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Orientation and Handbook: Graduate Teaching Associates and Graduate Assistants

On behalf of the faculty and staff at San Diego State University, we are delighted to welcome you to your new duties as a Teaching Associate or Graduate Assistant. Academic student employees play a key role in the instructional and research mission of the university. The Division of Graduate Affairs and the Office of Faculty Advancement have prepared this orientation to help you learn more about the university, and your new position and responsibilities. The faculty, lecturers and academic support staff in your home departments are also valuable resources, and will be both mentors and colleagues. We wish each of you well in your endeavors throughout the academic year.

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Appointment Types

Teaching Associate and Graduate Assistant appointments for graduate students at San Diego State University are supportive of but secondary to one's graduate studies. Although such duties must be carried out in a responsible manner, the University has limits on the time, length, and level of the appointment to help assure this subordinate assignment does not interfere with the primary purpose of obtaining a graduate degree.

From the Statement of Terms and Conditions (STC)

Teaching Associate (TA)

Appointments as graduate teaching associates, known more commonly as TAs, provide students the opportunity to participate directly in the teaching activities of the university. Indeed, faculty members in many programs consider such appointments an integral part of the academic curriculum for their graduate students. Under the supervision of senior faculty, TAs provide direct instruction to undergraduate students, primarily at the lower division level.

Appointments as graduate TAs are available to qualified graduate students in all doctoral programs, and many master's programs. Graduate TAs must be admitted to San Diego State University with classified or conditionally classified graduate standing. Appointments may be for a period of either one semester or the academic year. Reappointment is dependent on satisfactory performance in graduate studies (as prescribed by Graduate Council), departmental need, and satisfactory teaching performance. Information concerning an appointment as a graduate teaching associate may be obtained from the head of the department, school, or college in which the applicant wishes to obtain the advanced degree.

Graduate Assistant (GA)

Graduate assistants (GA) provide instructionally related services to undergraduate students, or may be assigned duties that directly support faculty research activities. Graduate assistants are available in most San Diego State University departments and schools. Graduate assistants must be admitted to San Diego State University with classified or conditionally classified graduate standing.

Appointments may be for a period of either one semester or the academic year. Reappointment or continuation of an appointment is dependent upon satisfactory performance in graduate studies (as prescribed by the Division of Graduate Affairs), departmental need, and satisfactory completion of assigned duties. Information concerning an appointment as a graduate assistant may be obtained from the head of the department, school, or college in which the applicant wishes to obtain the advanced degree.

Instructional Student Assistant (ISA)

Graduate students are eligible for employment as student assistants, who perform a wide variety of tasks supporting faculty and staff across the university. Assistants are paid by the hour and are restricted to assignments not to exceed 20 hours per week. Information concerning an appointment as a student assistant may be obtained from the head of the department, school, or college in which the applicant wishes to obtain the advanced degree. Some available positions are also be listed with the Office of Career Services in Student Services East, Room 1200.

Research Assistant (SDSU Research Foundation)

Some graduate students obtain part-time employment as research assistants. Research assistants work directly with faculty in a laboratory or other research facility in the health, physical, and social sciences. Although research assistants are employees of the SDSU Research Foundation, they are generally hired directly by faculty members seeking assistance for specific research programs.

Students may inquire about such appointments through the appropriate faculty in their program, the chair or director of the respective department, or the Office of Human Resources of the SDSU Research Foundation. Those interested in adding their names to a list of candidates for current or future openings may obtain application materials from the San Diego State University Research Foundation, Gateway Building, 5250 Campanile Drive, San Diego, CA 92182-1945. Further information may also be available on faculty and department websites.

Eligibility for TA, GA and ISA Appointments

TA, GA and ISA appointments are made by campus academic departments. The eligibility criteria are:

- Student has been admitted to a graduate program, or is continuing as a matriculated student.
- Student is not on probation or disqualified.
- Student has not graduated.
- Student is enrolled (or agrees to enroll in) at least one class per semester while a TA/GA/ISA.
- 3.00 or higher GPA.
 - New students: last 60 unit GPA that is used for admissions
 - Continuing students: post-baccalaureate cumulative GPA = cumulative GPA on transcripts
- For Master's students that have completed 2 semesters: Program of Study (POS) is filed.
- For Master's students in their final semester who intend to register for 799a: POS must be approved, student must be advanced to candidacy and thesis committee form must be on file.
- Student has not exceeded GA/TA term limits (if the Department or College has limits)
- Student's graduate program is in same department as the TA/GA/ISA appointment.
- Short-term exchange students not seeking SDSU degree may not be TAs/GAs (ISAs only).
- Total TA + GA + ISA workload is \leq 20 hours per week.

GPA Requirements

TAs, GAs, RAs and ISAs must maintain a 3.00 or higher post-baccalaureate cumulative GPA. If this GPA drops below 3.00, students have one semester to bring it to 3.00 or higher. If the post-baccalaureate cumulative GPA drops below 2.85, the student is placed on academic probation and is subject to dismissal from the appointment.

Concurrent Appointment

Per CSU coded memo 2005-29, TAs or GAs appointed for less than half-time may be appointed concurrently in another student classification, up to a combined total of 50% (half time) or 20 hours per week while enrolled in classes. In other words, a student may have 2 appointments, but the combined hours worked cannot exceed 20 hours per week or 50% time.

