

# UD Department of Mathematical Sciences General Guidelines for Graduate Student Job Duties

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These are general guidelines to be followed as you perform your duties in the Department of Mathematical Sciences as a Teaching Assistant (TA), Graduate Assistant (GA), Research Assistant (RA), or if you receive any kind of support from the Department or the University — this includes any fellowship from other sources, since you have an office in the Department. These guidelines are in addition to all University requirements described in the [Academic Regulations for Graduate Students](#) section of the Graduate Catalog as well as in the [Student Guide to University Policies](#). You should adhere to these principles, but you should also use your common sense in dealing with situations which are not covered by this document or by any other University and departmental rules and regulations. In case you are uncertain about how to resolve any issues that you may encounter as a TA or GA, you should consult the following UD resources available online: [Guidelines for Graduate Students on Fellowship or Assistantship Contracts](#) and the [Graduate Student Handbook of the Department of Mathematical Sciences](#) (a.k.a. the Blue Book).

If you cannot find the answer in the documents listed above, or in these guidelines, then you should consult with the instructor of the course you are a TA/GA for, the Director of Graduate Studies, or the Associate Chair. If anything stated in these guidelines is not clear to you, ask the Associate

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Chair for clarification — do not just assume that you can interpret it one way or the other if it is not very clear to you.

You will be representing the Department and the University when teaching undergraduates, and as such you can enhance or taint our reputation. You are expected to conduct yourself according to the University's high standards, and to do your work to the best of your abilities.

From the [Guidelines for Graduate Students on Fellowship or Assistantship Contracts \( Effective 2010 Fall\)](#):

*An offer of continuation of the appointment is contingent upon satisfactory performance of assigned duties each semester, continued academic eligibility in each semester (minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00), compliance with the University's Code of Conduct, availability of funds and stated policies of the program as to the number of semesters that a student is eligible to receive fellowships or assistantships.*

## 1 Workload

Students who receive 100% of the minimum stipend and 100% tuition scholarship may not hold additional employment on or off campus. As with any professional appointment, the amount of service may vary from week to week, but the average is usually expected to be no more than 20 hours of service per week for the UD minimum stipend.

The Department will strive to assign you no more than 12–15 hours per week on average for teaching duties during the regular semesters (Fall and Spring). Work will be assigned to you by the course instructors and by the Associate Chair (proctoring). If you find that the duties consistently demand more than 15 hours per week, speak first with the instructor about finding ways to reduce your time commitment. If the issue persists after that conversation, you are advised to discuss it with the Associate Chair or Graduate Director.

## 2 TA responsibilities

You are expected to follow the instructions given to you by the course instructor(s), and to respond to her/him/them in a timely fashion. Email is the most frequently used means of communication between instructors, TAs and students in a course, so you must check and answer your email daily (University account) so as to respond to your supervisor's and students' questions and/or requests in a timely fashion.

Each course instructor should set clear expectations for how discussion or laboratory class time is to be spent. It is your responsibility to be completely familiar with the course materials — textbook sections, websites, software, homework assignments — before each class meeting with students. You should never be idle or cancel a recitation or lab meeting on your own. If you can not attend to your recitation session or lab for any reason, you should communicate the fact to your instructor **and** the Associate Chair as soon as possible, so that arrangements for a substitute can be made; communication should be made **in writing** unless it is impossible for you to do so — an email is best. Informal arrangements for a substitute should **never** be made — approval of the Associate Chair is necessary. Absence is justified only by extenuating circumstances beyond your control, or for approved departmental travel to attend special events such as conferences.

During the recitation sessions and labs you may give students as much time to ask questions as they need. However, you should also prepare for the possibility that few questions will be asked, and plan activities that will make all of the time well spent. Always be prepared to review material as needed, and to discuss specific problems that help students understand the topics covered in the lectures. Lack of preparation will be obvious to the students, and it will certainly lead to student complaints. Talk about best teaching practices with your fellow graduate students and faculty, and try to learn from their experiences. You are encouraged to attend the Department's regular teaching seminar. If you are concerned about some issue during your teaching, talk to your instructor or the Associate Chair promptly.

You will also be expected to hold office hours; it is best to schedule them in agreement with the course instructor in order to avoid holding office hours at the same times.

