

# GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT GUIDE

2016-2017



TEXAS A&M  
UNIVERSITY  
CORPUS  
CHRISTI

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COLLEGE OF  
GRADUATE  
STUDIES

6300 Ocean Dr., Unit 5843 • Faculty Center 178 • Corpus Christi, TX 78412

Phone 361-825-2177 • Fax 361-825-2755 • Email: [gradweb@tamucc.edu](mailto:gradweb@tamucc.edu)



## WELCOME



Congratulations on being assigned to serve as a graduate teaching assistant (GTA) at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC). As a GTA, you play a very important role in maintaining and enhancing the quality of undergraduate education at TAMU-CC. Your teaching assistantship will allow you the opportunity to develop your teaching style so that you are able to engage students in active learning processes and do so in a way that conveys your enthusiasm for the material you cover. We have developed this guide as a guide to assist you in your journey as a teacher. As such, we will cover many of the academic policies that you should be aware of and we will provide some helpful tips to jumpstart your teaching path. In addition to this guide, always remember that your professors and peers can serve as excellent resources.

Please note that this guide provides general guidance for your role as a GTA. If you have more specific questions about your role as a GTA, please consult with your supervisor. Remember that your first obligation is to the department in which you teach and to the professor of record for the course you are providing services.

TAMU-CC is dedicated to supporting the efforts of graduate student teaching assistants through its various university-wide programs and services. In this handbook, we will provide you with some of the programs and services you can utilize to enhance your GTA experience. We hope that you will take advantage of these opportunities to further develop your skills as a teacher.

Please let me know if I can assist in any way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Steven Seidel". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Steven Seidel, Ph.D.

Graduate Studies Fellow

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# **GTA Roles and Expectations**

## **GTA Roles and Expectations**

### **Typical Teaching Roles**

- Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) are typically responsible for directing lab sections, leading discussion sections, grading assignments and, in some cases, regular classes of courses numbered below 5000.
- GTAs may assist with laboratories for 5000 and 6000 level courses, but may not teach or assist with a course in which they are enrolled.
- GTAs may not teach courses numbered 5000 or above, unless they were granted graduate faculty status via special appointment by the Graduate Dean in writing prior to the start of the semester in which they are scheduled to teach. Graduate faculty status will be granted to GTAs **only in rare and exceptional cases** and will require a thorough justification by their College Dean.
- According to the regulations of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, those teaching assistants given full responsibility for a class (Instructor of Record) must have at least 18 hours of graduate work in the field of their teaching responsibilities. Individual programs/departments/colleges may have additional qualification requirements.
- GTAs must be supervised by a faculty member who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating their performance. GTAs can be assigned to lab section and may be required to take some courses/training before they are allowed into the labs. Please contact your program/department/college for necessary/required training(s) you have to complete.

### **Appropriate Conduct Inside and Outside Classroom**

All GTAs are responsible for reviewing and understanding the following:

- Reviewing the [TAMU-CC Handbook of Rules & Procedures](#)
- Guidance and direction for handling complaints.
- [The University Catalog](#)
- [The Faculty Handbook](#)
- [TAMU-CC Student Handbook and Code of Conduct](#)
- GTAs DO's: must be on time, be prepared, be professional

GTAs DON'Ts: talk about faculty, other students, or other GTAs.

## Required Training

GTAs must:

- Attend and complete departmental required training before the start of classes
- Complete the Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) mandatory online training within 30 days of appointment
- Complete the required TrainTraq courses that are assigned. TrainTraq is a learning management system in which university employees (including GTAs) will be assigned specific training courses. It is accessed through the Single Sign On (SSO) web site. In order to access it, you will need your Universal Identification Number (UIN) number and password, which can be provided by the HR office. If you know your UIN number and password, and need assistance with locating TrainTraq in SSO website, please see the link below for instructions: <http://tder.TAMU-CC.edu/assets/TrainTraq%20Instructions.pdf>

## Student Privacy

To promote and instill student privacy at TAMU-CC, GTAs should always:

- Return graded papers directly to the individual.
- Never give graded papers to someone's friend or put graded papers outside your office door for students to pick up.
- Be careful when handing out graded papers, (Ensuring fellow students cannot see their peers grades).
- Email grades **only** via a secure server or use Blackboard (ex: islander)

## Professional Ethics

GTAs are expected to support and maintain an academic environment conducive to the positive educational development of all students. GTAs will perform responsibilities without intimidation and harassment based on sex, race, religion, politics or professional interest. Professional behavior must be maintained in the relationships among students, peers, and faculty members. Protection of the atmosphere of trust is essential to the flourishing of a dynamic academic community.

## Relationships with Students

Relationships that go beyond the platonic must be avoided. It is never appropriate for a GTA to enter into a sexual relationship with one of his or her students. In fact, not only are such relationships

morally suspect and professionally unacceptable, they may also be considered a form of sexual harassment, a violation of Title IX, and thus illegal.

### **Office Etiquette**

**Office Hours** - GTAs are required to hold office hours and should do so during times when they can help students the most. For example, holding office hours during lab days is not mutually beneficial to the attending professor or the student. Additionally, consider the following when planning your office hours:

- Office hours are not to be held past 7pm.
- GTAs must conduct office hours even if no one ever shows up
- The number of hours will be specified by the GTA's coordinating faculty or instructor.

