

UW Linguistics Department policies and procedures for graduate student teachers¹

For the purposes of this document, “TA” means a graduate student teaching sections under the supervision of a faculty member. “Teacher” means either TA or “stand-alone” teacher (the latter also known as the “instructor of record”). TAs are one type of ASE (Academic Student Employee) at UW.

Some of the following points may have been mentioned in your appointment letter.

Expectations of TAs

Lecture attendance

You are expected to attend all lectures. During lecture you should be a model of good behavior for the undergraduates: arriving at the classroom before the lecture starts, no checking your phone or laptop (except to take notes), no (or at least little) whispering or passing notes to fellow TAs, etc.

Contributions to course infrastructure

You are expected to contribute to the writing of exams and homework as directed by the faculty member in charge of your class. You are expected to attend all meetings (usually weekly) of the teaching team, and to arrive on time for such meetings.

¹The primary author of this document is Sharon Hargus, but the document has been reviewed by all the faculty, who have provided input and recommendations.

Timely and efficient communication

You are expected to answer e-mail from other members of the teaching team within one business day from time sent. From a practical standpoint you should check your e-mail once a day Monday-Friday and once over the weekend. Read all messages from the teaching team before replying to any one of them.

In emergency situations, do not send e-mail. Use the phone. (You should have exchanged phone numbers with other teachers of your class before the quarter started. See Emergency absences.)

Extent of quarterly teaching responsibilities

Normally there will be a meeting of the teaching team some time before the quarter starts. Check with the supervising professor to find out when this will take place.

TA responsibilities extend through finals week. Do not make plans to leave town after the last week of instruction. Most classes with TAs will have a final exam to administer and final grades to prepare. You are expected to be in town to help with both.

The official beginning and end days of each quarter of the academic year are as follows:

Autumn	Sept 16-Dec 15
Winter	Dec 16-Mar 15
Spring	Mar 16-June 15
Summer (entire quarter appt ²)	June 16-Sept 15

²However, most Summer teaching appointments are for one month only.

Note that the first day of classes is not the first day of the quarter. In the event that final exams or grading responsibilities for a particular quarter occur after the end of the quarter as defined above, TAs are still required to perform their job (Article 34, §7).

The maximum workload for ASEs is 220 hours per quarter (Article 34, §2). However, TAs, like other ASEs, are allowed one week of vacation per quarter (Article 32), to be “taken during academic quarter breaks or as otherwise mutually agreed to by the ASE and a supervisor” (Article 32, §2), and one personal holiday per 12-month hiring period (see Planned absences).

Expectations of all teachers

Designing your own lesson plans

You are responsible for determining what to do in class each time your class meets; i.e. lesson planning. Preparing for class is a major part of what you are being paid to do as a teacher. If you are a TA, your supervising instructor will normally make only general suggestions about how you should spend your class time. However, you can and should consult previous TAs for advice on this subject. There may also be an instructional archive for the course which may contain previous materials (use at your own risk).

Content/curriculum

Stand-alone teachers are expected to consult with previous instructors on textbooks/curricular content before the quarter begins, and to use course materials consistent with the departmental curriculum on a particular subfield, whether you are provided with some previous instructor’s lecture notes or not.

Teaching all your classes

You are responsible for making sure all your classes get taught.

Emergency absences

It is good practice to arrange an emergency substitute before you need one. If you are sick or experience some personal catastrophe such as a death in the family, you are not expected to come in and teach (see Article 17, §1 of your union contract), but you are expected to help find a way to ensure that your teaching obligations are met Article 17, §7).

Planned absences

Non-emergency substitution days, where you do not actually go to the classroom on the days and times you are supposed to be there, should be rare and should generally be for professional (e.g. conference attendance) rather than personal reasons. However, your union contract allows 3-quarter ASEs to have “one personal holiday” per 12-month period, provided that it is requested in advance and the ASE find a substitute for work (Article 10, §2). Taking a personal holiday for religious reasons is also an acceptable reason for a planned absence (Article 10, §3).

If you know in advance that you will be unable to teach on some day, arrange a suitable substitute teacher for the day. If someone teaches for you, it is customary and courteous to propose a reciprocal teaching arrangement.

If no suitable substitute teacher can be found:

- Devise an alternate instruction plan and review it with the faculty member in charge of the class or the TA coordinator (if you are the instructor of record) before the missed class. An alternate instruction plan might consist of recording and posting a lecture of yourself; remotely teaching your class at the regular time; showing a video and providing students with study questions. Failing any of those options, you could hold extra office hours.
- Missed instruction days can be made up on an alternate date if all students can agree on a time/date in advance. But this option should be

used sparingly because it may require a lot of staff time to find a classroom and it may be impossible to find a time that all students can attend.

Guest lectures

A guest lecturer may be invited to talk about a subject which the instructor is not an expert in. The difference between a guest lecture and a substitute lecture is that the instructor for the course is normally present for a guest lecturer (and will introduce the guest lecturer to the students and make sure they are properly thanked by the students at the end).

Guest lectures may greatly enhance the course content. However, keep in mind that preparing for and teaching a class can be a great burden on the guest lecturer's time. Teaching reciprocity applies to guest lectures just as it does for substitute teachers.

Grading

You are responsible for calculating grades for your students. If your course normally uses a learning management system (e.g. Canvas) and there is a malfunction in the system (either for grading individual assignments or for calculating final grades), you should be prepared to grade by hand in order to get final grades turned in on time.

