

Department of Psychology & Neuroscience,
Duke University

Guide for Graduate Teaching Assistants and Instructors

2020-2022



PURPOSE

The Department of Psychology & Neuroscience is committed to ensuring that graduate teaching assistantships are maximally beneficial for graduate students, faculty Instructors, and the undergraduates they teach.

Thus, it is important that Instructors and graduate teaching assistants (TAs) have a shared understanding of how TAs are valued, assigned, and expected to function in the Department, as well as shared expectations for each individual TA assignment, so that they can work together effectively as a teaching team.

To this end, this document provides the following important information:

- Departmental philosophy of Graduate Teaching Assistantships
- Departmental TA requirement for graduate students
- Process and timeline for making TA assignments
- Guiding principles for structuring the responsibilities of TAs
- Recommended process for setting Instructor-TA expectations
- Recommendations for giving and receiving feedback on teaching
- Recommended process for resolving grievances
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Departmental Philosophy of Graduate Teaching Assistantships

The Importance of Graduate Teaching Assistantships

The work of graduate TAs is of critical importance to the teaching mission of the University. Although TA assignments can vary greatly, and with them specific TA responsibilities, there are also significant commonalities. For instance, regardless of the course, graduate TAs typically act as proxies for the Instructor, serve as role models and possibly even mentors for students, and frequently orient students to the culture of the Department. Together with Instructors, TAs hold considerable power in shaping the educational experience and outcomes of undergraduate students at Duke. Thus, Instructors and TAs must work together to ensure that TAs are prepared to approach their role with care.

The work of graduate TAs also is important to the graduate training mission of the University and P&N, specifically. TA assignments are valuable opportunities for professional development for graduate students. The benefit of TA experience is obvious for graduate students hoping to pursue an academic career track that involves teaching. But even graduate students who pursue non-teaching careers stand to develop important, broadly generalizable skills, such as managing time effectively, presenting information clearly, concisely, inclusively and equitably; fielding questions thoughtfully; facilitating discussions and other group work; helping to prepare and review assessments; mentoring others; and both offering and making use of constructive feedback.

Joint Responsibility of Instructors and Teaching Assistants

Faculty who supervise graduate TAs have a responsibility to ensure that their TAs gain valuable knowledge and skills from these experiences and are treated as respected and valued partners in the teaching endeavor.

Graduate TAs have a responsibility to approach each TA assignment as an opportunity to learn valuable skills and knowledge and to commit the necessary time and effort to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

Faculty mentors also play a role in reinforcing the importance of teaching: emphasizing to their graduate students the important skills and experiences that will be gained via their TA experiences.

Accountability

Instructors and graduate TAs ought to be accountable for upholding their responsibilities to one another and to their undergraduate students. To that end, Instructors and TAs will set clear expectations for their partnership before they begin working together, and submit documentation of these expectations to the DGS and DUS offices of Psychology & Neuroscience.

Teaching is a skill that is developed through practice and feedback. Thus, it is recommended that even TAs who are not teaching labs or discussion sections solicit feedback from their students in the form of middle- and end-of-semester course evaluations, and that Instructors and TAs furthermore evaluate each other at the end of the term. (Please see Section 6 on “Mechanisms for Giving and Receiving Feedback on Teaching” for additional details.) Even if collected informally (for instance, via paper forms, Qualtrics or Google Forms), end-of-term feedback should be submitted to the DGS and DUS offices of Psychology & Neuroscience. Sharing this feedback prepares the DGS and DUS offices to support Instructors’ and TAs’ professional development more effectively, such as by suggesting resources they might find helpful. The feedback also may be used (with Instructor or TA permission) in letters supporting promotion and awards. Furthermore, this feedback will be confidential (not shared with other faculty). Feedback from students collected at midterm or throughout the term, and feedback solicited from peers, need not be submitted to the DGS and DUS offices.

Departmental TA Requirement for Graduate Students

Generally speaking, each graduate student in P&N is expected to serve as a TA for 4 classes, usually starting during the second year. Exceptions include clinical students and CNAP transfer students, both of whom are expected to serve as a TA for 3 classes. Summer teaching does not count toward this requirement.

Even students who receive external fellowships are expected to complete TA assignments, given that they are considered key training opportunities. Note that different fellowships (e.g., NSF, NRSA, NDSEG) have different rules regarding whether graduate students may receive additional compensation for TA assignments or other educational activities. **Students should contact [Lisa Wioskowski](#), the Financial Aid Coordinator in the Graduate School, to see under what circumstances and for what activities additional compensation may be approved.** This is a case where graduate students are strongly encouraged to seek permission in advance, rather than

to seek forgiveness after the fact. In the past, when students have agreed to and received funds for additional activities without first obtaining approval, they have been compelled to repay these funds.

According to the P&N website, courses that are assigned TAs include those “with discussion sections; Statistics (undergrad and grad); Research Methods; Laboratory courses; Courses designated as **“Writing in the Discipline”;** **[and] large courses (enrollment greater than 49)**”.

The Graduate School at Duke has outlined several policies regarding graduate TAs and Instructors, described [here](#); however, the present document provides details and offers recommendations that go above and beyond the guidance contained in the general document linked above.

Process and Timeline for Making TA Assignments

The assignment of students to specific TA positions results from simultaneously weighing a number of factors. These include the number of TAs needed in any given semester, specific requests from students, the training and expertise of the student, how many TA positions are still required for a given student, the student’s anticipated graduation date, scheduling conflicts, and requests from mentors. Some TA assignments are known to be more challenging than others in terms of the time and effort required. Generally, the work associated with a TAship increases with the level of independent teaching involved. Thus, in many cases, heavier TA assignments promote greater skill development. The difficulty of previous TA assignments may be considered when assigning classes to students, efforts will be made balance the workload across graduate students to the extent possible. However, given the many complexities of TA assignments, and differences in graduate student preferences, there is no guarantee that graduate students will all experience the same workload as TAs during their tenure in the Department.

Well before the semester begins (ideally, in March for the following fall and October for the following spring), graduate students share information to guide the DGS and ADGS in making TA assignments. Graduate students are sent a list of classes for which TAs are needed and asked to identify their TA preferences by filling out a Qualtrics survey. This survey asks students questions about their area, their current year in the program, and their anticipated graduation date; the presence of any circumstances (e.g., an upcoming MAP defense) that would impact their availability to TA during the term in question; the

TA assignments they have completed to date; their areas of competency/expertise (e.g., 'statistics,' or 'cognitive classes'); and their professional goals (e.g., 'I would like to gain more teaching experience'). Faculty and graduate students are discouraged from striking informal agreements that the student will TA for a particular class. Although faculty and graduate students may converse about the ins and outs of a particular TA assignment, and graduate students may rank a certain class highly on their preference survey, a much wider range of factors must be considered in drawing up the assignments each term.

Using data from the survey, the DGS and ADGS draft a preliminary list of TA assignments with the following considerations in mind:

- They honor the requests of students who indicate definitively that they do not wish to TA.
- Next, they try to prioritize seniority and preferences while also considering the prior TA experiences of each student.
- Finally, they fill the spots for less preferred courses by determining which remaining students have the required knowledge and skills in those areas, as well as who has received desired assignments in the past. The implication is that students who receive less preferred assignments during one term will be more likely to receive desired assignments in the future.

Next, the DGS and ADGS circulate this list to the DGSA and the leadership of both DUS offices to identify possible errors and omissions. Then, after any such issues have been resolved, they circulate the list to faculty for the same. (For instance, perhaps the enrollment in a course warrants more or fewer TAs than originally anticipated.) Finally, the DGSA communicates the assignments to the graduate students, who may make reasonable requests for changes. (For instance, perhaps a given TA assignment conflicts with other educational opportunities that the student may need to take part in, such as a required class or brown bag lunch.) Such requests are honored, where possible, and the DGSA immediately shares any changes with all parties involved. Generally speaking, change requests are not granted for reasons such as the following: the faculty mentor would prefer a different TA, the TA would prefer a different faculty mentor, the TA does not enjoy the course content, or the TA has a conflict due to a course that is not required for their degree.

Once the TA assignments have been finalized, the Instructor and TA schedule meetings with each other to review final (or nearly final) drafts of the syllabus, hand off important materials, like textbooks, discuss the terms of the TA assignment, and develop shared expectations for the term. It is suggested that these meetings take place at least two weeks before the semester begins. These early meetings are strongly encouraged to identify any possible conflicts between the course schedule, Instructor availability, and

TA availability. For instance, if the TA will be responsible for grading an assignment that is due just before the TA is attending a conference, the Instructor may decide to modify the due date to facilitate more timely grading.