In addition to your teaching responsibilities, you will be assigned proctoring duties for exams, including final exams, so you should not make travel or any other plans to leave the University before the final exam period is over, and the final exams for your course(s) are graded. In summary:

- Follow the instructions given by your supervisor (the course instructor);
- Check and answer your udel.edu email daily;
- Prepare every recitation and lab carefully; do not rely on “winging it”;
- Hold office hours and consider the students’ needs;
- Do not cancel recitation sessions or labs arbitrarily;
- Plan on being available until after the final exams are given and graded.

## **2.1 Time for each activity**

An estimate of the average weekly time you are expected to spend on each teaching related activity is given below.

- Teaching activities related to the assigned course (11 hours)
  - 4 hours of classroom teaching;
  - 3 hours holding office hours;
  - 2–3 hours of preparation for classroom teaching;
  - 2 hours organizing the production of course materials, entering grades, communicating with the instructor and the students, including email and appointments outside office hours as needed.
- Proctoring and grading (1 hour)
  - Proctoring and grading exams as assigned by the course instructor and the Associate Chair during the semester and final exam period.

- Professional Teaching Development (3 hours)
  - Observing the instructor's lecture and/or discussion and lab sessions conducted by other TAs, at the discretion of the course instructor or course coordinator;
  - Participating in the [Center for Teaching & Assessment of Learning](#) seminars and/or in the [Higher Education Teaching Certification \(HETC\)](#) Program activities, if so chosen;
  - Attending teaching seminars and activities promoted by the Department, or training sessions requested by the instructor or course coordinator;
  - Participating in webinars on new technologies and techniques; practicing with the technology tools used at UD, etc.

## 2.2 Student's right to privacy

All UD instructors are responsible for becoming familiar with the *The Family Education Rights & Privacy Act*, known as [FERPA](#) or the Buckley Amendment, a federal law passed in 1974. The link is to a summary provided by the Registrar. **Violations of FERPA can lead to lawsuits against the perpetrator, the Department and the University, so please be very careful not to violate federal law.** Some common mistakes can be avoided by observing the following are actions **not allowed under FERPA**:

- Sharing information about students with third parties, parents or others unless the student has provided written consent specifying what information you may share (e.g. when writing letters of recommendation).
- Sharing Directory Information (address, email, etc.) without a written release from a student who has a FERPA restriction.
- E-mailing students any confidential information including grades, unless specifically requested through their UD e-mail account. This information can **ONLY** be released directly to the student in person, on UDSIS, on UD-supported Learning Management Systems (Sakai and

Canvas), or through UD e-mail. Posting confidential information to other websites, e-mail addresses, blogs, etc., is not allowed.

- Releasing a student's class schedule. If there is an emergency in which an individual needs to locate a student, refer the individual to Public Safety.
- Asking students in a class to hand back graded work to other students.
- Leaving graded student work in a public area.
- Sharing or discussing education records with your colleagues or co-workers unless a legitimate education need exists.
- Posting grades in a manner that easily identifies students.
- Allowing another person to collect graded student work under any circumstances.

In particular, note that the practice of collecting student work to be graded, or leaving graded student work, in a box outside an office is a clear violation of FERPA. Also, showing the grade of a student to another student or anyone else is a clear violation of FERPA. **Note: Parents of students may call you and ask to discuss their children work — do not do so, as this would be a violation of FERPA.** Refer parents to the Associate Chair, if they insist.

## 2.3 Dealing with students

Students should be treated with respect and sympathy — arrogance and disdain are not acceptable attitudes. In particular, students may ask questions that show a lack of knowledge of prerequisite material. This should be viewed as an opportunity for a quick review of background material that may have been forgotten, if you find that several students have the same question (easily determined by asking other students to respond), or if it takes very little time to answer the question. If it is something that seems to be an issue with only one or two students, and it will take a little longer to answer, you may offer to answer outside class time. But, you should **not** just respond

that the student should know the answer — this attitude only discourages students from asking questions and from participating in class. Probably the best guide is to think about how you would like to be treated by your TA. On the other hand, kindness and sympathy are not to be confused with lack of control in the classroom; neither it is to be confused with making everything “easy” for the students. They should expect to be challenged, to put effort into learning the subject, to behave appropriately in the classroom, and to follow the rules set out on the syllabus given by the course instructor. In summary:

- Be kind and responsive to your students, but expect them to behave according to the University code of conduct, and to put in the necessary effort in learning the subject matter;
- Arrive to class at least 5 minutes before its start — late arrivals are not acceptable;
- Maintain control in the classroom;
- Enforce course rules.

