

# Department of Physics

## Guide for Graduate Assistants

**SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CARBONDALE**

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## INTRODUCTION

This Guide was designed to give graduate assistants an overview of departmental expectations of its graduate assistants, as well as some general operating procedures.

The departmental policies are subject to change in the future.

For more detailed information regarding the requirements for the Master's degree in Physics or the Ph. D. in Applied Physics, students should refer to the Graduate Catalog, which is the official document describing the degree requirements and conditions. Regarding terms conditions of employment, the Collective bargaining agreement is the controlling legal document. The Collective bargaining agreement has precedence over any statement made in this document that may be in contradiction with it.

## PROCEDURES FOR THE MASTER'S DEGREE IN PHYSICS

After admissions to the graduate program, a student is normally expected to complete all requirements for the M.S. degree, including the thesis, within two years.

During the first year, the student should become familiar with the research areas of the Physics faculty (preferably through a personal meeting with each member of the faculty). The student is encouraged to select a faculty member who will direct the student's thesis as early as possible.

***If the graduate student has not selected an advisor by the end of two regular academic semesters at SIU (i.e., Fall and Spring) the student will not be eligible to receive a graduate assistantship from the Department.***

The student's thesis advisor, after consulting with the graduate student, will identify two other faculty members to form the student's thesis committee. Generally, the thesis advisor will serve as the chair of this committee. Participation in any thesis committee by faculty members other than the thesis advisor is voluntary, and requires the explicit consent of the faculty members involved. After the committee has been tentatively identified, the thesis advisor or the graduate student will fill out the appropriate forms requesting administrative approval for the thesis committee. This form requires that the committee be approved by the Department Chair and by the Graduate School..

After the student finishes writing her/his thesis, the student is ready to undergo an examination centered on the thesis, but covering all aspects of graduate course work and thesis-related topics. This examination is administered by the thesis committee.

Prior to the examination date, but after consulting with his/her thesis advisor and obtaining the advisor's approval for proceeding with the examination, the graduate student should distribute copies the thesis to all committee members at least **ten days** before the examination.

The thesis examination is open to the public, and announcements of it will be posted in advance. This examination is the final examination for the Master's degree.

If the Graduate School receives the approved two copies of the thesis by their appropriate deadline, the student can graduate at the end of that semester; otherwise, graduation officially occurs in the following semester. The student should obtain the Graduate School's exact deadline date in advance by checking the Graduate School web site. In any case, **the student must apply to the Graduate School for graduation during the first week of the semester in which he/she plans to graduate.**

The student must also provide a final copy of the thesis or research paper to the Departmental Chair for approval. This copy will become the departmental copy.

### **PROCEDURES AND TIMETABLES FOR THE DOCTORAL DEGREE IN APPLIED PHYSICS**

After admission to the doctoral program, a student is expected to complete all requirements for the Ph.D. degree, including the dissertation, within four years.

In addition to completing all the requirements set by the Graduate School, the student must complete a sequence of Required Basic Core courses that includes: Classical Mechanics, Quantum Mechanics, Electromagnetic Theory, Statistical Mechanics and Solid State Physics. In addition, students are required to complete at least one course from a list that includes: Computational Physics, Scanning Electron Microscopy, Transmission Electron Microscopy, Adv. Topics in Surface Physics, Adv. Topics in Magnetism and Magnetic Materials, Adv. Topics in Quantum Computing, Adv. Topics in Applied Physics, Adv. Topics in the Spectroscopy of Materials or Adv. Topics in the Physics of Hybrid Materials.

After completing the Required Basic Core courses, doctoral students will need to complete another nine credit hours of graduate level elective courses selected from a list approved by the Department.

Starting no later than the third semester in the doctoral program, students will be required to enroll for two consecutive semesters in a Special Projects in Physics course.

In addition to the above-described course-work, while working on their dissertation, students must complete 24 credit hours of Physics 600 (Dissertation).

