Guidelines for Visiting Fellows and Non-degree Graduate Students  
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS)

Preamble

Mutual benefits may accrue when young scientists from other countries are able to visit Cornell/CALS to collaborate with faculty and students. In some cases, those who are students elsewhere or who are clearly not students anywhere may be appropriately appointed as Visiting Fellows; in other cases, those who are students elsewhere should be appointed at Cornell as Non-degree Graduate Students. Please see the categories and criteria below. If a department has questions regarding which circumstance applies, the Department Chair (or Division Director) should consult with his/her Senior Associate Dean.

The initial discretion to approve appointments of Visiting Fellow or Non-Degree Graduate Students comes at the departmental level by the Chair (or Division Director). The Chair (or Division Director) has the authority to choose whether or not to make such appointments, except for the situations outlined below in which the final approval comes from his/her Senior Associate Dean based on a request transmitted by the Department Chair (or Division Director). In deciding whether or not to appoint or to request special approval, the Chair (or Division Director) should consider the physical and staff resource implications on the department, the capacity of the department, the availability of specific faculty members to mentor the visitors, and the impacts of such appointments on opportunities for regular degree students.

Visiting Fellows and Non-degree Graduate Students are required to have health insurance coverage while at Cornell. Visiting Fellows must provide documentation that they have health insurance within 30 days following the start of their appointments or the appointments may be terminated. Non-degree Graduate Students will be automatically enrolled in SHIP until they document insurance coverage that meets Cornell’s requirements. The student is billed directly and pays through the Bursar.

Before issuing an offer letter to any international graduate student, the Department Chair (or Division Director) should consult the International Students and Scholars Office.

Visiting Fellows

A Visiting Fellow draws no Cornell salary but the title allows visitors to be affiliated with and to participate in the research program. According to the Cornell Faculty Handbook, Visiting Fellows ordinarily hold advanced degrees and are well established in their disciplines. University policy provides that an appointment as Visiting Fellow does not require a doctorate; Cornell graduate students cannot be appointed as Visiting Fellows unless all degree requirements have been met. An international student already in the United States on a student visa sponsored by another university cannot be appointed as a Visiting Fellow at
Cornell unless all degree requirements have been completed and the visa has been extended for “practical training.”

The University’s Visiting Fellow title description empowers the dean to authorize the appointment of an external graduate student if the student will contribute to, rather than take from, the department’s academic program. The following provides the CALS Deans’ provisions for exercising this authority.

A proposed visitor who is not a graduate student elsewhere and who holds a Master’s degree should be appointed as Visiting Fellow. Such appointments may be handled through the department (or division) office; no additional approval is required by his/her Senior Associate Dean. CALS will not permit these visitors to enroll in classes or to receive course credit. If the prospect is a graduate student elsewhere, see below.

If a proposed visitor does not hold a Master’s degree but is enrolled in a Ph.D. program at another institution and has passed the equivalent of an A-exam or has completed two years post-baccalaureate study, the faculty sponsor may request to the Department Chair (or Division Director) a waiver of the requirement for the advanced degree (Master’s) and approval for appointment as a Visiting Fellow. The Department Chair (or Division Director) should convey this request to his/her Senior Associate Dean for consideration. The Chair’s (or Director’s) request to his/her Senior Associate Dean should make the case clearly that the student will contribute to, rather than take from, the department’s academic program per the University policy above.

**Term**

Any student who is in a PhD degree program at another institution and who 1) holds a Master’s degree or 2) has completed two years post-baccalaureate study may be appointed for a term not to exceed one continuous 12-month period. For such a student who holds the title of fellow, an extension of the appointment for one additional continuous 12-month period is possible. Approval by the appropriate Senior Associate Dean is required before an appointment is offered or extended for the second and final continuous 12-month period.

For those who are not students elsewhere but otherwise qualify to be appointed as visiting fellows, the term of appointment may be extended by departmental action for a third continuous 12-month period.

NOTE: If a candidate who is a graduate student elsewhere does not meet these criteria for appointment as Visiting Fellow, the Cornell appointment should be as a Non-degree Graduate Student.

**Non-degree Graduate Students**

Non-degree Graduate Students are individuals who wish to come to Cornell to pursue opportunities in a faculty member’s program, who are currently enrolled in a graduate program at another institution, and who do not hold a Master’s degree or the equivalent.
According to the Cornell University Graduate School policy, Non-degree status is limited to one year. Prospective visiting Non-degree Graduate Students must complete a Cornell Graduate School Non-degree Application form (available from the Graduate School; not yet online). International Non-degree Graduate Students must demonstrate to the Graduate School that they have sufficient funds to cover living expenses for themselves and any dependents for the duration of their stay. If full tuition will be paid by or for the Non-degree Graduate Student, the appointment may be handled by the Department (or Division) and no further approval is required from his/her Senior Associate Dean.

Faculty wishing to sponsor a visiting Non-degree Graduate Student may request a tuition waiver through their Department Chair (or Division Director) who will then contact his/her Senior Associate Dean. CALS will not permit these tuition-waived students to enroll in classes or to receive course credit.

The request from the Chair (Director) for a tuition waiver should confirm that the Non-degree Graduate Student will be automatically enrolled in SHIP until they document insurance coverage that meets Cornell’s requirements, and specify: the duration of the visit (maximum one year), the hosting professor, and the department account number to cover the administrative charge for the second semester if applicable. If students cannot demonstrate adequate health insurance, they are obligated to purchase it through the University or the department can purchase it for them.