At the end of the semester, TAs share information about their experiences to guide future TA assignments. A Qualtrics survey is sent to TAs, asking them to summarize their workload and duties as TAs over the course of the term. These data will be used to 1) learn more about the teaching demands of each class and the experience of each TA, and 2) establish reasonable expectations for graduate students considering their future TA options. Importantly, it is difficult to establish accurate estimates of TA workload for specific departmental courses. There is dramatic variability in the amount of time different TAs require to complete the same tasks. Additionally, the workload and duties for a TA assignment may depend more on the Instructor than they do on the specific course.

The data from these workload/duty surveys will be reviewed and kept on file by both the DGS and DUS offices of Psychology & Neuroscience. In addition, as suggested above, this information will be added to a database that is accessible to graduate students who must, or would like to, complete additional TA assignments in the Department.

Guiding Principles for Structuring the Responsibilities of TAs

Although TAs provide crucial support for the courses offered by P&N, the Instructor is ultimately responsible for course design and implementation. This means that it is the Instructor's responsibility to create a detailed class syllabus, set course policies, generate tests and other assessments, and create rubrics for graded assignments. Although TAs may offer input/collaborate on these aspects of a course (e.g., to help create test items and/or rubrics for these exam items), their efforts should be guided and supervised by the Instructor.

Below are lists of responsibilities that may and may not be assigned to TAs, ethical issues for TAs, and best practices for Instructor-TA teams. This guidance should be helpful in setting clear expectations each term. However, both parties should acknowledge the need for flexibility and resolve to work together as a team. Expected events (e.g., professional travel) and unexpected events (e.g., inclement weather, illness, epidemics) require Instructors and TAs to coordinate and may require a willingness to adjust responsibilities as needed.

Responsibilities That May Be Assigned to TAs

Items generated by faculty in P&N or taken from This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and no TA would be expected to assume all of the responsibilities indicated.

Items listed have been generated by faculty in P&N or taken from Cornell University's document: [Guidelines for Graduate Teaching Assistants](#). This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and no TA would be expected to assume all of the responsibilities indicated.

According to the [Graduate School](#), the required workload for TAs may not exceed 20 hours/week, averaged over the course of the semester. However, the expectation in P&N is that TAs will work an average of 10–15 hours per week, which includes time spent attending class. Potential exceptions to that threshold should be planned well in advance (e.g., if an activity like student project presentations will take considerable TA time during the final week of the semester).

Common Responsibilities

- Attending lecture, taking notes (class attendance is expected across all TA assignments with rare exceptions made only for special circumstances, such as a repeat TA assignment for the same course. In-person attendance is best. However, if there is a time conflict between the assigned course and a required course for the TA, an acceptable alternative may be for the TA to review video or audio recordings of class sessions, with these recordings arranged in advance. Video or audio recordings also may be used as backups by TAs who miss class due to illness or professional travel. TAs' notes are for their personal use only, to ensure that they are prepared for student questions.)
- Becoming familiar with Sakai, Piazza, Qualtrics, JASP, or other platforms or software to be used
- Preparing and/or photocopying materials for class (e.g., handouts, quizzes)
- Preparing for and leading labs or discussion sections
- Keeping records of attendance in lecture/lab/discussion, and alerting the Instructor in the event of repeated absences by a student or a student's failure to complete major assignments
- Evaluating participation during lab/discussion
- Meeting regularly with the Instructor (and other TAs, if applicable) for purposes of planning/troubleshooting
- Offering weekly office hours for students
- Responding to student questions on Piazza and/or other appropriate learning platforms

- Grading quizzes
- Offering review session(s) prior to each exam, or as directed by the Instructor
- Assisting with exam construction and/or photocopying exams
- Helping to proctor exams
- Helping to administer make-up exams to groups of students
- Handling the scoring of multiple-choice items, and/or completing item analyses post-exam
- Helping to grade non-multiple choice exam items
- Grading other class assignments as directed by the Instructor
- Grading and/or providing feedback on paper drafts or partial drafts (using established rubrics)

Less Common or Ad-Hoc Responsibilities

- Preparing the classroom prior to lecture (re-arranging seats, setting up technology or laboratory supplies)
- Assisting with in-class demonstrations and small group exercises
- Providing constructive feedback to the Instructor on the syllabus, lessons, activities, assessments, etc.
- Researching/obtaining references on certain topics relevant to the class
- Identifying other materials/media that support a course goal
- Offering one or two lectures or mini-lectures on topics relevant to the course
- Distributing/collecting in-class quizzes
- Making alternate arrangements with/proctoring students who are entitled to Duke Student Disability Access Office (SDAO)-approved accommodations, and working with the SDAO or Academic Resource Center (ARC) office as needed
- Adding materials to or helping to maintain course Sakai site
- Offering APA style session(s) to students in advance of paper deadlines
- Helping to grade student presentations
- Referring students to various services (e.g., Academic Resource Center, Writing Studio), as needed, on the basis of conversations with them or their performance on graded works
- Providing input on letters of recommendation that are requested of the Instructor by students in the class
- Helping to supervise undergraduate TAs
- Sharing evidence of academic dishonesty/testifyng at Student Conduct hearings
- Logging time spent on a weekly basis to become familiar with course content, develop course materials, and/or work with students enrolled in the course
- Communicating with Directors of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies any concern that may not be reportable first to the Instructor

Responsibilities That Should Not Be Assumed by TAs

Adapted from Cornell University's document [Guidelines for Graduate Teaching Assistants](#). This list likely is not exhaustive; additional entries may be added based on the experience or comfort level of the TA.

- Transporting students in their vehicles. This is explicitly prohibited by Duke policies, and is not specific to P&N or TA roles.
- Teaching more than one or two lectures or mini-lectures per term, under normal circumstances
- Communicating with students' deans about concerns
- Assigning final grades to students
- Performing more than 10–15 hours of work per week (which includes time spent attending class), averaged over the course of the semester
- Performing work that is not relevant to the course
- Responding to student queries during “off hours” (as defined/agreed upon by the Instructor-TA teaching team)
- Responding to Instructor emails in the evenings or on weekends unless mutually agreed that this is necessary to fulfill certain responsibilities
- Communicating with students outside of formal Duke channels (such as Duke email) or channels established/overseen by the Instructor (such as Piazza or a class Slack channel)
- Working without additional financial compensation to which they are entitled (pertinent to students who TA when they are funded by external sources such as the NSF or NDSEG)

Ethical Guidelines for TAs

Policies pertinent to faculty may be found in the [Duke University Faculty Handbook](#)

Because TAs occupy positions of power relative to the undergraduates in their classes, certain ethical safeguards must be put into place to ensure the fair treatment and general well-being of their students.

Graduate students should not initiate or be involved in new non-professional relationships (e.g., personal, intimate, or fiduciary) with students who are enrolled in classes to which they have been assigned. This is true whether the TAship involves teaching labs or discussion sections, or focuses predominantly on grading.

If a graduate student has a prior or ongoing relationship with a student in the class that is not related to academic pursuits, they must disclose this relationship to the Instructor so that appropriate measures may be taken to avoid any possible conflict of interest.

Solutions may involve making the grading process “masked,” swapping papers with another TA, or asking the Instructor to provide additional checks on the grading of that student’s work. In rare cases, the TA may be assigned to another class.

Upon meeting with the Instructor to set expectations before the start of the term, the TA should be asked to review the class roster and declare any potential conflict of interest pertaining to prior or ongoing relationships. Such reviews should be conducted periodically through the end of Drop/Add for the term in question, so that appropriate steps may be taken.

TAs should not share their personal contact information with students and should communicate with students via formal Duke channels (such as Duke email) or channels established/overseen by the Instructor (such as Piazza or a class Slack channel).

Federal law protects the privacy of students’ educational records via the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#). Great care should be taken to protect the privacy of student grades. TAs should not discuss any aspects of student course performance with others who are not part of the teaching team.

TAs are encouraged to make reasonable accommodations for students who may need to meet outside of class, lab/discussion, or regular office hours to discuss the course. TAs should briefly document such meetings. However, it is also appropriate and encouraged for TAs to set reasonable boundaries on their time to protect their pursuit of other important goals (e.g., research, their own coursework). TAs may work with the Instructor to agree on “off hours” during which the TA will not respond to course-related emails or work on course-related tasks. TAs are encouraged to communicate clearly to students when they will and will not be available.

