Providing Teaching-Related Support

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BACKGROUND

• Majority of TAs at NIU provide teaching-related support and not primary instruction
• Teaching-related support involves many of the same responsibilities related to providing primary instruction
• This presentation is about the common responsibilities of teaching-related support
• Your department may offer discipline-specific TA training
• Check with your supervisor for additional training related to your responsibilities

TYPES OF TEACHING-RELATED SUPPORT

Assisting Students
Grading
Lab, Studio, or Clinic Support
Assisting Your Course Supervisor

KNOW YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND RELATED POLICIES

Responsibilities

• Work hours/week
• Duration of work
• Types of responsibilities
• Office hours
• Documentation requirements
• Reporting requirements
• Training and professional development requirements
• Performance expectations
• Performance evaluation

Policies

• FERPA - Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (www.reg.niu.edu/regrec/confidentiality/index.shtml)
• Assisting students with disabilities (www.niu.edu/disability/) and emotional difficulties (www.niu.edu/cssd/)
• Academic dishonesty and incident reporting (www.niu.edu/communitystandards/)
• Safety policies and procedures, and incident reporting related to your responsibilities
• Sexual harassment and ethics training
• Course load requirements for TAs
• Policies pertaining to Graduate Assistantships (www.niu.edu/provost/policies/appm/V1.shtml)
Assisting Students

- Tutoring
- Recitation sessions
- One-on-one help during office hours
- Laboratory/Studio/Clinic sessions
- In-class discussions and activities
- Out of class activities (e.g. field trips)
- Online discussions
- Other?

When assisting students

- Focus on the scope of your responsibilities
- Help your students learn but do not do their course work for them
- Be professional and encouraging
- Inform your faculty supervisor of any problems as soon possible
- Don’t socialize with students you work with
- Don’t let students take advantage of you

Grading

- Grading involves evaluating students’ work against course objectives
- Grading techniques may differ based on type of work and testing mechanism:
  - Quantitative vs qualitative work
  - Written work vs performance
  - Multiple-choice tests vs detailed tests
- Find out from your supervisor how to grade different types of work:
  - Use of rubrics
  - Specific guidelines or procedures
  - Assigning final grades

Grading Tips

- Grade the same problem or work for all students before moving on to the next one
- Be consistent and fair
- Inform your supervisor if you suspect any academic dishonesty in student work
- **DO NOT** display grades publicly with names or IDs
- Do not discuss student performance with anyone other than your faculty supervisor
- Keep records for at least 13 months and be prepared to explain your grading process in case there is an appeal
- Protect the grade roll and keep a back-up copy
Lab/Studio/Clinic Support

Regardless of lab/studio/clinic setting you may have to:

• Lead or assist with laboratory, performance studio, or clinic sessions
• Set up, install, and maintain equipment and materials
• Enforce safety precautions, take appropriate actions when necessary, and report safety violations
• Follow special protocols in labs involving human subjects, animal subjects, laser, radiation, etc.
• Undergo training before assisting students

Lab/Studio/Clinic Tips:

• Get the necessary training first
• Familiarize yourself with safety policies and procedures
• Know how to enforce safety policies or take action when necessary
• Learn to set up, calibrate, clean, and maintain equipment
• Practice leading laboratory, studio, or clinical sessions
• Learn how to manage students in laboratory, studio, and clinic settings

Assisting Your Supervisor

Assisting your Supervisor May Involve:

• Researching course-related information
• Preparing lecture materials, homework assignments and solutions
• Proctoring exams, exhibits and recitals
• Assisting with in-class or out of class (e.g. field-trips, site visits) activities
• Managing the course website
• Teaching the class during the course instructor’s absence

Tips for Assisting your Supervisor Effectively

• Know the details, performance expectations, and deadlines for your assigned activities
• Meet with your supervisor regularly
• Get samples or guidelines for course materials to be produced
• For covering the class during your supervisor’s absence, be clear on what to cover, prepare, practice, and deliver
• Request feedback on your work so that you can continue to improve
• Keep track of your work and hours
**General Tips**

- Take your TA responsibilities seriously
- If you need help, talk to your faculty supervisor, Graduate Director, or Chair
- Keep a detailed record of your work hours and activities in case there is a concern
- Consult your department chair if you are asked to work more than the required hours or to do tasks not appropriate for your role
- Request permission from supervisor for planned absence, and inform students about your absence in advance

**General Tips**

- Become proficient on technology tools regardless of your discipline
- Be aware of policies and procedures that apply to your work
- Do not post photos or comments online that may be considered unprofessional
- Attend Faculty Development’s programs and training offered by your department
- Do not do the minimum but go beyond the call of duty to gain the necessary experience and recognition

**Conclusions**

- As a TA, you have a significant impact on students and their learning
- You have the opportunity to:
  - Develop teaching skills in a safe environment
  - Prepare yourself for future career
  - Contribute to university’s teaching mission
  - Be recognized for your efforts
    - Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award: facdev.niu.edu/facdev/ta/outstandingta.shtml
    - Graduate Teaching Certificate: facdev.niu.edu/facdev/ta/tacert.shtml
- Enjoy the opportunity and make the best of it!

**Resources**

- Resources for Graduate Teaching Assistants: www.facdev.niu.edu/facdev/ta/index.shtml
- Instructional Guide for University Faculty and TAs: www.facdev.niu.edu/facdev/resources/guide/index.shtml
- Quick Tips on Effective Instruction: www.facdev.niu.edu/facdev/resources/quicktips/index.shtml
- Programs for Graduate Teaching Assistants: www.facdev.niu.edu/facdev/programs/tacurrent.shtml
- TA Connections Newsletter: www.niu.edu/taconnections/