

# UCI SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

## TEACHING ASSISTANT DUTIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Taking on the role of a Teaching Assistant (TA) in the School of Education is a core part of your UCI graduate training experience. In academia, faculty teach courses that require learned skills in instructional planning, engaged teaching, and assessment of student learning. As such, the TA experience gives you opportunities to be involved in each of these facets of work so that you can gain experience that will help you be successful in future teaching assignments. At the same time, this is also a paid position that supports your graduate study for the quarter in which you TA. As such, there are professional responsibilities associated with the role as well. This document serves to clarify your roles and responsibilities so that you can have a successful work and mentoring experience as a university scholar.

### Instructional Support

As a Teaching Assistant, you will be expected to work closely with an instructor both during and outside of class to perform a variety of tasks. While specific expectations from faculty will vary across courses, the following are examples of how you may be expected to support instruction:

- **Pre-Planning:** You are expected to review the course readings far enough in advance so that you are prepared to support the instructor in course planning; can effectively facilitate and deepen student understanding during class discussions and activities; and provide meaningful feedback on related assignments and assessments.
- **Planning:** Assist the instructor with course preparation and delivery of material by contributing to the development or revision of a course syllabus, and/or preparing and leading course assignments, discussions, and/or lectures.
- **Instruction:** Facilitate and deepen student understanding by: engaging in discussion with students during class activities and group work; leading instruction; getting to know students to help build a learning community; leading activities and serving as an effective resource outside of class to support student success on assignments and assessments.
- **Assessment:** Assess student learning by proctoring and grading assignments/ exams, assisting with creating assessments and rubrics; developing and/or managing a system for attendance and assessment recordkeeping.

### Professionalism

Teaching Assistants are also expected to be professional by modeling the norms expected of a university scholar. As such, you are expected to display the following characteristics during your service:

- **Be Physically Present:** Attend each class, arriving prior to the beginning of the class period to assist the instructor/s with any last minute activities (e.g., technology set-up, room set-up, handouts, etc.); arrive on time to meetings with the instructor/s and students; and make yourself available to grade assignments in a manner that meets the instructor/s expectations regarding deadlines for completion.

- **Demonstrate Initiative:** You will receive various duties from your assigned instructor that you will be expected to complete in a timely manner, as agreed upon between you and the instructor. Whereas you are expected to show an ability to accomplish this work independently, you are also expected to take the initiative to communicate potential concerns, ask clarifying questions, and offer ideas/suggestions. You are expected to find a balance between making decisions on your own, and discussing decisions with your assigned instructor. If you have any uncertainties or questions regarding the course, your role, or issues related to students, ask the instructor or program directors for guidance.
- **Be Intellectually Engaged:** You will be an important model for our undergraduates for what it means to be a graduate student. It is important, therefore, that you model what it means to be prepared, to be curious and intellectually engaged, to think critically about course content, and to build an engaged learning community.

### **Communication**

A successful TA experience includes maintaining consistent communication with the instructor/s and students by using the following strategies:

- **Start Early:** Before the quarter starts, email the instructor to set up a meeting to introduce yourself, sign your TA contract, establish the instructor's preferred means of communication, learn the particular duties you are expected to fulfill for the course and request access to the course syllabus so that you can start reviewing the required course readings. You should also set up a schedule with the instructor to meet regularly during the quarter, establish your office hours, and provide your contact information for the syllabus.
- **Meet regularly with your instructor:** It is typical for an instructor and TA to meet weekly during the quarter to prepare lessons and activities, plan your role in an upcoming class, and/or to calibrate on grading assessments. Some weeks may require more than one meeting. Working as a TA offers you the opportunity to develop skills related to university teaching, so the instructor is a great resource for offering you regular feedback as to how you can grow as an instructor. Throughout the quarter, and then again at the end of the quarter, you might ask to meet with the instructor to discuss what worked and what can be improved upon in the course and in the instruction of the course.
- **Respond to emails in a timely manner:** You should check your email daily and be able to respond to the instructor and student emails within 24-48 hours or sooner if necessary due to nature of inquiry. Consider copying the instructor/s on your communications with students. Keep the instructor/s abreast of any issues that arise with

students. If you have any uncertainties or questions regarding the course, or issues related to students, ask for clarity before communicating with students.

- **Provide timely, meaningful and equitable feedback on assignments.**
  - Please be aware that grading loads may vary throughout the quarter, so you should discuss this in advance with your instructor and plan your time accordingly. Get clarity from the instructor on how much and what sort of feedback the instructor wants you to give the students. This will influence the amount of time it will take to complete the grading. If the instructor has rubrics available for the various assignments, you should be given them prior to starting the grading. If you are unfamiliar with the use of rubrics, the instructor will either assist you in understanding them or will direct you to available resources (i.e., Pedagogical Fellow). You can also create rubrics to more efficiently grade assignments.
  - Ask your instructor for an estimate for when the grading should be completed as well as the amount of time each assignment will take to grade. If the grading of the assignments takes longer than originally projected, you should communicate this with the instructor as soon as possible and ask for strategies for approaching the grading.
  - TAs should consult with the instructor on how to securely store any exams, course assignments, student rosters, gradebooks, etc. *Storing documents with student IDs in an unsecured location is a violation of FERPA laws.*
  - It is expected that you will treat each student fairly in your grading. Toward this end, it is important that you are familiar with university policy regarding academic honesty (<http://honesty.uci.edu/>). If you suspect any incidences of academic dishonesty in student work, you must inform your faculty supervisor as soon as possible.