

Standards for Psychology Department Graduate Instructor Assistantships

Students who are funded on graduate instructor assistantships (GIA) are responsible for teaching a course as the instructor of record. There is one fundamental principle that guides this assistantship: ethical teaching. Represent yourself, the department, university, and our discipline professionally and ethically.

GIA are assigned by department administration. If you do not have the basic knowledge or competence to complete this GIA assignment effectively, you should communicate this to department administration immediately. If you are unsure if you have the basic knowledge or competence, please speak with the department administration or your advisor at once.

Responsibilities to Students (From McKeachie's Teaching Tips, 14e)

1. To encourage the free pursuit of learning
2. To demonstrate respect for students
3. To respect confidentiality
4. To model the best scholarly and ethical standards
5. To foster honest academic conduct and ensure fair evaluation
6. To avoid exploitation, harassment, or discrimination

Responsibilities to the Department & Institution

The following are from USU's [Policy 403: Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibility](#), which is written for faculty members, but are the standards for all instruction. Section 403.3.1 (Standards of Conduct - Faculty Responsibilities to Student) is the most relevant:

- (1) Faculty members **engage in reasonable and substantial preparation for the teaching** of their courses, appropriate to the educational objectives to be achieved and consistent with the standards of the discipline.
- (2) Faculty members **meet scheduled classes**. Schedules are altered or classes canceled only for valid reasons and only after adequate notice is given to students and the faculty member's direct academic supervisor. Failure to meet a class without prior notice to students is excusable only for reasons beyond the control of the faculty member. In the case of online courses, all content is available before content is needed.
- (3) Faculty members shall **select course requirements based on the legitimate pedagogical goals of the course and discipline**, and inform students of the general content and evaluation criteria in the syllabus or comparable documentation at the beginning of any course they teach. Faculty members evaluate student course work promptly, conscientiously, without prejudice or favoritism, and consistently with the criteria stated at the beginning of the course in the course documentation and related to the legitimate pedagogical goals of the course. The documentation for the course should identify, to the extent possible, the writings, lectures, films, presentations, performances, or

other course requirements in sufficient detail to allow the student to identify requirements that may conflict with the student's sincerely held core beliefs. Faculty will not always be able to predict in advance requirements that may conflict with the sincerely held core beliefs of a given student or group of students. If conflicts arise, Procedures for Alternative Course Requirements due to Conflicts with Sincerely Held Core Beliefs (403.4) provides guidance to students and faculty for the resolution of conflicts.

- (4) Faculty members with teaching responsibilities **maintain regular office hours** for consultation with students, or they otherwise assure accessibility to students. Instructors are also expected to make themselves available outside regular office hours if a student cannot attend their regularly scheduled office hours. Instructors who need to meet outside office hours should make *reasonable* accommodations.
- (5) Faculty members **do not plagiarize the work of students**. When faculty members and students work together, appropriate credit is given to the students. Faculty members do not limit or curtail the right of any student to publish or otherwise communicate the result of the student's own independent scholarly activities.
- (6) Faculty members **do not use their positions and authority to obtain uncompensated labor or to solicit gifts or favors from students**. Faculty members do not ask students to perform services unrelated to legitimate requirements of a course unless the student is adequately compensated for such services.
- (7) Faculty members **do not reveal matters told to them in confidence by students except as required by law**, and then only to persons entitled to such information by law or institutional regulation. Faculty members may, however, report their assessment of a student's performance and ability to persons logically and legitimately entitled to receive such reports. [Note: Graduate student instructors are, like all graduate student employee's, [Responsible Employees](#), who must report any form of sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, gender discrimination, sexual assault, relationship violence or stalking) they hear about or witness in the campus community. As a responsible employee, you must share everything you know.
- (8) Faculty members **create and maintain environments in which students are provided the opportunity to do original thinking, research, and writing**.
- (9) Faculty members **avoid the misuse of the classroom** by preempting substantial portions of class time for the presentation of views on topics unrelated to the subject matter of the course. Faculty members do not reward agreement or penalize disagreement with his or her views on controversial topics.
- (10) Faculty members **do not engage in the harassment** of students, sexual or otherwise. (policy 407.9).

Best Practices for a Successful Teaching

The best practices listed below are designed to facilitate an educational and rich experience for the instructor and a positive learning environment of students enrolled in classes.

