

Department of Mathematics¹
UCLA

TAing for Undergraduate Courses

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1 Introduction

Teaching assistantships are awarded on the basis of scholarship and promise as a teacher. The role of a Teaching Assistant, Teaching Associate, or Teaching Fellow (from now on referred to as TA in any of the three titles) is important both to undergraduate and graduate education. The goal of this handbook is to provide general information, to set forth the policies and procedures pertaining to TAs, and to provide some ideas about how to be a good teaching assistant in the department of Mathematics in specific. More general but also detailed information can be found in “The TA Handbook” by the OID at UCLA, which you should have received either at the campus wide TA Conference or at the Intensive Training in the department at the latest.

2 Important People

- *Chair:* Christoph Thiele, MS 6363B/(6191), x5-4984, *email:* <mailto:thiele@math.ucla.edu> thiele@math.ucla.edu
- *Chief Administrative Officer:* Judith Levin, MS 6363F, x5-4832, *email:* judith@math.ucla.edu judith@math.ucla.edu
- *Undergraduate Vice Chair:* Peter Petersen, MS 6913, x5-4149, *email:* petersen@math.ucla.edu petersen@math.ucla.edu
- *Graduate Vice Chair:* Don Blasius, MS 6364A/(6145), x5-4971/(x5-4341), *email:* blasius@math.ucla.edu blasius@math.ucla.edu
- *Student Affairs Supervisor:* Leticia Dominguez, MS 6356C, x5-8588, *email:* leticia@math.ucla.edu leticia@math.ucla.edu
- *TA Training Faculty Advisor:* Andrea Brose, MS 6167, x5-4314, *email:* abrose@math.ucla.edu abrose@math.ucla.edu
- *Graduate Advisor:* Magda (aka Maggie) Albert, room MS 6356, x5-4971, *email:* maggie@math.ucla.edu maggie@math.ucla.edu
- *Graduate Assistant:* Robin Krestalude, room MS 6356, x5-4971, *email:* robin@math.ucla.edu robin@math.ucla.edu

Teaching Assitant Consultants (TACs) 2007-2008

- Paul Bunn, MS 6603, x5-7239, *email:* paulbunn@math.ucla.edu
- John Leo, MS 6603, x5-7239, *email:* jleo@math.ucla.edu
- Zubin Gautham, MS 6603, x5-7239, *email:* sgautam@math.ucla.edu

3 Useful Websites

- Academic Calendar: www.registrar.ucla.edu/calendar
- UCLA General Catalog: www.registrar.ucla.edu/catalog
- Information on math undergrad programs: www.math.ucla.edu/ugrad
- Schedule of Classes for the current quarter: www.registrar.ucla.edu/schedule
- Course text and syllabus: www.math.ucla.edu/courses
- General course outlines: www.math.ucla.edu/ugrad/courses
- Class web page instructions: via links from www.math.ucla.edu/computing
- Class rosters: Log onto your MyUCLA account via my.ucla.edu.

4 The Job

4.1 Enrollment and Registration

TAs must be registered and enrolled graduate students at UCLA. All new TAs must enroll in 2 units of Math 495 in the Fall, unless they have passed Math 495 previously.

TAs are required to take at least 12.0 units. Half-time TAs can and should sign up for two, full-time TAs for four units of Math 375 with (one of) the instructor(s) of the course, if (s)he is not temporary faculty. If so, you sign up for Math 375 with the Graduate Vice Chair, currently, Don Blasius.

4.2 Workload

Beginning Fall quarter 2000, all Teaching Assistants (TAs) are covered by a collective bargaining agreement between the University and UAW. The [agreement](#) can be accessed on the Internet: see reference [7]. The terms of the contract must be adhered to.

In particular (Article 31 of the above), regarding workload:

- A TA with a 50% appointment (see section 4.3) shall not be assigned a workload of more than 220 hours per quarter. This standard shall apply proportionately to other percent appointments.
- In addition, a TA with an appointment of 50% or less shall not be assigned a workload of more than 40 hours in any one week. The number of hours worked in excess of twenty (20) hours per week may not total more than 50 hours per quarter.

4.3 Description of TA Commitment, Responsibilities and Limitations

The responsibilities of TAs extend from the beginning of the quarter through the end of finals week. Note that the beginning of the quarter is *not* first day of instruction, but usually about a week before the first day of instruction. This year the dates are Monday, September 24 (Fall 2007), Wednesday, January 2 (Winter 2008), and Wednesday, March 26 (Spring 2008). TAs are expected to be available during this period. Your responsibilities depend on your assignment and include, but are not limited to as described below.

