

Department of Physics and Astronomy

TA Responsibilities and Expectations

Discussion, Lab, and Grader TAs may be asked to perform several duties in their roles. The following lists of responsibilities contain examples of duties you may be asked to perform. If you (both TAs and Instructors) have any questions, concerns, or are experiencing any issues related to these responsibilities and expectations, please contact Zheng Zheng (zhengzheng@astro.utah.edu) or Navaneetha Valsan (u1424452@utah.edu).

A typical graduate TA assignment is formally 20 hours per week (0.5 FTE). Your regular TA duties should amount to no more than 18 hours per week. If you are a 0.5 FTE graduate TA and you are consistently working more than 18 hours per week, or if you are an hourly employee and are regularly working more or less than your assigned number of hours, please contact Zheng Zheng or Navaneetha Valsan.

As part of your Teaching Assignment, you are also required to attend at least 3 out of 4 TA Workshops that will be held throughout the semester. These workshops are organized by the Mentor TA with topics chosen based on TA feedback, aiming to keep TAs engaged in learning, to address TA needs, and to help TAs do efficient and effective jobs..

Discussion TA Responsibilities

- Teach two (0.5 FTE) or one (0.25 FTE) discussion sections
 - Each section meets twice per week
- Hold office/Help Lab hours and/or study halls
 - It is strongly recommended that office hours for upper level courses also be held in the Help Lab to increase accessibility and create a shared resource of TAs in the Help Lab.
- Attend weekly teaching team meetings
- Prepare for discussion section and office hours
- Proctor exams
- Grade assignments, quizzes, and exams
- Help instructor develop rubric for exam and homework grading
- Track or provide feedback to the instructor on participation
- Be available for lectures, help with logistics, and respond to student questions/emails
- Monitor online discussion boards and answer student questions
- Help finalize/format homework and discussion problem solutions

Lead TA Responsibilities

- Be available for lectures, help with logistics, and respond to student questions
- Lead one or two discussion sections per week
- Hold office hours/study halls

- Prepare for discussion sections and office hours
- Finalize the material for discussion section based on what is given by the instructor (e.g. prepare a class outline)
- Help finalize/format homework and discussion problem solutions
- Support TAs and answer questions (or direct them to the instructor)
- Summarize and communicate weekly responsibilities to the teaching team
 - Periodically check that tasks are being completed and remind TAs/LAs about deadlines
- Make sure grades are uploaded in a timely fashion (including attendance)
- Ensure sections are covered when TAs/LAs are unavailable
- Look over exams before exam date and give feedback to instructor
- Help instructor develop grading rubric for exams and homework
- Proctor exams
- Grade assignments, quizzes, and exams
- Occasionally write announcements and/or answer students' emails
- Ensure that work is distributed equitably among TA and LAs

Lab TA Responsibilities

- Lead 2-3 lab sections per week
- Grade lab reports
- Grade additional Canvas assignments (e.g. pre-lab or post lab activities, attendance tracking, participation)
- Lab preparation (e.g. watch instructional videos, get familiar with apparatus, attend lab prep meetings)
- Attend weekly teaching team meetings
- Hold office hours and/or help lab hours
 - It is strongly recommended that office hours for lab courses also be held in the Help Lab to increase accessibility and create a shared resource of TAs in the Help Lab.
- Answer student discussion questions on Canvas, reply to student emails if relevant to their lab section

Grader TA Responsibilities

- Develop rubric for grading (with appropriate instructor guidance)
- Finalize assignment solutions (with appropriate instructor guidance)
- Grade assignments, homework, exams, etc. in a timely manner
- Offer office hours and/or help lab hours
 - It is strongly recommended that office hours for upper level courses also be held in the Help Lab to increase accessibility and create a shared resource of TAs in the Help Lab.

TA Expectations

- Be prepared for your discussions, labs, help lab hours, and/or office hours:
 - Always work out problems or lab tasks on your own ahead of time
 - Arrive early and start on time
- Be respectful of other members of your teaching team by coming prepared and meeting your teaching expectations
- Respond promptly to communications (email, Canvas, etc.) from your teaching team, from students, from the Mentor TA, and other department members.
- Be aware of expectations for Learning Assistants. They are not TAs; they are there to support student learning. They are not supposed to present content, nor be the experts.

Instructor Expectations

- Provide guidance on administration of TA duties (e.g. running the lab/discussion section, using Canvas, communicating with students, etc.)
- Assure that rubrics are available for grading all assignments and provide guidance on grading according to the rubric
- Manage communication with the class, including emails and Canvas. The Lead TA may help, but the instructor should be the primary point of contact.
- Proctor exams or be available during exam times to answer questions
- Lead weekly teaching team meetings with all TAs and LAs which include discussions of:
 - Content for class and logistics
 - Pedagogical approaches for student success
 - Resources to be effective TAs/LAs
 - TA and LA workload check-ins
- Respect and protect the effort that TAs are giving to their duties, ensuring that the number of hours per week does not exceed expectations
- Ensure TA tasks are distributed equitably

Lecture Courses

- Provide teaching material and guidance for discussion sections
- Provide problem/s for discussion sections
- Provide homework/exam solutions and/or guidance to TAs on how to write them

Lab Courses

- Provide teaching material and guidance for lab sections
- Provide instructional material (e.g. lab manuals, directions, videos, rubrics, slides, etc.)
- Provide directions for the lab preparatory meetings and instructions on how to conduct experiments