

Standards for Psychology Department Graduate Teaching Assistantships

Students who are funded on a graduate teaching assistantship (TAships) are tasked with supporting the education of students while supporting themselves with a rich, professionally-relevant experience. They are supervised by the instructor of record in a given course.

TAships are assigned by department administration. If you do not have the basic knowledge or competence to complete this TA 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 instructor of record immediately.

Teaching assistants (TA) should track their hours and tasks completed during those hours. If a TA notices they are consistently under or over their hours, they should notify the instructor at once. TAs are generally assigned to work either half-time (10 hours/week) or full-time (20 hours/week). There are two basic rules that govern TAs:

1. TAs may not exceed total hours they are assigned over the course of the semester (although they may work over their weekly assignment in some weeks).
2. TAs should not work significantly fewer hours than their assigned hours over the course of the semester (although they may work notably fewer hours in some weeks than the hourly assignment).

Instructor Responsibilities

1. Train TAs so that they may effectively and efficiently complete the assigned tasks.
2. Communicate expectations clearly and consistently.
3. Communicate with assigned TA(s) regularly.
4. Treat TAs with respect, like a member of the teaching team.
5. Monitor TA effort.
6. Understand that TAs have many other responsibilities.
7. Evaluate TAs according to department standards. This includes an end-of-term evaluation.

Graduate Teaching Assistant Responsibilities

1. Prioritize your teaching assignment. You are an important member of the teaching team and your help is needed.
2. Represent yourself, the assigned instructor, department, and university professionally.
3. Do high-quality work and use the hours you are working on your assistantship efficiently (for example: if no one is consistently coming to your office hours, notify the instructor so that arrangements can be made for your hours to be used more efficiently).
4. Work the assigned hours every week they are needed.

5. Communicate with assigned instructor regularly. You should respond to emails in a timely manner (e.g., within 24 hours, except weekends and holidays). If that is not possible for some reason, you should notify the instructor.
6. Notify the instructor, prior to any period of unavailability, about forthcoming scheduling challenges.
7. If you are unable to attend the class time or will experience an extended period of time during a semester where you will be unavailable, you should notify the instructor prior to the beginning of the assistantship. Because online classes do not formally meet, please ensure if you have a clear understanding of the instructor's expectations for your availability.
8. Understand that instructors have many other responsibilities.
9. Evaluate your experience in the TA position at the end-of-term, according to department standards.

Best Practices for a Successful Teaching Assistant

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

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:
 - a. Expectations related to class attendance or availability for online classes;
 - b. Expectations related to 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. Expectations related to office hours;
 - d. Expectations related to communication with students and with instructor;
 - e. Expectations related to teaching experiences; and
 - f. Expectations related to required lab experiences.
2. **Meet/Communicate:** Regular check-ins should be scheduled throughout the semester (e.g., meet face to face via video conference, or via email every other week [at least] to discuss: 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 account 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 TAship, you may experience dual relationships. For example, if you are TA'ing for your graduate advisor, this represents a dual relationship of advisee/TA. You may also be a TA for a course that has multiple TAs. In this scenario, you may be friends or roommates with your fellow TA, which also represents a dual relationship: colleague and friend/roommate. Finally, you may have relationships with students in the class that you TA for. 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 colleagues and the students in the class for which you are the TA in a respectful manner with clear boundaries. If you are in the position of having more power (e.g., you are the TA, the student is a friend/roommate), it is up to you to establish these boundaries. If you have a relationship with a student, we expect you to bring it to the attention of the instructor of record 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 teaching staff immediately.

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.

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)