If you have a 50% appointment you are a full-time TA and are assigned to two courses. If you have 25% appointment you are a half-time TA and are assigned to one course. Any one course could be either a lower division course (course number is less than 100), upper division course (course number is larger than 99, but smaller than 200), or a PIC course.

What follows is a brief description of what your *minimum* commitment will be for each of your courses. That is, the below is a lower bound on what you may be asked to do:

Lower Division

- hold two 50-minute discussion sections per week for two disjoint groups of about 30 students
- hold office hours and SMC as shown in table 1;

In addition there is a “Reader” assigned to your course. The reader is another person (often an undergraduate) who is assigned to grade homework or quizzes for your course (see 6.5). If the instructor assigns both quizzes and homework, you may be responsible for grading quizzes, too.

Upper Division

- hold one 50-minute discussion section per week for one group of about 30 students
- hold office hours as shown in table 1
- grade homework

Roughly the same description applies to TAing for graduate courses. As a rule of thumb, upper division courses usually require more work outside the classroom on your part, but many people find them more fulfilling than lower division courses.

PIC

- hold two 50-minute discussion sections per week for one group of about 30 students
- hold office hours in the PIC lab as well as in your office

Quizzes are rarely given during your meeting with students; weekly programming projects are submitted electronically by students, graded by another person designated as a “Reader” for the course (see 6.5), and returned to the students electronically. See also 6.7.

115A

- hold two 50-minute discussion sections per week for one group of students
- hold office hours as shown in table 1

Math 115A (Linear Algebra) is the first seriously proof-oriented course that most undergraduates take early, as it is required for many upper division courses. In contrast to all other classes' discussion sections, in the extra meeting per week the TA teaches new material namely some sections on language, proofs, and mathematical induction. For more information see <http://www.math.ucla.edu/ugrad/courses/math115ab/115Ainformation.shtml>.

Table 1: **Office Hours** *LD=Lower Division, UD=Upper Division, PIC=Program in Computing, SMC see section 5.1*

| <i>TAship</i> | <i>Assignment</i> | <i>Office Hour(s)</i> | <i>SMC Hour</i> |
|---------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Full Time | 2 LD | 2 | 1 |
| | 1 LD + 1 UD | 2 | 1 |
| | 1 LD + 1 PIC | 2 | 1 |
| | 1 UD + 1 PIC | 3 | 0 |
| | 2 UD | 3 | 0 |
| Half Time | 1 LD | 1 | 1 |
| | 1 UD | 2 | 0 |

All Courses In addition to the above described responsibilities that vary from assignment to assignment these are typical tasks you may be asked to do in any of the above courses:

- help proctoring exams or finding a qualified substitute
- grade exams
- administering a quiz in case the instructor chooses to give quizzes
- attending any meetings that the instructor schedules,
- recording test scores and doing computations on raw scores

Limitations Items you (TAs) may not be asked to do include:

- substituting for the instructor in lecture
- modifying exam scores
- assigning final grades

- selecting homework assignments, preparing examinations, or preparing quizzes

As listed above, faculty members in charge of the course have limits on what they may ask of TAs. They may not give TAs responsibility for the instructional content of any course, for the selection of student assignments, nor for the planning of examinations. A Teaching Fellow may be given complete responsibility for the instruction of a lower division course under the general supervision of a regular faculty member. If you have any questions about what constitutes “unfair practices” by the faculty, or if any conflict should arise between a faculty member and you, you should consult with the Teaching Assistant Faculty Advisor Andrea Brose or with the Graduate Vice Chair, currently Don Blasius.

University policy prohibits graduate students from being TAs for more than 12 quarters. Only in rare cases will exceptions be made to this policy.

4.4 You and the Instructor

Because you may also assist in other courses and are taking courses as students yourselves, you are not expected to attend the instructor’s lectures on a regular basis. However, new TAs are expected to make arrangements with instructors to attend at least three lectures per quarter. But even later in your teaching career it is advised to attend the instructor’s lecture to see and hear how the material is taught, what is emphasized etc.

Inform yourself about the homework assignments well in advance so that you can work through the problems before your discussion section.

Some instructors monitor the performance of their TAs on their own by occasionally attending portions of discussion sessions. You may want to invite your instructor to do so. This may help you both, getting feedback on your teaching as well as possible another source for letters of recommendation when it comes to looking for jobs.

4.5 Absences

Unexcused absences are not permitted and may be cause for termination of your TAship.

Illness In case of a sudden illness, you must call Leticia Dominguez (310-825-8588) or Maggie Albert (310-825 4971) as soon as possible. You also should inform the instructor of the course to keep him/her in the picture. When you are back on campus, you need to fill out the TA Absence Approval Form (see page 24).

