

Guidelines for BIO Teaching Assistants

Job Descriptions

- Teaching Assistant (graduate student TA). By definition, TAs are graduate students. The TA Job is 20 hours per week: No TA should be expected to work more than 20 hours per week. Remember that the primary role of a graduate student is to conduct their PhD research, and they need to do so even when they are working as a TA.

Faculty are advised not to prescribe recurring weekly duties (including preparation) of more than 13–14 hours per week for a 20-hour appointment, i.e., to leave roughly one hour per day unprescribed. Without this buffer, students may be unable to react to surprises that inevitably arise without working an inappropriate number of hours. (Expectations for appointments not at 20 hours per week should be scaled appropriately, and reasonable accommodations may be made for courses involving field work in which the number of hours needed may vary substantially across a semester.)

- Specialists: By definition, Specialists are not students. However, Specialists function as TAs. They must have been awarded at least one degree in a related area of expertise. A full-time job for a Specialist is 3 normal-sized courses. (A normal-sized course is one with 100 students or fewer that has 4 Discussion Sessions.) Every effort is made to assign a full-time Specialist a maximum of two different courses to teach. If you are teaching two sections of a course and you have a total of 300 students and 12 Discussion Sessions, a Specialist who handles both courses would be full time. Specialists are expected to work 40 hours per week.
- UGTAs: Undergraduate TAs are usually juniors or seniors who have earned an A in the course they are TA-ing. A typical undergraduate TA job is 10 hours per week, but this is flexible. Be aware that UT students can be employed by UT a total of 20 hours; this includes all of their jobs on campus.

Lecture Course Guidelines for TAs

- Typical responsibilities are:
 - ∞ Attending class
 - ∞ Holding discussion sessions
 - ∞ Grading
 - ∞ Office hours for students
 - ∞ Holding review sessions
 - ∞ Proctoring exams
 - ∞ Duplicating handouts and exams
 - ∞ Preparing for classes and learning the course material
 - ∞ Posting grades, announcements, etc. on course website
- Important Notes:
 - ∞ Discussion Sessions: Typically, a TA/Specialist will be responsible for only 4 Discussion Sessions per week. A class of 150 students should have 6 Discussion Sessions. Two of them can be held by a UGTA.

- ∞ Grading: A TA can be expected to perform some grading, provided that this does not prescribe recurring duties of more than 13–14 hours per week. Graders can be hired to provide additional support.
- ∞ Preparation Time: A TA, especially if they are teaching a course for the first time, may require many hours per week to learn the material well enough to help the students. Please discuss this honestly with your TA and adjust their other duties accordingly.
- ∞ Trade-offs: As long as a TA is neither given more than 13–14 hours of prescribed recurring duties nor expected to work more than 20 hours in any week, trade-offs can be made between job duties. As one example, a TA can hold 6 Discussion sessions per week if they do no grading, and if they have taught the class before and require less preparation time than they would otherwise.
- ∞ Effective Communication: Instructors and TAs must be able to communicate effectively to ensure that the TA is able to conduct their PhD research while working as a TA.

Laboratory Course Guidelines

- Typical responsibilities are:
 - ∞ Supervising students in the laboratory
 - ∞ Attending lectures
 - ∞ Grading
 - ∞ Office hours for student
 - ∞ Prep meetings and lab set-up outside scheduled class times
 - ∞ Preparing for classes and learning the course material
- In large lab courses, each TA is typically responsible for 2 four-hour lab sections.
- Some smaller lab courses have only 1 four-hour session per week. These TAs are usually responsible for more preparation of materials than those in the large lab courses where staff prepare the materials.
- The comments above regarding Grading, Preparation Time, and Effective Communication apply to lab TAs.
- If TAs are helping staff to prepare lab materials, or preparing these materials themselves, you must request UGTA support if necessary so that no TA is given prescribed recurring duties of more than 13–14 hours per week.