



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY



College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Oceanography

TEACHING ASSISTANT MANUAL

2008 - 2009

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1. Introduction

This document provides a general outline of the main responsibilities and duties of a TA in the Department of Oceanography of the Florida State University (FSU). Since this is its debut, the document is in no way exhaustive but expected to continue evolving over time.

The Department of Oceanography graduate program offers both Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy graduate degrees in oceanography with specializations in biological, physical, geological, and chemical oceanography. A degree-seeking student with at least a B.S or B.A. degree may apply to enter the Master's program. Successful applicants without a Master's degree in Oceanography or closely allied field are accepted into the Master's program. In addition, such applicants as well as applicants with Master's degree in Oceanography or related field may also apply directly to the PhD program. The Department of Oceanography generally offers half time (0.5 FTE) teaching assistantship (TA) positions to well-qualified graduate students pursuing their Master's or Doctoral Degree in Oceanography.

Graduates from the Department of Oceanography hold many faculty positions in universities and colleges, as well as research posts in industry, private research institutions, federal and state laboratories, and regulatory agencies. Clearly, the placement of our graduates is a vivid testimony of the quality and integrity of the fine Oceanography graduate program available at FSU.

2. Criteria for Appointment of Teaching Assistant (TA)

- to be a TA, one must be a graduate student in the Department of Oceanography.

3. TA Orientation

In addition to the orientation session that takes place two weeks prior to commencement of classes in Spring and Fall semesters, all newly hired TA's in the department will be required to undergo a special orientation. This special orientation is specifically tailored for TA's to give them a quick general review of the department and what is expected of them as TA's in the department. The professor (or faculty) responsible for the OCE 1001 course during the semester and the PIE Associate will be in charge of this special orientation session. During orientation, the TA's will also be given basic tips on how to manage and enter grades at the Blackboard (Bb). However, later in the course of the semester, detailed training on this will be arranged with the CTL - APPS office.

4. TA Responsibilities

Currently hired TA's in the Department of Oceanography are only involved the undergraduate course, OCE 1001. The TA's do not generally teach the course but are involved in the various tasks associated with the course, while all the teaching is done by the professor responsible for the course. The specific TA responsibilities associated with the

course are defined by the professor at the beginning of the semester as the TA's assume their appointments. The main TA responsibilities include adherence to those listed below:

I. General TA Roles

(a) Grader

- quizzes, tests and exams

(b) Proctor

- quizzes, tests and exams

(c) Maintain class orderly environment

- providing regular suggestions for better management of the (rather "noisy") OCE1001 students!
- organizing media equipment, overhead projector, camera, lecture hall lighting etc.

(d) Classroom safety (what to do in an emergency)

(e) Class essential supplies

- exam bubble sheets, golf pencils, etc.

(f) Department services

- arrange for teaching materials, demo apparatus, etc.

II. Department Policies and Procedures

(a) Student attendance

- mandatory 1st day attendance

(b) Add/Drop period

(c) TA attendance

- set by professor

(d) Tardiness

- set by professor

(e) Religious Holidays

- if other than university observed, be sure to schedule time off early in the term with the professor

III. Regular TA Meetings

- There shall be regular scheduled meetings throughout the semester
- These shall be scheduled as appropriate in consultation with the professor responsible for the course at the beginning of the semester

5. PIE in the Department Of Oceanography

Although the Program for Instructional Excellence (PIE) has been operational in the FSU system for several years, it was first officially inaugurated in the Department of Oceanography for the first time in the fall semester, 2008. The PIE inauguration process culminated in the approval of a working draft proposal for this particular initiative, with a principal purpose of enhancing TA development in the department.

PIE serves as a teaching resource for graduate students, both those who are teaching currently and those who anticipate teaching in the future. Becoming a PIE associate involves being a mentor for other TA's in the department and assisting with PIE workshops.

The university - wide PIE is administered through the Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL), a unit within Academic and Professional Program Services (APPS), which functions as the hub for faculty and graduate students to promote participation in teaching enhancement opportunities, share instructional resources, and collaborate to develop teaching strategies for face - to - face, hybrid and online instruction.

PIE has been designed to complement the training and orientation offered by individual departments.

6. Mandatory Weekly Office Hours

(a) TA office hours

- to be set by the TA in consultation with the professor in charge of the (OCE 1001) course

(b) PIE - Associate office hours

- to be set by the PIE Associate in conjunction with the TA's

7. Faculty – TA Relationship

- TA responsibility
 - the TA is to first approach the professor in charge of the class (OCE 1001) for any issue requiring resolution
 - in case of any issue irresolvable by professor, the TA should see the Chair of the department
- Faculty responsibility
 - call TA's together early before commencement of semester
 - enter TA information in the Blackboard early
 - be clear about expectations, schedules, quizzes, exams and grading
 - provide the course syllabus

8. Grades and Grading Practices

(a) Posting student grades

- professor provides guidance for strictness of grading
- Blackboard instructions (appropriate training can be arranged)

(b) Grade appeals

- Discretion of the professor

(c) Fairness and consistency

- TA's should compare notes as to expectations on free response questions to insure consistency among graders

(d) Returning papers and exams

- all papers should be kept in department for at least 1 year after semester ends in case verification is needed

(e) Late papers and incompleteness

- all communications between TA and students should be kept on file

- ensure clear policies regarding late and missed work/tests are in place. Check with professor and/or syllabus

