



- Introduce yourself to your neighbors while waiting for the session to start.
- Include the following in your introduction:
 - Your name
 - What you will be teaching this coming term
 - Your prior teaching experience
 - What most concerns you about teaching



The Role of the TA
Cheating and Plagiarism
Dealing with Difficult Situations

New TA Orientation



Alumni Hall 835
(tahelp@pitt.edu)



- *TA Handbook: The Teaching Assistant Experience*
- Workshops
- FacDev 2200
- Individual Consultations
- Videorecording
- Classroom Services (educational technology hardware)
- Educational Technology Services (BlackBoard/CourseWeb)

<http://teaching.pitt.edu/graduate-student-teaching/>



Role of the TA: Objectives

- Define roles, rights, and responsibilities of TAs/TFs.
- Identify resources available to TAs/TFs, in and out of the classroom.

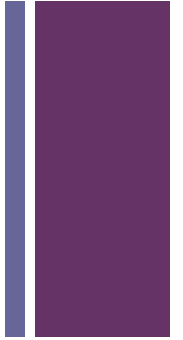
+ What is a TA? Why Teach?





What is a TA?

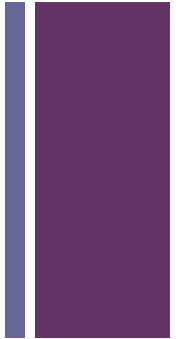
- An educator shaping the undergraduate experience at Pitt.
- A graduate and professional student acquiring and practicing marketable skills, under the mentorship of a faculty supervisor.
- A student supporting him or herself through graduate study.





What is a TA?

- 20 hours/week (standard)
 - However, fractional appointments with proportional workloads
- Course-related duties
 - Specified by faculty mentor
 - With supervision from faculty mentor
- Supervision and training from faculty mentor





What is a TA?: Roles

- Facilitating labs
- Leading recitation
- Leading discussion
- Planning Lessons
- Proctoring exams
- Grading papers/exams/assignments
- Offering review sessions
- Holding office hours



What is a TA?:

TA – Faculty Relationship (p. 9)

■ Professionalism

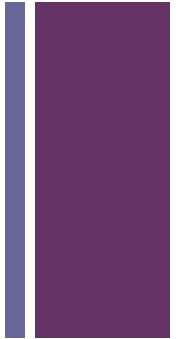
- Formal, polite, and regular communication
- Meeting expectations

■ Supervision

- Clear expectations
- Constructive feedback
- Working conditions within University guidelines
- Undergraduate students under TA instruction receive an education meeting standards of excellence

■ Mentorship

- TAs receive training and guidance in teaching skills





What is a TA?:

TA – Faculty Relationship



- Before and during the semester, meet and communicate with faculty regularly to:
 - Determine expectations for recitations/lab sections and/or other duties
 - Identify how individual course units (lectures, recitations, labs) “fit” within the broader course
 - Keep track of upcoming events
 - Inform faculty about developments in course sessions
 - Receive constructive feedback from faculty on instructional activities, grading, and in-class instruction
 - Inform faculty of any questions/concerns

+ What is a TA?

TA – Student Relationship



- Professionalism, Supervision, Mentorship
 - Maintain professional boundaries
 - Establish clear expectations
 - Convey approachability and accessibility, within limits
 - Be on time and prepared
 - Provide constructive feedback in a timely fashion



What is a TA?

TA responsibilities to self



- Set pedagogical goals and evaluate periodically.
 - one or two per semester
- Ask faculty supervisor for guidance and support.
- Know limits of responsibilities and rights as a graduate student and as a TA.
- Schedule time for teaching.
- Schedule time for research and coursework—continue making progress toward your degree!



When in Doubt, TAs should Talk to...



■ In your department...

- faculty supervisor for course
- departmental TA Coordinator/Director of Graduate Studies
- department chair
- colleagues
- advisor

■ Outside your department...

- Grad. Student Teaching Initiative (tahelp@pitt.edu)
- Disability Resources
- Academic Resources Center
- Counseling Center
- Office of Student Conduct

+ Questions or concerns?



Dealing With Difficult Situations & Distressed Students

New TA Orientation

+ Objectives

- Evaluate possible courses of action that you can take in handling difficult situations.
- Apply Pitt's policies in dealing with difficult situations.
- Identify distress in students and act accordingly when you see it.