For courses for which assignments must be graded by hand (e.g. LING 451), it's a good idea to return these to students by the next class meeting, if possible.

Office hours

You are expected to make yourself available to meet with your students during office hours, which should be scheduled for two hours per week once instruction begins. TA office hours should be scheduled at a different time than the supervising professor's office hours.

Training activities

TAs for general linguistics courses are expected to attend all departmental workshop and training activities, especially the late September workshop.

TAs for computational linguistics courses for which the duties are primarily grading and assisting students but no teaching of sections are required to attend the late September workshop the first time given a teaching assignment in linguistics. Attendance is optional thereafter. However, TAs for computational linguistics courses whose duties involve teaching should attend departmental training activities, like general linguistics TAs.

Evaluation of your teaching

Evaluation by students

You should have your course evaluated by your students every quarter. Check the box that says a copy should go to the chair of the department. If you teach multiple sections, you should have each section evaluated.

Evaluation by faculty

Classroom evaluation of new TAs

The Graduate School requires that graduate student teachers be evaluated by some faculty member during their first two quarters of teaching. (This policy does not apply to TAships for computational linguistics courses.)

The default evaluator of new TAs in the Linguistics Department is the TA coordinator. However, the faculty member in charge of the class may prefer to evaluate you him- or herself. The TA coordinator will contact you early in the quarter to arrange a classroom visitation.

Any TA beyond their first two quarters of teaching can request and receive a classroom evaluation by a faculty member.

Evaluation by the supervising professor

You may also expect to receive feedback from your supervising professor on your overall contribution to the course. Most TAs will probably receive ratings of *adequate*. Ratings of *exemplary* will generally be reserved for TAs who are unusually helpful and proactive throughout a course to undergraduates and/or to other members of the teaching team. TAs may receive a *subpar* rating for things such as tardy arrival at or non-attendance of TA meetings, failure to do assigned work on time (e.g. test preparation), poor quality of assigned work, failure to read and respond to e-mail in a timely manner, failure to grade student work in a timely manner, tardy arrival at or non-attendance of lectures by the supervising professor, etc.

University policies and procedures

ASE positions at UW are meant to be 20 hours/week on average, totaling 200 hours per quarter. If you find that your assigned responsibilities exceed 200 hours per quarter, you should discuss this with the supervising instructor ASAP.

You are expected to adhere to university policies reviewed at the Center for Teaching and Learning training you received before your first teaching assignment (e.g. FERPA, required storage periods for student work, sexual harassment, accommodating students with disabilities, etc.). (In some years, this workshop has been called “Policies and Professionalism for TAs and RAs”.)

Other departmental policies and procedures

You are expected to adhere to departmental information for graduate students reviewed by the administrator at the new students’ meeting. You are required to undergo periodic safety training within a reasonable time of receiving notifications about such events from the Linguistics Department administrator.

Notification of assignments

Your union contract states: “At least three weeks prior to the commencement of each quarter, the University shall provide ASEs with documentation that will set forth the specific duties of the appointment for that quarter, including assigned course...” (<https://hr.uw.edu/labor/unions/uaw/ase-contract>). The majority of teaching assignments are made over the summer. The department will try to provide you with the course(s) you are teaching much sooner than three weeks before the beginning of a particular quarter, but it is first necessary to make sure that there are no scheduling conflicts (see Resolving scheduling conflicts).

Refusing a teaching assignment

If you are offered a teaching position and are unwilling to accept it for reasons of inconvenience or inter-personal conflict with the supervising professor, the department is not obligated to find another course for you to teach that quarter.

Resolving scheduling conflicts

Sometimes a course you are assigned to teach will present a scheduling conflict with either a course which is required by the Linguistics Department or a course which is important for your individual goals within the program. The department will always try to accommodate such conflicts by shifting assignments among TAs. We try to avoid such conflicts in the first place by requiring you to provide your coursework schedule for the coming year before assignments to classes are made.

When a conflict is identified, you should immediately send a single message to the department chair, the TA coordinator and the instructor of the course. Last minute requests for staffing changes may or may not be able to be accommodated.

Resigning from a teaching position

When you are offered and accept a teaching position, you sign a contract with the department committing to teach a class or classes for a certain period of time. If you need to resign from a teaching position, your union contract states (Article 4, §1): “An ASE has the right to be released from any quarter(s) of an appointment provided that the ASE gives at least 30 days notice prior to the beginning of the quarter.” However, the more notice you can give, the better. Even when there is only the possibility of your needing to resign from a teaching position, you should communicate to the chair and the TA coordinator in writing (letter or e-mail) as soon as possible so that an investigation into finding a replacement for you can be started.

Grievances

If you have an issue with a student or students in your class (e.g. you suspect cheating), first familiarize or refamiliarize yourself with the Student Conduct Code (<http://www.washington.edu/admin/rules/policies/WAC/478-121TOC.html>) and UW’s Faculty Resource on Grading document ‘Addressing Academic Misconduct’ (<http://depts.washington.edu/grading/conduct/prevention.html>). Then consult the faculty member in charge of the course (if appropriate) or the TA coordinator.

If you have an unresolvable conflict or other issue with the faculty member in charge of the course, talk to the TA coordinator or the chair of the department.