**Mail and Keys** - GTAs are assigned mail boxes in their respective departments and are responsible for checking them frequently. GTAs should check with the Administrative Secretary of their department for any office or desk keys needed. Generally speaking, GTAs will not have access to university buildings when they are closed. To access to buildings after hours, special arrangements **must** be made through a department chair.

**Copier Information** - GTAs should consult with the Administrative Secretary of their department for operating instructions and codes for the copy machine.

### **Professional development**

Different departments may require their GTAs to participate in professional development workshops/seminars/conferences. Please contact your department about the necessary/required professional development programs you are expected to attend. In addition to specific requirements by your department, the College of Graduate Studies (CGS) offers professional development opportunities for Graduate Students and Graduate Assistants. More information can be obtained by visiting the website <http://grow.tamucc.edu>, emailing at [grow@tamucc.edu](mailto:grow@tamucc.edu), or on calling 361-825-2507.

### **Safety Issues**

All University faculty, GTA, staff, and students are responsible for the following:

- Performing their jobs in the safest prescribed manner.
- Eliminating and/or reporting workplace hazards.
- Reporting accidents, incidents, and unsafe practices or conditions to supervisors.

- Complying with environmental, health, and safety policies and protocols

For more information about safety and safety issues, please see the TAMU-CC Safety Manual

<http://safety.TAMU-CC.edu/S/TAMU-CC%20Safety%20Manual.pdf>

### **Guns on Campus**

Starting August 1, 2016; Senate Bill 11 will go into effect. This will allow the carrying of concealed handguns on campus. Currently on TAMU-CC grounds, concealed handguns are prohibited at the Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC), University Health Center, University Counseling Center, Various Laboratories, and Various Athletic Areas. If a student purposefully or accidentally displays their handgun, you should contact the University Police Department (UPD) and inform them of the situation. If accidental, the student will not be in trouble, but UPD will instruct the student on how to safely conceal their handgun. If you have any other questions, please contact UPD (x4444).

### **Continuity Plan**

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi; courses would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e. emails, websites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

### **Outstanding Teaching Assistant Awards**

The College of Graduate Studies has created six new awards to recognize outstanding graduate assistants, graduate students, and graduate faculty. They include: Outstanding Teaching Assistant; Outstanding Research Assistant; Outstanding Master's Student; Outstanding Doctoral/MFA Student; Outstanding Master's Mentor Award; and Outstanding Doctoral/MFA Mentor Award. Winners in each category will receive a plaque and a travel award of \$1000.

Eligibility Criteria for students include:

- I. GPA
- II. >75% of all graduate program work taken at TAMU-CC.

Similarly, to the Faculty Senate Awards, each college may submit one nomination for each of the six categories.

**For more information on process, deadlines, and nomination forms please visit the [link to website](#).**

[https://gradschool.tamucc.edu/current\\_students/award.html](https://gradschool.tamucc.edu/current_students/award.html)

## **University and College Policies**

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### **Appointments & Reappointments of GTAs**

Employment is contingent upon an: (a) acceptable grade point average (a minimum of 3.0 on the last 60 hours credit); (b) good interview; and (c) background investigation. Before accepting employment, you must meet the following requirements:

- Report to supervisors any arrests, criminal charges or criminal convictions, excluding misdemeanor traffic offenses punishable only by fine. [The I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification form](#) and supporting documentation must be submitted and processed prior to employment.
- GTAs with a 50% (FTE) appointment must be enrolled for at least 6 or 9 hours of graduate coursework in that semester depending upon their college. While some colleges require a minimum of 9 semester credit hours (e.g., College of Graduate Studies), others require a minimum of 6 hours of graduate coursework in Fall and Spring semesters (e.g., University Allocations to Colleges). Additionally, a minimum of 3 hours of graduate work is required in summer semesters. Please contact your department to inquire more information about the minimum semester credits hours required.

### **Terms of Appointment**

- GTAs can be appointed on a semester by semester basis up to a 12-month appointment period. GTAs can be reappointed based on performance and availability of position.
- Master's students enrolled in 30-36 SCH graduate programs cannot exceed 4 long semesters of employment.
- Master's students enrolled in 42-60 SCH graduate programs cannot exceed 6-8 long semesters of employment.
- Doctoral students are limited to 10 long academic semesters if entering the program with a B.S. degree or 8 long semesters if entering with a M.S. degree or equivalent.
- Students who file an approved request for a leave of absence will not have time spent on leave counted against these limits.
- To be considered for reappointment, GTAs must have maintained a cumulative GPA of 3.0 on all graduate-level coursework and received acceptable evaluations from their supervisors.
- GAs must satisfy the minimum enrollment requirements and must make satisfactory progress toward their degrees.

## **Evaluations**

At the end of the semester, Coordinating Faculty and Instructors will evaluate the job performance of each GTA and make a recommendation for reappointment. Your supervisor, or a professor in your department, may also observe your class to evaluate your performance. Keep in mind that this observation will be considered in the rehire procedure. You may also be required to obtain course evaluations from the students at the end of a semester. If you assist in a class and not required to obtain course evaluations from the students, we encourage you to collect students' evaluations for your future job applications. Please contact your supervisor about the evaluation process.

