



SCHOOL OF NATURAL SCIENCES
Graduate Programs

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Date: July 4, 2018
To: Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows
From: Director of Graduate Student Programs
Subject: TA Supplemental Memo

Introduction

Instruction provided by Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Teaching Fellows (TFs) is an important component of our undergraduate programs. Service by graduate students as TAs/TFs is also a valuable part of graduate education. As a TA or TF in our School, you will be carrying out critical work that is greatly appreciated. We look forward to working with you to create a strong partnership in educating our students.

TA/TF Employment Eligibility

TA/TF must be a UC Merced graduate student in good standing, and must meet all of the following basic requirements:

Enrollment: TAs or TFs must be a full-time UCM graduate student enrolled in at least 12 units during the semester of the appointment. Graduate students do not need to be registered in courses during summer session; however, they must be an active UC Merced graduate student.

Academic Standing: All students must be in good academic standing as defined in the Graduate Advisor's Handbook.

Appointment: During any academic year, a graduate student may not be appointed in any capacity by the University of California beyond a maximum of 49.9% time.

Application: Any graduate student seeking employment as a TA/TF must submit an application for a position through the UC Merced employment web site, <https://aprecruit.ucmerced.edu/apply>.

Oral English Proficiency: International and U.S. Permanent Resident graduate students who are not citizens of countries where English is either the primary or dominant language as approved by the UCM Graduate and Research Council, who wishes to be considered for appointment as a TA or TF, must pass an approved oral English proficiency examination. There is no exception to this requirement. Additional requirements for international students seeking employment can be found in the Graduate Advisors Handbook.

Conditions of Employment

Teaching Assistant

A TA is not responsible for the instructional content of a course, for selection of student assignments, for planning of examinations, or for determining the term grade for students. Neither is the TA to be assigned responsibility for instructing the entire enrollment of a course or for providing the entire instruction of a group of students enrolled in a course. The TA is responsible only for the conduct of recitation, laboratory, or quiz sections under the active direction and supervision of a regular member of the faculty to whom responsibility for the course's entire instruction, including the performance of TAs, has been assigned.

Teaching Fellow

Subject to the general supervision of a faculty member designated in catalogues and published schedules as "in charge" of the course, a TF should be competent to provide the entire instruction of a lower division course to a group of students, and normally should be given such assignments. Assignment to conduct instruction in an upper division or graduate course or course section may not be made except with the approval of the Committee on Courses of Instruction (Regulations of the Academic Senate, 750)

All TA/TF appointments are made in accordance with the University of California's Academic Personnel Manual (APM) 410, UAW labor agreement and the UC Merced Graduate Advisors Handbook.

As an Academic Student Employee, the terms and conditions of your appointment are described in the Agreement between the University of California and the International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW), AFL-CIO and its Local Union 2865. You can find the complete text of the Agreement at:
<http://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx/contract.html>.

Training and Orientation

All required training and orientation shall be considered part of the workload for the term, with the exception of pedagogy courses in which a TA/TF is required to be enrolled. Said pedagogy courses and training requirements shall not be used to reduce the number of TA/TF appointments.

The University may require, at its sole discretion, a TA/TF to satisfactorily complete required training to continue appointment as a TA/TF. The University may, at its sole discretion, require that a TA/TF who has not satisfactorily completed required training repeat training without the repeated training counting in workload. New TAs are required to participate in Graduate Orientation Week (GROW).

Unpaid activities for which academic credit is given, or that are academic program requirements for all students in the program, or are training required to meet minimum eligibility requirements (e.g., English language tests), are not considered employment activities.

Supervision of TAs

Teaching Assistants are supervised on a daily basis by the primary course instructor.

Workload

A TA/TF appointed to 49.9% time should expect to spend an average of about 20 hours per week on assigned duties. However, the time commitment may vary considerably from week to week, particularly in courses with a fieldwork component. The total workload should not exceed 340 hours per semester or 40 hours in any given week. TAs/TFs who believe that assigned duties require a greater time commitment should discuss the matter with the primary course instructor.