Course Load

Under the terms of the CSU/UAW contract, the university may not require a minimum course load for otherwise eligible academic student employees. International students note: under Federal Regulation Code (Title 8) section 214.2 (f), the maximum number of hours a foreign student with an F-1 Visa may work is twenty (20) hours/week while the university is in regular session. International students may work up to 40 hours/week when the university is not in session or during annual vacation periods or summer.

Termination of Appointment

According to the CSU/UAW contract, if a student fails to remain academically eligible, the university has five weeks to terminate the TA/GA appointment. Students must also demonstrate satisfactory academic progress and perform assigned duties satisfactorily, or they may be reassigned to other work or denied reappointment. Reappointment may also be denied for budgetary or enrollment considerations.

Conditions of appointment are specifically outlined on the Statement of Terms and Conditions, which must be read and signed by the student in order for the appointment to be valid. Departments may recommend termination to the Dean of their college, but removal from an assignment for academic reasons requires the concurrence of the Graduate Dean. The Dean of Graduate Affairs also may initiate the termination of an appointment if the Dean determines that a student's academic progress is unsatisfactory. Only the president of the university or the president's designee may terminate an appointment. In all cases, the student shall be given appropriate notification.

Relationship with Your Supervisor

You likely have many responsibilities as a graduate student in addition to your TA/GA assignment. For example, you may be taking courses, working on a research project, conducting a literature review, participating in an internship and/or studying for a comprehensive examination. At the beginning of each semester, establish clear boundaries and expectations with your supervisor so that you are able to meet all of these responsibilities. In an ideal situation, you will develop a trusting, open relationship and be able to discuss challenges with them directly. If you are unable to resolve conflicts or misunderstandings with your direct supervisor, turn to the department Chair, program Director and/or Graduate Advisor. Don't let unresolved issues persist to the point that your academic performance, degree progress and/or relationship with the supervisor deteriorate.

TA and GA General Responsibilities

The fundamental responsibility of a TA or GA is to work closely with their supervisor (often a faculty member) to complete all assigned duties while steadily making progress toward completion of the degree program. Your department, school or program will provide you with a clear statement of responsibilities and expectations. A more complete discussion of professional responsibilities of *all* instructors is available in the University Policy File:

<http://newscenter.sdsu.edu/universitySenate/policyfile.aspx>

Summary of TA and GA responsibilities

TAs and GAs provide essential support to their departments by:

- Managing the workflow associated with instruction.
- Freeing instructors to spend more time improving student learning outcomes.
- Facilitating interaction with students.
- Maintaining standards of academic integrity and honesty in labs, classrooms, and offices, and reporting violations to their supervisor.
- Providing feedback and new ideas to improve class performance and design.

Discuss with your supervising professor her or his expectations for:

- Course goals and methodology.
- Your office hours.
- Your attendance in lecture.
- Weekly meetings for course staff.
- Exam and assignment types, and scoring rubrics for each graded assignment.

- Procedures for handling all manner of special appeals, including makeup work, student complaints about grades, student difficulties with the course, instances of plagiarism or cheating.
- Additional materials that struggling students can review.
- Additional materials that you can review to improve your skills for this particular class.

Tips for TAs and GAs

1. BE REASONABLE
2. Stay informed of department/school, college, and institutional regulations and follow them consistently.
3. Keep careful records of student work assignments and grading, and maintain backup copies.
4. Document all student problems, makeup work and special accommodations in writing (emails).
5. Discuss expectations with your faculty supervisor on a regular basis. Clarify how you will be assessed in meeting these expectations. Articulate your goals as a TA or GA early in the semester, and work with your supervisor throughout the semester to achieve them.

Effective instruction

A primary qualification for appointment is the promise of effective instruction at the undergraduate level. Teaching ability is measured by command of the subject, skill in organizing and presenting material with force and logic, intellectual integrity, and enthusiasm. Command of the English language is mandatory in most fields of study. (Check with your department for specific requirements.) University policy requires regular student evaluation of teaching as well as evaluation by the appropriate administrator.

Knowledge of the University Catalog and Graduate Bulletin

The General Catalog, in effect, is a kind of contract with undergraduate students. Each student is entitled to receive a degree or credential upon completion of the requirements specified in the catalog. (The Graduate Bulletin is the graduate- and doctoral-level equivalent.) Instructors are obligated to ensure that each course meets the catalog description.

Class schedule

The Schedule of Classes posted on university website each term contains the officially designated time and place for class meetings and for final examinations. Time and place of meetings and examinations may not be changed. Should unusual circumstances seem to warrant a change, please consult with the department chair to receive official approval in advance of making a change. Violation of this policy is grounds for dismissal.

Courses with multiple sections

When multiple sections of a course are offered, it is imperative that all instructors meet the same course objectives and evaluate students in a consistent manner. Students must always attend the section they are registered for, except for rare accommodations for excused absences.

Textbooks

Textbooks and instructional materials for classes may be ordered from the Campus Bookstore. Each term, the bookstore will provide order forms and notification of deadlines to the instructor of record. It is the instructor's responsibility to make timely arrangements for the materials required in classes. Check with the department chair or graduate adviser for further information.

Auditing of classes

With the consent of the instructor, students may audit a class. An auditor must officially register for the class as an ungraded "Auditor". Auditors must meet all admission requirements and pay the same fees as those required of students enrolled for credit. An auditor is not held for examinations and does not receive credit or a final grade in the class. No change from regular registration to audit, or from audit to regular registration, is permitted during the semester.

