**Introduction of the Letter of Agreement for Users**

Graduate TAs contribute significantly to and advance the teaching mission of our institution. They support faculty in their instructional roles in multiple ways: they may conduct discussion sections, recitation sections, laboratory sections or studios linked to a main course, they may hold office hours, lead review sessions, provide feedback on and grade student work, author exam questions, develop course materials, and assist faculty in the course of record. Further along these TAs may design and teach their own courses as Graduate Part-time Instructors (GPTIs) where they may have their own TAs. Faculty supervisors (Instructors of Record) play a central role in preparing TAs for teaching in the discipline and serve as mentors in a graduate student’s teaching career. TAs’ knowledge of discipline-specific pedagogies that are tailored to address students’ learning needs provides the foundation for effective teaching. Faculty hiring committees expect candidates to demonstrate their teaching effectiveness in the discipline, discuss their professional growth, and provide evidence of the impact of their teaching. Thus, hiring committees both value and expect that graduate students will have received preparation, support, and feedback on instruction as part of their graduate training.

Graduate TAs, especially those hired for the first time, often are anxious about their new instructional role. Many have only recently graduated from their undergraduate institutions, in which they safely sat in their classes as students. Now, in the course of only a few months, they are expected to teach students and to participate as members of an instructional team. Their anxiety tends to stem from not knowing what exactly their responsibilities may entail. Faculty may reduce this anxiety by providing a clear description of the position goals and duties as well as means of feedback and performance evaluation.

Faculty supervisors should meet with TAs before the semester begins to clearly define and discuss position goals, expectations, workload, responsibilities, and performance evaluation. In addition, faculty should share course syllabi, relevant materials, and information pertaining to the students and expectations for learning and performance. The pre-semester meeting offers an opportunity to share faculty’s teaching philosophy and highlight ways of engaging the students with the course content. Such an initial meeting starts a conversation about the teaching and learning process, sets the stage for ongoing questions and dialogue, and helps reduce the likelihood of problems later in the semester.

The Center for Teaching & Learning has developed a Instructor/Teaching Assistant Letter of Agreement which aligns with the [Graduate School’s Advising Agreement](https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/professional-development/mentoring/mentoring-resources) and is based on the work of several departments who paved the way with their own agreements. We thank them all for their efforts and are pleased to offer this template for educators to utilize with their own teaching assistants and faculty. Feel free to download and edit this document as you see fit.

For further questions, please contact the Center for Teaching & Learning: [ctl@colorado.edu](mailto:ctl@colorado.edu).

**Instructor/Teaching Assistant Letter of Agreement**

This letter of agreement outlines standards for the lecturer/faculty/GPTI (hereby referred to as instructor) and teaching assistant (TA) working relationship as established by the Department of xxx at the University of Colorado Boulder. By signing below, both individuals agree to abide by the expectations established in this letter of agreement in order to ensure a mutually positive working relationship and a high-quality educational experience for the course’s students.

### Guidelines for the TA:

* **Grading –** Essays, exams and lab reports should be returned to students not less than one week, and not more than two weeks after they are submitted. (It is up to the TA, not the instructor, if the TA would like to grade and return homework faster than within one week). TAs may be asked to alphabetize papers, exams, and quizzes, and to enter them into Canvas.
* **Honor Code Violations** - The TA will
* **Attendance –** The TA will attend all regular course meetings. The TA will communicate with the instructor should an issue arise.
* **Classroom Participation –** The TA may be asked to lead review sessions or coordinate group work during class time. If the TA desires to present a class lecture, and the instructor approves, they should work with the instructor to choose a date and discuss lecture content. Note that this is contingent on whether the instructor allows TAs to lecture/run discussions.
* **Labs and Recitations -** The TA will be prepared and on time for their assigned lab(s) and recitation(s) each week.
* **Resource Acquisition** – The TA may be asked to make copies of readings, to scan course material for posting online, or to obtain materials from the library. The TA should work with the instructor to ensure that course materials are available in a timely manner for class.
* **Educational Feedback –** When applicable, both the instructor and the TA should aim to provide students with the kind of feedback on their assignments that will encourage learning by indicating how students can improve their performance.
* **Office Hours and Student Communication –** The TA will hold xx weekly, scheduled office hour(s) to meet with students. While the TA should make an effort to respond to emails and requests for meetings with students, the TA will not be expected to meet unreasonable demands for excessive meetings, for answering emails late at night, or to conference with a student who does not try to schedule a meeting in a timely fashion.
* **Weekly Meetings –** The TA should be available for weekly meetings with the instructor.
* **Proctor Exams –** The TA should plan to assist the instructor in proctoring all exams, including the final.
* **Performance Review(s)–** Instructor and TA should meet once, but ideally twice during the semester to formally check in by discussing the class, their working relationship, and areas of success and improvement. Please use the worksheets at the end of the letter of agreement to record the outcomes of these meetings.
* **Absences** - In the event of illness or other needed time away from campus, the TA will communicate ahead of time with the instructor of record to coordinate a suitable replacement or necessary materials for students in their absence.

