

Work Agreement for Learning Assistants

Section I: Terms of Work

College: Information Sciences & Technology

Student: _____ Email: _____

Professor: _____ Course: _____

Semester/Year: _____ Hrs/week for credit: _____ Hrs/wk for pay: _____

Learning Assistants (LA's) are undergraduate students who serve as learning coaches and mentors for students, while supporting instructors with teaching-related tasks. LA's are assigned to a particular course; they work closely with instructors to provide challenging and meaningful learning experiences.

Mandatory Responsibilities (See Section II for expanded list)

- Communicate with supervising instructor, any additional teaching staff, and students in the course
- Prepare for specific teaching- and learning-related assignments
- Attend class and scheduled meetings

Additional Responsibilities (See Section III for a complete list of possible responsibilities)

- As assigned by the supervising instructor

Feedback and Evaluation

Formative feedback should be given to the LA at mid-semester (ideally, to be completed by students in the course and by the instructor). Feedback will be shared with the LA and instructor only. A performance evaluation should occur at the end of the semester (ideally, to be completed by students in the course and by the instructor). The results will be shared with the LA and instructor and filed with the Office of Learning Initiatives & Instructional Assessment.

Training

First-time LA's are required to sign up for 3 credits (about 7-8 class periods) of IST 297B: Supervised Experience in Instructional Support. The credit amount includes credits received for the LA's first semester of work. However, first-time LA's on the graduation list will take this course for 1 credit. Returning LA's are invited to participate in IST 297B class sessions (for a refresher on certain topics), and all LA's are invited to additional workshops on the course management system and other technologies.

Compensation

First-time LA's who are not on the graduation list are required to sign up for 3 credits of IST 297B: Supervised Experience in Instructional Support. The credit amount includes credits received for the LA's first semester of work.

Credit Option for Returning LA's

5 – 10 hours/week for 15 weeks = **2 Credits**

15 – 20 hours/week for 15 weeks = **3 Credits**

Pay Option

Starting rate is \$9.50/hour, with raises after each increment of 2 semesters of service, contingent on good performance

If pay is chosen, please note that students are budgeted for 15 weeks of compensation, to be spread out over a 17.5 week period of time—see “Start/End Dates” below. (Most LA's do not work over break, do not work all of Finals Week, and, consequently, do not run over their budgeted 15 weeks of pay.)

Start/End Dates

- **Start:** Thursday before classes begin (instructors may ask LA's to work online prior to the start of classes)
 - **End:** Last day of Finals—or whatever earlier date instructor sets (make semester-end travel plans accordingly)
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Section II: Mandatory Undergraduate Learning Assistant Responsibilities

The following responsibilities are mandatory for all Learning Assistants:

Communication with Instructor and Students Outside of Class

- Meet with instructor on a regular basis (usually once a week or biweekly) to discuss enrolled students' progress and/or to get briefed on upcoming class lessons/assigned work
- Respond promptly to instructor's and, if applicable, students' requests via specified means of communication

Preparation

- Review (or complete, if you never have) assigned readings, class assignments, and/or research for the course
- Organize materials (e.g., survey results, search results, class handouts) ahead of meetings and/or class sessions

Attendance

- Attend all instructor meetings, class sessions, and/or outside lectures as designated by instructor
 - Provide advance notice to instructor and other teaching staff for the course if unable to attend meetings or class sessions due to sickness or other reasonable excuse
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Section III: Additional Undergraduate Learning Assistant Responsibilities

The following additional responsibilities are assigned by the instructor to the Undergraduate Learning Assistant:

Preparing Course Materials and Exercises

- Review readings, slides, examples for class with an eye toward students' understanding and interest
- Search for websites or materials needed for newly developed course activities
- Take and time quizzes/exams; identify items that don't work well
- Complete newly developed course assignments, estimate time to complete work, and locate problems
- Check in with instructor 10 minutes prior to class for last-minute things to be done
- Set up technology (e.g. computers, projectors, networks, clickers, websites) for class, if necessary