## **GTA Enrollment Requirements**

GTA enrollment requirements are the same of those required for graduate students. For more information about enrollment requirements, workload requirements, out-of-state tuition waivers, and grievances or appeals please refer to the Graduate Assistantship Handbook.

[https://gradschool.tamucc.edu/funding/assets/Graduate\\_Assistantship\\_Handbook.pdf](https://gradschool.tamucc.edu/funding/assets/Graduate_Assistantship_Handbook.pdf)

## **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX)**

TAMU-CC is committed to creating and maintaining a work and educational environment where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each student has the right to learn and each employee has the right to work in an environment free of all forms of harassment and discrimination and one in which ideas may be freely expressed. For information regarding Civil Rights, see University procedure 08.01.01.C1.01, Civil Rights Compliance.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity. Sexual harassment, which includes sexual violence, is a form of sex discrimination. TAMU-CC provides resources to students, faculty, and staff to address concerns related to sexual harassment, sexual assault (rape), sexual misconduct, sex discrimination and has appointed Mr. Samuel Ramirez as its Title IX Coordinator. For more information and a short Title IX Student Video from The Texas A&M University System, please see:

<http://edcs.TAMUCC.edu/TitleIX.html>.

## **Absences, Vacation, Holiday, Sick and Leave Time**

GTA's do not qualify for paid vacation, sick leave, emergency leave, or holiday pay. For more information, please refer to the Graduate Assistantship Handbook and Office of Human Resources.

[https://gradschool.tamucc.edu/funding/assets/Graduate\\_Assistantship\\_Handbook.pdf](https://gradschool.tamucc.edu/funding/assets/Graduate_Assistantship_Handbook.pdf)

<https://hr.tamucc.edu/Benefits/index.html>.

### **Request for Leave**

GTAs experiencing life changing or catastrophic events are encouraged to consult with their supervisors. For more information, please refer to the Graduate Assistantship Handbook.

[https://gradschool.tamucc.edu/funding/assets/Graduate Assistantship Handbook.pdf](https://gradschool.tamucc.edu/funding/assets/Graduate_Assistantship_Handbook.pdf)

### **Academic Integrity**

TAMU-CC reserves the right, through due process, to place on probation, suspend, or dismiss any student who violates academic integrity and regulations by providing false, misleading, or incomplete information to the University, by falsification of University records, by plagiarism, by classroom misdemeanor, or by academic dishonesty. Students are expected to obey federal, state, and local laws as well as the regulations of TAMU-CC.

TAMU-CC expects all employees and other persons participating in university research projects and support activities to maintain superior standards in all research and scholarship activities. For more information, please see:

[http://catalog.tamucc.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=177#Academic Integrity](http://catalog.tamucc.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=177#Academic_Integrity)

***Duplication of Copyrighted Materials*** - A single copy may be made of most copyrighted material when it is used for scholarly research or teaching. Multiple copies may be made for distribution to the students in a class:

- I. If each copy indicates that it is copyrighted material and it is brief (i.e. less than 250 words if a poem or, if prose, less than 2500 words or 10% of the work)
- II. If the use is spontaneous and the material is necessary for the class; or
- III. If there wasn't time to solicit and receive permission.

There can be no more than one instance of such copying in a semester. GTAs cannot repeatedly make multiple copies of any copyrighted materials. Therefore, they cannot create any sort of anthology without written permission from the holder of all copyrights.

**Grade Appeal Process** - As a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA), you should be aware of that students have a right to appeal to their grades to the instructor of record. As such, GTAs should familiarize themselves with the Student Grade Appeal Process. A student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course (see University Rule [13.02.99.C2](#)). The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal.

A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. If the problem cannot be resolved at this level, the student may take the steps below.

1. Presentation of grievance to instructor. (This step must be taken within ten calendar days after the beginning of the next term.)
2. Appeal to department chair or area coordinator.
3. Written appeal to the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee made in writing to the Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs (AVPAA).
4. The AVPAA will review the case with the student to ensure that the student understands the requirements of the process.
5. The AVPAA will convene a Pre-hearing Panel composed of one faculty and one student representative from the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee in addition to the AVPAA to determine if the student's charges meet one or more of the criteria for formal grade appeal specified in [Rule 13.02.99. C2](#)Section 1.4
6. Should it be found, by majority vote of the Pre-Hearing Panel that the student's complaint meets one or more of these criteria, the AVPAA will proceed with the formal University Academic Standards Grievance Committee Hearing Panel.
7. Proceedings of the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee. (Committee holds hearing, reviews data, presents findings to all parties, and makes recommendation to the AVPAA.)
8. Notification of the Panel decision.
9. Final appeal in writing to the Provost if student or instructor thinks appropriate procedures have not been followed.

For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule [13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals](#), and University Procedure [13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures](#).

These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university\\_rules/index.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html).

