

Title: CWRU Policies for Teaching Assistant Training

Date approved by Provost: 1993

Effective date: 1993

Responsible Official: Provost or the Provost's Designee

Responsible University Office: Office of the Provost

Revision History: 1993: Policy Origination
 2004: Updated (requiring training for undergraduates in TA roles)
 2011: Reviewed
 July 2019: Reviewed
 July 2025: Reviewed and updated

Related legislation and University policies: N/A

Review Period: 5 years

Date of Last Review: July 2025

Relates to: Faculty; staff and students who are serving as Teaching Assistants

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 an international student would be required to complete additional study to meet necessary competency standards. In 2004, the requirement for training was extended to undergraduates acting in TA roles. An updated set of policies regarding TAs was released by the Office of the Provost in March 2011. Responsibility for administering TA training was moved to the University Center for Innovation in Teaching and Education (UCITE) in August 2018. This document presents additional clarifications and updates to the policy.

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 undergraduates acting as a teaching assistant and can greatly aid the faculty members 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.

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Policies

- 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. Additional resources for faculty members can be found at: <https://case.edu/ucite/teaching-resources/working-effectively-your-teaching-assistant>
- 2. The Office of the Provost requires that students employed as UTAs successfully complete training prior to beginning their first TA assignment. Students who are hired as a UTA after the beginning of the semester must complete training within one week of being hired.** Faculty members are expected to provide any additional course-specific training necessary for the UTA to complete their assignment, including assessment rubrics. Students who do not complete the required training are ineligible to work as a UTA.
- 3. Departments/schools are responsible for notifying UTAs of their appointments and the associated required training.** UCITE provides details about UTA training at: <https://case.edu/ucite/ta-training/undergraduate-ta-training>. Questions related to UTA training may be addressed to: UTATraining@case.edu.
- 4. Students complete UTA Training by registering for UNIV 300, Professional Development for Undergraduate Teaching Assistants. 0 Units.** UNIV 300 is a fully asynchronous online course, delivered through Canvas, and is available prior to both the Fall and Spring semester. The course is designed to help students develop basic competencies necessary to be a successful UTA. Students who do not complete the course will receive a No Passing grade (NP) and will be ineligible to work as a UTA. Students who complete the course will receive a Passing grade (P) and will not need to register for the course again for any future TA assignments while an undergraduate. See Appendix A for a course description.
- 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, 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 is a fully asynchronous course, designed to provide GTAs with skills and knowledge regarding university policies, best practices in implementing these, as well as useful campus resources.

International students will also need to meet expectations for spoken English proficiency before serving in GTA roles.

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 prior to the beginning of their first TA assignment. If a GTA is hired after the beginning of a semester, the training must be completed within one week of the hire.** 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 in the defined time frame 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/schools are responsible for notifying GTAs of their appointments and the associated training required.** UCITE provides information about GTA training at: <https://case.edu/ucite/ta-training/graduate-ta-training>. The School of Graduate Studies provides additional information about GTA training requirements. Questions about GTA training requirements can be sent to GTATraining@case.edu.
4. **GTAs complete training through registering for UNIV 400, Professional Development for Graduate Teaching Assistants. 0 Units.** This fully online, asynchronous course is designed to help students develop basic competencies necessary to be a successful GTA. Students who do not complete the course will receive a No Passing grade (NP) and will be ineligible to serve as a GTA. Students who successfully complete all course components will receive a Passing grade (P) and are qualified to serve as a GTA for a three-year period. Students must repeat the GTA training if they will be serving as a GTA beyond this three-year period. See Appendix A for a course description.
5. **International students must be screened for spoken English proficiency** by professionals in the Spoken English Language Program (SELP) within the School of Graduate Studies before serving as a GTA. In some cases (e.g., international students who received a recent high score on the speaking portion of a standardized test such as TOEFL, IELTS, or PTE) students will be exempted from further assessments. Others will be required to take a Spoken English Test (SET) to assess their spoken English skills. International students who do not meet expectations for spoken English proficiency may not register for UNIV 400 and therefore cannot serve as a GTA until demonstrating proficiency. Additional details on the screening process are provided in Appendix B, and Appendix A contains descriptions of courses designed to improve spoken English proficiency.
6. **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.

7. **Faculty members are expected to establish course policies and share those with their GTAs.** 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.

Additional Opportunities

Faculty may encourage graduate students wishing to pursue a career in academia to participate in UNIV 401 College Teaching Preparation. This semester-long seminar provides participants with an interactive learning community in which they focus on specific elements of teaching and learning best practices in the college classroom. Transcript evidence of this course will formally document the student's interest in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to potential future employers. However, completion of UNIV 401 does not satisfy the GTA training requirement.

