

TA Job Description for Bio216 and Bio217

Unusual or unique aspects of the course

This is a 4-credit lecture and laboratory course studying the structure and function of human tissues, organs and systems. Topics include homeostasis, basic chemistry, cell structure and function, tissues, metabolism, and organ systems. Laboratories include bench top and interactive experiments, anatomy, histology and non-invasive experiments on human subjects and virtual experiments and dissections. TAs are expected to have taken Anatomy and Physiology courses and be comfortable with physiology concepts.

What aspects of the course / specific tasks are TAs involved in (what is the role of the TA in the course)?

(e.g. do they grade (and if so what), are they expected to do lab prep, design class exercises etc).

Ideally this will describe an expected percentage of time spent on different tasks.

TAs will:

- help with collecting materials and setting up and putting away lab equipment
- lead recitation. Recitation will focus on reviewing lecture materials and practice problem solving
- create questions/work problems for recitations
- Track recitation attendance
- Attend weekly TA meetings
- Proctor lab quizzes, lecture quizzes, and exams
- Attend labs and help students with lab work
- Grading is the one of the main responsibilities of TAs. TAs will grade weekly lab quizzes, weekly lab exercises, and study guides (Dr. McIlvain will grade lecture quizzes and exams)

Expectations for TAs (things that should be specified in the job description for the specific course)

1. TA meetings (schedule and duration of meetings outside class between professor and TA(s)) There are weekly TA meetings which last 30min-1 hour.
2. Office Hours (schedule and duration of office hours TA should hold, if any) TAs are not required to hold regular office hours.
3. Expectation for TAs meeting with students outside office hours TAs are expected to arrange a meeting with a student if requested, however TAs are not expected to provide one-on-one weekly tutoring.
4. Procedures to follow if TA is ill. If TA is unable to attend recitation or proctoring, they should notify Dr McIlvain as soon as possible so alternative plan can be made.
5. Response time for emails from the faculty member 24-48 business hours, but the sooner the better.
6. Response time for emails from students in the class. 24-48 business hours, but the sooner the better.
7. Turn-around time for grading and inputting grades in blackboard. 1 week after the submission deadline.

Commitments by faculty member (things that should be specified in the job description for the specific course)

1. Time within which the faculty member will respond to emails from TAs 24-48 business hours, however I try to respond as soon as possible.
2. Timing of when grading rubrics, course materials etc will be provided to TAs All course materials and rubrics are provided to TAs before the semester starts. If updates/adjustments are made, the rubrics are available at least a week in advance of class.
3. If TAs are responsible for developing class activities, the length of time before class by which faculty will provide TAs with any materials that they need. This should be at least a week before the class time.

General Biology Department Expectations of TAs and faculty

TAs should work a maximum of 20 hours a week on their TA responsibilities.

TA contracts run from two weeks before classes start until December 31st (fall semester) and from January 1st until a week after graduation (spring semester). [2021/22 dates were Fall – 8/16/21-12/31/21; Spring – 1/1/22 – 5/15/22].

Faculty should respect the fact that TAs also have course commitments and research responsibilities. While TAs are expected to be available for class periods and weekly TA meetings for large courses, faculty should be as flexible as possible in when other tasks are performed. They should also provide as much notice as possible of what these tasks are and any time commitments outside class (for example for lab preparation).

Faculty are encouraged to make the role of TAs in the course explicit in their syllabus and talk to students in their classes about the essential roles of TAs in the course, as well as how students should treat TAs and what they can and cannot expect from TAs (i.e. be polite, TAs are not available 24/7, expected turn-around time for grading). They are also encouraged to emphasize the international and team orientated nature of science in their classes and to have TAs introduce themselves to classes as professionals integral to the course mission.

TAs are expected to provide feedback to faculty if they find that they are working more than 20 hours a week on TA tasks and/or if the distribution of time spent on different tasks is different from the job description.

TAs and faculty are encouraged to reach out to the Graduate Program Director in the first place (or the Associate Chair or Chair of the Biology Department if that is not possible) if they feel that these expectations are not being met.