

UCSD Department of Sociology
Statement, Guidelines and Policies Regarding Teaching Assistantships and
Reader Positions

(Revised October 2019)

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Key Personnel & Facts

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Teaching Assistantships (TAs) and Readerships are the department's primary means of supporting graduate students. The Sociology Department hires approximately 12-13 graduate student teaching assistants and 12-13 graduate student readers each year, and occasionally partners with different programs and departments in the hiring of additional graduate students from year to year, such as the Teaching and Learning Commons and various writing programs. Graduate students in the sociology department can be expected to be a reader as early as their first year. The majority of graduate students appointed to a TA position will be at least in the second year of the doctoral program. The number of new TAs to Sociology can vary from year to year, but is roughly 4-6 per year.

Reader Selection and Qualifications

Graduate students are typically appointed as readers for upper division courses without discussion sections that have an enrollment of 60 or more students (25% appointment) at the end of the second week of the quarter (end of add/drop period). Courses with enrollments of 120 or more students will receive two readers at 25% appointments each, or a single reader at 50% appointment. Students will be asked in the winter/spring quarter of each year to submit requests for employment appointments for following year, whether as a Reader or TA. In addition to the spring application (where readerships are projected), the Graduate Coordinator also notifies Sociology graduate students each quarter of those courses likely to need readers in the following quarter. Students should indicate interest in course readerships to the Graduate Coordinator AND the instructor of the course.

TA Selection and Qualifications

Students* will be asked in the winter/spring quarter of each year to submit requests for assistantships to the Graduate Coordinator. TAs are then selected, each spring, for the following year's courses by the department's Graduate Program Committee, based largely on overall student performance (via review of annual student evaluations) in the graduate program and on teaching ability. The Committee also assigns students to TA positions allocated to the department from other programs or departments. Unfortunately, resource limits and the selection process mean that not all student requests for TAs can be met.

*All international graduate students who are nonnative speakers of English are required to demonstrate proficiency in the use of English language for teaching before they can be employed as teaching assistants. UC San Diego is requiring non-native English speakers to demonstrate fluency by taking the English Language Certification Exam. For more information, please see [The English Language Certification Exam \(ELCE\)](#).

ASE Minimum Qualifications for Graduate Student TAs and Readers

1. For academic year employment at 25-50% time, a student must be registered full-time (12 units or more). A student enrolled in less than 12 units, with departmental approval, is eligible for a maximum of 25% time employment.
2. A graduate student must be in good academic standing:
 - a. Meet departmental standards including a satisfactory annual spring academic progress evaluation.
 - b. Maintain a GPA of 3.0 in upper-division and graduate course work.
 - c. Must not have more than a total of eight units of F and/or U grades overall
3. A graduate student must be within departmental time limits:
 - a. **Ph.D. Degree Aim:** no one may be employed as a teaching assistant and/or associate (teaching a course) for more than 18 quarters (unless an exception is granted by the Dean). Note: employment as a reader does *not* count towards this limit
 - b. **M.A. Degree Aim:** eligible for up to 7 quarters of employment or other University funding.

Note: Any employment outside of the student's academic (home) department must have prior approval from the home department.

An exception to the minimum qualifications listed above may be granted at the discretion of the University.

Reader and TA Compensation

For the most current rates, please see [Graduate Student Academic Title Pay Rates](#). TAs that work at least 25% time (i.e. 110 hours per quarter) are entitled to receive a fee remission (TAHI/TAFE) for all but the following: University Center, Recreation Facility, GSA, and Student Transportation fees (currently totaling \$275.62, AY 2018-2019), per quarter. For more information, please see [Fee Payment Information for Academic Student Employees](#).

Reader Responsibilities

Readers are typically assigned 25% (10 hours per week/110 hours of work per quarter) appointments. Readers should not be asked to work beyond the 110 hour limit. Appointments of at least 25% usually come with a partial fee remission and payment of graduate student health insurance. In addition to fee and health insurance remission, Readers are also paid an hourly wage for 110 hours of work for the entire quarter.

The primary duty of Readers in Sociology is to grade students' work. The instructor will communicate the specific responsibilities expected of the Reader at the beginning of the quarter. The Reader and the instructor share joint responsibility for ensuring that each understands the division of work responsibilities. Additional responsibilities of readers may include: maintaining student records; preparing answer keys or supplementary notes; acting as course web-master; exercising fairness and sound judgment; keeping communication lines open with the professor; respecting the confidential nature of the student/teacher relationship; and reporting suspected incidents of dishonesty or cheating to the course instructor.

