

Top Tips—Working with STEM Teaching Assistants (TA)

TA Apprenticeship—Remember that beyond the short-term responsibility for part of your course, your TA is a faculty apprentice. Ensure that this is a quality professional development experience.

Share Knowledge—Pair senior and new TAs together so the senior teaching assistant can share experiences and knowledge with the new teaching assistant.

Course Goals—Discuss your goals for the course with your TA. Let the TA know what students are expected to learn in the course (final exams from former semesters can give your TA a good sense of this). Discuss your general plan and outline for the course, but be open and flexible with ideas your TA may have for planning their own sessions.

Course Policies—Give your TA a clear description of the decision-making power of faculty and of TAs. Discuss items such as how to handle drop/adds, absences, late or make-up assignments, or requests for extra credit.

Attendance—Be sure that your TA knows they are expected to show up for their scheduled lab/course section to supervise. Before the semester begins, clarify the procedure for finding a replacement if the TA is unable to make it to their shift.

Practice Assignments—Tell your TA to practice the lab or assignment in advance, before teaching it to the students. It can be frustrating to students when the TA is doing the activity for the first time in class, instead being already familiar with the project and available to help them.

Lab Safety—Safety is paramount in STEM labs. Ensure that your TAs are fully-trained in all relevant health and safety areas before the semester begins. Visit www.oakland.edu/labsafety for OU Lab Safety and Compliance information regarding policies and procedures, services, forms, manuals, and applicable resources. The website also provides links to regulatory agencies as well as professional organizations.

- **Lab Safety Training:** www.oakland.edu/?id=6079&sid=201
All researchers (including students) need to go through lab safety training.
To establish training times, contact Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) at x. 4196.
- **General Lab Safety (Laboratory Right to Know):** www.oakland.edu/?id=6080&sid=201

Use of Equipment—Ensure that your TA is properly trained on use of equipment in the lab.

Cheating/ Plagiarism—See the OU Student Code of Conduct for policies about cheating/plagiarism: www.oakland.edu/?id=24228&sid=482. A plagiarism tutorial can be found on the Kresge Library site at: research.library.oakland.edu/sp/subjects/tutorial.php?faq_id=35. See additional OU policies at: www.oakland.edu/policies. (See more about grading on back of this page.)



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Grading—Provide (or help your TA establish) a breakdown of how students' grades will be calculated and the kinds of assignments your TA will be responsible for creating and/or evaluating. Also inform them of course requirements, policies about grading, and deadlines for work. Clear descriptions of what is expected and what work is acceptable will help the grading be consistent between labs.

- Give your TA an example of old assignments (a high grade and low grade) so they can practice grading and see how much time it will take them to grade assignments.

Time Management—If the TA is having trouble dividing time between tasks, consider a breakdown of their schedule to help keep them organized.

Task	Hours (range)
TA Section/Lab (Actual Teaching Hours)	3-4
Office Hour	1
Course Group Meeting	1
Section Preparation	1-2
Grading	2-3
Attendance at Main Lecture	0-4
	8-15

Get Help on Campus

CETL Graduate Student Teaching Series: www.oakland.edu/cetl/gradseries

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) offers a series on teaching and learning for graduate students and future faculty. It is facilitated by Byungwon Woo (woo@oakland.edu) from the Political Science department. The four-part series helps prepare graduates to teach in higher education. The group meets 2-3 times per semester. See website for meeting times and slides from presentations.

The Writing Center: www.oakland.edu/ouwcc/

The Writing Center in Kresge Library is open to OU students and faculty and is free to use. The center provides writers with interested and supportive consultants. The Writing Center may be of use to teaching assistants who need help with developing drafts and assignments.

Additional Tips

See the following links to guides for teaching assistants and supervisors from other schools.

University of Michigan: <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/deptgsidevelopment>

West Virginia University: <http://grad.wvu.edu/r/download/101846>

Vanderbilt University: <http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/ta-supervisors/#expectations>

See the video of this CETL workshop at: www.oakland.edu/cetl

Click on "Workshops" and follow this link—"Missed a workshop? [View the recordings.](#)"

Tips adapted from the University of Michigan's Departmental GSI Development: A Handbook for Faculty and GSIs who Work with GSIs: <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/deptgsidevelopment>



The WISE@OU program is funded by the National Science Foundation
ADVANCE program through a Partnerships for Adaptation, Implementation,
and Dissemination (PAID) Grant.

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