Appendix A

Teaching Assistant Training Course Numbers, Titles, and Descriptions

UNIV 300 - Professional Development for Undergraduate Teaching Assistants (0 units)

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, best practices in implementing them, as well as relevant campus resources. The course is fully asynchronous and is scheduled at the beginning of the Fall and Spring semesters.

UNIV 400 - Professional Development for Graduate Teaching Assistants (0 units)

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 is a fully asynchronous course designed to provide GTAs with skills and knowledge regarding university policies, best practices in implementing them, as well as relevant campus resources.

UNIV 401 - College Teaching Preparation (0 units)

The goal of College Teaching Preparation is to introduce graduate students and postdoctoral scholars who want to learn the fundamentals of teaching and learning in higher education. Together, we will explore evidence-based strategies for good teaching practice by means of intentional course design (writing learning objectives, preparing aligned assessment tasks, as well as choosing the methods of instruction that best align with these). Class members will have the opportunity to engage with one another using texts and other materials, sourced from the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) literature, in active seminar-style classes.

UNIV 402A. Spoken English Pronunciation (0 units)

International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) and other students enrolled in UNIV 402A will increase their ability to speak English clearly and to navigate their informal speaking demands. Specifically, this class focuses on pronunciation skills, including vowels, consonants, syllable stress, word stress, and intonation. Students will also learn vocabulary and idiomatic expressions that are applicable to academic, professional, and daily life contexts. Students will employ many of these pronunciation and language skills in their informal presentation assignments throughout the semester. This course is required of all new ITAs who did not pass the CWRU Spoken English Test and received a score below 60. In addition, the course is open to any international student who may wish to enroll.

UNIV 402B. Spoken English Fluency (0 units)

International Teaching Assistants and other students enrolled in UNIV 402B will increase their ability to speak English fluently and to listen more acutely within formal and informal contexts. Specifically, this course focuses on skills and strategies needed to function comfortably in the academic community as a Teaching Assistant, as well as a student and colleague. Students will strengthen their skills by exploring scenarios that involve asking and answering questions, conferencing with students, leading lab or classroom discussions, and other skills relevant to their academic, professional, and daily life contexts. Students will practice their formal communication skills in their presentation assignments throughout the semester. This course is required of all new ITAs who did not pass the CWRU Spoken English test and received a score of 60 - 69. In addition, the course is open to any international student who may wish to enroll.

UNIV 402C. Professional Presentation Skills in English (0 units)

International Teaching Assistants and other students enrolled in UNIV 402C will increase their ability to speak English fluently with advanced vocabulary in formal settings, with emphasis on presentation communication skills. Students in this class will improve their English skills to enhance their comprehension of US academic and social culture. Assignments will be applicable to students' academic community and beyond, in their professional and daily life contexts. Students will practice their formal communication skills in their presentation assignments throughout the semester. This course is required of all new ITAs who did not pass the CWRU Spoken English test and received a score of 70 - 79. In addition, the course is open to any international student, postdoctoral visitor, or employee who may wish to enroll.

Appendix B

Procedures for International Students Assigned GTA responsibilities

International students are exempt from assessment of spoken English proficiency if they have received a speaking section score of at least 27 on TOEFL, 8 on IELTS, or 76 on PTE on a test taken within two years of the first GTA assignment. Proof of the test score will need to be shared with the SELP program. Students receiving the exemption can enroll directly in UNIV 400 to proceed with GTA training requirements.

All other international students assigned GTA responsibilities should follow these steps:

1. Complete the CWRU-administered Spoken English Test (SET) assessment before the first GTA assignment. Register for the SET by emailing selp@case.edu. SET score results will be shared directly with departments, following student completion of the assessment.
2. If a score of 80 or higher on the SET is received, register for UNIV 400. The student is eligible to serve as a GTA after completing UNIV 400.
3. If a score of 70-79 on the SET is received, the student must take UNIV 402C but could also register for UNIV 400. However, these students may not serve as GTAs until scoring 80/100 or higher on the final presentation for UNIV 402C and completing UNIV 400.
4. If a student scores 60-69 on the SET, they will be required to take UNIV 402B. Students in this category cannot register for UNIV 400 until the following semester and will be ineligible to work as a GTA until they have completed UNIV 400.
5. If a student scores below 60 on the SET, they will be required to take UNIV 402A. Students in this category cannot register for UNIV 400 until the following semester and will be ineligible to work as a GTA until they have completed UNIV 400.