

Undergraduate Teaching Assistants (UTAs) in Emory College

Undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs) serve important roles in the classroom. They help faculty with course delivery and serve as a link between students enrolled in the course and the faculty instructor of record. They may provide another place for enrolled students to seek help and may offer more informal opportunities for course review and practice. Serving as an undergraduate teaching assistant is also an important learning opportunity for the UTAs themselves as they increase their confidence within their discipline and develop academic and leadership skills. Serving as a UTA should be an opportunity for intellectual and professional growth.

I. Role of Undergraduate Teaching Assistants (UTAs)

Undergraduate teaching assistants may assist faculty in different ways depending on the nature of their position and the needs of the course. The list below represents functional roles that ECAS UTAs may fulfill:

- Assisting the course instructor with class preparation and setup. This may include setting up film or AV equipment, loading presentations or film, organizing the course Canvas site, setting up in-class demonstrations, and preparing for laboratory sessions
- Leading optional review sessions (problem sets, language practice, etc.) outside of regularly scheduled class time
- Holding supplemental office hours to answer student questions (these should not replace instructor office hours)
- Assisting students in laboratory course sections
- Keeping attendance
- Assisting the course instructor in-class with active learning exercises

Faculty are responsible for student assessment and grading. UTAs should not be used for grading except in the limited cases below. These include:

1. Assignments or active learning exercises that are true/false, multiple choice, or graded based on completion only.
2. Assignments or problem sets that have very little impact on the overall course grade. In these cases, the instructor of record is responsible for ensuring the grading criteria are clearly specified and for supervising the grading.

UTAs should not be used to grade major quizzes, exams, essays, or papers. If UTAs assist with grading lab reports or homework assignments, their work must be directly supervised by the course instructor. Whenever possible, work graded by UTAs should be anonymized. UTAs should never be granted access to record grades in CANVAS or in online gradebooks. Therefore, UTAs should never be assigned a grader or TA role in CANVAS because it gives students access to other students' confidential academic records. Faculty may assign UTAs a "Librarian" role in Canvas. The Librarian role allows students to edit discussions, pages, and assignments, and to take attendance, but Librarians do not have access to view or edit grades in the gradebook. UTAs are never permitted to view, calculate, record, or discuss midterm, final exam, or major assignment scores with students in their classes.

If a department needs to use UTAs for tasks not outlined in this document or needs an exception to this policy, department leadership should work with OUE to develop an approved plan to ensure that student privacy is protected, that academic integrity is maintained, and coursework is expertly

evaluated. Departments should contact oue.facultysupport@emory.edu in order to request an exception.

UTAs should never proctor examinations or quizzes on their own, although they may assist the instructor of record during exams. It is not appropriate to use UTAs as the sole proctors for examinations because of the responsibility it places on undergraduates to monitor peers and be involved in the reporting and adjudication process for potential honor code violations. If UTAs are involved in the distribution and collection of exams and quizzes, they must be directly supervised by the instructor of record.

When UTAs are employed by an instructor, the role of UTA should be outlined in the course syllabus so that students in the class understand the role of the UTA and what to expect from them.

II. UTA Expectations

UTAs are the responsibility of the faculty supervising them. The instructor of record is responsible for articulating UTA work expectations and supervising students serving in these roles. The work expectations and time commitment of UTAs must be articulated in the job description and communicated in writing. If UTAs are underperforming, it is the responsibility of the instructor to improve the UTAs performance or terminate the UTA position.

III. UTA Selection

UTA selection is determined by individual programs or departments. Whenever possible, departments should establish a formal search process that includes a concise position description (noting the expected time commitment), an application process, faculty recommendations, and a check to ensure the students do not have any past or pending honor code or other disciplinary violations. In smaller departments, programs, and classes, a formal search process may not be possible. In these cases, faculty should still provide a detailed position description and ensure candidates have no honor code or other significant disciplinary violations. Although the selection process does not need to be lengthy and involved, it should be transparent.

In order to check a student's honor code and disciplinary record, departments should email oue.facultysupport@emory.edu with a list of the student names and ID numbers. As part of the application, departments should include a question that requires students to give consent for the release of their disciplinary records. The following language may be used:

By typing my name in the space provided, I permit the Office for Undergraduate Education (OUE) to access any academic and disciplinary records, including Honor Code, Undergraduate Code of Conduct, or Title IX records within Emory University and to release this information to the academic department or program for which I am applying to be considered as an undergraduate teaching assistant.

IV. Training

All UTAs should have disciplinary expertise in the course they are assisting with. UTAs typically demonstrate this expertise via a previous record of excellent academic performance in the course or field. All UTAs must complete the required Undergraduate Teaching Assistant module designed and

administered by the Office for Undergraduate Education (OUE) before they begin their teaching assistant assignment. This training module includes important information about FERPA, Title IX, confidentiality, the honor code, academic support resources, student support resources, and conflicts of interest. Pedagogical training is the supervising faculty member's responsibility.

V. Compensation

The compensation rates for UTAs should be determined each academic year in consultation with the Office for Undergraduate Education. There are three different compensations structures available for UTAs. Students may receive academic credit for their role or they may receive payment. Students may not receive both academic credit and payment in the same semester.

1. *Hourly paid UTAs.* These UTAs typically work between 2-8 hours per week on UTA related responsibilities. The starting hourly UTA pay rate is \$12/hour. To comply with University HR policy, all students compensated via this mechanism must track hourly work via the hourly rate system.
2. *Semester paid UTAs.* Semester UTAs have defined workloads and typically spend between 4-8 hours per week on UTA related responsibilities. Pay rates for these assistants are decided at the beginning of the semester and paid on a per semester basis.
3. *Academic Credit.* Students may receive academic credit for serving as an undergraduate TA. When students receive credit, they are not allowed to receive financial compensation. Individual departments and programs may determine how academic credit is awarded. Typically, departments and programs will have a specific course number for undergraduate teaching assistants. When this isn't possible, departments may use an independent studies course number. Academic credit for teaching assistants should be graded S/U. The number of credit hours awarded in a given semester should correspond to and reflect the students' time commitment to training and teaching assistant roles and responsibilities. If a student is spending ~3-4 hours per week on TA related responsibilities, 1 credit hour should be awarded. If a student is spending ~6-8 hours per week on TA related responsibilities, 2 credit hours may be awarded. Supervising faculty are responsible for ensuring TAs meet expected hourly contributions.

VI. Supervision and Evaluation

The instructor of record for any given course is ultimately responsible for course content and delivery and is also responsible for the conduct and performance of undergraduate teaching assistants. Undergraduate Teaching Assistants have a unique opportunity to work closely with faculty in these positions. Faculty should view UTAs as mentees. Faculty members should meet with undergraduate teaching assistants on a regular basis to provide feedback and should also solicit feedback from UTAs about student learning and comprehension. These regular meetings should be used to discuss course material, learning goals, assignments, and pedagogical approaches relevant to the discipline. Faculty members should establish a process by which UTAs can report on their activities outside of the classroom including office hours, review sessions, and student comprehension.

Undergraduate teaching assistants should be evaluated regardless of their compensation model. If UTAs are regularly involved in the classroom experience, instructors may consider including optional evaluation questions about the UTAs as part of their teaching evaluation process. Alternatively, instructors may wish to solicit student feedback about the performance of undergraduate teaching

assistants via an alternative feedback method. Whenever possible, instructors are encouraged to provide feedback in written form so that students have a record of their evaluation.

Approved: Curriculum, Assessment, and Educational Policy Committee, April 22, 2022