In assigning grading and other tasks – e.g., asking a reader to attend lecture or, in special cases, to keep office hours (which readers generally do not do) – instructors should bear in mind that all work beyond the 110-hour limit (or 220-hour limit) – including grading – is the instructor's responsibility. Readers are not required to lead discussion sections, hold office hours, or be involved in the instructional content of the course. Readers should never work more than 40 hours in one week. Readers are required to attend the instructor's lecture regularly, unless explicitly directed otherwise by the instructor. Course responsibilities commence at the beginning of the academic quarter and continue until the final course grades have been turned in (usually Monday after Finals Week). Readers are responsible for contacting the instructor prior to the first day of instruction and for determining when their responsibilities for the course have finished for the quarter.

The purpose of the reader is not to relieve the faculty member of the responsibility of grading, but to spread that responsibility out. For these reasons, grading should be divided in some fashion between the faculty member and the reader. Readers appointed to a 25% position are responsible for up to 60 students, faculty are to grade for enrollments beyond that figure.

ONCE THE QUARTER GRADING IS OVER THE READER IS TO RETURN ALL DOCUMENTS USED IN MAKING GRADING DECISIONS TO THE INSTRUCTOR. IT IS THE INSTRUCTOR'S RESPONSIBILITY TO TALK TO ANY STUDENT WHO HAS A QUESTION PERTAINING TO THEIR GRADE. INSTRUCTORS ARE NOT TO REFER STUDENTS WITH GRADING QUESTIONS TO THE READER AT ANY TIME.

TA Training and Preparation

Preparation for teaching is an important part of graduate education. Campus and University-wide policy requires that each campus provide both campus-wide and departmental training for its TAs in basic content and skill areas.

Elements of a comprehensive training program include:

- An orientation before classes begin that introduces TAs to their instructional role, basic teaching skills and concepts, policies affecting TAs, and resources available to instructors.
- Individual mentoring and feedback by faculty, advanced TAs, and instructional improvement professionals, based on observation, student evaluations and/or videotaping.
- Ongoing quarterly seminars and workshops on teaching, as well as access to materials from which TAs can learn independently. Regular email communication of the [Teaching + Learning Commons](#) offerings is made available to all graduate students advertising the array of teaching development workshops offered each quarter.

Responsibility for the training, supervision, and evaluation of teaching assistants rests jointly with the administration, academic departments, and individual faculty members.

Prior to beginning their assignment in Sociology, first time teaching assistants are required to attend either a Sociology Department TA Orientation or a quarterly TA orientation provided by the [Teaching + Learning Commons](#). Experienced TAs are encouraged to continue to participate in the Sociology Department TA Orientation Workshop(s). Additionally, international graduate students must have taken and been certified in a test of their English skills through the [Teaching + Learning Commons](#) before classroom assignments begin (see above.)

In the sociology department, we rely on three layers of TA training.

- Instructors of the courses to which TAs are assigned maintain primary responsibility for supervising and evaluating TAs and offering advice on teaching methods.
- A faculty TA Adviser (or the Graduate Program Director) coordinates training activities and assembles information on resources (on and off campus) useful for general pedagogy, for teaching sociology in particular and for helping students with research and writing skills.
- A Senior TA (chosen for their extensive and well-regarded TA experience) provides individualized consultation and training with TAs when necessary and offers feedback. The Senior TA is also responsible for organizing two pedagogy workshops during the academic year.

Course Credit

Credit may be awarded for instruction a TA receives under the mentorship of a faculty advisor. Such instruction will enable the TA to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to enhance the learning experience of students. Areas of instruction include, but are not limited to: organizing discussion sections or tutorials, writing homework or test questions, setting grading policies, communication and teaching skills that promote learning. Instruction will entail regular faculty contact hours, and should also include visits by the faculty supervisor at the discussion sections given by a TA. Lastly, instruction may include outside preparation to gain specialized knowledge required by a particular course.

All TA's should enroll in *SOCG 500: Apprentice Teaching in Sociology* during quarters for which they are a TA. The course can be taken for up to 4 graduate-level credits. Through WebReg, enroll in *SOCG500 Apprentice Teaching in Sociology* with the faculty who will be teaching the course. This course aids TAs in learning proper teaching methods by means of supervision of their work by the faculty: handling of discussions, preparation and grading of examinations and other written exercises, and student relations. (S/U grades only.)

TA Evaluation

Faculty will evaluate the TA's performance, provide the TA with constructive feedback, and prepare a written evaluation of the TA's performance. Faculty and the Senior TA may provide training in developing teaching skills in relations to the duties stated above.

TA's will also receive cumulative and summarized evaluations from students enrolled in their discussion section(s) at the end of each quarter.

