

Department of Anthropology

# Teaching Assistant Handbook

Updated 6/27/25

# Welcome to the Department of Anthropology!

You are vital to undergraduate student learning at Purdue. Entering the classroom as an instructor is an exciting adventure. We are sure that you will have a wonderful semester.

As a Teaching Assistant (TA), we look forward to working with you. You should have received a letter from the Director of Graduate Studies and the Academic Program Manager regarding your official appointment as a Teaching Assistant to your course. This document will help you better prepare for your duties and provide information about your contract. Below, we offer more details on your role, expectations, and the resources available to help you navigate your semester successfully.

Have a list of essential contacts ready for quick reference:

Teaching Supervisor  
Mentor/Advisor/PI  
Graduate Coordinator/Director  
Department Head  
Academic Program Manager

Anthropology Main Office  
Brenda Gunion (Assistant to the Head/Schedule Deputy)  
700 Mitch Daniels Blvd., Suite 219  
West Lafayette, IN 47907  
Phone: (765) 496-7400

# Teaching Assistants

A Teaching Assistant works with primary instructors to carry out various course duties and interface with students. There are two types of Graduate Teaching Assistants in our department:

- **Teaching Assistant (no recitation):** Duties for .50 FTE appointments are not to exceed an average of 20 hours per week (10 hours for .25 FTE appointments) over the semester, including in-class time, the week prior to classes starting, and preparation time. Students with .25 FTE appointments are not to exceed 10 hours per week. Teaching Assistants are required to host at least two hours of office hours per week, which must be shared the week before classes start with the instructor, the Academic Program Manager, and the Director of Graduate Studies. Duties may include: maintaining office hours, grading assignments, responding to emails, meeting with students, as well as any other duties as outlined by the major instructor.
- **Teaching Assistant (recitation):** Duties for .50 FTE appointments are not to exceed an average of 20 hours per week (10 hours for .25 FTE appointments) over the semester, including in-class time, the week prior to classes starting, and preparation time. Students with .25 FTE appointments are not to exceed 10 hours per week. Teaching Assistants are required to host at least two hours of office hours per week, which must be shared the week before classes start with the instructor, the Academic Program Manager, and the Director of Graduate Studies. Duties may include preparing for and teaching recitations (small 50-minute discussion OR hands-on laboratory sections), maintaining office hours, grading assignments, responding to emails, meeting with students, and any other duties outlined by the major instructor.

In some weeks, the workload will likely be smaller; in other weeks (finals, midterms, big projects), the workload may be more significant. If the average TA workload is greater than 20 hours per week (.50 FTE appointment), talk to the faculty instructor and then to the Director of Graduate Studies. Students' own course and research responsibilities occur in addition to and separate from Teaching Assistant and Research Assistant appointments.

Check out the [Purdue Graduate Staff Employment Manual](#) for more information.

## Key Information

- You are an employee of Purdue and the College of Liberal Arts.
- The faculty instructor of the course is your supervisor for the semester.
- The Director of Graduate Studies will provide information on how to attend the Center for Instructional Excellence TA Orientation, complete mandatory FERPA training, and access our Department of Anthropology Teaching Brightspace Course.
- Employment begins one week prior to the start of classes and ends the Tuesday following the final exams week when final grades are due.
- Please make sure to discuss with your faculty instructor about meetings and responsibilities during the first week of your assignment.
- TAs meet regularly with the faculty instructor and other TAs to discuss ongoing course issues.
- TAs should satisfy CLA's requirement to be registered full-time (eight credit hours in spring/fall semesters, six credit hours in summer) during your TA semesters. As an international student, you must also follow ISS requirements.
- As a TA, you are accountable to Purdue graduate staff policies. Please see the [Graduate Staff Employment Manual](#) for a complete understanding of positions, requirements, responsibilities, termination, etc.
- You are paid biweekly. You can find [biweekly payroll calendar dates](#) on the Human Resources website.
- If your appointment is at least half-time (.50 FTE), you will be eligible to enroll in the Graduate Student Staff Health Plan, see [Graduate Staff Benefits](#). As of 2023, additional coverage for a spouse and other dependents may be available but without the University subsidy. Please refer to the Graduate Staff Benefits manual for the most up-to-date information.