To be admitted into candidacy, students must pass a Qualifying Examination which must be taken no later than during the second Summer after the student was admitted into the program

No later than six months after admission to candidacy the student must request her/his dissertation advisor to proceed with the selection of a dissertation committee. The

dissertation committee shall consist of no less than five members, at least one of which must not be a member of the Physics faculty (as per Graduate School rules).

Within two months after the approval of this committee, the student must present the dissertation committee with a written research proposal, and must also describe this proposal to the committee in an oral presentation.

Upon completion of the dissertation, the dissertation committee will administer a final oral examination, the dissertation defense.

All graduate degrees are subject to all the rules and regulations imposed by the Graduate School. Such rules are listed in the Graduate Catalog, and all students are highly encouraged to read them and to become familiar with them.

A description of the doctoral program in Applied Physics, its requirements and deadlines, (including all matters related to the Qualifying Examination) are found in the Graduate Catalog.

### **TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS PERIODS**

The normal TA contract has a length of one semester. More senior TA's (Ph.D. level), or those students that so require as a condition for admission, may be given academic year contracts.

The students should be aware that the Graduate School has limits on the number of semesters that a student may receive assistantships (either teaching or research). The limits are: two calendar years at the Master's level; and, four calendar years at the Ph. D. level.

***If the graduate student has not selected an advisor by the end of two regular academic semesters at SIU (i.e., Fall and Spring) the student will not be eligible to receive a graduate assistantship from the Department.***

### **ASSISTANTSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS AND OTHER FINANCIAL AID**

Awards of teaching assistantships are made every semester on a competitive basis. Every teaching assistant will be periodically evaluated to determine if awards are to be continued.

In addition to departmental teaching assistantships and research assistantships, available through individual faculty members, there are other opportunities for support from different sources in the University (Graduate Fellowships, Graduate Dean Award, Morris Fellowships, etc.)

## GENERAL COMMENTS FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS

The standard load for half-time Graduate Teaching Assistants (TA) is twenty hours per week. These hours may be distributed in a variety of assignments including, but not limited to: teaching laboratories, teaching discussion sessions, holding Help Desk hours, grading, proctoring, and in some cases teaching courses for the Department.

Teaching assignments are made by the Department Chair. In making the assignments the Chair will take into consideration the Department's instructional needs, and the background and interests of the TA.

Incoming TAs should discuss, at the earliest time possible, their specific teaching duties with the instructors in charge of the courses to which they are assigned. They need to make sure that they know what duties are expected from them.

The Department Chair will make every effort to assign the teaching hours are arranged so that they do not conflict with the TA's graduate course schedule. If a graduate student identifies any scheduling conflicts, he/she should bring them to the attention of the Department Chair as soon as possible, so that they may be corrected prior to the start of classes.

Prior to the signing of the semester contract, the Department Chair must have a copy of that semester's registration or the contract will not be processed.

Any changes in registration must be given to the Department Chair at least two weeks before the start of the semester.

Graduate students are required to **maintain sustained enrollment throughout each semester or term in the manner listed below** in order to retain eligibility for having a teaching or research assistantship:

- Masters students: a minimum of 8 credit hours during the Fall and 8 credit hours during the Spring semesters.
- Masters students: a minimum of 3 credit hours during the Summer term.
- Ph.D. students: a minimum of 3 credit hours of enrollment during the Summer term.
- Ph.D. students: at the present time, a minimum enrollment of 6 credit hours is required during the Fall and Spring semesters.

Students must be in good academic standing in order to be eligible to receive an assistantship.

All TA's are expected to arrive on campus at least one week before classes begin (which, in general, will coincide with the start of their contracts). This will allow all graduate assistants time to become familiar with their assignment and to meet with the faculty member who will be responsible for supervising their work.

