

Best Practices and Guidelines for Teaching Assistants and Supervising Faculty

For the Student Teaching Assistant

Best Practices and Guidelines¹

- In your first meeting with your faculty supervisor, discuss the **Description of Duties Form** that they filled out about your TAship/Associateship. Your supervising faculty member is expected to discuss these duties with you before you both sign. Plan to ask questions about anything you are unsure about during this first meeting.
- Come to class/section meetings on time and prepared. Come to class with a plan in mind, having worked out a lesson plan that will enable you to cover the main points and themes of the week that have been developed in consultation with the course instructor.
- Try to identify students who are experiencing difficulty early in the quarter. Keep a watch for signs such as inadequate writing skills, poor study habits, poor preparation, and repeated absences.
- During your first class, clearly outline expectations, rules and grade makeup via a section syllabus. Make sure to approve the section syllabus with the faculty member or instructor in advance of your first meeting. The rules and processes for late assignments, section absences, grade petitions, and the like should be consistent with the policies applied across all course sections, and established by the course instructor.
- In section, give students an opportunity to ask questions and clear up any confusion, since this can be difficult in lecture. If needed, report to the supervising faculty member if there is any material that students are still not understanding.
- Maintain an inclusive environment that is conducive to learning.
- Be sensitive to students' feelings, especially concerning issues of race, gender, class, age, national origin, sexual orientation, and religion. Use appropriate gender and racial terms and be specific in your use of language.
- Be available to students and hold regularly scheduled office hours.
- Read and grade exams, papers, homework assignments, etc. in a timely fashion and supply ample feedback through written comments. Per UAW contract rules, TAs are allowed up to two weeks to grade assignments.
- Be aware of campus deadlines and policies for dropping, adding, grade option changes, withdrawals from a course, incomplete petitions, etc. This will help you advise students more effectively.

¹ Adapted from UCSB History Department TA Handbook, Northwestern University's The Graduate School Best Practices and Guidelines for Graduate and Teaching Assistantships, The University of Texas at Austin Graduate School Best Practices: Teaching Assistant-Instructor Agreements, Vanderbilt University Supervisors of Teaching Assistants, Pitt University Center for Teaching and Learning "Working with Your TA"

- Work with the supervising faculty member (and other TAs if necessary) to ensure consistency in grading. Find out early in the quarter what the instructor expects for a grade distribution.
- Meet weekly with your supervising faculty member (and other TAs if applicable).
- Learn your students' names – a high-priority task for you. Consider using name cards for each student and yourself. This also allows for students to learn each other's names and can help create a sense of community.
- Attend lectures and read all readings as required by the managing faculty supervisor. Pay attention and take notes as needed.
- Provide feedback to the supervising faculty supervisor by expressing views from your experience and especially by relay students' reactions and concerns.
- Be supportive of the supervising faculty supervisor and respectful of course content and objectives. Remember, your role is to explain and clarify the course material as developed and presented by the course instructor. Avoid negative undercutting of assigned texts, lectures, instructor, etc.
- TAs are recommended to solicit feedback from their students sometime in the middle of the quarter to assess how well their section/course is going. We recommend setting aside the last 5 minutes of one section/course to distribute the following **Mid-Quarter Feedback Worksheet** to their students.
- Per UAW contract rules, TAs should not spend more than 20 hours per week on TA duties. This includes attending lecture, section, office hours, preparing for section, reading, and grading. Don't permit TAing to eclipse your own graduate studies. If you feel that you are spending too much time on teaching, discuss these priorities with the supervising faculty member.
- If you have issues, conflict, or grievance with your section and/or students, please contact your supervising faculty member. If you have issues, conflict, or grievance for which you believe your supervising faculty member cannot help, please contact either the interim chair of the department (Helen Morales for 2023-2024, hlmora@ucsb.edu) or the director of graduate Studies (João Pedro Oliveira for fall 2023 and spring 2024, jppo@ucsb.edu; Isabel Bayrakdarian for winter 2024; bayrakdarian@ucsb.edu).

Training Requirements for TAs

- In their first quarter TAing at UCSB, graduate students will be required to take a to-be-determined pedagogy course that will help them be a better TA. This requirement will go into effect beginning fall 2024.
- In their first year TAing at UCSB, graduate students must attend the annual TA orientation meeting at the beginning of the year.
- Throughout their time at UCSB, TAs must attend at least 3 TA training workshops and/or pedagogy workshops throughout the year. We recommend attending 1 workshop per quarter. Workshops offered through Office of Teaching and Learning, CITRAL,

Instructional Development (e.g., Pillars of Teaching Assistantship Workshop Series, Specialty Workshops) and/or offered by a faculty member within the music department count. Keep track of the title and date of each attended workshop as graduate students will list workshops attended in their annual end of year report. (The TA orientation meeting does not count toward these requirements).

- TAs are required to request a [Video Consultation from Instruction Development](https://id.ucsb.edu/teaching/ta-training/video-consultation) at least once during the year. Graduate students will include their consultation letter in their annual end of year report. See: <https://id.ucsb.edu/teaching/ta-training/video-consultation>

Instructional Development's Resources for TAs

- Information and tips for new TAs: <https://id.ucsb.edu/teaching/ta-training/new-tas>
- Instructional development put together some commonly requested teaching and learning resources, tips, handouts, videos, and other practical advice into these “teaching handbooks”: <https://id.ucsb.edu/teaching/teaching-handbooks>
- The TA Development Program offers campus-wide training and workshops: <https://id.ucsb.edu/teaching/ta-training/ta-workshops>
- The TA Development Program offers four certification programs for UCSB TAs to help them at all stages of their instructional career. Information on these certification programs here: <https://id.ucsb.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/ta-programs/overview>
- Information and tips for international TAs: <https://id.ucsb.edu/teaching/ta-training/international-tas>