

# Department of Psychology

## Graduate TA Tips and Expectations

### TA Tips

1. The role and purposes of a TA
  - a. Funding for grad students
  - b. Contribution to the teaching program of the department
  - c. Training function
2. Confidentiality
  - a. Even from parents
  - b. FERPA
3. Attending Class and Proctoring
  - a. TAs should all plan to attend class
  - b. TAs are responsible for proctoring all exams
4. Resources
  - a. Supervising faculty member for course
  - b. Department Chair, Area Head, Director of Graduate Studies, Director of Undergrad Studies
  - c. ASU—writing center, counseling center, disabilities resource center, etc. – see the Graduate Handbook on the Psychology grad student resources webpage
5. Role Boundaries
  - a. Facebook
  - b. Open door

### TA Expectations

#### *Meet Before Semester*

- a. **TA**: should contact the instructor to set up a meeting time to prepare.
- b. **Faculty** should:
  - Make sure TA has all necessary materials (book, syllabus)
  - Make sure TA knows responsibilities

#### *Clarify Expectations*

- a. **Faculty**: Clarify the job responsibilities by defining the tasks. Examples include the following:
  - Will the TA guest lecture?
  - Lead discussions?
  - Grade assignments?
  - Hold office hours?
  - Attend each class?
  - Manage Canvas?
  - Define when are things due?
- b. **TA**: Ask questions to make sure you know all of the above

#### *Manage Workload*

- a. **Faculty**: TA workload should not exceed 20 hours per week (10 hours if it as .25 FTE position)
- b. **TA**:
  - Keep track of hours
  - Give faculty advance notice of conflicts or problems (big tests, out of town trips, etc.)
  - Recognize that workloads vary across classes, instructors, and times of the semester

### *Maintain Communication*

- a. **Faculty:**
  - Have regular meetings throughout the semester
  - Maintain communication through phone and email
  - Suggest that TA meet with past TAs for the class
- b. **TA:** Attend meetings; keep faculty informed

### *Communicate about Grading*

This is best done BEFORE the first grading assignment

- a. **Faculty:**
  - Make sure that the TAs have accurate answer keys
  - Be clear about expectations (e.g., grade distributions)
  - Create a policy for resolving disagreements about grades
  - Be sensitive to issues of maintaining vs undermining the TA's credibility with the students
- b. **TA:**
  - Clarify expectations and discuss with the faculty member how to resolve differences about grades
  - Be sensitive to issues of faculty grading standards and policies
  - Maintain the faculty member's autonomy over their own grading decisions

### *Clarify Details and Logistics: How to do the job*

- a. **Faculty:** Provide TA with information about office locations, office hours, meeting times, preferred methods of communications, how to post grades, etc.
- b. **TA:** Make sure you get the information that you need and know how to get needed information

### *Mentoring the TA*

- a. **Faculty:** Help the TA develop teaching skills (e.g., invite guest lectures, give feedback, share teaching tips and experiences; consider offering a simultaneous 501 class for your TA)
- b. **TA:** Ask for help and feedback, discuss the skills that you want to learn, volunteer for tasks that provide you with teaching experience

### *Ask for Help When Needed*

- a. **Faculty:** Have a problem? Can't resolve it by talking to the TA? See the student's area head, the Director of Graduate Studies or the Director of Undergraduate Studies
- b. **TA:** Have a problem? Can't resolve it by talking to the supervising faculty member? See your mentor, area head, the Director of Graduate Studies or the Director of Undergraduate Studies

### *Difficult Topics*

Situations in which students are behaving inappropriately can be complicated and difficult to handle. They are also the subject of larger policies within the ASU community, such as the [Academic Integrity](#) policies. When these situations arise, TAs need to immediately communicate with the supervising faculty member.

The Director of Undergraduate Studies is very knowledgeable and can be very helpful in these situations. These scenarios can be more problematic than they appear, so TAs should not try to handle them alone.