

Graduate Appointee Training Program

2020-21 Teaching Assistant Handbook



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate College

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Graduate College

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wmich.edu/grad

WMU Mission and Vision

Mission

Western Michigan University is a learner-centered research university, building intellectual inquiry and discovery into undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in a way that fosters knowledge and innovation, and transforms wisdom into action. As a public university, WMU provides leadership in teaching, research, learning, and service, and is committed to enhancing the future of our global citizenry.

Vision

Nationally and internationally recognized, the University aspires to distinguish itself as learner centered, discovery driven, and globally engaged.

Learner centered

Western Michigan University is a university where every member of our community is responsive to and responsible for the education of our students. We challenge and engage all members of our community with a university experience that creates skilled, life-long learners.

Discovery driven

Western Michigan University offers experiences that enable discovery and promote creativity and research. We are committed to pursuing inquiry, disseminating knowledge, and fostering critical thinking that encourage life-long learning. Our scholarship creates new knowledge, forms a basis for innovative solutions, leads to economic development, and makes substantial contributions to society.

Globally engaged

Western Michigan University impacts the globe positively. We are a community of learners committed to human dignity, sustainability, social responsibility, and justice. Our campus embraces a diverse population of students, faculty, and staff who develop learners and leaders who are locally oriented and globally competent, culturally aware, and ready to contribute to world knowledge and discovery.

The synergy of these three pillars enables WMU to be a premier and distinctive university of choice. Western Michigan University offers all students a learning community designed for and dedicated to their success. We are committed to access and affordability and sustaining an environment in which every student can meet the world head-on and triumph.

University Organization

Western Michigan University is led by its President, who reports to the Board of Trustees. The University consists of the following vice-presidential units, each of which is headed by a Vice President:

- Academic Affairs
- Business and Finance
- Development and Alumni Relations
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Government Affairs and University Relations
- Legal Affairs and General Counsel
- Research
- Student Affairs

The **Academic Affairs** area, headed by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, is further divided into a variety of colleges, departments, schools, institutes, centers, and other units. Colleges are headed by a dean and all degree-granting academic programs are housed in colleges. Western Michigan University has the following colleges:

- Arts and Sciences
- Aviation (undergraduate only)
- Business (Haworth College of)
- Education and Human Development
- Engineering and Applied Sciences
- Fine Arts
- Graduate College
- Health and Human Services
- Lee Honors College (undergraduate only)

The Graduate College

The Graduate College at Western Michigan University (wmich.edu/grad) provides an array of resources and services to assist graduate students and departments that house graduate programs. Headed by a dean and staffed by professional staff members, the Graduate College provides services such as the following:

- Serves as advocate for graduate education and programs across the University and seeks to sustain a high quality of programs. In this role, the Graduate College interacts with other academic colleges, the Graduate Studies Council of the Faculty Senate, Academic Affairs, and offices such as Admissions, Financial Aid, and the Registrar's office.
- Manages and oversees University policies and procedures related to graduate education and assists departments with consistent implementation of policies and procedures.
- Interacts with other graduate institutions through the Council of Graduate Schools and other organizations to share information and stay current with trends and issues in graduation education.
- Oversees the appointment process for graduate faculty members.
- Oversees and monitors graduate student appointments across the University for student eligibility and department compliance with minimum standards.
- Offers financial assistance to graduate students in the form of grants for research and conference travel expenses as well as some fellowships for graduate study.
- Assists students with thesis/dissertation writing and proposal development.
- Assists departments with recruitment of graduate students.
- Publicizes the scheduling of doctoral dissertation defenses, reviews format of all doctoral dissertations and master's theses, and holds workshops for formatting of dissertations and theses.
- Schedules and carries out numerous events for graduate students, including the new graduate appointee training, graduate student resource fair, annual graduate awards convocation, many workshops of interest to graduate students, etc.
- Provides a home for the Graduate Student Association and works with GSA to address graduate student concerns and develop opportunities for graduate students to get involved.

WMU Online Orientation for Graduate Students

The Graduate College offers an online graduate student orientation course in e-learning. This serves as a resource for information about Western Michigan University and the surrounding community.

This course is not intended to replace traditional in-person orientation programs offered by graduate programs but serves to enhance your experience at WMU. It is our intention to make sure that all incoming students have the opportunity to learn about WMU and the many programs and services available. You will have access to this course as long as you are a student. To access the course, follow these steps:

- Log into GoWMU and click the Elearning tab.
- Find the course “Graduate Student Online Orientation”

Policies That Affect Graduate Appointees as Employees

For the full *Employee Handbook*, see: wmich.edu/hr/policies/handbook

For the current TAU contract, see: wmich.edu/academic-labor-relations/agreements

Stress Management and Conflict Resolution Resources

Graduate appointees who need assistance with academic, work-related, or personal issues have numerous places to go for help, including:

- **University Ombudsman** (wmich.edu/ombudsman) — An intervention agent and impartial person who helps students, faculty, and staff resolve academic and non-academic concerns. The Ombudsman listens to you and discusses your question or concern; provides you with information that answers your question or helps you locate someone who can assist you; explains the University’s policies and procedures and how they may affect you; follows up with you and others at the University to make sure your concern is resolved; and recommends changes in the institution that will make it more responsive to every member of the community. The basic principles of the University Ombudsman are independence, impartiality, informality, and confidentiality. The Ombudsman is authorized to make thorough investigations and has access to most University offices and records, reports, and other documents. No person shall suffer any penalty for seeking assistance from the Ombudsman.
- **Office of Institutional Equity** (wmich.edu/equity) — Oversees and administers the University’s Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity programs and policies, the Americans with Disabilities Act and related accommodations, and also addresses issues of equality and justice for all members of the University as consistent with the University’s Non-discrimination Policy. Western Michigan University is committed to an environment which encourages fair, humane, and beneficial treatment of all faculty, staff, and students. In accordance with that fundamental objective, the University has a continuing commitment to assure equal opportunity and to oppose discrimination because of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, handicap, height, weight, or marital status.
- **Campus Employee Dispute Resolution Services** (wmich.edu/disputeresolution) — Offers free confidential mediation and community conferencing services that assist faculty and staff (including GAs) in finding mutually agreeable solutions to interpersonal disputes with other individuals in the workplace.

