

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Teaching and Research Assistants play an important role in the academic mission of Arts and Sciences. They provide valuable support in the responsibilities of teaching, mentoring and research. The opportunity to serve as a teaching assistant (TA) or research assistant (RA) is equally an important part of the professional development and training that the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences offers graduate students.

The skills and training acquired as a Teaching Assistant (TA) and as a Research Assistant (RA) depend on faculty mentoring, feedback, and assessment. Faculty members supervising TAs and RAs should clearly define assistants' responsibilities at the beginning of the assistantship and provide feedback on how those responsibilities are being met. Feedback identifies TA and RA strengths, encourages performance improvement, as well as prevents, mitigates, or helps resolve academic disputes. Guidelines have been established by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences regarding assessment of teaching and research assistants.

Teaching Assistant Guidelines

1. All TAs with a TAship of 10 hours per week or more during the semester must register for the course XXX-405 for 0 course credits. In addition, all new TA are required to attend the TA Orientation.
2. The course instructor will set specific expectations at the beginning of each semester that can be documented with a TA agreement form signed by both the instructor and the TA, and copied to the TA's Graduate Advisor and/or Department Chair. The TA agreement should specify details such as class attendance, average weekly work load, office hours, laboratory work, recitations, vacation time and other activities.
3. The course instructor or designee will gather assessment data using methods such as student course evaluations, classroom observation, student focus groups, and direct measures such as examples of interaction of TA and undergraduate students. TAs should be provided with written and/or verbal feedback at least once mid semester, and at the end of the semester, or in the student's annual progress review. At the end of the semester, the course instructor will assign a grade of S (satisfactory) or U (unsatisfactory). The course instructor must provide the TA with documentation of unsatisfactory performance (U) at least three weeks before the grade is assigned. Copies of the document shall be provided to the Department Chair.
4. In the case of unsatisfactory performance the course instructor must provide the TA with written documentation of unsatisfactory performance in a timely manner before the end of semester. The TA may write a response. Copies of this documentation shall be provided to the Department Chair and/or Graduate Director. The consequences of unsatisfactory performance in rare circumstances may include dismissal as a teaching assistant and loss of stipend and tuition scholarship. These consequences will be determined by the Department Chair and/or Graduate Director.

5. The TA and course instructor may bring any unresolved academic disputes to the Department Chair. If the dispute remains unresolved, then it shall be brought to the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, or his/her designated associate for resolution.
6. TAs must be in good academic standing in order to serve in the position and receive the stipend associated with the work. Please see the [Graduate Student Handbook](#) for the policy on Academic Standing.

Research Assistant Guidelines

1. The faculty research advisor will develop specific expectations annually that can be documented with an RA agreement form signed by both the faculty member and the RA, and copied to the RA's Graduate Advisor and/or Department Chair. Expectations such as vacation schedules, benchmarks and timelines should be defined.
2. If at any time RA performance issues arise, then the faculty research advisor must immediately provide the RA with written documentation. The document should identify corrective measures including deadlines for their implementation and include space for an optional RA response. Copies of the document shall be provided to the Department chair. The RA is encouraged to constructively discuss this document with the faculty research advisor.
3. All RAs must register for the course XXX-406 for 0 course credits. At the end of the semester, the faculty research advisor will assign a grade of S (satisfactory) or U (unsatisfactory). The faculty research advisor must provide the RA with documentation of unsatisfactory performance (U) at least three weeks before the grade is assigned. Copies of the document shall be provided to the Department Chair.
4. The consequences of unsatisfactory performance (U) may include dismissal as a research assistant from the advisor's research group and loss of stipend and tuition waiver. The specific consequences will be determined by the faculty research advisor in consultation with the Department Chair.
5. Throughout the assessment process, the RA and faculty research advisor may bring any unresolved academic disputes to the Department Chair. If the dispute remains unresolved, then it shall be brought to the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (or his/her designee) for resolution.
6. RAs must be in good academic standing in order to serve in the position and receive the stipend associated with the work. Please see the [Graduate Student Handbook](#) for the policy on Academic Standing.