

Teaching Assistant Handbook

**Policies of the University of Florida
Department of Mathematics
August 2026**

The following policies of the Department of Mathematics at the University of Florida are for Teaching Assistants and adjunct instructors. Your supervisor is Dr. Rong, the Department Chair.

Policies for All Sections

MEETING YOUR CLASS

1. You must meet your class when and where it is scheduled to meet. You are not allowed to cancel a class without prior authorization from your course coordinator. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to arrange an acceptable substitute and to inform your course coordinator and Margaret Somers (msomers@ufl.edu, 352-294-2355) of the substitution before it occurs. The choice of substitute and the reason for your absence must be acceptable to your coordinator. If you are teaching a standalone class, you must notify Margaret Somers.
2. It is a good idea to pair up with another Teaching Assistant who is teaching the same course and would be available to teach your assigned periods at the last moment if necessary. As stated above, you must notify your coordinator and Margaret Somers (msomers@ufl.edu, 352-294-2355). If you cannot reach either of them, then notify the Math Department office (352- 294-2350). If it is not during business hours, then send emails to your coordinator and Margaret.
3. Your teaching assignment is a contractual obligation which you accepted when you signed your letter of appointment, and it has specific beginning and ending dates. These dates extend beyond the beginning and ending of the semester. **Note that your duties can often include meetings before the beginning of the semester or around the time of posting final grades.**

CHANGE OF TEACHING ASSIGNMENT

Trading teaching assignments before the semester begins is acceptable within the same course, but Margaret Somers (msomers@ufl.edu), the course coordinator, and the Undergraduate Coordinator, Dr. Christodouloupoulou (kchristod@ufl.edu) must be notified. All other changes and trades must be approved by Dr. Christodouloupoulou in advance. Notification is necessary to provide access to your class rosters.

CLASS ROLL

You cannot add/drop students to/from your classes. All students must go through the regular drop-add process. Do not encourage them; if they cannot enroll in your section there is a reason. **Under no circumstances should you allow a student to stay in your class who is not on your class roster.**

GRADES

1. In lecture/discussion courses, you must strictly follow grading policies of the course coordinator and department.
2. Your course coordinator may want you to input grades for your sections in the grading system; if so, these grades will be reviewed by your coordinator.
3. You may not change the grade for a student by allowing them to sit through the course again.
4. An "I" (incomplete) may be given in lecture-discussion courses by permission of the course coordinator only. Refer any such inquiries to the course coordinator.
5. In standalone courses, an "I" can only be given with the approval from Dr. Rong. Strict [department incomplete criteria](#) are followed in the use of the "I" grade. You must fill out a contract which states exactly how you and the student will complete the course. Normally the work must be completed within the first few weeks of the following semester.
6. Any extra credit project or other opportunity to improve the grade that is offered to one student must be offered to all students and must be approved by the course coordinator. No student may be offered a chance to improve their grade after the final exam is completed. If you are a discussion leader, do not deviate from the course grading policy.

OFFICE HOURS

1. You must provide at least 2 hours per week when you will be available to talk to students. These hours are for students in your discussion class and for students in the overall course. It is preferable to stagger these times, rather than having them all in the same period, for the convenience of your students.
2. You must announce your office hours to your sections.
3. You must inform the Math Dept. by filling out the requested schedule cards.
4. You must post office hours on the metal strip on your office door.
5. All scheduled office hours must be between 2nd and 9th periods inclusive.
6. If a student has a grade issue, you should also be willing to arrange with individual students to meet at other appropriate times should your office hours be inconvenient for the student.
7. If you find it necessary to miss an office hour, you should notify your sections in advance, if possible, or put a message on your office door, and in any case announce when the office hour will be made up.
8. You should also provide your students with your email address.
9. You must also work one hour in the Little Hall Math Lab (LIT215). Please respond to the email (survey) concerning your hour in the lab.

PROCTORING

1. You will proctor night exams for the class you are teaching.
2. You will also be assigned night proctoring for other classes.
3. You will proctor your final exams and possibly other finals.