Office hours

Every TA is expected to hold at least one office hour per week for each course at a time convenient for that class. Many departments require additional office hours. Each instructor is required to post a schedule of office hours adjacent to his or her office door and to file that schedule with the department.

Final examinations

All final examinations must be held at the time and place designated in the Final Examination Schedule listed in the Schedule of Classes each term. Final examinations may not be held during the last week of classes. The examination periods are part of the regular school year and all instructors are expected to be on duty. Teaching obligations are not fulfilled until all coursework has been evaluated, grade reports filed in the Registrar's Office, and any special duties accomplished. Instructors shall provide accommodations to disable students throughout the term (including finals) as directed by Student Disability Services.

Grading

All courses are graded A through F unless departures from this standard are authorized. For exceptions, notably the regulations regarding credit/no credit grading, please refer to the University Policy File, the General Catalog and the Graduate Bulletin. Grading practices are to meet the highest professional standards of objectivity, fairness, and accuracy. Grade distributions in individual classes are not to reflect a prescribed distribution or curve. However, instructors may be required to provide a professionally defensible explanation when grades in any class depart markedly or persistently from statistically predictable patterns for courses on a university level. Adequate records must be kept for seven years. TAs should deposit their grade books with the department chair when their services have ended.

The differences between final grades of "I", "F" and "WU" are as follows:

1. "I" for incomplete indicates that a portion of required coursework has not been completed and evaluated in the prescribed time period due to unforeseen, but fully justified, reasons. There is still a possibility of earning credit. An incomplete should not be given to make up more than a final assignment or two (certainly less than 1/3 of the course points). An incomplete should not be given if the student has turned in all the graded work. An incomplete should not be given if the only way to make up the work would be to attend a major portion of the class when it is next offered. If undergraduate students fail a course, note that they can use a course forgiveness and retake the course for a new grade (their academic advisor can explain the details). Students should be notified in writing of the remaining work to resolve the incomplete, maximum time frame (no more than one year), and whether they will be assigned a final grade based on the same point scale as the remainder of the class. If an exam remains, specific instructions on how to schedule it should be provided, and whether the format will differ from the in-class exam.

2. A grade of "WU" means unauthorized withdrawal. A grades of WU is treated like an "F" for GPA calculations. A WU should be issued if the student
 - a) began the course and was graded on some assignments, AND
 - b) was passing (grade > F) BEFORE THEY
 - c) stopped coming to class.

WU is also appropriate if a student does not show up for the final, and did not request a makeup in a timely manner.

3. A grade of "F" should be issued if the student has a failing grade, and neither an incomplete or WU applies. An F would be appropriate for a student who was never passing the course, and simply stopped attending. Even if an instructor knows that the student has serious personal problems, the instructor should issue an F. The student has the opportunity to petition the university for retroactive withdrawal if it is warranted.

Course grades are the responsibility of the instructor. Except as provided in the Student Grievance Code, grade changes may be initiated only by the instructor of record. If a student received a lower grade than earned in the course due to an error by the instructor, the instructor shall direct the Office of the Registrar to raise the grade by completing the required form. In cases where the grade is to be changed for reasons other than instructor error, the change must have the approval of the department Chair and the Dean of the college.

Professionalism

Be professional, courteous and responsible. You are expected to adhere to the highest standards of ethics in your professional relationships with students, and refrain from any behavior that might be interpreted as sexual harassment. Additionally:

- Be on time for classes and office hours.
- If you cannot attend class, you must find a replacement.
- If you cannot attend office hours, provide an alternative time as soon as possible.
- Provide a thorough syllabus that conforms to Senate policies. If a syllabus already exists, work with your supervisor to improve it for this semester and future semesters.
- Order textbooks on time, if this is your responsibility.
- Return all graded assignments in a timely fashion.
- Strive to grade fairly and objectively.
- Report scores on all graded assignments on Blackboard as soon as you complete your scoring, or personally to each student.
- Maintain backup copies of the electronic documents in which you record assignment scores. Blackboard does not maintain automatic backups for your class scores.
- At the end of the semester, submit your grades on time.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries with students in and outside the classroom.
- Present a professional appearance.
- Recognize diversity and incorporate it into your teaching
- You are responsible for all of the specific policies detailed in **University Policies and Rules** below.

Five Important Rules of Thumb for Difficult Decisions

Instructors and instructional support staff face difficult decisions each semester, often with no prior warning. Requests for regrading, requests for makeup work, and complaints about the course or instructor must all be handled thoughtfully and in a consistent manner. Here are important rules of thumb for unexpected and/or difficult decisions.

1. **Provide a prompt response, but not immediate unless necessary.** If you are not sure about the appropriate response, do not get pressured into an immediate decision. Listen sympathetically and take careful notes. Tell the student that you will confer with your supervisor and/or other course staff and respond by email. Tell them exactly when to expect a response from you (for example, within 48 hours).
2. **Assume that your response will not be private.** Any emails or verbal conversations you have with the student might very well be shared with other students, instructors or staff. Do not make any decisions or respond with a tone that you would be unable to defend publically.
3. **Be reasonable and consistent.** Follow the course policies as outlined in the syllabus whenever possible. When unusual and unanticipated situations arise, coordinate your response with your supervisor and other instructional staff. Everyone (including the instructor and other TAs in the course) should be responding to similar requests in the same way. Make sure that your decisions would appear to be reasonable to the average student and faculty member.
4. **Document everything in writing.** New grading criteria, assignments, opportunities for extra points, etc. should be publicly posted on Blackboard. Any course policies that deviate from the course syllabus should be publicly posted on Blackboard. Communicate your decisions on requests for makeup work, regarding, or any unusual situations in an email to the student and copy your supervisor. If you are providing a makeup exam to a student who was ill, tell them exactly where and when the makeup will be, and whether the format will be the same as the in-class exam.
5. **Anticipate additional problems.** There are many ways to anticipate and prevent future problems. For example, if you document your decisions and responses in writing (emails), it eliminates the possibility that a student will later claim "I didn't know ..." or "That is not what my TA told me." You can avoid additional problems if you clearly state what the penalty will be if a deadline is missed. Consider adding an expiration date for regrade requests and for makeup work to your syllabus. (For example, "Requests for makeup quizzes must emailed to the TA prior to the in-class quiz, unless you are too sick or do not have email access.")