Each TA is required to select early during the first week of classes office hours, no less than two hours per week, on two different days, during which he or she will be available for student consultations. The purpose of the office hours is for the students to be able to reach the teaching assistants, so these hours need to be selected with this goal in mind

(for example, a teaching assistant should not establish his or her office hours at the same times that the course meets).

During the first week of classes all teaching assistants must submit their office hours to the Department secretary. These times will be posted in the departmental website.

In order to be re-employed as teaching assistants by the Department of Physics, the graduate teaching assistants are required to satisfactorily fulfill all their teaching duties and must maintain good academic standing. This means:

- That they must satisfactorily fulfill the teaching duties corresponding to the specific courses that they are assigned to. (For Lab TA's or for Discussion Sessions this requires that the teaching assistants show up to teach their classes on time, and that they be well prepared to teach them. For Help Desk assignments: this requires for the graduate assistants to show up at the time and for the period for which Help Desk hours are assigned. For grading duties: this requires the graduate assistants to have satisfactorily graded the material required, in the amount of time assigned by the instructor for whom the grading is being done.)
- Attend all the meetings required by the faculty member(s) in charge of the course to which the teaching assistants are assigned (the purpose of this requirement is to properly train the teaching assistants, usually this involves one meeting per week);
- Attend any other meeting requested by the faculty in charge of the course, by the Department Chair, by the College of Science or by the Graduate School;
- Satisfactorily perform in the classes in which they are enrolled (i.e., main good academic standing).

Good performance in course work and good performance in research will be taken into consideration as enhancing factors when deciding the priority in which students will receive re-appointments to teaching assistantships.

## **GRADERS**

A TA assigned duties as a grader needs to meet with the instructor in charge of the course **before the beginning of the semester**. Grading duties will vary from instructor to instructor, so this meeting is essential.

The instructor in charge of the course may or may not provide the grader with solutions for homeworks, quizzes or exams.

Graders have to make every effort to ensure that their grading is fair and uniform for the entire class.

The grading system, partial credit, posting of solutions, grade book maintenance, grading schedules, etc. are all determined by the instructor in charge of the course.

As part of the grading duties the graduate assistant may be required to have office hours for students in the lecture course, and, he/she may also be asked to help proctor exams or quizzes.

In order to maintain eligibility for receiving an assistantship from the Department, with regards to grading duties, the teaching assistant must have any material properly graded in the time period required by the instructor in charge of the course for which the grading is being done.

## **HELP DESK**

The Physics Help Desk is located just outside Neckers 240G and is free to all SIUC students enrolled in any Physics class.

The Help Desk hours are assigned by the Department Chair. A Help Desk assignment is just like a laboratory assignment. A student assigned Help Desk duty must show up, in time, and be at the Help Desk for the amount of time assigned.

If the Department receives complaints from students that the assigned TA was absent during their assigned Help Desk hours, the incident will be treated in the same manner as if a laboratory TA had missed a lab session.

## **LABORATORY TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

### **Office Hours**

Each TA is responsible for having **two office hours, on two different days**. The TA should post these times on their office door. The teaching assistant should notify during the first week of classes the Department secretary of their office hour schedule. Teaching assistants are expected to be in their offices at the posted times.

Office hours should be scheduled such that they do not conflict with the lecture course. Teaching assistants must try to accommodate the students' need to ask questions.

### **Grading**

The lab report is the primary source of graded material in the lab course and, therefore, a great deal of thought should be put into developing standards from which the report will be judged. Grading should be as uniform and as fair as possible to all students. The teaching assistants need to follow the indications of the instructor in charge of the laboratories with regard to grading (for example, follow the syllabus as to how to assign



grades, how many pre-lab quizzes and lab quizzes to have, whether any lab grades will be discarded, etc., etc)

Unlike 101 or 103, the 253 and 255 lab courses are each taken for one credit hour and receive an independent grade. These are serious courses, and should be viewed as seriously as any other course.

Students must follow the guidelines for lab reports. During the first week of classes, the lab sections should meet to go over the purpose of the course, rules, policies, expectations, grading, etc.