### IMPORTANT!

This is a guide of best practices and norms. It is not a policy document or a legal document.

TAs should refer to their appointment letter for specific duties and appointment details.

## Faculty and TA Core Duties

Faculty	Teaching Assistant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the course, determine course policies, mentor students, and provide training opportunities.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Manage registrar issues (add/dropping, Purdue athletic checks, final grades, incompletes).</li> <li>○ Complete and return a TA evaluation at the end of the semester.</li> <li>○ Address DRC accommodations and communicate needs to TAs as necessary</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Communicate expectations to TAs.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Communicate expectations of the TA assignment at the beginning of the assignment period.</li> <li>○ Provide regular feedback to TAs on work quality.</li> <li>○ Supervise, evaluate, and provide timely feedback on any formal classroom, large group, or small group teaching assignments.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Recognize TAs as colleagues in training.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensure FERPA compliance.</li> <li>○ Design and teach lectures.</li> <li>○ Ensure recitation and lab plans are in place for each week.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Meet regularly with the teaching team to discuss issues, address expectations, and resolve conflicts early.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide TAs with basic objectives for each week of student learning in advance of labs and recitations to allow TAs to prepare the materials.</li> <li>○ Ensure coverage of lectures, recitations, and labs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Manage grades and graders.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Communicate the time period within which students should receive grades and discuss the nature of feedback students receive.</li> <li>○ Submit final grades for the course.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist the primary instructor by implementing course policies, grading, corresponding and meeting with students about course requirements and assignments.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Implement attendance policy.</li> <li>○ Meet with students and hold office hours in a space that can be confidential (<u>not in lab spaces</u>).</li> <li>○ Respond to emails from instructors and students in an agreed-upon timeframe.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Participate in course work plan.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Actively <u>attend all classes</u> to assist with setup, in-class activities, and questions.</li> <li>○ Attend teaching team meetings.</li> <li>○ Read all course materials.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Manage in-classroom activities that support the instructor.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work with instructors to implement recitations, labs, and discussion sections.</li> <li>○ Manage small group activities.</li> <li>○ Input course assessment grades into Brightspace as requested by the instructor.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Communicate with the instructor and fellow TAs.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tell your instructor and fellow TAs about any known scheduling issues and create a plan to cover class fairly (Quals, Prelims, Conferences – <u>all employees, including faculty, clear absences with their immediate supervisors</u>).</li> <li>○ When emergencies arise that affect TA duties, communicate early and often with fellow TAs and the instructor to ensure coverage.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Feedback. We encourage you to provide feedback to the faculty instructor on things that are confusing or ideas about the course.</li> </ul>

# Resources Available to You

## FERPA Training (Required)

Please make sure that you are up to date with your required [FERPA](#) training:

## Department of Anthropology Teaching Toolkit

Teaching anthropology can be challenging if you are a first-time Teaching Assistant or well-versed in pedagogy. For Teaching Assistants at Purdue, planning classroom instruction and fostering constructive dialogue around contentious topics like evolution, race, racism, gender, sexuality, and immigration comes with a unique set of pedagogical challenges. This guide provides short summaries, pedagogical resources, and other helpful information to assist you in teaching at Purdue and our department. This toolkit is available via Brightspace.

## Disability Accommodations for Purdue Employees

[Purdue Human Resources](#) manages all employment-related disability accommodation requests. For more information on protection and accommodations for disabled employees and applicants, please view the [Purdue Human Resources ADA page](#).

## CIE Teaching Support

The [Purdue Center for Instructional Excellence](#) offers many resources for students to grow as TAs, including syllabus templates, consultations, and certificate programs.

- The Certificate of Foundations in College Teaching
- The Certificate of Practice in College Teaching

Additionally, [IMPACT X Access](#) can be of use for students instructing their own courses.