STAY INFORMED

1. Check your physical mailbox at least once per day.
2. Check your official UF email at least once per day, and especially just before your classes, for important information that may need to reach you or be disseminated to your students.
3. Keeping informed is especially important for teaching assistants with discussion sections.

4. Do not forward UF emails to your personal (non-UF) email address. This is a university-wide policy.
5. Answer email from department administration, staff, and your course coordinator within one business day.

CHALKBOARDS

1. The chalkboard/whiteboard space in your classroom is for the use of you and your class during your class period. All outside notices should be erased, especially if they say "do not erase".
2. The only exceptions would be notices directly relevant to the operation of the classroom, such as notices of change of room for some other class.
3. Erase the chalkboard/whiteboard completely at the end of class as a courtesy to the next instructor.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

1. Anything that might conceivably influence you in the determination of a grade is a possible conflict of interest.
2. It is a conflict of interest to tutor for compensation a student who is in your section or is taking the same course that you are teaching.
3. A gift would frequently be viewed as a conflict of interest. A gift offered to you after the semester is over as thanks for a good job of teaching may be accepted provided: (1) the gift is of modest value, say \$25 or less, (2) there was no attempt to influence the grade, and (3) your course coordinator is informed.
4. A more serious example is romantic or sexual involvement. Any such involvement with a student in your section is a very serious conflict of interest.
Sexual involvement places you in a position to be viewed as sexually harassing the student. Sexual harassment policy requires that all cases be immediately reported. See the [UF Title IX website](#) for the relevant policies.

SPECIAL REQUESTS FROM STUDENTS

1. Students will frequently ask for the opportunity to do something extra to help their grade. If you are a discussion leader, do not deviate from the course grading policy.
2. If you are teaching a standalone section, any opportunity offered to one student must be offered to all. You should weigh carefully if the entire group needs this special opportunity.
3. Students may inquire about an Incomplete in the course. Always follow the Department Incomplete Policy. If the course has a course coordinator, refer the student to the coordinator. When in doubt about the policy, talk to Dr. Christodouloupoulou. You can find the form for an I grade on the [department incomplete policy website](#).
4. A student may present you with a petition. It is possible to petition for a great variety of things at UF. You should consult with the course coordinator first and supply any requested information. The petition will go to the Petitions Committee. It is their job to assess the validity of the request, and your job to supply the information which will assist them. Do not try to influence the Petitions Committee beyond the fact requested on the form.
5. When in doubt consult the course coordinator or Dr. Christodouloupoulou.

CLASSROOM DISRUPTIONS (DELIBERATE)

1. Disruptions of a class are very rare, but they do occasionally occur.
2. When a student deliberately disrupts a class, making it difficult for the others to learn, that student is in violation of the Code of Student Conduct.
3. Remain calm. If the disruption is persistent, ask the student to stop. If they persist, ask them to leave the room.
4. Bear in mind that the other students in the class are on your side.
5. Get the student's name.
6. After the class, see your course coordinator to discuss what happened and make a plan on how to handle the situation if it should happen again.
7. If at any time you feel that you or someone in the class is in danger, call 911.
8. For more information see the websites for [Student conduct](#), [Counseling and Wellness Center](#), and [U Matter We Care](#).

CLASSROOM DISRUPTIONS (UNINTENTIONAL)

1. An unintentional disruption can be something as minor as a cell phone or something as serious as a seizure.
2. Do not let the minor things noticeably bother you; just tell them to turn off the phone, etc.
3. If there is a health-related issue, you are not expected to diagnose the severity of the situation.
4. If the student is not in self-control, **call 911** and call the Mathematics Department office, 352-294-2350, for help.
5. If they are lucid enough to respond to questions, call the Mathematics Department office.
6. When in doubt, call 911; better safe than sorry.
7. A student can refuse to be transported by signing a waiver. Paramedics will usually allow this if the person is coherent and doesn't want to be transported. Ambulance transportation is expensive, and many students want to avoid the cost.
8. A UFPD officer may arrive before paramedics. Let the officer take charge.

