



TEACHING ASSISTANT ALLOCATION COMMITTEE

Policies for CNAS Life Science TA Appointments

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This manual and other documents that support the life science TA allocation process can be found at:

- TAonline (<http://Taonline.ucr.edu>)

The Teaching Assistant Allocation Committee

CHARGE

In 2004, the CNAS Deans Office established the CNAS Life Science TA Allocation Committee (TAAC) to create transparent mechanisms for allocation of life science teaching assistantships (TAships; Academic Student Employee; ASE). Allocation of life science TAships is a complex process since excellence in the teaching delivered to our undergraduates and the training needs of department-based and interdepartmental graduate programs must both be accommodated. The TAAC was charged with the following objectives:

- (1) To make the TA allocation process more transparent.
- (2) To define CNAS criteria to guide TAAC for student appointments to TAships.
- (3) To provide to all graduate programs in the life sciences that require their students to serve as a Teaching Assistant for one or more quarters a mechanism for their students to fulfill this requirement in a timely fashion.
- (4) To create an interactive forum to assure “resources” are appropriately distributed across departmental and interdepartmental graduate programs and that CNAS is meeting the educational needs of our undergraduates.
- (5) To assure that TA workloads are appropriate and balanced across all life science classes at both the upper- and lower-division level.
- (6) To assure that departments and interdepartmental graduate programs have an active voice in the TA allocation process.
- (7) To create a TA allocation plan that will allow both Departmental and Interdepartmental Graduate programs to plan for teaching needs and to use TAs in the recruitment process.
- (8) To assure that students, professors and programs understand the commitment made and responsibilities accepted when a graduate student is appointed as a teaching assistant.

TAAC is composed of representatives from each department-based and interdepartmental graduate program in the life sciences in CNAS. TAAC provides recommendations to the Divisional Dean of Life Sciences for allocation of the appropriate number of TAs per class. TAAC provides recommendations for the assignment of specific students for TAships to the Chairs of departments delivering the curriculum. These recommendations are provided after discussions with full TAAC member participation. TAAC has developed TAonline (<http://Taonline.ucr.edu>) in conjunction with the College and UCR’s Computing and Communications and created the materials to guide students, instructors, academic coordinators, and major professors through the TA allocation process. The TAAC members for the current academic year are listed at TAonline and in Table 1.

The policies and mechanisms for TA allocation are iterated below. While these policies are designed to assure adequate communications between students, faculty, and staff, TAAC realizes that policies will need to be continually evaluated and refined to meet the needs of the College. The current policies have been developed over the past three years with consultation with departments and interdepartmental graduate programs, Graduate Student Staff Advisors, and Academic Coordinators.

Table 1. 2007-08 TAAC Representatives		
Department/Interdepartmental Graduate Program ^A	Graduate Program TAAC Member	Contact information
Biochemistry & Molecular Biology (Graduate Advisor)	Frank Sauer	Frank.sauer@ucr.edu
Biology Teaching Committee (Chair)	David Reznick	David.reznick@ucr.edu
Cell Biology and Neuroscience (Department Rep)	Raphael Zidovetzki	Raphael.zidovetzki@ucr.edu
Cell, Molecular & Developmental Biology (Director)	Peter Atkinson	Peter.atkinson@ucr.edu
Entomology (Chair ISAC)	Bill Walton	William.walton@ucr.edu
Environmental Toxicology (Graduate Advisor)	Janet Arey	Janet.arey@ucr.edu
Ecology, Evolution & Organismal Biology (Graduate Advisor)	Daphne Fairbairn	Daphne.fairbairn@ucr.edu
Genetics, Genomics & Bioinformatics (Director)	Isgouhi Kaloshian	Isgouhi.kaloshian@ucr.edu
Microbiology (Director)	James Borneman	James.borneman@ucr.edu
Nematology (Department Rep)	Ed Platzer	Edward.platzer@ucr.edu
Neuroscience (Director)	Mike Adams	Michael.adams@ucr.edu
Plant Biology (Vice Chair for Teaching)	Patty Springer	Patricia.springer@ucr.edu
Plant Pathology (Graduate Advisor)	Howard Judelson	Howard.judelson@ucr.edu
CNAS (Divisional Dean for Life Sciences)	Linda Walling	Linda.walling@ucr.edu

Note: TAAC members are appointed for an academic year. Changes will be made in July of each year. The most updated TAAC membership Tables can be found on the TAonline front page (<http://TAonline.ucr.edu>).