## Sexual Harassment Training and Title IX Compliance

All graduate students will receive training on sexual harassment and discrimination. Sexual harassment from faculty, staff, fellow TAs, or students is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act, a federal law, requires all new incoming students to receive primary prevention and awareness education about sexual violence. In compliance with this law, new students are required to complete the Respect Boundaries: [Sexual Violence Awareness Program](#). Title IX Mandatory reporters are individuals, designated by policy, who are responsible for reporting any Title IX violations to the University as soon as possible. As of 2023, graduate students are not Title IX mandatory reporters. However, anyone who is concerned about a student's behavior is encouraged to report the concern to the [Office of the Dean of Students](#) using the [Student of Concern Reporting Form](#). If you are in doubt about your status, check with the Director of Graduate Studies.

We strongly encourage all continuing students to refresh their Respect Boundaries Program: Sexual Violence Awareness, take [supplementary courses](#) (Healthy Relationships, Impressions, Intervene, Lasting Choices), and participate in the yearlong departmental programming.

Additionally, students are encouraged to become familiar with the [American Anthropological Association's \(AAA\) Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault](#).

### **Safe Zone Training**

We are committed as a department to attending **Safe Zone** training. All students who serve as TAs should take this training as soon as possible to maintain high-quality preparation and to be able to continue to serve in this capacity. Students who have not yet taken the Safe Zone training should make arrangements to [sign up](#) for it this semester (see times attached). Students who have taken the Safe Zone training should try to fit one of the additional offerings (Trans-Inclusion, QPR Gatekeeper, Green Training, Inclusive Classroom training) into their schedule this semester if possible.

### **Emergencies**

Please review the [Emergency Preparedness Safety Briefing](#) to familiarize yourself with Purdue's emergency and safety procedures.

### **Additional Resources and Training**

- [Purdue University Code of Honor](#)
- [Purdue Center for Instructional Excellence](#)
- [Purdue OWL](#)
- [Office of the Dean of Students](#)
- [Student of Concern](#)
- [SAFE Zone Training](#)
- [Bias in the Classroom](#)
- [Report Hate and Bias](#)
- [All Hazards Awareness Training](#)
- [Hot Button Topics and Difficult Dialogues](#)

## **Professional Conduct in the Classroom**

As teachers, our primary duty is to deliver a high-quality learning experience to students. With this as our guiding duty and responsibility, we must always act in ways that provide professional, fair, and educational experiences for students taking our classes. Teaching is a relationship where the instructors, including TAs, have sway over student success and well-being in the classroom – a power relationship. Professional behavior includes recognizing this power differential, respecting students, and centering their educational needs. TA assignments are made by the Department Head and the Director of Graduate Studies to balance a wide range of teaching needs, schedules, and preparation across faculty and graduate students.

- As TAs are in a power relationship with faculty instructors, professional behavior involves regular communication to ensure that classroom expectations and educational goals are met.
- Classes must always have coverage, students must receive instruction, and assessments should be clear and fair.
- Classes should begin and end on time. Arrangements should not be made to have the class meet at an alternative time. Arrive early to class so that you can prepare to start class right on time. It is important to end on time as well. Students have other obligations and need time to get to their next commitment.
- If you need to be absent from class (lecture or recitation) for any reason, notify your faculty instructor ASAP so they can decide the best course of action (i.e., for someone to cover your class or advise you to cancel or provide an alternative assignment for students).
- Students are to attend all classes in person unless there is a conflict with the graduate student course schedule (for example a course that the student is taking, although we try to avoid this when making TA assignments) or if the TA has a documented accommodation.
- Do not socialize with students outside of the classroom while they are in your class.
- Social media can be a helpful tool for disseminating research and networking. However, it can also introduce a layer of personal relationship between a TA and a student, and introduce another medium of communication and expectation. Instructors may have specific policies around social media, so please check with them. We suggest that TAs do not accept “friend” requests or other invitations on social media from your students while they are in your class. This is to avoid any appearance of favoritism, additional or confusing communication via social media tools (e.g. likes or direct messages), and FERPA violations (e.g. identifying a student and class by name in a public sphere). Also, if your accounts are not private – students will see what you post. Think carefully about using texting as a means of communication with students.
- At Purdue, an instructor, TA, grader, etc. cannot engage in an amorous relationship with their student. See the [amorous relationship policy](#) for more information.

