's computer administrator is Rick Holsberry, [rth@math.wvu.edu](mailto:rth@math.wvu.edu), in Room 311 Armstrong.

## Departmental orientation session

The department orientation for all new graduate students will take place on **Thursday morning, August 13**. Coffee and other refreshments will be available in the Math Dept Lounge in Room 310 Armstrong Hall from 9:30 AM to 10:00 AM. The program itself will begin at 10:00 AM across the hall in room 315 Armstrong Hall and last about one hour. Among the sessions/activities will be the following:

- Meeting Department administration and staff
- Overview of graduate program requirements and faculty research interests
- Discussion of course offerings
- Course registration and the STAR system
- Brief tour of building & facilities

## Graduate Teaching Assistants

New Graduate Teaching Assistants are required to attend the University's [Graduate Teaching Assistant Workshop](#), from 8:00 AM -1:30 PM on Monday, August 10. It will be held in Room G20 Ming Hsieh Hall, up College Avenue from the Mountainlair. Attendance is mandatory and is recorded. Please also note that there is an [online series of modules](#) to complete as well. There is, in addition an optional supplementary special orientation for [international students that are GTA's](#) that will take place on August 6 and August 7, 8:00-11:30 a.m., in Ming Hsieh Hall G21. This international student GTA orientation is not required, but if you are a new international GTA and are here at that time, we encourage you to attend. [Registration](#) is available at the linked web page. GTA's will be attending sessions that will orient them to the different assignments they may have during the semester. Most of these meetings will not occur until

classes begin. There are a variety of duties to which you may be assigned, such as assisting in a class by grading papers and maintaining grades, working with undergraduate students in the Institute for Mathematics Learning (IML) instructional computer labs, working as an assistant instructor in the calculus sequence, running your own calculus recitations, covering our self-paced developmental courses, and teaching your own course. Your assignment depends on Departmental needs and your own background and experience. More information about this will be available at orientation. Please note that **all GTA's must register each semester for one credit hour of Math 590 Teaching Practicum.** (If you do not have an assistantship but are interested in part-time work in the IML labs, see below.)

Graduate Assistants will receive office space, as assigned by Department staff. Office space for students that are not graduate assistants is in short supply, and is mostly restricted to advanced Ph.D. students working on their thesis. Mailboxes are available for Graduate Assistants and otherwise are distributed as available and/or needed. Most communication is by e-mail, however, using your WVU MIX email address. Graduate Assistants and Ph.D. students may use Department copiers for work or research-related copying. If you are a Graduate Assistant, please see Kristine Bowsher in the main office to receive your office assignment and keys.

## **New M.S. students**

New M.S. students will take the [Basic Exam](#) in Advanced Calculus and Linear Algebra on Friday, August 14, from 10:00-12:00 in Room 315 Armstrong. There is also a take-home part, due back on Tuesday, August 18. The exam is designed to furnish us with an idea of your background in advanced calculus (introductory real analysis) and in linear algebra. Based on the results of the exam, we may require and/or advise you to include certain prerequisite courses as part of your program, such as Math 451 (undergraduate advanced calculus), or Math 343 (the undergraduate linear algebra course). Information on the basic exam and topics covered is available on the department web site.

## **Registration**

**All students are encouraged to register** for the fall semester during the summer. This is particularly important for GTA's, as your assignment has to be chosen so as not to conflict with your class schedule. Registration is done over the internet through the "STAR" system. You should contact me first for recommendations, but if you register yourself, please email me your schedule. You can access the system directly, or through your WVU student portal at [mix.wvu.edu](http://mix.wvu.edu). In either case it is best if you have already logged into the Mix system and activated your Master ID. For direct access, go to the address <http://star.wvu.edu/>. Click "Star Access". You can find information about courses by following the link "Schedule of Courses". When you are ready to register, use the link "STAR Information System Login". Information on how to log in is posted – you will need your WVU Mix user name. You can also access STAR through the Mix system, <http://www.mix.wvu.edu/>. Feel free to correspond with any of the professors by email during the summer for information about courses. Full time enrollment for graduate students is 9 credit hours (three courses) and is mandatory for Graduate Assistants and is usually a condition for international student visas. Some additional one-credit seminar-type enrollments are sometimes also required, notably Math 590 Teaching Practicum, which is required for teaching assistants, and one credit of Math 696 Graduate Seminar, required primarily for Ph.D. students. An email directory of faculty is available from the main department web page. I will be posting descriptions of our [course offerings](#) in the fall. Changes to your course schedule can be made after you arrive in Morgantown. Schedule changes can be made up until the end of the first week of classes, but it is very difficult to make any changes after that. Graduate Assistants receive a full tuition waiver and other students may receive a partial tuition waiver; however student fees currently amounting to about \$630 per semester, and College tuition that ranges from \$279 to \$531 per semester based on residency, cannot be waived for anyone. Please note that after registration you are expected to pay at least [60% of your account balance](#) by Friday, August 7; otherwise you will be dropped from all your classes and will have to re-register, with a \$100 reinstatement fee required. If you are unable to pay the initial amount on time for your schedule, or are expecting a tuition waiver or a scholarship to be applied to your account later, you may want to consider a token registration of one course, or even one credit, and wait until general registration on August 14 to add the rest of your schedule.