Benefits and Human Resources

Teaching associates appointed for an academic year at a time base of 50% are eligible for employee benefits. Spouses, same-sex domestic partners, and unmarried dependents under the age of 23 are eligible for health benefits. The following is a partial list of employee benefits: a) Medical Insurance, b) Dental Insurance, c) Flex Cash, d) Life Insurance, and e) Retirement through the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).

Teaching Associates are covered by Workers' Compensation. Any job-related accident or illness must be immediately reported to the supervisor.

A summary is provided below. For further information and a complete listing of benefits, please go to the benefits page at the Center for Human Resources website: <http://bfa.sdsu.edu/~person/>

Getting started

Coordinate with your department to complete all payroll paperwork with the Center for Human Resources (Gateway Building 4th Floor) no later than three days after beginning work. You will need to bring original documents (not copies) that demonstrate eligibility to work in the United States.

Health benefits

Graduate assistants are not eligible for benefits.

Teaching Associates appointed half time or more for an academic year are eligible for health benefits. Spouses, same sex domestic partners, and unmarried dependents under the age of 23 are also eligible for health benefits. See the Unit 11 Benefits Summary at the CSU web site: <http://www.calstate.edu/hr/benefits/benefits-summaries.shtml>

You must enroll in benefits within 60 days of hire. Contact the Center for Human Resources to attend a benefits orientation at the start of your employment.

Paychecks

If all paperwork has been completed on time, the first paycheck will arrive on schedule at your department/school for pick up. Please see your supervisor or department administrative assistant for details.

Parking

TAs can purchase faculty/staff parking permits at the Parking Services Office with an authorization slip from the department. GAs may obtain student parking permits.

Keys

If keys are required, you will be given an authorization card to take to Key Issue.

Sick leave and other leaves

TAs accrue sick leave with pay pro-rata according to their time base. Please see: http://www.calstate.edu/LaborRel/Contracts_HTML/CBA_Contract/index.shtml

TAs who miss a class because of illness must notify the department before the time of the class meeting, if at all possible. Upon return to duty, they must notify their department immediately and fill out Form 634, Absence Request, obtainable at the departmental office. Sick leave is charged from the first full day of absence to the day of return, including academic working days on which the sick TA had no assigned classes.

Normally, absences for personal reasons are without pay. However, the president may authorize paid leaves of absence in some specified circumstances. All absences, with or without pay, require completion of an Absence Request, a professionally competent substitute to take over the class, and approval in advance. TAs receive one personal holiday per calendar year. This day may be used only with advanced approval from the department. The holiday cannot be carried over to the following year.

Unauthorized Absence

Instructors who leave without the required approval in advance will suffer loss of pay for all days on which they are absent without official leave. They are also subject to disciplinary action. If such unauthorized absence is for a period of five consecutive days, the instructor may be considered to have resigned. To protect both salary and job, the TA must get official approval before an absence for any reason other than emergencies.

Personnel Files

The personnel files of temporary faculty and TAs are maintained in departmental offices. These files contain employment information and information that may be relevant to personnel recommendations or personnel actions.

Paychecks

Payroll checks are delivered each month to colleges and departments for distribution to individuals. Checks not picked up are returned to the Center for Human Resources where they may be individually claimed. TAs receive six paychecks per semester and should complete the clearance procedure in Human Resources before the final paycheck is released.

University Policies and Rules

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment violates university policy and federal law. Sexual harassment is the unwelcome imposition of sexual attention, often in the context of a relationship of unequal power. This can include faculty imposing sexual attention on a graduate student, or a graduate student imposing sexual attention on an undergraduate. TAs and GAs are expected to adhere to the highest standards of ethics in your professional relationships with students, and refrain from any behavior that might be interpreted as sexual harassment. Such behaviors include but are not limited to:

- “Quid pro quo” or “this for that”: exchanging a benefit (such as a grade) for sexual favors.
- Asking students for dates
- Physical contact of a sexual nature
- Engaging in sexual or romantic relationships with students
- Creating a “hostile environment”:
 - Sexual content in a class with no reasonable academic rationale.
 - Comments directed at a group or individual regarding student appearance or personality
 - Inappropriate jokes or examples.

Teaching Associates who engage in these behaviors may be in violation of State and Federal law and the California Education Code and may be subject to university sanctions and/or held personally liable. Additional information is available from the Office of Employee Relations and Compliance at this website: oerc.sdsu.edu/sexharas.html

If you are accused of sexual harassment:

- Bring the issue to your supervisor immediately.
- Do not retaliate against accuser.
- Know that false accusations are a serious offense.
- Cooperate fully and honestly in any investigation.

