



SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

University of California, Merced
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Date: August 14, 2019
To: Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows
From: Director of Graduate Program Services
Subject: Supplemental Teaching Assistant Memo regarding Duties, support, and evaluation of TAs

Introduction

Instruction provided by Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Teaching Fellows (TFs) is an important component of UC Merced's undergraduate programs. Service by graduate students as TAs/TFs is also a valuable part of graduate education. As a TA or TF in the School of Engineering, 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.

This memo describes your responsibilities as a TA, as well as the support provided to you and the procedure for evaluation.

TA/TF Employment Eligibility

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

1. **Enrollment:** TAs or TFs must be a full-time UCM graduate student enrolled in at least 12 units during the semester of appointment. Graduate students do not need to be registered in courses during summer session; however, they must be an active UCM graduate student.
2. **Academic Standing:** All students must be in good academic standing as defined in the Graduate Policies and Procedures
https://graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/sites/graduatedivision.ucmerced.edu/files/documents/PDFs/uc_merced_graduate_policies_and_procedures_handbook_18-19.pdf.
3. **Appointment:** During any academic year, a graduate student may not be appointed in any capacity by the University of California beyond a maximum of 49.99% time.
4. **Application:** Any graduate student seeking employment as a TA/TF must submit an application for a position through the UCM employment web site, AP Recruit, at <https://aprecruit.ucmerced.edu/>.
5. **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, and who wish 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 Policies and Procedures Handbook.

Conditions of Employment

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 Policies and Procedures 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>

Teaching Assistant:

A TA is not responsible for the instructional content of a course, selection of student assignments, planning of examinations, or determining the term grade for students. In addition, the TA is not 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.

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Teaching Fellow:

Subject to the general supervision of a faculty member designated in catalogs 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).

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 the required training, repeat the training without the repeated training counting toward the workload. New TAs are required to participate in Graduate and Research 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 and Instructional Support for TAs

Teaching Assistants are expected to work under the direction of the primary course instructor. That person should clearly outline the goals of the course and your duties, and provide you with the support you need to carry them out.

Should you feel that your duties are not adequately defined or that you are not being provided with the necessary direction or support you need to carry them out, you should first discuss the matter with your primary course instructor. You are also welcomed to contact the Graduate Staff at soe-grstaff@ucmerced.edu

For Instructional Logistics (office space, keys, desk copies, etc.) visit: http://engineering.ucmerced.edu/instructional_logistics

Workload and Responsibilities

For your current semester course assignment, please refer to your Appendix C (Description of Duties). In addition, 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: <https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/>.

Most TA appointments are at 50% time. A 50% TA should expect to spend an average of about 20 hours per week on teaching 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. You are also welcomed to contact the Graduate Staff at soe-grstaff@ucmerced.edu

Before Classes Start

- 1. All TAs/TFs must accept or decline their appointment within one week of receiving the Academic Student Employee: Description of Duties (Appendix C). Failure to accept an appointment in writing within one calendar week of receipt will nullify the appointment.***
- TAs/TFs must be prepared to attend meetings with the instructor in charge of your course to discuss his/her goals for the course. In addition, you must be prepared to perform other duties as assigned at least one week prior to the scheduled start of classes. If the instructor has not contacted you prior to the day before classes start, please contact the instructor to arrange for an initial meeting.
- If you are assigned to a course with multiple TAs/TFs, please work together to determine who will cover which

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section and then report your final sections/schedules to your primary course instructor and the School of Engineering graduate staff at soe-grstaff@ucmerced.edu

4. Attend any required TA/TF training sessions and/or laboratory safety instruction meetings.
5. Familiarize yourself with UC Merced's academic regulations regarding such issues as grading policy, dropping and adding courses, etc. TAs do not assign course grades and cannot approve dropping or adding courses, but you should be aware of the policies.
6. If you have questions about how to use student learning outcomes in your teaching, talk to your primary course instructor or contact the Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning (<https://cetl.ucmerced.edu/>)
7. TAs/TFs play a central role in ensuring that the UC Merced's Academic Honesty Policy is upheld. All TAs/TFs should familiarize themselves with the UCM Code of Student Conduct available at <http://studentconduct.ucmerced.edu/>
8. For all instructional support needs (i.e. textbooks, supplies, office hour room assignment, room access, etc.), please visit http://engineering.ucmerced.edu/instructional_logistics

