

Teaching Assistant and Research Assistant Policy

Gender and Women's Studies

Approved by GWS Faculty on 11/2/2021

Graduate assistantships serve a dual role in graduate education. They are an important part of your education in which you learn about effective teaching and/or develop research skills. At the same time, they are a form of employment in which graduate students play important roles in providing high quality education to undergraduates and/or advancing scholarly knowledge.

Teaching assistantships (TAs) may take many forms, including grading assignments, helping instructors in the classroom, leading discussion sections, or teaching your own course. TA assignments are determined by department needs as well as each student's TA classification by the Graduate School (<https://gradschool.uky.edu/ta-types-teaching-credentials>). For international students, TA assignments also reflect the results of an English language screening assessment (<https://gradschool.uky.edu/ita-language-screenings>).

Time Commitment and Graduate Student Employment Policies

The time commitment for most TA and RA positions is 20 hours per week. It is important to realize that there is likely to be some variability in how many hours you work each week, based on the nature of the tasks that need to be done (e.g., whether there is grading in a particular week). However, if you are consistently working more than 20 hours per week, you should talk with your supervisor and the TA Coordinator about tailoring your responsibilities and/or strategizing about efficiency.

It is important to plan ahead for how you can handle your student responsibilities at the same time as your TA or RA responsibilities. For example, if you have a major paper due at the same time that you will be grading, you may want to complete that paper early.

TAs and RAs cannot be employed more than 20 hours per week without an overload exception that is approved by the student's advisor, the College, and the Graduate School. If graduate students will be an TA or RA in the fall semester and they are employed by the University during the summer, their summer appointment needs to end before their TA/RA appointment begins in order to not have an overlap in payroll or a delay in processing their TA/RA assignment for the fall.

General Expectations

As a graduate assistant, you need to meet the following expectations for professional behavior:

- You must be available for the entire period of your assistantship. The specific dates vary by semester, but generally you should expect to be available approximately one week before classes start (e.g., for orientation) through the date in which final grades are submitted.
- You need to be reliable and conscientiousness about completing your assigned duties in a timely manner.
- You must treat students, research participants, and your supervisor in a respectful and non-discriminatory manner.
- You should work with the Department Manager to arrange for any necessary materials (e.g., photocopies) for your assistantship.

Communication with Faculty Supervisor

- It is essential to maintain clear, ongoing communication with your faculty supervisor, as well as the TA Coordinator, throughout the period of the assistantship.
- You should meet with your supervisor before the semester to establish expectations. For example, are you expected to attend class sessions? To grade assignments or papers? To maintain the gradebook? To recruit participants for research?
- You also need to discuss the supervisor's expectations about turnaround time. For example, how quickly do papers need to be graded?
- You also should discuss how to handle any problems that may arise.

Specific Expectations for TAs:

TAs have many important responsibilities to their students to ensure that they are receiving high quality, equitable instruction.

- You must be responsive to your students (e.g., replying to emails, timely return of assignments).
- You must follow all UK academic policies (<https://www.uky.edu/ombud/>).
- You must follow FERPA rules to protect student information (<https://www.uky.edu/registrar/content/facultystaff-ferpa-privacy>).
- You must ensure that your class materials are accessible to all students (e.g., captioning videos, making sure handouts meet accessibility standards; for more information, see <https://www.uky.edu/udl/best-practices>.)
- You must provide required accommodations for students who are working with the Disability Resource Center (<https://www.uky.edu/DisabilityResourceCenter/>).
- You must uphold UK standards for academic integrity (<https://www.uky.edu/ombud/academic-offense-information-0>). If you suspect

plagiarism, you need to immediately report it to the course instructor or TA Coordinator.

- GWS TAs are required to attend regular meetings held by the GWS TA Coordinator.

For TAs who are Instructors of Record:

- All courses in Gender and Women's Studies are expected to use student-centered pedagogy (see Training & Resources below).
- You must provide students with a syllabus that includes all the required syllabus components (<https://www.uky.edu/ombud/course-syllabus>) by the first day of class. You should think about your syllabus as establishing a contract with your students in which you clearly describe the course requirements and policies. You should avoid major deviations from the syllabus, especially if they increase the expected workload.
- All approved courses have established learning objectives. Courses that fulfill UK core requirements have additional core learning objectives (https://www.uky.edu/ukcore/Course_Templates). You are responsible for designing your course in a manner that fulfills all learning objectives in a manner that can be assessed.
- You are responsible for ordering textbook(s), if applicable, with the University Bookstore (<https://uky.bncollege.com/shop/uky/home>).
- You must follow UK's Fair Use policies for copyrighted works (e.g., course texts; <https://www.uky.edu/copyright/facultyresources/fairuse>).
- You only cancel classes if it is unavoidable (e.g., due to illness). If you know that you will be missing class on a given day (e.g., for a conference), you should arrange for another TA to cover your class or provide the students with online material. Please report any cancelled classes to the TA Coordinator.
- You are responsible for submitting midterm and final grades before the deadlines. Late grade submission can cause major problems for students (e.g., jeopardizing graduation).
- If challenges or problems occur in class or with individual students, please discuss the situation with the TA Coordinator as soon as possible.

