Department of Integrative Biology

**Document of Expectations for GTA/ULA and Instructors**

## Purpose

Establishing clear expectation documents is a valuable practice for instructors and their teaching assistants because it establishes a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities, and norms within the teaching environment. These documents serve as a communication tool that outlines how the teaching assistant-instructor relationship will function, covering areas such as work hours, policies, feedback timelines, culture, and professional development opportunities. By explicitly defining expectations early on, both parties can reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings, manage potential conflicts more effectively, and create a more inclusive and supportive teaching environment. It also empowers mentees by giving them a clearer picture of what success looks like and how they will be supported in achieving it. For instructors, it provides a framework to ensure fairness and consistency in how mentorship is delivered. Ultimately, expectation documents contribute to a more transparent, respectful, and productive research experience for everyone involved.

## Instruction

Use this document to structure a discussion between the teaching assistant and the instructor to onboard them prior to the course starting. It is intended to establish clear expectations of joining the teaching team and some aspects to be discussed and revisited regularly within the semester and annually if teaching relationships continue. This document can be used as a checklist. All university and department policies are expected to be followed; these expectations provide additional guidance for both individuals. If your course has already developed expectations documents, please use this document as an opportunity to check that all relevant areas are considered, revisit current expectations and have open discussions with teaching assistants to improve the teaching culture and conduct policies.

*The document provided to your teaching assistant should start with the header below:*

\*text in red are areas to add course-specific text

## Introduction and purpose of this document:

To set clear expectations for both the (undergraduate or graduate) teaching assistant and their instructor. This form should be completed once a work agreement has been reached.

## Definitions and Key Terms

“Instructor” is the lecturer/professor in charge of the class and responsible for assessing grades for students. "GTA," refers to Graduate Teaching Assistants. "ULA" refers to undergraduate teaching assistant. An “IDP” is an Individual Development Plan and would be appropriate for additional mentoring beyond the specific requirements of the teaching assistant contract.

\*include any additional course-specific terms required

## Course Description Overview and Expectations

### Position Description:

Per the graduate student contract, GTAs are expected to work an average of 20hrs per week throughout the semester. ULAs are typically expected to work 10 hours per week. Specific roles and responsibilities will be provided below.

\*describe the specific requirements of the graduate teaching contract as it pertains to your course.

### Course Description

\*Copy the course description from the syllabus.

### Key Departmental Personnel/Instructors for classroom coordination

\*List any key staff, instructors, researchers, etc. involved in the project, including those within the lab, at MSU, and beyond that the GTA/ULA may need to contact or coordinate with.

### Roles and Responsibilities

\*Detail roles and responsibilities at course and section levels which shall as a minimum include:

#### Comply with all Required Trainings

The GTA/ULA will complete and comply with all required training. The Instructor will verify that all training courses are complete. Known mandatory training for GTAs would include FERPA, CSA, AVI, and RVSM; additional training is course specific (E.g., Chemical Hygiene Safety, Site-specific training, etc.). ULAs are required to take RVSM, FERPA, and are recommended to take the (pilot) asynchronous online ULA training; additional training is course-specific such as laboratory safety training, site-specific training, Chemical hygiene safety, etc.).

The asynchronous online ULA training can be found here:

https://iteach.msu.edu/iteachmsu/groups/iteachmsu/stories/2993

#### Organize Backups and Contingency Plans:

\*Outline a plan for coverage of time-sensitive responsibilities and unexpected events

#### Organize Responsibilities by Time Blocks:

\*Structure tasks daily, weekly, monthly, semesterly, and annually. Outline specific tasks

expected of GTA/ULA including office hours, recitations, lectures, labs, communication with students, weekly meetings, etc.

#### Open Communication:

Maintain honest and regular communication between the mentor and the mentee.   
Define preferred method of contact and response expectations.

#### Foster an Inclusive Environment and maintain ethical conduct:

It is expected that you will promote respect and inclusiveness within the classroom and in all class discussions (see inclusive classroom document in the “IBIO IDEA Inclusive Classroom and Teaching Resources” Course in D2L that is available to all IBIO faculty). Go to d2l.msu.edu make sure you have development courses visible and search for the title. It may help to “pin” the course for easier repeat access.

## Professional Development (Optional or as aligned with IDP)

Allow for adjustments to the mentoring plan based on feedback and changing circumstances.

### Feedback and Evaluation:

Schedule periodic evaluations to assess progress and address any issues and establish the timing and format of these evaluations.

#### Constructive Feedback:

Establish a framework for providing and receiving feedback.

### Conflict Resolution:

#### Procedure:

Outline steps for addressing and resolving minor conflicts or misunderstandings directly.

#### Additional Resources:

When direct conflict resolution is not possible or is not effective, the website below will help you to determine which office(s) are appropriate for your individual concern and direct you to resources. The college provides resources for conflict resolution including RVSM, Anti-discrimination, faculty grievance and dispute resolutions, office of student support and accountability, office of university ombudsperson (including a problem concern form), research integrity office, at others.

https://natsci.msu.edu/diversity-and-wellness/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/reporting/index.aspx

## Time Management and Commitment

Expectations: Define the expected time commitment for both mentor and mentee. Per the graduate student contract, GTAs are expected to work an average of 20hrs per week throughout the semester based on the academic employment calendar for each semester (typically Aug 15 through December 31; Jan 1-May 15). ULAs are typically expected to work 10 hours per week. Specific roles and responsibilities will be provided below.

## Teaching and Research Products and Access

### Long-term curation:

The instructor will keep all exams, assignments and other student-generated materials for 1 year after the course.

### Teaching Documents and Materials:

Clarify ownership and management of teaching-related materials after the semester has ended.

### Physical Space and Resources:

#### Teaching/Office/Lab Access:

Detail the physical workspace allocated to the supervisee (as appropriate). This could include teaching space, office space (if applicable), help room hours and access (if appropriate or different from office space), laboratory, etc.

#### Building Access:

Outline procedures for accessing laboratory buildings and facilities.

#### Additional Resources:

Include any other relevant physical resources required.