## 2.4 Classrooms and Labs

Room assignments are accessible through the [Faculty Center on UDSIS](#).

The Registrar may need to make classroom changes very close to the start of classes. Instructors and TAs should check to confirm their classroom assignments on the day of the first class (or the day before) in order to avoid going to the wrong room.

It is recommended that instructors and TAs check their room assignments early on to make sure that those are workable for the class being taught; any special room requests should be submitted to Ms. Betty Walls ([bwalls@udel.edu](mailto:bwalls@udel.edu)) before the semester starts. Please, do not seek other faculty or TAs trying to make side deals or swaps. Any room change has to be properly entered into the system so that the correct information is available to anyone who needs it.

Students are not allowed in the Ewing computer classrooms (101, 205 and 207) unsupervised. Please make sure to check that all students have left the room, that the lights are off, and that the door is securely locked when you leave the labs after teaching, or after any other activity there. Doors do not always fully close automatically, and you may need to push them to make sure they are locked.

## 2.5 Teaching special sessions

If you are assigned a course to teach in the **summer** or **winter sessions**, you will have additional responsibilities. You will need to prepare a syllabus that conforms to University and departmental guidelines, and you must follow the rules set out on the syllabus. The syllabus must be approved by the Associate Chair before distribution to your class, unless you are teaching STEM Calculus (MATH24X), in which case you should submit your syllabus for approval of the course coordinator. Some obvious rules worth emphasizing again are:

- You must prepare a syllabus to be distributed to the students on the first day of classes. The syllabus has to be approved by the Associate Chair or Calculus Coordinator prior to distribution.
- No arbitrary class cancellations: If you are unable to teach your class due to extenuating circumstances, you must inform the Associate Chair as soon as possible so that arrangements for a substitute instructor can be made; communication should be made **in writing** unless it is impossible for you to do so — an email is best. It is **not acceptable** to ask a friend to replace you, or to cancel the class, without approval from the Associate Chair.
- Midterm exams are to be given on the days specified on the syllabus; the final exam is to be given on the day and location specified by the Registrar's Office. It is not acceptable to have take-home exams or to end classes before the date specified in the [University Academic Calendar](#). So, you should not make travel or any other plans to leave the University before the final exams are given and graded, and the final course grades are submitted.



- Final exams as well as all grading records should be kept for a period of one year. If you will be absent for a long period of time after teaching during winter or summer, you should leave all records as well as the final exams with the Associate Chair, just in case a student has an inquiry during your absence.
- For large copying jobs you should not use the departmental copying machines; large jobs should be submitted to the University printing facility. Multiple copies of any document should not be made on departmental printers — print one copy and make additional copies on copying machines.

## 2.6 Disability Support Services

The University's Office of Disability Support Services ([DSS](#)) takes care of proper certification of students who need special arrangements in taking classes, taking exams, etc. When a student is certified by DSS, it is not up to the instructor to question whether the student actually has the need identified by DSS — we must abide by University policies.

Be mindful that DSS accommodations are a private issue and should only be discussed in private with each student involved — see Section 2.2.

When receiving an email from DSS informing that specific students should have special accommodations, whether to take exams in their center facilities, with more time, or any other identified need, compliance with the instructions received from DSS is not an option. They request that exams be sent to them 24 hours in advance of the time for the exam. If the instructor does not have the exam ready by then, she/he must call the DSS Office and make arrangements so that the exam will be delivered to them at least 30 minutes ahead of the starting time; DSS should be made fully aware that the exam will not be delivered 24 hours ahead of time. That said, it is best to have the exam delivered to the DSS Office 24 hours in advance. In order to avoid abuse, the following should be kept in mind:

(a) If a student is certified by DSS for special accommodations, the instructor will receive an email from DSS at the start of the semester with the name of

the student and a description of the type of special accommodations needed (extra time, special room, etc.). It is important to save such an email from DSS with other class files.