- **Counseling Services** (wmich.edu/healthcenter/counseling) — Offers low-cost one-on-one personal counseling to assist individuals in better understanding themselves and the emotional conflicts that may interfere with their everyday lives as students, to help them become more aware of alternative means of coping with conflicts and stress, and to aid them in developing more healthy, satisfying, and fulfilling lifestyles.

Campus Safety and Security

Like campuses all over the nation, Western Michigan University has made campus safety and security top priorities and responded with intense scrutiny of its resources and procedures for responding to immediate security threats. As a result, the University has implemented numerous procedures for notifying the campus community of threats and for protecting the safety and security of all campus citizens. Everyone in the campus community has a responsibility to be aware of potential threats to campus security and to follow these important procedures that will minimize such threats.

Find WMU's emergency procedures here: wmich.edu/emergencymanagement/emergency-procedures

Western Michigan University has a 24/7/365 Department of Public Safety with Patrol, Detective, and Community Policing divisions. The WMU DPS can be contacted using any one of the following procedures:

- Calling (269) 387-5555 from any phone any time
- Calling 118 from any campus blue light emergency call box or elevator phone

Please note: Calling 911 from a cell phone on campus will reach Kalamazoo County emergency dispatch, rather than WMU DPS.

WMU Alert System: All members of the WMU community may register a telephone number (cell, office, or home) through the GoWMU portal for “WMU Alert,” operated by Rave Mobile Safety. If an extreme emergency is identified (including but not limited to severe weather, terrorism, shootings, hazardous materials incidents), the system employs preprogrammed text or voice messages that will deliver information to any currently enrolled WMU student or active WMU employee via a cell phone or a landline. Anyone who has registered the number of a text-capable phone in WMU Alert will receive messages about emergency situations in text format. Landlines or cell phones without text capability will receive messages as voice alerts. WMU urges all enrolled students and active employees to activate their WMU Alert account by following these steps:

- Log into GoWMU.
- Click on the yellow and red WMU Alert triangle.
- Enter the preferred phone number.
- Indicate preference for text or voice messages—or both.
- Click submit.

After hours Assistance

The department of public safety offers Vehicle Escorts and Walking Escorts as after hour services for students on campus. Call 269-387-5555 or visit wmudps.wmich.edu/safe-ride.php for hours of operation.

What should you do if you have reason to believe someone at WMU (e.g., a classmate, a student in a class you teach) is a threat to himself or to others? Campus security threats are sometimes precipitated by mental health crises in individuals. Campus mental health professionals are trained to identify these kinds of issues in persons with whom they have contact. Other individuals on campus who don't have specific mental health training may also have concerns about the mental stability of persons they encounter in the campus setting. If someone you know at WMU has made threats against others or you believe an individual poses a possible danger to himself or others, you should immediately report your concerns to the WMU Department of Public Safety. They will investigate the potential threat and help determine what interventions may be necessary. Don't take it upon yourself to assess such possible threats, and don't assume that someone else will do something about it or that your concerns are not valid. Public Safety will listen to your concerns and take appropriate action. The Division of Student Affairs has more information on recognizing a student in distress and how to report a concern at wmich.edu/studentaffairs/concern.

Confidentiality/Disclosure of Student Records

Western Michigan University is bound by federal law to comply with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). Maintaining confidentiality of educational records is the responsibility of all users whether the individuals are faculty, staff, or students. According to FERPA, an education record, with limited exception, is a record which is maintained by the institution, directly related to the student, and from which a student can be identified. As graduate assistants, whether or not you are teaching you may be asked to handle student records, such as grades, as part of your assistantship responsibilities. It is important that you understand the limits of confidentiality in regard to student records (including your own records).

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act affords students certain rights with respect to their educational records. These include the right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's educational records, **except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosures without consent.**

Disclosure without consent is permitted when the information consists solely of "directory information." Directory information may be published or released by University faculty and staff at their discretion. Unless a student specifically directs otherwise by requesting confidentiality of his personally identifiable information, WMU designates all of the following categories of information about its students as "Directory Information":

- Address
- Telephone number
- WMU E-mail address
- Curriculum and major field of study
- Dates of attendance
- Enrollment status (full/part-time)
- Degrees/awards received
- Most recent previous educational agency or institution attended by the student
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height of athletes

Confidentiality Procedures: Please observe the following procedures in order to protect student records:

The Registrar is the University officer charged with ensuring compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. More information on FERPA is available at:

wmich.edu/registrar/policies/ferpa

Western Michigan University Libraries

University Libraries recognize that WMU graduate students engage in significant research and teaching while at WMU. The libraries are committed to providing resources and services that enhance your academic experience as both a researcher and an instructor at WMU.

Get to know your library liaison: WMU librarians are available to assist you whether in person or by phone, text, email, or online chat. Each academic department has an assigned liaison librarian whom you can contact about topics ranging from general inquiries to arranging in-depth research consultations. Your library liaison is the point person for many services available to you in your role as researcher as well as instructor. For example your liaison can assist with any of the following:

- Overview of services or introduction to resources (print, electronic, multimedia) available for your field
- Scheduling an in-depth research consultation
- Arranging hands-on library instruction for a class
- Recommending items you'd like the library to purchase or requesting a library workshop or service
- Find your library liaison at wmich.edu/library/subject-librarians

WMU Libraries collections and facilities:

- Collections include millions of print items as well as electronic books and databases, streaming video, DVDs, CDs, and maps.
- Off-campus access to databases, electronic journals, streaming video, and other online resources is available via Bronco Net ID.
- University Libraries consist of Waldo Library and several branches. Waldo Library houses collections in humanities, social sciences, science/technology, business, maps, government documents and special collections (includes medieval collection, rare books, women's poetry) and is the university's main library.
- Branch Libraries include:
 - Swain Education Library (Sangren Hall)
 - Maybee Music and Dance Library (Dalton Center)
 - Archives and Regional History (Zhang Legacy Collections Center)

Course reserves: WMU Libraries offer a reserve service for materials you would like set aside for your class. You can place physical or electronic materials on reserve for use by your students. More information about setting up reserves for your classes, including copyright guidelines, can be found at wmich.edu/library/reserves.

