Head TA Training

Department of Statistical Science Spring 2023

Welcome

Agenda

- Introductions
- Head TA responsibilities
- Case studies
- Q&A

Introductions

- Name

- Class you're TAing this semester

- Have you ever been a Head TA? If so, for what course?

Who are the Head TAs?

- You're TAing for a large course with 5 or more TAs

- You've been identified by the instructor as someone who has

    - excelled as a TA in previous semesters, and/or

    - has demonstrated an ability to take on more responsibility in the administration of the course

Responsibilities

Head TA responsibilities can generally be categorized as one of the following:

- Administrative
- Pedagogical

Exact responsibilities will differ based on the course needs

Administrative

Payroll

- Set up Mrs. Scott as a VIP in contacts
- Remind bi-weekly TAs about deadlines
- Discuss TA hours with instructor if patterns seem unreasonable

Office hours

Work with instructor to ensure

- Each TA has scheduled their allotted number of hours (at least 2 per week)
- Ensure office hours are well distributed throughout the week
- The necessary rooms are reserved and Zoom links set up
- Office hours are posted in the departmental office hours Google list and course environment

Total TA hours

- Ask the instructor for the expected number of weekly hours for each TA. In most cases, they are

Role	Weekly hours
Undergrad	8 - 10 hours
MS	10 - 12 hours
PhD	12 - 15 hours
RA+	4 - 5 hours

Role	Weekly hours
RA/TA	6 - 7 hours
TA from other departments	10 hours

Total TA hours

Periodically check in with TAs about the number of hours they're working each week

- Adjust grading assignments, as needed, to keep workload allocated fairly and each TA within their limits

- Notify the instructor if this is not feasible

- Routinely exceeding limits without authorization is not okay!

Managing Gradescope

- Work with the instructor to ensure all TAs know how to use Gradescope
- Create assignments in Gradescope and link to Sakai through the Lessons tool
- Schedule a training session with Joan Durso if you or other TAs need help with technical aspects of Gradescope

Rubrics in Gradescope

- Add rubrics to each assignment

- Rubrics are copiable

- Talk with instructor about preferred grading conventions:

    - Positive, negative, or combination scoring

    - Additional rubric items, such as "Blank", "Needs Review", etc.

Assigning grading

Make grading assignments for all TAs taking the following into account:

- If using Gradescope, each question should be graded by one TA, with rare exceptions

- The number of questions assigned to each TA is based on their total number of allowed hours and their other responsibilities

Managing grading

Make sure all TAs complete grading within a week (or other deadline set by the instructor). This includes

- Gently reminding TAs of upcoming grading deadline about 1- 2 days prior
- Keeping track of progress and sending personal reminders to TAs who have little to no grading completed the day before the deadline
- Sending personal reminders to TAs who have not completed grading by the deadline.
- Letting the instructor know if there are repeated issues with a TA completing quality grading by the deadline or if you are unable to contact a TA

Evaluating feedback

- Do a first pass on graded items marked "Needs Review" by TAs.
- Spot check the grading accuracy and quality of all written feedback, and let TAs know if they need to improve either
- Let the instructor know that grades are ready for release or if there are any outstanding questions about grading
- Check with instructor on handling regrade requests
- Graders should not be handling their own

. . .

Pedagogical

Creating answer keys & rubrics

- Review assignment instructions and notify the instructor of anything that may be confusing or unclear
  - Make minor updates and corrections as requested; the instructor is responsible for assignment creation and major updates
- You will likely be asked to do one of the following:
  - Create answer key and grading rubrics

    – Review grading rubrics and notify instructor of errors or inconsistencies between instructions and rubrics

Team evaluations

- Schedule team peer evaluations in Teammates or software preferred by instructor.
- When peer evaluations are due, read through the "instructor only" comments and write a one-page summary. In particular, note

    – Common pain points

    – Groups that may be having trouble

    – Groups doing especially well (good news is nice to hear too!)

Talk with the instructor!

- Determine the specific tasks you're responsible for as Head TA in their course
- Regularly communicate with the instructor, particularly if challenges arise or the assigned tasks are not feasible in your allotted weekly hours

Instructor's perspective

Value

- Good teaching experience
- Communication skills
- Teaching statement
- Organization skills
- CTC Observations

Summary of tasks

- **First two weeks of semester**
  - Office hours scheduling
  - Coordinating Gradescope/Sakai training, if needed

- **Regularly occurring**
  - Create or review answer keys and grading rubrics
  - Make assignments in Gradescope with rubrics
  - Assign and manage grading; spot check grading accuracy and written feedback

- **Periodic**
  - Check-in in with TAs about workload
  - Set up team evaluations and write summary report

Things you're not responsible for...

- Making the final call on grades, especially course grades
- Making the final assessment on grading consistency within particular items and across entire graded assignment
- Managing and making arrangements for accommodations requests
- Making sure all TAs have a good handle on the course content and upcoming assignments.
- Managing Sakai Gradebook

> *Perhaps the most important task of the head TA is to set an example for other TAs.*

Questions?

Case studies

Case study #1

Two TAs have been assigned to grade question #3 on a problem set. The question has multiple parts. The TAs have not consistently graded a missed part; one gave partial credit for correct follow-through from the error, one gave no credit.

The grading is due to be released tomorrow. What do you do if

- the T.A.s are available,
- and if they are not.

There are 150 homework sets.

Case study #2

One of your TAs appears to be holding help sessions for a large group of their quadmates in the Quad. They have asked you if they can report these hours on their timecard.

What would you do, and what advice do you have for the TA?

Case study #3

You have agreed to substitute for a Lab Lead TA while they are away on an interview. The morning of the lab, you test positive for COVID. There's not much time before you were supposed to leave for the lab.

How do you handle the situation? How do you handle it if the substitute is another TA?

Head TA Training - Spring 2023

All head TAs are expected to complete the following training items each semester they are serving in this role:

- Review the *Head TA* chapter of the TA manual.
- Attend a Head TA training during the first week of classes.
- Attend the Head TA check-in during week 3 or 4 of the semester. The check-in will include
    - Training on giving quality feedback and effectively reviewing feedback from other TAs
    - Sharing experiences with course logistics, set up, Gradescope, and workload
    - General Q&A
- Complete Head TA survey at the end of the semester to provide reflections on the Head TA role, training, etc.