### Guidelines for the Instructor:

* **Syllabus –** The instructor should provide both the TA with a syllabus by the end of the week before classes begin.
* **Rubrics –** The instructor should always provide clear rubrics and grading keys. In order to ensure consistent grading practices, the department encourages the instructor and TA(s) to grade several papers together before grading separately.
* **Grading –** The instructor is ultimately responsible for the final grades and should manage the course grading and the TA’s function as an educator within that course with that responsibility in mind. Instructors may ask their TAs to enter grades on Canvas, but they must confirm the grades before the grades are released to the student. Essays, exams and lab reports should be returned to students not less than one week, and not more than two weeks after they are submitted.
* **Weekly Meetings –** The instructor will hold brief, weekly meetings with the TA(s).
* **Mentorship** – The instructor has the unique opportunity to serve as a mentor to the TA. The instructor  should therefore assist the TA in developing their own tools as an educator, including grading, developing lectures and course material, and – as applicable – meeting with students. In unfamiliar situations, a TA can reach out to their instructor for guidance.
* **Performance Review(s)–** Instructor and TA should meet once, but ideally twice during the semester to formally check in by discussing the class, their working relationship, and areas of success and improvement. Please use the worksheets at the end of the letter of agreement to record the outcomes of these meetings.

The instructor should tailor the duties of the TA to the needs of their course. The department expects that the TA should be able to commit to all of the aforementioned duties, and that while the instructor is not required to assign all of them, the instructor may also require no more beyond this list without the approval of the assigned supervisor. (In such unusual cases, please attach an addendum of explanation to this form, signed by all parties.) In some cases, the department may assign a TA additional duties either within or beyond the course, based upon individual appointments.

Instructors should know that a TA contract is a 10-50% appointment, and each TA is contracted for up to 20 hours a week of work per class. The workload is not always equally distributed over the semester, and some weeks are heavier and others lighter. Please keep in touch about the hours the TA is spending on the class workload.

Once the instructor has filled in the duties required for the TA for their individual course below – in accordance with the department expectations outlined above – the instructor and TA should sign this letter of agreement and submit it to the Graduate Program Assistant/Director of Graduate Studies/Chair by the end of the second week of the semester.

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| --- | --- |
| Semester: | Course Title/Number: |

Assigned Duties:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Print Instructor Name | Instructor Signature | Date |
| \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Print Teaching Assistant Name  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Student Signature  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Date  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
|  |  |  |

**Instructor: TA:**

# Required Performance Review  #1

## Semester/Year:

Please know that the intent of this meeting is to focus the TA/Instructor relationship on mutual support and on learning and growing as educators.

Questions to complete:

**Both:** From your perspective, how is class going? What is going well? What challenges have come up? How is your workload? Is it within the contracted hourly amount? If not, what strategies can be employed to address this issue?

**Instructor:** What is one area where your TA is doing really well? Where is one area for the TA to focus on improving for the rest of the semester?

**TA:** How is your instructor supporting you as a TA and how could they do more/differently to help you do your best? Are students responding well to the instructor’s materials: syllabus & rubrics?

GPTI/TA only: Does the TA see opportunities for the class or for the students that the GPTI might benefit from? 

**Instructor: TA:**

# Optional Performance Review  #2

## Semester/Year:

Please know that the intent of this meeting is to focus the TA/Instructor relationship on mutual support and on learning and growing as educators.

Questions to complete:

**Both:** Have you addressed the challenges that you identified at Required Meeting #1? Has it made a difference? How can you fine tune it? Are there additional challenges that you need to address at this point? Please check in again about your workload. Is it within the contracted hourly amount? If not, what strategies can be employed to address this issue?

**Instructor:** What is another area where your TA is doing really well? Is there another area for the TA to focus on improving for the rest of the semester?

**TA:** How is your instructor supporting you? Has your instructor acted on the opportunities discussed in the first meeting?