

Roles and Responsibilities of a TA

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Roles of a TA

Roles are many:

- subject expert and facilitator of learning
- role model and advisor for students
- assistant to a professor
- representative of a department/faculty
- employee of the university

TA acts as liaison, providing bridge and filter between student and instructor.

These roles may be very rewarding or very trying.

Duties

- assists with marking (most common)
- leading seminars
- discussions or laboratory sessions
- preparing teaching materials
- occasional lecturing in the absence of instructor
- Invigilation of tests and exams

Range of TA duties may be wide, but time devoted to duties should not exceed an average of 4-5 hours per week (56 hours total) per course.

Roles you will play and duties you perform as a TA vary from course to course.

Responsibilities

Teaching Assistants have responsibilities to:

- (1) professional standards of the discipline,
- (2) general academic standards of the university,
- (3) Department/Faculty,
- (4) students,
- (5) professor being assisted,
- (6) teacher
- (7) themselves.

Diverse set of roles played by TA also carries potential for serious value conflicts.

Responsibilities (cont)

(1) Yourself

You are in the graduate program primarily as a student and should therefore ensure that:

- (a) you get your own work done
- (b) work is done within a reasonable amount of time
- (c) do best job possible on your own assignments.

(2) Teacher

As a teacher, your responsibilities are primarily to students. Show that you want to help students with their learning. You should:

- (a) ensure that students know who you are
- (b) keep up with progress of course
- (c) be familiar with course material
- (d) be available to students, especially during your stated office hours
- (e) use appropriate teaching methods and techniques.

(3) Assistant

As an assistant to a faculty member, your responsibilities are primarily directed towards that individual. It is your responsibility to:

- (a) discuss with instructor exactly what your duties and responsibilities will be for course
- (b) be familiar with text book and course outline
- (c) know technical details of course (e.g., number and weight of assignments)
- (d) keep in contact with instructor of course.

(4) Professional

In your capacity as an expert, you are expected to represent department/faculty by being knowledgeable in subject matter of the course. Your responsibilities are to:

- (a) do sufficient background reading so that you may answer the students' questions carefully and accurately
- (b) remember your position in department, and not represent yourself as THE authority;
- (c) be intellectually honest and admit when you don't know the answer to a student's question.

If you want to be a future professor, being a great TA is a good step to take.

Questions?