CWRU Policies for Teaching Assistant Training
Updated July 2019

Background

In 1993, the Office of the Provost established a requirement that graduate students functioning as teaching assistants (TAs) be trained using a series of UNIV courses coordinated through Educational Student Services (ESS). One component of the training required international TAs to undergo an oral evaluation, the CWRU Spoken English Test (SET), to assess spoken English proficiency. Results from the SET determined whether or not an international student would be required to complete additional study to meet necessary competency standards. A revised set of policies regarding TAs was released by the Office of the Provost in March 2011. The 2011 revisions included:

1. *Establishment of a requirement that all undergraduate students functioning in teaching assistant roles receive training.*
2. *Adoption of guidelines for undergraduate TAs*
3. *Clarification of procedures to ensure that international students who had been assigned TA responsibilities would be able to deliver a high quality educational experience for undergraduate students.*

Responsibility for administering TA training was moved to the University Center for Innovation in Teaching and Education (UCITE) in August 2018. This document represents clarifications and updates to the 2011 policies.

Undergraduate TA Training

Undergraduate students are employed in a variety of teaching and grading roles across campus. UTA roles may include, but are not limited to, recitation leader, lab instructor, and grader. These experiences can be both educational and beneficial to the undergraduate acting as a teaching assistant and can greatly aid the faculty member being assisted to deliver a high quality experience for the students enrolled in the course.

CWRU encourages the responsible use of undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs). Since undergraduate students may have limited experience in delivering instruction and/or dealing with complex academic situations, CWRU recognizes the special obligation to provide adequate mentoring and guidance for UTAs so they can properly fulfill their duties. The guidelines listed below are intended to provide the structure for the responsible involvement of undergraduates in teaching assistant roles.

<u>Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Policies</u>

1. **Faculty members are responsible for ensuring that the undergraduate student has the necessary background and abilities to function as a UTA in their course.** In most cases, the UTA would be expected to have previously taken the course in which their assistance will be utilized or to have taken a higher level course in the same topic area. Faculty members should become acquainted with the UTA to ascertain whether the student has appropriate skills and depth of knowledge to carry out the intended teaching or grading assignments.

2. **The Office of the Provost requires that students employed as UTAs successfully complete TA training, provided by UCITE at the start of each fall and spring semester.** Training will take place online and during an orientation session prior to or concurrent with their first teaching assistant assignment. Faculty members are expected to provide any additional course-specific training necessary for the UTA to complete their assignment. Students who do not complete the required training will be ineligible to work as a TA.

3. **Departments are responsible for notifying UTAs of their appointments and the associated required training.** UCITE will notify the campus community of training dates and procedures. Questions related to UTA training may be addressed to UTATraining@case.edu.

4. **Students required to complete UTA Training will register for UNIV 300, Professional Development for Undergraduate Teaching Assistants. 0 Units.** Online instructional sessions and an in-person seminar designed to help students develop basic competencies necessary to be a successful TA. Students who do not complete the course will receive a No Passing grade (NP) and will be ineligible to work as a TA. Students completing the online sessions and in-person seminar will receive a Passing grade (P) and will not need to register for the course again.

5. **Faculty and UTAs should work together to identify any potential peer conflicts for the UTA.** The course roster should be examined at or prior to the start of the semester to identify potential conflicts of interest. UTAs should not be placed in a position wherein they are being asked to evaluate the academic work of their friends.

6. **UTAs should identify and resolve scheduling constraints that may hinder the UTA in performing their duties.** UTAs should understand the scheduling of assignments and exams in the courses in which they themselves are enrolled and manage their time in a manner that allows them to fulfill their teaching or grading assignments.

7. **Faculty members must supervise the activities of UTAs and review the work they produce.** Faculty members may not allow UTAs to prepare course materials without oversight; course materials produced by UTAs must be evaluated by the faculty member before the students enrolled in the course receive them. Course materials may include: the content of lectures or recitations; questions for homework, quizzes, or exams; answer keys; study guides. Once the teaching or grading assignment is underway, faculty members should continue to monitor the performance of the UTA.

8. **Faculty members are expected to establish course policies and share those with their UTAs.** Grading rubrics, assignment of partial credit, policies about re-grading work, and other issues related to the assessment of the performance of students enrolled in the course must be determined and supervised by the faculty member.

Graduate TA Training

CWRU is committed to ensuring excellence in its academic programs. For this reason, graduate students serving as teaching assistants (GTAs) are of critical importance to the University in fulfilling its educational mission. GTA roles may include, but are not limited to, instructor of record, teaching assistant, lab instructor, and grader.

All graduate and professional school students with teaching assistant responsibilities are, therefore, required by the Office of the Provost to successfully complete training in the form of UNIV 400: Professional Development for GTAs. UNIV 400 is the only course that will satisfy the Provost Office's required training for GTAs. The training requirement applies to graduate and professional school TAs working with undergraduate or graduate students. UNIV 400 includes an online webinar and an orientation seminar, designed to provide GTAs with skills and knowledge regarding university policies, campus resources, and best practices in teaching and learning. The webinar and orientation seminar must be completed prior to the term in which students begin their TA responsibilities. GTAs will also have opportunities to develop peer learning communities in order to network with and support one another.

