

UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT (UGA) GUIDELINES

Undergraduate teaching assistantships provide opportunities for students to enrich their educational experiences while simultaneously supporting faculty and providing greater individualized support of enrolled students than might otherwise be possible. By assisting with course instruction, UGAs develop knowledge of course content and skills that are natural to an instructional role. UGAs develop not only an understanding of the learning process within a discipline but also an ability to explain the importance and value of course content to a novice audience.

Students may serve as a volunteer, enroll for class credit or receive stipends for their work. Usually, UGAs should be upper-level students who have demonstrated ability in the course to which they are assigned. The faculty member of record is ultimately responsible for creating the syllabus, delivering instruction and assigning grades but the UGA can support the faculty member in any of these functions. However, challenges to grades must be handled by the faculty member. These guidelines are intended to provide guidance to faculty in the development and implementation of undergraduate teaching assistantship programs.

Faculty/academic unit responsibilities

- Develop and articulate eligibility criteria and a selection process for serving as a UGA.
- Provide a written description of specific UGA responsibilities.
- Create a UGA course syllabus consistent with university syllabus standards that defines what the UGA will learn from the process, their roles and responsibilities, and the basis for determining the UGAs grade. (When UGA is enrolled for class credit.)
- Train or orient UGAs before they work with students. Training must include a discussion of student privacy, the ethics of serving in an instructional role and grade data integrity, as appropriate to the UGA's responsibilities. Attention should be given to UGA safety including discussion about prudent practices in scheduling time and location of appointments as well as disclosure of personal information such as address or phone number.
- Supervise all UGAs regularly. Meet with UGAs as necessary and whenever requested.

- Develop a system of UGA training, supervision, and support that includes regular interactions between UGAs and the instructor.
- Assist and be available to UGAs. UGAs should feel comfortable asking the instructor for assistance with any course-related problems.
- Consult their AUH when in doubt. Faculty are advised to consult with their AUH regarding acceptable departmental practices regarding the nature and assignment of UGAs to particular tasks, and the volume of training and supervision, that might be considered appropriate for UGAs in their department.
- Complete paperwork that might be necessary to support the position.
 - When UGAs are responsible for grading or grade recordkeeping, faculty members should regularly and systematically check student work to assure grade accuracy and integrity.
- Review pertinent university policies that are applicable to an undergraduate student's work including appropriate use of JMU-owned computers in fulfilling their responsibilities. (policy 1207, JMU Policies and Procedures <http://www.jmu.edu/JMUpolicy/index.shtml>)
- Accept responsibility for resolving any conflicts disputes or complaints about UGA behavior or UGA-student interactions that are brought to the faculty member's attention.

UGA responsibilities

- Participate in all training, orientation, and supervision activities.
- Maintain confidentiality about student performance, grades, disability concerns, personal issues, and advising issues except when consulting with the supervising faculty member. (UGAs may discuss confidential issues as a team for the purpose of working together to help students.)
- Behave professionally in completion of all duties.
- Maintain appropriate schedule to fulfill responsibilities.
- Keep written records as required.
- Abide by university policies applicable to one's work including the appropriate use of JMU-owned computers.

Potential UGA Activities

- Assist with grading
 - Provide feedback on written assignments
 - Grade portions of exams for which the UGA can directly compare student work to a grading key created by the course instructor
 - Grade short answer questions for which a clear grading rubric has been developed.
- Help develop course materials, classroom activities and lectures. This may include:
 - Complete literature reviews
 - Read and evaluate research
 - Search the library and internet for resources such as videos and publications that may be used during lectures, laboratories or assignments.
 - Develop study guides or other materials that are used by enrolled students.
- Prepare and deliver lectures under the supervision of the faculty member.
- Lead lab classes, study skills sessions, review sessions, tutoring meetings.
- Facilitate feedback sessions.
- Assist with data collection and analysis.
- Attend and assist with class meetings/reading/discussion sessions.
- Support class management by taking attendance, distributing materials, facilitating group activities, etc.

SAMPLE STUDENT PRIVACY AND HONOR CODE AGREEMENT

As an undergraduate teaching assistant in XXX department/program, I understand that I must abide by all university policies as well as state and federal laws with respect to protecting student privacy at all times. I have been informed of the terms of the Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and I understand that they prohibit me from sharing any personal and academic information about a student with another party. I will adhere to FERPA expectations and pledge to keep confidential all conversations that take place between me and a student that occur as a result of my role as a teaching assistant. I understand that I am permitted to discuss protected information with my supervising faculty member and may discuss this information with other teaching assistants who work as a team as defined by my supervisor.

I further understand that it would be a violation of the JMU Honor Code to allow my relationship with a student to impact the grades I assign to a student or to intentionally manipulate grade records in any way. Prior, current, or emerging relationships with enrolled students, external to my role as a UGA, should be reported to the instructor.

I understand that violations of this agreement will result in termination of my undergraduate assistantship and possible judicial sanctions.

UGA signature: _____

Date: _____

Supervisor signature: _____