If you experience sexual harassment from a supervisor, or observe it in your workplace:

- Report it to your Department Chair/School Director, or to the Office of Employee Relations and Compliance.
- As a union member, you also have the right to file a grievance through the UAW.

Standards of Conduct

- Sexual relationships with students enrolled in your courses are prohibited.
- Alcohol use is strictly controlled on campus. Never bring alcohol into your office or classroom.
- Never use illegal substances with students.
- Never teach under the influence.

Student Privacy

Federal and state laws protect student privacy by forbidding:

- Group emails (use Blackboard instead).
- Posting grades or assignment scores publicly.
- Leaving graded assignments unattended in public places for students to pick up.
- Revealing grades or other personal information about students to anyone else. This includes the student's parents, unless you can verify that the student has actually filed paperwork with the university approving the release of this information to the parents.

Academic Dishonesty

- Before the semester begins, establish a specific plan with your supervisor for addressing plagiarism or cheating, whether on homework or during an in-class exam.
- Make sure that the syllabus clearly states the consequences for academic dishonesty. For example: "If you turn in an assignment that is not your own work, you will receive a score of 0 on the assignment, and the incident will be reported to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities for review."
- In classes that include writing assignments, the syllabus should include a specific definition for plagiarism, and examples of how to properly cite a variety of sources (lecture notes, textbook, other books or journal articles, online material).
- When an incident occurs, immediately notify your supervisor.
- Academic dishonesty incidents must be reported to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities (online submission form)
- The instructor determines the appropriate academic sanction for incidents of dishonesty; CSRR determines punitive sanctions
- Learn ways to identify academic dishonesty (e.g., Turnitin, variations on exams, targeted assignments).

Student Disciplinary Procedures

Executive Order No. 628, Student Disciplinary Procedures, provides for disciplinary action against a student under Title 5, Section 41304. Penalties range from reprimand to expulsion. Problems should be discussed with the department Chair and the college Dean before proceeding.

Attendance and Absences

- Verify that all students attending class are registered by checking the official roster on WebPortal.
- Classes must be held in assigned classrooms at assigned times.
- Instructors may drop students from the class roster if they miss the first class period and do not show up at the beginning of the second.
- The class syllabus should include clear examples of excusable absences (for which makeup work will be provided), and absences that are not excusable. These could include traffic-related delays, work conflicts, illness, religious holidays, personal travel, death in the family, employment or graduate school interviews.
- The class syllabus should include clear instructions for when the instructor will be
- Students must notify instructor within first two weeks if they will miss class due to official university events.
- Students should notify the instructor within first two weeks if they will miss class due to religious observances. In some cases, instructors may be expected to provide reasonable accommodations even if a student will not miss class.

Field Trips

Consult your supervisor or department Chair to obtain the proper permission and liability waivers for class field trips.

Student Disability Services

Student Disability Services (SDS) is the campus office responsible for determining and providing appropriate academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Support services are available to students with certified visual limitations, hearing and communication impairments, learning disabilities, mobility, and other functional limitations.

As a teaching associate, you are required to ensure that students with disabilities who attend your classes receive the accommodations authorized by Student Disability Services. In addition, you are responsible for providing a harassment-free atmosphere that does not discriminate against students with disabilities or other protected groups. If a nonstandard accommodation is requested, consult with your supervisor and BE REASONABLE. For more detailed information, including a suggested syllabus statement, contact SDS at (619) 594-6473 or see their website:

http://newscenter.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/sds/

Grievance Procedures

Grievances related to a specific course

Students with grievances related to a specific course should first attempt to resolve them with the instructor (which may be you as a TA). Both student and instructor are advised to document the request and response in writing (email is usually appropriate). If an agreeable solution is not found, the student should appeal to the instructor's supervisor (for a multi-section course) or the department's Chair. For graduate students, further appeals are directed to the Assistant Dean or Associate Dean of the College, as directed by the Chair. Final appeals may be made to the university Ombudsman.

Grievances not course-related

Students should see the Ombudsman in SSE 1105 (or email ombuds@mail.sdsu.edu) for grievances concerning employment, sexual harassment, discrimination, fees/Student Account Services, or other offices within Student Services/Enrollment Services. The Ombudsman acts as the student liaison or mediator, and is a confidential, independent, and neutral resource for students. The Ombudsman will direct students appropriately, depending on the specific issues.

Undergraduate students with grievances that do not fall into these special categories and are not course-related should first attempt to resolve the issue directly with the relevant faculty or staff member. A clearly articulated request sent by email will establish a written record. If there is no resolution, students may appeal to the Department Chair. After that, students may appeal to the Assistant Dean of their College. Final appeals may be made to the university Ombudsman. Students who are concerned about conflicts of interest or retribution may request a meeting with the Ombudsman.

Graduate students with grievances that do not fall into these special categories and are not course-related should first attempt to resolve the issue directly with the relevant faculty or staff member. A clearly articulated request sent by email will establish a written record. If there is no resolution, students may appeal to the Department Chair or Graduate Advisor, as appropriate. After that, students may appeal to the Assistant Dean of their College or the Assistant Dean of Graduate Affairs. Final appeals may be made to the university Ombudsman. Students who are concerned about conflicts of interest or retribution may direct their appeal to the next highest level, or the Assistant Dean of Graduate Affairs <AsstDeanGRA@mail.sdsu.edu>.

