

TA Job Description for Class Bio 471/671

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

This is a lab course that meets twice a week, one shorter 55 minutes “lecture” period and one longer 4 hour lab period (though some lab activities do occur during the shorter “lecture” period). The TA assists the professor by attending all course meetings, preparing reagents for the lab, helping students complete the lab activities, grading lab reports, and meeting with students who have questions about the material or the lab reports.

Expectations for TAs

The TA will meet with the professor the week before each lab to discuss what needs to be done for the next lab period (30 minutes). During that meeting, the professor will provide a list of needed supplies and reagents to the TA which should have prepared before that start of the lab period they are needed for. The TA will be in the classroom and unlock the lab course room 15 minutes before the start of each class period. The TA will attend all class meetings, listen to all lectures and assist students with lab activities. The TA will meet with students as needed when they have questions about the lab reports or preparation for quizzes. They will grade lab reports and a rubric will be provided by the professor on the due date of the lab report. The TA should finish the grading within two weeks of the lab report due date. If the TA is ill they should notify the professor by email as soon as possible and before the start of class. The professor is responsible for preparing and presenting the lecture material but the TA if interested is welcome to present some of the lectures if they would like the experience. The TA should respond within 24 hours to professor’s emails and 48 hours to students emails. The professor will respond to TA emails within 24 hours.

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.