Graduate Teaching Assistant Policies

1. **Faculty members are responsible for ensuring that the Graduate student has the necessary background and abilities to function as a GTA in their course.** In most cases, assessment of graduate students' abilities and prior experience would be measured during a department-level TA selection process, or an appropriate equivalent process. Through this process, faculty members should ascertain whether the student has appropriate skills and depth of knowledge to carry out the intended teaching or grading assignments.

2. **The Office of the Provost requires that students employed as GTAs successfully complete TA training, provided by UCITE at the start of each fall and spring semester.** Training will take place online and during an orientation session prior to or concurrent with their first teaching assistant assignment. Faculty members are expected to provide any additional course-specific training necessary for the GTA to complete their assignment. Students who do not complete the required training will be ineligible to work as a TA. Successful completion of GTA training will satisfy the Office of the Provost requirement for a period of three years. If GTAs are active for more than three years following their initial training, they will need to complete the online webinar again, in order to remain current on university policies and procedures related to their responsibilities.

3. **Departments are responsible for sending a roster of Graduate TAs (international and domestic) to UCITE.** Departments are responsible for identifying Graduate TAs before the semester begins and sending the names of the GTAs to UCITE. Names can be sent directly to Elise Geither, PhD at GTATraining@case.edu. GTAs will then receive information and a link to self-enroll in the webinar. Names of GTAs who will begin their responsibilities in a fall semester should be sent no later than August 1st. Names of GTAs who will begin their responsibilities in a spring semester should be sent no later than December 10th.

4. **Departments are responsible for submitting Graduate TA names (international and domestic) in Hobsons.** Departments are responsible for identifying Graduate TAs before the semester begins and uploading that information into the Hobsons application system.

5. **All students required to complete GTA Training will register for UNIV 400, Professional Development for Undergraduate Teaching Assistants. 0 Units.** Online instructional modules and on-the-ground orientation seminars are designed to help students develop basic competencies necessary to be a successful TA. Students who do not complete the course will receive a No Passing grade (NP) and will be ineligible to work as a TA. Students who successfully complete all course components will receive a Passing grade (P), and will not need to register for the course again (see Appendix A for additional course details).

6. **International Students.** International students who may be assigned GTA responsibilities complete training requirements after taking a required Spoken English assessment, the SET. This brief discussion with one of our professionals or Mentor TAs will assess international students' spoken English skills. All international TAs here on any visa should take this assessment. A detailed list of step-by-step directions for CWRU faculty and international students assigned GTA responsibilities may be found in Appendix B. International students who do not meet the requirements for spoken English proficiency on the SET assessment will not be able to register for UNIV 400 and therefore may not serve as a TA during that semester. (see Appendix B).

7. **Faculty members must supervise the activities of GTAs and review the work they produce.** Faculty members may not allow GTAs to prepare course materials without oversight; course materials produced by GTAs must be evaluated by the faculty member before students receive materials. Faculty are encouraged to provide a formal mentor for GTAs and to complete formal reviews of GTA responsibilities at the conclusion of each semester.

8. **Faculty members are expected to establish course policies and share those with their UTAs.** Grading rubrics, assignment of partial credit, policies about re-grading work, and other issues related to the assessment of the performance of students enrolled in the course must be determined and supervised by the faculty member.

9. **Faculty may encourage students wishing to pursue a teaching position in higher education to participate in UNIV 401, Advanced Professional Development for College Teaching**. This semester-long seminar provides participants with a learning community in which they will focus on specific elements of teaching and learning best practices. Students will observe CWRU faculty members, work with a faculty teaching mentor, develop course objectives, and apply their knowledge through coached teaching episodes. Transcript evidence of this course will formally document the student's interest in the Science of Teaching and Learning to potential future employers. UNIV 401 does not satisfy the Office of the Provost TA Training requirement.

Appendix A
Teaching Assistant Training Course Numbers, Titles, and Descriptions

UNIV 300 - Professional Development for Undergraduate Teaching Assistants
(NEW course)
All undergraduate students with teaching assistant responsibilities (UTAs) are required by the Office of the Provost to successfully complete training in the form of UNIV 300: Professional Development for UTAs. This course is designed to provide UTAs with skills and knowledge regarding university policies, campus resources, and best practices in teaching and learning. Course components include an online, self-paced webinar and an orientation seminar scheduled at the beginning of each semester. The UNIV 300 learning community will provide UTAs with opportunities to interact and network with peer colleagues serving as teaching assistants.