Library instruction services:

University Libraries provide a variety of instructional support services including course-related instruction, one-on-one consultations, virtual and self-guided tours, handouts, and tutorials. Librarians

can work with you to develop research assignments that help students learn how to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information for their subject. Librarians can help you develop assignments using print collections, primary source materials, statistical information, etc. More information about Library Instruction Services is available at wmich.edu/library/services/graduate.

Borrowing books and other materials:

- Books from WMU libraries may be checked out by graduate students for one semester. You may borrow up to 100 items from the general collections. See summary of library services for graduate students at wmich.edu/library/services/graduate
- Present your Bronco Card whenever you wish to borrow library items.
- Items may be renewed online or in person.
- DVDs and videotapes from the **Instructional Video Collection** may be borrowed for seven (7) days.
- For information on borrowing other types of materials, as well as further information on borrowing and renewal policies see wmich.edu/library/borrow.

Interlibrary loan: The interlibrary loan service allows you to borrow items that are not in the WMU Libraries collections. Requests are placed through the interlibrary loan system by creating an account with your Bronco Net ID and password. Journal articles and book chapters are generally delivered electronically. Books, microfilm, CDs, DVDs, etc. can be picked up at Waldo Library. For more information about interlibrary loan services and to sign up for an account see wmich.edu/library/borrow.

Recommend new books, journal subscriptions, etc.: The libraries welcome your suggestions for new materials to add to the collections: books, electronic resources, journal subscriptions, media materials, etc. To recommend items for purchase you may either contact your library liaison or use one of the forms at wmich.edu/library/services/forms

Reference Manager Software: The Mendeley Desktop and Zotero citation management tools allow students to manage, read, share, annotate and cite research papers. Learn more at libguides.wmich.edu/citing/tools.

Writing style guides: The Libraries website provides “quick guides” as well as more extensive help with several of the more popular writing style systems: APA, Chicago, MLA, etc. These can be found at: libguides.wmich.edu/citing.

Teaching Assistant Roles and Responsibilities

As a teaching assistant (TA), you may fulfill a variety of instructional roles at Western Michigan University. Here are some examples of typical TA responsibilities.

Assisting the Professor: Assisting a professor with a course might include helping design the course, constructing tests, preparing materials, updating the course website, or grading assignments. You may even assume the responsibility for teaching a class session. In any case, you need to understand the objectives and goals the course professor has set for the students so that you can communicate effectively with them. Above all, be sure you know the professor’s expectations of you.

Holding Office Hours: Some TAs are required to hold office hours for the professor whom they assist. Tutoring or holding office hours is one of the most important responsibilities a teaching assistant can have. It is your chance to work with students one-on-one and to learn about the problem's students are having with the course material. You must schedule regular office hours and adhere to that schedule. Word spreads rapidly that a TA is unreliable and inaccessible if you fail to meet your regularly scheduled appointments. Students may need to be motivated to use office hours. Schedule office hours when students are available or right after class when students are most likely to have questions. Be sure to provide your office location, email address, and office phone number if you have one.

Grading papers/exams: Some TAs start out with the task of grading papers, homework, exams, and if you are teaching independently, you will certainly grade. To be a grader, you need to understand the course content and be able to follow a student's thinking to interpret answers that might not be complete. You need to be consistent so that your grading is fair and reliable. Know your department's grading procedures and policies and work with your course supervisor to develop grading criteria. [See the section later in this booklet on "Grading and Its Challenges" in "Principles of Grading and Evaluation."]

You will also want to be familiar with your department's and the University's policies on academic dishonesty. Do you really know what plagiarism is, and can you convey this to your students? What is the department's policy on cheating? Finally, develop strategies for dealing with angry or aggressive students. Learning how to communicate with students about grading procedures can help you work effectively with those students whose performance is not up to par.

Leading discussions/recitations: As a discussion/recitation leader, your primary challenge will be to identify the most important content from the large class lectures or readings and then elaborate on the information to help students understand the material. You may even be responsible for testing and grading students' work. If you're assisting in one section of a large lecture class, be sure to attend class lecture so you understand what the students need to know.

Conducting laboratory sessions: Lab assistants are responsible for reviewing experiments beforehand, asking and answering student questions, and evaluating students' lab work. As a lab assistant or lab instructor, you must demonstrate knowledge about safety procedures and provide a safe environment in which students can work. Advance preparation for lab experiments or assignments is the key to successfully teaching a lab. Learn how to guide students' thinking and answer questions without giving the answers. Work closely with your departmental supervisor or faculty member to learn the protocol or your lab.

Teaching studio courses: In art or music you might be assigned to teach a studio course. Work closely with your departmental supervisor. You'll need to know the expectations for studio projects and how you will communicate these expectations to your students. An awareness of your department's resources should help you determine what teaching aids/tools are available and where you can find them.

Identifying help: Your department is responsible for all of your work, from making your teaching assignment to supervising and evaluating your classroom performance. When you have a question relating to your assignment, your department is the primary source to consult. The department chair, the director of graduate studies/graduate program advisor, the faculty member in charge of GA training, your own graduate advisor or the faculty member you assist, and the department's administrative assistants are all sources of information and guidance. The veteran GAs in your department are a great resource as well. Ask questions; seek advice!