Responsibilities

Before Classes Start

- 1. All TAs and TFs must accept or decline their appointment within one week of the transmittal of the Duty Form (Appendix C). Failure to accept an appointment in writing within a week will invalidate the appointment.**
2. TAs and TFs must be prepared to attend meetings and perform other duties as assigned at least one week prior to the scheduled start of classes.
3. Meet with the instructor in charge of your course to discuss his/her goals for the course and your duties. If the instructor has not contacted you one week prior to the start of classes, please contact the instructor to arrange for an initial meeting.
4. Familiarize yourself with the syllabi, for which you are instructing (available at <http://naturalsciences.ucmerced.edu/academics/courses>).
5. If your course has an assigned textbook you can retain a copy by contacting the School's Curriculum Support staff.
6. Attend all required TA and laboratory training as instructed by faculty and staff.
7. Teaching assistants play a central role in insuring that UC Merced's standards of academic honesty are upheld. Familiarize yourself with UC Merced's academic honesty policies, <http://studentlife.ucmerced.edu/content/uc-conduct-standards>.

During the Semester

1. Attend lectures as required by primary course instructor (contact the instructor).
2. Attend all TA meetings and/or instructional laboratory meetings as required by primary course instructor or laboratory staff.
3. Hold at least two hours of office hours per week (for a 50% appointment). Be sure the students in your section(s) and your primary course instructor know your office hours and location. For 25% appointment other than 50%, adjust the number of office hours proportionately.)
4. Return graded materials to students as directed by your primary course instructor. Note that privacy laws require graded materials be returned to students individually, not placed in a pile to be picked up.

For additional information about student privacy, see registrar.ucmerced.edu/policies/family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act-ferpa.

After Instruction Is Over

Please note that course obligations are not complete until the final exam is graded and returned to the course instructor and all course grades are entered in accordance instructor's method of course score recording. Depending on the date of the final exam, the grading process may extend into the week after the instructional end of the semester. Meet with the primary course instructor to be sure you have completed all grading and provided all input needed for grades to be assigned. Provide any other input on the course requested by the primary instructor.

Conflicts of Interest

Graduate teaching assistants must refrain from any activity or conduct that creates an apparent or actual conflict of interest. A TA must not assign grades for, or evaluate the work of, anyone he or she is closely related to or has a financial or close personal relationship with. If you think that your TA assignment might involve an actual or perceived conflict of interest, please discuss the matter with your primary course instructor and/or one of the Graduate Program Staff.

A TA may not request or accept any form of additional compensation from any student in the course to which he/she is assigned.

Request for Leave and Coverage (Absences)

In order to ensure proper coverage for leaves other than long-term leaves, TAs/TFs are expected to contact the supervisor to request leave as soon as the need for the leave becomes known but not less than one (1) working day in advance of the commencement of the leave unless the leave is for an unanticipated personal or family illness or bereavement. Requests for leave shall be made in writing with information about the nature of the leave and probable duration. Upon request, the TA/TF will be required to provide appropriate documentation. While it is the University's responsibility to make arrangements for coverage, the TA/TF will assist as reasonably possible.

TAs are responsible for the education of the students in their sections and should realize that it is very difficult to replace a TA on short notice. If you are unable to meet a scheduled section because of a medical or personal emergency, immediately inform the course instructor, instructional lab staff, and/or one of the Graduate Program Staff so they can find a replacement. Be prepared to provide documentation of the reason for cancellation. For more information refer to the Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article 17 Leaves, http://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx/docs/bx_2010-2013_17_leaves.pdf.

Re-appointment and Evaluations

In accordance with UC Academic Personnel Manual 410, all TA/TF appointments are self-terminating unless the appointee is otherwise notified. Each TA may be evaluated at the end of every semester for adherence to the requirements listed above. If the work has been judged satisfactory, the TA will be eligible to be reappointed for future teaching.

1. Comments may be solicited from other faculty, instructors, or laboratory coordinators with whom the TA interacted.
2. Student teaching evaluations will be considered.

Professional Development

TAs/TFs are highly encouraged to attend one professional development workshop during each semester. We recommend all to participate or utilize the following:

1. Workshops offered by the Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning (CETL)
2. Instructional Internship Program (IIP)
3. Student Assessment of Teaching and Learning (SATAL) service
4. One-on-one consultation with CETL
5. Service as a volunteer for a TA training workshop with CETL or faculty
6. Teaching and learning of English Language Learners with the English Language Institute (ELI)

For additional information on workshops and services offered by CETL, see cetl.ucmerced.edu.