The responsibility of the TA is to support students’ learning in a given course. Discussions with students will largely be course-focused. However, many TAs find it rewarding and appropriate to discuss students’ broader academic goals, interests, and experiences. Sometimes, students will need resources and support that go beyond what the TA can or should provide. TAs should be aware of and encourage students to utilize the many other resources available to them, including academic support resources (e.g., [Academic Resource Center](#)) and health resources (including mental health). Any concerns about a specific student’s well-being should be brought to the Instructor, who can help mobilize support for that student (e.g., by contacting Duke Reach or the student’s dean).

Finally, in their interactions with students, TAs should not in any way violate the [Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, and Related Misconduct or the Student Sexual Misconduct Policy](#).

Best Practices for Instructor-TA Teams

- Secure access for the TA to textbooks and other required course materials as soon as feasible after TA assignments have been finalized.
- Meet in advance of the term to talk about the class, hand off materials, share information about travel or other obligations that may conflict with lecture/lab/discussion (possibly necessitating changes to the schedule), and discuss and complete documentation of their shared expectations (see Section 5).
- Identify learning objectives for the TA (see Section 5), and discuss strategies for ensuring these objectives are met; for instance, if the TA would like to gain experience facilitating class discussion, the TA and Instructor might agree that the TA will facilitate two in-class discussions during the term, and plan to meet before and after each for purposes of preparation and debriefing.
- Identify the TA's roles and responsibilities for the class in question.
- Agree upon the timeframe and turnaround time for each specific TA responsibility (e.g., constructing exam items, grading papers, logging grades in Sakai).
- Share expectations for the average number of hours required to complete TA duties each week.
- Emphasize the importance of effective time management and develop strategies for TAs to be efficient in their work.
- Discuss professionalism in the TA role, including expectations of confidentiality around students' performance-related and personal issues.
- Discuss ethical quandaries sometimes experienced by TAs, Duke's policies around academic integrity violations, and other, similar, issues prior to and throughout the term, as necessary.
- Establish a regular meeting time for the term for the Instructor and TA(s) (typically once per week, although this may vary depending on whether there are lab/discussion sections, an assignment is coming due, etc.).
- Ensure that meeting times between the instructor and TA(s) stay within the time limits established (e.g., one-hour meetings last no longer than one hour).
- Establish how the Instructor and TA(s) will communicate between meetings (e.g., email, text messages, apps, phone calls, more than one of the above).
- Establish the expected response times to communications between the Instructor and TA(s); may differ by day of week, time of day, and/or mode of communication.
- Establish any "off hours" for the class, during which the TA(s) is/are not expected to respond to the Instructor.
- Establish the expected response times, on business days, to communications from students.
- Establish any "off hours" for the class, during which the Instructor and TA(s) are not expected to respond to communications from students.

- Acknowledge that the TA may not be able to immediately complete additional, unexpected tasks that arise, and express a willingness to set reasonable timelines in such cases.
- Determine how much advance notice is sufficient when the Instructor or TA must miss lecture/lab/discussion unexpectedly.
- Determine how much advance notice is sufficient when the Instructor or TA wishes to reschedule a planning meeting.
- Distinguish between excused and unexcused TA absences from lecture/lab/discussion and planning meetings.
- Discuss the specifications for each graded work and the standards for evaluating each, going over rubrics to develop a shared understanding of their use.
- Clarify the procedure to be followed around challenges to the grading of student work.
- Determine how and when the Instructor and TA will seek feedback from students about their respective performance, and how that feedback will be used.
- Prepare to keep the channels of communication open: Determine how and when the Instructor and TA will provide feedback on each other's performance and process, and how and when that feedback will be shared.

If the TA is also an advisee or other research collaborator of the Instructor, great care should be made to keep TA responsibilities and communications separate from research responsibilities and communications. In this circumstance, a documented separate meeting with the student should occur at an interval agreed upon by both mentor and TA - one meeting specifically designated for TA responsibilities and a separate meeting pertaining to research activities.

Recommendations for Giving and Receiving Feedback on Teaching

Teaching Evaluations Completed by Students

In all professional domains, effective performance and growth depends on receiving and making good use of feedback. Also, practically speaking, evaluations completed by students—both quantitative and qualitative in nature—make up an important component of the teaching portfolio for students who expect to pursue academic positions following graduation.

For TA assignments that involve leading labs or discussion sections for a course, the University requires that students complete formal evaluations of the TA, as well as the Instructor. Even if a TA does not lead a lab or discussion section, however, the TA should request anonymous feedback from students, such as through paper surveys administered during lecture/lab/discussion or assessments administered via Qualtrics or Google Forms. Please refer to Appendix B for a sample survey, and note that items can/should be modified or supplemented based upon the specific responsibilities of the TA, as well as the nature of the feedback desired.

TAs are strongly encouraged to request feedback from students at mid-semester or even more frequently so that helpful changes may be implemented within the same term. Please refer to Appendix C for sample questions to ask students at mid-semester. Again, these questions may be modified or supplemented, as desired. TAs who preside over labs or discussion sections are evaluated by their students using the same course evaluation form that Trinity uses for faculty. Students with these types of TA assignments may find it helpful to supplement the open-ended questions provided here with close-ended questions from the Trinity form, so that they may track changes to their ratings over the course of the term.

One alternative to requesting feedback at midterm is for TAs to request weekly or biweekly feedback from their students. The questions may be general, inquiring into the TA's strengths, as well as ways the TA could increase effectiveness; or they may be specific, inquiring about the coverage of certain concepts or the value of particular class activities. The precise frequency and format of the evaluations collected during the term is flexible; the most important thing is to collect and make use of the data.

Like their TAs, Instructors are strongly encouraged to request feedback on their performance at midterm, perhaps by producing a joint survey with the TA. Not only would this yield useful information, but it would model for the TA the desire to continually enhance one's teaching effectiveness.

The feedback surveys in Appendices B and C may be given to students via paper or online form (i.e., using Qualtrics or Google Forms). Care should be taken to not ask students for any identifying information (i.e., names, email addresses) on surveys, in order to protect their anonymity. The responses that graduate TAs receive from their students at the end of the term (i.e., Appendix B and/or any supplemental items) should be forwarded to the DGS and DUS offices of Psychology & Neuroscience within two weeks of the grade submission deadline. Evaluations received at midterm (i.e., Appendix C and/or any supplemental items) need not be forwarded the DGS and DUS offices, although Instructors and TAs are encouraged to discuss these evaluations and come up with ways to respond to constructive feedback.

Feedback Sharing Between TAs

Another potentially valuable source of feedback for TAs who teach labs or discussion sections is input from other TAs for the course (either current TAs, if the course has multiple TAs, or previous TAs for the same course), or students who have taught labs or discussion sections for other courses. While fairly informal, this feedback may be especially helpful because it is offered by others playing similar roles and possessing similar levels of authority. All TAs who teach labs or discussion sections are encouraged to seek this type of peer feedback each term. The feedback received does not need to be submitted to the DGS and DUS offices of Psychology & Neuroscience.

Feedback Sharing Between Instructor and TA

In addition to ensuring that TAs receive formal and/or informal feedback from students, it is important that they receive periodic feedback on their performance from the Instructor. For predominantly “grading” TAs, this could mean that the Instructor notes the attentiveness/ helpfulness of the TA during lecture, reviews the scoring completed by the TA on a few examples of a certain written assignment, etc. For classes with labs or discussion sections, this might mean that the Instructor observes the TA teaching in section once or twice per term, in addition to the above, and provides feedback on that.

Instructors are strongly encouraged to seek feedback from the TA on their own performance. The Instructor may be interested in feedback from the TA on the clarity of their explanations, the effectiveness of in-class exercises, etc. Not only can Instructors benefit from this feedback, but the act of requesting it models desirable behavior for the TA. Dedicated Instructors should be interested in continuing to develop and enhance their teaching skills.

More Formal Two-Way Feedback, Instructor and TA

In order to promote accountability and gather valuable performance data, both the Instructor and the TA will be asked to evaluate each other on separate surveys at the end of the term. Please refer to Appendices D and E. The survey in Appendix D is used by Instructors to assess TAs’ menteeship pertinent to teaching. The survey in Appendix E is used by TAs to assess Instructors’ mentorship pertinent to teaching. Data from both surveys will be submitted to and kept on file by the DGS and DUS offices of Psychology & Neuroscience. Generally speaking, neither Instructors nor TAs will have access to the data collected about them via these surveys, although summaries of these data may be shared with them in the context of grievance procedures. (See Section 7, “Recommended Process for Resolving Grievances.”) Additionally, positive feedback may also be used (with Instructor or TA permission) in letters supporting promotion and awards.

