JOB DESCRIPTION FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Intercollegiate classes are organised by the Mathematical Institute on behalf of colleges to support Part B and Part C lecture courses. Teaching assistants are appointed to help class tutors with these classes and are responsible for:

- marking student work;
- recording students’ marks and attendance on Minerva, promptly after each class;
- liaising with the class tutor prior to each class;
- attending and assisting with every class.

It is hoped that the job will provide you with useful experiences and give you an opportunity to develop your teaching skills.

Pre-Term Meeting

The lecturer should call a pre-term meeting for the teaching team which you should attend.

Training Sessions

All new TAs should attend a class teaching seminar, or if they are unable to attend they should be properly briefed on their role. The next Teaching Training Seminar is on Tuesday 7th of October. All new DPhil students are registered as attending as part of their Induction programme, if you’re from another department or for some reason never attended, please contact Jessica Sheard (sheard@maths.ox.ac.uk) to register.

Payment Rates

The payment rate per set of classes (6 hours in total) for TAs will be: £130.22 + £13.48 per student

The Class

TAs are expected to attend each class. How s/he participates will be decided in conjunction with the class tutor, but the TA might demonstrate one or more of the problems, or help by encouraging students to participate in the class and pointing out particular problem areas. However, a TA who is in training should present some problems each week. At some stage during the class, students should have an opportunity to raise any individual queries. Where a student is not attending a class it would be helpful if the TA contacted Jessica Sheard so that their registration can be checked before student numbers are frozen at the beginning of week 4.

Pre-class meeting

Some class tutors like to be informed of how the students have done by e-mail, but there should also be a pre-class meeting of about 15 minutes. This is to inform the class tutor how the students have done, discuss submitted work and the class planned.

Marking

- Students submit work each week which is marked by the TA in advance of the class (though the class tutor may mark one or two scripts). Payment varies with the number of students in the class. Model solutions will be provided, though most TAs find it necessary to work through the problems themselves.
- Research shows that students benefit most from feedback on their work, rather than grading. So you should write comments on the work; for instance explaining where the student has gone wrong, how it could have been done better, how the presentation could be improved, or indeed that an argument is particularly elegant or inventive. Try to be reasonably positive and encouraging.
- Please also give each question a grade and also give an overall grade for the piece of work and keep a record of the grades. You should give either a numerical mark or a quality mark for each question. These translate roughly as follows. If a question is marked out of 25, then 19-25 is an alpha, 12-18 is a beta and 6-11 is a gamma with additional pluses or minuses to indicate where in the range the mark falls. An overall grade might be assigned as follows:
  - Alpha: A student has answered most questions with an alpha score (possibly one or two betas); has demonstrated a very good grasp of the topic, with possibly a few minor errors. Overall shows flare.
  - Beta: A student has mostly scored beta for each question (with, possibly, one or two alphas or gammas). Has answered the questions well and has demonstrated a sound knowledge of the topics.
  - Gamma: Gamma: Poor work. Mostly gamma scores, a few betas or alphas. Lacks understanding. Short on details or precision."
- You should expect the marking to take approximately 20 minutes per script.

Student Hand in Area

The problem sheet hand in area is by L2 on the mezzanine level. Each class will be allocated a mail box which will be labelled with the details of their class and an identification number. TAs can collect work from the mail boxes by entering through the side door of the hand-in area, using their University card, and going through the door to their left. This takes you to the back of the mail boxes (also labelled with the box identification numbers). All mathematics DPhil students should automatically have access to this area but if you have any problems please contact Jessica Sheard (sheard@maths.ox.ac.uk) or door-entry@maths.ox.ac.uk. Please note that you will have to activate your card using the free standing card reader in reception before trying to access the hand in area.

Reports

TAs are asked to record students’ attendance and grades on the Minerva Undergraduate Classes Database promptly after each class. A report comprising those grades and overall comments on each student should be completed by the class tutor with input from the TA by the end of seventh week.

Contacts

Dr Janet Dyson, Faculty Teaching Advisor (janet.dyson@mansfield.ox.ac.uk)
Dr Richard Earl, Director of Undergraduate Studies (earl@maths.ox.ac.uk)
Jessica Sheard, Academic Assistant (jessica.sheard@maths.ox.ac.uk)