



UNIVERSITY
OF WYOMING

School of
Graduate Education

University of Wyoming

Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook

2024



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Congratulations on your appointment as a graduate assistant! For many of you, this is an important chapter in your life, as you transition from undergraduate studies to becoming an independent scholar and representative of the university. New responsibilities are added to your role as a student, and you are about to make important contributions that are critical to



the University of Wyoming. In addition to your academic experiences, you will now serve in research and creative work, provide instructional support, and offer undergraduate student mentorship. The diversity of these complementary activities is intended to strengthen your expertise and facilitate your professional development. Regardless of your primary responsibility here, we encourage all our graduate assistants at UW to excel both as learning scholars and as teachers of the knowledge and skills of their disciplines and awareness of the theoretic underpinnings and critical thought essential to creation of new knowledge.

The experience you will gain is invaluable to your preparation for your professional career. To facilitate your growth as an effective instructor for UW's students, we provide this Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook as an introduction to your training in pedagogy. We also provide our students a range of learning opportunities and environments.

Learning takes place in traditional classrooms, studios, and laboratories, and also in the field and in the community. UW's most effective teachers are constantly learning by testing new strategies and approaches to convey topics to facilitate higher levels of understanding within their students. Because students learn most effectively when they are actively engaged, university educators learn to employ a range of strategies to facilitate student learning. In this handbook, you will find a number of these strategies and approaches. Some will work for you, some will not fit your particular uses. Pick and choose wisely, for that is the role of the effective instructional graduate assistant. We wish you the very best in all of your endeavors at the University of Wyoming and look forward to sharing the day you receive your graduate diploma.

Sincerely,

Jim Ahern, Vice Provost for Graduate Education

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Introduction

Graduate Assistantships

A Graduate Assistantship is a financial award provided to a student by the university to aid a student's graduate education. Graduate Assistantships carry work and academic expectations. Eligible students apply for assistantships through a department or unit offering the positions. Selections are competitive, and appointments are contingent on the availability of funds. Selection criteria include standardized test scores, grade point averages, recommendations, experience, past performance, collegiality, and suitability for the position. Reappointment is contingent on eligibility, satisfactory performance, and availability of funding.

Graduate Assistantships may fall into different categories like teaching, research, and administration; in this handbook, Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) are the focus.

- [Graduate Assistantship Information](#)
 - [Job Descriptions and Time Limits](#)
 - [School of Graduate Education](#)
 - [Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure](#)
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Getting Started

First Day

You are a student and an expert in your field of study. It is time to start sharing your knowledge with others. All new GTAs are required to attend the University of Wyoming's (UW) Graduate Teaching and Learning Symposium, organized by the Office of Graduate Education, and facilitated by the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning, prior to the start of classes. The symposium is meant to support GTAs in their new role.

- [Graduate Teaching and Learning Symposium](#)
- [Survivor Strategies: Teaching Large Enrollment Classes](#)
- [Designing for Discussion-Based Teaching](#)
- [Lecture Based Learning](#)

Get to Know Students

Forging genuine connections is the key to unlocking students' curiosity. Try to learn and use students' names regularly. It shows you care and builds trust with students. Icebreaker activities are a great option to get your class acquainted with one another and with you.

- [Active Learning Spectrum](#)

Syllabus

Understanding the course syllabus is essential for effective teaching. It serves as the foundation for the course, outlining lessons, assignments, and expectations. The syllabus design and terminology create an impression of you and your course.

- [Syllabi Resource page](#)
- [UW Syllabus Regulation and Template](#)
- [Syllabus Requirements](#)

Meet With Your Supervisor

Meet with your supervisor to discuss expectations for teaching, grading, and other responsibilities. Establishing a solid working relationship with faculty is crucial for adequate support and a successful GTA experience.

Course Objectives and Outcomes

Knowing the course objectives helps align your lessons and teaching with the overall student learning outcomes. Ensure that your teaching methods contribute to the achievement of these goals. Every instructor should strive to increase student learning with great teaching.

- [Student Learning Outcomes](#)
 - [Rubrics](#)
-



Inside the Classroom

Create an Engaging Classroom

Move beyond traditional lecturing to facilitate discussions, encourage peer-to-peer learning, and ask open-ended questions when it is appropriate. Offer insightful prompts and celebrate diverse perspectives. Try and walk around the classroom during labs and lectures. Seek out the quiet students; a friendly interaction with a student can turn them into an engaged participant. Make yourself approachable and show your investment in student learning.

Remember, your classroom is not just about delivering information; it is about fostering a shared journey of discovery. By making connections, you become more than a teacher – you become a navigator, a motivator, and a fellow learner. Authenticity is something students will perceive as trustworthy so be passionate about your teaching and share your experiences.

