Five Points to Address During
Teaching Assistant (TA) / Course Instructor Introductory Meeting

Grading Expectations

1. What is the purpose of the assignment/lab? (If you know WHY students are doing a particular activity, you can assist them beforehand more easily, and it provides you with a basis for deciding unclear grade issues).
2. How should factors such as neatness, grammar, and clarity of writing in grading assignments and/or lab reports be weighed?
3. Is there an expected average (i.e., class average of 65%) or a specific distribution of grades (i.e., normal distribution) to be sought?
4. What is the policy for late or missed assignments?
5. Is a marking scheme provided or are TAs expected to generate their own?
6. What is the policy (or accepted procedure) for making comments on the labs/assignments?

Academic Dishonesty

1. How should TAs deal with cases of academic dishonesty? What steps should be taken? (Refer to handout)
2. What is your definition of “academic dishonesty?” For example, if two students work together and hand in the same lab/assignment, is this considered dishonesty or group work?
3. Will the instructor follow up on the cases TAs find, or will this be the TA’s responsibility?

Recording Grades

It is important to clarify in advance the methods to be used in recording students course grades.

1. When must marks for labs and/or assignments be submitted?
2. What is the overall weighting scheme for the course?
3. What software (if any) will be used to tabulate grades?
4. What style of grading (numeric, letter) will be implemented?
5. Who is responsible for entering the grades and for making grade changes?
6. How should grade complaints be handled?

Your Performance

In addition to the grading deadlines (mentioned above), what other responsibilities do TAs have in this course? It is important to clearly identify the instructor’s expectations for EACH TA. These may include, for example,

• exam invigilation,
• pre-lab/tutorial preparation,
• extra tutorials or tutoring,
• safety and clean-up,
• attending specific lectures or
• providing input (proof reading or contributions) into the design of assignments.

Additional Questions

1. If sufficient time is not available during the lab/tutorial session, will TAs have a few minutes of lecture time to outline assignment/lab expectations to students?
2. Each course is different, Instructors and TAs should brainstorm additional questions prior to the introductory meeting, and inquire about any other practices or expectations for this course.
3. When will the professor be available to consult with TAs regarding any problems or questions?
4. To facilitate networking between TAs, ask for the contact information for any other course TAs.