### **General Comments**

Lab Coordinators or Instructors in Charge of a course with a lab will schedule periodic meetings with the lab TAs to review weekly assignments, answer questions, go over the laboratories for the next week, etc. Generally these meetings are held on a weekly basis. **All laboratory teaching assistants assigned to a class are required to attend these meetings.**

All grading must be done in a timely manner so that materials are ready to be handed back to the students at the next lab meeting.

The lab grading should follow the criteria and rules set out by the Instructor in Charge or by the Lab Coordinator.

Teaching assistants are responsible for maintaining grades for their section, for preparing exams/quizzes, and for reporting their grades. All grades must be turned into the Lab Coordinator or Instructor in Charge and will be included in the grade sheet at the end of the semester.

### **253 and 255 Laboratory Procedures**

Teaching assistants must take the time to familiarize themselves with the experiment before their section meets. In addition to attending the required TA meetings called by the Lab Coordinators, this familiarization may require (especially for those students teaching a lab for the first time) that the teaching assistant perform the experiments and gather the appropriate data before each laboratory.

Teaching assistants should report any problems with the lab equipment to Clay Watts in the machine shop. If the problem is electrical or computer-related in nature, TAs need to report it to Bob Baer, Department's the Computer/Electronic Specialist.

Each lab session should begin with a short introduction to the experiment and include a description of the equipment for the lab and its proper use.

The teaching assistants should point out any pertinent safety cautions during this introduction.

The teaching assistant's introduction should supplement the material that is in the manual, not rehash it.

Some equipment must be checked out by the students by using their student ID. The teaching assistants are responsible for checking-out this equipment and for ensuring that all equipment is returned to its proper storage.

All TAs must announce to their students who the Lab Coordinator is, and they must provide the Lab Coordinator's contact information (office, phone, email).

Final Exams for the 253/255 Labs are to be given the week prior to finals' week. They are not to be given sooner.

## **COURSE EVALUATIONS**

All teaching assistants in charge of laboratories, assigned discussion sections or assigned to teach a course, are required to distribute teaching evaluations in all the classes assigned to them.

The course evaluation forms will be distributed to the teaching assistants by the departmental secretary.

The teaching evaluations should be given to the laboratory students during either one of the final two labs, during either one of the final two discussion sessions, or sometime during the last two weeks of classes (depending on whether the assignment is for a lab, discussion session, or course.)

It is not appropriate for the teaching assistant being evaluated to be present in the room during his/her evaluation.

The teaching assistant should assign one of the students in the class the task of returning the evaluations to the Department office prior to distributing the evaluations.

The teaching assistant should leave the room *immediately* after distributing the evaluation forms.

The student assigned to return the completed forms should be instructed to collect all the evaluations, place them in an envelope, and return the envelope to the Department secretary (or put them under the door of the Department if the lab or class meets when the office is closed).

The teaching evaluations will be used as part of a process of evaluating the performance of all the teaching assistants.

## DEALING WITH STUDENTS AND CLASS DISCIPLINE

One of the most challenging aspects of being a TA can be dealing with the control of the classroom atmosphere. TAs must exercise reasonable caution and apply common sense in dealing with students. If the atmosphere in the class is unruly, then it will be difficult for learning to take place; if the atmosphere is unduly oppressive, the result is the same; no learning will take place either.

TAs should always be professional in dealing with students. The proper relationship they should have is that of an instructor to a student. This does not mean that teaching assistants should talk down to students; everyone should be treated with respect.

TAs should avoid arguments about grades in the classroom. They should refer any complaints about grades to their office hours. Individual grades should not be discussed with the entire class.

If a problem arises in class with a student, the teaching assistant must continue to act professionally. Teaching assistants should not raise their voice during a discussion or argument with a student. If the graduate assistant becomes agitated, it is advisable to slow the conversation down until he/she has regained control.