The survey items in Appendices D and E will be made available to all faculty and graduate students at the beginning of the term, so they know on what bases they will be evaluated. Unlike the surveys in Appendices B and C, these surveys should not be modified, but rather, administered as they currently appear. Both completed surveys should be submitted to the DGS and DUS offices within two weeks of the grade submission deadline.

If and when problematic patterns emerge, the Departmental leadership will initiate conversations with the relevant parties to problem-solve, identify helpful resources and offer other recommendations to reduce difficulties/improve performance in the future.

Evaluation of Achievement of TA Learning Objectives

At the end of the term, the Instructor and TA should work together to review the TA's learning objectives for the semester, as specified in the set of expectations developed for the term, and assess how well each objective was met. Appendix F is intended to assist with this process. The completed form should be submitted to the DGS and DUS offices of Psychology & Neuroscience within two weeks of the grade submission deadline.

TA Self-Evaluation

Finally, TAs may find it helpful to draft a self-evaluation or reflection—either once, after the term has ended, or at multiple times throughout the term. This is a recommended practice for individuals who wish to improve their teaching. Also, by reviewing what they have learned across their various experiences, individuals may gain insight into their emerging teaching philosophies. Although important in its own right, the teaching philosophy is another component of the teaching portfolio for students seeking academic posts after they have completed their degrees.

Recommended Process for Resolving Grievances

Ideally minor or one-time concerns would be resolved as they arise in the context of regular meetings between Instructor and TA. When the Instructor and TA meet regularly for course planning and troubleshooting, they should make space on occasion to share feedback about the term and their partnership, focusing on what is going well in addition to any trouble spots.

When there are more serious or habitual concerns about communication, workload or the quality of work performed (i.e., when one or both parties believe there has been a deviation from the expectations developed prior to the start of the term), it is recommended that the concerned party reach out to request a special in-person meeting to discuss these concerns. It is important that both parties approach such meetings with an open mind, with acknowledgment of what is going well in the relationship, and with a focus on proposing specific remedies for problems. Because such conversations may be perceived as difficult, one alternative would be for the concerned party to document their concerns/requests in writing and initiate an email exchange. Although people's feelings may be harder to discern from emails than from face-to-face meetings, one advantage of email communications is that messages may be archived for future reference; another is that people may ask others for advice on the text of the message before the email is sent.

In cases where concerns are not easily addressed due to the serious nature of the issues, or where repeated attempts to address concerns have been unsuccessful (i.e., the target behaviors have not changed), the aggrieved party is encouraged to reach out to both the DGS and DUS offices of Psychology & Neuroscience for a consult. In some cases, the provision of resources (e.g., readings, access to workshops or training sessions) may be all that is needed to get things back on track. In other cases, the DGS and/or DUS may offer to intercede with the other party, or offer to serve as a mediator/help identify a solution to the issues identified. (In the case of persistent problematic behavior by a graduate TA, the faculty advisor also will be involved. Rarely, the TA assignment may be changed. If resolution cannot be achieved at the level of the DGS and DUS offices, the matter will be brought to the Chair. According to the ["Duke University Guidelines and Policies for Graduate Student Teaching Assistants and Instructors,"](#) the Graduate School is the "final avenue of appeal".

If the student would like feedback from an impartial third party rather than trying to resolve this issue within the Department, a consultation with a [University Ombudsperson](#) may be helpful either preceding or following any in-person meetings or email exchanges scheduled to address concerns.

If evidence accumulated across multiple terms suggests persistent problematic behavior on the part of a particular Instructor or TA, the Departmental leadership will take stronger steps to respond to these concerns with additional training and oversight of either the Instructor or TA, as needed.

Of course, the hope is that most potential conflicts or impasses will be prevented by developing and signing off on a set of expectations prior to the start of the term, as the document itself is comprehensive and the process of finalizing the document requires proactive, thoughtful communication between the Instructor and TA. Indeed, this hope was the impetus for creating these guidelines (although all parties still should be prepared to be flexible, especially during unprecedented and challenging times). Because preventing problems is often easier than resolving them, TAs may also find it valuable to consult with other students who have served as TAs for the class and/or Instructor in question, as they may have advice for increasing efficiency or optimizing the working relationship with the Instructor. Likewise, Instructors may find it useful to consult informally with Instructors who have supervised their TA in the past, in order to gather data that may help them better navigate their relationship with the TA.

Appendices: Samples and Templates

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Appendix A

Template for Document of Expectations to Be Completed by Instructors and TAs

Below is a template for a document to be drafted, reviewed, and signed by both Instructors and TAs prior to the start of the term. The Instructor should submit the completed document to the DGS and DUS offices of Psychology & Neuroscience (CCing the TA) before the start of classes.

Shared Expectations of Instructor and TA for (specific term)

Course Number/Title:

Instructor Name:

TA Name:

Lecture Time/Location:

Lab/Discussion Time(s)/Location(s):

TA Responsibilities

Below is a list of responsibilities commonly assumed by graduate TAs. Because every TA assignment is different, not all items will be applicable for a given course. For each responsibility that is relevant, note the approximate dates that Instructors will assign the task, the turnaround times, and any other necessary details. Items that are not relevant should be deleted before finalizing and signing the document.

Prior to meeting with the TA, the Instructor should estimate roughly how much time will be devoted to each task, to ensure that the average workload of 10–15 hours (which includes time spent attending class) is not exceeded and that individual weeks that require more than 10–15 hours are rare.

Common Responsibilities

- Attending lecture, taking notes (Class attendance is expected across all TA assignments with rare exceptions made only for special circumstances, such as a repeat TA assignment for the same course. In-person attendance is best. However, if there is a time conflict between the assigned course and a required course for the TA, an acceptable alternative may be for the TA to review video or audio recordings of class sessions, with these recordings arranged in advance. Video or audio recordings also may be used as backups by TAs who miss class due to illness or professional travel. TAs' notes are for their personal use only, to ensure that they are prepared for student questions.)
- Becoming familiar with Sakai, Piazza, Qualtrics, JASP, or other platforms or software to be used
- Preparing and/or photocopying materials for class (e.g., handouts, quizzes)
- Preparing for and leading labs or discussion sections
- Keeping records of attendance in lecture/lab/discussion, and alerting the Instructor in the event of repeated absences by a student or a student's failure to complete major assignments
- Evaluating participation during lab/discussion
- Meeting regularly with the Instructor (and other TAs, if applicable) for purposes of planning/troubleshooting
- Offering weekly office hours for students
- Responding to student questions on Piazza and/or other appropriate learning platforms
- Responding promptly to communications from students (expectations may vary somewhat from class to class)
- Grading quizzes
- Offering review session(s) prior to each exam, or as directed by the Instructor
- Assisting with exam construction and/or photocopying exams
- Helping to proctor exams
- Helping to administer make-up exams to groups of students
- Handling the scoring of multiple-choice items, and/or completing item analyses post-exam
- Helping to grade non-multiple choice exam items

