



William & Mary Arts & Sciences

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 14, 2024

To: Working group on the use of teaching assistants in the undergraduate classroom

From: Suzanne Raitt, Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Sciences

Subj: Charge to the working group

CC: Rob Hinkle, Vice-Dean for Natural, Physical & Computational Sciences & Interdisciplinary Studies
Erica Macleod, Executive Assistant to the Dean

Many academic units use teaching assistants, both graduate and undergraduate, in a variety of roles. This working group is charged with exploring and assessing the use, training and compensation of both graduate and undergraduate teaching assistants in the undergraduate classroom. The following questions are central to the working group's inquiry:

- How are TAs recruited (part of a financial package – for GTAs; open application process; invitation to serve, etc.)?
- How are undergraduate TAs paid (hourly, stipend) and from what budget?
- Do undergraduate TAs earn academic credit for their work as TAs?
- How are TAs assigned to specific courses and sections: class/lab size, class/lab format, etc? Who makes the decision on TA assignments?
- What is the range of responsibilities of TAs?
 - Labs:
 - Monitor and help students during lab sessions
 - Monitor and help students in lab outside of formal sessions
 - Grade lab reports (using grading software?)
 - How are FERPA considerations handled?
 - Other
 - Courses:
 - Assist with teaching during class sessions
 - Teach their own discussion section
 - Hold office hours
 - Grade assignments (using grading software or not)
 - Enter grades
 - How are FERPA considerations handled?
 - Other

- How are TAs trained and by whom?
 - Background checks (GTAs only)?
 - Safety considerations addressed?
 - Classroom/lab management
 - Climate/inclusion considerations
 - Grading practices
 - Other?
- How and by whom are TAs supervised and assessed?
- What processes are in place to improve performance and/or to terminate a TA-ship in the case of unsatisfactory performance or misconduct?

Based on the answers to these questions (gathered via interviews and surveys with Chairs, Program Directors, TAs, faculty and any other relevant individuals or groups, including members of the A&S Dean's office), the working group will recommend best practices for the recruitment, assignment, compensation, training, supervision, job responsibilities and assessment of both graduate and undergraduate TAs. Recommendations will apply only to TAs working in Arts & Sciences post 1 July 2025, although they may be of interest to administrators and faculty in the School of Computing, Data Sciences & Physics.

An interim report summarizing and detailing current practices will be due to the Dean by 31 January, 2025. A final report with recommendations for best practices will be due on April 30, 2025.

Erica Macleod, Executive Assistant to the Dean, will provide administrative support in the form of scheduling, etc.