Duties of Teaching Assistants

Attendance

TA course responsibilities commence at the beginning of the academic quarter and continue until the final course grades have been turned in. TAs are responsible for contacting the instructor prior to the first day of instruction and for determining when their responsibilities for the course have finished for the quarter.

TAs are expected to be present during scheduled office hours or sections. If a TA must cancel office hours or sections due to illness or another conflict, s/he should notify his/her students as soon as possible (preferably via email and an announcement at the course lecture, but at least by having a notice posted at the appropriate location). The instructor should also be notified. In the event of an absence, TAs should either arrange for a substitute or reschedule the section for a different date, if possible, in consultation with the instructor. Cancelled office hours should be rescheduled as well.

TAs are expected to be adequately prepared for office hours and sections.

Workload

A TA with a 50% appointment – the typical case in Sociology – shall not be assigned a workload of more than 220 hours per quarter including the keeping of regular office hours. This rule applies proportionally to 25% appointments (110 hours). In addition, a TA shall not be assigned a workload of more than 40 hours in any one week or assigned to work more than eight (8) hours in any one day. The number of hours worked in excess of twenty (20) hours per week may not total more than 50 hours per quarter. TAs should initiate discussion with their supervisor as soon as they anticipate any workload related issues that would result in a violation of this rule. **TAs asked to exceed 50% time or to perform inappropriate duties are urged to consult with the DGS, chair, or graduate advisor.**

A TA may not be employed as a substitute instructor, where the effect is to relieve the instructor of his or her teaching responsibilities. (This is specifically prohibited by *University Policy*.) In case an

instructor is absent from school, the instructor will normally ask another faculty member to act as a substitute. However, in the event of an emergency, the Department Chair may ask the TA to substitute for the instructor. A TA may decline to substitute for the instructor if doing so would interfere with his/her studies (e.g. a class), or if s/he feels unprepared to lecture. Whenever a TA serves as a substitute lecturer, a faculty member shall be appointed to supervise.

For workload procedures, please refer to [UAW & ASE Agreement, Article 31, Workload](#).

Additionally, University policy states that:

A TA may conduct under the direction of a faculty member, recitation, laboratory, or quiz sections but, may not be responsible for the entire instructional content of any course, for the selection of student assignments, for the planning of examinations or for determining the final grades of students (The University of California Faculty Handbook, 1995, page 17).

Duties & Responsibilities

The instructor will communicate the specific responsibilities expected of the TA at the beginning of the quarter, using the Description of Duties form (Appendix B). The TA and the instructor share joint responsibility for ensuring that each understands the division of work responsibilities.

TA duties may include, but are not limited to, the following: facilitate a discussion section or tutorial; hold weekly office hours; e-mail contact; grade homework, exams, or papers; maintain records; distribute and copy reading materials; prepare answer keys or supplementary notes; and act as course web-master. TAs may be required to attend the instructor's lecture regularly, and testify at disciplinary hearings.

Additional responsibilities include: exercising fairness and sound judgment, keeping communication lines open with the professor and with students, respecting the confidential nature of the student/teacher relationship, being knowledgeable about rules and regulations governing the TA appointment, and reporting suspected incidents of dishonesty or cheating to the course instructor.

*The primary duty of TAs in Sociology is to lead discussion sections. These sections are an important part of the course, and they should be rescheduled or switched with other TAs only for good cause (e.g., to deliver a paper at an academic conference) and by pre-arrangement with the instructor. The instructor should discuss the content and form of the section with the TA, bearing in mind that *responsibility for every aspect of the course rests ultimately with the instructor, not with the TA.**

The secondary duty of TAs is to grade student work. However, as with the teaching, the instructor in the course bears ultimate responsibility for grading. The instructor should discuss grading with the TA, make certain that TAs in the same course grade as consistently as possible, be available to TAs to discuss grading issues and problems, and in general, monitor the grading process. Furthermore, while TAs often upload students grades into the electronic eGrades system, it is ultimately the instructor's responsibility to review and submit final grades. In addition, where a student disputes a grade, the instructor must be willing to settle the dispute. While the instructor may ask the student to consult with the TA, the instructor must be willing to review the work in question and issue a final decision based on his/her own evaluation of the work. A "Grading Information Booklet" is available in the department administrative office for your review.

Exams and Copying

TAs may be asked to contribute to the writing of examinations; e.g., to propose questions or offer ideas. However, the writing of examinations is up to the instructor. It is inappropriate as well as against University policy for the instructor to ask TAs to compose examinations. As with other aspects of the course, primary responsibility for the ways in which student learning is evaluated rests with the instructor, not the TA.

