

Framework for meeting to establish TA roles

Department of Biological Engineering TA Training

It's a good idea to meet with your teaching team *before* beginning your TAship. To help clarify expectations, ask your faculty instructor(s) any or all of the following questions:

- (1) *What will my teaching duties be?*
 - a. *Giving recitations?*
 - b. *Holding office hours? (How often/long?)*
 - c. *Grading homeworks? Grading exams?*
 - d. *Pre-taking exams? (How far in advance?)*
 - e. *Helping design course materials?*
- (2) *What will my administrative duties be?*
 - a. *Maintaining Stellar site? Which aspects?*
 - b. *Attending staff meeting once per week?*
 - c. *Documenting/tracking student grades?*
 - d. *Coordinating homework graders? [large classes]*
 - e. *Is there a head TA who has additional duties? [large classes]*
- (3) *What level of homework help should I provide to students? What level of collaboration among students is permitted?*
- (4) *Tell me about your grading philosophy and practices.*
 - a. *How are different aspects of the classwork weighted?*
 - b. *How are final letter grades set? What factors are taken into account for determining grades for border students?*
 - c. *How should I respond if students ask me about their current grade and/or how final letter grades are set?*
- (5) *Tell me about content expectations in this class.*
 - a. *What relevant foundational classes have students typically taken? How long ago? Do they tend to retain this material or is a refresher helpful?*
 - b. *What topics do students struggle with most? Do you have suggestions for helping students succeed with these topics?*
- (6) *Tell me about academic dishonesty in this class.*
 - a. *Have there been instances of academic dishonesty in the past?*
 - b. *Should I be on the lookout for anything in particular?*
 - c. *How would you like me to handle dishonesty? (For example, should all instances be reported directly to you, or does copying part of a homework assignment merit a stern note/lecture from the TA instead?)*
- (7) *Tell me about other non-content-related concerns in this class. What policies should I be aware of (e.g., regarding late work) and what decisions are under my purview?*
- (8) *Does this subject historically require an average, high, or low time commitment? (Note that 20-24 hours/week is what MIT suggests for a TAship.)*
- (9) *If there is something you would really like to try, let the Professor know. For example, s/he may be willing to let you give a guest lecture or design an exam problem if you have a deep interest in pedagogy and/or a particular aspect of the subject content.*

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In classes with multiple TAs, it's also a good idea to meet and decide on a preliminary division of labor. You can always revise the plan later. You can also use this time to check that you are on the same page for the topics above as discussed with faculty.

- (1) How will we divide the administrative and teaching tasks?*
- (2) How comfortable does each TA feel with the following skills or tasks? And how much does each TA want to rely on existing abilities and/or develop new ones?*
 - a. Content knowledge*
 - b. Pre-testing assignments and exams*
 - c. Preparing practice problems for recitation*
 - d. Delivering recitations*
 - e. Working one-on-one with students*
 - f. Others relevant for specific class (e.g., coding)*
- (3) Will we have a weekly TAs only staff meeting, in addition to the broader meeting?*