Specific Expectations for RAs

- All graduate students, including RAs, must complete the Responsible Conduct of Research training and engage in yearly refresher training (<https://www.research.uky.edu/responsible-conduct-research/getting-started>).
- All research activities must follow IRB guidelines for ethical research practice, including maintaining confidentiality for research participants (<https://www.research.uky.edu/office-research-integrity/uk-human-research-protection-program-questionsanswers>)

Expectations about How TAs and RAs Should be Treated

- As a TA or RA, you should be treated respectfully and equitably by your supervisor, students, and research participants.
- If you are not being treated respectfully, please discuss the situation with your supervisor (for student and research participant issues), with the TA Coordinator (for course instructor issues), or with the GWS Director of Graduate Studies or Department Chair (for research supervisor issues).

Concerns and Reporting

- As a TA or RA, you are a mandated reporter for Title IX violations. If a UK student or research participant discloses to you that they have experienced sexual misconduct or harassment, you are required to report it to the UK Office of Equity and Equal Opportunity (<https://www.uky.edu/eeo/discrimination-harassment>).
- If you have concerns about the wellbeing of a particular student (e.g., mental health, ability to meet basic needs), you should file a report with the UK Center for Support and Intervention (<https://www.uky.edu/concern/>).
- If you believe a student is violating the UK Student Code of Conduct, you should file a report to the UK Office of Student Conduct (<https://www.uky.edu/studentconduct/>).

Training & Resources

There are many resources, both within and outside of the department, to help you succeed as a TA or RA!

For TAs:

- The Graduate School provides an orientation for all new TAs (<https://gradschool.uky.edu/orientation-new-graduate-teaching-assistants>), as well as many resources for TAs (<https://gradschool.uky.edu/resources-teaching-assistants>).
- The GWS TA Coordinator holds regular meetings to provide ongoing training and support for GWS TAs.
 - o The TA Coordinator also maintains a Canvas site with syllabi and materials that can be used in GWS courses.
- GWS students who are TAs for the WRD (Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies) Department will receive training from that department, including a seminar about teaching writing and regular meetings with a teaching mentor.

- The Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) offers resources and workshops about teaching (<https://www.uky.edu/celt/>). They also provide one-on-one consultation about teaching issues and concerns.
- For helpful information about creating online and hybrid courses, see CELT's Teach Anywhere website (<https://teachanywhere.uky.edu/>).
- Graduate students who wish to further develop their teaching skills can earn a Graduate Certificate in College Teaching and Learning (<https://gradschool.uky.edu/graduate-certificate-college-teaching-learning>) and/or participate in the Preparing Future Faculty program (<https://gradschool.uky.edu/preparing-future-faculty>).

For RAs:

- The UK Office of Research provides a variety of resources and trainings for researchers (<https://www.research.uky.edu/resources>).
- The Office of Research Integrity oversees the Institutional Review Board (IRB). They provide consultation and training related to research with human participants (<https://www.research.uky.edu/office-research-integrity>).

Evaluation

- All TAs are evaluated once per semester.
 - o For Instructions of Record and Discussion leaders (TA Types 1-3), evaluations consist of a class observation and/or review of course materials by a faculty member and TA Coordinator.
 - o For Classroom TAs and Graders (TA Types 4), evaluations are conducted by the supervising instructor and TA Coordinator.

All TAs are encouraged to meet with the faculty evaluator to discuss their evaluation.

- UK collects Teacher Course Evaluations (TCEs) for all courses and discussion sections (TAs Types 1-3). TCEs can provide helpful information about students' views of a course, but also have significant limitations. TAs are encouraged to discuss their TCEs with the TA Coordinator and/or their advisor.
- If desired, instructors can ask CELT to collect midterm student feedback and/or conduct class observations (<https://www.uky.edu/celt/what-we-do/services>).
- RAs are evaluated by their supervisors. RAs are encouraged to meet with their supervisors to discuss their performance and evaluation.
- TAs or RAs who believe they have been evaluated unfairly should follow the GWS Graduate Student Appeals Process.
- Reappointments of all graduate assistantships are contingent on positive evaluations of performance.