

TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

Teaching assistantships (TA) provide students with educational and professional benefits, enhancing their pedagogical skills. Departments and faculty members benefit from the services provided by teaching assistants. However, the rationale for supporting teaching assistants is centered on the role the experience plays in their professional and educational development. Students holding teaching assistantships devote their time to a combined program of study and instructional activities. The stipend received by teaching assistants is in recognition of their service to the university, and to further support their learning.

The following include best practices for departments who have teaching assistants that support faculty teaching and instructional activities. Depending on the student's experience and departmental needs, typical assistantship activities include:

- Teaching classes as teachers of record
- Grading course assignments
- Holding office hours
- Working with students in a laboratory class
- Leading discussion groups
- Mentoring
- Tutoring
- Proctoring examinations
- Teaching an occasional class
- Preparing instructional material

Commitment

All of these activities occur under the guidance of a mentor, either the course instructor or, in the case of teachers of record, an assigned mentor. The mentoring structure supports the pedagogical component of the teaching assistantship experience.

Hours

- Full Teaching Assistantship: Engagement in instructional activities should average between 16 and 19.5 hours per week. Given the instructional rhythm of a semester, there will be some variation in the actual number of hours spent on instructional activities per week. Faculty mentoring TAs should develop a general plan of action with their TAs to plot out and monitor the number of hours spent over the course of the semester.
- Partial Teaching Assistantships: Typically engagement in less than 16 hours per week of instructional activities. Given the instructional rhythm of a semester, there will be some variation in the actual number of hours spent on instructional activities per week. Faculty mentoring TAs should develop a general plan of action with their TAs to plot out and monitor the number of hours spent over the course of the semester
- Graduate students are only expected to attend to their teaching responsibilities during the regular fall and spring academic terms. This timeframe aligns with the Human Resources pay schedule.

Department Pedagogical Instruction

The Graduate School expects all departments to provide assistants with teaching instruction. This may occur in a formal course (with a course number) or in an intensive or year-long seminar that is noted on each student's transcript as a milestone.

Assessment

Each teaching assistant should be assessed in writing at the conclusion of each semester. This assessment should be based on the observation of the TA in action. The assessment should be shared with the TA and placed in the student's departmental file.

English Proficiency

All teaching assistants with native languages other than American English are required to take an English Proficiency test on campus during the week before school begins. Based on the results of this test, teaching assistants may be required to take one or two ESL courses during their first semester at Loyola. This requirement is designed to insure the ability of teaching assistants to communicate effectively in spoken and written English.

Non-Renewal

Assistants are required to keep a minimum 3.0 GPA (each semester as well as cumulatively), make progress toward their degree, and perform assistantship duties in an acceptable manner. In the case of multi-year assistantships, a student may not have any more than one outstanding incomplete grade by July 15, or the assistantship will not be renewed.

- Maintaining academic standing, per Graduate School or departmental academic requirements, is mandatory and failure to do so will result in the teaching assistantship being withdrawn. Departments may have higher minimum GPA requirements for their assistants and, if so, these requirements trump the minimum GPA requirement of the Graduate School.
- Should a TA's activities be deemed unacceptable by the department, the Graduate Program Director should inform the student in writing that his/her teaching activities are unsatisfactory. The letter should include information about the deficiencies and a remediation plan of action. Additionally, the letter should include a date for re-assessment. If the student fails to improve his or her teaching performance, the assistantship will be withdrawn.
- In very specific instances, such as violations of university policies, academic dishonesty, or violations of ethical or professional code of conduct, the assistant may have his or her teaching activities suspended immediately and a departmental recommendation of withdrawal to the Graduate School is in order. Non-renewal/withdrawal appeals, just as all other student grievances, should first be made at the departmental level before moving to the Graduate School.
- The stipend will be stopped at the date of the withdrawal.

Relinquish Assistantship

Departments depend on the services of teaching assistants for the period of appointment. If the TA must relinquish his or her assistantship during the course of the academic year, the student must follow these steps:

- Discuss the intent to relinquish their assistantship with the Graduate Program Director well in advance of the actual date so appropriate plans to award the TAship to another student can be made.
- Submit a formal letter explaining the reason(s) for and date of the withdrawal. A copy of this letter should be sent to the Graduate School.
- Return of any keys and teaching-related materials to the department.

- The assistant's stipend will be ended upon receipt of the letter of relinquishment.