Getting Started:

Before the term begins:

1. Meet your chair and any faculty member(s) you will be assisting.
2. Read carefully the catalog description of the course(s) you will teach or with which you will assist. WMU's Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs are available online at: www.wmich.edu/registrar/catalogs.
3. Visit the site of the classroom or laboratory where you will teach or in which you will assist. Check for necessary supplies, see what technology is available, and determine possible seating arrangements. Discuss any problems you may have discovered with your department chair or person in charge of facilities.
4. Check with your department about what books are used in your assigned course and whether or not you need to order textbooks for your course yourself. You may also need to obtain desk copies for those books, so ask how desk copies are handled by instructors in your department. Be sure to do this with sufficient time for your own and your students' preparation.
5. Check with your department chair or administrative assistant if you expect to need assistance with the preparation or copying of syllabi, exams, or other class materials. Be aware that some departments have budgetary limitations on the amount of support that they can provide.
6. The University requires a syllabus for every course. Make sure that it is informative, listing your name, office address, office telephone, and office hours and all pertinent general information for the course. List the required textbooks or readings, the obligations of the class, overall requirements (including your attendance policy), and grading scale. Indicate the expected assignments, tests, exams, reports, or papers, and then give a tentative course schedule. If you must make a change in the syllabus, the assignments, or the schedule, explain the change carefully and distribute a written explanation of the change to the class, post to the class website, or send an email to the class. If you are assisting with the class rather than teaching it yourself, be sure to discuss the syllabus with the faculty member you are assisting.
7. List your office hours on the syllabus and post them on your office door. Then, keep those hours! If an emergency forces you to cancel your office hours, place a notice on your office or ask the department office staff to post the notice. Make up any missed appointments with students promptly.
8. Waldo Library provides many essential services. The Reference staff is very helpful to students and there is a Reserve desk (269-387-5884) on the first floor where you can leave books or articles placed on reserve.

Developing a Syllabus

If you have primary responsibility for teaching a course, the syllabus is the end-product of your course planning activity, and it is written primarily—though not exclusively—for your students. The major purpose of a syllabus is to provide a “road map” for students to enable them to get through the course successfully. Research has shown that students who are instructed in what they are supposed to learn and how they are to be evaluated perform better than those who are not so instructed. The course syllabus is an excellent medium for providing the kind of information students need to guide their own learning. Moreover, a syllabus can point out connections between various parts of the course and, therefore, help students understand the course as an integrated whole.

A syllabus specifies the duties and responsibilities of both instructor and students and clearly states the benefits they are to derive from the experience. A professor once pointed out that there seemed to be an inverse relationship between the length of his syllabi and the length of the line at his office door—if he put more information in the syllabus, fewer students had questions about the organization of the course (and he had more time to consult with students about more significant questions).

Your course syllabus should be posted in e-learning to allow students to access it anytime.

Once you have decided upon the rules, procedures, and requirements for the course and have articulated them to your students in your syllabus and in class, you should never arbitrarily change these elements—this is the equivalent of unilaterally changing a legal contract after it has been signed. Students will feel justifiably upset if you change the rules in the middle of the game. Plan your course carefully so as to avoid making changes to the syllabus as you go along.

The syllabus is an important document for the instructor as well as the students because it is one of the few tangible records of the course itself. It provides an account of your activities and it reflects your conceptualization of the course as a whole, proof of which may be important for job applications. When you accept a faculty appointment at a college or university, your course syllabi may become part of your promotion/tenure file.

The following elements should appear in every syllabus:

Required Course Information

1. Title of the course (exactly as it appears in the course catalog), course number, semester, and year
2. Name of the instructor, office location(s), office hours, telephone number(s), email address(es)
3. Course location, room, building, and meeting time, if applicable
4. Required textbooks and supplies.
5. The description of the course from the course catalog, including prerequisites.
6. The objectives, goals and outcomes of the course.
7. A calendar of the scheduled meetings, including date/time/location of the final exam, with the subject of the lecture/discussion/reading/activities for each date. Due dates for assignments and what each assignment is worth out of the total grade.
8. A grading scale. (The syllabus may note the grading scale could be revised.)
9. Attendance policy and expectations for classroom etiquette.

Course Description

1. Statement of course goals (preferably written in terms of what the students will gain from the course).
2. Your teaching formats (lecture, discussion, lab work, field work, etc.) and their implications for students.
3. A detailed explanation of course procedures involving (for example) papers, homework assignments, lab work, field trips, and so forth.
4. All required texts, workbooks, study guides, additional readings, and other materials students will need for the course (e.g., scientific calculators, dissecting kits, graph paper, etc.).
5. Grading procedures and scales. List every activity that will be graded, how each will be graded, and the exact percentage (or points) of the final grade each one represents. Also explain the procedures by which you will determine the final grade.
6. An explanation of the formats you will use in quizzes and exams. Also, if you intend to use “pop” quizzes, you should warn students about them in this section.
7. Guidelines for writing reports, research papers, reviews, etc. These guidelines should include the preferred format for each assignment, advice on how to research and write the papers, and the criteria that will be used to grade.
8. Policies about class absence (and lateness), missed exams, late papers, cheating, and plagiarism. For example, you should clearly delineate the types of source materials and the extent of collaboration permitted on homework and other assignments. Try not to scold students in this section, but be specific, firm, and clear in your expectations. Explain the different types of academic misconduct (cheating, plagiarism, multiple submission, fabrication of data, etc.) and cite the University’s student academic conduct policy (found in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs).
9. Strategies for success in the course. If you were a student in your class, how would you approach the course? What pitfalls can you warn the student against? How would you prepare for the quizzes and exams? How would you budget your time? What would your note-taking strategy be? (Remember that many undergraduates have poorly developed study skills, and anything you can teach them about how to study and learn will improve their performance.)

Boilerplates to include on every syllabus, required by the Registrar’s Office.

Accommodation for Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the office of Disability Services for Students at 269-387-2116 at the beginning of the semester. A disability determination must be made by this office before any accommodations are provided by the instructor. See wmich.edu/disabilityservices.

Student Academic Conduct

You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the academic policies and procedures in the Undergraduate or Graduate Catalogs (found online at wmich.edu/registrar/catalogs) that pertain to student rights and responsibilities. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity, and computer misuse. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct wmich.edu/conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the

opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

Other general syllabus points: Although you may feel that a syllabus combining all this information seems excessive, you will discover that students appreciate your effort to create a useful and comprehensive syllabus, particularly if you take time to review it on the first day of class and show them its features. Some teachers have carried these guidelines even further and developed course manuals which include the assignments and activities for an entire semester, with handouts, illustrations, and special instructions for each class day. Of course, as a TA teaching a course for the first time you may not have time to create a manual, but you might keep the idea in mind for your future teaching career.