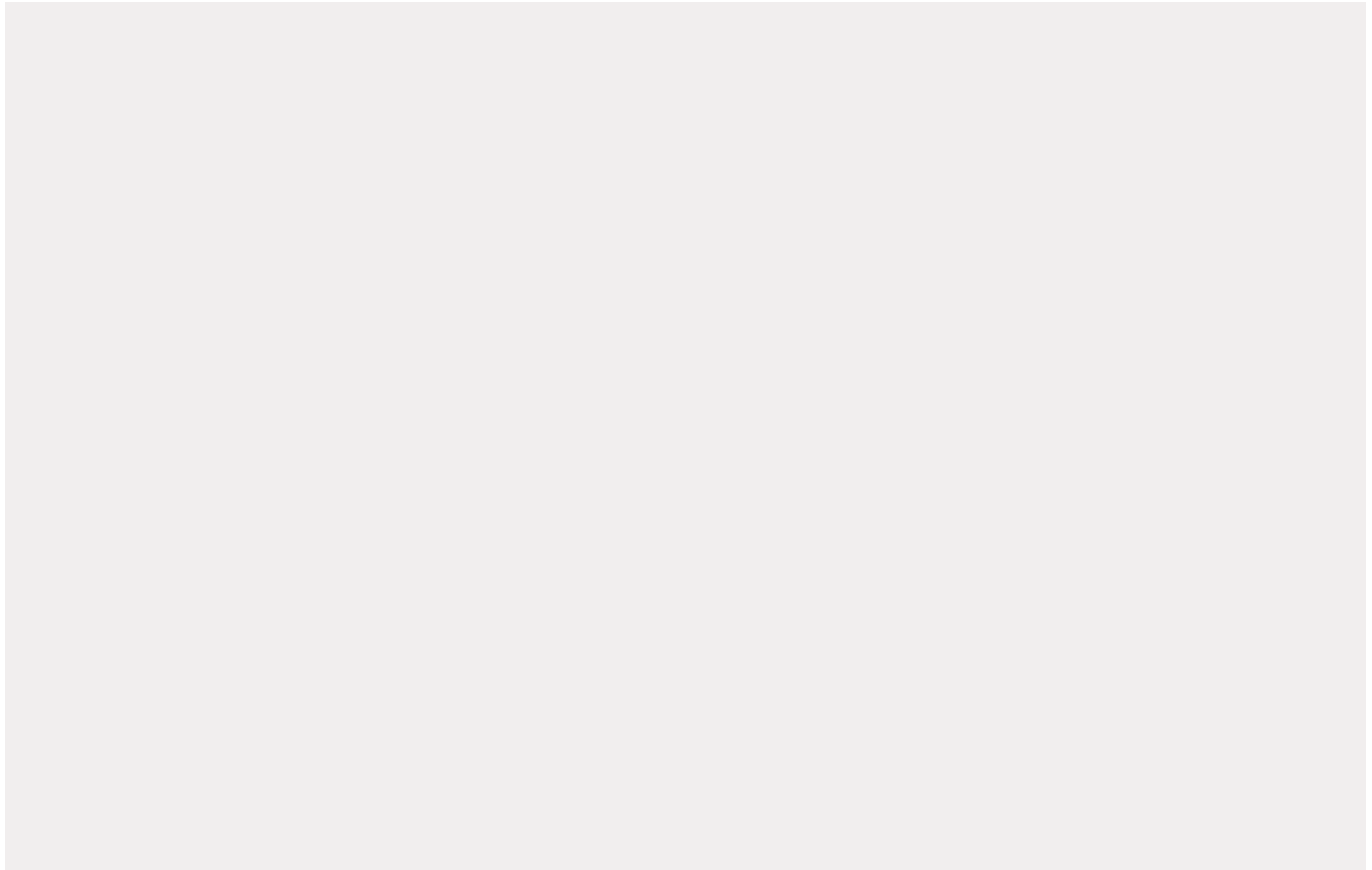
- Grading other class assignments as directed by the Instructor
- Grading and/or providing feedback on paper drafts or partial drafts (using established rubrics)
- Grading and/or providing feedback on final drafts of papers (using established rubrics)
- Entering quiz, exam, and assignment grades on the course Sakai site

Less Common or Ad-Hoc Responsibilities

- Preparing the classroom prior to lecture (re-arranging seats, setting up technology or laboratory supplies)
- Assisting with in-class demonstrations and small group exercises
- Providing constructive feedback to the Instructor on the syllabus, lessons, activities, assessments, etc.
- Researching/obtaining references on certain topics relevant to the class
- Identifying other materials/media that support a course goal
- Offering one or two lectures or mini-lectures on topics relevant to the course
- Distributing/collecting in-class quizzes
- Making alternate arrangements with/proctoring students who are entitled to Duke Student Disability Access Office (SDAO)-approved accommodations, and working with the SDAO or Academic Resource Center (ARC) office as needed
- Adding materials to or helping to maintain course Sakai site
- Offering APA style session(s) to students in advance of paper deadlines
- Helping to grade student presentations
- Referring students to various services (e.g., Academic Resource Center, Writing Studio), as needed, on the basis of conversations with them or their performance on graded works
- Providing input on letters of recommendation that are requested of the Instructor by students in the class
- Helping to supervise undergraduate TAs
- Sharing evidence of academic dishonesty/testifying at Student Conduct hearings
- Logging time spent on a weekly basis to become familiar with course content, develop course materials, and/or work with students enrolled in the course
- Communicating with Directors of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies any concern that may not be reportable first to the Instructor

TA Learning Objectives

Please enumerate learning objectives for the TA, and discuss how and when these objectives will be met:



Class Policies and/or Topics Checklist

Below is a list of policies and/or topics that should be addressed by each Instructor-TA team prior to the start of the term. Check off each item below as it is covered, adding notes as needed for clarification:

_____ Expectation for TA attendance at lecture (again, this responsibility is expected across all TA assignments, with only rare exceptions)

_____ Plan for staying current in situations where TA in-person attendance is not possible

_____ Identification of platforms and software to be used in the course, and plans for any training the TA need relating to these platforms and software

- _____ Provision (to the TA) of textbook(s) and other required materials
- _____ Expectation for average number of hours of work per week
- _____ Identification of weeks for which heavier workloads are expected because of exams, assignment due dates, etc.
- _____ Dates that Instructor and/or TA expect to miss lecture/lab/discussion (e.g., for conference attendance), and any plans for securing coverage or making up work
- _____ Importance of providing as much notice as possible when either the Instructor or TA must miss lecture/lab/discussion unexpectedly
- _____ Plan (for the TA) for making up missed labs/discussions
- _____ Office hours for both the Instructor and TA (when/where/how scheduled/offered)
- _____ Days/times of planning meetings
- _____ Plan for communication between meetings, including specific modes of communication (email, text messages, apps, phone calls)
- _____ Expected response times to communications between the Instructor and TA; may differ by day of week, time of day, and /or mode of communication
- _____ The “off hours” for the class, during which the TA is not expected to respond to the Instructor)
- _____ The “off hours” for the class, during which Instructor and TA are not expected to respond to students
- _____ Expected response time, on business days, to communications from students
- _____ Expected turnaround time for TA re: grading various assignment types
- _____ Notice required for the completion of additional, unexpected tasks by the TA
- _____ Professional behavior in the TA role
- _____ Ethical issues relevant to TAs

_____ What behaviors constitute academic dishonesty, and the policies in place for addressing violations of academic integrity at Duke

_____ Resources at Duke that may be helpful to students struggling with academic and/or personal issues

_____ The roles played by academic deans

_____ Policies around student illness, athletic participation

_____ Policies around late work

_____ Policies around challenges to the grading of student work

_____ Plan for evaluation of TA by students

_____ Plan for Instructor evaluation of TA, TA evaluation of Instructor

_____ Plan for joint evaluation of TA's progress on learning objectives

Brief summary of the expectations developed by Instructor-TA team:

TA signature

Date

Instructor Signature

Date

Appendix B

End-of-Term Student Evaluation of TAs Who Do Not Teach Labs/Discussion Sections

(TA submits to DGS and DUS offices within two weeks of the grade submission deadline)

The items below ask for your impressions about the TA for class this term. Please rate your level of agreement with each statement on a 1-5 scale where 1 = "Strongly Disagree" and 5 = "Strongly Agree." If an item is not applicable or you have insufficient information to respond, please select "NA or Unable to Rate".

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	NA or Unable to Rate
---------------------------	---------------	---------------------------------------	------------	------------------------	-------------------------