Additional information about grievance review may be found on the Ombudsman's website:
http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/ombudsman/Default.aspx

Other sources of information

- See the Orientation for New Graduate Students, posted on the Graduate Affairs Web Site.
- Important university policies are documented in the Graduate Bulletin.
- Your degree requirements are documented in the Graduate Bulletin.
- Contact your department/school for specific details related to your employment duties.
- Questions about the paperwork needed to begin your employment should be directed to your department, or the Center for Human Resources at (619) 594-7901.
- Questions about your benefits may be directed to the Center for Human Resources at (619) 594-1144.
- Payroll-related questions may be directed to the Center for Human Resources at (619) 594-5251.
- Your union is UAW Local 4123: <http://www.uaw4123.org>
- Contact Graduate Affairs with questions regarding degree requirements or graduation. We may be reached at (619) 594-5213 or gra@mail.sdsu.edu.
- The Center for Teaching and Learning promotes effective learning and teaching at SDSU through collaborative ventures with faculty, academic units, support services, and students. See their web site: <http://ctl.sdsu.edu>

Safety and Emergencies

Call 911 from a campus phone or 594-1991 from a cell phone for a life threatening injury, or true emergencies such as fire.

Emergency Preparedness

- Read through the [Campus Procedures posted at http://bfa.sdsu.edu/emergency/](http://bfa.sdsu.edu/emergency/)
- Keep a list of who to contact for emergency and non-emergency issues. These include:
 - Know your Department Safety Coordinator.
 - Know your building's Facilities Coordinator.
- Additional Teaching Associate responsibilities:
 - Inform students about evacuation procedures at the beginning of the semester.
 - Assist and direct students during evacuation.
 - Participate in campus emergency preparedness drills.
 - Evacuate the building when the fire alarm sounds or when otherwise directed.
 - Be familiar with two building exits nearest to your classroom, and the two nearest exit routes.
 - Evacuate to the designated assembly point when outside the building.
 - If evacuated, report any helpful information to the Safety Coordinator in the yellow vest with the yellow flag or Public Safety representative at the assembly point.
 - Be familiar with procedures contained in the Emergency Procedures Booklet, burgundy and white flip chart posted in departments and classrooms.
 - Have contingency plans for those with special needs to assist them during an emergency.

Injury & Illness Prevention Program

- Read the Injury and Illness Prevention Program documents maintained by Business and Financial Affairs: <http://bfa.sdsu.edu/ehs/IIPP/iippindex.htm>
- Teaching Associate Responsibilities:
 - Be responsible for your and others' safety.
 - Provide and document task-specific safety training when applicable (e.g. research, instructional laboratories, workshops, studios).
 - Learn the appropriate reporting mechanisms for student injuries.
 - Learn the hazards associated with your course and your building.
 - Inform students to report their injuries to you. Report student injuries, hazards, or potential hazards when they are known to you.
 - Assist and direct students to report to Student Health Services for treatment of injuries that are not life threatening.

Frequently Asked Questions by TAs and GAs

1. What is the most important first step to being a successful TA/GA?

READ THE ENTIRE CONTRACT before you sign it. You are agreeing to comply with its requirements. If you have any questions, please consult with Graduate Affairs first.

2. I've been offered an appointment; what happens next?

You will be given a contract stating the terms and qualifications of the position. Read over it carefully. This is a binding document. It sets the conditions of the appointment.

3. Who gives me my assignment?

You will be assigned a supervisor to whom you will report for assignments and progress. This person is listed on your contract. In most cases, your supervisor will be a faculty or staff member who has a long-term association with the course.

4. How will I know what to teach or how to present the material (for TAs only)?

Your department/school should provide its own orientation. Previous course instructors should provide a syllabus or other course materials, and some mentoring. If you miss this information, please speak with your supervisor or the department chair/school director as soon as possible.

5. Am I entitled to benefits?

Please consult with your Graduate Advisor, the supervisor named on the contract, or Human Resources. Benefits vary depending on the numbers of hours you work, appointment type, etc.

6. When will I be paid?

October 1st is the date of your first paycheck. It's important that you are in compliance with the contract throughout your hire period to ensure this. Do not begin working without a valid contract. Please ensure you have gone through the HR orientation prior to beginning work.

7. My contract is being held up in my College, or in Graduate Affairs. What could be the problem?

There are many reasons why your pending contract could be returned to the department. The instructional needs of the university may have changed suddenly, or you may have exceeded department or college term limits. Your eligibility may be question for one of reasons listed above in the section titled **Eligibility for TA, GA and ISA Appointments**.

8. What deadlines are important, and where can I find them?

Major deadlines are listed in the Graduate Bulletin, the online SDSU academic calendar, the Graduate Affairs web site, and in flyers posted by Graduate Affairs. You are responsible for knowing these deadlines.

9. What types of tuition and fees am I responsible for?

Basic Tuition and Fees are required of all students. Students who have not been judged by SDSU to be California residents pay additional "nonresident" tuition and fees. (Visit the Registrar's website for more information about California residency for tuition purposes.) Graduate students in the College of Business also pay a college-specific fee. Some laboratory courses require additional fees to cover supply costs. Auditors pay the same fee as students carrying courses for credit.

See the SDSU "Money Matters" web site for full details:

<http://bfa.sdsu.edu/fm/co/sfs/moneymatters.html>

10. What is a Non-Resident Tuition Waiver, and how do I get one?

A NRTW (Non-Resident Tuition Waiver) covers the fee for tuition paid by international and non-Californians for attending a California State University. You may ask your department/school to nominate you for a NRTW when applying to your graduate program. A limited number of NRTWs are available, and they are awarded competitively to incoming graduate students.

