

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Department of Mathematics and Statistics

INFORMATION FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS

As an employee of the University, a teaching assistant is expected to carry out assigned duties faithfully and diligently. Specifically, tutorial assistants must always be punctual for labs/tutorials, complete the assigned grading promptly, and be courteous and helpful to students.

COURSE OUTLINE/SYLLABUS

Prior to the beginning of classes, TA's should familiarize themselves with the curriculum of the courses to which they have been assigned lab, tutorial or marking duties. The course textbook can be obtained from the Administration Office, MS 464, and a copy of the course information sheet from the course instructor. Also, course information sheets and syllabi for many of the courses are available from the web page at <http://math.ucalgary.ca/courses/f08>. Course information sheets describe how the overall grade will be computed in the course. As well, additional information may be given showing sections of the text to be covered in each lecture, test dates, instructions regarding labs, tutorials, assignments and quizzes. **In any case, it is important to meet with the course instructor to obtain course details.**

PREPARATION FOR LABS/TUTORIALS

Time should be spent prior to each lab or tutorial to prepare to present the material and to answer student questions. Topics to be covered each week may be listed in the course outline; otherwise, arrangements should be made for TA's to stay in touch with instructors regarding the material covered each week and to determine the manner in which the labs/tutorials are to be conducted.

LABS

Some of the sections of MATH 211, 249, 251, 253, and all of STAT 211, 213, 217, and others have quizzes that are held, approximately every second week, during the lab classes. In some classes the quizzes are hand graded, in others computer graded. If the quiz is 30-minutes long, the first part of the lab time can be spent answering student questions. In case students have few questions, be sure to bring exercises to work through with the students prior to the time the quiz is to start. Usually on non-quiz days the previous quiz will be discussed and the remainder of the time will be spent answering student questions and working through other material you (or the course instructor) have prepared. Other sections, especially in MATH 249 and 251, have quizzes held on certain weeks in one of the computer rooms, often MS 317.

COMPUTER ASSISTED LABS

In courses using computer assisted learning and/or grading, tutorial assistants should ensure that they are familiar with sign-on instructions, and the details of the computer package. The course coordinator may require lab/tutorial instructors to attend an orientation meeting.

Labs in STAT 213/217, MATH 321/323 are held in computer room MS 515 and 521. Since students may drop in to use these rooms, when your scheduled class is starting you may need to ask the other students to leave. Lab instructors in the evening sections in MS 515 and 521 should ensure that after the students have left, the lights are off and the door is shut and locked.

CONTINUOUS LABS/TUTORIALS

First year linear algebra, calculus, discrete mathematics and statistics have associated continuous tutorials or labs. Classrooms are staffed at various times throughout the week. Students come to these rooms mainly for one-on-one help. If no one is waiting for your help, walk around the room, from time to time,

to check if any of the students need help. If the room is very crowded some TA's have students sign a list on the blackboard so they can sit and work rather than waiting in line. If one student has many questions check if anyone else in the room is waiting before spending all your time with the one student. MATH 271 has some assignments, rather than all quizzes, so one must take care not to write out complete solutions for assignment questions or to pre-mark the student's work. On the other hand, one does want to provide some general help with the material. Discuss this aspect of the tutorial with the MATH 271 coordinator. Some other classes, mainly AMAT 217, 219, 307, MATH 211, 249, 251, 253, also have computer assignments. Discuss with the instructor or coordinator on how to assist students with these questions.

GRADING

Grading Scheme

It is useful to make a grading scheme which assigns marks for each step in the solution. Instructors often provide these. Consult with the instructor if you wish help in deciding on partial marks. It is helpful to note on the solution sheet the number of marks taken off for certain mistakes as this will help in handling grading appeals. Graders can assist the education process by informing the course instructor of any common difficulty noted during the grading of assignments or quizzes.

Reappraisals

Students usually approach the grader first about questions regarding the assignments of grades. If students request a reappraisal it is useful to mark on the top of the page the specific question to be reevaluated and take the paper with you. This serves a number of purposes: it removes the student pressure to just raise the mark, it allows you to consult any notes you have made on the solution sheet and it means you will be sure, if you happen to make a grade change, that you will record it.

If a student, even after an explanation, disputes a grade the matter should be discussed with the course instructor. In cases where there is a suspicion that a quiz or assignment has been altered prior to a reevaluation request it is advisable to arrange for all subsequent papers to be photocopied before being returned to the student.

Class Record Books

Class lists can be downloaded from your "My U of C" portal; however, do not expect the lists to be accurate until after the last day to make changes – about 2 weeks into term. If you are recording grades on a spread sheet do not just omit the grade for a missed quiz but **be sure to** record it as zero.

Missed Quizzes

There are always a few students who miss quizzes – some with medical excuses, some without. TA's should obtain from the instructor instructions regarding policy in these cases. Some courses, but not all, give the grade for the best 4 out of 5, quizzes, and so some instructors may wish you to use the missed quiz as the one to be omitted. Other instructors may assign, especially with a medical excuse, an average grade, while other instructors may prepare an alternate quiz.