During the semester

1. Prepare for class and give clear presentations of the material to your students.
2. Intentionally design your instruction to support student achievement of the student learning outcomes and communicate to your students how each assignment, discussion section or laboratory is linked to their achievement of the course's learning outcomes. Be sure everything you do in class is related to the goals and student learning outcomes of the course. Explicitly teaching to help students achieve the course's student learning outcomes and communicating this clearly to your students is very important.
3. Maintain a professional and respectful relationship with your students.
4. Be on time for all assigned meetings of your section(s).
5. Hold at least two hours of office hours per week and be prepared to devote all of that time to meeting with students. Be sure the students in your section(s) and your primary course instructor know your office hours and location.
6. Attend lectures as required by primary course instructor.
7. Attend all TA/TF meetings and/or instructional laboratory meetings, which may involve performing laboratory experiments ahead of time, as required by primary course instructor.
8. Write or provide questions for quizzes and exams as required by primary course instructor.
9. Work exams and quizzes ahead of time as requested and report problems to the primary course instructor in a timely manner. Be careful not to divulge specific information about the content of upcoming exams or quizzes to students.
10. Proctor exams including midterms as scheduled by the primary course instructor and final exams as scheduled by the Registrar. Proctor exams actively to guard against cheating. Be alert to all forms of academic dishonesty and inform the course instructor immediately if you suspect problems.
11. Grade laboratory reports, homework problems, quizzes, and exams as required by primary course instructor and submit all scores for which you are responsible to the primary course instructor, and/or post scores to CATCOURSES as required, before the designated deadline.
12. Return graded materials to students. **Note that privacy laws require graded materials be returned to students individually, not placed in a pile to be picked up.** Information about student privacy: registrar.ucmerced.edu/policies/family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act-ferpa.
13. Convey to your primary course instructor in a timely manner any problems with individual students.

After the semester is over

1. Provide any other input on the course requested by the primary instructor.
2. Depending on the date of the final exam, the grading process may extend into the week after the instructional end of the semester

Conflicts of interest

TAs/TFs must refrain from any activity or conduct that creates an apparent or actual conflict of interest. A TA/TF 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 your 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.

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TAs/TFs are allowed and encouraged to offer help to their students outside of regular class or office hours. However, such sessions should be conducted in a professional manner within the duties of the teaching assignment. A TA/TF may not request or accept any form of additional compensation from any student in the course to which he/she is assigned.

Absences, Coverage, and Leave Requests

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. Should you be unable to meet a scheduled section because of a medical or personal emergency, immediately inform the course instructor and email Shannon Adamson and we will attempt to find a replacement. Be prepared to provide documentation of the reason for cancellation. More than three such emergency absences during a semester must be taken as unpaid leave.

Special note regarding influenza (“flu”): The campus is encouraging students, TAs and instructors to stay home and away from others if they think they might have the flu or are experiencing flu symptoms. The flu usually starts suddenly and may include the following symptoms:

- *Fever (usually high)
- *Tiredness (can be extreme)
- * Body aches
- * Sore throat
- *Headache
- *Cough
- * Runny or stuffy nose
- *Diarrhea and vomiting

Leave Requests

In order to ensure proper coverage for leaves other than long-term leaves, TAs and TFs are expected to contact their 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 or TF is required to provide appropriate documentation. While it is the University’s responsibility to make arrangements for coverage, the TA or TF will assist as reasonably possible.

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. Be prepared to provide documentation of the reason for cancellation. For more information refer to the Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article 17 Leaves,

https://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.

Additional Resources

University of California TA policies <http://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/academic-personnel-policy/index.html>

Academic Personnel Manual 410 <https://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/files/apm/apm-410.pdf>

University of California, Merced Academic Personnel Office: <http://academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/>

<http://academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/resources/academic-titles/graduate-student>

Graduate Student Child Care Reimbursement Policy: <http://academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/node/300>

Laboratory safety: Environmental Health and Safety: <http://ehs.ucmerced.edu/>

General advice, support, and training for TAs: Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning: <http://cetl.ucmerced.edu/>