## Department of Anthropology Best Practices

### Cultivating Teaching Teams

- Consider **weekly** meetings to touch base on course duties
- Co-create a list of responsibilities, expectations, and a communication plan
- Discuss course goals
- Consult the [Purdue Syllabus template](#) for up-to-date information on university course policy recommendations
- Co-create rubrics, keys, and/or other assessment guides to ensure consistency, fairness, and clarity for assignments and assessment



- Create a recitation plan with at least 24 hours in advance of recitation class time to achieve course goals
- Create a plan to discuss graded assignments with lingering questions and check to ensure assignments are being assessed appropriately
- Communicate to pre-empt or help defuse issues in recitations and labs
- Recognize how course content may impact different TAs at various points in the course and discuss weeks that may involve triggers
- Communicate any issues that may affect teaching duties, including health, traffic, and technology failures early to provide a positive classroom experience
- We may be the first exposure to anthropological ideas. If and when undergraduate concerns arise in class, over email, in assignments, or during course activities, consider discussing the best course of action as a teaching team.

## Prepare for a Diverse Classroom

Strive to make your classroom inclusive and work with your faculty instructor on how to do so. Make sure all students feel comfortable with participating in your class. Ask your faculty instructor ways that you can make that happen.

- Know your responsibilities to ensure the classroom is safe by visiting the [Innovative Learning Website](#).
- Purdue has a strict [Nondiscrimination Policy Statement](#). If you suspect or observe discrimination in your classroom report it to your faculty instructor for guidance as soon as possible.
- Consider participating in diversity training opportunities across campus so that you can innovate your classroom to be welcoming and inclusive.
- Work with your faculty instructor to open up pathways to communicate about courageous conversations and difficult dialogues in the classroom and ways you can raise concerns about triggers and topics relevant to the course or your positionality and life experience.
- Consider talking with your faculty instructor about using Universal Design for inclusivity in the course and [creating accessible documents](#).
- Consider asking students for their pronouns and name preferences.
- Consider including a variety of course materials that promote a diversity of voices and perspectives.
- Students may present necessary accommodations (e.g., extra time for exams, note takers, etc.) to be successful in the course. Work with the faculty instructor to make sure these accommodations are met. The [Disability Resource Center](#) will inform you if a student needs accommodation. They are also a valuable resource should you have questions.

## Lectures

- **Actively attend all lectures.** By “active” engagement, you should be a model for students in the class. Although you may sometimes work for the same instructor on the same course over multiple semesters, you should consider the material as new each semester. Please

plan on arriving at the lecture at least five minutes early and be available for at least five minutes afterward. Finally, if you prefer to take notes on a computer or tablet, please only refer to and engage with course materials during lectures. Please do not try to multitask by completing other personal and academic obligations. Trying to complete non-course-related tasks while you are at work is unprofessional. Students will respect and respond better to a teaching team that takes the course policies and their academic experiences seriously.

- **Proctor quizzes and exams.** When a course has an in-person quiz or exam during the course, we will invite you to help with proctoring the exam and quizzes. This means that you should help pass out exam materials, answer student questions, monitor the room during the exam, and help drop off exam materials after the end of the class period.
- **Materials.** The faculty instructor may sometimes ask TAs to help curate or carry course materials. However, these requests should be within classroom materials and preparations. If you feel you exceed classroom materials or your 20 hours per week (for .50 FTE), contact the faculty instructor or the Director of Graduate Studies.
- **Guest lectures or mini-lectures.** A faculty instructor may ask the TA to provide a mini-lecture or guest lecture on a topic related to your research. Faculty should provide guidance and instruction on how to do so and work closely with the TA on their work.