Finally, do not be afraid to ask faculty members and other TAs for copies of their syllabi for inspiration and guidance in creating your own. Look for syllabi posted by faculty in the department in which you will be teaching. Although your syllabus should express your own teaching goals for the course, there is no need to “reinvent the wheel” on your own. Those who have taught the course before have had to solve many of the same problems, and their solutions can provide a rich source of time-tested ideas for your own syllabus.

Course Syllabus Checklist:

Because the syllabus helps instructors provide students with the kind of written criteria required by the University’s *Student Rights Policy*, it is one of the most important documents in a course. The syllabus should contain the following information.

COURSE INFORMATION

- Course number and name (e.g., ENGL 1050, Thought and Writing)
- Semester/session and year (e.g., Fall 2014)
- Meeting days
- Building name and classroom number (omitted if the course is taught online)

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

- Name and title (Dr., Ms., Mr.)
- Office address
- Phone number(s) with restrictions
- Email address
- Office hours
- “By appointment” statement

COURSE DESCRIPTION

- Textbook(s) or other sources, in bibliographic style you require
- Supplemental reading and where available, listed in your bibliographic style
- Catalog course description (taken from wmich.edu/registrar/catalogs)
- Course purpose, goals, and objectives
- Topic outline for course
- Rationale for content

GRADING

- Assignments and weighting

- ___ Grading scale
- ___ Grading criteria
- ___ Testing methods
- ___ Feedback to students about grades

CLASS POLICIES

- ___ Written work guidelines and policies
- ___ Attendance and excused absences
- ___ Reporting illness
- ___ Make-up and late work
- ___ Extra-credit work
- ___ Academic honesty/misconduct [required—see above]
- ___ Accommodations for students with documented disabilities [required—see above]

PHILOSOPHY AND VALUES

- ___ Beliefs about teaching and learning
- ___ Methods of instruction

CLASS CALENDAR

- ___ Tentative schedule (clearly note this is subject to change)
- ___ Due dates for readings, papers, projects (also may be subject to change)
- ___ Quiz, exam, and final exam dates
- ___ Holidays
- ___ Last day to drop (wmich.edu/registrar/calendars)

E-learning

E-learning is the University's web-based learning management system. It allows instructors to manage many of the functions of their course online, including grading, administration of homework assignments and quizzes, and linking other online tools to the course. Check out the E-learning page (wmich.edu/elearning) for more information on setting up courses and using the system.

E-learning allows you to keep your class up-to-date on the latest assignments, provide access to the syllabus (and updates to the syllabus) and other materials handed out in class, provide additional resources and links to other information, etc. When the instructor makes course information available on e-learning, students have no excuse for missing assignments or information they may have missed if they were not in class (or not paying attention); the onus is on them to check the site and keep up.

If you need additional help with e-learning, or anything technological in the classroom, the Faculty Technology Center (wmich.edu/facultytechnology) offers online and walk-in assistance with teaching technology resources.

Office of Faculty Development

Another valuable resource for teaching is the Office of Faculty Development (wmich.edu/facultydevelopment/graduate). They offer a number of opportunities to graduate teaching assistants including Cool Tools for Teaching, which are workshops on various teaching-

related issues. In addition, the Office of Faculty Development and the Graduate College offer a summer Graduate Student Teaching Intensive. The Intensive is a week-long professional development program designed to help graduate students enhance their teaching and learning approaches and become more effective communicators both in and out of the classroom.

Cool Tools for Teaching!

Are you interested in learning high-tech, low-tech, and no-tech tools to enhance your teaching methods? Cool Tools will show you how to create a stellar teaching portfolio, how to use grading rubrics to improve student learning, how to incorporate iClickers into your classroom, and much more! For a complete schedule, visit wmich.edu/facultydevelopment/programs/cooltools.

These popular workshops are free and are open to adjunct faculty, full-time faculty, and graduate teaching instructors. Register online by clicking the registration link on the page referenced above. Register early, because space is limited.

Office of Faculty Development
(269) 387-0732
wmich.edu/facultydevelopment

Communicating With Your Class

Email Your Entire Class Using GoWMU: the University uses only official 'wmich.edu' email addresses for all emailed correspondence. All students, faculty, and staff automatically receive an official wmich.edu email address at the time of their Bronco NetID account creation. Using the following steps at GoWMU, instructors can email their entire class, or individual members of a class.

1. Go to gowmu.wmich.edu and login using your Bronco NetID and password.
2. In the Faculty/Staff Home channel under My Work, click "Detailed Class List" or "Summary Class List".
3. Select a term from the drop-down menu.
4. Then select your course and CRN (Course Registration Number) from the drop-down menu.
5. The class list will now be displayed. You may choose to email a specific student by clicking the appropriate icon. Or, at the bottom, you may choose "Email class". Whichever you choose, your default email client will pop open a window and the selected student or your class list will be populated in the Bcc: field, which allows the email addresses to remain private to all recipients. (Due to privacy rules, you should not provide student email addresses to other class members unless you have permission in writing from all students to do so. Always use the Bcc: field when sending email to your entire class.)
6. If you do not want the "Email class" feature to open a default email client, let your mouse hover over the icon and you will see an email address (after *mailto:*) containing the course CRN that you can use in W-exchange to send an email to the entire class.

Accessing Rosters, Submitting Grades

Steps 1 & 2 immediately above will reveal the rosters of your courses. Additional instructions for accessing class rosters, submitting grades, and other GoWMU functions are available from the Office of the Registrar. Please see: wmich.edu/registrar/faculty-staff/grades

To Export or Print Class Rosters from GoWMU: If you are listed as a primary or secondary instructor of record for a course, you are able to obtain a roster of students registered for your course by doing the following:

1. Log in to GoWMU.
2. In the My Work channel, Select “Summary Class List”.
3. Select a term, click submit.
4. Select the appropriate CRN/Title, click submit.
5. To print the class list, use the print option in your browser, OR copy the class list to a spreadsheet.*
6. To choose another course, scroll to the bottom of the screen and click on “Return to Faculty and Advisor Menu”.
7. Repeat steps 3 through 5 above.

