

General Guidelines for Professors and Teaching Assistants

The following is a list of general guidelines governing the role of teaching assistants in the undergraduate program. The following guidelines are not mandatory but are suggestions and recommendations to improve the overall quality of teaching in the undergraduate program. Individual professors and graduate students may modify these guidelines to suit their individual needs.

What is expected of teaching assistants

1) Attend class: When the graduate student is assigned to the class the first time with a particular instructor then the student should attend the lecture. If the student has a class/seminar conflict with the class time then (s)he will be switched to another course. It is the responsibility of the graduate student to inform Afton if (s)he has any conflicts and needs to be switched. When a student has previously been assigned to the same class with the same professor then (s)he can miss one class per week if necessary because of a schedule conflict.

2) Office hours: Each assistant should have at least 1-2 hours of office hours per week. Office hours are more than a great opportunity for undergraduates to ask course related questions. Since class sizes are so large office hours provide the best opportunity for establishing a friendly rapport between the undergraduates and the teaching assistants. If there is a class website that allows students to post questions then at least one assistant must check the class website on a regular (1 time daily) basis to answer students questions. If no website exists then assistants must provide students with their email addresses and answer student emails on a regular (1 time daily) basis.

3) Homework and answer sheets: Teaching assistants should look at the homework before discussing the homework with students in office hours or in recitations. If the assistant has any questions about the homework (s)he should check with the professor. Answer sheets should be provided in a timely fashion (within one week) and should be as free of error as is possible. Some subjects are inherently tricky so if the assistant is unsure about an answer then the graduate student should check with another assistant or with the instructor. Graded homework should also be returned in a timely fashion (within two weeks). If the assistant is having trouble getting the homework graded in time (s)he should contact the professor and the department. Perhaps additional assistants can be assigned or the instructor can adjust the homework schedule. The professor may also decide to have students work in groups or to require that you grade only a selection of the homework questions.

4) Recitations: When giving recitations be prepared. Assistants should **never** walk into the room believing that (s)he can just solve something on the blackboard off the top of his/her head. Even if the assistant has previously taught the class before and has saved the notes, take a few minutes before class to look over those notes.

5) Contact: The assistant should contact the professor at least one week prior to the beginning of classes. Get a syllabus and order a copy of the text book. During the semester the assistant should speak with the professor on a regular (weekly) basis.

What is not expected of teaching assistants

1) Writing exams: Teaching assistants are not responsible for writing the exams for a course.

2) Writing homework questions: same as above.

3) Giving lectures: In general teaching assistants should not be giving lectures. There may be however extraordinary circumstances that necessitate the teaching assistant stepping in and teaching a lecture. In these cases the professor should provide the assistant with ample time to prepare the lecture as well as with the material to be covered in that lecture.

4) Course Grades: Graduate students are not responsible for assigning the final (letter) course grades to the students.

What is expected of professors

1) Homework: Professors should provide their teaching assistants with homework assignments at least two days in advance of giving those assignments to the students.

2) Textbooks: Professors should make sure that their teaching assistants have desk copies of all of the textbooks used in the course. Assistants should be told to order a desk copy from the publisher in advance of the beginning of the semester or the professor should supply them with one prior to the beginning of classes.

3) Contact: Professors should respond to their assistants' emails in a prompt fashion.

Workload

The workload of a TA varies with the course. Courses may vary with respect to number s of recitations, graded homework assignments, quizzes, etc. To compensate for the additional work the student per TA ratio is lowered in "high work" classes by assigning additional TAs – both graduate and undergraduate and by the assignment of grader positions. In general the TA in the core courses (Principles, Micro, Macro and Econometrics) is expected to hold 1-2 recitations per week plus office hours. In the elective courses the TA may hold weekly recitation sections or may just hold the occasional review session. The exact workload in the elective courses is determined by the faculty member. In the case that a course does not have a regular weekly recitation it is very important that the TA attend the class in order to establish a relationship with the students in the class.