_____ The TA was reliable at attending office hours.

_____ The TA was reliable at attending other meetings relating to the class.

_____ The TA arrived on time to office hours and other meetings.

_____ The TA seemed enthusiastic about the course material.

_____ The TA was well-grounded in the course content.

_____ The TA made self available to help students.

_____ The TA appeared to be invested in helping students in the class.

_____ The TA was a clear and effective communicator.

_____ The TA responded promptly to emails or other messages from students.

_____ The grading completed by the TA seemed fair.

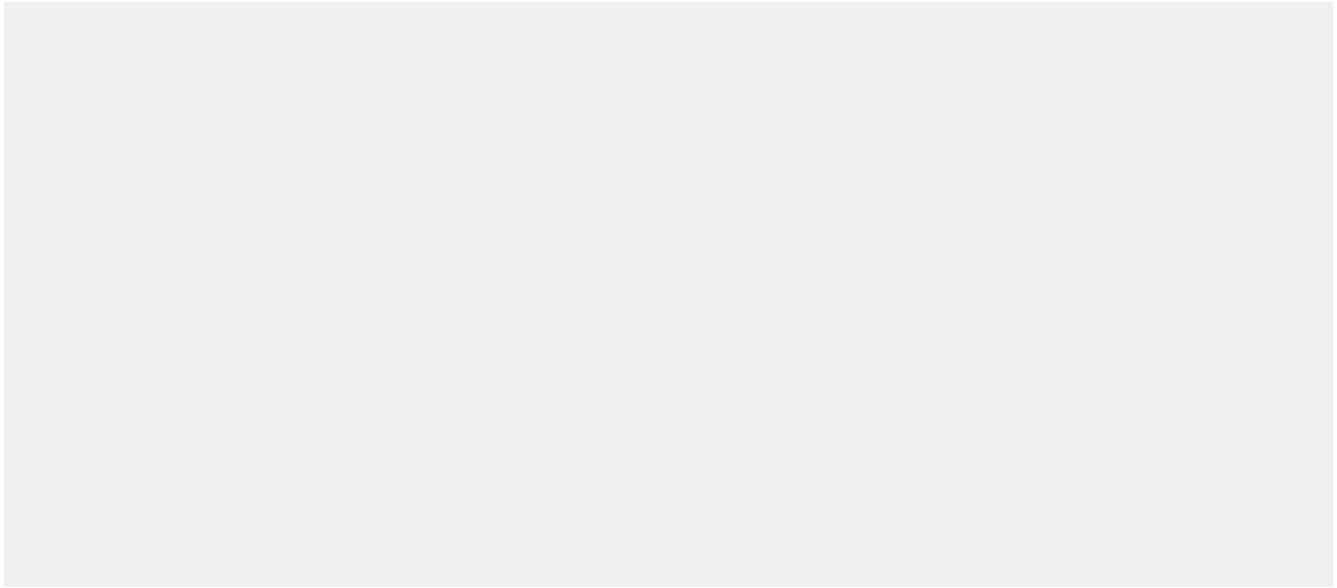
_____ The feedback provided by the TA on written assignments was helpful.

_____ The TA seemed friendly and inclusive.

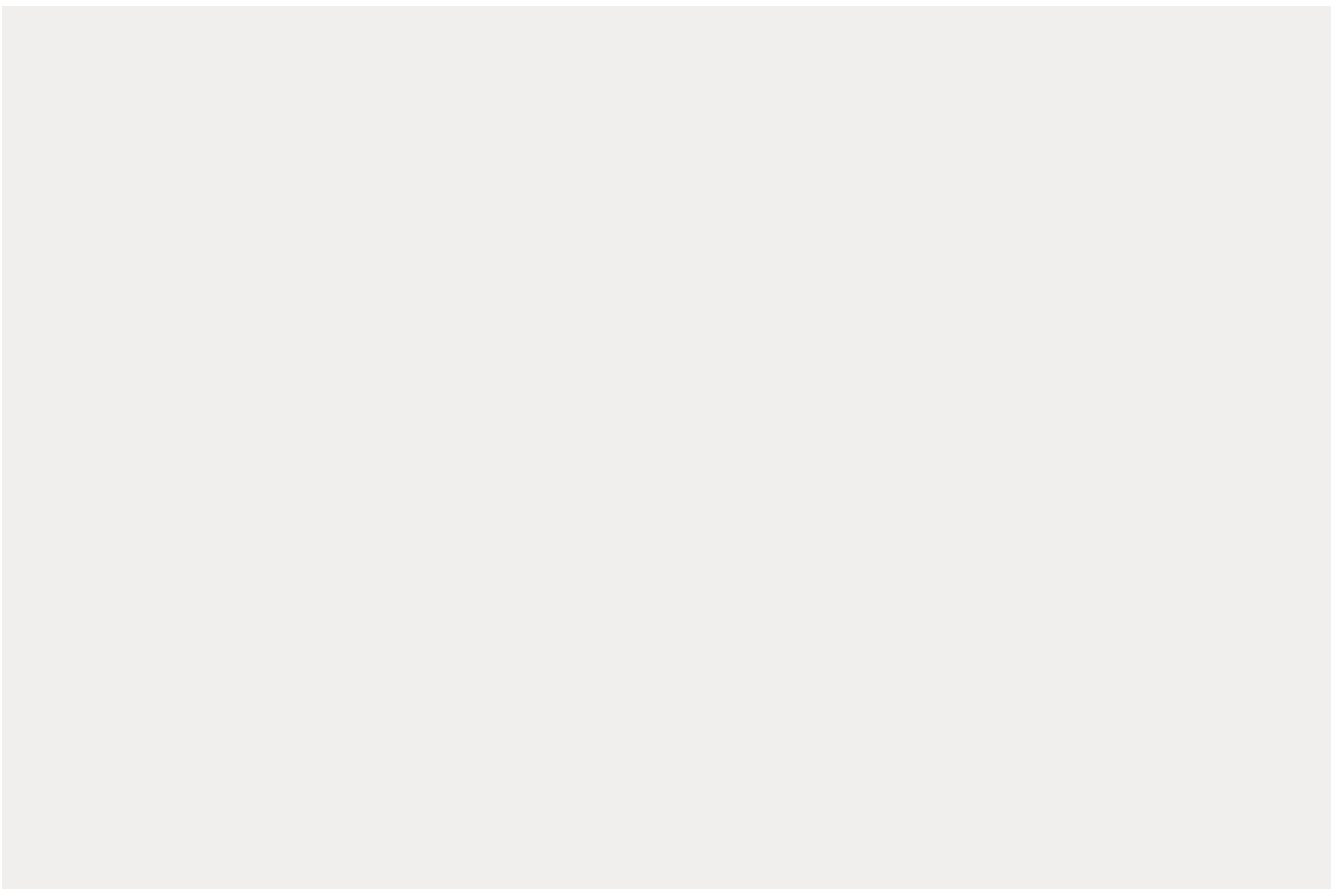
_____ The TA exhibited professional behavior.

_____ Overall, the TA was effective.

Please use this space to expand on your response to any item above.



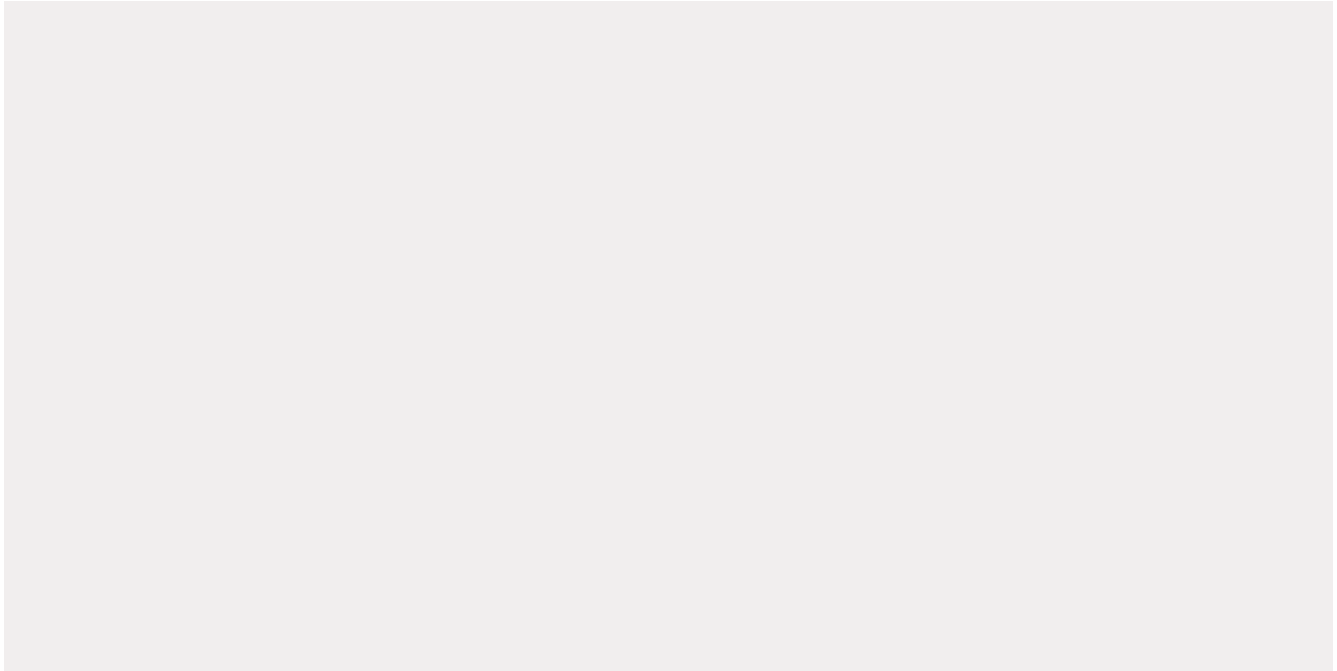
What other positive or constructive feedback would you like to share with the TA?