- [Active Learning Spectrum](#)
- [Strategies for engaging and motivating students](#)

Classroom Management

Clearly defining expectations to your students sets the tone for the course and helps manage student behavior. Ask your students what their expectations are as well and create a social contract among you and your students. Communicate classroom policies regarding attendance, participation, and late assignments. Highlight key aspects of the syllabus to reinforce expectations. Encourage students to ask questions about expectations to avoid misunderstandings.

- [Classroom Management Basics](#)
- [Managing your online course](#)
- [Valuing space and place in classroom learning](#)

Accessibility

Ensure your materials are as accessible as possible to everyone. Use clear and concise language, provide alternate text descriptions for images, and offer captions or transcripts for multimedia content. Create written forms of class lectures and information to provide students prior to class. Employ various teaching methods by incorporating lectures, discussions, group work, hands-on activities, and visual aids to keep everyone engaged.

- [UW Disability Support Services](#)
- [UW Accessibility Resources](#)
- [The National Disability Rights Network](#)
- [Disability Support Services](#)
- [Designing for Accessibility with POUR](#)

Inclusive Classroom for All Learners

Go beyond simply meeting minimum accessibility standards and ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to participate and learn, regardless of their ability level. A vibrant classroom thrives on the richness of different backgrounds, perspectives, and abilities. As a GTA, cultivating an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and supported is an ethical imperative and a key to maximizing learning for all.

Be open to feedback from students and colleagues on improving inclusivity in your teaching. Reflect on your practices and be willing to adapt your approach to meet the needs of your learners. Creating an inclusive classroom is an ongoing process, not a one-time achievement. Stay involved in professional development opportunities and resources on accessibility and inclusive teaching.

- [Higher Education Inclusion Guide](#)
- [The National Center for Universal Design for Learning](#)
- [Columbia's Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching](#)

Technology Integration

WyoCourses is UW's branding of Canvas, our learning management system (LMS). Every course has a WyoCourses course shell. Whether you teach entirely online, hybrid, or in a physical classroom, WyoCourses can be the interactive hub of all your course content. In this place, students find resources, receive and submit assignments, access feedback and grades, collaborate, and interact with each other, with you, and with the course content. Explore WyoCourses to become familiar with course organization, discussion forums, and assignment submission processes. Incorporate multimedia, discussion boards, assessment tools, and integrations within WyoCourses to enhance the learning experience. Multimedia creation tools can enhance live lectures and written course materials. Brief videos, audio recordings, and images can engage students and support diverse ways of learning.

- [WyoCourses Help](#)
- [ECTL Knowledge Base](#)
- [Classroom Technology Support](#)

Academic Integrity

Students may have the best intentions at the beginning of a semester. They are not planning to take significant shortcuts that involve plagiarism on papers or cheating on exams. By the end of a semester, however, some instructors report being discouraged by problems with plagiarism.

Instructors can make relatively small changes in their courses and in their teaching that will help students engage in their assignments and manage their time. The payoff will be evident in better all-around performance on assignments and reduced plagiarism or cheating. Take the time to teach students how to properly paraphrase content, conduct their own research, and what classroom expectations are. Talk to students about the points in the semester when they may experience higher difficulties with time management that may interfere with completing assignments. Remind students about upcoming assignments.

- [ECTL Plagiarism Resources](#)
- [Dean of Students/Registrar/UDSS/Academic Dishonesty](#)
- [Grammarly Plagiarism Checker](#)

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Instructors should include a section focused on permitted/unpermitted AI technology use in the syllabus, generally in the location of their Student Academic Dishonesty statement.

- [UW AI Resources](#)
 - [AI: Responding to the Challenges and the Opportunities](#)
 - [ASU AI Resources](#)
-



Outside the Classroom

Office Hours

If your position requires you to hold office hours, you must be available to meet with students during published office hours. If you are unavailable during your office hours or in a location other than your office, let students know. GTAs should be available to work scheduled class times, research hours, office hours, meeting hours, exam hours, study session hours, and any other hours required by your supervisor.

Responding to Emails

Timely responses to emails contribute to a supportive and responsive learning environment. Communicate your expected availability response time to students. Address urgent queries promptly and provide a timeline for more complex issues. You are not expected to be available to your students 24 hours a day. It is okay to answer emails only during prespecified times of the day.

Time Management and Work Life Balance

Balancing teaching responsibilities with your coursework and personal life takes time and effort. Set realistic goals and priorities and develop strategies for maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Do not hesitate to seek help if your mental health is declining. UW offer free counseling services to students.

- [UW Counseling Center](#)
- [Student Organizations](#)

Family Rights and Education Act (FERPA)

Do not release information to parents or others regarding a student without written permission from the student. Do not post identifying information in hallways, such as names or social security numbers and do not leave graded materials outside of the classroom for students to pick up. Posting grades to WyoCourses is appropriate.