(b) Once DSS sends the notification, it is up to the student to communicate to the instructor, ahead of each exam, the intention to take advantage of those special accommodations. This is done by the student filling out a web form (UDSIS) which in turn generates an email to the instructor. DSS does not receive a copy of the form, and therefore does not check to see if the student who filled out the electronic form has been certified for such accommodations after the form is submitted. If the instructor does not check the request against the notifications received from DSS (see (a) above), a cheating student will go unnoticed. So, the instructor should:

(c) Check the request received from a student against the notification received from DSS to make sure that they match. If they do not match, the instructor should call DSS to verify the source of the discrepancy. The instructor should request an email from DSS if they just failed to send one. Otherwise, if the student is not certified, the instructor must report the student (keeping all the evidence) to the [Office of Student Conduct](#).

## 2.7 Improving teaching skills

The University has some useful resources to help you improve your teaching skills and your interaction with your students. One such resource is:

- [Center for Teaching & Assessment of Learning](#). In particular, if you wish, you can participate in the [HETC Program](#).

A useful fact to keep in mind for classroom teaching is that students like to take notes for subsequent review, and what goes into their notes is whatever you write on the blackboard. So, in addition to a verbal explanation of the ideas involved in solving a problem, you should write all the work on the board, so that what they copy into their notebooks makes sense to them upon reviewing the material. Properly writing the solution of problems on the board will also help the students by showing them the proper form to

### 3 GRADING RESPONSIBILITIES (GA)

present their written work on exams and homework. This will also help when grading their work, as it improves the likelihood that they will present complete solutions and write them clearly.

## 3 Grading responsibilities (GA)

If you are a Graduate Assistant, your primary responsibility is grading for designated courses as specified by the course instructor(s) or coordinator(s), but you will also be expected to participate in professional teaching development and proctoring duties.

### 3.1 Time for each activity

An estimate of the average weekly time you are expected to spend on each activity is given below.

- Grading activities related to the assigned course (12 hours)
  - 10 hours grading course assignments — quizzes, homework, projects, labs, etc.;
  - 1 hour organizing grading materials and entering grades;
  - 1 hour communicating with the instructor.
- Proctoring and grading (1 hour)
  - Proctoring and grading exams as assigned by the course instructor and the Associate Chair during the semester and final exam period.
- Professional Teaching Development (3 hours)
  - Observing the instructor's lecture and/or discussion and lab sessions conducted by other TAs, at the discretion of the course instructor or course coordinator; this activity may be **required** if you are an international student and you have not yet received your teaching certification allowing you to classroom teach;

#### 4 RESEARCH RESPONSIBILITIES (RA)

- Participating in the [Center for Teaching & Assessment of Learning](#) seminars and/or in the [Higher Education Teaching Certification \(HETC\)](#) Program activities, if so chosen;
- Attending teaching seminars and activities promoted by the Department, or training sessions requested by the instructor or course coordinator (Such attendance may be required for students who have not yet been certified for classroom teaching by the English Language Institute.);
- Participating in webinars on new technologies and techniques; practicing with the technology tools used at UD, etc.

## 4 Research responsibilities (RA)

Expectations for RAs should be discussed and negotiated between the student and the faculty member(s) providing the financial support before the term of research support begins.

Note that RAs may be required to perform research during a Winter term that comes between Fall and Spring semesters of continuous research support. If the funding faculty chooses this option, which is specified in the funding contract, the student may not take any additional employment, including teaching, during that Winter term. Financial support for research during the Summer terms is negotiated and paid separately from the other semesters.

In addition to their research activities, RAs may also be assigned proctoring duties by the Associate Chair, including proctoring during the final exam period. If there is a conflict with your research supervisor over a proctoring assignment, contact the Associate Chair or Graduate Director.

## Statement of Agreement

I have read, I understand and I promise to adhere to the Department of Mathematical Sciences General Guidelines for Graduate Student Job Duties, version dated August 31, 2015.

Date:

Name:

Signature:

[Detach and submit this page dated and signed to Ms. See before the start of the semester.]