*To copy the class list to a spreadsheet:

1. Launch Excel and open a new spreadsheet.
2. From the Summary Class List, highlight the entire list beginning with the Record Number through the Grade Detail column.
3. Select Copy.
4. Select the open excel spreadsheet.
5. Select Paste.
6. Perform a "save as" to save to your computer* or print the list.
7. When you have completed viewing your class rosters, log out of GoWMU and close the browser.

To View Class List in Elearning: If you have instructor or teaching assistant access to your course in e-learning, you can view the class list of students registered for your course by doing the following:

1. Log in to GoWMU.
2. Select Elearning from the menu.
3. Select the course from your ‘My courses’ list.
4. In the ‘Communications’ drop-down menu, select Class List.

If your class list does not match the students attending your class: If you either have students attending your class who are not registered, or students registered in your class who are not attending, you should notify the Registrar’s Office by using the function “Report Student Not Attending/Not Registered” in the My Work channel under Faculty Menu in GoWMU. The Registrar’s Office will contact these students to clarify their registration status.

To Submit Grades:

1. In GoWMU, click on the link “Final Grade Worksheet” in the Faculty menu under the My Work channel.
2. Select the appropriate term from the drop-down box.
3. Select the appropriate CRN/Title.
4. Enter a grade from the drop-down list for each student. If you have multiple pages, it is recommended, but not necessary, to submit each page before moving to the next. **Credit/No Credit Grade Option:** If a student is registered with a credit/no credit option or audit, assign the letter grade earned. The system will default the correct CR/NC or AUD.
5. **Non-Attendance:** for any listed student who discontinued attendance or never attended and was not pre-assigned a “W” (official withdrawal), enter a grade of “X.” Enter a date for last attendance as accurately as you can.
6. Click the “Submit” button at the bottom of the page to save your grade entries. You do not have to have all grades entered before submitting. You may change any grade, including submitted/saved grades, until the deadline for grade submission (noon on the Tuesday following the end of the term).
7. Note: You will not receive an email confirmation.
8. **Warning:** Submit your work often. You will be automatically logged out after 60 minutes of inactivity.
9. To choose another course, scroll to the bottom of the screen and click on “Select a New CRN.”
10. Repeat steps 2–6 for additional courses.

When you have graded all of your courses, log out of GoWMU and close your browser. You can verify that grades are saved by logging back in and looking at the grade worksheet again.

Change of grade: grades can only be changed by the instructor who gave the grade. The link to “Remove Incomplete Grade/Change Grade” is available through the Faculty menu in GoWMU. Grade changes are accepted according to the timelines published in the catalog.

When can I give an “Incomplete?”:

From the undergraduate catalog, an Incomplete grade is defined as follows:

“This is a temporary grade, which the instructor may give to an undergraduate student when illness, necessary absence, or other reasons beyond the control of the student prevent completion of course requirements by the end of the semester or session. The grade of ‘I’ (incomplete) may not be given as a substitute for a failing grade.”

The grade of ‘I’ must be removed (through the Removal of Incomplete Grade/Change of Grade form in GoWMU) by the instructor who gave the grade. A student has up to one year from the time the incomplete is given to make up the work and have the grade of ‘I’ replaced. The instructor is not obligated to provide one year to complete the work and can designate a shorter time if desired.

At the time the Incomplete grade is given, the instructor should indicate the length of time allowed for the student to complete the work. When the length of time is not indicated, the student is automatically given one year to complete the work. Please keep this in mind when speaking with the student about your expectations. You will be responsible for reviewing the student’s work and changing the grade from ‘I’ to a letter grade when the work is completed. Extensions beyond the one-year deadline are sometimes granted; in a situation where the instructor is convinced that the

student should be given more time to complete the work, the instructor should either email or write to the Registrar's office and the extension will be granted.

Instructors receive notification from the Registrar's Office about 6 weeks before all incompletes they have granted expire. For undergraduates, incomplete grades for which an extension has not been requested will be converted to an 'E' (fail) about one month after the year has expired. For graduate students, incomplete grades (except those for dissertation and thesis, and courses related to them) for which an extension has not been requested will be converted to an 'X' (unofficial withdrawal) about one month after the year has expired. Note that both 'E' and 'X' grades generate 0.0 honor points and the 'X' grade has the same effect on the student's grade point average as a failing grade.

Since TAs are essentially temporary instructors with no guarantee of employment beyond the current period of appointment, they should be especially judicious in giving incomplete grades. For many TAs it may not be possible to give a student a year in which to complete the missing work (and in many cases a year may not be justified). These additional time constraints should be clearly communicated to students who request incomplete grades. If necessary, a department chair can step in to change a grade when an instructor is no longer available to do so.

“First Work” and Mid-term Grades: WMU allows instructors of record to submit “first work” (within first 4 weeks of semester) and mid-term grades through GoWMU, if they wish. These temporary grades do not appear on a student's official record, are not calculated in the student's GPA, and are only visible to the student by logging into GoWMU. Instructors are encouraged to use this system to inform students of their class progress early or midway through an academic term. Instructions on the availability and use of first work and mid-term grading will be emailed to instructors of record each term.

