

# School of Government and International Affairs

## Guidelines for Undergraduate Teaching Assistants

Besides providing support to faculty, undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs) are given the opportunity to develop significant mentoring relationships with their faculty supervisor and gain significant skills and insight into the academic profession. Additionally, UTAs enhance the undergraduate learning experience and provide a varied body of experience to the courses they support. The results of this opportunity put the UTAs at a unique advantage when applying to graduate school and to other post-baccalaureate endeavors. Each assistantship is unique, tailored to both the individual UTA's skills and knowledge and to the faculty member's needs.

### 1. Faculty Eligibility

Only full-time faculty members are eligible to supervise UTAs.

### 2. Key School Policies

- The mix of activities for UTAs must have a significant percentage that has discernible pedagogical benefit. Put another way, UTAs may not be used only, or even overwhelmingly, for clerical activities.
- Faculty supervision of UTA courses will not count toward faculty teaching reassign-time.

### 3. Potential Activities of UTAs

The UTAs' activities may include but would not be limited to:

#### Interacting with Students

- Preparing/presenting learning modules/lectures (Presentations would be supervised by the instructor of record and limited to one or two per semester.)
- Tutoring and supplemental instruction (e.g., review sessions)
- Assisting with in-class activities
- Assisting with outside-class activities
- Facilitating study groups
- Conducting online discussion groups
- Commenting on/critiquing/proofreading assignments prior to submission
- Assisting with questions regarding computer-assisted technology

#### Developing teaching-related skills

- Assisting in syllabus preparation
- Assisting the instructor in preparation of class assignments or critiquing/proofreading assignments prior to distribution to class

- Exploring basic issues related to teaching (e.g., reading pedagogical resources) and discussing them with supervisor
- Developing a philosophy of teaching
  - Collaborating with the instructor on activities linked to the scholarship of teaching (e.g., evaluating the effectiveness of a class exercise) including collecting data, setting up data files and entering data, and conducting data analysis
  - Collaborating with the instructor on test item analysis, including setting up data files, entering data, and conducting data analysis
  - Assisting the instructor in developing grading rubrics
  - Assisting the instructor in preparation of quizzes or exams

#### Providing evaluative feedback to the instructor on student-submitted assignments

- Finding specifically defined errors in papers (e.g., Chicago Manual of Style “Humanities Form footnote and bibliographic citations, content missing) based on checklists developed with or by instructor and approved by instructor
- Marking errors on multiple choice/fill-in-the-blank/short answer combination exam answer sheets
- Grading objective, structured examinations, homework, and lab assignments based on checklists developed with or by instructor and approved by instructor.

#### Clerical

- Entering data collected by students as part of a research assignment (e.g., in the History research sequence) into a single file for subsequent analysis by students
- Taking and keeping records of attendance
- Photocopying course-related materials
- Photocopying exams
- Proctoring exams
- Alphabetizing exams after collected
- Running exams through Scantron
- Entering grades other than final course grades in grade book

#### **4. Note on Grading:**

The assignment of grades to essay examinations and research papers is not within the purview of an undergraduate assistant. However, this does not preclude an assistant from grading the more objective coursework (e.g., multiple-choice/short answer/fill-in-the-blank questions). When UTAs are grading student work or exam materials, it is recommended that student work be identified by code number rather than by name as an added protection for maintaining confidentiality. Regardless of the activity, faculty are ultimately responsible for all grades. Furthermore, all students are advised, preferably by a statement in the syllabus, that any concerns related to grades (involving either UTAs or instructors) should be brought directly to the instructor’s attention. Similarly, all students are advised and encouraged to bring any concerns regarding UTA activities directly to the instructor.

#### **5. Application for and Approval of an Undergraduate Teaching Assistantship**

All applicants for an undergraduate teaching assistantship must be students in good academic standing with a minimum overall GPA of 3.0.

## **6. The Directed Study Contract**

Next, the faculty would prepare a draft contract detailing:

- the timeframe for the assistantship,
- a draft syllabus for the course in which the student would TA
- activities and responsibilities of the UTA,
- responsibilities of the supervising faculty member, and
- method of evaluation of the UTA

Both the UTA and faculty member sign the contract.

The contract, together with a Confidentiality Agreement signed by the potential UTA, would be forwarded to the School Director for review. To assist in the review process, the proposed contract would include a cover page indicating, at a minimum, the following standard information:

- Students name
- Students KSU number
- Supervising faculty members name
- Course name(s), section(s), and semester(s) for which assistance is proposed
- Students declared major(s) and minor(s)
- Current GP

Approval of the School Director is required prior to implementing the assistantship. The assistantship is limited to the activities approved by the chair and the timeframe noted in the contract.

## **7. Other Policies Related to Undergraduate Teaching Assistantships**

7.1 Students served by UTAs are aware that UTAs are closely supervised by faculty. This awareness is typically achieved via a statement made available to the students (e.g., in the course syllabi, on the course Web page). An example of one such statement follows:

Undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs) are sometimes used in this course. These individuals provide an array of assistance and are directly supervised by the instructor. UTAs sign contractual agreements regarding their work in the course and have been approved by the department chair. All concerns relating to UTAs should be brought to the instructor's attention. Students submit their concerns regarding UTAs to the instructor in writing and with supporting documentation. UTAs sign and adhere to a professional confidentiality and responsibility statement similar to that signed by all faculty. UTAs are ethically and legally obligated to maintain confidentiality regarding student information and share information only with the instructor and those legally entitled to the information.

7.2 As part of the assistantship contract, UTAs complete the "Acknowledgment of Professional Confidentiality and Responsibility" form (a modified Buckley form) regarding confidentiality of student records. This form is attached to their contract. A copy of this form remains on file with the supervising faculty member for the duration of the assistantship. An additional copy remains on file with the School as statutorily required.