Conference, Workshop, Jury Duty . . . In the (rare) event that you cannot teach or perform duties listed above, including not being able to hold your office hour or your SMC hour because of academic reasons such as attending a conference or workshop, or because of jury duty you must turn in a form, filled out front and back, well ahead of the time of your proposed absence. This form is obtainable from Robin Krestalude, in MS 6356 and is also

attached on page 24 of this manual. Expect to provide necessary paperwork that documents your reason for the proposed absence. It is your responsibility to make arrangements to cover your absence.

4.6 Success

Continued service as a TA is dependent upon conscientious teaching and satisfactory academic performance.

The quality of your work as a Teaching Assistant, your attitude toward this important teaching function, and your cooperation are all important parts of your record as a graduate student. These factors are included in all letters of recommendation (e.g. for fellowships and employment) issued by the department. What your students learn in the course depends significantly on your attitude and ability to help them learn, particularly for the great majority of students who are neither at the top nor the bottom.

Each year the department nominates one or two teaching assistants for the university-wide **Distinguished Teaching Award**. The selection is based on student and faculty evaluations. Nominees also receive Department recognition.

5 The Nitty Gritty

5.1 TA Assignments

Normally, you will receive your assignment to specific courses the week before classes begin. If you have questions about your assignment, first see Leticia Dominguez. We try to assign courses according to preference sheets.

5.2 Student Math Center (SMC)

The SMC is located in MS 3974 and offers group study and tutorials for lower division mathematics courses led by TAs. It starts on the third day of instruction and lasts through tenth week of classes. For hours which vary from quarter to quarter see www.math.ucla.edu/undergrad/smc.shtml. Depending on your assignment you will spend some time there (see table 1 on page 6). You sign up for your SMC hour at the beginning of the quarter, in the front office. The SMC can be somewhat stressful, but you should keep a few things in mind:

- The SMC gets busy, especially during midterms; while you should try to help as many people as possible, don't sweat it if you can't help everyone.
- If several people are waiting for your help, try to get one group started working on a problem, and then rotate through the rest of the waiting students. Also, getting students in the same class working together can alleviate some of your burden.

- Don't just answer questions from students in your section. Your SMC hour is *not* an extension of your office hours.
- You are not required to help students from any upper division courses (i.e. courses numbered 100 or more). You're welcome to help them if you have time and no lower division students are present.

5.3 Software and Hardware for your Job

- Offices and Mailboxes: TAs are assigned offices and mailboxes. The Graduate Assistant makes and distributes these assignments. The mail room is locked and only those with keys are permitted in it (that is faculty, staff, graduate students, and readers). Thus: *Do not let anyone into the mailroom.*
- Copying Services: If you wish to have copies made of class materials, you must submit a request with the receptionist in MS 6363 at least two days in advance. TAs should not use the facilities in the copy room.
- Room Requests: If you wish to reserve a room for large office hours or a review session, see Leticia Dominguez in MS 6356.

6 Teaching

Getting off to a good start can save you a lot of trouble later on in the course.

6.1 Before Day One

- After receiving your assignment, get the textbooks and course outlines from Leticia Dominguez in MS 6356. (Please note, assignments can be changed, even in the first week of classes.)
- Contact the instructor in charge of the course. This may sometimes be difficult, as some faculty member return to campus only shortly before the quarter starts. You are off to a good start with the instructor if you made your first move.
- Get some chalk and/or wet erase board markers. Contact Julie in MS 6384.
- Find the classroom *before* the first day of class. Not all classes are held in the Math Sciences building and it can take up to 10 minutes to walk to North Campus.
- Meet with the instructor and ask him/her the following questions:
 - Are there any handouts?
 - Is there a homework assignment? When will it be assigned?

- How will the students (and *you*) find out what the assignment is?
- When will it be due?
- Who will collect and return it?
- What is the late homework policy?

- When are the midterms?
- Will there be quizzes in section?
- How will the grades be calculated?

- Assigned problems: Should you do any they ask for, some but not all, similar problems, give hints, and/or do problems after homework has been handed in?
- Anything particular for the first class?
- *How* and how often will you and instructor communicate during the quarter? For example be very clear on how often your instructor expects you to check your email and how soon to respond to his/hers.

Instructors vary on how formal they are about meeting with their TAs at the beginning of the quarter or during the term. If you feel comfortable with the course, this is fine, but don't be afraid to ask to meet with them to discuss any matter if you feel the need.

- Write notes for yourself on what to say in your first class.
- Review the textbook.
- Decide on your office hours, fill out the door card you should receive in your mailbox early shortly before the quarter starts, and post it outside your office.

6.2 Day One

Day one of the Quarter is too important to throw away.