EMERGENCIES

1. If there is a fire alarm or a bomb threat, immediately tell your class to go outside.
2. Tell the group to stay together, as it is likely that it is a test, or a false alarm and you will be able to return to the room.
3. Tell your coordinator about any missed work that may have resulted.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

1. Some students have the need for additional time on quizzes and exams.
2. If a student requests this, the student *must* email you a letter from the UF Disability Resource Center which is specific about the type of accommodation required.
3. The student must discuss the accommodation with your course coordinator.
4. It is important to be as fair as possible to all students.
5. **Do not implement any accommodations without a letter from the DRC.**

PRIVACY

1. The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires privacy protection for students under

Federal Law. For more information see the [Registrar's FERPA website](#).

2. Do not email grade or academic performance information to anyone, **including the student or their parents**. You do not know who is on the other end of that email.
3. Do not discuss grade or academic performance information on the telephone to anyone **including the student or their parents**. You do not know who is on the other end of that phone line.
4. The only time you can discuss grade or academic performance with anyone, including a parent, is in person with the student present and the student's consent.
5. If a parent protests, refer them to your course coordinator.
6. Do not post grades publicly, including on your door.
7. Some university groups, namely the University Athletic Association, the Promise Program, and the Florida Opportunity Scholars will request academic progress information concerning students in their programs. Students have signed privacy waivers with these organizations which allow you to provide this information. If you are asked for information from one of these organizations, your coordinator can advise you on how to respond.
8. If you are in doubt about whether to provide information, contact your course coordinator.
9. A FERPA violation could lead to losing your job. Take it seriously.

CHEATING

1. UF students are subject to the UF Honor Code.
2. Any work submitted by a student which is not solely theirs (with obvious group activity exceptions) is a violation of the Honor Code.
3. A student who provides work to another student (with obvious group activity exceptions) is in violation of the Honor Code.
4. Exam procedures used in the lecture /discussion courses are designed to discourage cheating. **Follow exam procedures carefully.**
5. If you suspect or have evidence of cheating, you should contact your course coordinator.

PROFESSIONALISM

1. Your relationship with your students should be professional.
2. Treat your students politely and with respect.
3. Dress appropriately. Casual dress is acceptable.
4. Be careful what you reveal about yourself on personal websites and social networking sites. Social Media can be helpful tools, but they can also lead to embarrassing situations.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. The Department offers a growth path for you in terms of increasing responsibility, variety, autonomy and mathematical depth of the courses you are assigned.
2. Your progress along this growth path is based on trust.
3. A TA who is conscientious and accurate in their teaching and administrative duties is showing that they can be trusted.
4. You have a **Teaching** Assistantship, a TA who cannot be trusted in the classroom, will not have their assistantship renewed.
5. Course assignments are based on Mathematics Department need. That need is not always the same as your expectation.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIORS OF A TEACHING ASSISTANT

1. **Arriving late. Leaving early.**
2. Failure to meet your class.
3. Failure to proctor an assigned assembly exam.
4. Failure to keep office hours.
5. Failure to arrive on time for the start of the semester or
6. Leaving before your semester duties are finished.
7. Failure to post scores and grades. Mishandling grades.
8. Failure to respond to your course coordinator.
9. Conflict of interest with a student.
10. **Arriving late. Leaving early.**

DIFFICULTIES

If you are having problems with your teaching, communicate with your course coordinator. You will not receive bad evaluations for problems that you are earnestly trying to correct.

Procedures for Teaching Assistants

TEXTBOOKS/DOCUMENT CAMERAS, etc.

1. You may check out textbooks/document cameras for the course you are teaching from the front desk. They must be returned at the end of the semester, so that they are available for the instructors for the next semester.
2. Your textbooks/document cameras may not be passed on to another instructor for the following semester without notifying the front desk.
3. If the materials checked out in your name are not returned in a timely fashion, staff members have the right to enter your office in order to retrieve them.
4. Department materials must not be loaned or given to students under any circumstances.

COPYING TESTS, QUIZZES, ETC.

