

# GEOGRAPHY TEACHING ASSISTANT STATEMENT OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

September 30, 2020<sup>1</sup>

*All Geography Graduate Teaching Assistants are responsible for understanding and abiding by the regulations and procedures outlined in this document.*

## 1) Office Staff:

The Geography Department Manager (DM) is Lori Tyndall (POT 817). Lori has many responsibilities but is not in charge of TA-related work issues so do not seek her assistance regarding your work as a TA until you have consulted with the Primary Instructor of the course to which you are assigned, a fellow TA, your Faculty FTAMP Mentor, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), or Chair. The DM is the right person to contact about getting paid and other questions regarding getting set up in the system.

## 2) Contracts and Responsibilities:

Graduate School Contract Dates: 8/15/20-5/15/21 (or the two weeks after the last day of classes for the semester in which you hold a TA position, as per the UKY Academic Calendar).

Supervisor and Primary Instructor: The Chair of the Department is the official supervisor for all teaching assistantships and the DGS oversees issues involving TAing and students' own course work and degree requirements. Students working as graders or recitation leaders (Type 2 TAs) will work with a Primary Instructor (a faculty member) who is responsible for day to day supervision related to the specific course tasks. If you are the Primary Instructor for a course (Type 1 TA) be sure to consult the GGSU guidance document (on the GGSU google drive) that outlines (1) key things that must be in your syllabus (Title IV assignment, UK Core assignment, etc. (2) and pedagogy resources.

Workload: TAs and RAs are first and foremost full-time graduate students. You will be assigned responsibilities requiring no more than 50 percent of your time/not more than an average of 20 hours per week, with an understanding that you might work less or more than this average some weeks due to grading, etc. TA responsibilities include class preparation, classroom and laboratory teaching, grading assignments, email correspondence, Primary Instructor and student meetings, etc. (Please consult the "Policies Relative to Teaching and Research Assistants", Univ. Administrative Regulation [AR] 5.2, link below).

**TAs and Ras are advised to keep a weekly log of the hours spent working on various tasks.** If at any point you find that you are working significantly more than stipulated in the aforementioned regulation, please talk with your Primary Instructor and/or the DGS or Chair ASAP so that we can resolve the situation and ensure that your employment situation is equitable and efficient.

Remember your obligation to the course and Primary Instructor ends when final grades are turned in; NOT the end of instruction.

---

<sup>1</sup> This document supersedes all previous versions and is subject to change.

Availability and Schedule: Please inform your Primary Instructor of any days/times during the week when you are not available for any TA-related matters because of your own schedule related to graduate seminars, proposals, Qualifying Exams, etc. (i.e. a day of the week when you are not in lecture, recitation, or office hours, and that you reserve for working only on matters related to your status as a graduate student). TAs and faculty should communicate with each other well before the end of the semester on the process for finalizing grades, including expectations for in-person availability for grading. TAs should not assume that remote participation is possible without discussion with the faculty. Any concerns or issues about this should be discussed with the Chair and/or DGS.

Students facing any circumstances affecting their ability to perform their duties as a teaching assistant such as meeting deadlines, attending lectures or leading recitation sections should contact their Primary Instructor, the DGS and Chair as soon as possible.

Role of Teaching Assistant. The role of TAs will vary in terms of pedagogy and producing course content. If you have any concerns about your position, especially as you develop expertise about what is and is not working during recitations, be sure to contact your Primary Instructor, the DGS or Chair ASAP.

### **3) Copying and printing:**

Please consult with the Primary Instructor on how to duplicate any course-related materials, including exams, student papers or other assignments, especially in large quantities. You will be given your own personal code for the departmental copy machines. You should not use this code for printing or copying your own personal materials (including for your own classes). It is not appropriate for Primary Instructors to expect or ask TAs to use their personal printers to print any course-related materials, unless a TA agrees to do so. Be sure to make explicit arrangements with your Primary Instructor at the start of each semester, keeping documentation thereof.

### **4) Scheduling Make-up Exams and Other Student Events:**

It is your responsibility to schedule necessary DRC testing, makeup exams, video screenings, etc. for students in concert with the Primary Instructor. This includes reserving departmental spaces (e.g., the conference room) for test taking. You should establish a policy for this with the Primary Instructor at the beginning of the semester. Please do not ask the Department Manager for assistance with these tasks beyond confirming room availability.

### **5) Student Privacy and FERPA:**

The University, College of A&S, Graduate School, and Geography Department take student privacy and the protection of education records very seriously. It is your responsibility as a TA to ensure that you understand and comply with all aspects of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). You must review FERPA regulations (<http://www.uky.edu/registrar/FERPA-privacy>). Some general guidelines:

- If you have any questions about complying with FERPA (including the use of shared TA offices in relation to student assignments) please consult the Primary Instructor, the Chair

or DGS before responding or providing information about students' in-class work, assignments, attendance, etc.

