

FACULTY OF ARTS

FACULTY-FUNDED TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS GUIDELINES (UNDERGRADUATE MARKERS/GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS)

UPDATED: AUGUST 2024

Definition of Teaching Assistants/Assistantships:

- a. A Teaching Assistant (TA) in Arts is typically a student registered in a program offered by the Faculty of Arts who performs teaching-related duties in support of classroom instruction.
- b. Teaching Assistantships are considered apprenticeship positions for furthering academic or professional careers. In view of this, TA tasks shall include work directly related to or in support of teaching and shall not normally include secretarial, clerical, technical, or administrative work, outside what may be required for the administration of a course.
- c. Teaching Assistantships may be held by undergraduate (“markers”) or graduate students.

Eligibility of Students for Teaching Assistantship Appointments:

- a. Eligible students across the Faculty of Arts may hold a TA appointment in any course offered in Arts. Typically, only registered students will be eligible to apply, except in circumstances in which a specific skill or expertise (such as language proficiency) is required.
- b. To be awarded a Teaching Assistantship, new and continuing students will possess a minimum GPA of 3.0 and exhibit consistent progress through their program. Priority will be given to full-time graduate or undergraduate students registered in SMU Arts programs.
- c. Preference will be given to graduate students. Strong third- or fourth-year undergraduate students can also be considered for TA appointments.

- d. The Instructor of Record for the course will provide mentorship to the TA. The Instructor will conduct regular meetings with the TA and complete a Description of Duties agreement form (see attached). Where appropriate, TAs may attend some or all classes, if requested. It is understood that the time required for these meetings and classroom attendance are counted towards the hourly contract for that week.

Duties of Teaching Assistants:

- a. TAs will perform teaching-related duties, which may include marking assignments or exams, organizing course materials, preparing and leading lectures, discussions, seminars, lab- or studio-type work, and other related duties appropriate to the instruction of the specific course.
- b. Terms for TA appointments may vary in duration up to a 10-week period per semester, depending on duties assigned and agreed to in advance. Normally, in a single appointment, graduate TAs may be engaged at 50 hours total (5 hours per week on average), and undergraduate markers/TAs up to 30 hours (3 hours per week on average). Graduate and undergraduate students may hold up to two appointments per semester (see below, Procedures for Awarding TAs, items b and g.)

NOTE: A student who is fully responsible for a course, including lecturing, course and lecture planning, preparing and grading assignments and examinations, etc. cannot be hired as a TA.

Procedures for Awarding TAs

- a. Chairs must consult with the Dean for available funds in their annual departmental budget allotments prior to awarding any student a TA contract.
- b. Chairs will identify, via a department-determined process and with input from course/specialization coordinators, priorities for student TAs inclusive of all semesters in each academic year. **Priority should be given to courses with an enrolment of 40 or more students; courses with 80 or more students may be assigned two TAships. In the case of two TAships, the appointment may be fulfilled by one or two TAs; in the case of undergraduates, one TA fulfilling such an appointment would work 60 hours/6 hours per week; in the case of graduate students, one TA fulfilling such an appointment would work 100 hours/10 hours per week).**
- c. Departments/programs post TA job ads on the department/program and Arts websites.

- d. Students apply for TAs using the TA application form (also posted on the Arts website). Application forms are sent to the chair via the department/program administrative assistant.
- e. The Chair reviews the applications in concert with Instructors seeking TAs. The Chair will make the formal offers of employment to students for TA positions. In the instance that a recommended TA is not a registered student (such as when specific language proficiency is required; see above, Eligibility item a) a brief rationale should be provided.
- f. In the case of graduate programs with enrolled students requiring TA appointments outside of their immediate program or department, the Graduate Coordinator should communicate with the Associate Dean (Research and Faculty Support), who will, in turn, in concert with Chairs, identify departmental needs for TA support and assist with the determination of appropriate assignments.
- g. TA appointments will normally not exceed the equivalent of an average of 6 hours per week for undergraduates or 10 hours per week for graduate students across a term. In awarding a TA, Chairs must take into consideration any other Teaching or Research Assistantships held by the student so that, normally, a maximum of 14 hours per week of combined SMU contracted duties is not exceeded unless an appropriate arrangement is agreed to by the student and the Chair and approved by the Dean or Associate Dean.
- h. TAs in the Faculty of Arts will be paid at the same rate, with undergraduate students at a rate of \$22 per hour and graduate students at a rate of \$25 per hour in the 2024-25 academic year.
- i. TAs and Instructors sign a TA agreement (see attached and/or Arts website), which includes responsibilities/tasks and hours allocation. A copy of this agreement will be held by the department/program administrative assistant.
- j. The department/program administrative assistant corresponds with appointed TAs to ensure the completion of payroll forms (casual employee action form, fixed remuneration form, provincial and federal tax forms).
- k. At the end of each term, the Instructor of Record for the course employing a TA is strongly encouraged to prepare a brief written report to their department Chair regarding the student's performance, and provide a recommendation for future appointments, if deemed appropriate (please see attached Feedback form, below and/or Arts website).

FACULTY OF ARTS

Teaching Assistant Agreement/Description of Duties

(UNDERGRADUATE MARKERS/GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS)

UPDATED: AUGUST 2024

TERM: _____

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM: _____

COURSE: _____

TOTAL HOURS: _____

INSTRUCTOR: _____

STUDENT NAME: _____

STUDENT EMAIL: _____

TASKS	DETAIL	HOURS/WEEK (est.)
Meetings		
Marking		
Admin		

Tutorials		
Materials Prep		
Advising/Office Hours		
Other (describe)		

The Instructor commits to providing mentorship, guidance and support to the TA's pedagogical work and development.

INSTRUCTOR SIGNATURE: _____

STUDENT SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

Adapted from a document prepared by Dr. Benita Bunjun, Department of Social Justice and Community Studies

FACULTY OF ARTS

End of Term Assistantship Feedback

(UNDERGRADUATE MARKERS/GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS)

UPDATED: AUGUST 2024

TERM: _____

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM: _____

COURSE: _____

TOTAL HOURS: _____

INSTRUCTOR: _____

STUDENT NAME: _____

STUDENT EMAIL: _____

Teaching assistantships can facilitate students' involvement in the learning environment of the University and offer the opportunity for the development of a range of skills, pedagogical and otherwise. The goal of the feedback process is to foster a constructive dialogue between the TA and the instructor that promotes learning, enhances teaching performance and the student experience, and recognizes successful efforts and excellence.

Ideally the feedback will be presented in an open discussion between the instructor and the TA. Following its completion, it can be submitted to the department Chair/filed with the Department's administrative assistant.

Brief Summary of Responsibilities:

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Instructor Comments:

Instructors: please consider the following as you provide a discussion of the TA's strengths, as well as areas that might benefit from improvement.

- Communication Skills
- Interaction with Students
- Time Management
- Accuracy and Attention to Detail
- Responsibility and Initiative

Additional Comments, including recommendations for future appointments:**INSTRUCTOR SIGNATURE:** _____**STUDENT SIGNATURE:** _____**DATE:** _____