Coaching

- Coach students who need help with in-class work
- Explain in-class assignments when tasks are unclear
- Hold review sessions prior to exams/quizzes
- Hold scheduled office hours to tutor students

Team Management

- Assist instructor in creating teams
- Read team minutes, contracts, and project plans, to keep abreast of what teams need help with
- Help teams keep on task with in-class group activities
- Monitor teams' communication, planning, and critical evaluation processes during in-class team work

Classroom Management

- Monitor quizzes and exams for cheating
- Encourage student engagement, attentiveness (e.g., enforcing computer use policies)
- Take attendance

Feedback for Faculty on Students' Learning

- Create an electronic medium for the students to post questions
- Observe what students understand best and least so instructor knows what to review
- Administer surveys and/or conduct "Classroom Assessment Techniques" (CAT's)

*Grading and Feedback on Students' Work**

- Provide ungraded feedback on homework assignments and projects
- Assist instructor in refining grading rubrics
- Grade short writing assignments (1-2 pages), with a clear rubric provided by the instructor
- Grade multiple choice or short-answer exams
- Record grades in grade book
- Communicate grades to students
- Provide item analysis for exams and/or common misunderstandings for assignments

Additional Responsibilities

* A word of caution: LA's may be assigned to a class in which friends or classmates from other courses are enrolled. LA's must work with the instructor to minimize conflicts of interest. At a minimum, this means that LA's should NOT grade assignments, quizzes, or tests of an acquaintance or friend in the class and should NOT be solely responsible for proctoring exams.

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Section IV: Suggestions for Instructors Working with Undergraduate Learning Assistants

First Day of Class

- Explain the role of the LA to students enrolled in class
- Allow LA to introduce himself/herself

Communication with LA

- Meet with LA on a regular basis (usually once a week or biweekly) to discuss LA's feedback on students' progress and to brief LA on upcoming class lessons
- Provide performance feedback to LA at mid-semester and at end of the semester (using online forms)

Class Participation

- Prepare materials to be handed out in class in time for LA to distribute
- Check with LA 10 minutes prior to class to determine if anything needs to be done

Coaching in Class

- Invite LA to assist with group work and individual student work during class
- If necessary, assign LA to specific teams to help keep students on task

Team Management

- Provide the LA information and guidelines for constructing teams if assigned to create teams
- Outline role of LA in intervening with troubled teams (consider using team resources for troubled teams: <https://collab.ist.psu.edu/learning/teams>)
- Brief LA on what teams should be doing during in-class activities (e.g., give LA key questions to ask of groups), so that the LA knows how to help keep teams on task
- Give LA access to team collaborative spaces, so that LA can monitor team meeting minutes, progress toward deliverables, and team communications

Classroom Management

- Give LA appropriate level of access in the Course Management System
- Outline attendance procedures and any other procedures LA is responsible for
- Communicate whether you will ask LA to help maintain desired classroom environment
- Provide guidelines to LA on what is fair to say in response to student questions during quizzes/exams
- Review academic integrity policy and procedures for reporting cheating

Feedback on Students' Learning

- Determine if you want LA to set up an electronic medium to collect student questions
- Work with the LA in creating Classroom Assessment Techniques (surveys, diagnostics, or 1-minute activities) if you want to know what students understand, how class is going, or how students study

*Grading and Written Feedback on Students' Work**

- Coach LA on the kind of feedback to provide on homework assignments and projects
- Familiarize LA with your grading rubrics
- Make course grading policies and procedures clear to LA
- Train LA in meeting your expectations for how you want grading done; and, if working with more than one LA, train them together until you achieve inter-grader consistency that meets your expectations

* LA's may be assigned to a class in which friends or classmates from other courses are enrolled. Work with your LA to minimize conflicts of interest. At a minimum, this means that LA's should NOT grade assignments, quizzes, or tests of an acquaintance or friend in the class and should NOT be solely responsible for proctoring exams.

Work Agreement for Learning Assistants
Section V: Agreement of Responsibilities

Signatures on this page indicate agreement on the responsibilities checked in section III.

Learning Assistant's Signature

Date

Instructor's Signature

Date