- Do not provide any information on students to anyone who contacts you including whether a student is enrolled in a class (see limited exceptions below). **This absolutely includes any family members, friends, or other faculty.** Parents are the most likely people to request this kind of information but being parents of a student and paying tuition does NOT give them access under FERPA. Send these inquiries to the Chair or DGS who will advise.
- If you are a TA for a Primary Instructor always forward requests for information on student grades or overall performance to the Primary Instructor.
- Avoid discussing grades or student work in detail via email (including with UKY staff in Athletics or other departments where students have signed a disclosure waiver).
- Do not leave students' assignments (graded or not) outside of your office, or post students' grades using first or last names or Student ID#s as an identifying marker.

Limited Exceptions (You should consult with the Chair or DGS before sharing any information):

- If you receive a request for information about students' performance in class (for example from someone in Athletics who is monitoring student academic status, or other similar university staff) be sure to clarify that the student has signed the necessary waiver of disclosure (such as a Release of Academic Information) before you share any specific information.
- If students sign a disclosure waiver with one unit on campus you can only share information with them, not any other University units or individuals, until you obtain proof of specific signed waivers.
- In order to share information with parents of the student they must provide you with a signed waiver of disclosure (such as a Release of Academic Information) from the student. Being parents and paying tuition does NOT give them access under FERPA.

You must also ensure that students have privacy during office hours. However, do not close your office door. Instead, make sure that no one is hovering outside your doorway and/or leave the door at least halfway open.

## 6) Title IX – Student Protection Against Sex Discrimination

As a teaching assistant you are a mandated reporter and if a student reports sexual harassment, discrimination or assault, you are required to report it to the university's Title IX office (located in the basement of the Main Building, <https://www.uky.edu/eoo/title-ix> ). You can make a report via an online form or contact the Director of the Title IX office (Martha Alexander, (859) 257-8927 | [Martha.alexander@uky.edu](mailto:Martha.alexander@uky.edu)).

### Relevant University Regulations

Discrimination and Harassment AR 6.1 - <https://www.uky.edu/regs/ar6-1>

Sexual Assault - <https://www.uky.edu/regs/ar6-2>

## 7) The Syllabus is a Contract

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with all University Senate and Ombudsman policies regarding course syllabi. Please see <https://www.uky.edu/ombud/course-syllabus>

If you are the Primary Instructor for a course be sure to consult with the GGSU guidance document for guidance on key things that must be in your syllabus (Title IV assignment, UK Core assignment. A copy of your final syllabus must be turned into the department.

#### **8) Student, Faculty, and TA Classroom Decorum:**

Regardless of whether you are a Primary Instructor or an assistant to one, it is your responsibility to set the tone for respectful and civil discussion in ways that encourage and teach students to express their diverse opinions without judgments or offending others. The range of challenges in doing so is vast and beyond the scope of this document. If you have any concerns about how students are treating one another and/or treating you in the classroom or office hours, and you are unsure how to address the situation, please contact the Primary Instructor, Chair or DGS (avoid including student-specific details in email correspondence). You should also familiarize yourself with anti-discrimination laws relevant to education, including University and Departmental Diversity statements, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (see above).

#### **9) Academic Integrity:**

All University instructors are required to follow university policy regarding academic offenses. Should you encounter an academic offense or suspected offense, be sure to talk with the Primary Instructor, Chair or DGS immediately prior to grading the assignment, prior to contacting the student, and prior to posting a grade. The Department Chair is responsible for determining whether or not there is sufficient evidence to pursue the case, contacting the student, and proceeding according to university policy from there.

Some indicators of plagiarism include differences in sentence structure and writing style within the same assignment (or between assignments), different font styles and colors, ambiguity or inconsistency between sources cited and those in the bibliography, etc. You should also be aware of websites that provide students with pre-written essays for a fee. These include Adventures in Cheating, Essay World, Free Essay Network, and Top 100 Essay Sites.

UKY Office of Academic Ombud Services provides a PDF titled “Plagiarism: What is it”? <https://www.uky.edu/ombud/plagiarism-what-it> It can be useful to make this link available on syllabi, assignment handouts, and Canvas. If you are not the Primary Instructor talk with students about using class time in the first week and when discussing the first assignment to show them the document and discuss its primary points. See also <https://www.uky.edu/ombud/plagiarism-and-cheating>

#### **10) Academic Ombud Services:**

Academic Rights of Students <https://www.uky.edu/ombud/academic-rights-students>  
Code of Faculty Responsibilities <https://www.uky.edu/ombud/faculty-responsibilities>  
Code of Student Responsibilities <https://www.uky.edu/ombud/student-responsibilities>

## 11) TA Evaluation and Mentoring:

FTAMP. The Department of Geography Faculty Teaching Assistant Mentoring Program (FTAMP) provides assistance and feedback/support for Teaching Assistants to improve their classroom performance/techniques and, by so doing, improve the learning experience for undergraduates. Teaching assistants in their first semester of teaching will have two observations. Teaching assistants beyond the first semester will have one classroom observation, plus be entitled to one (additional) optional classroom observation at their request. The first observation and evaluation should be completed before the middle of the semester and second observation by the end of classes. The Department may conduct additional observations of teaching assistants if it is deemed necessary by the Chair.