It is not advisable to deal with a disciplinary problem through humor.

Never embarrass a student in front of the class.

If for some reason, a student decides to leave class, let him/her go. Do not pay attention to this person unless they are overly disruptive while leaving.

Use non-confrontational techniques whenever dealing with conflict.

If a situation arises in which a student is disruptive (disturbing others, acting in an unsafe manner, mistreating other students, acting offensively toward the instructor, etc.), the teaching assistant should politely but firmly ask the student to leave. The TA should inform the disruptive student that a meeting will be set up between the disruptive student, the teaching assistant and the Laboratory Coordinator some time before the disruptive student's next laboratory meeting. The teaching assistant must write down all information surrounding the disciplinary incident and report it to the lab coordinator and to the department Chair as soon as it is possible, prior to having any meeting with the student.

The teaching assistant **SHOULD NOT MAKE, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, ANY PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH A STUDENT DURING A DISCUSSION OR ARGUMENT.** If the graduate assistant makes physical contact with a student during a discussion she/he will be liable to be accused by the student of assault, and then she/he will be subject to Police and legal action.

If a student refuses or fails to comply with the teaching assistant's request to leave the class, the teaching assistant should quickly proceed to call Campus Police (i.e., 911) and should also notify the Department. Campus Police has both the training and the experience needed to deal with these situations.

**If the student touches, grabs or hits a teaching assistant the teaching assistant SHOULD NOT RESPOND IN KIND. INSTEAD, THE TA SHOULD CALL THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY.**

In any incident that results in Police involvement the teaching assistant will most likely be asked by the Police whether she/he wants to file charges. The graduate assistant should use her/his best judgment when deciding what to do in these circumstances. The teaching assistant should be ready to prepare a written report on the incident, because the police will likely request it. As a result of Police involvement, the incident is likely to be referred to Student Judicial Affairs.

### **ABSENCES AND ABSENCE REQUESTS**

The following procedures are to be followed to process graduate assistants/ absence requests:

When a TA has to be absent temporarily from teaching duties at the University (to attend a professional conference, for example), he or she must file an Absence Request form with the Department Chair in advance of the absence, just as every other Department employee has to. The teaching assistant should use the Faculty /AP form.

The TA must find a qualified person to take over the teaching duties while he or she is away. The TA needs to notify the instructor in charge of all the classes he/she teaches both about the future absence and about the replacement.

The Chair will approve or disapprove the absence request after consulting with all the Department members involved, and will return an executed copy with the decision to the TA.

When a TA cannot perform his/her regular duties due to a sudden illness or an emergency, he or she can file the Absence Request form after returning to work.

However, he or she needs to present the necessary documents to provide support for a justifiable reason for the absence. It is the teaching assistant's duty to assist the Chair in finding a qualified graduate student to cover the teaching duties he/she will miss and to inform the Department as soon as possible, (but, in any event, **always prior to**, the lab meeting, class, Help Desk assignment, or office hour) about the upcoming unplanned absence; and, to suggest the name of a person who can fulfill his/her duties.

In the case of a research assistant, paid from an individual grant, the fiscal officer for the grant from which the student is being paid is the person in charge of deciding on the research assistant's absence request.

If a research assistant is paid from university fellowship or scholarship and has an official advisor, the Department will delegate authority to the advisor to decide on the student's absence request.

If a graduate assistant is paid from a university fellowship or scholarship, but does not have an official advisor, the Chair decides his/her absence request.

## VACATIONS

**Graduate assistants (TAs or RAs) on semester or academic year appointments do not accrue vacation days.**

The week prior to the first day of classes each semester and the period between the end of classes and the final date for submitting grade reports, are **not** vacation periods.

## SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES

There are **limited openings** for Summer employment in the Department of Physics.

**The Department can not guarantee Summer employment.**

Applications for Summer assignments should be made in the Spring semester. All Summer term assignments are almost always limited to a maximum of two months. TA summer appointments are almost always made on a maximum of a 25 % basis.