Security of Grades

A careful record of grades must be kept in a secure place. Double check that all grades are recorded before returning papers. **Remember: IF you grade it, you record it.** It is advisable to make grade back-up copies, to be kept separately, from time to time throughout the term.

Be careful with the security of recorded grades. Do not take a list of grades to class or leave it out on top of your desk.

Absences

It would be useful if TA's were to find, in advance, another TA, preferably someone involved in the same course, to cover for them in case of illness or some unforeseen circumstance which would cause an absence. Also leave messages about the replacement for the instructor to facilitate the orderly running of quizzes and returning of graded assignments. Failing these arrangements, **YOU MUST** phone someone in the Department so a replacement can be sought.

EXAMINATIONS

Care should be taken in the supervision of quizzes, and tutorial assistants should be aware of rules regarding examinations that the course instructor or coordinator wishes to be enforced, such as the use of calculators, texts or formula sheets, and time allowed. Try to prevent cheating by being seen to be watching during quizzes and exams. If cheating on an examination is discovered the Head of Department should be notified as soon as possible.

In addition, graduate students will be assigned to assist in the supervision of final examinations and in some cases midterm examinations. These examinations may be held out of class time, often in the evening and sometimes on a Saturday. If you are helping to invigilate an exam do not carry on a conversation with other invigilators which would disturb students. The supervision of mid-terms and final examinations is part of a graduate TA's assignment.

READING WEEK/POST-TERM REVIEW

The continuous lab/tutorial classes may open during Reading Week and in the period between the end of classes and final examinations. Information regarding this will be provided just prior to each period, but graduate students could be asked to staff the tutorial room during these dates.

OFFICE HOURS

Students may wish to discuss a graded assignment or quiz, or other course material with a tutorial assistant. Therefore, tutorial assistants are expected to complete a timetable schedule and attach it to their office door so that students or course instructors will be able to determine when they can meet their grader or tutorial assistant. Mark on this timetable an office hour.

PRIVATE TUTORING

NO PRIVATE TUTORING FOR MONEY IN COURSES FOR WHICH YOU ARE A TEACHING ASSISTANT.

TEACHING ASSISTANT EVALUATION

The Department has instituted a Teaching Assistant Evaluation with the following goals in mind:

1. To provide each of you with an important feedback as to how students, view you and your teaching methods. It is the Department's wish that you use this information to improve further your teaching technique.
2. To provide feedback for the assignment of TA duties by the Assistant Head and the Graduate Director, and the nominating of the Graduate Student Teaching Awards.
3. To provide information, regarding your teaching experience, to those members of the Faculty who write letters of reference for you.

OFFICE

Remember that you all share your office. Be considerate of your roommate. If you have a visitor it is best to go to the lounge so as not to disturb your office mate. If you do tutoring, especially private tutoring, arrange a time when your roommate is out of the office or arrange a different location.

EMAIL, COMPUTER NETWORK

See the technical staff in room MS 488, phone: 220-3944 to obtain an email account.

Our network gets heavy use so follow the Network Administrator's basic rules; namely, do not connect any computer to the network without approval and **DO NOT EVER** share your password, or send it anywhere by e-mail. Remember no hacking, no games, no porno, and no streaming video or music.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION & PROTECTION OF PRIVACY PROGRAM (FOIP)

The following is an excerpt from the Faculty of Science Guidelines.

Exam Papers, Term Work, Lab Reports etc.

Section 36 of the FOIP Act states that the practice of placing graded examinations and assignments in a public place for pick-up is not acceptable. As a general principle, examinations and assignments should be returned directly to the student and students should not be allowed to handle exams or assignments other than their own. Marks and any information that identifies a student should not be visible together. It is the responsibility of the course instructor to ensure that all aspects of a course (i.e. labs, tutorials) follow these procedures. The following method is suggested and students should be advised on the procedure in the course outline:

1. Students should be told to put only their name (or only their ID, not both). Title, course number, etc. are also OK of course.
2. A space for the ID number (or name) could then be on inner pages – this will allow cross checking.
3. Mark summary and grade can appear anywhere but on the front page.

Return Exams and Term Work

Regardless of the venue (i.e. lecture, lab or tutorial) work may be returned either by:

1. Giving it directly to the individual student or
2. Placing exams on a table in the front of the lecture hall and supervising the students as they pick up their exams. The instructor must be watchful to deter students from picking up work other than their own. No pickup of work for friends will be allowed (even with accompanying documentation).

Posting of Grades

Section 35 of the FOIP Act states that the practice of posting grades in identifiable form, either by name or by student identification number sorted in alphabetical order, is considered an unreasonable invasion of privacy and not appropriate under the Act. As a general principle, it must not be possible to the casual observer to determine information about a particular student from posted grades. The method suggested is to:

Post grades which have been sorted numerically by ID number. No other identifying information (e.g. name) is allowed.

However, for small classes it is conceivable that an individual's grade could be deduced from such a posting. Therefore, it is suggested that for classes smaller than 8 students, no posting of grades be done, and the information be provided to the students individually by the instructor or office staff.

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