1. **Intentionality:** Effective teaching in a course is supported by intentionality. Course objectives that align with the pedagogical goals, values, and department requirements for instruction.
2. **Clarity:** Write stuff down, get feedback.
3. **Presence/Communication/Responsiveness:** Your role as an instructor requires presence, communication, and responsiveness.
4. **Reflection and Improvement:** Effective teachers are self-reflective and practice an evidence-informed model. That means formal mid-term evaluations and informal ongoing evaluations of student progress and teaching effectiveness.

Best Practices for a Teaching Team: Graduate Teaching Assistants, Undergraduate Teaching Fellows, Supplemental Instruction (SI) Leaders

- **Undergraduate Teaching Fellow:** Courses may be assigned an [Undergraduate Teaching Fellow](#) (UTF). The Undergraduate Teaching Fellows (UTF) program pairs faculty mentors with high-achieving undergraduate students who assist with day-to-day classroom management, administrative, and teaching tasks. The program affords teaching and leadership opportunities for UTFs and facilitates a learner-centered classroom experience for students enrolled in the courses they support. Faculty who mentor UTFs benefit from their feedback and associated opportunities to improve course content and delivery.
- **Supplemental Instruction:** Some courses (PSY1010) may be assigned a [Supplemental Instruction](#) (SI) Leader. The SI program provides after-class study sessions for selected General Education breadth courses. These study sessions are led by trained and certified undergraduate SI leaders who have completed the course and are pursuing majors or minors in the course discipline. SI leaders attend each class and during the study sessions actively involve students in discussing and understanding course concepts as well as demonstrating effective study strategies. The majority of students who regularly attend SI sessions succeed in improving their test scores and final course grades, as you can see by viewing our annual report.
- **Graduate Teaching Assistants:** Courses may be assigned a graduate teaching assistant. There are department standards for GTAs, [here](#). Best Practices for a Successful Teaching Assistant, and a template for a workplan agreement) are included below:
 1. **Discuss Expectations & Context:** Set up a time to meet before the first day of class—either in person or via video conferencing—to communicate between instructor and TA. Instructors should consider a written set of guidelines and expectations (see template, below); these should be tuned to course, assignment, calendar, and enrollment:
Expectations related to:

- a. Class attendance;
 - b. The expected flow of grading work during the semester: if there are 300 papers to grade in week 7, agree on a logical flow and time expectation to time for high quality completion of the task;
 - c. Office hours;
 - d. Communication with students and with instructor;
 - e. Teaching experiences; and
 - f. Required lab experiences.
2. **Meet/Communicate:** Regular check-ins throughout the semester (Meet face-to-face via video conference, or via email every other week (at least) to check in: what is the workload? what has changed? what are TAs observing? Good communication is very important. If you anticipate not able to communicate regularly during the semester for some reason, discuss prior to that period of time.
 3. **Midterm Evaluation:** Graduate Student TAs and instructors should meet at the midterm to revisit expectations and discuss how things are working and attempt to map out effort and workload for the remainder of the term.
 4. **Plan:** Map out decision rules for TA course load that accounts for different weeks having different TA workloads, student needs, the needs of your own TA as an individual, as a student, and (importantly) the needs of the course in general. See template, below.
 5. **Train/Provide Feedback:** Graduate TAs should be trained to do their work and given feedback. Over time, Graduate TAs should become more independent.

Dual Relationships

A dual relationship is defined as having more than one relationship with a single person at any given time. During your GIA, you may experience dual relationships. For example, if you are the instructor and your friend/roommate is assigned as your TA, this represents a dual relationship: GIA and friend/roommate. While we hope that you experience many meaningful friendships during graduate school, we urge you to recognize that this is a job/professional environment first and foremost. Thus, we expect you to approach your TA in a respectful manner with clear boundaries. If you are in the position of having more power (e.g., you are the GIA, the TA is a friend/roommate), it is up to you to establish these boundaries. It is possible that you have pre-existing relationships with students who opt to take your course. If you have a relationship with a student, we expect you to bring it to the attention of department administration immediately. The American Psychological Association provides guidance on how to navigate dual relations – please see [Ethical Standard 3.05](#). If you are unsure how to establish boundaries or unsure if your relationship constitutes a dual relationship, we urge you to talk to department administration immediately.

