

**Information for Teaching Assistants**  
**Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences**  
**(2005-2006)**

The purpose of this information sheet is to help TA's to understand their responsibilities and to answer any questions that they may have. It is hoped that this will help TA's to have an effective and useful experience.

All PhD students are required to be TA's. Each course is given an approximate unit value. Every student must accumulate 2 full units worth of TA points to graduate. This is a responsibility that should be taken seriously. Both faculty and students depend on you to do your part in making the class successful.

Being a TA earns you valuable experience in teaching, organizing course material, course planning and teacher/student relationships. It also helps you to review a lot of material from your own courses. Many students find that this is valuable preparation for orals.

Teaching assistants are **Assistants**. They are not primarily responsible for the teaching material and curriculum (although they may well be asked to help the professor develop these materials). Below is a list of the responsibilities of the TA (the rest is the responsibility of the faculty member who is teaching the course):

- Keep track of how much photocopying is done. If you plan ahead, you can take photocopy jobs to the Copy Center at Lamont. (They will not do last-minute rush jobs.) Call Carol Mountain for an account number, if necessary. You can also use the Schermerhorn copier for SMALL jobs. Please do not depend on the Schermerhorn machine for your copy jobs; it is not built for super-heavy use.
- Put readings on reserve in the libraries as requested by your Professor.
- Arrange for audio-visual equipment as requested by your Professor.
- Prepare materials needed for class as instructed by your Professor.
- Attend lectures if required by your Professor. If you have a class of your own at the same time as the class you are TA'ing, make sure you discuss this with the Professor. You will need to get the materials and information you need to be able to help the students. You are still responsible for knowing

what is going on in class even if you have a course conflict and cannot attend.

- Know and understand material being taught in class/lab ahead of time. If you need help with material yourself, make sure you get it before class. If you are going to teach a lab or a class, make sure you are fully prepared ahead of time. Anticipate the needs of the class and the materials you will require.
- Set up lab in advance for lab sessions.
- Clean up lab/classroom after class. That means putting away **all** materials in their proper places and leaving the room ready for the next person. Make sure room and microscopes or other expensive or irreplaceable items are properly locked up. This is part of the TA's job. You don't earn full TA credit if you neglect this part of your job.
- If there is more than one TA for a class, the TA's should coordinate their jobs so that:
  - a) one TA doesn't end up doing all or most of the work; and
  - b) each TA knows what the other is doing and can take over or finish or put things away in proper places, if necessary.

If you are teaching in Schermerhorn you should see Robbi Simpson and have her show you where things (especially lab specimens) can be found, and where and how they should be put away. This is very important!

Never just dump specimens and samples into a cabinet. Ask Robbi for help if you don't know where the samples go.

Never white out numbers on specimens. If you have to change a number on a test sample so students can't memorize the numbers and pass along answers, use tape or a similar sample with a different number. Ask Robbi for help if you need it.

- If you plan and prepare ahead, you will be able to avoid problems and confusion!
- Collect money (when necessary) and turn it in to Carol at Lamont. **You need to keep track of who paid, how much, what it was for, the date you collected it, and whether cash or check was collected.**
- Hold office hours and help sessions. (R. 551 Schermerhorn can be used for this activity.)
- Grade homework if your Professor requires it. This must be done right away so that students get their work back in time for it to be useful to them. If you are asked to grade exams or papers and do not feel qualified to do so,

discuss this with your Professor. All grading must be done quickly and given/mailed to students as soon as grades are recorded.

- Hand out and collect course evaluations at the end of the semester completed. Evaluations should be handed in to Mia.
- Make sure all keys are returned to Robbi in the office at 556-557 Schermerhorn at the end of the semester.

Your faculty member is responsible for:

- planning curriculum;
- teaching lectures;
- informing TA of course objectives;
- letting TA know **in advance** what will be needed for class/lab. If you have not already been contacted by the faculty member you are TA'ing for, you should contact him/her to find out what you should be doing for the next class. It is not a good idea to wait till the last minute to do this.
- making sure grading is done on time.

Another thing you need to be aware of is the Sexual Harrassment Policy of the University (copies are attached). Simply, there should be no questionable behavior between a TA and a student in his/her class. All students should be treated equally and no special treatment should be given to any individual or group of individuals in class or in class-related matters.

**Some useful information:**

- For lab supplies, see Robbi
- For keys, see Robbi
- If you need field-trip equipment, see Robbi or Carol.
- For van rentals, see Carol
- If you need to get audio-visual equipment, see the following people:
  - Schermerhorn: Robbi\*\*\* ( from Lamont:74-4525 or 74-5029)
  - Geoscience: Carol (x8551)
  - Geochemistry: Ellen Thompson (x8305)
  - Seismology: Dave Lentricchia or Stacey Gander/Bonnie Bonkowski
- If you need to use the video camera and tripod, see Pat Temple @ Lamont

□ Anything to do with textbooks, see Carol.

*Remember: DEES will reimburse for textbooks needed for class you are TAing, so save your receipt*

□ Problems with students, see your Professor or Mia.

Frustrations, talk to your Professor or Mia.

□ Problems with cheating, talk to the Professor.

\*\*\* You must see Robbi for instructions on how to use the overhead and slide projectors and how to change the bulbs. The bulbs are very expensive so it is important that you know what to do (sometimes they blow out even if you are careful, but you need to know the correct procedure anyway)

**Some Useful Phone Numbers:**

Dept. Office in 556-557 Schermerhorn (Robbi)

from Lamont: 7-4-4525/7-4-5029

from Main Campus: 4-4525/4-5029

from Off-campus: (212) 854-4525/5029

Dept. Office at Lamont (Mia, Missy, Carol)

from Lamont: 8550

from Main Campus: 95-8550

from Off-campus: (845) 365-8550