

# Purpose, Policies and Procedures Relative to Teaching Assistants and their Appointments in the UK College of Pharmacy

(Revised August 2015)

Teaching Assistants are expected to familiarize themselves with, and follow, the general guidelines for TAs as outlined by the University of Kentucky Graduate School (<http://www.uky.edu/regs/files/ar/ar5-2.pdf>). The College of Pharmacy will adhere to all applicable guidelines.

Please note the following additional information and clarifications.

## 1. The Purposes for the Teaching Assistantship Program

- a. Facilitating the effectiveness and efficiency of the faculty involved in the educational programs of the College and improving the learning experience of the students in those programs.
- b. Offering graduate students who are interested in teaching the opportunity to develop skills and attributes helpful in future careers as a faculty member (e.g., presentation, small group facilitation, organization, teamwork, responsibility)
- c. Providing an opportunity for the graduate student to demonstrate skills, commitment, responsibility and dedication and establish a performance level that will be helpful in obtaining reference letters for future employment.
- d. Providing support for the graduate training program.

## 2. Priorities for Managing Schedule Conflicts with Other Activities

- a. Seminars – TA responsibilities take priority over attendance at seminars. Requests for excused absence from a seminar course (e.g., PHS 778) should be sent to the course instructor prior to the absence.
- b. Class – Every attempt is made to schedule TA assignments so they do not conflict with pre-established meeting times for required graduate courses. If such a conflict occurs, the TA may be reassigned. If appropriate reassignment cannot be made, the student may be ineligible for a TA position during that semester.
  - i. Graduate courses in the College of Pharmacy that are listed as “TBA” in the course catalog will NOT be scheduled during times that would conflict with TA responsibilities.
  - ii. When meeting times for graduate courses in other departments that are listed as “TBA” are being set, TAs should notify the course instructors of the hours when they are unavailable due to their TA responsibilities.
- c. Professional Meetings – TA responsibilities take priority over attendance at professional meetings. Students wishing to attend professional meetings that conflict with TA responsibilities may do so, if they are presenting a paper at that meeting, and if they arrange for another graduate student, approved by the supervising course director, to fulfill those responsibilities during the TA’s absence. In all cases, the TA must make these arrangements at the beginning of the semester in which the absence will occur.
- d. Sick Leave and Parental Leave – The College of Pharmacy will follow the policies developed by the Graduate School. (<http://www.research.uky.edu/gS/StudentFunding/tarainfo.html>)

## 3. Time Commitments for TAs

- a. Teaching Assistantships are normally supported for 5 months each semester, for a total of 10 months during the academic year. Stipends for two consecutive semesters of a TA appointment are paid over a 12-month period. TA responsibilities may begin before the normal start of a semester and/or extend beyond the normal end of a semester.

- b. The Graduate School considers TA appointments as 50% positions; therefore, individuals with full-time TA appointment are to average no more than 20 hours/week of TA responsibility over each 5-month assignment.
- c. Individuals with RCTF support and/or other Fellowships are only permitted to hold a half-time TA appointment; they are to average no more than 10 hours/week over each 5-month assignment. Additional financial support is provided for individuals with RCTF or other Fellowship appointments when they are assigned TA responsibilities.

#### 4. Scope of TA Responsibilities

- a. The supervising faculty members explicitly define the responsibilities and expectations of the TAs for their courses at the time that they request TA support. The assigned TAs are expected to complete those responsibilities as described.
- b. The Associate Dean for Education and the Director of Graduate Studies will use the following general guidelines to determine the appropriateness of responsibilities and expectations for a TA:
  - i. When appropriate, TAs should participate in activities requiring intellectual and judgmental skills relative to the delivery of content covered in the course and/or in those activities related to student assessment.
  - ii. TA duties may include clerical activities such as preparing, duplicating and/or distributing course materials and/or student assessments, including preparation or correction of PowerPoint presentations.
  - iii. TAs may give formal lectures in class (usually limited to no more than one week's worth in a course, and with close faculty guidance and supervision).
  - iv. TAs may help to prepare, and/or facilitate, small-group activities or other active learning exercises.
  - v. TAs may tutor students in course material. TAs who have the responsibility for tutoring are expected to attend the regular class meetings of the course involved, schedule and hold regular office hours for students, and be available for appointments with students.
  - vi. TAs may grade (under the direction of the course director) and return exams and/or quizzes; record grades; calculate course averages; and set up and/or post items (especially grades) to Canvas. If assigned these responsibilities, TAs should record and/or return completed exams and quizzes or other assessments in a confidential and timely manner.
  - vii. TAs may proctor make-up exams. Note that proctoring of exams that require special accommodations is done by the specially assigned Accommodations TA(s).
  - viii. TAs with laboratory course assignments are expected to prepare the laboratory and materials for the instructional activities, then return the facility to an organized and clean condition following the exercise. In addition, they may prepare, grade and return non-exam course assessments/activities, e.g., practice stations, quizzes, preparations.
- c. After assignments are announced, TAs should immediately contact the faculty member(s) to whose course(s) they have been assigned and confirm the responsibilities of the assignment(s) and the starting dates and other important dates for the semester.
  - i. Provide the supervising faculty member with the TA's email address, office and lab location and phone numbers, including home and/or mobile phone numbers.
  - ii. Establish how communication will occur between course director and TA. TAs are expected to check in with the supervising faculty member at least once per week during the assignment period, unless otherwise notified. TAs are expected to check daily their email and phone messages for information and instructions regarding their TA responsibilities.