- [FERPA](#)

Grading Responsibilities

Understanding the grading rubric and providing constructive feedback to students is crucial. Maintain fairness and consistency in grading and communicate the schedule to students so they know when to expect feedback and grades. You are also required to have your grades recorded accurately and promptly. Be sure to enter your grades before the end of the semester.

- [UW Grading and Academic Status](#)
- [Rubrics](#)

Talk With Other GTAs

Make a point of meeting and talking to other GTAs in and outside of your department. You can learn a lot from their experiences, and it is nice to know that there are other people who can empathize with your situation.

- [GTA ECTL Programs](#)

Professional Development

Take advantage of opportunities for professional growth, like workshops, seminars, and conferences. Participating in these events will help build a network within the academic community. The Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning (ECTL) recognizes that graduate students are important in the UW teaching and learning community. The ECTL encourages students to utilize their programs and resources to develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities as instructors. They offer and promote educational development opportunities for GTAs.

- [ECTL](#)
 - [GRAD 5910 Course](#)
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Resources and Support Services

Resource	Location	Email	Phone (307)
Academic Affairs	Old Main 312 www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs		766-4286
Associated Students of the University of Wyoming	UW Union 20 https://www.uwyo.edu/asu/	asuwgov@uwyo.edu	766-5204
Clothing Cottage	310 E University Ave, Laramie, WY 82072		745-0625
Counseling Center	341 Knight Hall https://www.uwyo.edu/ucc/index.html	uccstaff@uwyo.edu	766-2187
Disability Support Services	Knight Hall 128 www.uwyo.edu/udss	udss@uwyo.edu	766-3073
Ellbogen Center for Teaching & Learning	Coe Library 510 www.uwyo.edu/ctl	ellbogenctl@uwyo.edu	766-4847
Emergency			911
Graduate Education	Knight Hall 250 https://www.uwyo.edu/uwgr	GradEd@uwyo.edu	766-6478

	ad/index.html		
Interfaith Good Samaritan	712 Canby St, Laramie, WY 82072 https://www.laramieinterfaith.org/	info@laramieinterfaith.org	742-4240
Information Technology	www.uwyo.edu/infotech/	userhelp@uwyo.edu	766-4357
Laramie Connections Center	920 E. Sheridan Street Laramie, WY 82070 https://www.laramieconnections.com/services	info@laramieconnections.com	206-0607
Laramie Soup Kitchen	104 S 4th St, Laramie, WY 82070 St. Matthews Church Lower level https://www.laramiesoupkitchen.org/	Info@LaramieSoupKitchen.org	460-1605
Learning Resource Network	Coe Library 105 www.uwyo.edu/learn	first-year@uwyo.edu	766-4430
Libraries at UW	Multiple locations https://www.uwyo.edu/libraries/index.html		766-3190
University Food Pantry	New! See the interactive map of food cabinets on campus https://www.uwyo.edu/food-security/access-food-uw/index.html	asuwexc8@uwyo.edu	
University Testing Center	Knight Hall 4 www.uwyo.edu/utc	utc@uwyo.edu	766-5250
Writing Center	COE Library Level 1 www.uwyo.edu/writingcenter	writing@uwyo.edu	

WyoCourses Instructional Support	www.uwyo.edu/wyocourses	wyocoursesinst@uwyo.edu	766-5250
WyoCourses Technical Support	www.uwyo.edu/wyocourses	wyocourses@uwyo.edu	766-4357



Glossary

Graduate Assistant: A general name for any Teaching (GTA), Research (GRA), or Administrative Assistant (GA).

Instructor: Any teacher in a course, including the Instructor of Record who leads the course, any academic staff who teach in the course, and any Teaching Assistants who also offer instruction. The term "instructor" refers to any person in an official role teaching a course.

Graduate Teaching Assistant: A graduate student enrolled in the University of Wyoming System who is regularly assigned teaching and related responsibilities (other than manual or clerical) under the supervision of a faculty member. Teaching Assistants do various kinds of instruction in different programs, from leading small breakout discussion sections to running entire sections of their own. In all cases, Graduate Teaching Assistants are instructors and should consider their teaching experience part of their education.

FERPA: Family Rights and Education Act

Instructor of Record: The instructor in a course who has overall responsibility for developing the course syllabus, managing the delivery of course material, ensuring that learning outcomes are met, and issuing final grades. GTAs sometimes assist a faculty or academic staff member who is the instructor of record and occasionally serves as the instructor of record themselves.

Plagiarism: The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own.

Supervisor: All GTAs are employees and have an official supervisor responsible for assessing their performance and providing them feedback and guidance.

UDL: Universal Design for Learning is an educational framework based on research in the learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience, that guides the development of flexible learning environments and learning spaces that accommodate individual learning differences.