

Office of Academic Affairs

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TA Rules and Policies for PG and Ph.D. program

Teaching Assistantship (TA): All the Full-time I-Ph.D. and Ph.D. students irrespective of their category of admission (i.e. MoE/ Institute TA/ external agency Fellowship Awardees (FA)) have to perform Teaching Assistantship (TA) duties assigned by the Institute to the extent of 8 hours of work per week as per Ministry of Education Guidelines.

Under the TA duties, a I-Ph.D./ Ph.D. student is supposed to assist the concerned faculty member (to be known as course instructor/coordinator) in the academic work related to conducting of practical classes, tutorial classes, preparing assignments/tutorials and their solutions, invigilation duties, etc. and the other academic work assigned by the concerned course instructor/coordinator or by the concerned Department.

TA must NOT be assigned confidential work such as setting up question papers of different examinations and quizzes, final evaluation of answer sheets of different exams, and finalizing the grades, etc. Under any circumstances, TAs won't be assigned the duties of taking lecture classes of any course.

Monthly release of I-Ph.D./Ph.D. scholarship/Fellowship requires submission of TA work report in the specified format duly signed by the TA Supervisor and Thesis supervisor through proper channels.

Teaching Assistants in IISER Berhampur - A quick look-up guide

Welcome all to the new role of being a Teaching Assistant (TA) at IISER Berhampur. We hope that the following FAQs would be useful for you to prepare yourself to be a successful TA.

1. Why should I be a TA?

As per the institute rules, all scholars enrolled in the Ph.D. Programme should sign an undertaking to earn their Teaching Assistantship and have to complete TAship putting in 8 hours of work as suggested by the Department. Renewal of assistantship every semester is also subject to a good performance during the preceding semester in the discharge of responsibility as a teaching assistant.

More than any of the above, by being a TA you get an excellent opportunity to improve your expertise in the technical content of the course, enhance your communication skills, obtain hands-on experience in handling the experiments in the laboratory and improve your interactions.

2. What are the possible TA responsibilities in the department?

This set of duties is *complete*, the department/faculty reserves the right to ask for any other duties not covered here as and when it deems necessary. However, if the TA feels that the duty being assigned is not appropriate as TA duty, he/she should appeal to the HoD/DPGC

(a) Attending Classes: If the TA is asked to attend classes by the instructor, then attending one hour of class accounts for one hour of TA duty.

(b) Conducting Tutorials: The TA should count Judiciously along with the instructor the number of hours spent on preparing for the tutorial and the hours spent in the tutorial class towards his/her TA duty.

(c) Help students with difficulties: TA's could have regular office hours of at most two hours a week during which doubts about the course can be directed to the TA.

(d) Grading answer books, assignments and conducting vivas.

(e) Invigilation during tests and quizzes.

(f) Conducting Lab.

Note: TA's own research work (for thesis) or research: The TA supervisor or instructor needs to endorse those hours. The account maximum will be 8 hours/week only. The work with a faculty in her/his lab cannot be counted towards TA-ship hours.

3. How do I find what my responsibilities are?

1. You are typically assigned a course or a lab by the Department before the semester begins. You must report to the faculty in charge of the course/laboratory well in advance and find out what your responsibilities are.
2. Department shall allot the TAship at the time of course instructor assignment before the start of semester.

4. How should I prepare myself to be a TA for a tutorial for a theory course?

See Annexure 1

5. How should I prepare myself to be a TA for a laboratory course?

See Annexure 2

6. How do I begin my task on the first day?

The first day of your action makes a lot of difference in handling students for the rest of

the days. Introduce yourself and familiarize with each fresh batch of students when you meet them. Your personality, punctuality, preparedness, and sharing expectations help to manage your tutorial/laboratory classes better throughout the session. Remember the first impact lasts forever in the minds of students.

7. What if I am not able to attend a Tutorial/Laboratory session?

Try not to be absent for the tutorial/laboratory session. In case of unavoidable circumstances, find another TA to replace you and inform the teacher in advance.

8. What does a TA do if he/she is overworked?

First, the TA should try to resolve it by discussing the problem with the instructor. If that fails, the TA should bring the issue to the notice of HoD/DPGC.

9. What happens if a TA has less or no work in a week?

If any other course has additional requirements of TA duty then the underworked TA can be assigned to the other course for the week.

10. How does a faculty member keep track of the number of hours spent by a TA?

The department has to maintain the details record for the TA activity and share the allocation sheet with academics_pg@iiserbpr.ac.in.

11. Who allocates TA's?

The DPGC of the respective department will be responsible for TA allocation. The TA allocation must be done well in advance as mentioned in point 3.

12. Do TA's work in the Summer also?

The PG faculty advisors should make sure that some parity is maintained between TAs who work during Summer and those who do not. The TAs who work during Summer should be given less load during Autumn and Spring semesters and the ones who do not work during Summer should be given more load during the Autumn and Spring semesters.

Note: Some labs like the software and the research labs may benefit from having TAs throughout the year. Some courses may also benefit if the TAs could prepare early-odd/even semester.

13. What are the guidelines for allocating TA's to courses?

The following guidelines are suggested for TA allocation.

- (g) UG Labs (One per thirty students for a one credit lab)
- (h) UG Courses (One per thirty students)
- (i) PG Lab (One per twenty students)
- (j) PG Courses (One per thirty students). Note that the TA in a PG course should not have registered as a student in the same course at the same time.
- (k) If a course also has an associated lab, then the number of TAs assigned to the course will be larger than the number calculated for the theory part and lab part as per the guidelines above (as opposed to the sum of the two numbers).
- (l) Other Professional Activities of the department (based on demand and supply).