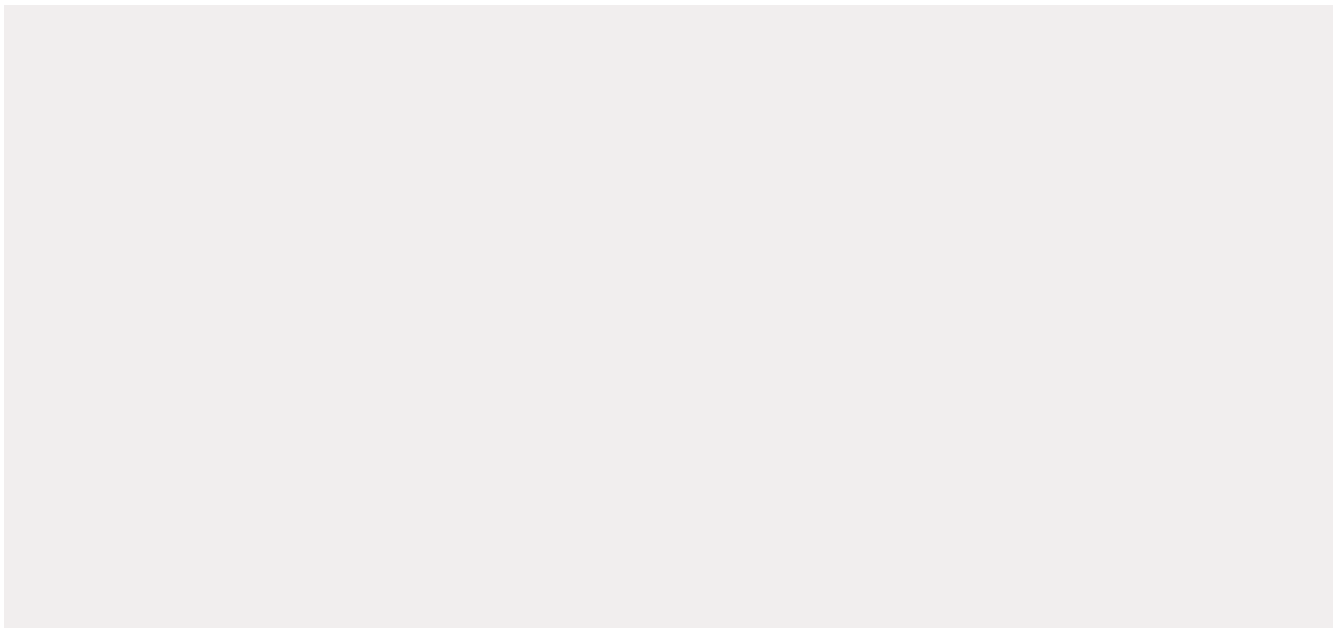
Appendix C*

Midterm Feedback Survey

Please identify one or more things you have appreciated about the TA for the class.



Please identify one or more things that the TA might do differently to improve your experience in the class.



*TAs who preside over labs or discussion sections may find it helpful to supplement the open-ended questions provided here with close-ended questions from the Trinity course evaluation form, so that they may track changes to their ratings over the course of the term.

Appendix D

End-of-Term Evaluation of TA by Instructor

(Instructor submits to DGS and DUS offices within two weeks of the grade submission deadline)

This survey seeks your frank impressions about your graduate TA this term. You should submit the completed document to the DGS and DUS offices of Psychology & Neuroscience within two weeks of the grade submission deadline. These data will be accessible only by the DGS and DUS offices and Departmental leadership.

For this first section, please rate the frequency of the behaviors listed using a 1-5 scale where 1 = "Never" and 5 = "Always." If an item is not applicable or you have insufficient information to respond, please select the "NA or Unable to Rate".

1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Always	NA or Unable to Rate
------------	-------------	----------------	------------	-------------	-------------------------

How often did the TA:

_____ miss lecture - unexcused?

_____ miss lecture - excused?

_____ arrive late to lecture?

_____ miss labs or discussion sections - unexcused?

_____ miss labs or discussion sections - excused?

_____ miss planning meetings?

_____ arrive late to planning meetings?

_____ make last-minute requests to reschedule planning meetings?

For this next section, please rate your level of agreement with each statement on a 1-5 scale where 1 = "Strongly Disagree" and 5 = "Strongly Agree." If an item is not applicable or you have insufficient information to respond, please select the "NA or Unable to Rate" option.

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	NA or Unable to Rate
---------------------------	---------------	---------------------------------------	------------	------------------------	-------------------------

The TA:

_____ seemed enthusiastic about the course.

_____ made self available to help students in the class.

_____ seemed invested in helping students in the class.

_____ seemed friendly and inclusive with students.

_____ responded promptly to communications from students.

_____ responded to communications from the Instructor in a timely manner.

_____ was efficient/completed tasks in a timely manner.

_____ graded students' assignments in a thoughtful manner.

_____ provided helpful feedback on students' written assignments.

_____ completed other tasks thoughtfully.

_____ seemed knowledgeable about the structure/policies of the course.

_____ acted in accordance with/did not contradict course policies and procedures.

_____ made good use of feedback from the students.

_____ made good use of feedback from the Instructor.

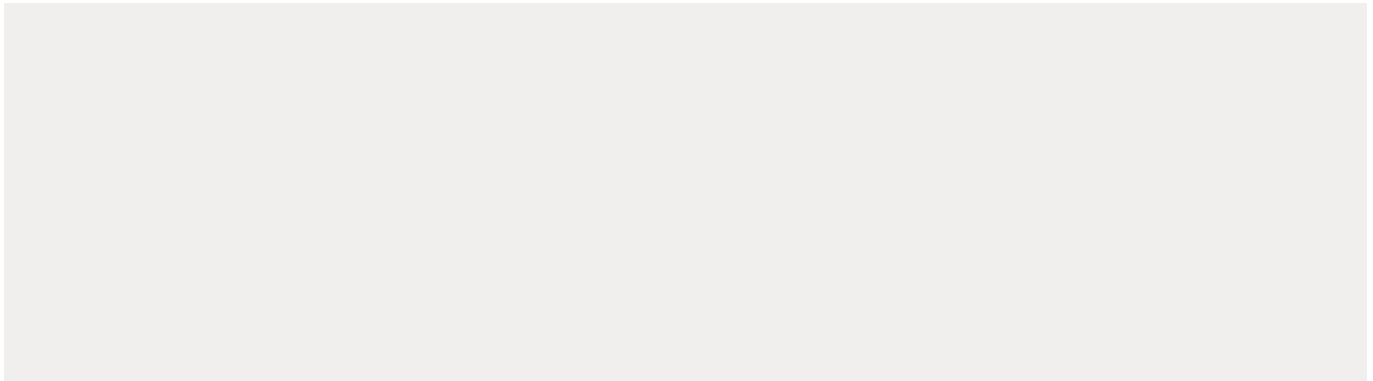
_____ exhibited an appropriate level of flexibility.

_____ seemed professional in the TA role.

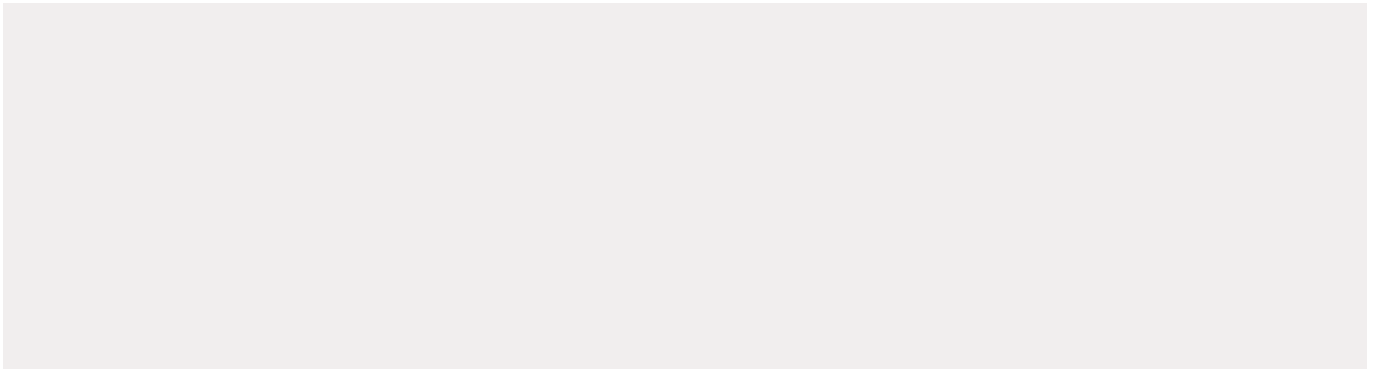
_____ generally followed the expectations established prior to the start of the term.