Critical Change in the TAonline process

If you have applied for a TAship you **MUST** log on every quarter to confirm the accuracy of your request and or update your application materials. ***If you fail to confirm or update your information your application does not enter the TAonline database and you cannot be considered for a TAship.***

TA responsibilities

A teaching assistantship (TAship; appointment as an Academic Student Employee [ASE]) is an internship, not a fellowship or gift. A graduate degree, particularly a Ph.D., implies that a student has mastered his/her subject area and is able to teach it to others. There are few better ways to master a subject than teaching it, so serving as a TA is an excellent career development opportunity and preparation for qualifying examinations. A student should view a TAship as an opportunity to be trained and obtain experience in the profession of teaching. Students should take their TA responsibilities seriously. In accordance with this professional emphasis, TAs are evaluated for academic reasons. At the end of the quarter, an academic evaluation of the TAs will be carried out by the students, instructor(s) and/or Academic Coordinator from their course.

TAs play critical roles in undergraduate instruction. An excellent TA can excite students about the subject matter and make learning a very rewarding experience for students. The qualifications and responsibilities of the TAship(s) for each class are outlined in the *Life Science Teaching Assistant Qualifications and Responsibilities* document, which can be found at the life science TA link at (http://www.cnas.ucr.edu/graduate/life_science_TAships.html) and at TAonline (<http://Taonline.ucr.edu>). The workload for a 50%-time TAship is on average 20 hours per week and a 25%-time TAship is on average 10 hours per week.

Upon accepting a TAsip, the instructor-in-charge for each class will provide a written statement of the responsibilities of a TA for her/his class. TAs are partners with the instructor(s) of the class to maximize the learning experience for all the enrolled students. Depending on the class, Academic Coordinators and tutors may join this educational team.

TAAC understands that TAsips that were requested based on a student's financial need may sometimes need to be relinquished (i.e., if a student's major professor obtains a grant and a TAsip is no longer needed). During the TAsip application process, the student and major professor will be able to update a student's application prior to initiation of the fall, winter and spring TAsip appointment deliberations. If changes in funding status due to receipt of a grant occurs after the TAsip deliberation process has initiated, the student should contact the graduate program's TAAC representative (Table 1) as soon as possible. If additional qualified students in need of a TAsip are available, TAAC will release the TAsip to another student.

The responsibilities and rights of TAs can be found at the UCR Graduate Division website at <http://www.graduate.ucr.edu/ASEwebPAGE.html>.

It is critically important that accurate information be provided in your application. Changes to your need for TAsips during the application process cause:

- (1) A substantially increased workload for your graduate program director and all members of TAAC
- (2) Effect the availability of TAsips to other students in need
- (3) Delays the announcement of TAsips or forces movement of students to and from different classes.

Mechanisms for Requesting of Life Science TAsips.

During the spring quarter (last week in April), TAAC will announce the opening of the applications for life science TAsips. This is a online process at <http://TAonline.ucr.edu>.

- Graduate students apply for TAsips for the fall, winter or spring quarters of the academic year. Go to TAonline for help in this process.
- Instructors will be able to request specific graduate students for TAsips for the academic year at <http://TAonline.ucr.edu>.
- Academic Coordinators will be able to request specific graduate students for TAsips for the academic year at <http://TAonline.ucr.edu>.

Graduate student requests for TAsips.

- A graduate student's request for a TAsip must be approved by his/her major professor and the student's graduate program director/TAAC representative (See Table 1). The application process begins in April and a two-week application period is provided.
- A student who is requesting a TAsip must:

- have the requisite skill set for the class. TA evaluations by faculty and students will aid this evaluation process.
 - must complete TADP training (<http://www.tadp.ucr.edu/>) prior to initiation of a TAship. Alternatively, a strong rationale should be provided if an exception is to be made. Exceptions to completion of TADP training will be made rarely.
 - meet Graduate Division requirements for the TAST or Speak Test (<http://www.learningcenter.ucr.edu/esl/speak.html>).
- Requests must be made using TAonline (<http://TAonline.ucr.edu>).
 - It is critical that the TA application be complete, accurate and on time.
 - Students will enter their data into the TAonline database. Materials to be entered are listed in Appendix I and can also be found at life science TA link at (http://www.cnas.ucr.edu/graduate/life_science_TAships.html) and at TAonline (<http://Taonline.ucr.edu>).
 - The database will transfer information from previous years into a student's current TAship application.
 - TAships received in previous academic years (AY2007-08 and forward) will be uploaded to a student's TAship application.
 - A graduate student's request for a TAship must receive formal approval and be justified by his/her major professor.
 - After completion of the TAship application, the application is sent to the major professor for approval.
 - The application is not complete until the major professor approves the TA application at TAonline.
 - After major professor approval of a TAship application, the TAship application must be approved by the Graduate program Director or TAAC representative (Table 1).
 - The TAAC representative will prioritize student requests for TAships using the life science College criteria for TA allocations.
 - Students will be notified of TAAC allocations approximately four weeks prior to a quarter. Students should be aware that TAships often become available late in the quarter due to unanticipated changes in student enrollments; therefore, some TAships cannot be assigned until near the beginning of the quarter.
 - Students must notify their Graduate Program's TAAC representative of any changes in their need for a TAship as soon as possible. This will provide a funding opportunity for another student and allow TAAC adequate time to find a student who has the qualifications for the course that is impacted.
 - Students should remember that obtaining a GSR from your own or faculty member's grant is a good thing!
 - However, it is expected that graduate students and major professors should understand if this funding is available to support a graduate student *prior to* or *during* the initiation of the TAship application periods (April for Fall, October for Winter, and January for Spring).

- The Biomedical Sciences Division will be informed of the impending CNAS TA allocation process. If Biomedical Sciences students wish to apply for a TAship in the life sciences, they must follow the life science TAship application procedures.

CRITICAL: If you have applied for a TAship you **MUST** log on every quarter to confirm the accuracy of your request and or update your application materials. ***If you fail to confirm or update your information your application does not enter the TAonline database and you cannot be considered for a TAship.***

Instructor Requests for student appointment as a TA

- All instructors or teams of instructors can request a specific graduate student or students to serve as a TA(s) for their class. Instructor requests are one of many criteria used in the TA allocation process.
- Instructors can exclude a specific student from being considered from their class. Only union designated reasons are allowed. There is a drop-down menu at TAonline.
- Instructors must use the web-based system for these requests. TAonline is accessed at <http://taonline.ucr.edu>.
- TAAC will make every effort to ensure that instructor requests are honored; however, given the complexities in the TA allocation process, there is no guarantee.
- At the beginning of each quarter, there will be a call for instructors (faculty member, lecturer or team of instructors) to request a specific student or students to for the TAship(s) associated with the instructor's class in the next academic year.
- The instructor's requests will evaluated by:
 - the graduate student's TAAC representative (Table 1). These designees are posted at the life science TA link at the CNAS web site (http://www.cnas.ucr.edu/graduate/life_science_TAships.html) and at TAonline (<http://Taonline.ucr.edu>).
 - the TAAC representative for the Department/Program offering the course. These designees are posted at the life science TA link at the CNAS web site (http://www.cnas.ucr.edu/graduate/life_science_TAships.html) and at TAonline (<http://Taonline.ucr.edu>).
- If the Instructor would like to change the student requested as a TA (the initial application), the rationale for this change should be discussed with the appropriate TAAC representative (Table 1).
- The student that is requested for a TAship must:
 - have the requisite skill set for the class. TA evaluations by faculty and students will aid this evaluation process.
 - meet TA training standards (TAST or Speak Test scores and completion of TADP) of the Program or Department offering the course.

- The TAAC representative for the department offering the course will notify the Instructor of the student assigned as TA for the class. This will occur when the tentative TA assignment list has been made. This will be particularly important if a specific student was not requested as a TA or TAAC is not able to accommodate the instructor's requests.
- If the Instructor would like the tentative TA appointment to be reconsidered, a short written rationale for this "veto" must be made immediately. The memo should iterate the reasons for rejection of the student proposed as a TA. Disqualification of a student should be based on a documented history or inadequate qualifications for supporting the class; these must be union-designated reasons.

Academic Coordinator requests for student appointment as a TA

- Academic Coordinators can request a specific graduate student(s) to serve as a TA(s) for their class. Academic Coordinator requests are one of many criteria used in the TA allocation process.
- Academic Coordinators can exclude a specific student from being considered from their class. Only union designated reasons are only allowed. There is a drop-down menu at TAonline.
- Academic Coordinators may request and exclude students for consideration of TAship positions at <http://taonline.ucr.edu>
- TAAC will make every effort to ensure that Academic Coordinator requests are honored; however, given the complexities in the TA allocation process, there is no guarantee.
- Prior to the outset of each quarter, there will be a call for Academic Coordinators to request specific student(s) for the TAships associated with the large lower division classes for the next academic year.