1. Materials to be used in the classes you teach may be copied by the Department.
2. Personal notes or books are **not** to be copied by the Department.
3. Generally, materials must be submitted at least 48 hours in advance, since last-minute copies are a tremendous strain on the staff.
4. Materials to be copied must be emailed to Margaret Somers (msomers@ufl.edu). Your email should include 1) the number of copies needed, 2) the date by which you need the job done, 2) if the copies need to be double or one-sided, and/or stapled, 3) whether you need colored paper and what color. Failure to provide this information will not allow the staff to complete your job on time.
5. Completed work will be put in your mailbox, or a note saying where to pick it up if it is too large for the mailbox.
6. The copier in Little 465 may be used for teaching purposes, max of 40 copies.
7. If you need supply materials such as pens, pencils, chalk, notebooks, etc., ask at the Math Department reception desk (3rd floor Little Hall).

MAILBOXES

1. Use your mailbox key.
2. Do not go behind the counter in the mailroom.

Preparation for Discussion Classes

KNOW THE MATERIAL

1. Know what has been covered in lecture.
2. Have a plan before you walk into class.
3. Attend the lecture if necessary; it is a good idea to attend occasionally in any case.
4. Just because a course is introductory does not mean that you know the material.

PREPARE PROBLEMS

1. Work the problems that your students have been assigned for homework. This will allow you to anticipate their questions.
2. If they do not have questions, know which problems have interesting solutions and you can ask them about those problems.
3. It is a good idea to keep a notebook with the worked-out solutions in it.

MANAGEMENT

1. Plan your classroom time so that all of the required material is covered.
2. Always start your class on time, so that the students know that they should be there on time.
3. If you are to take attendance, it is suggested that you do that as the first activity.
4. Likewise, papers and quizzes should be returned at the beginning of class.
5. Complaints or questions about grading of individual students should be deferred until after class **during office hours** for privacy and so that they do not take up class time.

Preparation for Standalone Classes

PLAN THE SEMESTER

1. Meet with the most recent coordinator of the course to get a copy of their course syllabus or contact the Undergraduate Coordinator, Dr. Christodouloupoulou.
2. You are required to cover the listed material in order to prepare the students for later courses.
3. Decide how you will structure the course, in terms of quizzes, homework, group work, etc., and how you will compute grades.
4. This information must be put in a course syllabus and made available to the students.
5. CLAS has mandated that departments must post all syllabi for the courses offered during any term on a single page on the main department site. The department's deadline to post syllabi will be announced for each term; you should submit your syllabus to the department or post it on your math department webpage by the deadline in the announcement.
6. [UF Syllabus Policy](#)
7. [Canvas shell request information](#)

CLASS PREPARATION

Carefully prepare for each day, both the new material you will explain, and the examples and problems you will work.

MANAGEMENT

Same as discussion sessions above.

Other Considerations

WEBSITES

1. Course-related things like assignments and announcements should be in Canvas; however, it is a good idea to have a website for your courses with basic information such as office hours and course syllabus.
2. You should also have your own home page. Some of the more experienced graduate students might be willing to help you develop a website.

IMPROVEMENT

1. Watch the techniques of those professors who are the best teachers.
2. Ask them questions about teaching outside of class.
3. Talk to your fellow Teaching Assistants to see what techniques they are trying and to see how they have solved difficulties in the past.
4. Discuss ideas and problems with your coordinator.

YOUR CONTRIBUTION

The Mathematics Department is a complicated place which contacts nearly all students who enroll at the University of Florida. Your contribution is not only the knowledge you pass on to your students, but also your conscientious attention to the details that help this operation to run as smoothly as possible.

REWARDS

1. The financial support you receive, and the satisfaction of a job well done are some of the rewards from your teaching.
2. Each year the Department nominates three TAs for the University Graduate Teaching Awards. Usually, one or two Mathematics TAs will win this award.
3. The level of responsibility you exhibit and the efforts you put forth are noticed. They are reflected in the letters of recommendation that will be written on your behalf when you graduate.

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