+ Agenda



- Two different difficult situations
- Solution and prevention for each situation
- Identifying and taking action when students are :
 - Distressed
 - Grieving
 - Depressed/anxious
 - Abusing alcohol and other substances



Situation 1: Jason's Favorite Student



Jason was grading papers in his office in the Mathematics Department, when one of his favorite students, Maureen, stopped by. Jason liked Maureen because she always asked questions in class and had even stayed after class a few times to discuss a particular topic. Besides, he couldn't help noticing that she was one of the prettiest girls in class, and, because she had taken a few years off before going back to school, she was a lot closer to his own age than most of his students. They seemed to have a lot in common. She didn't have the highest grades in the class, but she certainly was trying.

Maureen came into the office, shut the door, and sat in the extra chair near Jason's desk. She spent a few minutes chatting about the upcoming football game and a concert she was planning to attend. She then mentioned that she was having trouble with that week's homework assignment and asked for a few days extension. In fact, she suggested that they meet for a beer at the local pub so that she could ask him some questions, or, that if it was more convenient, she could stop by his house.

+ University Policy on Faculty/student Relationships

“Faculty and staff members are not permitted to engage in or solicit Consensual Relationships with students over whom they have Direct Supervision or with whom there is a reasonable likelihood of Direct Supervision.”

<http://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-04-03.html>

- Direct Supervision: Includes, but is not limited to, the following activities: academic instruction, advising, supervising, evaluating, recommending, promoting, allocating resources, employing and other employment actions including directly setting of salary, benefits or wages, or any disciplinary action.



Situation 2: A Student Complains About Her Grade & Talks to the Chair



A student is quite upset with the grade she has received so far in the class. At this moment it is not higher than a B and she believes she does not deserve less than an A. The student believes that the way you grade and the way you teach are the reasons why she is not getting a better grade. She says that, whereas she can follow other teachers and get straight As with them, she cannot follow you. She thinks your demands are too high for the level of the class and that it is absolutely unfair that a hard worker such as herself could receive only a B. Before leaving the office she threatens to talk to the chair of your department, even to the Dean, if you do not change your style and your demands. Before you can do anything you receive a message from the chair saying that a student has presented a very “serious complaint” about you and he wants to talk to you.

+ Ways to Respond

■ Prevention

- Have your syllabus approved by a faculty member before the course begins.
- Distribute a grading rubric.
- Keep meticulous records of what grades you gave and why.

■ Solutions

- Be reasonable: if you think there is some truth in the criticism, act accordingly.
- Do not attack the student while defending your position.
- Be open to any inquiry on your teaching and cooperate fully to clarify any doubts.
- Gather as much evidence as possible—copies of assignments, tests, e-mails, etc.



+ What do you do if you have a disruptive student?



■ Prevention

- Deal directly with disruptive students early on in the semester, and refer them to the University's Student Code of Conduct. (<http://www.drs.pitt.edu/studentconduct>)

■ Solutions

- Call campus police (412-624-2121) if you feel threatened.
- Avoid speaking with angry or aggressive students alone or in an isolated area.
- Contact your department chair to make him or her aware of the situation, and ask for advice on how to proceed.
- Contact the Office of Student Conduct to discuss student conduct.



The Bottom Line on Difficult Situations



- When in a difficult situation, always communicate with your advisor, supervisor or department chair about what to do; they can provide you with support.
- Keep a written record of what happened.
- Follow University Policy and use your best judgment.

+ Distressed Students

During your time as a TA, it is likely you will encounter:

- Grieving Students
- Depressed or Anxious Students
- Students Abusing Alcohol or Other Substances



+ Grieving Students

- Be willing to extend deadlines.
- Avoid clichés like “time will help,” or statements that might invalidate their experience.
- Suggest counseling if the student seems distraught.
- Expect that time will be required for a student to return to their normal state of functioning.





How to Help a Depressed Student

- Refer them to the Counseling Center (412-648-7930); **see p. 10** for information.
 - The Counseling Center can work with the student and professors to determine the best course of action re: schoolwork.
- Be compassionate. It is not, however, your job to act as a counselor or confidante.
- **Do not ignore** evidence of self-harm or expressions of a desire to die.





If you think a student is likely to harm him/herself or others:

- You need to call the police, not the Counseling Center.
- Call 911 or Pitt's police-(412)624-2121.
- The police will escort him/her to the Counseling Center or get him/her the help needed.
- Program the phone number for Pitt police into your telephone.
 - If an ambulance or other help is required, they will make that call and direct help to you.





Students Abusing Alcohol and Other Substances



Symptoms of Substance Abuse:

- Frequently absent.
- Falling asleep in class.
- Mood swings.
- Defensive behavior.
- Difficulty walking and talking.
- Smell of alcohol or other substances.



How to Help a Student with Substance Abuse Problems



- Refer them to the Counseling Center (412-648-7930).
- Describe your concerns to the student, focusing on facts and the evidence that caused your concern.
- As before, you are not expected to act as a counselor.