## Recitations

- You may be responsible for three 50-minute weekly recitation sessions and other relevant activities to support student groups. Recitations or other activities ideally amplify and highlight lecture material and provide a space for students to discuss concepts and/or have hands-on laboratory experiences.
- **Recitation topics.** Faculty instructors will provide instructions on what you should cover for your recitation period with at least 24 hours' notice, preferably more under normal circumstances. All students in the course need equitable experiences learning about and discussing material. For this reason, cover all of the topics outlined by your faculty. Students are generally not expected to teach new content or topics in the recitations. However, recitations and labs may introduce new specific details, examples, case studies, or conversations that did not unfold in the lecture. Teaching Assistants should facilitate discussions, activities, labs, and other reinforcements of the content discussed by the instructor. Faculty are responsible for working with TAs to identify the learning outcomes and activities for the recitation topics/sections. TAs are responsible for implementing these learning activities and reporting to the instructor with any successes, issues, and concerns.
- **Feedback.** As above, we encourage you to provide feedback to your faculty supervisor about concepts that you think students needed help understanding or examples that you think need to be clarified to students. TAs should work with their faculty supervisor to implement lab or recitation codes of conduct. They should bring the instructor any concerns about making the classroom a safe and productive learning experience. If students have questions or concerns they do not feel comfortable bringing to the instructor, they should meet with the Director of Graduate Studies.

**The Director of Graduate Studies & Department Head  
Are available for assistance, mediation,  
and problem solving.**

## **Working with Students**

### **Clear Consistent Communication**

- Clear and consistent communication is needed with your faculty instructor and students.
- Make sure that you keep students informed of any changes in the course over the semester.
- It is also important that you keep in constant communication with your faculty instructor during the semester so that you are informed about any changes or issues.

### **Office Hours**

- Office hours must be reported to the Director of Graduate Studies and Graduate Administrative Assistant the week prior to classes starting.
- Ask the faculty instructor how office hours should be managed. Important questions are how many office hours you must hold and where they should be.
- We suggest providing office hours on multiple days at different times. This is to accommodate students who may have standing conflicts and maximize the chance that they can meet with you. Students who aren't available on Monday at 9:00 a.m. are also unlikely to be available at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday or Friday. Ideally, office hours held by the TAs and instructor should be staggered across days and time. It is our departmental expectation that TAs and faculty are also available by appointment if a student has conflicts with office hours.
- Make sure you do not have too many people in your office or have a group of students huddled outside your office door waiting for office hours.
- You may employ virtual office hours if approved by your faculty instructor.

### **Emails**

- Reply promptly to student e-mails. A good policy is to inform students of normal response time early in the semester. Something like, "I usually respond to emails within 24 hours unless I receive it on the weekend." Students will escalate unreturned emails very quickly. So, it is important to reply and set expectations. Use your @purdue.edu email for correspondence with students.
- TAs should always feel comfortable reaching out to the faculty instructor to double-check a student interaction over email or in class. If students harass or badger TAs,

they should ask the instructor for guidance as a first step.

- Do not discuss or return grades over e-mail. It is a FERPA violation.
- Do not answer emails from individuals other than your students regarding that student (e.g., a parent or roommate). This is a FERPA violation and should be reported to your faculty instructor so that you can receive advice on how to proceed/respond.
- Save all of your e-mail correspondence with students. It might be useful later.

## Grading

- Make sure that you are FERPA certified so that you can access the BrightSpace course and can carry out your duties.
- **Sharing.** Even though we are all FERPA certified, sometimes we just want to post grades on our door or leave feedback in a box by our office door. Please remember that this information is protected and a violation of FERPA. Grades should only be shared through Brightspace or in private meetings with students.
- **Timeliness.** Make sure students have some indication of when they can expect their graded assignments to be returned to them. It is unfair for a student to take Exam 2 when Exam 1 has yet to be returned. Generally, a week or two after an assignment is due is a fair expectation for returning grades. This timeline should be discussed with the faculty instructor, and TAs should communicate with the teaching team if they need any adjustments. If grading coincides with another expected professional event (Conference, Qualifying exams, invited lecture), please work with the instructor and TAs to anticipate and overcome this bottleneck.
- **Transparency.** Your grading process should be transparent. Use rubrics when possible so that students will understand how they will be evaluated.
- **Consistency.** Your grading should be consistent across papers and students. Sometimes, we drift in our grading criteria as we move through our pile. That is unfair to students. Make sure that all students are being evaluated by the same criteria.
- **Challenges.** Students may question a grade from time to time. Grades, as you know, are important for future success so students will be concerned about them. Do not see grade challenges as a threat to your authority. If you made a mistake – own it and change the grade. If you didn't, and you believe the grade is fair, stand by it.