Inter-session assignments are, on some occasions, possible purely depending on the availability of funds. Many Summers there are no departmental funds available for the Intersession period. Intersession assignments are not necessarily limited to 25 % or 50 % and their duration is also variable.

## ETHICS

Because teaching assistants are employees of the Department, the University and ultimately the State of Illinois, they are expected to abide by certain professional and ethical standards.

When a teaching assistant signs a contract, she/he is agreeing to follow the guidelines set forth by the Department, the University, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and the State of Illinois. In addition to those already discussed, some of these guidelines involve specific policies with regard to: drug use, sexual activity, sexual harassment, smoking, and discrimination.

Any violation of official policies will place a teaching assistant's appointment in jeopardy.

Teaching assistants may not discriminate between students because of age, gender, race, or national origin.

In all dealings with students, teaching assistants must treat everyone equally and fairly.

Teaching assistants should not engage in social relationships with their students; this includes romantic and or sexual relationships, as well.

Teaching assistants may not accept money or other favors from their student.

Teaching assistants cannot tutor their own students for money.

Teaching assistants are expected to fulfill their duties to the full extent of their ability.

Teaching assistants must observe their students' right of privacy. Grades should never be posted in a manner in which a student's grade would be known to anyone other than the student him or herself.

## **DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS AND DISMISSAL**

Complaints regarding unsatisfactory graduate assistant performance are labor matters and are now covered by the provisions of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

This agreement covers the principles that guide disciplinary actions, the possible penalties, what constitutes just cause for disciplinary action, and the procedures and timelines that are to be followed in the formal resolution of disciplinary matters.

## **MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION**

### **Office Procedures**

In general, all requests for office work (keyboarding, etc.) should go through the Department secretary and not through the Secretary to the Chair, or through student workers.

All routine work should have a properly filled Work Request Slip attached to it.

The order should be placed in the WORK REQUEST tray of the Department secretary's desk.

The order should be placed at least a week before it's needed, if possible.

Orders are (generally) filled on a first come, first served basis.

The Department secretary handles requests for office supplies, such as pens, tape, staples, markers, folders, note pads, transparencies, etc.

The Department secretary is in charge of keys, office assignments, textbooks, and solution manuals.

Copies of purchase requests and all other fiscal (money) matters are handled by the Secretary to the Chair.

### **Departmental Supplies (Transparencies)**

The department will provide transparencies to be used in teaching or if a student needs to make a presentation at a professional meeting.

Whenever possible, however, students should avail themselves to using electronic media in their professional meeting presentations.

### **Keys**

All key requests should be given to the Department secretary. All disbursed and returned keys will be recorded by the Department secretary.

Report lost keys as soon as possible.

### **Textbooks**

Requests for textbooks for grading and teaching purposes should be made to the Department secretary.

All textbooks must be checked out and returned to the Physics Department at the end of the semester.

Textbooks will not be given out to teaching assistants for classes in which the teaching assistants are enrolled as students.

### **Copy**

Teaching materials for classes and other work related to an assistantship that need to be copied should be given to the Department secretary directly.

Copying of materials for thesis research should be done only with the express permission of the dissertation/thesis supervisor.

Getting articles related to research photocopied is acceptable, provided the student brings in the paper on which the copies are going to be made.

(An example of a non-approved use of the copy machine would be for making copies of handouts for a project/presentation for a class the teaching assistant is taking as a student.)

There are pay copy machines available on campus for dealing with copying needs not approved by the Department.

### **Mail Room**

Each graduate student is assigned a mailbox. Other than faculty, office staff, and graduate students, no other persons are allowed in the mail room.

Teaching assistants should not ask their students to put things in their mailbox. Rather, teaching assistant may ask their students to turn in the items to the office staff, and ask the office staff to place them in their mailboxes.

