

POLICIES & GUIDELINES FOR USE OF UNDERGRADUATE INSTRUCTIONAL AIDES (UIAs)

I. Purpose and Expectations

The UIA position provides students with a unique opportunity to receive faculty mentoring, and it is anticipated that all UIAs will benefit from their experience. Regular meetings or opportunities for conversations with the course instructor should not be limited to reviewing the UIAs assignments, but also serve as times for students and faculty members to discuss current issues in the discipline, mutual scholarly interests, and future opportunities for the UIA in terms of research, graduate work, and/or careers. Overall, this should be an enriched learning experience for qualified undergraduate students not available through regular coursework.

Undergraduate instructional aides can serve in various capacities, depending upon the specific needs of a department and the nature of the course/lab to which the UIA is assigned. Below is a list of potential capacities that UIAs may serve:

- Assisting the instructor of record with class preparation and course content
- Assisting students in help rooms or review sessions outside of class time
- Leading discussion sections or labs
- Grading homework, quizzes, lab reports, etc.

II. Selection Process

The process by which students become UIAs will vary depending on the particular department. Departments that employ several UIAs each semester may have a formalized search procedure, involving a job announcement, an application submission period, and interviews. Alternatively, UIAs may be recruited and hired on the basis of faculty recommendations, or departments may hire UIAs as a result of an individual student directly contacting a faculty member about possible employment opportunities. UIAs should be assigned to faculty members taking into consideration mutual intellectual interests and the potential for an enriched learning experience.

Departments should define minimum standards that a potential UIA would have to satisfy to be qualified for a specific position. For example, undergraduates serving as UIAs should have earned an above-average grade in the course (or its equivalent) in which they assist, with grades being commensurate with the responsibilities of the position. The UIA may also demonstrate knowledge of the material by performing well in more advanced courses. Prospective UIAs should be judged to be mature, willing, and able to learn to function as professionals in fulfilling all aspects of their teaching responsibilities.

III. Orientation & Training

UIAs should receive training with regard to the specific content of their instructional responsibilities as well as general training on the professional aspects of instruction and learning. This training should occur before the UIA starts his or her instructional responsibilities and may

require that they return to campus prior to the beginning of classes. Each department utilizing UIAs should provide UIAs with a written guide or handbook, which provides appropriate information needed to carry out their responsibilities in a professional manner. Some suggestions for information that should be included in the training and/or guide are:

- Name(s) of person(s) having ultimate responsibility for policy decisions in the courses in which they are assisting, and (b) having responsibility for their mentoring and supervision
- Expectations regarding grading, including
 - Proper record keeping of students' grades including instruction on the use of Angel (if necessary)
 - Returning papers in a timely fashion
 - Confidentiality of student records
- Expectations regarding how to handle situations in which students miss deadlines or who have excessive absences
- Limitations on scheduling extra help sessions and procedures for reserving rooms for help sessions
- The URLs for academic or personal help resources on campus
- Promoting academic integrity and how to handle cases of suspected academic dishonesty
- University policies on tutoring students in their classes, dating students in their classes, grading papers of students they are dating or tutoring, and sexual harassment
- How to respond to an emergency situation such as how to exit a building in case of fire

IV. Supervision & Mentoring

Faculty are ultimately responsible for all grades. Individual departments should determine the type of grading permitted by UIAs based on what is appropriate for their level of knowledge, experience, and the nature of the material being evaluated. Within this context UIAs can implement well-delineated grading criteria protocols. UIAs should not be allowed to develop their own grading rubric for any assignment. Departments using UIAs in grading roles should provide a procedure for re-grade requests in the event that a student disagrees with a grade given by a UIA. Departments should also provide UIAs with a protocol for grading problems that have more than one solution and/or where students may come up with unique answers not in the grading rubric.

The specific tasks required of UIAs should be provided, in writing, to any student who serves in this role. UIAs should not be asked to perform tasks that are not specified in their position description.

If UIA tasks include grading of assignments or other evaluations of student work, the course instructor should ensure that the UIA understands the importance of maintaining student privacy with respect to performance. Suggested guidelines for UIAs include the following:

- Grades or other assessments of student performance must not be discussed with anyone other than the student and the course instructor.

- When in the UIA's possession, homework and other assignments must be secured so that they may not be viewed by unauthorized individuals.

A faculty member having the responsibility for the assigning of grades in a course also has the ultimate responsibility for the performance of UIAs serving in that course. The faculty member may delegate the direct supervision of UIAs to others such as a lab manager or a graduate student. The faculty member (or his/her designate) is expected to meet with UIAs regularly (usually weekly) to inform them about the material covered, the approach taken in presenting the material, the approach the UIA should take to reinforce the material, evaluative exercises and upcoming deadlines. UIAs may also be expected to provide valuable feedback to the faculty member on how well the students are learning the material.

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V. Evaluation

UIAs should be systematically evaluated at the end of each semester. Departments are expected to design assessment methods appropriate to the tasks and roles fulfilled by the UIA. These must include written feedback from the students who were instructed by the UIA through discussion sections, labs, help rooms, and/or review sessions. Anyone who assisted in supervising the UIA (such as a course instructor, lab manager, graduate student, etc.) should also be invited to provide comments on the UIA's performance based on their observations. The results of these evaluations should be shared with the UIA since they have the potential to impact future employment. Since the UIA may want to share the results of the evaluation with persons writing letters of recommendation for him/her, evaluation materials should be given to the UIA after grades have been submitted for the course.

VI. Compensation & Workload

The amount of compensation for UIAs is to be determined at the discretion of the hiring department, but should be within the range set by the university.

Departments should ensure that UIA responsibilities do not adversely affect students' ability to complete their own academic work. While there is no set minimum or maximum number of hours that UIAs may work, the recommended workload is 5-15 hr/week.

VII. Inappropriate Relationships Between UIAs & Students

It is inappropriate for UIAs to date students in their section(s). It is also inappropriate for

UIAs to grade the work of a student whom they are currently tutoring. To avoid potential conflicts of interest, course instructors should request that their UIAs inform them if someone they are dating or have previously dated is in their section, and/or if their duties require them to grade a paper/assignment of someone they are dating or have previously dated. Upon exposure of a potential conflict of interest, the course instructor/UIA supervisor should reassign the inappropriate assignment to another UIA.

UIAs should be informed that sexual harassment of students by an instructor or teaching aide in an academic environment is understood to be intentional abuse of authority. UIAs should be directed to the University Policy regarding sexual harassment – Click on link below.

<http://www.hr.msu.edu/HRsite/Documents/Faculty/Handbooks/Faculty/UnivPolicies/Univ+Pol+-+POLICY+ON+SEXUAL+HARASSMENT.htm>