Students with a NRTW must keep their GPA at 3.00 or above, or risk losing the NRTW. Students may have a NRTW renewed for up to 5 semesters. The NRTW is only good in the Fall and Spring semesters.

11. I have been turned down in one department/school to be a TA/GA. May I apply to another?

You may only TA in the department/school for which you are pursuing your degree. For example, if you have a Bachelor's degree in English but are currently pursuing a Master's degree in Chemistry, you are not eligible to TA an English course. GAs may work in a program or field that is closely related to their degree program. For interdisciplinary programs without a home department, the GA may be eligible to work in departments/schools related to their field of study. The hiring department may petition for exceptions to these rules.

12. I'm getting conflicting information about university policies. My advisor said one thing, my teacher said another, and a friend with the same question is giving different advice. Who do I believe?

Graduate and Research Affairs is the most reliable source of information for all graduate students, including those pursuing Master's degrees, doctoral degrees, certificates and credentials. The Assistant Dean, Associate Dean and Dean of Graduate and Research Affairs oversee many university policies. Graduate and Research Affairs staff also have the most current information for policies that are administered by other units on campus. Please see us in SSE 1410, or email us at gra@mail.sdsu.edu.

13. How are formal complaints handled at the university?

See the above section titled **Grievance Procedures**.

14. Can students take "regular" courses (such as the one I am teaching) even if they are not full-time registered students at SDSU? What is Open University?

Possibly. Individuals not officially enrolled in a graduate or undergraduate program may enroll in a SDSU Main Campus course through the College of Extended Study's Open University. "Open University students" may not register for a particular course until the instructor has verified that all regularly enrolled students have enrolled. Open University students will never be able to enroll in courses that fill completely every semester. The online schedule of classes is a public document that shows the number of seats available in every class for this semester and past semesters. If you are responsible for enrollment decisions in your course, discuss Open University enrollment with your supervisor.

Appendix I: CSU Standards Sheet for Teaching Associates

CSU The California State University

Classification and Qualification STANDARDS

Teaching Associate

Classification Title	Class Codes	Date Established
Teaching Associate, Academic Year	2354	06-01-1991
Teaching Associate, 12-Month	2353	06-01-1991
Teaching Associate, Summer Term	2324	05-01-2011
Teaching Associate, Extended Education – For Credit	2309	06-01-2014

OVERVIEW:

The Teaching Associate classification provides currently enrolled or admitted CSU graduate students with part-time employment offering practical teaching experience in fields related to their advanced study. They teach university courses and may also assist faculty or teaching staff with various professional and technical activities. Work assignments are closely associated with their program of study or the academic department in which they are enrolled.

Range A represents the salary range for CSU graduate students who (1) are currently enrolled or admitted to master's degree programs and (2) usually teach credit-bearing courses. Range B represents the salary range for CSU graduate students who (1) are currently enrolled or admitted to doctoral degree programs, or hold a doctorate, and (2) usually teach credit-bearing courses.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:

The Teaching Associate classification is distinguished from the Graduate Assistant and Student Assistant classifications by assignments that primarily involve classroom and laboratory instruction. Responsibility for a course may be vested in the Teaching Associate under the direct supervision of an appropriate faculty member.

TYPICAL ACTIVITIES:

(Note: Duties described in this classification standard are examples only; they are not necessarily descriptive of any one position. Individual positions may be assigned responsibility for other duties which require the skills, knowledge, experience and education of this classification standard.)

Teaching Associates typically are responsible for providing classroom and/or laboratory instruction, making assignments to students, preparing course materials, administering examinations, assessing student performance, tutoring students and determining course grades. Also, incumbents may assist faculty with field experience, supervision, simulation exercises and/or research projects. Normally, incumbents in Range A are designated to teach courses at the lower division level, and incumbents in Range B are designated to teach courses at the lower and/or upper division level.

TYPICAL QUALIFICATIONS:

Knowledge and Abilities:

Knowledge of the subject matter of the discipline to which the individual is assigned. Ability to relate well to others within the academic environment and ability to instruct and evaluate students.

Teaching Associate – 1

Education:

- ◆ Range A: Equivalent to or completion of the requirements for a bachelor's degree and concurrent admission to or enrollment in a graduate degree program of the university that is related to the discipline to which the individual is assigned.
- ◆ Range B: Equivalent to or completion of the requirements for a master's or doctorate degree and concurrent admission to or enrollment in a doctoral degree program of the university that is related to the discipline to which the individual is assigned. One academic year of full-time doctoral study, with successful completion of all requirements, may be substituted for the master's degree requirement.

Experience:

Evidence of satisfactory achievement in previous academic work.

Teaching Associate – 2

Appendix II: CSU Standards Sheet for Graduate Assistants

Classification and STANDARDS

The California State University System



Graduate Assistant

AY Class Code: 2355

Monthly Class Code: 2325

On-Campus Work-Study Class Code: 2326

Date Established: 07-01-1963

Date Revised: 11-02-2004

OVERVIEW:

Under immediate supervision, the Graduate Assistant assists a regular faculty member or the teaching staff with various professional and technical duties associated generally with the subjects or programs in which the assistant is doing graduate work. This work should not take precedence over the successful completion of the graduate degree program by the student in a timely manner.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS:

The Graduate Assistant is distinguished from those classifications used for undergraduate student help in the instructional program who perform clerical or other routine tasks such as grading examinations, recording grades, etc., by the following:

- ◆ Graduate Assistants are provided part-time employment and practical experience in fields related to their advanced study.
- ◆ Graduate Assistants provide professional non-teaching assistance to faculty members.