What is an “Instructor of Record?”: The Banner Student Record System lists instructors of record for each course. These are of two types: primary instructors of record (only one per course) have overall responsibility for a course, including submitting grades, while secondary instructors of record assist with a course but do not have primary responsibility for it. As a graduate teaching assistant, you may be listed as either a primary or secondary instructor of record in one of the following ways:

- Graduate teaching assistants who teach subordinate (linked) lab or recitation sections should be listed as primary instructor of record for zero-credit lab or recitation sections (and should be listed as secondary instructors of record for the linked lecture section at the discretion of the department chair). Faculty who teach the lecture sections and who are responsible for assignment of grades must be listed as the primary instructor of record for the lecture and must also be listed as the secondary instructor for the laboratory or recitation sections.
- Graduate teaching assistants who teach stand-alone sections (including the stand-alone lab sections in some science departments) should be listed as the primary instructor of record. Supervising and coordinating faculty should be listed as the secondary instructor of record for these sections.
- Graduate teaching assistants should be listed as secondary instructors when they assist a professor in teaching or grading a large class.
- Part-time and adjunct faculty should be listed as instructors of record based on the same rules as those which apply to graduate teaching assistants.

Principles of Grading and Evaluation

Grading and Its Challenges: Whether you are responsible for teaching your own course, you may be asked to grade daily assignments, papers, and exams. At the most basic level, grades should reflect the degree to which students meet stated course expectations. The primary goals of grading are to provide feedback to students on their progress in a course (and, if necessary, provide guidance on how they can improve their future work) and to accumulate data on which the final course grade will be based. Effective grades will accomplish these goals and be perceived by students as fair and reasonable.

Unfortunately, too often a secondary goal of instructors in assigning grades is the desire to avoid criticism or complaints from students. Grading can be an intimidating process that may leave the grader open to student complaints of inconsistency, arbitrariness, partiality, or worse. As an attitude of consumerism and entitlement has crept into higher education, students sometimes expect to receive good grades whether or not they have earned them, and they may demand reconsideration of grades they consider to be “unfair,” arbitrary, or just too low. Too many student complaints lead to instructors growing tired of defending their grading policies. Students may also lose motivation to work in a course if they feel they are being graded too harshly and their efforts are not being rewarded with the grades they believe they deserve (an outcome of the “motivation vs. reward” cycle). The result has been “grade inflation” and lower standards as instructors have capitulated to these pressures from students rather than give (and be prepared to defend) meaningful grades. Keep in mind that the definition in WMU’s Undergraduate Catalog of a grade of ‘C’ is “Satisfactory, Acceptable, Adequate.” Thus a student who is doing the expected amount of work in a course, and work that is of satisfactory quality, would be deserving of a grade of ‘C.’ A grade of ‘B’ by catalog standards is “Very Good, High Pass” and to earn a grade of ‘A’ a student’s work should be “Outstanding, Exceptional, Extraordinary,” signifying effort that is far beyond that of an average student.

Strategies for Relatively Painless (and Virtually Indisputable) Grading

1. Have clearly stated expectations for learner outcomes in the course syllabus and establish a clear relationship between these expectations and grades. The direct relationship between clearly stated expectations and grading outcomes cannot be overstated. For each assignment, communicate clearly to the class—and have in mind as you grade—what the expectations are for that assignment and how it will be graded. Students who are unclear about the expectations of an assignment will become frustrated trying to hit an unknown or moving target. If the student work you are seeing does not meet expectations, ask yourself if your expectations were stated clearly enough, or if there was too much room for interpretation. Being able to discern and effectively convey expectations to students is one of the most important skills an inexperienced instructor needs to work on.
2. Use objective grading criteria whenever possible, especially as you are gaining experience in evaluating student work. Grading scales based on percentages (A = 93–100%, etc.) are often used and stated in course syllabi. Grading assignments on a points and percentage basis is easier on the instructor and more difficult for a student to dispute but may not be appropriate for all assignments (term papers, for instance). Objective grading allows the instructor less leeway, however, in how the spread of grades turns out for a given assignment; thus, if an assignment was relatively easy, most of the class may earn A’s under objective grading. That’s not necessarily bad for the occasional assignment, but if it happens with most of the assignments in the course the

final course grades will likely be inflated and it will be difficult to differentiate actual student achievement.

3. For more subjectively graded assignments, as you begin to grade a stack of papers, have clearly in mind what an 'A' paper will look like, a 'B' paper, etc. You may want to make a quick first pass through the papers and assign them to different stacks based on broad quality descriptors (outstanding, satisfactory/meets minimum requirements, inadequate) and then go back through the stacks and make finer distinctions in the quality of the work in order to convert the quality descriptors to actual grades. It may be possible to rank order the entire stack of papers from best to worst, then assign (or at least confirm) grades based on ranking. (This is not the same as grading on a curve.) Finally, if you can grade student papers 'blind,' without knowing the students' names, you can avoid any perception of partiality.
4. Grading rubrics can be especially helpful for grading papers and other assignments that are not based on objective questions, including classroom participation. The grading rubric helps the instructor determine in advance how much each criterion counts in the overall grade, and helps students understand where points were taken off. For more information on grading rubrics, see www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/teach/rubrics.html. The Office of Faculty Development (wmich.edu/facultydevelopment) also offers workshops and other helpful information on use of grading rubrics.
5. Whenever possible, provide feedback on the reasons for a particular grade. This can serve to both advise the student what they can do better next time (e.g., help them understand your expectations), and justify why you gave a particular grade. For assignments or exams with objective questions graded on a points basis, this may simply mean indicating how many points were taken off for each question as well as indicating why only partial credit was given.
6. On exams especially, and for some assignments, use questions that require students to stretch and apply their knowledge rather than just regurgitate information. Such questions will help separate out the students who have truly absorbed and mastered the material from those who have not. If you're concerned about such questions dragging down the grades of many students, you can make them extra credit questions. (You can also change a question on an exam that proved to be especially difficult to extra credit if only a few students did well on it; this way the students who didn't get it are not penalized but the students who did still receive credit. Throwing the question out penalizes the students who were correct.)
7. Ask your teaching supervisor to explain the grading standards that exist in your department. Departments will often have their own profile of typical grades for courses in that department—the average grade in one department may be 'C' while in another department it may be between 'B' and 'A.' There may also be different standards within a department for introductory courses for non-majors as opposed to upper-level courses in the major. As a teaching assistant, it is not your role to change the department status quo or make a statement by using grading standards that are vastly different than the department. Find out what the department standard is and take that into consideration as you develop your grading policies.
8. Be very careful about making exceptions to deadlines, giving make-up exams, etc. Life happens, and there are sometimes unforeseeable circumstances (illness, family emergencies, etc.) that result

in students missing class or being late in submitting work. You will have to use your discretion in determining when such events are legitimate and what the appropriate recourse is; whatever recourse is offered to the student, make sure that it doesn't open the door to abuse of your good nature and that fairness to other students is taken into consideration. One of the ways to handle this is to allow each student to throw out one or two quiz or daily assignment grades each term. This tactic is fair to everyone because it accommodates the students with unplanned absences or "situations" while allowing the students who consistently did the required work to throw out their worst grade(s) or skip an assignment at the end of the term.

