

Teaching Assistants at Duke University Fall 2019

There has been much talk across campus about requirements for the use of teaching assistants (TAs). This document seeks to offer clarification and to outline requirements and timelines for moving forward.

There are three salient categories related to TAs: (1) training and onboarding; (2) evaluation; (3) everything that happens between (1) and (2).

Training/Onboarding

Training is mandatory for all TAs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The training needs to cover FERPA, mandatory reporting, harassment, the Duke Community Standard, conflicts of interest, and disciplinary-specific norms. Completion of this training must be documented. A recommended practice is to include a line in the TA contract that indicates the signee has completed all required trainings.

In order to facilitate the training process, the Provost Office is currently developing online training modules with embedded quizzes that will introduce concepts standard across the disciplines. This will include FERPA, mandatory reporting, the Duke Community Standard, conflict of interest etc. In addition to this online training, departments can supplement with disciplinary-specific training.

Contracts for TAs should include a list of expected duties and required hours per week. Departments should keep electronic copies of the signed contracts (in Duke Box or another secure location).

Evaluation

Every TA (both graduate and undergraduate) must be evaluated regularly. Each TA must be evaluated prior to signing a new contract, usually once per semester. Student course evaluations alone **do not** constitute an evaluation. Anyone who assisted in supervising the UTA (such as a course instructor, lab manager, graduate student, etc.) should be invited to provide comments on the UTA's performance based on their observations. Instructors of record are primarily responsible for the TA evaluations. The evaluation must be documented in writing and maintained electronically by the department.

The Provost Office is developing a standardized tool that departments can use for this evaluation. Departments are welcome to supplement this form as they deem appropriate.

Oversight and Supervision

Faculty members are responsible for providing regular guidance and feedback to their TAs. This includes regular (usually weekly) meetings, ongoing assistance, and professional development.

Timeline

For Spring 2020, please continue operating under the status quo.

By Summer 2020, new online training modules and evaluation templates will be ready for use across departments.

By Fall 2020, training and evaluation should be consistently employed across all departments.

Acceptable Duties for Undergraduate TAs

Working as a TA should be an educationally enriching opportunity for undergraduate students. Assuming TAs are trained and evaluated properly, they may engage in the following responsibilities:

- Serving as a peer mentor
- Leading office hours/answering questions outside of class
- Leading review sessions
- Leading discussion sections during which no new material is presented
- Grading de-identified assignments that are objectively graded (i.e. multiple choice assignments against an answer key)
- Leading lab sections under the supervision of a lab manager/instructor of record; see forthcoming attachment regarding circumstances under which UG TAs can lead labs

Unacceptable Duties for Undergrad TAs

Undergraduate TAs may not engage in the following:

- Lead the training of their fellow TAs
- Grade subjectively graded, identifiable work (i.e. essays, open-ended questions, etc)
- See or enter final course grades
- Teach new content during unsupervised instruction

Acceptable Duties for Graduate TAs

Working as a TA is an opportunity for professional growth for our graduate students. Graduate student TAs fall into three categories: graders, those responsible for classroom instructional support (i.e. leading a discussion section), and those with primary responsibility for teaching a course. The requirements for each of these categories are outlined below.

Graduate TA Type	Requirements
Graders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• be enrolled as a graduate student in the teaching area or a related teaching area• have access to a faculty member who will provide supervision and support• participate in regular orientation and development programs• participate in a periodic performance evaluation with his/her supervisor• achieve above a predetermined threshold on TOEFL or equivalent
Instructional Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• be enrolled as a graduate student in the teaching area or a related teaching area• participate in required supervision for all teaching activities

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Primary Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet the following educational attainment criteria: an earned master’s degree in the teaching discipline or 18 graduate semester hours completed in the teaching discipline. The faculty member making a teaching assignment is responsible for ensuring a match between the TA’s educational credentials and the teaching area • have access to a faculty member who will provide supervision and support • participate in regular orientation and development programs • participate in the Teacher Course Evaluation process, or other formal teaching evaluation process as required by the college, and have an opportunity to discuss results with the faculty supervisor in order to plan for improvements AND participate in a periodic performance evaluation with his/her supervisor that is documented in writing • achieve above a predetermined threshold on TOEFL or equivalent