

**Guidelines for Faculty**  
**Department of Political Science**  
August 16, 2012

Most teaching or research assistant assignments are for a maximum of 10 or 20 hours per week, and their assignments should take up no more than the assigned hours per week *on average*. For teaching assistants, office hours, teaching sections, attending lectures, grading, course administration, and meetings with supervising faculty all count toward these hours. In most cases, TAs will be assigned to a class with grading responsibilities determined by the faculty supervisor, although on occasion TAs may be assigned their own class. For research assistants, all responsibilities associated with the research assignment including, but not limited to, meetings with faculty, background research, coding, computer time, and travel associated with the research should count toward the research assistant's hours.

**Supervising Teaching Assistants**

1. Teaching assistants are designated for primary use in one (and only one) course unless clearly stated in TA assignments otherwise. Their work should be for the class or classes in which they are assigned as a TA, and they should not routinely be assigned to do work for other classes. Because TAs are paid with state funds for instructional purposes, they cannot be reassigned to research. If TAs are underutilized after completing their work for their main assigned class, then the faculty supervisor can alter the assignments or workload in that course to take full advantage of TA time or notify the department head.
2. TAs may teach an occasional class session for the course that they are assigned (typically one or two in a semester). This should be done for purposes of enhancing their training, and graduate student teaching should generally be accompanied by evaluation by the faculty instructor.
3. TAs should have clearly defined tasks. The faculty supervisor should make these tasks explicit before the first class meets. These tasks may include, but are not limited to, providing administrative assistance in the course, delivering an occasional lecture, leading discussion sections, leading reviews, grading, and holding office hours. Any question about whether a task is appropriate or not should be addressed to the department head.
4. The undergraduate office staff is responsible for reproducing materials for class, including exams. These materials need to be submitted to the staff at least five working days in advance. This allows the department to find other options if the copier is unavailable, and allows materials for large classes to be sent out to printing services. Copying of course materials will be done in the order the work is received.
5. The department strongly recommends that faculty supervisors schedule regular weekly or biweekly meetings with teaching assistants, and that the schedule for the meetings be laid out at the beginning of the semester. Faculty supervisors should schedule meetings with teaching assistants during regular working hours. It goes without saying, that faculty will make every effort to schedule this meeting when the TAs are not in their regular graduate seminars.
6. Supervising faculty should give TAs reasonable notification of tasks in advance and should allow reasonable time for the tasks to be completed. Teaching assistants are not expected to be on call evenings or weekends, unless there is an emergency.
7. Faculty supervisors must provide written evaluations to the graduate director at the end of the semester.

8. Faculty supervisors should help TAs develop their teaching skills and teaching portfolios. This means TAs should be given opportunities, where possible, to lead their own classes or deliver lectures, to be involved in discussions about pedagogical goals, and to receive timely feedback.

### **Supervising Research Assistants**

1. Research assistants can perform better when they are given clearly defined tasks. Where possible the faculty supervisor should provide a set of goals the first time s/he meets with the research assistant, and suggest specific benchmarks for completion of the work.
2. The department strongly recommends that faculty supervisors schedule regular meetings with research assistants to assess progress on the tasks and to give feedback on the work completed. Such meetings should be scheduled during regular working hours.
3. Supervising faculty should give RAs reasonable notification of tasks in advance and should allow reasonable time for the tasks to be completed. It is strongly suggested that faculty supervisors encourage students to provide a schedule which documents hours they are available for research work. Faculty can also demand – if they wish – that students document the actual hours they spent engaged in research activities. Research assistants are not expected to be on call evenings or weekends, unless agreed upon in advance with their faculty supervisor.
4. If issues arise with the work provided by research assistants, the department strongly advises that faculty members inform the student in writing of the issues. Faculty are also encouraged to inform the director of graduate studies of recurring issues.
5. Faculty should provide written evaluations of RA performance to the graduate director at the end of the semester.
6. Where possible, faculty supervisors are encouraged to help RAs develop their research skills through their research assignments. This might include (but is not limited to) encouraging RAs to learn about the research question and accompanying literature, about the management of larger research projects, about research design or methodological issues. Faculty supervisors are under no obligation to co-author with their research assistants.