

Faculty Handbook for Graders and Course Managers (CMs)

1. Introduction

The department considers its Instructional Support Staff (ISS), including graders and graduate student Course Managers (CMs), to be invaluable members of our instructional staff. This handbook serves to define the roles the graders and CMs serve, including their rights, responsibilities, and support mechanisms that should be in place for them.

All course instructors, graders, and CMs are expected to be aware of the policies in this handbook. Similarly, Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) who coordinate with the graders and CMs are also expected to be aware of the policies in this handbook. This information is also available on our website. Instructors who have questions about these rules should talk to the undergraduate Associate Chairs. Graders and CMs who have questions or concerns should talk with their graduate advisor.

2. Graduate Student Roles:

(i) **Grader:** The graders serve primarily as graders for the course. They may also help with other minor logistical tasks, such as managing the communications platforms (including Piazza). The graders do not take an instructional role, and they should not be tasked with direct teaching, or developing course infrastructure such as assignments, quizzes, or lecture notes. If a grader wishes to take on additional responsibilities (e.g., office hours), they are welcome to do so in agreement with the instructor and within the constraints of their allotted hours.

(ii) **Course Manager (CM):** Large courses may receive additional support in the form of Course Managers. The CMs are intended to provide additional logistical and administrative support for the instructors and TAs, including coordinating with disability services, booking rooms, updating Canvas, and managing Piazza. Additionally, the CMs may also contribute to any necessary grading. The CMs may also take a more instructional role than the graders, by holding office hours and discussing graded work with students. Furthermore, the CMs may write solutions and rubrics, provided they are validated by an instructor or TA. However, the CMs are not responsible for lecturing, hosting recitations, or running exam review sessions. While the CMs may help faculty with creating assignments and quizzes, the course instructor or GTAs should carefully check the assignments and quizzes before releasing them to students. If a CM wishes to take on additional responsibilities, they are welcome to do so in agreement with the instructor and within the constraints of their allotted hours.

(iii) **Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs):** The GTAs are actively involved in supporting the instructors to ensure that the course runs smoothly. GTA responsibilities include teaching recitations, creating course infrastructure (e.g., assignments, quizzes, solutions, recitation materials), holding office hours, managing Piazza, and grading as appropriate. Furthermore, the GTAs may serve as the point of contact for the Graders/CMs, which includes designing rubrics, answering content and grading-related questions, and working with the Graders/CMs to ensure that the grading is completed in an appropriate time frame. It is up to the faculty members how

to distribute work among their TA. It is perfectly acceptable to have some TAs have different roles from others as long as none of the TAs are exceeding their 20 hour appointment.

3. Hiring:

(i) **Graders/CMs:** It is up to the individual instructor to hire the individual graders and CMs to cover the allotted hours. The graders and CMs should not work more than the hours for which they have been hired. International students may also not be hired to work more than 20 hours/week in total, though they may be hired for multiple smaller appointments that sum to 20 hours/week. CM positions are 20 hours per week by default. Domestic students may be hired to work up to 25 hours/week; note that the extra 5 hours requires approval from the student's advisor and the Graduate School. For PhD students, they should discuss with their faculty advisor. Domestic Masters students should discuss with Rajshree Shrestha (CS) or Ryan Edington (TCP).

(ii) **GTA:** GTA positions are allocated by the department and are by default hired for 20 hours per week. The GTAs workload should not exceed 20 hours/week.

4. Policies:

This section contains a number of policy for utilizing the graders and CMs. These guidelines are designed to help ensure that the graders and CMs are able to effectively and appropriately support the courses to which they have been assigned. Section 4.1 contains Departmental Guidelines, which should be adopted in any course that is supported by graders or CMs. Section 4.2 contains additional, optional suggestions that are considered best practices for utilizing the graders and CMs.

4.1 Departmental Guidelines:

- Graders/CMs should not work more than their allotted hours. This is particularly an issue for international students, where working more than 20 hours in a given week can jeopardize their visa status. This could lead to their deportation.
- Instructors must approve grader/CM timesheets within the deadlines as outlined by CS Team, so that the grader/CMs can get paid on time.
- Each course should have a designated and accessible point of contact for the Grader/CMs. This point of contact could be an instructor or GTA.
- Grading deadlines should be a minimum of 7 days from when the assignments are available to be graded.
 - This window should begin when the graders can start grading, which may be at a later point than the assignment deadline for the students.
 - For project milestones or other large assignments, this deadline may need to be longer.