If all we do is call the roll and dismiss the class, what message are we sending? “I didn't really think about this class until now,” maybe, or, “You don't need to be any more serious about the material than I have been just now.”

- Take the following with you to class:
 - a plan of what you want to say
 - chalk
 - textbook

- enrollment list²
 - syllabus and course handout
 - all the information you have obtained from the instructor
- Get there early. It’s less intimidating to watch the students come in one by one than to walk into a full classroom. Try to project an image of being friendly, yet in control.
 - Write the following on one corner of the board and leave it there for the entire period:
 - your name
 - email and *your* webpage
 - your office number
 - office hours (it’s okay if these are still tentative)
 - class number and name
 - class website address

You may want to write your office hours on the board at each meeting for the first few weeks to avoid having to answer the same question over and over.

- Explain the mechanics of the course; homework, exam grading, how to label homework so that it does not get lost - name on every sheet, TA’s name, lecture and section on first page.
- Ask for questions on the mechanics.
- Explain a little about yourself – a Ph.D./MA student, where you are from, and so forth.
- Ask students about themselves, how many are new to UCLA, what is their major, why are they taking the course? You shouldn’t necessarily go around the class and have them introduce themselves, but you should try to get the students talking, and make the class atmosphere seem friendly.
- Ask students to think of three reasons why/how an undergraduate may benefit from taking a math course.
- Give a “pep” talk:
 - Stress to the students that you are not there simply to do their homework. More importantly, explain to them why this is beneficial to them. Explain that in math, just as when playing the piano for example, they need to “practice”. Make sure they understand the need to look at their homework before coming to class.

²You can download it from <https://be.my.ucla.edu>.

Explain the futility of copying homework. In upper division courses especially, explain the benefits of forming a “study group,” and explain the difference between “working together” and everyone copying one person’s solution.

- Encourage them to go to your office hours, this is an excellent way for them to get one-on-one help and to ask questions they were too embarrassed to ask in class.
 - Encourage them to ask questions in class.
 - Explain the course, its application, importance, why you like it, what the main points are.
- Explain what you intend to do in section, and what the structure of the class will be. Let them know if there will be quizzes, and how you intend to help them with their homework.
 - If the instructor has asked you to do something, do it.

See also page 37 of the TA Handbook [2] 2007-2008 from OID.

6.3 After Day One - General Teaching Tips

Learning how to teach is like learning how to do anything else. You know a good teacher when you see one but it takes practice before you become good at it yourself. You are bound to make some mistakes when you start but if you try to be aware of them and correct them as you notice them, it won’t be long before you improve. The greatest teachers are those who continually work to improve their teaching.

Preparation The importance of preparing for class cannot be overemphasized. It is an integral part of teaching. Without a plan in mind of where you are going, how do you really know when or if you get there?

Think about the following: You want to go on a trip. You could just get into our car and start driving. Assume you have enough resources (i.e. time, money, gas and the like), you might, based on the laws of probability, get to your destination if you continued to drive long enough. But wouldn’t it be easier to take out a map, figure out where you want to go and then plan the best way to get there?

- Think about things you disliked your instructors doing and try not to do them ... and vice versa.
- Know which sections were covered by the instructor, and prepare those to make sure *you* know what is going on.
- *do* the problems (i.e. work them out completely) you’re likely to do in section, but anticipate that students may want help on other problems as well.

- Just knowing how to do a problem is not enough to prepare how to present a solution in a way that benefits the students most.
- Attend a lecture or two, in particular if you are TAing for a class you never took before.
- Work out any special explanations you think they will need.
- Think about what you will do if there are no questions, or too many questions.
- Pick a few problems that highlight the ideas of the week.
- Always come equipped with more problems than you think you can do, in case you do have time left.

In the Classroom When you teach a discussion section in a large lecture course, your primary responsibilities are to clarify and give examples of materials already presented in the lecture. Most of your time will be divided up between working examples to illustrate the material in lecture, answering questions on the lectures and homework, and sending students to the board to work problems.

Avoid doing the homework for your students. Doing the homework is the students' opportunity to learn as well as their part to get credit and a deserved grade for the class. Nevertheless, most likely you will be asked "Can you do problem n on page m , please?" Be prepared to offer a similar problem, hopefully more than just changing some numbers around. Refer to examples in the book which are like problem n . If it is a rather unique and more difficult problem, be prepared to either give them a hint on how to get started, or give a 'big picture' outline, where they still need to fill in the details (zoom into the big picture) in such a way, that they are still asked to *understand* the problem, rather than just copying a pattern.