UNIV 400 - Professional Development for Graduate Teaching Assistants
(formerly UNIV 400A)
CWRU is committed to ensuring excellence in its academic programs. For this reason, graduate students serving as teaching assistants (GTAs) are of critical importance to the University in fulfilling its educational mission. All graduate and professional school students with teaching assistant responsibilities are, therefore, required by the Office of the Provost to successfully complete training in the form of UNIV 400: Professional Development for GTAs. The training requirement applies to graduate and professional school TAs working with undergraduate or graduate students. UNIV 400 includes an online webinar and an orientation seminar, designed to provide GTAs with skills and knowledge regarding university policies, campus resources, and best practices in teaching and learning. GTAs will also have opportunities to develop peer learning communities in order to network with and support one another.
NOTE: ONLY successful completion of UNIV 400 will satisfy the Provost Office training requirement for GTAs.

UNIV 401 - Advanced Professional Development for University Teaching
(formerly UNIV 400C)
Advanced Professional Development for University Teaching is intended to provide participants with the chance to learn innovative, effective, and evidence-based teaching strategies that are useful in University classrooms. Taught by experienced teachers and graduate teaching assistants, this seminar will feature small group discussions about the Science of Teaching and Learning research literature, opportunities to observe experienced university faculty, and micro teaching sessions. On-the-ground and online learning settings will be incorporated into course activities in an effort to prepare students interested in university teaching with a broad background of learning environments. Participants will receive a certificate of completion and will have transcript evidence acknowledging successful completion of this professional development course.
NOTE: UNIV 401 does NOT satisfy the Provost Office training requirement for GTAs.

Appendix A (*cont.*)
Teaching Assistant Training Course Numbers, Titles, and Descriptions

UNIV 402A – Professional Communication Skills in English – Emphasis on Pronunciation
In this course, students will work on enhancing their pronunciation skills (vowels, consonants, and blends), syllable stress, word stress, and intonation. Students will also learn vocabulary and idiomatic expressions that are applicable to academic, professional, and daily life contexts.

UNIV 402B – Professional Communication Skills in English – Emphasis on Fluency
In this course, students will work on enhancing their skills in pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation for fluency. Students will also learn common reduction and linking patterns for fluency in English.

UNIV 402C – Professional Communication Skills in English – Emphasis on Presentation Skills
In this course, students will focus on presentation skills. Students will practice using language skills for class discussions, office hours, networking, and formal presentations.

TOTAL SPOKEN ENGLISH TEST SCORE: _____ / 100

0 – 60 =   UNIV 402A
61 – 70 =   UNIV 402B
71 – 80 =   UNIV 402C
81+ =   Student should enroll in UNIV 400

Appendix B
Procedures for International Students Assigned GTA responsibilities

CWRU Faculty and International Students assigned GTA responsibilities should follow these steps, in order:
1. Names of ITAs will be sent to UCITE.
2. ITAs will receive a web link to self-enroll in the Graduate TA Webinar
3. ITAs should complete the Graduate TA Training Webinar
4. Register for the Spoken English (SET) assessment during general Graduate Student Orientation
5. Complete the SET assessment before classes begin
6. If students score 81 or higher on the SET, they should register for UNIV 400 in SIS
7. If students score 71-80 on the SET, they will be required to take UNIV 402C and should also register for UNIV 400 in SIS. These students are eligible to serve as TAs and will be required to do an Exit Exam at the end of the semester to demonstrate their skills in spoken English.
8. If students score 0-70 on the SET, they will be required to take UNIV 402A or UNIV 402B. They **cannot** register for UNIV 400 until the following semester and **will be ineligible to** work as a TA until they have completed UNIV 400.
9. At the end of the semester, students in 402C who meet the <u>requirement</u> of 70/100 or above on the Exit Exam are now eligible to serve as TAs in any capacity.

SET and UNIV402 Description
The SET test is a Spoken English assessment. Students who score over 81 are exempt from taking any Spoken English class and may continue on with UNIV 400. They are eligible to serve as TAs.

Students who score 0-80 will be required to take one of the Spoken English Courses: UNIV 402A, UNIV 402B, or UNIV 402C. **Only** students in UNIV 402C may concurrently take UNIV 400. These students are eligible to be TAs.

Students in UNIV 402A or UNIV 402B will take UNIV 400 the following semester. These students are not eligible to be TAs until they complete UNIV 400.

UNIV 402A/B/C are semester-long, non-credit courses designed to improve students' oral communication and presentation skills. Students will be registered by the instructor.
A list of students and their SET scores will be sent to Graduate Studies.
It is assumed that ITAs have met the required TOEFL or IELTS score for admission to the university.

Students who do not meet the requirements for spoken English proficiency may serve only as graders or observers until the minimum requirements have been met. Students who do not complete the required TA Training components will not be eligible to work as a TA.

Appendix B (*cont.*)
Procedures for International Students Assigned GTA responsibilities

SET score results will be shared directly with departments, following student completion of the assessment.

Website: https://case.edu/ucite/ta-training/graduate-ta-training