Establishing procedures for grade disputes is helpful. Here are some examples that may be useful.

- Work with your faculty instructor. Wait 24 hours after grades are returned before discussing a returned assignment. This allows the student to reflect on their performance rather than just reacting to a disappointing grade.
- Have a procedure with the faculty instructor – grade disputes need to be presented in writing, only during office hours, and only so long after an assignment is returned. For example, you may have a policy to review an exam

with students, but only for two weeks after it is returned.

- Students may wish to escalate issues or raise difficult questions beyond your scope as a TA. In such cases, you should inform the faculty instructor of the situation so they can respond appropriately, often by forwarding the inquiry or issue to them.
- Purdue does have a [Grade Appeal Process](#) for final course grades. It is important to know that students have **30 calendar days** after the start of the following regular semester (excludes summer session), to file an appeal. Therefore, you must save any unreturned exams, gradebooks, etc. in case it is needed for the grade appeal process. **You should give these to the faculty instructor at the end of the course.** It is important that you ask your faculty instructor how to handle saved material.

## Absences

- Faculty instructors create the attendance policy, and TAs implement this policy.
- Make sure you understand how students will make up assignments if they are missed. This is an important discussion to have with the faculty instructor.

# Teaching Assistant Employment Information

## Teaching Assistant Evaluation

Your pedagogical development is important to us. We hope to provide constructive feedback on how you are doing and areas to improve. This includes an in-person discussion during mid-semester and an end-of-the-semester written evaluation. If you are a recitation leader, this also includes an in-classroom evaluation. Undergraduate students will fill out anonymous evaluation forms on your performance at the end of the semester.

## Failure to Perform Job Duties

Job duties should be performed satisfactorily to meet graduate staff requirements. It is the faculty instructor's responsibility to communicate specific job duties for their course, and the teaching team should be in frequent discussion to clarify any questions around work responsibility and expectations. While every class has particular specific duties, all TAs have general responsibilities as per their contracts including the dates of employment and the weekly work expectations (average 20 hours per week over the semester for .50 FTE appointments).

Failure to complete one's job duties compromises the quality of the education for Purdue undergraduates and creates undue burdens for fellow TAs, instructors, and the department. Purdue University policy is that graduate staff employment is subject to the availability of funds, satisfactory academic performance, and satisfactory performance of one's job duties.

Failure to perform job duties may become an issue referred to Human Resources. According to the [Purdue Graduate Student Employment Manual](#):

The employment of any graduate staff member may be terminated, **in consultation with Human Resources**, at any time prior to the expiration of the stated employment period by the University for Just Cause. Just cause includes but is not limited to inadequate performance, lack of progress toward degree, budgetary constraints or misconduct, which includes the repeated or serious violation of University rules, regulations, or policies. No extension or renewal of employment of any graduate student beyond the stated employment period shall be effective unless a notice in writing is given to the student.

### **Have a Grievance or Concern?**

If you have a grievance or concern about the course, a fellow TA, or a course instructor, there are several avenues available to you to reach out to either individuals in the department or in the Graduate School. The faculty instructor and the Director of Graduate Studies are available for mediation or confidential discussions. TAs can request a meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies to work through TA issues at any time. We anticipate that many issues can be solved by communicating within the teaching team or via discussions with the Director of Graduate Studies.

1. First, please reach out to the faculty instructor. This is your first point of contact for questions about course management, issues in the classroom, clarifications around policies, communication between TAs, absences, adjusting course duties, and other concerns that relate to TA work. We expect that most issues can be resolved by communicating with the faculty instructor.
2. If the issue escalates or if it involves the faculty instructor, you should then reach out to the Director of Graduate Studies for assistance. This can include mediation between TAs and/or faculty, discussion of course duties, or clarifications about contracts, but it also can provide another perspective around teaching and pedagogy questions.
3. If the issue escalates, you should contact the Department Head.
4. If the issue still cannot be resolved or involves the Director of Graduate Studies or Department Head, you should contact the [Graduate School Ombuds](#) for guidance (click Request Assistance).