Preparation for tutorial sessions

There are three phases when you handle a tutorial session

Before the tutorial session

1. Meet the teacher and understand your responsibilities well in advance.
2. Attend the lectures of the course for which you are a tutor. Work out the solutions for all the tutorial problems yourself.
3. Approach fellow-TAs if you find any discrepancy or if you need help in solving the tutorial problems. If the issue is still not resolved, approach the teacher.
4. If you are asked to prepare a tutorial sheet, do not copy and paste the contents from the internet. Try to use reference text books and be innovative.
5. If you think you have trouble expressing yourself in English, make sure that you speak English as much as possible. Seek out English-speaking lab-mates and friends for regular conversations, read English newspapers and books.

During the tutorial session

1. Report for the session on time.
2. Try to work with a smaller group of students. Make sure that you work with the same group every week. This will help you to keep track of the progress of the students through the semester.
3. Try to lead the students to the correct solutions by providing appropriate hints rather than solving the entire problem yourself.
4. Encourage questions from the students. You need not answer all of them; you can lead the group to a discussion based on their questions. It is best if the group arrives at an answer. In case you do not know the answer, accept the same with the promise that you will get back with the answer. Make sure to keep up that promise. You can plan to ask them some questions as well.
5. Be friendly and open with the students, simultaneously being firm with them.
6. Keep track of the progress of each student in your group. Give periodic feedback to the student about his/her progress. Issue warnings if the student is consistently under-performing. Report to the faculty if you find that a particular student is consistently underperforming.
7. Pay special attention to slow-learners.
8. Be open to the feedback and comments from the students and faculty.

After the tutorial session

Many times you are required to grade the tutorials/assignments/tests.

1. Make sure that you work out the solutions to the questions yourself, and compare it with the answer key. Think and work out possible alternative solutions to the same question.
2. Understand the marking scheme from the teacher.
3. Consult the teacher if you are in doubt.
4. Make sure that you are not partial to some student/students while grading. Follow basic ethics.

Preparation for laboratory sessions

There are three phases when you handle a laboratory

Preparation Phase:

1. Meet the faculty –in- charge a few days in advance of the actual lab class and get the details of the experiment. Get clarifications from him/her regarding all aspects of the experiment and the expectations.
2. Prepare by reading about the theoretical background of the experiment. Know the physical concepts involved in the experiment. This helps in discussion and answering questions from students.
3. Go to the laboratory and check out the condition of the equipment/instrumentation. Perform the laboratory experiment at least once one or two days before the actual laboratory class. Make sure the equipment/ instrumentation is in good condition after your experimentation.
4. In case there are problems, report to faculty in charge and make sure that they are rectified in time for the laboratory session.
5. Familiarize with safety/ security aspects of the experiment / equipment/laboratory.
6. Prepare an instruction sheet for the experiment in consultation with the faculty, and keep sufficient copies ready for distribution to students for their reference.
7. Obtain students' roll list for the laboratory course.
8. Meet senior TA/TAs who have handled the laboratory session in earlier semesters to discuss their experiences. Try to discuss the specific issues that they faced and how they handled difficult students/ difficult situations. Their inputs are invaluable.
9. If there are laboratory assistants available in the laboratory, introduce yourself to them and consult them in case of any necessity.

Laboratory Phase:

1. Report on time for the laboratory class. Verify the condition of the equipment/set up about 30 minutes before the students arrive in the class and be ready with the hand outs. Follow dress code if any.
2. After the students have come in, take attendance.
3. On the first day, introduce yourself to the students and ask the students to introduce themselves to you. This is important to start off on a pleasant note.
4. Get the email ids and contact numbers of the students, and give them your contact phone number and email id for future interactions.
5. Make brief introductory remarks about the experiment, its importance, its relevance to the theory they have studied in the class.
6. In case the students are required to come to the laboratory with preparation, check whether it is done.
7. Ask the students suitable questions to know their level of preparation for the experiment.
8. Demonstrate the experiment, simultaneously explaining what you are doing.
9. Ask the students to perform the experiment and record data.
10. Let there be as much cooperative/group activity as possible
11. Tell them the importance of repetition of measurements and error analysis.
12. Guide them in doing the required calculations, in an interactive way.
13. Discuss how to interpret results. Ask them to comment on the results.
14. Obtain the reports for grading –soft copy or written report as per the instructions of

the faculty.

15. Clean up the set up, if necessary, and leave the set up in a good condition after the experiment.
16. Inform the students that they can meet you, if required, at a specified place and time. Keep about one hour per week for this activity

Assessment and Feedback Phase:

1. Correct/evaluate/grade the submitted reports after receiving suitable instructions from the faculty in charge. Have a consistent marking scheme.
2. Continue to interact with students if they have any clarifications regarding any aspect of the laboratory session, including of course grading.
3. At the end of the academic session, get written feedback from the students studying it and pass on the same to your faculty in charge. The feedback questionnaire will be supplied to you by the faculty in charge.

Good Practices:

1. Keep a professional demeanor throughout your interaction with students, in and out of the class/ laboratory.
2. Discuss with the faculty in charge the extent of your authority /responsibility while you are in the laboratory supervising the experiments.
3. Good preparation enhances competence and hence confidence.
4. Carefully observe instruments and human safety in laboratory class.
5. Preparing simple questions for short oral quizzing during explanation of experiments enables active participation of students, facilitate attention, provides feedback and formative assessment
6. Avoid any dishonesty during the discharge of your responsibility.