The observation will be done by FTAMP mentors: departmental faculty members assigned by the Chair of the Professional Development committee. These assignments change each semester. FTAMP mentors will conduct classroom observations, write up a report of their findings (using the departments FTAMP observation form) and hold a private follow-up meeting with the teaching assistant. This meeting is to discuss any issues arising from the mentor's observation (his/her strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities to enhance in-class content, delivery, and undergraduate learning experiences etc.) and any additional concerns on which the TA might wish advice. After the meeting both the TA and FTAMP mentor sign the observation form and it is turned into the Chair of the Professional Development committee.

FTAMP mentors should be available through the semester for on-going consultation and troubleshooting regarding any issues the TA encounters in their work.

Departmental Resources. Teaching assistants have several other resources within the department, namely the Primary Instructor for the course, other faculty who have taught the same course, and their advisor. Any problems that arise for teaching assistants are best dealt with earlier rather than later.

## 12) Important Websites

Note: University policies are dynamic and subject to change and so you should consult with the Chair or DGS to ensure that you are operating with correct and up-to-date information.

### Key Policies on Teaching and Research Assistantships

UKY Graduate School Policies on Assistantships on <http://gradschool.uky.edu/assistantships>

UKY Policies Relative to Teaching and Research Assistants, Univ. Administrative Regulation 5.2: <http://www.uky.edu/regis/files/ar/ar5-2.pdf>

### Resources for Teaching Assistants

Note: this is a non-comprehensive list.

The Graduate School provides an excellent list of internal and external websites related to teaching, including some of those listed below: <http://gradschool.uky.edu/teaching-assistant-resources> Also ask the Chair, DGS or GGSU leadership for a recent copy of campus resources for students facing various challenges.

UKY Geography Department Statement on Diversity:

<https://geography.as.uky.edu/inclusivity-statement>

UKY Academic Calendars <http://www.uky.edu/registrar/content/academic-calendar>

UKY Center for the Enhancement of learning and Teaching (CELT)

<http://www.uky.edu/celt/> (be sure to join the listserv for workshop and other resource/event announcements)

UKY Learning Management Systems <http://www.uky.edu/canvas/>

UKY Academic Communication Tool (ACT) Alert Management System (formerly Early Alert System) <http://www.uky.edu/studentacademicsupport/ACT-alert>

UKY Office of Institutional Equity and Equal Opportunity (OIEEO)

<http://www.uky.edu/EVPFA/EEO/index.html>

UKY OIEEO Explanation of Relevant Terms and Laws:

[http://www.uky.edu/EVPFA/EEO/terms\\_laws.html](http://www.uky.edu/EVPFA/EEO/terms_laws.html)

UKY Disability Resource Center (DRC):

<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/DisabilityResourceCenter/>

UKY Office of Institutional Diversity: <http://www.uky.edu/diversity/>

UKY Martin Luther King Center: <http://www.uky.edu/mlkc/>

UKY Office of LGBTQ Resources: <http://www.uky.edu/lgbtq/>

UKY Violence Intervention and Prevention Center (VIP):

<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/VIPCenter/>

UKY Center for English as a Second Language (ESL): <https://esl.as.uky.edu/>

UKY Counseling Services: <http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Counseling/>

UKY Office of Academic Ombud Services: <http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/>

UKY on FERPA and Student Privacy: <http://www.uky.edu/registrar/FERPA-privacy>

Title IX and (Sex) Discrimination (See also the UKY OIEEO Website)

[http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix\\_dis.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html)

US DOE on FERPA <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

The Study (UKY's hub at Transformative Learning for help with writing, studying for and taking exams, taking notes in class, etc. They have lots of great resources, including 1-page handouts, for students and faculty. They will also come give presentations to your class)

<https://www.uky.edu/thestudy/>

UKY Student and Academic Support <http://www.uky.edu/studentacademicsupport/>

UKY A & S Advising <http://www.as.uky.edu/advising>

UKY Graduate School 20-Minute Mentor Commons: <http://gradschool.uky.edu/20-minute-mentor-commons>

UKY Institutional Research & Advanced Analytics: <http://www.uky.edu/iraa/>

Faculty Support for TCE Process: <http://www.uky.edu/eval/facultystaff-support>

Student Support for TCE Process: <http://www.uky.edu/eval/student-support>