### **Ways for TAs and Instructors to collect feedback**

Teaching Assistants are invaluable contributors to the classroom environment, offering support to both professors and students. TAs are positioned to provide important feedback about the teaching and learning process. Instructors and TAs may consider ways to improve the course experience including:

#### **1. Surveys and Anonymous Questionnaires**

Instructors can create structured surveys on areas like student engagement, class materials, support systems, class structure, and grading systems. Although teaching teams are too small to be truly anonymous, instructors can use anonymous feedback forms to ask about course challenges, communication gaps, or issues with grading procedures.

## **2. Check-ins**

Regular check-ins create an opportunity to discuss issues related to student engagement and classroom logistics, as well as provide feedback on how the class is managed. Check-ins can also be an opportunity to discuss the administrative aspects of teaching, such as issues with scheduling, communication, or grading. Feedback at this stage can help address problems before they become larger issues.

## **3. End-of-Semester Feedback Forms**

Forms can allow TAs to reflect on their experience that include questions about how well the course supported student engagement, how effectively the TA was able to interact with students, and whether administrative aspects (grading, scheduling, resources) were manageable. Forms can allow TAs to suggest improvements for the future. TAs may also wish to discuss specific challenges or successes they encountered while teaching, such as how they addressed student questions, handled difficult topics, or managed classroom dynamics. This helps highlight areas for both faculty and TAs to focus for improvement.

## **4. Group Discussions**

Discussions allow TAs to share their perspectives on student engagement, classroom interactions, and administrative support in a group setting. Members of the teaching team can share ideas and strategies for handling common teaching challenges.

## **Requesting Time Off**

[Request Time Off](#)

[Payroll Information for Graduate Staff](#)

Graduate student TAs are staff members and may be entitled to sick leave, family sick leave and bereavement leave as detailed in the [Graduate School Graduate Staff Employment Manual](#). Please consult the Graduate School Graduate Staff Employment Manual to identify what types of leave may be available to you (see below).

In the event that you find yourself in a situation where you need to quarantine, isolate or are experiencing illness or grief/bereavement issues, you should be in touch with your major professor AND the faculty member who is supervising your TA assignment. In some cases of quarantine (not isolation—i.e., not illness), you may be able to continue to work remotely. In cases of illness/bereavement, you may need to take some time away from work. In either of these cases, it is up to the faculty instructor to decide on any changes to the work assignment, coverage of recitations, grading, or other work needed during the leave period. For short-term needs, faculty supervisors may cover recitations themselves or work with other current TAs to provide coverage. They may also consult the Department Head if additional support is needed.

On the other hand, if graduate students request leave for other personal reasons or during conference or exam times, they should first work with the faculty instructor. If indicated by the instructor, the student may reach out to other graduate students to propose flexible kinds of exchange of recitation/grading coverage.

Leave Type Amount that may be available to Graduate Staff with at least .50 FTE appointments (restrictions may apply; please consult the Graduate School Graduate Staff Employment Manual for the most up-to-date information):

- Vacation: Up to 22 days per fiscal year (taken during the academic breaks)
- Holidays: 10 paid official university holidays
- Employee Sick Leave: 10 working days within a 12-month period
- Family Sick Leave: Three working days per fiscal year
- Bereavement Leave: Up to five working days of paid leave for the death of a relative or coworker

Other leave policies exist for additional situations. Please consult with the Graduate Student Handbook, the DGS and the Department Head for assistance.

Emergencies can happen that affect the teaching team. The first step is for instructor to work with the TAs, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Department Head to attempt to find an internal path forward, that would allow members of the group to work out teaching coverage fairly in accordance with their allotted 20 hours per week of course time. In the Department of Anthropology, this has included trading recitation hours, grading responsibilities, scheduling extra office hours, or other kinds of coverage. **TAs should not devise this plan on their own.** Instead, instructors, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Department Head will work with TAs to find a solution.

**Graduate students are under no circumstances to pay each other directly.** In the exceptional event that the teaching team cannot arrange coverage in ways that do not exceed the 20 hours-per-week rule, the faculty member should consult with the Department Head to determine the number of hours required and discuss possible paths forward that might include hourly compensation for the person delivering overload instruction.



**Purdue University, Department of Anthropology  
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