

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Listed below is a summary of the main duties of a teaching assistant (TA). Precisely how these are carried out will be decided in discussion between the TA and class tutor. It is hoped that the job will provide you with useful experience and give you an opportunity to develop your teaching skills.

Marking

- TAs should put boxes for handing in work in the Mathematical Institute basement – one box for each class, marked clearly with the subject, name of tutor and deadline for handing in work for marking (which should be no more than two days before the class).
- 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. You should also 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 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 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: Average. Mostly gamma scores, a few betas or alphas. Nothing noteworthy. Lacks details or precision. Plodding.

- You should expect the marking to take 10-15 minutes per script.

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. In this meeting submitted work is discussed and the class planned.

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. At some stage during the class, students should have an opportunity to raise any individual queries. The TA may also be asked to keep the attendance record. Where a student is not attending a class it would be helpful if the TA contacted Helen Lowe at week 3/4 so that their registration can be checked before student numbers are frozen at the end of week 4.

Reports

TAs are asked to record students' attendance and grades on the Minerva Undergraduate Classes Database after each meeting of the class. A report comprising those grades and overall comments on each student should be completed by the end of seventh week.

Pre-Term Meeting

The lecturer should call a pre-term meeting of the teaching team and 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 6th of October – please contact Margaret Sloper (sloper@maths.ox.ac.uk) to register.

Thank you for carrying out this role.

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