

Teaching Assistant Questionnaire

Given the wide variation in the teaching assistant role, the following set of questions may be helpful to address up front with the faculty member in charge of the course you are TAing, ideally before the course begins.

Learning Goals:

- What are your key learning goals for the course?
- Will I be involved in reviewing / modifying the course goals? The course syllabus?
- Are there any particular goals for which I will be primarily responsible as the TA?

TA Responsibilities

Highly recommended: Bring your calendar with you to your first meeting to highlight any potential conflicts that you know about (such as a time you will be out of town). The quicker you address possible conflicts, the easier it is to resolve them.

What are my teaching responsibilities for this course?

- Will we meet regularly to discuss students and/or the course? If so, how often?
- What is the expected time commitment?
- How many office hours do I need to hold each week?
- Do I need to attend class?
- Do I need to lead review sessions for midterms/final exams?
- Do I need to proctor exams?
- Do I need to manage the course's Blackboard site?
- Will I be asked to present lectures? If not, can I request this opportunity?
- Will I need to lecture in your absence, if you have to miss class? Will I be given any guidance?
- Will I be evaluated? By whom? How will I be informed of the results of any evaluation?
- What would you like me to get out of my TA'ing experience? Do you have any particular goals for me?

Class Format

Note: Even if the course has a syllabus, it can be helpful for TAs to provide a handout to students of section-specific policies. For example, if you're responsible for participation, how will you assign points?

- Do I need to develop my own syllabus or will one be provided?
 - Are you designing and planning the content of sections or am I?
- Who is responsible for setting up the classroom before class? For clearing up after class?
- If there are multiple TAs, do you want all the sections/labs to be similar in format/content?
 - If so, will you be providing us with guidelines?
- If students work in groups, should they self-organize or should we place them?
- What role would you like me to play during class (lecture/main class meeting)?
 - Would you like me to observe or gauge the interest/reaction of the class?
 - Would you like me to participate in discussions during class?
 - Is it acceptable for me to interject with ideas while you are speaking?
 - Should I be a liaison between the students and you?
- Will I be conducting labs?
 - Will the lab lectures be provided to me?
 - Can I vary the format if not the content of the labs? For example bringing in real-life examples or asking some higher-level questions during the lab?
- Will I be leading problem-solving sections?
 - What role does the section serve in this course?
 - Chance to apply theory to problems? Chance to address student questions? Chance to review material for exams? Other?
- Will I be leading discussion sections?
 - What role does the discussion section serve in this course?
 - Explanation of lectures? Adding supplemental material? Chance to address student questions?

Grading Issues

- What is the grading breakdown for the course? What is your grading/scoring system?
- Is there a particular portion of the course grade that I am responsible for as a TA?
 - Will participation in the lecture and/or sections be assessed? How?
 - Will I be responsible for grading homework? Essays? Journals? Lab reports?
 - Will I be responsible for grading quizzes? Midterms? Exams? Final Projects?
 - Are there any particular formats/special instructions for the material that I am grading?
- If there are multiple TAs, do you expect grading to be consistent across sections? If so, how?
- Will I be furnished with answer keys/rubrics or will I have to prepare them?
 - When grading homework, should I be concerned with the student's approach to the problem or simply the final answer?
 - Should we grade anonymously (using Student ID number rather than names)?
- How should grading be delegated / divided (between TAs and TA and Faculty)?
 - Should the same instructor always grade the same students to track progress?
 - Or should instructors swap students after each assignment?
- Can we discuss grading after I receive the first assignment?
- Who records the grades?
- What do I do about students' grading concerns?

Assignments/Feedback

- How involved should/can /will I be in creating projects and assignments?
- Are there any group projects? If so, how will we assess group work?
- Should I give students written or in-person feedback?
 - By when should I give students feedback on assignments?
 - Do you have a preference for the type or amount of feedback I give?
 - How many hours do you expect me to spend on written feedback?
 - How much attention should I pay to spelling, grammar, style, and presentation?
- How do we handle student deadlines?
 - Under what circumstances can extensions be granted?

Addressing Student Problems

- Can students collaborate on homework/lab reports?
- How does the honor code pertain to your course?
- What steps would you like me as the TA to take to detect instances of plagiarism?
 - What do I do if I suspect someone of cheating?
- What do I do if I have behavior problems in my section?
- What do I do to address absences or missed work?
- What do I do if I suspect psychological problems with one of my students?
- What do I do if I suspect substance abuse with one of my students?
- If students have questions or even issues they want to resolve, should they come to me first or you?
Are there exceptions for any particular questions or issues?

Course Materials

- Will you provide me with a textbook and/or other reference materials for the course?
- Where do I get supplies that I may need (ie. copies, etc)
- Do I need to help write exams or quizzes?
- Do I need to put materials on reserve/electronic reserve?
- Do I need to put together the coursepack for the course?
- Do I need to make photocopies for the course?
- Has my name & netid been added to the CTEC evaluation site by the department assistant so I can get access to my TA-specific comments?

Adapted from Vanderbilt University's 'Possible TA Questions for Course Heads' handout, NU Linguistics Department's 'Outline of TA Responsibilities' worksheet, and NU Learning Sciences' Department 2007 New TA Training workshop.