In general, faculty should proctor their own examinations, although there may be circumstances in which alternative arrangements are acceptable. It is worth restating the University policy that “In the case of an unavoidable absence, the department chair, with CEP approval, may designate another faculty member to administer the final exam.”

TAs are neither research assistants nor general factotums. It is inappropriate for an instructor to ask a TA to gather or prepare lecture materials for the instructor or to carry out work for the instructor that is primarily research-related. While an instructor may ask a TA to deliver a lecture in a course, and a TA may well wish to lecture, the instructor may not compel the TA to do so. This is not the TA’s job, and it is inappropriate for an instructor to ask a TA to lecture on more than a very occasional basis.

TAs should NOT use their own card to photocopy class materials related to their employment as a TA in a Sociology course. TAs should borrow the department’s green card, (see Jillian Tracy in SSB 401.) For large copying jobs, it is recommended that a TA use Imprints. Imprints will pick-up and drop-off jobs to the front desk in the main office. In most cases, the cost will be drastically cheaper than using a copy card. Department staff at the front desk can assist TAs in filling out the Quick Copy request.

Confidentiality

All completed assignments, exams, grades, correspondence, and other information about individual students in the class shall be kept confidential except where the student has given written consent. In particular:

- No student in the class should ever be allowed access to a TA computer account or to TA files. Grade files on the computer should be kept protected.
- Grades should never be posted by name or by any identifying number such as a student ID or social security number.
- Graded assignments should not be left in a public place unless students sign a privacy waiver (aka, a Buckley waiver).
- Graded assignments should be returned directly to each individual student, rather than in a pile through which the students search for their assignment.
- Answer keys or exam materials should be kept secure in a locked drawer.
- These provisions are consistent with Federal and State privacy laws.

Use of Authority

Decisions made by TAs have a significant effect on their students' grades. TAs should carry out their responsibilities professionally, and be especially careful not to abuse their authority. TAs should evaluate student work objectively and fairly. In particular:

- TAs may not agree to be paid as tutors for students in their class. These students would by definition receive preferential access to the TA.
- TAs may not become romantically involved with students in their class. Such involvement makes objective evaluation difficult.
- If a TA has a friend or partner who is a student in the class, then they should not grade that student's papers.

Safety

On rare occasions, a TA may be threatened or harassed by a student, either in person or by electronic mail. These issues should be taken seriously and could be in violation of the campus Student Conduct Code. The TA must immediately report the incident to the instructor. Consequently, a TA may file a complaint against a student and report directly to the Office of Student Policies and Judicial Affairs, (858) 534-6225, studentconduct@ucsd.edu.

Grievances

If you have a grievance, please refer to the Grievance Procedures as outlined in the UAW & ASE Agreement, Article 12 for detailed information and guidance.

Note: TA positions are covered by a collective bargaining agreement between the University and the Association of Student Employees ("ASE"), International Union, UAW. The ASE Union Contract Agreement is the authoritative document for any possible discrepancies between this document and the ASE Union Contract Agreement.

Triton alert emergency notification system

In the event of a major campus emergency everyone with an "ucsd.edu" email address will receive information on the incident via email.

If you have not done so already, I highly recommend that you update your security contact information to include your cell phone number so that you will receive text messages.

To view and update your information anytime, log on to the Triton Alert portal at: <https://blink.ucsd.edu/safety/emergencies/campuswide/notifications/index.html>

Other questions re: campus emergencies?
Contact EH&S Emergency Services, 858-246-0695.

Teaching Assistant Policy Resources

TA Union Contract Agreement

<https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx/contract.html>

UCSD Policy and Procedure Manual

<http://rmp.ucsd.edu/policy-records/ppm.html>

Teaching Assistant Pedagogy Resources

UCSD Teaching and Learning Commons

<http://commons.ucsd.edu/>

Sociology TA Handouts Webpage

<http://sociology.ucsd.edu/graduate/grad-resources.html#Teaching>

Includes:

- How to Read Academic Texts
- Writing Tips
- Structuring a Formal Essay
- Common Paper Problems
- Developing Ideas for Your Essay
- Basic Essay Grading Rubric
- Sample Grading Rubric
- TA Guidelines

SOCIAL ASSETS

[http://sociology.ucsd.edu/graduate/grad-student-resources.html#Social-Assets-\(google-drive\)](http://sociology.ucsd.edu/graduate/grad-student-resources.html#Social-Assets-(google-drive))

(use this link and your UCSD email login to access social assets in google drive)