You should neither hope for covering nor prepare to present brand new material in your sections. In first place, one discussion section usually covers material from three lectures, and most of the time your students will be more confused than you think and hope, and hence most of the time you will be challenged to choose what is most important to present, because you won't have enough time. In addition, the danger of presenting new material either incorrectly or in a confusing manner has far reaching consequences for the students.

Write as neatly as you can, stop every so often and wait until everyone has caught up with you. (Hint: at the end of lecture, before you erase the board, go to the back of the room, and look at your creation on the chalkboard!) The first section or two, stop intermittently and ask your students if they can read what you just wrote. Some basic communication hints:

- Do not write on the bottom of the blackboard, as someone inevitably can't see it. Neither try to fill every conceivable corner or side which may still be black, because you do not want to erase.

- Do not talk to the blackboard, the wall, the floor, or the window.
- Do divide the board into pages, and number the questions you write on the board.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Don't be afraid to repeat yourself if you think the students didn't understand what you said.
- Make eye contact with the students.
- Point out the central idea and any tricky points.
- Leave out routine calculations. You only have a limited amount of time in your section each week, and it's just silly to waste this on something the students can do by themselves.
- Explain your thought process, reference all theorems and make the relevant definitions. Remember, you're not just trying to show the students how to solve this problem, you're trying to teach them how to solve problems themselves. Make comments about things you found confusing when you were first learning the material, if you feel it will help.
- If you see a lot of worried faces, go over the question again. It's better to actually help the students understand two or three questions than to whiz through five questions and leave the students as confused as they were at the start.
- If there is a second way of solving the problem, at least mention it.
- Encourage questions.

Try to get students to contribute to the class by asking them questions:

- Ask more open ones, e.g. "How might we get started on this?".
- Treat all answers with respect, but also be clear on handling and correcting incorrect answers.
- Give your students time to answer before you give up and answer the question yourself. This can be painful, especially the first day of the quarter, but it's well worth it if you can get your students to feel comfortable contributing in class. If it's been two full minutes, and no one seems to have any ideas, try giving them small nudges in the right direction.

Know and *admit* your limits. Never pretend you know the answer if you are not sure you do, to stumble through vague, and possibly incorrect answers. Leaving the students with a comment that you will get back to the question, once you are sure about the answer is far better than having to correct false information. See also **6.4 Trouble** below.

If it makes you feel more comfortable, learn the names of your students. People have varying opinions on this matter, so go with what works for you. However, if you have certain students who are especially vocal or trouble-making, it pays to know their names.

Office hours

- Be there!
- Office hours are a big help to you: they give you feedback and help you to get to know your students. Take advantage of the chance to see what is and is not working in section.
- Make the students feel welcome. Don't have your friends hang out in your office during office hours. Even if you're talking about something interesting, stop and talk to your students when they come in. During office hours, they're your first priority.
- Divide your time as equally as possible between students. If you have one or two students who come in with long lists of questions, take turns asking for one question from each student.
- Have your office hours at a different time from the class lecture and from your office mates. If you are particularly popular you can ask Leticia Dominguez for a seminar room.
- Let them tell you what they need: "What would you like to talk about?" Take all questions seriously.
- Beyond office hours: you are welcome to go above and beyond with office hours. If you have students who can't make it, you can schedule extra office hours for them. Remember, though, that you're not required to do so. Discourage students from "just dropping in" in general. Don't give out your cell phone number.

6.4 Trouble

- Control: If the students are talking while you talk, stop talking and wait. This will usually do the trick. If it continues, you could try standing by the students who are noisy until they stop. Another tactic is to point at the student who is talking, and say, "Do you have a question?" In extreme cases, pull the student aside after class and talk to them.
- Mistakes: correct them and make sure everyone fixes them in their notes. Don't feel too bad about it – it happens to everyone, but make sure to give everybody a chance to fix it! Depending on the severity of the mistake, you may even talk to the instructor, that he addresses the problem in class.
- Getting confused or not being able to solve the problem: the students will usually help you out, but if you get really stuck, apologize and tell them you will work it out and go over it the following week, distribute a handout or post it your office door. E-mailing the students with a solution is usually the best plan.

- If a student comes to you and asks about whether or not they should drop the course, send them to the instructor. It is not your place to offer this kind of advice.
- If you have a know-it-all student, try to get them to give the other students a chance to talk without embarrassing them. You can play it off, and say something like, “Well, I know you know the answer, but let’s give someone else a chance.” If need be, pull them aside after class, and tell them that you’re happy that they’re excited about the course, but that they need to give the other students a chance to talk as well.
- Sometimes, people will continue to ask for clarification, no matter how much you offer. Usually, these students aren’t trying to slow class down, they just genuinely don’t understand. If you feel like most of the class understands something, but one or two students keep asking questions, offer to talk to anyone still interested after class, or in office hours, and keep moving. Similarly, don’t spend too much time talking about advanced topics with two or three excited students, even if you’re excited about the topic. Remember, your goal in class is to try to help as many people as possible understand material. In this case, the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few.