For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**Presentation of Academic Grievance to Instructor** - Students must formally present matters of grievance an instructor in writing within 10 business days after the beginning of the next term. Within 5 business days after receiving the written grievance, the GTA or faculty member will either sustain the original grade assigned or make a grade change. The GTA or faculty member will notify the student and his or her department chair or area coordinator in writing or by email regarding this action. If the instructor does not act within this period, the student may appeal to the next level. More information about the grade appeal process can be accessed through the Faculty Handbook at:

[http://academicaffairs.TAMU-CC.edu/faculty\\_handbook1/fhb3211gradeappeals%20proc6208.pdf](http://academicaffairs.TAMU-CC.edu/faculty_handbook1/fhb3211gradeappeals%20proc6208.pdf)

**Disability Accommodations** - Students with disabilities should present the GTA with documentation informing the GTA of any type of special arrangement that they may need to succeed in class. If the GTA needs information regarding any of these arrangements, they should call Disability Services (DS) at extension 5816. Documents from DS are confidential.

**University Excused Absences** - Make-ups for university-sponsored events (e.g., athletic, ROTC, performing arts show) that require the student's presence, qualify as excused absences. The GTA must allow for make-up assignments and exams.

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** - FERPA (1974) is a Federal Law that ensures the privacy of student education records by controlling access to and disclosure of students' education records. This law applies to all schools that receive funds from the U.S. Department of Education. All professors, instructors, administrative officers, and GTAs at Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi **must** comply with FERPA. To this end, the student records should be treated confidentially- unless a legal exception applies or the student provides written consent to release of the information. Additionally, FERPA indicates that students have the right to:

- I. review their education records;

- II. request their records to be revised; and
- III. file a complaint if they feel any of these rights have been violated.

Below are the FERPA Essentials for Faculty from Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi website. As a GTA, you will be assigned to some classes and involved in grading. Please keep in mind that the information below applies to all GTAs as well.

**FERPA Essential**

DO	DO NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DO refer requests to the Registrar’s Office when you are uncertain how to respond</li> <li>• DO release a student’s information to him or her when you can positively identify the student; telephone and e-mails are not reliable methods to make positive IDs</li> <li>• DO post grades on SAIL</li> <li>• DO use Blackboard to give individual students access to their grades and assignments</li> <li>• DO check with the University Registrar to verify student's consent prior to releasing information</li> <li>• Do feel comfortable to contact the Registrar's Office for assistance including the one-time parental release for dependent students</li> <li>• DO shred unneeded confidential documents</li> <li>• DO hide confidential information on computer screens from unauthorized individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DO NOT display student scores or grades publicly in association with names, student ID numbers (even the last 4 digits of the SSN) or other personal Identifiers; <b>NOTE</b> - <i>Randomly assigned numbers or code words that only the instructor and student know can be used to post grades and are not a violation of FERPA. However, the posting order should NOT be in alphabetical order</i></li> <li>• DO NOT put exam papers containing student names and grades in publicly accessible places; students should not have access to the scores and grades of the other students in the class</li> <li>• DO NOT post grades on any individual Facebook page or group Facebook page</li> <li>• DO NOT share student education record information with other campus officials unless there is "legitimate educational need" for that information</li> <li>• DO NOT share by phone or e-mail information from student education records, with parents or others outside the institution, including letters of recommendation, without written permission of the student</li> <li>• DO NOT view education records for personal reasons.</li> </ul>
<p><b>" When In Doubt, Don't Give Out "</b></p>	

Please note that this is only an introduction to FERPA. You will need to complete FERPA training via Train Traq. We also encourage you to acquire more information about FERPA, as it will be difficult to cover everything in this handbook. Please see the links below for more information about FERPA.

- For more information about FERPA please visit:
- <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>
- For more information visit TAMU-CC website about FERPA please visit: <http://registrar.TAMU-CC.edu/ferpa/>
- For more information about Faculty essentials and questions that you may have, please visit: <http://registrar.TAMU-CC.edu/ferpa/faculty.html>

# **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

## **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

### **The Syllabus**

***Syllabus as a Contract*** - A course syllabus can be considered a contract with students. A good syllabus is explicit and transparent in communicating the expectations and procedures for the class. ([See example syllabus with descriptions here](#)). As a quasi-official contract with students, it provides students with certain assurances about the course, methods, and grading criteria. It also provides GTAs and faculty with protection should they become involved in a dispute over a grade or procedure. Each student **must** be given a syllabus. A syllabus should also give students a sense of what the content to be, the course assignments, and how their performance will be evaluated.

***Creating a Syllabus*** - All programs have an agreed-upon course description, rationale, and objectives for a particular class available for instructors. Ask for a copy of this document or a previously used syllabus for the course. You can find syllabus that were used previously in the classes you will be teaching using the university's website. For more information, please visit:

[http://rattler.tamucc.edu/Syllabi\\_Courses/](http://rattler.tamucc.edu/Syllabi_Courses/)

Should you be asked to compose a brand-new syllabus from scratch, you can follow the syllabus template that is in line with the recommendation of the Texas Coordinating Board (please see Appendix for the template).