9. University - wide Standards for TA's

- University-wide TA Standards (copy from Grad Studies Office)
- Ethics and unacceptable conduct
- Students with disabilities
- Confidentiality of student records
- Sexual harassment policy
- Academic Honor Code
- Family Education Right & Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Copyright
- Blackboard (step-by-step basic instructions in resources/appendix)

10. PIE Conferences

From time to time there are useful conferences organized through the central PIE office that are recommended for the TA's to attend. The current schedule for these conferences is available through the PIE website. The PIE teaching conferences can be found at:

http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/schedule.cfm?s_mstr_seq_num=7419

11. Teaching File

(i) SPOT forms

- Faculty have to leave the class when SPOT is being administered
- Can be completed at any time during the semester
- Consists of a survey form with bubble questions

(ii) TA performance evaluations

- A short review guide to be developed that a faculty can use to assess a TA. This will be made available to the TA and then filed in the TA's student folder in the Academic Coordinator's Office

12. TA - PIE Officials

There shall be two TA officials and a PIE Associate to serve in the TA - PIE offices every academic year (AY). The two TA officers will be elected on an annual basis during a departmental TA - PIE workshop, while the PIE Associate is nominated from among the TA's by the department. The current officials for the 2008 - 2009 AY are listed below:

- TA Coordination office

TA Co-Coordinators who were elected during the 1st TA - PIE workshop which was held on October 17, 2008 are: Andy Canion and Rachel Wilson.

- PIE Associate office

The PIE Associate for the 2008 – 2009 AY is: Benjamin Mwashote

13. TA - PIE Website

The TA - PIE website which is expected to be launched shortly, will be posting important announcements and information related to TA development in the department. The site will be managed and regularly updated by the PIE - Associate in liaison with the department's media/application developer.

14. Organizations

Preparing Future Faculty (PFF): Interested in becoming a professor someday? PFF helps students from all disciplines prepare for academic careers in higher education:
<http://online.fsu.edu/instructor/teachingenhancement/pff/>

Interdisciplinary Teaching Society (ITS): ITS is a new campus-wide organization dedicated to the development and support of teaching assistants and other student instructional personnel. Currently no website online, but to join get on Bb, click organizations, type ITS in organization search field. Preview for more information then sign up.

15. Possibilities for the Future

As far as possible, there will be a continuous active effort toward enhancing potential, mutually beneficial agreements with other departments/institutions that will allow oceanography students to gain teaching/instruction experience. This could be teaching in a special oceanography seminar, semester course, a unit in a course or just one class. Departments to investigate for this possible cooperation include: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Meteorology, Geology, Marine Lab and perhaps neighboring Colleges and High Schools.

16. Useful Contact Information

- List of the departmental staff

Administrative

Stephenie Brimm, Grants Compliance Associate
Room 507

brimm@ocean.fsu.edu
Tel: 644-2720

Diane Grubbs, Administrative Support Assistant
Room 102A
grubbs@ocean.fsu.edu
Tel: 644-6700

Michaela Lupiani, Academic Program Specialist
Room 333A
lupiani@ocean.fsu.edu
Tel: 644-7443

Helenthia Stephens, Grants Compliance Associate
Room 102B
hstephens@ocean.fsu.edu
Tel: 644-3013

Susan Stetson, Administrative Specialist
Room 102E
stetson@ocean.fsu.edu
Tel: 644-3046

Shawn Steadham, Application Developer/Designer
Room 102D
steadham@ocean.fsu.edu
Tel: 644-2770

Machine Shop

Alan M. Michels, Technical/Research Designer
Room 012
michels@ocean.fsu.edu
Tel: 644-6268

Dave Oliff, Technical/Research Designer
Room 012
oliff@ocean.fsu.edu
Tel: 644-6268

Departmental Computer Support

Daniel Whelan, Systems Administrator
Room 404C
whelan@ocean.fsu.edu
Tel: 645-1311

Steve Armstrong, Computer Technician
Room 404C
armstrong@ocean.fsu.edu
Tel: 645-1311

- Blackboard help, Tel: 644-9610
- Preparing Future Faculty, Tel: 644-3501

17. Appendix

All of the relevant University policies can be found from the FSU Student handbook online at: http://registrar.fsu.edu/student_handbook/handbook_tal.pdf.

- General conduct: Student rights and responsibilities from FSU Graduate Bulletin
<http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/grad/info/>
- Sexual harassment policy:
http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/grad/info/university_notices.htm#SexualHarassmentPolicy
- Program for Instructional Excellence (PIE): The PIE website is:
<http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/collaborate/PIE/meetassociate.cfm>;
- Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL): Directed under Academic and Professional Program Services (APPS). CTL supports the FSU teaching community in pursuit of instructional excellence by providing a broad range of instructional support services designed for all types of teaching formats:
<http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/explore/bestPractices/> (also see the link::
<http://learningforlife.fsu.edu/ctl/index.cfm>)
- [Student Disability Resource Center](#)

08 Kellum Hall
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4066
Email: sdrc@admin.fsu.edu
Tel: 644-9566.

- Blackboard help:
<http://supportcenteronline.fsu.edu/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=763&task=knowledge&questionID=591>
- User Services: <http://us.fsu.edu/>
- Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC): <http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

- Environmental Health & Safety: <http://www.safety.fsu.edu/>
- Campus Police: <http://www.police.fsu.edu/>; 830 W. Jefferson, Tel: 644-1234
- Dean's Office (Arts & Sciences) – 010 Longmire, Tel: 644-9656
- Dean's Office (Graduate School) – 408 Wescott, Tel: 644-3500
- Academic Honor code:
http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/undergrad/info/acad_regs.htm#AcademicHonor.

Acknowledgements

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