This final section asks about the TA's relative strengths and weaknesses, and allows you to provide any other feedback that you think is important.

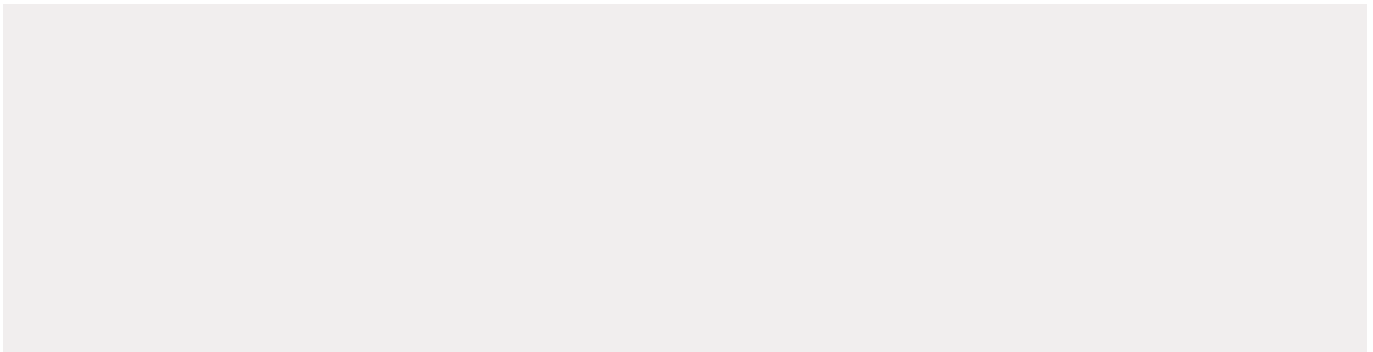
Please use this space to expand on your response to any item above.



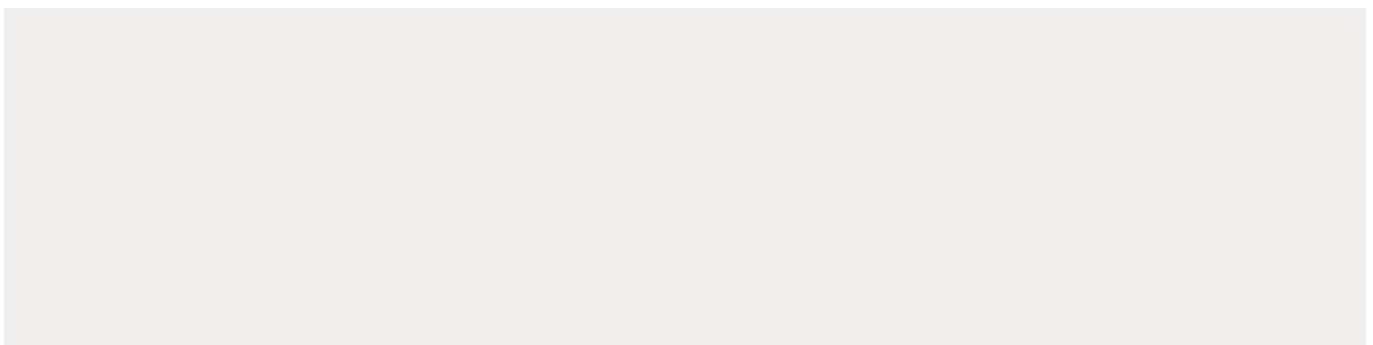
Identify the biggest strengths exhibited by this student in the TA role.



Identify the areas most in need of improvement for this particular TA.



What other impressions would you like to share about this TA?



Appendix E

End-of-Term Evaluation of Instructor by TA

(TA submits to DGS and DUS offices within two weeks of the grade submission deadline)

This survey seeks your frank impressions about the Instructor for whom you TAd this term. You should submit the completed document to the DGS and DUS offices of Psychology & Neuroscience within two weeks of the grade submission deadline. These data will be accessible only by the DGS and DUS offices and Departmental leadership.

For this first section, please rate the frequency of the behaviors listed using a 1-5 scale where 1 = "Never" and 5 = "Always." If an item is not applicable or you have insufficient information to respond, please select the "NA or Unable to Rate".

1 Never	2 Rarely	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Always	NA or Unable to Rate
------------	-------------	----------------	------------	-------------	-------------------------

How often did the Instructor

_____ miss planning meetings?

_____ arrive late to planning meetings?

_____ make last-minute requests to reschedule planning meetings?

For this next section, please rate your level of agreement with each statement on a 1-5 scale where 1 = "Strongly Disagree" and 5 = "Strongly Agree." If an item is not applicable or you have insufficient information to respond, please select the "NA or Unable to Rate" option.

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	NA or Unable to Rate
---------------------------	---------------	---------------------------------------	------------	------------------------	-------------------------

The Instructor

_____ was warm and encouraging of the TA.

_____ exhibited a willingness to address TA comments and questions.

_____ offered to explain the rationale for decisions about the curriculum.

_____ established regular meetings with the TA.

_____ responded in a timely way to communications from the TA.

_____ invited the TA to collaborate on various course materials (e.g., syllabus, assignment instructions, grading rubrics).

_____ provided the TA with the instructions/knowledge/materials necessary for the completion of tasks.

_____ allowed the TA sufficient time for the completion of tasks.

_____ made frequent last-minute requests of the TA.

_____ invited the TA to teach a lecture or mini-lecture.

_____ offered to provide feedback to TA on their teaching.

_____ provided feedback on the TA's performance across tasks.

_____ provided feedback that was useful/valuable.

_____ exhibited an appropriate level of flexibility with the TA when things came up.

_____ was clear about the expectations for the TA.

_____ was fair in their expectations for the TA.

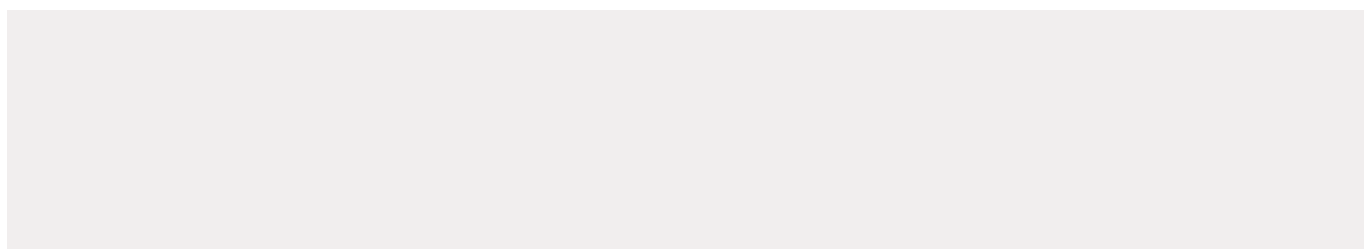
_____ did not require the TA to work more than 10-15 hours/week (which includes time spent attending class), on average.

_____ identified in advance which particular weeks would require more than 10-15 hours of work.

_____ generally followed the expectations established prior to the start of the term.

This final section asks about the Instructors' relative strengths and weaknesses as a teaching mentor, and allows you to provide any other feedback that you think is important.

Please use this space to expand on your response to any item above (optional).



Identify the biggest strengths exhibited by the Instructor as a mentor for graduate TAs.

Identify the areas most in need of improvement for the Instructor in the mentoring role.

What other impressions would you like to share about the Instructor?

Appendix F

Evaluation of Achievement of TA Learning Objectives

(Instructor submits to DGS and DUS offices [CCing TA] within two weeks of the grade submission deadline)

In order to complete this form, you will need to refer to the learning objectives that were outlined on the document of shared expectations developed prior to the start of the term (Appendix A). The Instructor should submit the completed document to the DGS and DUS offices of Psychology & Neuroscience (CCing the TA) within two weeks of the grade submission deadline. These data will be accessible only by the DGS and DUS offices and Departmental leadership.

Learning Objective #1:

How well did the TA achieve this objective? (Circle appropriate rating)

1 Not at All Well	2	3 Moderately Well	4	5 Very Well
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Comments:

Learning Objective #2:

How well did the TA achieve this objective?

1 Not at All Well	2	3 Moderately Well	4	5 Very Well
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Comments:

Learning Objective #3:

How well did the TA achieve this objective?

1 Not at All Well	2	3 Moderately Well	4	5 Very Well
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Comments:

Learning Objective #4:

How well did the TA achieve this objective?

1 Not at All Well	2	3 Moderately Well	4	5 Very Well
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Comments:

