

Primary Teaching Assistant Responsibilities (Econ 101)

As a Teaching Assistant your primary responsibilities are to

1. Provide at least two hours of office hours per week.
2. Answer student questions in Piazza.
3. Answer student emails.
4. Teach your assigned discussion sections.

You have a lot of latitude in how you complete these responsibilities.

Office Hours

Be available for at least two hours of walk-in office hours per week.

- The university is pushing hard for office hours to be in-person this semester. However, I am leaving it up to you to decide if you are comfortable with that. I am offering a mixture of in-person and virtual office hours to best accommodate differing student preferences.
- Please also make yourself available for office hours by appointment for those students who are not able to attend your regularly scheduled office hours.

Piazza

Students will be using Piazza, a discussion board system, to ask course content questions. You will receive an email inviting you to be a co-instructor; please accept this invitation. You can find out more about Piazza [here](#).

- Teaching Assistants as a group will be responsible for answering student questions as they are posted and for endorsing student answers.
- I will try to answer student questions every weekday morning. But I expect Teaching Assistants to answer new student questions at least once a day in the afternoon or evening.

Email

Please respond to student emails within one business day. You should redirect content questions to Piazza so that all students can benefit from the answer. Its best to address personal issues like illness or grade inquiries via email. If you ever feel like a student issue is “above your paygrade” just forward the email to me and I will deal with it.

Discussion Sections

In discussion sections your goals are to:

1. Address any student content questions stemming from the lectures or post-lecture activities.
2. Introduce/motivate the weekly discussion activity.
3. Oversee the student’s completion of the weekly discussion activity (ideally in small groups of 3 to 4 students).
4. Review the solutions to the weekly discussion activity.

How you achieve these goals is entirely up to you!

Some Relevant Details

- I will email you each weekly discussion activity handout and its solutions in advance, usually on Mondays.
- The discussion activities are not graded or collected; they are designed to enrich student understanding of the more challenging course topics.
- Attending discussion sections is optional for students, so attendance may be very low. If there are only a few students, feel free to adapt the discussion section content to their needs.

Some General Advice

Prepare for discussion sections

1. Read through the discussion activity and solutions in advance.
2. Think about how you are going to explain each concept.
3. Think about what questions are likely to be the most challenging to students and how you can point them in the right direction.
4. Think about time management. Discussion activities are typically divided into several parts; it may be helpful to stop and discuss the solutions after students complete each part.
5. Visit the classrooms you will be teaching in before classes begin. This way you will be familiar with the layout of the room, and you will be comfortable on your first day.

Be patient with your students

1. Think about what it's like to learn a new subject. Be aware that the material may seem very difficult to the students even if it seems simple to you.
2. Keep in mind that many students in our class are first semester freshmen who spent the last 18 months learning virtually. To them the transition to college will be doubly hard. Be ready to offer study advice, note taking advice and general insights about navigating college life.

Be patient with yourself

1. It's okay if you don't know everything. When a student asks you a question you don't know the answer to, it's better to admit your uncertainty than to tell them something that is incorrect. You can always follow up via email once you have determined the correct answer.
2. You can't save everyone. Some students will struggle no matter how much help you provide. Let me know if a student is monopolizing your office hours or emailing you multiple times a day. I can step in and help them find additional support resources.

Things To Do in the Next Two Weeks

Mandatory

1. By Sunday (9/5) please send me the following so that I can add the information to Canvas:
 - A headshot
 - When and where you will hold your office hours
 - How students should make an office hours appointment (email, [calendly](#), [youcanbookme](#), etc...)
 - A short personal statement (who you are, where you are from, what you are studying etc...)
2. Set up email lists for each of your discussion sections. *You cannot complete this task until your sections are officially assigned.*
3. By Thursday (9/8) send an introduction email to each of your discussion sections with pertinent information about your office hours.

Strongly recommended

1. Familiarize yourself with Canvas so that you can answer basic questions about its structure. *You will have access as soon as your sections are officially assigned.*
2. Familiarize yourself with the online textbook and associated resources on Cengage so that you are ready to answer student questions on problem sets. *You will receive an invitation to join soon.*
3. Familiarize yourself with Piazza. *You will receive an email inviting you to be a co-instructor soon.*