

# GRADUATE TA/GA EXPECTATIONS

## Definitions

TA – Teaching Assistant – a student who assists with activities associated with a course

GA – Graduate Assistant – a student who assists faculty with research oriented activities

Students who are assigned full time may be reasonably expected to work up to 20 hours per week, including time spent in assigned class(es), preparation, office hours, meetings and grading. Most assignments are about 15 hours. Students with half assignments may work half the above amounts (7-10 hours per week). Since both faculty and students have workloads that vary within the academic year, TA/GAs and their supervisors should work together to assure an **average** workload that falls within these guidelines. For example, if a student works less than the normal number of hours in one week, it can reasonably be expected that they will make up the time by working additional hours in another week if necessary. Students who are regularly required to work more than 20 hours per week are expected to contact the Director of Graduate Studies; regular work assignments of more than 20 hours per week are excessive and not allowed.

All TA/GAs are expected to provide faculty supervisors with a copy of their schedule and all of the information needed to contact them, including telephone numbers and e-mail each semester.

Faculty should be aware of the student's schedule as well. It is not only reasonable, but also in the best long-term interest of all concerned, to manage the workload (especially for GAs) so that, as far as possible, it does not coincide with exams and other course related deadlines. It is the students' responsibility to inform their faculty supervisors of times when their academic commitments are heaviest, as well as times when the academic workload is lighter.

TA/GAs are expected to be available for meetings in person and/or by telephone with their supervisor during normal business hours – 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday. TA/GAs should expect to meet with their faculty supervisor once each week at a time that is mutually convenient within that timeframe.

TAs may be expected to create homework assignments and quizzes for their classes, but normally will **not** create course exams.

TAs will not be required to purchase books for the discussion sections of courses that they lead. Faculty will order desk copies for their TAs. TA/GAs are not normally expected to incur any expenses (such as books, supplies, copying, telephone, etc.) associated with their assignment. Students should speak with the staff before spending any personal funds for which reimbursement is expected.

Students should check their e-mail and mailboxes (in LT 910) at least once every day. However, **DO NOT** tell undergraduate students that they may leave or pick up work there.

Students who are grading or leading discussion sections are expected to attend all the lectures of the classes for which they are grading. Exceptions must be approved by all involved, keeping in mind the maximum hours of work per week allowed.

TA/GAs assigned to more than one faculty member during the semester should make each supervisor aware of the workload assigned by the other so that the total number of hours per week remains within the guidelines stated in the first paragraph above.

In very large classes TAs may need to act as “police” to maintain order. TAs should be instructed by the faculty supervisor as to what manner of discipline is expected in the classroom.

All TAs and GAs are expected to be able to use Microsoft Word and Excel and know or learn MyCourses as well.

TAs are not allowed to be paid as tutors for the classes they assist, but may do so for other courses.

TAs are expected to be careful to ensure the confidentiality of all grades, other class records, and student work. This is federal law known as the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). More information can be found at <http://www2.binghamton.edu/registrar/services/ferpa.html>

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TAs must report any potential conflicts of interest to their faculty supervisor immediately and as close to the beginning of the semester as possible. Such conflicts of interest include, **BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO**, having a student in the class who is a girl or boy-friend, other close friend, or relative.

TA/Graders typically do not determine exceptions to policies or handle grading disputes. Any problems should be brought to the instructor.

More experienced graduate TAs may eventually become instructors of record teaching their own classes. Class policies and syllabi should be approved in advance by the Undergraduate Director(s) or a teaching mentor. All problems relating to student discipline and grading disputes should also be reported *immediately* to the Undergraduate Director(s) for assistance in resolving any conflicts.

Since assistantship appointments are generally for the entire academic year, TA/GAs should consider themselves employed through traditional "breaks". The obligation of a TA/Grader **normally** does not end until the final grades have been completed. TA/Graders are not allowed to go home and expect to e-mail the grades when they are done with them. TAs are expected to remain until the assignments are finished. The end of final exams does NOT mean that the assignment is over.

TA/GAs may, on occasion, be asked to work throughout the term of their appointments if this has been negotiated with the faculty supervisor. All TA/GAs and faculty supervisors should reach a mutual agreement **at the start of the semester** as to what work, if any, is to be performed at times when classes are not in session. It should not be assumed by TA/GAs that assistantship assignments are suspended during such times, nor should it be assumed by faculty supervisors that the TA/GA assignment is to continue unabated through major breaks in the academic calendar unless specifically arranged and agreed to in advance with the student. Any conflicts regarding this policy should be brought to the attention of the Director of Graduate Studies.

Examples of types of work that may be required during the performance of TA/GA assignments:

- \* TA/graders may be expected to grade homework assignments and exams, and to keep records of their students' attendance at discussion sections and grades, both electronically and hard copy.
- \* TA/GAs may be called upon to post notices of changes in the class meeting time and/or place.
- \* TA/GAs may be called upon to proctor exams for their faculty supervisor.
- \* GAs may be asked to perform bibliographic and library research
- \* GAs may be asked to perform data acquisitions and entry, including running programs in SAS, STATA, SPSS, R, Eviews, RATS, etc.
- \* TA/GAs may be expected to create spreadsheets for purposes specified by the faculty supervisor.
- \* TA/GAs may be asked to assist in the creation and maintenance of course web sites.

NOTE: The above list of examples is not meant to be exhaustive. It merely contains examples of some types of work that might be required of graduate student assistants.

Additional sources that may be consulted include the *Terms and Conditions Statement* signed by each student, the [\*Economics Department Graduate Student Handbook\*](#), and the *GSEU Contract*.