- d. TAs are expected to attend all orientation and general information sessions scheduled for them, and to familiarize themselves with, then follow, the guidelines included in the College of Pharmacy TA Instruction Manual.
- e. TAs are expected to undergo Canvas and/or ExamSoft training before the beginning of their first semester assignment, if their assignment(s) include duties in those two software programs.
- f. All TA activities are to be closely mentored, monitored and evaluated by the course director(s) to whom the TA is assigned.
- g. TAs are expected to maintain a log of course activities, including time required to complete each of those activities, and submit that log to the Office of Education at the completion of the assignment period.
- h. TAs are expected to do grading in an unbiased and preferably "blinded" manner, and to follow FERPA guidelines (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) regarding confidentiality of information on student performance. This will include returning graded materials to students such that individual grades are not readily accessible (e.g., stapling closed or placing in an envelope), and not discussing student performance with anyone other than the faculty involved in the course.
- i. TAs are expected to be punctual, courteous, friendly, and to maintain confidentiality and show no favoritism.
- j. In order to avoid the appearance of any conflict of interest or preferential treatment, it is expected that TAs will not have close personal relationships (dating) with students in courses for which they serve as assistants. In the event a TA develops a relationship with a student or if the TA has any questions or issues related to relationships with subordinates, they should consult with the Associate Dean for Education and the Director of Graduate Studies.

#### 5. **Assignment of TAs:**

- a. Teaching Assistantships are a resource of the College of Pharmacy and are assigned to course instructors by the Office of Education in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies.
- b. TAs are assigned according to course need and course load.
- c. In general, the TA(s) considered to have a skill set or background well suited for a particular course will be assigned. Qualifications are determined by the best match between the course content and structure and the candidate's educational background, including courses or workshops in educational methods, communication ability, previous experience and quality of performance in former TA assignments.
- d. TA appointments for the fall semester are made during the previous summer. TA appointments for the spring semester are made during the late fall. TAs in the College of Pharmacy are not notified of a continuation of their TA appointment until after their course responsibilities are completed, evaluations of assignment are submitted and new requests for TAs are received and processed. Ordinarily reappointments for the fall are made in late July or early August.
- e. In general, students will be assigned TA responsibilities for one year. A student who wishes to gain additional experience may, if funds are available, be allotted a TA assignment for additional semesters if they have unique or highly valued skills suitable to the assignment and have been highly rated in the evaluation of their previous TA assignment. Preference is given in those cases where significant professional student contact is integral to the assignment, and where the specific knowledge or skills of the TA are needed.
- f. Every attempt is made to balance the load for TAs and make assignments consistent with the level of the appointment, i.e. full time or half time. Changes in assignments or responsibilities may be made by the Office of Education in consultation with the DGS during the assignment period as the need arises.
- g. Each graduate student should complete at least a one-year TA assignment during their training in the College of Pharmacy.

6. **Failure to Satisfactorily Complete a TA Assignment:**
  - a. A TA who is not completing assignments satisfactorily will be given one verbal notification by the instructor to whom s/he is assigned.
  - b. If the TA fails to complete assignments satisfactorily after the verbal notification, s/he will be given one written notification and will meet with the supervising instructor, Dr. Jim Pauly (Director of Graduate Studies), and Dr. Frank Romanelli (Associate Dean for Educational Advancement).
  - c. If a TA fails to complete assignments satisfactorily after one written notification, s/he may be reassigned or the TA appointment may be terminated. A student whose TA appointment is terminated will be ineligible for other assistantship support for the remainder of the original appointment period.
  - d. A student will not have a TA appointment terminated before the end of the assignment period without the opportunity to be heard by the Office of Education and the Chair of the Department in charge of the course to which the TA was assigned.
  - e. A student whose TA appointment is terminated may appeal that termination to the Dean of the College of Pharmacy in writing within 10 days of the notification of termination. The Dean will respond within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal.
  
7. **Faculty Responsibilities when Supervising TAs Assigned to Course**
  - a. Serving in a mentoring and development capacity for any TA assigned to a course they direct.
  - b. When requesting TA support for a course, developing a written list of responsibilities and expectations of the TA for approval and review by the Office of Education and the DGS.
  - c. At the beginning of the assignment period, clearly communicating to the TA the responsibilities and expectations of the assignment.
  - d. Closely supervising, evaluating, and providing timely appropriate feedback on any formal classroom large group or small group teaching assignments in particular. Individuals in the Office of Education may help the faculty evaluate and provide feedback to the TA.
  - e. Providing general guidance to and supervision of the TA during the assignment period, including providing regular feedback to the TA on quality of the work and whether it is satisfactory.
  - f. Completing and returning a TA evaluation at the end of the semester.
  - g. Structuring the TA assignment to include as many activities as possible that would foster TA development and learning.
  - h. Ensuring that the TA understands FERPA guidelines <http://www.uky.edu/Registrar/ferpa.htm> or confidentiality when handling or returning graded materials.