Criteria for TA assignments

CRITICAL: If you have applied for a TAship you **MUST** log on every quarter to confirm the accuracy of your request and or update your application materials. ***If you fail to confirm or update your information your application does not enter the TAonline database and you cannot be considered for a TAship.***

There are numerous criteria used for assigning TAships. The criteria considered by TAAC are listed below. The criteria are not prioritized.

The following considerations are used for assigning students to TA positions:

- Course content should be matched as closely as possible to a student's expertise.
- A graduate student has expressed an interest in being a TA for a specific course.
- Course instructors (faculty and lecturers) have requested a specific student as a TA for their course.

- Academic Coordinators have requested a specific student as a TA for their course. In the large undergraduate classes, some talented, experienced TAs are needed to provide “role” models for new TAs.
- Graduate students must have completed the TADP program to qualify for TAships. Alternatively, a strong rationale should be provided if an exception is to be made.
- Graduate students must meet Graduate Division requirements for the Speak or TAST tests.
- Past TA performance will be considered. Highly qualified, experienced TAs are assets to the instructors and their students.

The TAAC rank-ordered list of priorities for TAship assignment are listed below.

- PhD students in CNAS graduate programs who require TAships to meet their graduate program’s requirements receive highest priority for TAships.
- PhD students in CNAS graduate programs who have completed their programmatic requirements for teaching will be considered for a TAship if there is financial need or if additional teaching would significantly enhance the student’s ability to meet career goals.
- PhD students in CNAS graduate programs who have completed their programmatic requirements for teaching will be considered for a TAship if they have specialized knowledge that is required for a class.
- PhD students in CNAS graduate programs will receive a higher priority for TAships than students in non-CNAS graduate programs. Specialized knowledge, financial need, and career objectives are considered.
- PhD students in CNAS graduate programs in their first 5 years of residence will receive a higher priority for TAships than PhD students who have exceeded 5 years in residency. Specialized knowledge, financial need, and career objectives are considered.
- Thesis MS students in CNAS graduate programs will be considered for TAships. Specialized knowledge, financial need, and career objectives are considered. Thesis MS students will receive a lower priority for TAships than a graduate student in a CNAS PhD Program. In most cases, Thesis MS students will receive a higher priority than graduate students in a non-CNAS PhD graduate program and course-work MS students.
- Course-work MS students in CNAS graduate programs may be considered for TAships when CNAS PhD, non-CNAS PhD and CNAS thesis MS student needs have been accommodated. Specialized knowledge, financial need, and career objectives are considered.

Evaluation of Teaching Assistants

Talented, high performing TAs who receive positive teaching evaluations are more widely valued and have a higher probability of their talents being acknowledged by TA awards. Positive evaluations will enhance a student's ability to secure additional TA opportunities if needed.

Instructor Evaluation of TAs (Note: This has not yet been implemented)

A *CNAS Life Science Instructor Evaluation Form* will be developed by TAAC. This form will be used by instructor(s) to document a student's academic performance as a TA. The information on this form will be important to guide a program's and major professor's efforts in guiding a student's professional development.

Instructors will be provided notified of the importance of evaluating TA(s) at the initiation of the Course. The Department offering the course will provide the instructor(s) the *Life Science Instructor Evaluation Form* during the 8th week of classes.

Faculty TA evaluations should be provided to:

- the Department offering the class
- the Instructor of the class
- the Major Professor of the TA
- the Graduate Advisor of the student's program of study
- the Teaching Assistant

The TA evaluations should be in the student's academic record but not their employment record. This is in compliance with the TA union rules.

Student Evaluation of TAs

Student evaluations often provide valuable feedback to TAs. Talented TAs recognize that teaching methods can be improved, and student evaluations provide one form of feedback that can be considered for assessing the effectiveness of one's teaching. Accomplished TAs are more likely to be recognized and nominated for awards when evaluations are distributed both to persons responsible for oversight of teaching and to the students' advisors.

Student TA evaluations should be provided to:

- the Teaching Assistant
- the Department offering the class
- the Instructor of the class
- the Major Professor of the TA
- the Graduate Advisor of the student's program of study

The TA evaluations should be in the student's academic record but not their employment record. This is in compliance with the TA union rules.