Generally speaking, we recommend that a syllabus include:

- Course number, section, title, meeting days and time, room and building
- Your name, title, office number, telephone, email, web address, office hours
- Prerequisites
- Course goals or objectives
- Required texts and supplies
- Schedule of assignments, readings, exams, papers and other required activities
- Grading standards and criteria—*Students should know what elements of the class will determine their final grade and what grading scale you will use in assigning the final grades*
- Course policies regarding attendance, participation, make-ups, late assignments, tests or exams, extra credit, extensions, illness, cheating and plagiarism, and P, F, I, and W grades
- A disclaimer, such as “The above schedule and procedures are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.”

- Explanation of the conceptual structure used to organize the course
- College policies regarding withdrawing, accommodations for students with disabilities, inclement weather, term calendar, and academic dishonesty
- Statement that provides an estimate of the student workload. How much time should students plan to spend on reading assignments, problem sets, lab reports or research?
- Glossary of technical terms used in the course
- Statement about civility in the classroom
- Bibliographies of supplemental readings at a higher or lower level of difficulty in case students find the assigned readings too complex or too simple
- List of campus resources for tutoring and academic support
- List of co-curricular activities relevant to your course (e.g., lectures, plays, events, exhibits)
- Supplementary material to help students succeed in the course: studying, note taking additional readings or resources
- Statement on your beliefs about teaching, learning, and the instructional methods you will use
- Overall, be sure to abide by the stated procedures systematically, impartially, and consistently in creating the syllabus.

Adapted from:

<http://www.wcccd.edu/dept/pdf/AF/Tips%20for%20Creating%20a%20Syllabus%20IUPUI.pdf>

<http://gradlife.uncc.edu/sites/gradlife.uncc.edu/files/media/GTA/TA-Handbook-September2014.pdf>

### Course Administration

**Blackboard** - TAMU-CC utilizes Blackboard as its web-based learning management system. It is designed to support fully online courses or provide a space for face-to-face course supplementation. Blackboard provides many types of tools and features for enriching the learning experience.

Information about Blackboard can be found at: [https://iol.TAMU-CC.edu/bb\\_resources\\_instructors.html](https://iol.TAMU-CC.edu/bb_resources_instructors.html)

Please also see the [Blackboard Quick Start Guide](#). Training is also available ([click to see the website](#)) online and per request. To schedule a visit, please contact [odelt@tamucc.edu](mailto:odelt@tamucc.edu).

**Sail.tamucc.edu** - S.A.I.L. is a secure student portal where you can access your student, academic, and financial aid records at TAMU-CC. GTAs can use SAIL to access class schedules, final exam schedules, and the academic calendar, which may be useful when developing a syllabus.

**Starfish** - Starfish is an Early Alert software program for identifying undergraduate students who need assistance from academic support services at TAMU-CC. This “Success Network” includes faculty, advisors, and specialized support staff (CASA, Academic Advising, Student Engagement and Success, PASS, etc.). Starfish generates emails notifying the student and members of the student’s “Success Network” of course progress and academic concerns needing to be addressed. Starfish also requires GTAs to complete a progress report on students to help identify academic needs, including poor class attendance, low class participation, low test or quiz scores, classwork performance concerns, etc. All developmental, freshmen, and sophomore level courses require the use the Early Alert program, progress reports, and midterm grades. For more information, see <http://casa.TAMU-CC.edu/starfish.php>.

**I-CARE** - I-CARE is a behavioral intervention team for TAMU-CC students of concern, including those who display disruptive, distressed, or high risk behaviors. The Team is represented by multiple campus departments, including the Office of Student Engagement and Success, Disability Services, University Police Department, University Counseling Center, and more. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students can make a student referral to I-CARE via the I-CARE Referral Form on their website: <http://icare.TAMU-CC.edu/>

**CASA** - The Center for Academic Student Achievement is committed to providing all TAMU-CC students’ academic support services through student-centered, supplemental, lifelong learning opportunities to help students achieve independence in learning in an inclusive and supportive environment. CASA’s Writing Center assists writers across the University, online and on campus. We respond to the writing needs of TAMU-CC writers by providing consistent, knowledgeable and flexible support. We foster the growth of a community of writers through inclusivity and respect. For more information, see <http://casa.tamucc.edu>.

### **Student Support Services**

**Programs for Academic Student Support (PASS)** - Serves the needs of low-income, first generation college students and underrepresented students in higher education to increase student retention and graduation. For more information, visit <http://pass.tamucc.edu>.

**First in the World (FITW) Program** - FITW is an online supplemental instruction (SI) program for STEM departments. For more information, go to <http://fitw.tamucc.edu>.

**The Student Support Services (SSS)** - SSS provides a special environment for students seeking assistance in meeting their academic, personal, career, cultural awareness, and social needs ([click here for the website](#)). All services are available through multiple methods (in-person, internet, YouTube, WebEx, and phone). SSS offers:

- Academic coaching in Math, English, and Science;
- Financial Aid advice and assistance;
- Self-improvement workshops;
- Advice and assistance in postsecondary course selection;
- Education or counseling services designed to improve financial and economic literacy;
- Assistance preparing students for graduate school.

**SSS STEM** - SSS STEM supports students majoring in STEM fields. In addition to regular SSS support services, students can access workshops specifically involving technology innovations, scientific and health research, and biotechnology through SSS STEM. For more information, please go to <http://ssstem.tamucc.edu>.

