
Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows

Responsibilities and Duties of Teaching Assistants/Teaching Fellows

The teaching of physics by Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows is both a responsibility and a privilege. A student is appointed to this position because the department believes students have the ability necessary to pursue graduate studies and at the same time assist in the education of less mature students. It is expected that the latter activity will deepen your own knowledge of physics. Read and assimilate any information provided to you at the University's TA Orientation Sessions. (The information is available in [the online copy of the TA's Handbook](#). The following sections describe:

- Duties of Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows
- Responsibilities for preparation for teaching
- Procedures for evaluating teaching
- Workloads.
- [CIDDE Teaching Services](#)
- [TA/TF WORKSHOPS](#) sponsored by Center for Teaching and Learning See also:
- [Contractual Obligations](#)

A. Duties

Duties of TAs and TFs are essentially the same. TFs are more experienced graduate students with a MS or equivalent and have excellent teaching grades. They may be expected to handle more challenging assignments. As a teacher you should:

1. Prepare for and meet all assigned classes promptly at the scheduled time and place. If for any reason you cannot meet your class, you should inform the person in charge of the course in advance, and arrange for an acceptable substitute. New graduate students with TA support are expected to arrive on campus one to two weeks before the beginning of a term, this will be explained in your orientation materials. Continuing students with TA support are required to be available several days prior to the term to meet with their respective course instructors. Inability to arrive before the start of classes may result in a cancellation of your appointment.
2. Grade problems and laboratory reports and return them promptly to students in accordance with the procedure explained to you by the person in charge of your course.
3. Proctor and grade examinations. You will also be expected to proctor when additional coverage is needed for another class.
4. Hold, and announce to your class, regular office hours for your students.
5. Serve in the [Resource Room \(312 Thaw Hall\)](#) to answer questions of students. The Resource Room is a room staffed by Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows for the purpose of answering questions for our introductory physics and astronomy students.
6. Keep in close touch with the person in charge of your course so that you may coordinate your activities with his/hers and inform him/her of difficulties students may be encountering.

B. Preparation for Teaching

You must prepare yourself for your classes by studying the text and working the assigned problems. You must prepare for supervising a laboratory by doing the assigned experiment. TAs assigned to Labs for Physics 0212 and 0219 will have a mandatory meeting with the lab instructor, prior to the start of classes. In addition, satisfactorily complete Physics 2997, Teaching of Physics, during the first term that you are here.

C. Evaluation

During the term several evaluations will occur. By the end of the first month of the term, undergraduates enrolled in the lecture portion of your class are given an anonymous survey on TA performance. Secondly, your instructor will meet with you to conduct both a mid- and end-term evaluation. Thirdly, in lecture, your students will fill out a questionnaire evaluating your teaching. Lastly, your class will be visited at times by the person in charge of your course, and possibly by other faculty members. Try not to be disconcerted by these visits. Their purpose is to check on the accuracy of student evaluations, and to see if there are ways you can be helped in your teaching.

At the end of the term, the departmental committee for the evaluation of teaching will assign you a grade based on the evaluation of your teaching by your students and the person in charge of your course. If your grade is less than satisfactory, the department chairperson will meet with you to see what can be done to improve your teaching.

The department has established an award in recognition of exceptional graduate student teaching. This award is given to one or two graduate student teachers on the basis of recommendations from the teaching evaluation committee and others.

D. Work Loads

According to University regulations, you are not to work over 20 hours, on the average, in a week. This includes contact hours, preparation time, office hours, grading, proctoring, and time in the Resource Room. It does not include time in English remedial instruction, nor time in teaching practice.

Normally a full TA assignment consists of:

- 4-6 recitation sections of Physics 0174, Physics 0175, or Physics 0110/0111 (all elementary physics courses) plus two resource room hours.
- 2 Physics 0212, or 2 Physics 0219 laboratory sections (both are elementary physics laboratory courses) and 1 resource room hour
- 1 Physics 0212 or 0219 laboratory section + 5-6 resource room hours
- 1 Physics 1361 laboratory section (Optics Laboratory) + 2 resource room hours
- 1 Physics 0577 laboratory section (Modern Phys Lab (honors section))
- 1 Physics 0525 laboratory section (Analog Digital Electronics Laboratory) + 2 resource room hours
- 1 Physics 1426 laboratory section (Modern Phys Lab) + 2 resource room hours

When possible, all recitation sections will be in courses taught by same lecturer.

On occasion, because of lack of proficiency in English, a TA may be assigned grading and proctoring duties in addition to an assignment as a laboratory aide to another TA. It is expected that all students whose

English is deficient will correct that deficiency by attending required English courses and/or the special ITA Communication Course.

Persons in charge of courses should expect TAs to work in compliance with the standards set forth above. If they find that a TA is working less than the normal amount, they may assign additional course-related duties. If the TA is working more than the normal amount, the lecturer should try to lighten the TA's load.

Sometimes it may be necessary for a TA to carry a heavier or lighter than normal load for a term. In such cases the department will try to adjust the load in a succeeding term to compensate.

Teaching assignments continue through the exam period and TA/TFs are to remain available until final grading is completed. Any TA or TF who experiences a problem connected with his/her teaching duties should try first to resolve it by talking with the person in charge of the course. If the problem cannot be resolved in this way, the TA or TF should contact the graduate director or the department chairperson.