**All students need to make sure that they check at least once a day their mailbox. Even in these days of electronic communication the mailboxes are still the main means the Department has for communicating with its graduate.**

### **The Physics Lounge (Neckers 493)**

The Department provides coffee, hot water and the use of a microwave in the lounge. Students can drink coffee, tea, and/or cocoa for a small charge per cup. A list is attached to the cabinet above the microwave for everyone to record their beverage consumption. At the end of the month everyone will receive a payment reminder, and should promptly proceed to pay the Department secretary.

Please help keep the microwave oven clean by covering any food being heated.

### **Computer Lab**

The computers are located in Neckers 411. The computer lab is for common use by all Physics faculty and staff as well as Physics graduate and undergraduate students and assistants.

It is everyone's responsibility to be aware of the University's network use policy for computers on campus. The policy is on the web at:

<http://www.infotech.siu.edu/csc/policies.htm>

Please be aware that additional state laws and departmental policies are posted in the computer lab and apply to all departmental computer facilities. Failure to adhere to the policies or laws will result in loss of computer use privileges and prosecution by the appropriate enforcing agency.

### **Returning Keys and Textbooks**

When a graduate assistant completes his/her degree and/or is ready to leave SIUC, the keys and textbooks issued to that person must be turned into the Department.



## **Letters of Reference**

Students should provide stamps and envelopes for mailings of letters of recommendation for applications for graduate school and/or for employment.

## **Non-Native English Speaking Teaching Assistants**

Every non-native English speaker assigned a graduate assistantship with teaching duties must pass an examination of oral English skills before undertaking classroom duties. There are two parts to the exam: an interview and a teaching sample.

The procedures for this exam are described below. The exam is given by a three-person committee: a Department representative, a Center for English as a Second Language representative, and a Graduate School representative.

The interview begins with the committee asking the student for general information. This interview covers matters such as the student's reasons for choosing Southern Illinois University, the student's chosen field of study and major emphasis, plans for graduation and the future, and also information about the nature of the projected teaching assignment.

For the teaching sample, the student is asked to give a 10 to 15 minute teaching presentation on a topic related to his/her assistantship duties. The interviewers act as potential students in the relevant setting, asking the kinds of questions likely to be posed by students in such a setting.

Upon completion of the oral exam, the interviewers rate the student independently on three sets of scales:

1. comprehension (how well the student understood what was asked)
2. speaking/fluency (how grammatically and fluently the student spoke)
3. pronunciation/accent (is the accent a barrier to communication)

The result of the oral interview is a consensus of all three interviewers, arrived at immediately upon comparison of the ratings. There are three outcomes for the exam:

1. Pass, which allows the student to serve as a teaching assistant without restriction.
2. Restricted Pass, which limits the student's potential assignments. Limits are specifically tailored to the student's performance level, e.g., (for example: grading only, help sessions, laboratories under close supervision, relatively small classes as opposed to large lecture sections, one-on-one tutoring sessions, or to relatively advance classes within the major subject).
3. Failure

Students who fail, or are given a restricted pass, may be re-tested the next semester or when potential teaching assignments change.

The Graduate School sends letters detailing the results of the examination to the student's home department, and a copy is placed in each student's permanent graduate assistant file.

## **EVALUATION OF GRADUATE ASSISTANTS AND RE-APPOINTMENT**

While the Department of Physics makes a serious effort to support all of its graduate students, it needs to be clearly understood by all that a teaching assistantship is not something that every graduate student in Physics is entitled to.

It should also be clearly understood that while the renewal of TA/GA contracts for those students that meet the eligibility requirements set by the Department and the Graduate School will not be made arbitrarily or capriciously, they will be made at the sole discretion of the Department.

In providing students with TA assignments the Department will take into account the Department's need for services, the availability of funds, the past performance of the TAs, the furtherance of the Department's goals in research, and other criteria of this nature.

The evaluation of a TA's performance will be conducted at least once during the academic year or term of the appointment.