Calendar of Deadlines (tentative for AY 2009-10)

Fall 2009 TAship Meetings	
Tentative Dates	Actions
April 8	Call to Departments to update TA qualifications and course offerings
April 24 to May 8	Students apply for TAships
April 8 to May 15	Major Professors approve applications
May 15 to May 18	TAAC Graduate program reps approve applications
May 18 to May 26	Instructors and Academic Coordinators request/exclude students as TAs.
May 26 to June 7	TAAC reps prioritize and request students as TAs.
June 8 to June 12	First TAAC meeting
June 15 to June 19	Second TAAC meeting
June 22 to June 26	Third TAAC meeting (may not be needed)
June 30	TA appointments are announced

Winter 2010 TAship Meetings	
Tentative Dates	Actions
September 8	Call to Departments to update TA qualifications and course offerings
September 18 to October 2	Students apply for TAships
September 18 to October 9	Major Professors approve applications
October 9-12	TAAC Graduate program reps approve applications
October 13-19	Instructors and Academic Coordinators request/exclude students as TAs.
October 20 to November 2	TAAC reps prioritize and request students as TAs.
November 2-6	First TAAC meeting
November 9-13	Second TAAC meeting
November 16-20	Third TAAC meeting (may not be needed)
November 20-25	TA appointments are announced

Spring 2010 TAship meetings	
Tentative Dates	Actions
December 1	Call to Departments to update TA qualifications and course offerings
December 15-January 15	Students apply for TAships
December 15-January 22	Major Professors approve applications
January 22-24	TAAC Graduate program reps approve applications
January 25-30	Instructors and Academic Coordinators request/exclude students as TAs.
February 1-6	TAAC reps prioritize and request students as TAs.
February 7-13	First TAAC meeting
February 16-20	Second TAAC meeting
February 23-30	Third TAAC meeting (may not be needed)
February 20 or 30	TA appointments are announced

Appendix I: TAonline: Materials to Collect

Graduate students will need to collect the following information to complete the online application.

CRITICAL: If you have applied for a TAship you **MUST** log on every quarter to confirm the accuracy of your request and or update your application materials. ***If you fail to confirm or update your information your application does not enter the TAonline database and you cannot be considered for a TAship.***

Note: If you applied for a TA using the TAonline system, your previously entered information and TAships will be automatically entered into your TAonline application.

Note: Many applications last year were not complete. Given the demand for life science TAships, an incomplete application will be disadvantaged in the TA appointment process.

Note: If you have TAed before, be sure that all TADP training has been completed.

You will need to collect and think about the following information:

- (1) The UCR graduate and/or undergraduate classes that you have taken that qualify you to be a TA in a life science class [you will need to know your grades]. You will be able to select these UCR classes from a pull-down menu.
- (2) The graduate and/or undergraduate classes from other universities that qualify you to be a TA for a specific class [you will need to know your grades]. You will have to type these in.
- (3) If you have a strong mathematical or physical science background, and would like to be considered for a CHEM, PHYS or MATH TAship, please include these classes too.
- (4) Previous TA experiences at UCR. TAships provided in the Fall 2007, Winter 2008, and Spring 2008 will be downloaded into your application. Previous TA experiences from other institutions or at UCR before fall 2007 will need to be entered manually.
- (5) TADP status
- (6) Speak or TAST exam status
- (7) Reasons for the TAship request (meeting graduate program requirements, financial reasons, promoting career goals). Have a conversation with your major professor.
- (8) Number of quarters a TA is needed
- (9) Quarters you cannot teach due to internships, field work, etc
- (10) Special requests or considerations for the TA Allocation Committee.
- (11) Would you be interested in a 25% TAship if the opportunity is available?
- (12) Look at the list of classes offered and the qualifications for each of the classes. This is located at the CNAS Life Science TAship website page (http://www.cnas.ucr.edu/graduate/life_science_TAships.html) and at TAonline (<http://taonline.ucr.edu>).
- (13) Prioritize the courses that you would like to be a TA for during the fall, winter and spring quarters. TAAC is not always able to give a student their preference for a TAship due to the number of requests and criteria used in the TA appointment process.
- (14) Prioritize the courses you are qualified to be a TA for in the fall, winter and spring quarters. By listing a wider array of classes, you are sure to be considered for other TAship opportunities.
- (15) If you have spoken to an instructor and know that you will be requested as a TA for a specific class in the fall, winter or spring of academic year 2008-09, please indicate this in the appropriate place in your application.