6.5 Readers

- You may want to check the readers’ grading from time to time to see if they know what they are doing, otherwise you are going to spend a lot of time sending homework (or quizzes) back to the reader to be regraded. If in doubt about the quality of the reader’s performance, talk to the instructor about it.
- Some readers take a long time in getting the homework back, if this gets to be a problem, talk to the instructor.
- In general, students don’t know that there is a reader. They probably think you grade their homework; you should explain how the process works on the first day, so that the students don’t hold you responsible for a reader that’s slow to grade their work. However, *do not* tell students the name of the reader, or to just talk to the reader directly. They can submit homework for regrades through you.

6.6 Exams

Most of the items you should discuss with the instructor thoroughly to minimize the risk of trouble.

Proctoring: Find out when and where the exam will be held from the instructor. Look through the exam to check for mistakes and ambiguities. Students will ask you lots of questions, most of which should be answered “this is part of the problem.” If you think the

questions deserves a detailed answer, go to the instructor. Do not give answers that put a student at advantage over the others!

Cheating: See 7.1 for details. There will be a presentation on “Academic Integrity” in the first of the weekly Math 495 meetings.

Grading: Before grading the problem, do the problem and decide how to split the points. Record any partial credit decisions, and keep this list, in case students come to you to ask whether they deserved more points. Keep in mind though, that all regrades need to be approved by the instructor, who is the only one who can make a change in the exam score. If you have any questions, ask the instructor. If possible, try not to look at the name of the paper as you grade it. Place the papers face down and open them from the back, if necessary. This is especially important if you know your students by name – it’s just too hard to be impartial otherwise. Don’t spend an endless amount of time agonizing over a single paper. You will get more details on this in the presentation on meeting on “grading Practice” in one of the weekly Math 495 meetings.

Extra Office Hours: You are welcome to hold extra office hours or a review session, before an exam. Remember, though, that you are under no obligation to do so.

Leftover Exams: After the quarter is over, turn any students’ work related to the class over to the instructor. In particular this applies to students’ homework and exams which were not picked up.

6.7 Program in Computing (PIC)

The PIC website (www.pic.ucla.edu) states among other things that the mission of PIC is “not a ‘trade school’ mission, but a mission undertaken out of recognition that students need to have a good set of computational skills to be productive participants in the educational and research activities at UCLA.”

To you this means that you will be teaching a diverse crowd of students (Applied Math, Psychology, Biology, Physics, etc.) how to use a programming language to accomplish tasks on a computer. In the introductory course some of the students are still adjusting to double-clicking a mouse, so you should adjust your teaching curve accordingly. Do not neglect any of the details such as where to find the program on the computer, how to set up a new project, where to click to make it compile, etc. The students are also allowed to work and submit the assignments from home; instruct them how to do it so that you avoid a crowded lab. The instructor of the course can bring you up to date on these aspects.

The course is generally structured with weekly programming projects submitted electronically. During discussion you should practice the concepts necessary to complete the assign-

ment. Your office hours must be held in the PIC lab (find it on www.pic.ucla.edu under *Information*) where you will help students by offering hints and debugging their program. This is the unpleasant part, since students may come to view you as their human debugger – don't despair! In the beginning you should offer more help so that they are not bogged down by typos and misplaced semi-colons. As the course progresses your role shifts to identifying which part of the program doesn't work and then saying "now that we found the problem, I will let you debug it."

6.8 Feedback

Both students and faculty evaluate you at the end of every quarter. Students evaluate you on a numerical scale and also have the opportunity to provide written comments. The instructor provides written comments. These evaluations are kept in your permanent employment record. The Graduate Vice Chair reviews them to determine whether you are maintaining a responsible attitude toward teaching. The Graduate Vice Chair also uses these evaluations to write teaching recommendation letters if requested.

An obvious form of gaining feedback is through observing your students. Notice the way your students respond in class. Do they have a glazed look in their eyes when you are talking? Do they groan when you erase the board?

Ask your students for comments in office hours. Ask leading questions, such as "Do I stand in front of my writing?", "Is my lecturing clear?"

Have other TAs or faculty members come into your class to observe you. Observe other TAs and faculty members.

At the end of the quarter, you will be given student evaluations to distribute in class. Explain that while these are reviewed by people in the department, the comments are mostly for your benefit in improving your teaching. Point out that they should save comments about lecture, exams, the book, etc. for the evaluation the instructor passes out.