Contact List for Helpful Resources

| Office | Information | Contact Information |
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| Academic and Instructional Services (AIS) | AIS is committed to student success by working across the USU system – service and supporting faculty, staff, and students wherever they are located- to advance USU’s capacity to build, deliver, and support academic excellence (teaching and learning), with a focus on quality, accessibility, and innovation. | <p>Website: https://www.usu.edu/ais/</p> <p>Instructional Designer Contacts: Amy Carpenter – amy.carpenter@usu.edu & Jennifer Paskett - jennifer.paskett@usu.edu</p> <p>Zoom Support: Sarah Kohler - sarah.kohler@usu.edu</p> <p>In-Person Classroom Support: https://classroomsupport.usu.edu/</p> |
| CANVAS | Support for CANVAS is offered 27/7 through their support lines. | <p>Live Chat Support for Faculty</p> <p>Phone: 1-833-713-1202</p> |
| Center for Innovative Design and Instruction (CIDI) | CIDI helps university instructors create and maintain high quality learning environments. They provide access to practical tools, relevant data, prompt and effective support, consultation, and hands-on training. | <p>Website: https://cidi.usu.edu/index</p> |
| CEHS IT Help Desk | The CEHS IT Help Desk is a helpful college resource for office issues including office phone support, software support, and more. | <p>Website: https://cehs.usu.edu/faculty/tech-services</p> <p>Phone: 435-797-8324</p> <p>Digital Service Request Form</p> |
| Counseling and Psychology Services (CAPS) | CAPS’ mission is to embrace a holistic approach to student development by removing psychological, emotional, and behavioral barriers to learning and success. | <p>Website: https://aggiewellness.usu.edu/logan/mentalwellness</p> <p>Phone: 435-797-1012</p> <p>Email: capsinfo@usu.edu</p> |
| Office of Student Conduct | The Office of Student Conduct available resources through Utah State University and other agencies to assist each student; victim, accused, Student Code violators and others to fulfill our mission. | <p>Website: https://studentconduct.usu.edu/</p> |
| Psychology Advising Office | Psychology advisors are available to help undergraduate students navigate their academic career while attending Utah State University. | <p>Website: https://psychology.usu.edu/undergraduate/index</p> |

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|-------------------------|---|---|
| | | <p>Students Last Names A-C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becca Boman • 435-797-1456 • becca.boman@usu.edu <p>Students Last Names D-M</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ben Elwood • 435-797-0865 • ben.elwood@usu.edu <p>Students Last Names N-Z</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tressa Haderlie • 435-797-0097 • tressa.haderlie@usu.edu |
| Student Health Services | Student Health Services is home to the Student Health Center and the Student Wellness Center. | <p>Website: https://health.usu.edu/</p> <p>Phone: 435-797-1660</p> |
| USU IT Help Desk | The USU IT Help Desk is a valuable resource for many of the institutions tech platforms including Banner, Box, Canvas, MyID, MyUSU, and software. | <p>Website: https://it.usu.edu/</p> <p>Phone: 435-797-4357 or 877-878-8325</p> |
| Qualtrics Support | Qualtrics offers direct support for their software. | <p>USU Website: https://www.usu.edu/qualtrics/</p> <p>Support Website: https://www.qualtrics.com/support-center/</p> <p>Email: support@qualtrics.com</p> |

TEMPLATE FOR GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT WORKPLAN AGREEMENT

Course:

Term:

Instructor:

Graduate Teaching Assistant:

Task: Class Attendance

- Graduate Student TAs are required/encouraged to attend class sessions or have a notable online presence where applicable.

Task: Grading/Exams

- Students will submit Exam X on DATE, grading will be completed by DATE.
- Students will submit Exam X on DATE, grading will be completed by DATE.
- Students will submit Exam X on DATE, grading will be completed by DATE.
- Students will submit Exam X on DATE, grading will be completed by DATE.

Task: Grading/Assignments

- Assignment X is due DATE, grading will be completed by DATE.
- Assignment X is due DATE, grading will be completed by DATE.
- Assignment X is due DATE, grading will be completed by DATE.
- Assignment X is due DATE, grading will be completed by DATE.

Task: Student Communication

- **Office Hours:** Graduate Student TAs will be responsible to hold XXX hours per week of office hours.
- **Discussion Groups:** Graduate Student TAs are expected to log into canvas XXX times per week to monitor and respond to discussion groups.
- **Email Traffic:** Graduate Student TAs are expected to respond to email traffic from students within XX (36?) hours of receipt

Task: Teaching

- **Exam Review/ Support:** Graduate Student TAs are expected to design and conduct X review sessions for exams: DATE, DATE, DATE, DATE
- **Lecturing:** Graduate Student TAs will teach course sessions on the following days: DATE (topic: XXX), DATE (topic: XXX), DATE (topic: XXX), DATE (topic: XXX).

Task: Labs

- Graduate student TAs will FILL IN THE BLANK WITH LAB-SPECIFIC INFO (PSY3010, PSY3400, PSY4420, PSY3450, PSY3450)