**SSS Teacher Prep** - Supports students pursuing a teaching degree for kindergarten through 12th grade education; in addition to regular SSS support services, students can get test preparation to meet the teacher certification exams. For more information, please visit <http://sssteacherprep.tamucc.edu>.

**McNair Scholars Program** - The program prepares low-income, first generation, and underrepresented undergraduate students to pursue doctoral degrees by involving them in research and other scholarly activities. For more information about the program, go to <http://www.mcnair.tamucc.edu>.

**STEM Outreach, Access, and Retention (SOAR)** - Assists students from high schools, community colleges, and TAMU-CC succeed in a STEM field. For more information on any of these programs or services, visit <http://pass.TAMU-CC.edu/>

**University Counseling Center (UCS)** - The UCS provides counseling and personal skill development for university students including time management, stress management, and test taking skills. It is located in the Driftwood Complex (x2703).

**University Health Center (UHC)** - The UHC provides health services for the campus. It is located in the Driftwood Complex (x2601).

**Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)** - The OSD provides assistance to students by arranging special services as needed. Students requesting special accommodations must make them through this office. It is located in the Corpus Christi Hall room #116 (x5816).

**University Police Department (UPD)** - The University Police Department is the sole law enforcement agency on the campus of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. The University Police Department reports to the Executive Vice-President for Finance and Administration. The University Police Department is located on the west side of the campus on Oso Lane and is ready to assist twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year (x4444).

**Mentoring** - Mentoring is an essential leadership skill that involves providing wisdom, technical knowledge, assistance, support, empathy and respect throughout, and often beyond, the school. As a GTA, you are expected to serve as a mentor to students. This may include sharing your experience, knowledge, expertise, providing assistance and support, and maintaining an empathic, respectful as well as trusting relationship with your mentees. As a GTA you are also expected to identify a mentor network for yourself. The modern trends in mentorship are that you pick several mentors in specific areas and create a mentor network.

Being in both the mentor and mentee position will help you to

- Acquire new knowledge and skills
- Learn new techniques for collaborating and networking
- Develop a sense of scholarly citizenship by understanding your role in a larger educational enterprise

Source(s): <https://grad.uw.edu/for-students-and-post-docs/core-programs/mentoring/>

# **Bringing Out the Best in Your Students**

## **Bringing Out the Best in Your Students**

Students are in charge of their own situation, whether they choose to work hard and study, or not do anything about their grade. But you as the instructor can use methods to help bring out the best in them, and maybe help them succeed in your class.

1. Require students to attend class. Take attendance – (experience shows that course pass rates increase when attendance counts!)
  - a. In your syllabus, clearly explain how unexcused absences will impact final grade
  - b. Give quizzes periodically throughout the semester and/or on days that students are likely to skip class
  - c. Talk to students about why you think attendance is important.
2. Provide timely feedback on tests and assignments
  - a. Design your syllabus so that students will have a good idea of what their grade is for the course by midterm. This will give them time to make changes or get help!
  - b. Make grading a priority and posting grades where students can see them on BlackBoard
  - c. Provide ways for students to review their test errors so they can learn from them
3. Get to know your students as individuals
  - a. Use photo rosters to learn student names in and before class.
  - b. Encourage students to visit you during office hours.
  - c. If class size permits, include an individual or group meeting with the instructor as part of the course requirements.
  - d. For disruptive or inappropriate behavior, make appointments with students individually to discuss. Do not engage with a student dispute in a class setting.
4. Encourage Academic Integrity Among Your Students
  - a. Discuss the Academic Honor Policy at the beginning of the course.
  - b. Do not use the same exam for different sections and semesters.
  - c. Make it difficult for students to plagiarize by creating unique writing assignments.
  - d. Require students to submit their assignments through an originality checker such as Safe Assignment (on Blackboard) or [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com).
  - e. Meet with a student immediately if you suspect an academic honesty violation. Contact your supervising faculty member and discuss how best to handle the situation.

5. Teach students Study Techniques
  - a. Use graphic organizers to scaffold learning for students
  - b. Show students how to best take notes in your class. (Posted PowerPoint slides do not make good notes).
  - c. Make study resources available on Blackboard
  - d. Keep your students actively engaged by requiring them to do something more than passively absorb your lesson (e.g., panel discussions, student debates, or team-based learning)
  - e. Describe how past successful students did well in your class.
  - f. To get better writing from all students, require early drafts and/or stage your major assignment due dates over a span of weeks.
  - g. Encourage all students to use the Writing Center. If writing is a large part of your courses, you can schedule a consultant to make a brief orientation presentation to your class.
  - h. For term papers and lengthy assignments, set due date for benchmark assignment and provide formative feedback.
6. Make Policies Clear and Concise
  - a. Review your syllabus on the first day to highlight important policies, dates, and expectations. Then check for understanding.
  - b. Make use of grading rubrics for assignments and explain these rubrics to students prior to assignments.
  - c. Take time to check the clarity of your instructions for assignments and establish deadlines well in advance.
  - d. Provide students with examples of high quality work to clarify what is expected.

# Developing A Teaching Philosophy

## **Developing a Teaching Philosophy**

As a GTA, you may be asked to compose your teaching philosophy (TP). A teaching philosophy is a narrative statement that includes:

your conception of teaching and learning and a rationale for your method of teaching.