This evaluation will include the following aspects: Student Teaching Evaluations and Evaluation by the Instructors in Charge of the Assigned Courses. These two are directly related to the teaching duties of the TA (teaching duties here includes the duties of GA's in charge of grading, and/or of the Help Desk, and/or of lecturing, in addition to the traditional duties of conducting laboratories and observations and running Help Sessions.)

In addition, when considering a graduate student for re-employment positive evaluations by the student's Research Advisor, and by the departmental Graduate Student Advisor will be taken into account as factors enhancing the student's eligibility for re-employment. These other evaluations are related to the performance of the student in his/her other duties in the Department (that is, in the performance of the TA as a student in a graduate program, and in the TA's performance as a researcher conducting either Thesis or Dissertation research). Performance in these three areas (namely, the TA as a teacher, the TA as a student, and the TA as a researcher) are all relevant when deciding whether a TA's appointment should be renewed or not.

For Research Assistants the performance evaluation will be conducted by the Faculty member employing the RA. The evaluation will be based on the performance of the RA relating to how she/he discharges the research-related duties.

In addition the Faculty supervising the RA *may* also take into account a positive performance by the RA in her/his duties as a student when deciding on re-employment. The Faculty research supervisors will use the same form when evaluating RAs and TAs.

**EVALUATION FOR TAs**

**A.- Summary of Student Evaluation Forms in previous semester or year. (This summary is prepared by either the Chair or the Departmental graduate Advisor):**

Semester\_\_\_\_ Course\_\_\_\_ Section\_\_\_\_ Students Participating:\_\_\_\_ Rating:\_\_\_\_  
Semester\_\_\_\_ Course\_\_\_\_ Section\_\_\_\_ Students Participating:\_\_\_\_ Rating:\_\_\_\_  
Semester\_\_\_\_ Course\_\_\_\_ Section\_\_\_\_ Students Participating:\_\_\_\_ Rating:\_\_\_\_  
Semester\_\_\_\_ Course\_\_\_\_ Section\_\_\_\_ Students Participating:\_\_\_\_ Rating:\_\_\_\_  
Semester\_\_\_\_ Course\_\_\_\_ Section\_\_\_\_ Students Participating:\_\_\_\_ Rating:\_\_\_\_

**B. Evaluation by the faculty member in charge of the course in which the teaching assistant discharged his/her teaching/grading duties.**

Period and course being evaluated:\_\_\_\_\_

Attendance (including training sessions) and Punctuality:\_\_\_\_\_

Knowledge of the subject matter (if there is an opportunity to observe): \_\_\_\_\_

Complaints by students:\_\_\_\_\_

Promptness in discharging assigned duties: \_\_\_\_\_

Overall Evaluation of Teaching Assistant’s Performance:

Exceeds Expectations \_\_\_\_\_  
Meets Expectations \_\_\_\_\_  
Does not meet expectations \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments:

Recommendation for Re-employment as Teaching Assistant Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**C.- Evaluation by the Graduate Assistant’s Research Advisor**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Period evaluated: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance and Punctuality:\_\_\_\_\_

Level of Effort and Interest Shown in Research:

Research Effectiveness and Direct Evidence of Research Productivity:

(This could include the following items:

Is the project progressing at a reasonable rate?

Is the student taking care of all the needed duties?

Are there presentations as a result of the student’s work?

Are there publications prepared by the student?

Are there publications including the student’s contribution?)

Overall Research performance: Exceeds Expectations \_\_\_\_\_  
Meets Expectations \_\_\_\_\_  
Does not meet expectations \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments:

Recommendation for continuation of Graduate Assistantship Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**D. Evaluation by the Graduate Advisor**

(This provides an overview of the course-work and academic progress made by the GA)

Student’s Name:

Period evaluated:

TA meets average grade requirement: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

TA has begun MS or Ph.D. work on time: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation for continuation of Assistantship Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Additional Comments:



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