



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

Employment of Temporary Staff including Teaching Assistants Protocol

Responsible Committee/Unit/Division/Faculty	HR division
Responsible Chairperson/Director/Manager	Director of HR
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Review Cycle (e.g. every 2/5/7 years etc)	n/a
Last Reviewed	n/a



1. Introduction

Teaching assistants are usually post-graduate students with a Masters' degree and some tutoring experience but with limited or no teaching experience and no research supervision experience. In contrast, temporary lecturers¹ should have teaching and/or professional experience.

The employment of teaching assistants may provide departments with critical assistance during periods of other academic staff being on academic leave, when there are job vacancies, when staff are away on maternity leave or sick leave or as a strategic opportunity for providing students with exposure to teaching with a view to their employment in the longer term. For the post-graduate student, being employed as teaching assistant (TA), may provide valuable work experience and an opportunity to fund one's studies. If being a teaching assistant is a positive experience, this may lead to the individual considering a career in academia.

This protocol and its requirements provide guidelines to ensure the on-going quality of the academic programme. These requirements become critical when the TA is given responsibility for substantive elements of a course or programme, hereafter referred to the course. Where a TA is involved on a more ad hoc basis, the Head of Department (HoD) should use discretion as to what requirements are necessary.

2. Responsibilities of a TA

A teaching assistant, as the name implies, is someone who assists with teaching. As such, the TA does not have the same responsibilities as a temporary lecturer. The responsibilities can be broadly defined as:

	Teaching Assistant	Lecturer
Curriculum development	This person is usually not required to do any curriculum development. Where minor curriculum development is required of the TA, appropriate support and guidance must be provided and there must be close supervision of the TA.	This person is usually required to do curriculum development work. This may constitute reworking existing materials or may require an entirely new course.
Facilitation	The TA is involved in the teaching of undergraduate classes or practicals. This may be in the context of co-teaching or taking responsibility for a section of a course (this is understood to mean a term's teaching or the equivalent of 6 weeks). The intention is not that the TA should teach a substantive element of a course without any support from other academics.	The lecturer is involved in teaching of undergraduate classes, tutorials and/or practicals and is usually also involved in teaching post-graduate courses and/or projects.
Design of assessment	This should preferably have been set by the academic on academic leave or another member of staff. If this is not feasible, then the TA will do this under the close supervision of another academic.	The lecturer is responsible for the design of the assessment of the course and/or practical.
Marking of assessments	The marking can be undertaken by the TA provided that this is moderated by another academic.	The marking is undertaken by the lecturer, usually not moderated except where an external examiner is involved.
Evaluation of the course	The TA will work with CHERTL in identifying an appropriate evaluation tool and questions. A peer review needs to be conducted in the early stages of the teaching by the TA.	The lecturer determines what evaluation needs to be undertaken. No peer review is required.
Administration	The TA usually is involved in some administrative work .	The lecturer may pick up some administrative work depending on the nature of the contract.
Supervision	The TA will not be involved in the supervision of post-graduate theses.	The lecturer may be involved depending on the extent of the contract.

¹ Temporary appointments are made at the level of lecturer. Distinctions are not made between lecturers, senior lecturers, professors etc due to the temporary and short term nature of the contract. Where academic leave funds are combined e.g. over a period of 3 years to create a longer term contract, the appropriate use of another title may be considered. Any appointment at the professorial level, even on contract, requires the approval of Senate.

The appointment level should be based on the experience and qualifications of the temporary staff member and the nature of the work to be done and should not be driven by financial considerations. Academic leave monies are based on the temporary lecturer rate (and not a TA rate).

3. Employment of temporary staff including teaching assistants

- 3.1 Irrespective of the funding source, the employment of any temporary staff in the teaching programme must be approved by the HoD. This is to allow the HoD to:
- (a) Monitor the extent to which temporary staff are being used and the ratio of permanent to temporary staff in the teaching programme. Where this ratio has not been determined by the department, this deliberation should take place;
 - (b) Confirm that the person nominated is appropriate in terms of qualifications and experience and that appropriate level of appointment is being proposed;
 - (c) Discuss the implications with any member of staff who is buying out their teaching responsibilities on a continuous basis. On-going diminished teaching responsibilities alters the nature of employment of that individual who is employed as an academic (and not as a researcher);
- 3.2 Confirmation of employment in terms of a contract from the Human Resources Division and acceptance by the prospective staff member must be done before the person commences teaching. In the case of teaching assistants, the individual will be advised of the requirements outlined in section 4 below;
- 3.3 In the case of the employment of teaching assistants, a conversation regarding the role of the TA needs to be held between the HoD, the prospective TA and the lecturer whose course the TA will be teaching. This conversation should include the requirements outlined in section 5 below.

4. Requirements for the department when employing a teaching assistant

It is assumed that the TA has limited teaching experience. Based on this assumption, it is critical that the Head of Department (HoD) ensures the following:

- 4.1 That TAs are supported in their new teaching role. This is seen to include guidance as well as evaluation for the purposes of development and where appropriate, oversight of activities;
- 4.2 That where feasible, the TA is provided with teaching material including: outcomes for the course, material for each lecture, exercises for students, previous assessment exercises and an assessment model answer or outline. In the absence of this, that the course co-ordinator or another appropriate academic as determined by the HoD, ensures that the TA is provided with appropriate guidance and support;
- 4.3 That in the early stages of the teaching by the TA, that either a staff member of CHERTL or an academic from the department, attend a lecture or tutorial to conduct a peer review. This is to ensure that any immediate problems related to the presentation, amount of work covered etc can be addressed quickly and/or suggestions can be provided for the enhancement of the lectures. It is important that this is not seen as threatening by the TA but rather as a way to support the TA;
- 4.4 That the formal assessment is set by another academic member of staff and if this is not feasible, that the TA is provided with appropriate guidance and support;
- 4.5 That while the the actual marking of the course assessment/s is done by the TA, that the assessment is moderated by the course-coordinator or another appropriate academic as determined by the HoD. This also applies to any marking of examinations;
- 4.6 That a student evaluation for the course is conducted. In this regard, the TA must liaise with CHERTL in the determination of appropriate questions for the student evaluation. The results of the evaluation are discussed with the TA by CHERTL and the evaluations together with the TA's input (a talking back to the evaluations) are provided to the HoD. Where the TA is to teach another course, the TA and HoD or course-coordinator should identify any problem areas and put in place strategies to address these.

5. Employment requirements

When the TA is employed, the individual is advised of the following requirements and needs to ensure that these take place:

- 5.1 A peer review will be conducted in the early part of the teaching of the course and any concerns will need to be addressed;
- 5.2 The course assessment and examination assessment must be overseen by the course co-ordinator or another academic identified by the HoD;
- 5.3 The course-coordinator or another academic identified by the HoD will be responsible for the moderation of the relevant assessments;
- 5.4 That a student evaluation of the course must take place and that the TA must liaise with CHERTL in this regard;
- 5.5 Where relevant, that areas of concern identified must be addressed.

Written: Director, HR with input from DVC: Academic and Student Affairs and Dean: Teaching and Learning

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