6.9 After the Term is Over

After the term is over, turn any students' work related to the class over to the instructor. In particular this applies to students' homework and exams which were not picked up.

7 Code of Conduct

7.1 Academic Integrity

As a graduate student and TA at UCLA you fall into two categories regarding academic integrity. You are a student, and you are a teacher.

In Math 495 there will be a 50-minute session on Academic Integrity first week of classes. Some of the material you will be receiving are also on the web: The *Student Guide to Academic Integrity* [4] published by the Office of the Dean of Students:

www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/StudentGuide.pdf and the *Faculty and Teaching Assistant Guide to Academic Integrity* [3] published by the Office of the Dean of Students: www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/FacultyandTAGuide%20.pdf.

7.2 Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment, as defined in the University of California Policy Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations, and Students, reads in part:

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects a person's employment or education, unreasonably interferes with a person's work or educational performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or learning environment. In the interest of preventing sexual harassment, the University will respond to reports of any such conduct.

Please refer to the Policy on Sexual Harassment and Complaint Resolution Procedures for the entire definition. The Policy on Sexual Harassment and Complaint Resolution Procedures is incorporated into the Policy on Student Conduct and Discipline which can be found under [5] www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/studentconductcode.pdf.

7.3 Ethics and Professionalism

Being a TA will most likely be your first step into professional development. It will give you financial support, a chance to learn while teaching, the opportunity to interact with faculty as well as with students. However, you will also have to learn what is expected of you, what your obligations and limitations are in order to act as a professional. Here are a few aspects of professionalism you need to keep in mind [6]

- **Integrity** We will conduct ourselves with integrity in our dealings with and on behalf of the University.
- **Excellence** We will conscientiously strive for excellence in our work.

- **Accountability** We will be accountable as individuals and as members of this community for our ethical conduct and for compliance with applicable laws and University policies and directives.
- **Respect** We will respect the rights and dignity of others.

In more detail [8]: The normal exchanges that go on in the classroom (and in one-on-one meetings) can evoke many different responses from teachers. But it is extremely important to realize that teachers cannot interact with students in the same way they would interact with friends or colleagues in other settings. The teacher-student relationship is professional and formal, not (primarily) personal and informal. It exists in an environment that is purposefully diverse. Students of all backgrounds and circumstances have a right to be treated with respect and to be evaluated in accordance with the prevailing norms of your discipline. This means that teachers must be both dedicated to their students and professionally detached – sufficiently detached, anyway, to be able to carry out one’s responsibilities in a manner that is consistent with the highest standards of professional ethics. Respecting students means – among other things – that teachers must be extremely mindful to avoid any conduct or comments that might be interpreted as disrespectful or even outright hostile. The classroom is no place for certain forms of sarcasm, incautious statements, or playful comments that are inconsistent with your position of authority and your professional responsibilities. One of the more egregious mistakes in this regard involves behavior or commentary that are reasonably viewed as forms of sexual harassment. Obviously, purposeful harassment is inexcusable, but also be careful to consider whether comments that you believe to be innocent (such as compliments on someone’s appearance) are inconsistent with your position. You encounter these students because you have a job to do. Focus your demeanor on that goal.

Battling the “Friendship” Temptation

Finally, and relatedly, it is tempting for teaching assistants to try to win students over by making friends (or acting as a friend). In part this is due to the natural inclination of teachers to want to be liked by students, and being friendly is an obvious element of that strategy. The temptation also arises in cases where teaching assistants feel as though they are part of the same peer group as undergraduates (or at least not far removed) – not much different in age; sharing similar interests; etc. It is not uncommon to think that, in other settings, many of one’s students could instead be one’s friends.

It should be clear by now how important it is to maintain a sharp distinction between being a friendly professional and treating students like your friend. The teacher-student relationship is, inevitably, a structure of authority, and includes an evaluative component that absolutely requires a teacher to be able to offer fair, objective assessments of student work. One’s position as a teaching assistant is dramatically undermined when one sacrifices professional detachment for more personal and informal relationships; and students quickly lose respect for instructors who seem more interested in making friends than doing their jobs. Obviously, the most egregious and unforgivable case of this mistake would be the temptation to pursue more romantic relationships. The converse of the temptation to treat some students as

friends is the situation where a teaching assistant develops a personal dislike for a particular student. Needless to say, the demand that one maintains some professional detachment in such circumstances is the same as in the previous situations.

The bottom line: being a teaching assistant can be an extraordinarily satisfying part of one's academic training, but it is also a job, and you must treat it as such.

8 Teaching Assistant Grievance Procedures

The procedures were developed by the Judicial Review Committee in consultation with the Dean/Vice-Chancellor, Graduate Programs, the Committees on Undergraduate Courses and Curricula and Educational Policy, and the Graduate Council.

