



Teaching Assistants



rights
responsibilities
rewards
resources

Office of the Dean for Graduate Education (ODGE)
Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education (DUE)

Rights

At the beginning of each semester, teaching assistants have the right to know, and faculty are expected to provide, the following:

- An overview of the course, including course goals, topics, and assignments.
- The number of hours/week the department expects TAs to devote to course-related activities. This number will be reasonable, given that TAs also have responsibilities as students and researchers.
- Specific course-related activities in which TAs are expected to engage (e.g., lead recitation sections, hold office hours, supervise labs, grade, attend lectures).
- Ways in which TAs are expected to work with course faculty.
- The distribution of work among TAs associated with the course.
- Methods and measurements by which TA performance will be evaluated (e.g., student evaluation surveys at the end of the semester, in-class observations by faculty during the semester).
- Resources at MIT accessible to TAs for assistance and support in teaching and mentoring students.
- Timely notification of any unexpected or unusual change in funding status as soon as the change is known, particularly if funding might be terminated.
- Any other department-specific expectations.

Responsibilities

The duties of a teaching assistant may include assisting a faculty member in grading undergraduate homework and quizzes, instruction in the classroom and laboratory, preparing apparatus or material for demonstrations, posting web-based materials, and conducting tutorials and discussion sections. Regardless of assigned duties, all TAs are expected to:

- Work a designated number of hours / week on average. The number of hours / week may vary somewhat during the semester.
- Know the goals of the subject and understand the course content. TAs may be asked to help prepare problem sets, in-class assignments, or exams, as well as organize the course. TAs may be required to attend lectures.
- Come prepared to all recitations, labs, and review sessions.
- Be dependable. If a TA can't lead recitations, or carry out any other assignment, he or she must inform the supervisor. TAs may be asked by the supervisor to find a suitable replacement.
- Participate in the teaching assistant workshops that are offered by their School or department.
- Communicate effectively in English with students.
- Grade fairly and promptly. TAs should consult with faculty to ensure that their grading standards are consistent with other graders.
- Treat every student with courtesy and respect.
- Abide by MIT's Policy on Harassment. See web.mit.edu/policies/9.5.html
- Avoid initiating or maintaining inappropriate relationships with students.
- Remain available at the end of the semester to help faculty with the administrative aspects of the subject.
- Comply with any additional department-specific requirements.

Rewards

In fulfilling their responsibilities, teaching assistants enhance skills that will serve them well in future careers, whether in academia, business, or industry. These invaluable experiences help TAs to:

- Gain a deep understanding of the subject material.
- Communicate thoughts and ideas effectively.
- Improve presentation skills.
- Develop the ability to motivate and mentor others.
- Strengthen group facilitation skills.
- Enhance negotiation and conflict mediation skills.

Other rewards include:

- Instructor-G Appointments. Advanced graduate students who show exemplary classroom performance may be appointed as an Instructor-G in recognition of their interest and ability in teaching. See also: web.mit.edu/odg/gpp/assistance/rata.html
- Honors and awards. At semester or academic year end, many departments recognize exceptional performance by teaching assistants. The Institute awards the Goodwin Medal each year for “conspicuously effective teaching” by a graduate student. Some prizes include monetary rewards. See also: web.mit.edu/odg/development/teaching.html

Resources

For help with teaching

Teaching and Learning Laboratory

Room 5-122
617.253.2850
web.mit.edu/tll/

For non-native English speakers

English Language Studies Program Foreign Languages and Literatures

Room 14N-305
617.253.4771
web.mit.edu/fll/www/languages/ELS.html

For confidential discussions related to workplace issues

MIT Ombuds Office

Room 10-213
617.253.5921
web.mit.edu/ombud/

For department-specific support

Departmental graduate administrators

web.mit.edu/odg/gpp/oversight/administrators.html

For Institute-wide support and referral services

Office of the Dean for Graduate Education

Room 3-138
617.253.4860
web.mit.edu/odg

Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education (DUE)

Room 7-133
617.253.6056
web.due.mit.edu

For resources to support undergraduates

Office of Undergraduate Advising and Academic Programming

Room 7-104
617.253.6771
web.mit.edu/uaap/

Student Support Services (S3)

Room 5-104
617.253.4861
web.mit.edu/uaap/s3/

MIT acknowledges the following sources for their contributions to this material:

Stony Brook State University of New York/ Computer Science Department/Teaching Assistant Duties and Evaluation
alum.cs.sunysb.edu/graduate/TAs/Responsibilities.html

Dartmouth College/Department of Physics and Astronomy/Teaching Labs/TA Responsibilities
www.dartmouth.edu/~physics/labs/ta.responsibilities.html



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