## **Considerations for International students**

For new international students, the University will have its [International Student Orientation](#) for graduate students on Wednesday, August 12 from 8:15 AM – 4:30 PM in the Mountainlair Gluck Theater. All international students are expected to attend, receiving information regarding their visa status, ICE rules and regulations, and information pertaining to living in the U.S. Please see the linked page for information on checking in with the Office of International Students and Scholars and other requirements.

### [SPEAK Test](#)

Any graduate teaching assistant (GTA) whose native language is not English and who has not taken the Test of Spoken English (TSE) with a score of 50 or higher is **required** to take the SPEAK Test at WVU, given on multiple occasions the week before classes. **It is also recommended** for any other international students who may teach or work with undergraduate students at some point, as a passing score is needed for those duties. GTA's who do not pass the SPEAK test will be **required** to take English classes as recommended based on the results, and their duties, as assigned by the Department, will not involve working directly with students. Information about this test will be available at the international student orientation; you can **make an appointment** for the test yourself by sending email to Karen Allen, SPEAK Test Coordinator, at [karen.allen@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:karen.allen@mail.wvu.edu). Identify yourself as a graduate student in Mathematics; our Department will pay the fee for the exam. If you are not a GTA and wish to take the SPEAK test, please notify me in advance so that I can make arrangements with Ms. Allen to have your fee paid. The Fall SPEAK test will be held August 12-13.

### **Employment processing**

All students who are **graduate assistants** or are otherwise to be paid through the University as of August 16 should start employment enrollment well before that date in order to be paid starting August 16 (your first check will not arrive until mid-September however); we recommend one week in advance, particularly for international students. International students will need to supply the documents necessary for certifying your eligibility for employment. Everyone also needs a social security card in order to be processed for employment. [International students without a Social Security number](#) must get an Employment Letter from the Department before applying for a number at the local Social Security office. International students with a Social Security number can call to schedule an appointment with the [Tax Services](#) unit located at One Waterfront Place at 304-293-3379, ext. 3 or [tax@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:tax@mail.wvu.edu). Graduate Assistants can go directly to [employee processing](#) in the One Waterfront Building, or at the Mountainlair during the hours shown on the linked document. Employment questions can be addressed to Ms. Joann Mayhew in the Mathematics Department Office, 320 Armstrong.

### [Health insurance](#)

All students, including international students, are automatically enrolled in the student health insurance plan. Graduate Assistants (either teaching or research) are provided with this plan at no extra cost. If you are a half-time GTA, you will have half of the health insurance fee credited to your account. If you have your own comparable insurance and do not wish to be charged for the WVU student health insurance you **MUST** submit a waiver by the deadline of August 3.

### **Employment for students who are not graduate assistants**

The Department has a limited number of part-time positions in a number of capacities, including grading, and assisting students in our computer laboratories. The number, and nature, of such positions depends on needs, scheduling, and available funding, and is generally not determined until near the beginning of the semester, or shortly thereafter. If you are interested in being considered for such positions as may arise, send an email with your course schedule to Betsy Kuhn, the Lab Manager, at [bkuhn@math.wvu.edu](mailto:bkuhn@math.wvu.edu). Identify yourself as a Mathematics graduate student.

Here is a schedule listing various activities taking place the week before classes as discussed above. The list is not necessarily exhaustive.

## Summary of Activities 8/6-8/14

| <u>What</u>                             | <u>When</u>                              | <u>Where</u>                                 | <u>Who</u>                        |
|---|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| International GTA Orientation           | August 6-7<br>8:30-11:30AM<br>(register) | Ming Hsieh G21                               | New int'l GTA's<br>(optional)     |
| GTA Workshop<br>(with online component) | Mon 8/10,<br>8AM-1:30PM                  | Ming-Hsieh G20                               | <b>All</b> new GTA's<br>mandatory |
| International Student Orientation       | Wed, 8/12<br>8AM-4:30PM                  | Gluck Theater,<br>Mountainlair               | All International students        |
| Employment processing                   | Aug. 9 or<br>sooner                      | One Waterfront<br>or Mtnlair                 | Graduate assistants               |
| Departmental Orientation                | Thursday,<br>8/13, 9:30-11<br>AM         | 315 Arm (Coffee<br>in 310 Arm)               | <b>All new graduate students</b>  |
| SPEAK Test                              | 8/12-8/13 (by<br>appt)                   | 134 Eiesland<br>Hall                         | International<br>GTA's            |
| Office/mailbox for<br>GTA/GRA           | All week                                 | 320 Armstrong                                | New GA's                          |
| Basic Exam                              | Friday 8/14,<br>10AM-12PM                | 315 Armstrong                                | <b>New M.S. students</b>          |
| 60% payment<br>deadline                 | August 7                                 | Student accounts<br>(online or in<br>person) | <b>Pre-registered students</b>    |

The following web sites can further provide information on WVU and the Math Department.

- Main WVU web site: <http://www.wvu.edu/>
- Student life: <http://www.wvu.edu/~studlife/> (various information, including off-campus housing)
- General University graduate policies and information: <http://grad.wvu.edu/>
- Main Math Dept web site: <http://www.math.wvu.edu/>
- Direct link to STAR system (for web registration): <http://star.wvu.edu/>
- Information on graduate program for current students: [http://www.math.wvu.edu/current\\_graduate](http://www.math.wvu.edu/current_graduate)
- International Students: <http://oiss.wvu.edu/>

If you need further information, or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, by e-mail or phone. I look forward to seeing you in the fall, if not sooner.

*Harvey Diamond*

*Graduate Director*

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