Graduate Assistant work may involve supervising students in a classroom, workshop, or laboratory (where final responsibility for the class and its entire instruction, including the performance of the Graduate Assistant, is vested in a member of the faculty); training students in the use of equipment or other resources; assisting faculty with research and preparation of course materials; participating in the evaluation of students' work; tutoring students; and other related work.

Graduate Assistants are not responsible for the instructional content of a course, selecting student assignments, planning of examinations, determining the term grade for students, instructing the entire enrollment of a course, or providing the entire instruction of a group of students enrolled in a course. Graduate Assistants may not be employed to assist in a course in which he/she is enrolled, nor should they be consulted regarding the grading of their peers.

Classification code 2326 (On-Campus Work-Study) is for Work-Study graduate students funded by the Federal Work-Study Program. Appointments to this classification code must meet provisions of the Federal Work-Study Program.

TYPICAL ACTIVITIES:

Typical activities of Graduate Assistants may include: (1) assisting in the instruction of students by conducting small discussion groups related to large lecture or television courses and the like, supervising laboratory periods, workshops, production courses or other course activities, assisting by handling equipment, performing demonstrations, maintaining office hours to provide direct individual contact between student and graduate assistant, clarifying course material or course content for students; (2) providing assistance to faculty conducting authorized

Graduate Assistant • 1

research by collecting and arranging data, developing source materials, summarizing reports, searching the literature and compiling bibliographies, developing and operating research equipment, preparing and caring for research materials, assisting in the conduct of experiments, etc.; and/or (3) generally assisting faculty in evaluating student work and examinations; preparing course materials and aids, or performing other functions requiring knowledge and background beyond that generally possessed by undergraduate assistants.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:***Knowledge and Abilities:***

Knowledge of the subject matter of the discipline in which assigned. Ability to relate well to others within the academic environment; ability to supervise, assist, and train students; and ability to assist faculty in the conduct of special projects/research within the discipline.

Experience:

For the initial appointment, evidence of satisfactory achievement in previous academic work. For subsequent appointment, evidence of satisfactory progress toward completion of the degree.

Education:

Equivalent to completion of the requirements for a bachelor's degree and registration in a CSU graduate degree program. Students enrolled in credential programs are not eligible for this position.

Graduate Assistant • 2

Appendix III.

Help for Students: SDSU campus resources

Undergraduate academic advising. Undergraduates have access to a Degree Audit Report in WebPortal, which does a very good job of summarizing how their completed coursework meets their specific degree requirements. For questions, students should meet with their major advisor, or their department or college advising center (if there is one). Some students are associated with programs that have additional academic advisors (such as sports teams, EOP). If none of these advisors are available (or able to provide satisfactory answers), undergraduates should visit the campus advising center in SSW 1551. For **academic probation or disqualification**, meet with an advisor immediately.

Registration problems. See the Registrar (SSW 1641) and/or the department office staff.

Need help with a specific class. Each professor should have scheduled office hours.

Need help with writing. See the SDSU Writing Center in Love Library <http://writingcenter.sdsu.edu>

Disability accommodations. Student Disability Services validates accommodations for students with a wide variety of challenges (including mobility limitations, learning disabilities, hearing or visual impairments). SDS is located in Calpulli Center Suite 3101, 619-594-6473, <sdsinfo@mail.sdsu.edu>. Their website is http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/sds/

Grades of Incomplete. The university has specific policies about incompletes. An incomplete should NOT be given to make up more than a final assignment or two (certainly less than 1/3 of the course points). An incomplete should not be given if the student has turned in all graded work. Instructors who wish to give a grade of incomplete must fill out a form in WebPortal that lists the specific remaining requirements, and the time frame to complete them (1 year maximum). After 1 year, unresolved incompletes turn into a grade of "IC" (Incomplete Charged), and are treated like an "F" for GPA calculations.

If an incomplete is inappropriate, students can use a course forgiveness and retake the course for a new grade. There are very specific limitations to course repeats and forgiveness (see an academic advisor).

Need to drop a course after the drop date has passed. Late withdrawals are not allowed by the university, but can be petitioned if there are serious extenuating personal circumstances that go beyond poor performance in one particular course (e.g., illness, death in the immediate family). See an academic advisor immediately to discuss the petition process. Even after filing the petition, keep going to class and taking all tests, in case your request is denied. Extremely unusual and cases (including imminent disqualification) can be appealed to the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs in the student's college.

Need help with personal problems. Make an appointment with Counseling and Psychological Services as soon as possible (Calpulli Center 4401, 594-5220). Students who require immediate psychological help are seen on an emergency basis by calling during business hours. After hours, students can call the San Diego Access and Crisis 24-hour Hotline at 800-479-3339 or the Student Health Services Nurse Advisory Line at 888-594-5281. For emergencies, call the University Police at 619-594-1991.

Need help because of illness. The Student Health Services clinic (Calpulli Center) is open Monday to Friday 8:30-4:30. Appointments can be made by calling 619-594-4325. For immediate emergencies, call 911 from a campus phone. Note that Student Health Services does NOT have an emergency room or trauma center.