These grievance channels are to be used for TA complaints for which there are no other established procedures such as, but not limited to, assigned workloads and evaluations. They may also be used by TAs to satisfy the Informal Consultation and Formal Investigation Steps of Campus Appeal Procedure 140.

Informal Discussion The TA should make every effort to resolve the matter through discussion with the instructor of the course. If this form of negotiation does not result in an acceptable agreement, the following steps shall be taken.

Request for Mediation

- The TA shall prepare and submit a written grievance to the Department Chair, or to the appropriate Dean if the Department Chair is party to the dispute, or if there is no Department Chair or Acting Chair. A copy of the grievance shall be sent to the instructor. (Note: the appropriate Dean is that party to whom the Chair reports).
- The instructor may submit a written response to the Chair (or appropriate Dean), before the meeting with the Chair (or appropriate Dean) occurs but in no event later than three (3) business days after receipt of a copy of the grievance.

Meeting The Department Chair shall schedule an ad hoc meeting to be held no sooner than three (3) business days and no later than five (5) business days after receipt of the grievance. (Note: either time limit may be waived for good reason, including the unavailability of one or more participants or the Chair's need for more information.)

The meeting shall include:

- the TA
- the course instructor, and
- the Department Chair (or appropriate Dean)

- At the request of the TA, a graduate student with current or prior TA experience in that department, or a representative of the Ombud's office, may also attend. The choice of the graduate student requested shall have the concurrence of the Department Chair.
- At the request of the course instructor, a faculty member in that department or a representative of the Ombudsman's office, may also attend. The choice of the faculty member requested shall have the concurrence of the Department Chair.

Notification of Decision The Department Chair shall prepare a written statement of the decision and make the statement available to the TA and course instructor within three (3) business days of the meeting.

Disputes Regarding Workload For disputes regarding TA workload:

- If the Department Chair decides that the workload extends beyond the TA's normal responsibility (e.g. 50% time is the equivalent of 20 hours/week as defined in the Apprentice Personnel Manual, pp. 10-13), then:
 - The course instructor must make every effort to alleviate these conditions as soon as possible and prior to the end of the quarter.
 - In the case of prospective assignments, changes can be made in the required assignments in an effort to adjust the TAs workload to the appropriate level.
 - In the event that assignments have already been started and/or completed by students in the class, the instructor will evenly split the quantity of work between him/herself and the TA(s) of the course.
- If the Department Chair decides the workload does not extend beyond the TA's normal responsibilities, then the TA is to continue in his/her teaching responsibilities.

Other Disputes In other disputes, the same process is recommended for discussion and resolution. The Department Chair shall make a decision and provide an appropriate remedy.

Appeals In the event that the TA disagrees with the Chair's or Dean's decision, the TA may file an appeal under the Campus Appeal Procedure 140. If the instructor disagrees with a Chair's or Dean's decision and the instructor is not a person to whom Rule 140 applies, the instructor may appeal to the Dean of the Graduate Division. In either case the parties shall comply with the decision until the appeal is decided.

For more information on this process, see the Graduate Advisor or the current TA Consultants. For confidential advice outside the Department, call the Ombud's office at 825-7627.

A TA Absence Approval

TA Absence Approval Form

Submit this form with both sides completed
to the student services office, MS 6356, in advance of your absence

Name: _____

Dates of proposed absence: _____

Course and sections: _____

Course instructor: _____

Course and sections: _____

Course instructor: _____

Reason for absence: _____

Graduate office approval

Date

References

- [1] UCLA Graduate Division. Academic Apprentice Personnel Manual. <http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/gss/appm/aapmstudent.pdf>.
- [2] Office of Instructional Development. The TA Handbook. <http://www.oid.ucla.edu/units/tatp/tahandbook>.
- [3] Office of the Dean of Students. Faculty and Teaching Assistant Guide to Academic Integrity. <http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/FacultyandTAGuide%20.pdf>.
- [4] Office of the Dean of Students. Student Guide to Academic Integrity. <http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/StudentGuide.pdf>.
- [5] Office of the Dean of Students. UCLA Student Conduct Code. <http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/studentconductcode.pdf>.
- [6] UCLA. Statement of Ethical Values. <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/compliance/ethics/ethicalvalues.html>.
- [7] UCLA and UAW. Agreement Between the Regents of UCLA and the UAW. http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/employees/policies_employee_labor_relations/collective_bargaining_units/academicstudentemployees.bx/agreement.html.
- [8] Center for Excellence in Teaching USC. Teaching Nuggets. http://www.usc.edu/programs/cet/private/pdfs/teaching_nuggets/professionalism.PDF.