A teaching philosophy typically contains:

- Educational purpose and learning goals for students
- Teaching methods
- Methods of student assessment
- Teaching evaluation tools used to gauge the value of your teaching

General Formatting Suggestions:

There is no right or wrong format, however, here are some tips that will help you with writing your teaching philosophy.

1. A TP is usually less than 3 pages.
2. Use present tense, in most cases, and write in first-person as it is easier for your audience to read.
3. Be descriptive in explaining your teaching strategies and methods so that other can “see” you in the classroom
4. If you are writing this as a part of a job application, remember that the search committee may review several TPs from different applicants. Therefore, try to make your TP unique and memorable

Sources:

<http://gradschool.cornell.edu/career-services/teaching-philosophy-statement>

<http://ucat.osu.edu/professional-development/teaching-portfolio/philosophy/>

# Teaching TIPS for TAs

## **Teaching TIPS for TAs**

A seminal source for teaching may be found in *“Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education”* by Chickering and Gamson (1986). Each principle is intended to provide a foundation for good teaching practice. Here is a concise detail of each “good practice” to implement during your time as a GTA at TAMU-CC:

1. Encourage contact between students and faculty. The most important factor that influences student motivation and involvement is the amount of contact a student has with the instructor in and out of class. Knowing faculty well enhances student’s intellectual commitment.
2. Encourage cooperation among students. Collaborative and social environments are much more effective than competitive and isolated ones when it comes to student learning. Working with others increases involvement in the educational process. The process of sharing one’s own ideas and responding to others’ reactions improve thinking and deepen understanding.
3. Encourage active learning. Students learn more by doing. The more they talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives, the more likely those students will be able to internalize the information presented in class.
4. Give prompt feedback. Identifying errors in thinking is a key to learning. Providing students with appropriate feedback allows students to assess their progress toward mastering course objectives and motivates them to work in the direction of mastery. Students need assistance to assess their previous knowledge and competence. In addition, students need plenty of opportunities to test their knowledge and abilities and constructive feedback aimed at helping the students to improve.
5. Emphasize time on task. Effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty hinges on time management. Teaching students requires time management skills and defining accurate expectations for how long it takes to master material will increase teaching effectiveness.
6. Communicate high expectations. High expectations are important for both high and low performing students. Expecting great things from all students creates a self-fulfilling prophecy in which students will strive to accomplish what they believe is expected of them.
7. Respect diverse talents and ways of learning. There is no one perfect method of teaching to all students. Students bring a wide variety of talents and styles of learning into the classroom. Students need the opportunity to showcase their talents and learn in ways that are familiar to them. They can then be challenged to learn in novel ways that may be as easy for them.

*SOURCE: Chickering, A.W., and Gamson, Z.F. (1991). Applying the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. New Directions for Teaching and Learning. Number 47, Fall 1991. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.*

# **Factors Affecting Academic Performance**

## **Factors Affecting Academic Performance**

<b>Factors We Cannot Control</b>	<b>Factors We Can Control</b>
<b>Self-esteem</b>	Seating and classroom layout
<b>Nutrition</b>	Organization
<b>Sleep</b>	Teaching strategy
<b>Home Related Situations</b>	Assignment types
<b>Student Attitudes Towards Class</b>	Appropriate and constructive feedback
<b>Student Goals</b>	Classroom learning environment
<b>Academic Maturity</b>	Fairness
<b>Interest in subject matter</b>	Instructor-student engagement

Sources:

- <http://www.brighthubeducation.com/teaching-methods-tips/34757-factors-which-positively-or-negatively-affect-student-learning/>
- <http://www.pie.fsu.edu/content/download/168110/1474136/2015-16%20TA%20Handbook.pdf>
- *Adapted from Florida State University, The Graduate School, TA Handbook.*

# **Techniques to Engage Students:**

## **Use of Active Learning**

## **Techniques to Engage Students: Use of Active Learning**

### **What is Active Learning?**

According to Myers and Jones (1993), active learning, in contrast to traditional classroom delivery method in which the instructor is active and doing most of the work and students receive information passively, “involves providing opportunities for students to meaningfully talk and listen, write, read, and reflect on the content, ideas, issues, and concerns of an academic subject” (p.6).

There are two basic assumptions behind active learning:

- a. learning is an active process by nature, and
- b. different people learn in different ways.

The first assumption suggests that students learn best by doing and the second suggests that teachers should use multiple classroom delivery styles to engage and successfully deliver class content. Active learning not only allows the students to engage and be a part of learning, but also helps students to expand their thinking abilities.

For more information, please visit <https://www.cte.cornell.edu/documents/presentations/Eisen-Handout.pdf>.

### **Creating Traditional Assessments**

- Your test should measure what is taught in the course.
- The distribution of the questions should be proportional to the time you spend on the topic. For example, if you talked about topic A for two weeks but talked about topic B for a week, then the number of the questions about topic A should be more than the number of questions for topic B.
- If you are going to use a pre-existing instrument, select one that shows evidence of reliability and validity.
- Avoid biases (e.g. gender, race, culture).
- Arrange items from easy to difficult.
- Construct items that require knowledge of the subject matter.
- Cluster items of similar format together.
- Make sure to solve all the questions to check if the answer is accurately provided (especially if you are using multiple choice questions).
- Provide test directions, space for name and date.
- Proofread the test before sharing with students.