+ The Counseling Center's Guide for to Working with Distressed Students

http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/PDFsandForms/Counseling/helping_distressed_students_guide1.pdf

+ University Policies

- Policy Statement for TAs, TFs and Graduate Student Assistants

<http://www.pitt.edu/~graduate/TATFGSAPolicyStatement.pdf>

- Guidelines on relationships between faculty members and students

<http://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-04-03.html>

- Graduate Student Parental Accommodation Guidelines

http://www.provost.pitt.edu/documents/Grad_Parental_Accommodation_Guidelines2011.pdf



**GRADUATE
STUDENT
TEACHING
INITIATIVE**

Pitt

UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR
TEACHING AND LEARNING

Cheating & Plagiarism

New TA Orientation

+ Objectives

- Define cheating and plagiarism.
- Identify methods of cheating and plagiarism.
- Identify ways to detect and prevent cheating and plagiarism.
- Apply the University of Pittsburgh's Academic integrity Policy.



+ What is Cheating?

“To use unfair or dishonest methods to gain an advantage; to influence the outcome of something through the use of fraud, deceit, or trickery that escapes observation; get something by dishonesty or deception.”

(Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary
[<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>:2017]).



+ Why do students cheat?

SHOW VIDEO

+ Cheating can include:

- Use of unauthorized materials, sources, or devices on any exam, quiz, lab, or assignment.
- Providing unauthorized assistance to another person.
- Receiving unauthorized assistance from another person.
- Utilizing or acting as a substitute.
- Providing aid to another student, knowing such aid is expressly prohibited by the instructor, for work to be submitted for academic credit.
- Violating disciplinary ethics.

Office of the Provost, University of Pittsburgh. "Guidelines on Academic Integrity" 2009. p. 6.
https://provost.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/academic_integrity_guidelines.pdf

+ How to detect and prevent cheating

■ Detect:

- Look sideways at neighbor, look down towards lap or bag, looking excessively at the instructor.
- Whispering.

■ Prevent:

- Space out students
- Tell students to put away ALL personal belongings (including cell phones)
- Move around – continually monitor the class.
- Remind students to keep their eyes on the test.
- Do not allow students to leave room during the exam.

+ How to detect and prevent cheating: Grading

- Look for suspicious answer patterns
 - Identical right and wrong answers.
 - Similar answers with only slight variations.
 - Providing solution without showing work, or missing key steps.
 - Others?
- When grading:
 - Use a distinctly colored pen.
 - Circle error and write correct answer.

+ Applying University Policy

- Gather the evidence.
 - If possible, have another instructor observe the cheating.
- Discuss the violation of the integrity policy with a supervisor.
- Talk to the student (calmly!)
 - Inform him/her that you have evidence that alleges that he/she has committed an offense related to academic integrity.
- Refer the student to the academic integrity clause of the syllabus, and **IMPLEMENT THE CONSEQUENCES.**





Applying University Policy

- Agree in written form on a solution to the conflict that includes:
 - Acceptance of the violation.
 - Penalty that has been agreed upon or is established in the syllabus.
- If an informal agreement is reached, the matter should be considered closed.
 - Submit a written record of agreement to Dean's office (it does not go to student's file; it is destroyed after graduation).
- If no agreement is reached, then you or the instructor must submit a letter to the school's Academic Integrity Office and formal proceedings are initiated.





Print this page, complete it in a timely fashion, and send it to the appropriate address below.

Student Name: _____	Course number: _____
Student ID: _____	Course name: _____
Date of Incident: _____	Faculty name: _____
Term of Incident: _____	Faculty phone/e-mail: _____

Brief description of violation (if necessary, additional sheets may be used).

Brief description of discussion held with student(s).

Sanction determined by instructor.

_____	_____
Student's signature accepting sanction	Instructor's signature accepting sanction

For violations involving **undergraduate** students, send to:

Adriana Helbig, Assistant Dean
Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences
Undergraduate Studies
140 Thackeray Hall

For violations involving **graduate** students, send to:

Tara Meyer, Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies
Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences
Graduate Studies
5141 Sennott Square

For more information, please review the Dietrich School's Academic Integrity guidelines at www.as.pitt.edu/fac/policies/academic-integrity.

+ Communication is the key to prevention!

- Communicate with your students
 - Review university and course academic integrity policy
 - Be specific about assignment expectations and materials
 - Include statement on academic integrity and cheating on exam.
 - Specify consequences for violations (fail assignment vs fail course)

+ Cheating and Plagiarism:

Questions?