- For work that needs to be graded quickly before a major exam, it may be appropriate to shorten the deadlines. We recommend giving the graders as much time as possible to grade, as well as trying to ease their burden whenever possible (e.g., by taking on extra grading to help them, by trying to lighten their workload the next week, etc.).
- Graders/CMs should have correct solutions prior to when they start grading.
 - Graders/CMs may contribute to writing the solutions, but they should be validated by a GTA or instructor prior to when they begin grading. If they do contribute to drafting solutions, this counts as time spent working. We recommend factoring in Graders/CM hours when determining an assignment's length.
 - Graders/CMs should have a rubric prior to grading. They may draft a rubric, but this should be approved by an instructor or a GTA first. If they do contribute to drafting rubrics, this counts as time spent working.
 - We recommend the GTA or instructor draft a rubric and grade a dozen or so solutions to help ensure that common mistakes are incorporated into the rubric (particularly those mistakes that may not have been considered prior to grading).
 - Provide guidance on designing detailed rubrics, so as to award partial credit, provide actionable feedback for the students, and reduce grade disputes.
 - Provide guidance on how to give feedback, including level of specificity. Such guidance could include (but is not limited to):
 - Identifying common or important issues to highlight when grading.
 - Setting up 0-point rubric items on Gradescope to be used for feedback.
 - Highlighting specific issues with a student submission, rather than indicating that there were issues. (I.e., "This was what was wrong at line x." vs. "Line x is wrong.").
 - Trying to debug code vs. providing inputs for which the student submission failed.
- A designated point of contact should be available to answer grading questions as they arise.
- Should graders/CMs be required to handle grade disputes, there should be clear guidelines for how the graders should handle these as well as clear syllabus policies for how students should make these requests.
 - Internal Guidance: Ensure that graders/CMs have clear guidelines for how to handle grade disputes, including:
 - Correcting legitimate mistakes in grading,
 - Navigating instances where students want to negotiate for points,

- Navigating instances of students who continue to dispute their grades after having their regrade request declined, and
- Students who are clearly combative.

- We recommend that the graders/CMs only handle legitimate mistakes in grading, and that the other cases be directed to an instructor or GTA. It may be the case that the GTAs need to direct particularly problematic cases to an instructor.

- Syllabus Guidelines: Effective syllabus policies serve to insulate and protect all members of the instructional staff (including Faculty, graders/CMs, and GTAs) from difficult situations. We recommend the following guidelines:
 - Students should have a limited timeframe in which they can request a regrade. This serves to prevent them from arguing at the end of the semester about grades they received early in the course.
 - Require students to explain why a mistake was made in grading.
 - Prohibit grade disputes in grader/CM/GTA office hours.
 - For in-person office hours, grader/CM/GTA office hours are usually in public places. It is a FERPA violation for them to discuss student grades in office hours.

 - Provide a centralized mechanism (e.g., a Google form) for students to submit regrade requests. (Recommended, but not Mandatory.)
 - This serves to minimize emails or Piazza posts, which can easily be overlooked.
 - This also serves to prevent abuses via the Gradescope regrade request feature.

4.2 Best Practices:

- In upper division courses, we recommend that graders/CMs not be involved in writing solutions. This should be left to the instructor or GTAs.

- Graders/CMs should not handle grade disputes. This responsibility should be left to the instructors and GTAs.

- Explicitly welcome and encourage graders/CMs to raise concerns about overworking.
 - In particular, explicitly encourage the graders/CMs to track the time they spend working on the course.
 - Furthermore, after the first couple weeks, explicitly reach out to the graders/CMs to better calibrate their workloads.

- Ask the graders/CMs about their schedules. The graders/CMs are likely taking 3-5 graduate courses in a given semester and may also be doing research. So they have a lot of deadlines. When possible, we advocate trying to give them deadlines that minimize conflicts with their other responsibilities.

- Explicitly encourage the graders/CMs to voice their opinions and raise concerns, especially as it pertains to their roles.
 - In particular, explicitly encourage the graders/CMs to raise concerns that they have.
 - Furthermore, periodically reach out to the graders/CMs to solicit their input and ask about any concerns they have.
 - Invite the graders/CMs to be part of the weekly instructional staff meetings, particularly if the graders/CMs are involved in more than grading. This time should also count as hours worked.