## **Administering Tests**

- Arrive to the place in which the test will be administered in advance of the scheduled time.
- Have extra copies of the exam.
- Minimize possible distractions.
- Review the test instructions with the students.

Ask the students to check for any error or missing pages

- Remind the students to write their names and date the exam form.
- Monitor students from an angle that would allow you to see all students, if possible
- Give time warnings as discussed during the instructions
- While collecting the test check if the students wrote their names

## **Grading**

- Prepare an answer key for the closed test items and key points sought
- Grade students' exams/papers/quizzes blindly- without seeing any identifier information
- Take breaks during grading.
- Double-check the final score.
- Take notes on the exams or use stick notes to provide an explanation for why point(s) were deducted and what should have been included (if an essay question).
- Record scores and keep the exams in a locked file cabinet.

## **Strategies for Fostering Diversity in the Classroom**

Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC) is one of the most diverse campuses in the Texas A&M University System. To illustrate, there were 11,100 enrolled students at TAMU-CC in Spring 2016. Of these students, 4997 were Hispanic, 4310 were White, 732 were Black, 493 were international, 310 were Asian, 106 were multicultural, 33 were Native American, and 6 were National Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Davis (1999) listed several strategies for fostering diversity and overcoming stereotypes and biases. Below are some strategies that would be useful in your classes.

- Recognize any biases or stereotypes you may have.
- Consider the individuality of the students and respect each student for who they are.

- Use unbiased language patterns or case examples that would not offend, exclude, or demean any groups.
- Try to understand and appreciate the cultural climate in your classroom.
- Become more informed about the history and culture of groups other than your own.
- Treat equally in acknowledging students' good work. Be culturally sensitive when using public acknowledgement.
- Be aware that not all students will recognize cultural, literal, or historical references familiar to dominant culture.
- Emphasize the significance of considering different approaches and viewpoints.
- Make it clear that you value all comments.
- Re-evaluate the diversity aspect of your pedagogical method.
- Be considerate of students whose first language is not English.
- Provide opportunities for all students to get to know each other (e.g., ice breakers, group assignments, group presentations).

### **Conducting Laboratory Sessions**

Although the goal of laboratory classes will vary from department to department, most lab sessions are intended to provide students with (a) opportunities to discover the practical applications of their discipline in a “safe” and controlled environment, and (b) an introduction into the rules and practice of, and research in the discipline.

To conduct effective laboratory sessions:

- Align laboratory activities with the rest of the curriculum.
- Meet with your department professor in advance to discuss lab session expectations.
- Prepare before your lab classes.
- Familiarize yourself with the equipment and materials in the lab before your actual class time.
- Interact with all students during labs.
- Break the demonstrations into small steps so that students can understand better and get a chance to ask questions.
- Note students' progress/struggles and employ teachable moments as appropriate and address individuality. Determine whether students understood the lab.

- Read, evaluate, and return lab reports in a timely manner with helpful feedback.

Sources:

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/lab-classes/>

[http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p7\\_6](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p7_6)

<http://teaching.unsw.edu.au/laboratory-teaching>

## Appendix Syllabus Template

Course Number and Section

Name of Instructor

Class meeting time and location

Office:

Fall 2013

Office Hours:

Office Telephone:

E-Mail:

### Course Name

#### Course Description

Insert a brief description of the course. This can be copied from the course catalog.

#### Learning Objectives

(Student learning objectives)

- 1
- 2
- 3 and so on

#### Major Course Requirements

( Brief description of each major course requirement – assignments, projects, quizzes and exams, etc., and associated points or weights of each)

#### Required or Recommended Readings

(Lists of required/recommended texts and reading)

***Textbook:***

***Recommended or Supplemental Reading:***

***Website:*** (required if on-line course)

The Website that accompanies and is coordinated with this course ... [www.learnthesubject.com](http://www.learnthesubject.com)

***List of Supplies*** (if applicable)

#### State Adopted Proficiencies/TEExES competencies (COE)

## Course Policies

### *Attendance/tardiness*

### *Late work and Make-up Exams*

### *Extra Credit*

### *Cell Phone/Electronic Device Usage*

### *Academic Integrity/Plagiarism.*

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one's own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in ( ).

### *Dropping a Class*

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. ( ) is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of "W" this term.

### *Preferred methods of scholarly citations*

### *Classroom/professional behavior*

**Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor's ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.**

### **Statement of Civility (can be in place of classroom/professional behavior)**

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

### ***Grade Appeals\****

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university\\_rules/index.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean's office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost.

### ***Disabilities Accommodations\****

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

### **Statement of Academic Continuity**

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

\*Required by SACS or HB2504

## Syllabus

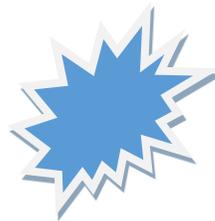
*(course outline)*

Date(s)	General description of subject or activity of class session(s)
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Etc.	

Required



Recommended



## NOTES