Other University Resources

Academic Personnel Manual

The UC Office of the President Academic Personnel manual sets forth general university policy concerning all academic appointments (faculty, TAs, researchers, etc.). It is available in academic department offices and on <https://dev-academicaffairs.ucsd.edu/aps/reference/apm.html>

UCSD Student Conduct Code

This document contains University policies and procedures regarding student conduct. It is available from the office of Student Policies and Judicial Affairs (SP&JA) Student Center Building B or on-line. <https://students.ucsd.edu/student-life/organizations/student-conduct/regulations/22.00.html>

Academic Integrity (AI) Office

Promotes and supports a culture of academic integrity in order to reinforce quality teaching and learning at UC San Diego. <http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/>

General Catalog

This publication includes the grading policy, grade appeals procedures, degree requirements, academic disqualification policy and procedures, and policy on integrity of scholarship. It is available at the UCSD Bookstore, academic departments, OGSR and online at <http://www.ucsd.edu/catalog/>

Schedule of Classes

The schedule of classes lists registration procedures and time, place, instructor, and section numbers for all courses being offered for a particular quarter. It is available at the UCSD Bookstore, academic departments or on line at <https://act.ucsd.edu/scheduleOfClasses/scheduleOfClassesStudent.htm>

Graduate Division

The Graduate Division's website outlines policies and resources for graduate students at UCSD. It is available online <http://grad.ucsd.edu/>

UCSD Office of Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination (OPHD)

OSHPP provides assistance in investigating and resolving complaints of sexual harassment and provides education to the entire UCSD community. Emphasis is on prevention and early resolution. <http://ophd.ucsd.edu/>

UCSD Principles of Community

<http://www.ucsd.edu/about/principles.html>

Appendix A

Sample of Sociology TA Training Schedule

Sociology TA Training Agenda

September 25, 2018

SSB 101, 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Goals and Objectives:

1. Introduce and discuss departmental policies and teaching resources.
2. Promote the sharing of teaching materials and teaching philosophies.
3. Advance TA professional development in the teaching of sociology.

By the end of this training, new TAs will be able to:

1. Develop a section syllabus and lead a Day 1 section meeting.
 2. Lesson plan for goal-oriented section meetings.
 3. Draw on tips and strategies to manage a classroom of undergraduate students.
 4. Grade student papers confidently, in communication with peers and instructors.
 5. Know where to turn as questions arise during the quarter.
-

11:00 – 11:15	Welcome
11:15 – 12:00	Overview of TA and Reader Responsibilities and Resources
12:00 – 12:45	Mini-Workshop #1: Preparing for Day 1
12:45 – 2:00	Lunch with Experienced TAs
2:00 – 2:45	Mini-Workshop #2: Lesson Planning and Leading Discussion
2:45 – 3:30	Mini-Workshop #3: Grading
3:30 – 4:00	General Questions and Discussion with Teresa and Kwai

Appendix B

Sample of Description of Duties Form

UAW and UC Agreement
Academic Student Employees
10/1/2007-9/30/2009

APPENDIX "C" REQUIRED FORM: DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES

DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES

Term: Fall 2018 Supervisor: _____ ASE: _____
 Course #: SOCI 1 Course Title: Introduction to Sociology
 Location: PETER 108 Day/Time: TuTh, 11:00a-12:20p

The job duties designated below are required of the Academic Student Employee,
(Please check the appropriate items and describe, as applicable):

- Attend lectures
- Present, lectures
- Instruction of 2 sections/labs per week
- Preparation
- Hold 2 office hours per week
- Supervisor/ASE(s) meeting _____ hours per week
- Read and evaluate 2 papers per student
- Proctor 2 examinations
- Prepare drafts of narrative evaluations and make grade recommendation as appropriate for students in TA section/lab (Santa Cruz only)
- Perform individual and/or group tutoring
- Class/faculty visits
- Maintain/submit student records (e.g., grades)
- Perform other tasks as assigned. Please list: _____

Please provide departmental policy on class, section and/or lab size where it exists.

A Teaching Assistant with a 50% appointment shall not be assigned a workload of more than 220 hours per quarter (340 hours per semester) or a workload of over 40 hours in any one week. The number of hours worked in excess of 20 hours per week may not total more than 50 hours per quarter or 77 hours per semester. This standard shall apply proportionately to other percent appointments.

In addition, a Teaching Assistant with an appointment of 50% or less shall not be assigned a workload of more than 40 hours in any one week or more than 8 hours in any one day.

This check sheet is designed to be distributed to all ASEs except those who are designated as the Instructor of Record for the course.

cc: EMPLOYMENT FILE
(Updated March 2009)