By being clear in stating expectations, giving solid feedback, and being consistent across assignments in how you treat all students in the course, it is possible to give students meaningful grades based on how well they have met course expectations. In this way you will earn and maintain the respect of students, and both you and the grades you give will be perceived as fair and reasonable.

Grading system at WMU: The numeric grading system at Western Michigan University is as follows: A = 4.0; BA = 3.5; B = 3.0; CB = 2.5; C = 2.0; DC = 1.5; D = 1.0; E = 0.0, failure; X = failure because of non-attendance or unofficial withdrawal. Note that there are no "plus" or "minus" grades.

The 'E' and 'X' course grades: Note that although both the 'E' and the 'X' grade count as 0.0 in the GPA calculation, there is a difference. A student who completes all work in the course, but whose work is failing, should receive the 'E' grade. A student who has either never attended class or who has discontinued attendance and does not qualify for an incomplete should receive the 'X' grade.

Creating Well-Crafted and Useful Exams: Effective and fair grading begins with well-crafted exams. Often, teachers dash off exam questions the night before and spend little time crafting or honing them. The result can be detrimental to both student and teacher. Effective exams should be an accurate reflection of the student's ability to comprehend and interpret information as well as the amount of time the student has devoted to the class, not simply a test of his or her ability to cram and use short-term recall. Therefore, the type of exam to be used must be carefully considered.

In most cases, essay exams are more effective in testing a student's comprehension and reasoning skills than are multiple-choice exams. They ask for interpretation and explanation of information rather than simple recall. A good essay question will require the student to examine causation and ramifications of problems. The instructor can then determine whether the student truly understands the subject being studied. In addition, essay exams require the student to use writing ability and test expression of knowledge.

Multiple-choice exams may be required in very large classes due to grading time constraints. Even if this is necessary, multiple-choice questions can be formulated to test comprehension and reasoning skills. This will take considerable time and effort but will be worth the effort. Good multiple-choice exams should use a variety of question types such as cause, result, exception, definition, insertion, match/mismatch, completion, graph, map or illustration-based, chronology and others. Using a variety will ensure that the student is tested on more than simple recall.

Instructors should try to craft questions carefully, whether they be essay or other type of questions. Wordiness should be avoided, and clear, precise terms used. Vagueness in questions creates vague

answers and can make it difficult for the student to determine what the instructor is asking for. It is also important to make questions specific while avoiding too many minor details. A good exam question should cover the whole of a particular, significant problem. Other considerations for the instructor are bias and stereotyping in exam questions. Gender-biased statements or racial stereotyping should be avoided, as should other prejudices and personal convictions.

Another important consideration is directions to students. It should be made clear to the students what is expected on exams, what the instructor looks for in an essay answer, and how much information should be included. The instructor should also make clear ahead of time what information will be covered on the exam. This will ensure a more accurate picture of the student's grasp of the course material, which is, after all, the purpose of exams. Using a variety of exam types may also be helpful in that some students will excel on some rather than others. Quizzes provide weekly feedback for both teacher and student and can be very helpful in catching problems early. Take-home exams are often inaccurate because it is difficult to enforce uniform time constraints or to control collusion. No matter what type of exam is used, clear and direct questions formulated to test specific teaching goals will be the most helpful in grading students.

Getting ready: checklist for constructing better tests: Well-constructed tests help motivate students and reinforce their learning while enabling you to assess their mastery of course objectives. Tests also provide you with feedback on your teaching, often showing you what was and was not communicated clearly. Designing tests is one of the most challenging tasks confronting college instructors. Unfortunately, many of us have had little, if any, preparation in writing tests.

Test writing may be made easier by considering the following suggestions for general test construction.

1. Overall Guidelines

- Test questions should reflect your objectives for the unit.
- Your expectations should be clearly known to the students.
- Each test item should present a clearly formulated task.
- State each item in simple, clear language free of nonfunctional material, extraneous clues, and race, ethnic, and gender bias.
- One item should not aid in answering another.
- Allow ample time for test completion (your estimate on how long it will take your students to complete a test may be wildly optimistic, especially when you first begin teaching! Don't judge the amount of time it will take by how long it took you!).
- Assignment of points should be determined before the test is administered and relative percentages for each section indicated on the test; this allows students who are pressed for time at the end of the test to make an informed decision about where to direct their efforts if they cannot finish.

2. Test Format and Directions

- Place similar type items together in the test to minimize the number of directions needed.
- Balance the proportion of correct answers (e.g., A, B, C, D) and avoid patterning when sequencing answers (e.g., A, B, C, D).

3. True/False Items

- Write the statement so that it can be unequivocally judged true or false.
- Make statements brief and in simple language.
- Use negative statement sparingly. Eliminate confusing double negatives.

- Avoid specific determiners (e.g., always, sometimes, may) and other clues (e.g., length).
4. Multiple-Choice Items
 - The stem of the item should present a single, clearly formulated problem.
 - The stem should be stated in positive form, whenever possible. If negative wording is used in the stem, emphasize by underlining or caps.
 - The intended answer should be correct or clearly best. Make distracters plausible and attractive to the uninformed but not deliberately confusing.
 - Alternatives should be grammatically consistent with the stem, parallel in form, and free from verbal clues to the correct answer.
 - Avoid the alternative “all of the above.” Use “none of the above” carefully and sparingly.
 - Vary the relative length of the correct answer to eliminate length as a clue.
 5. Matching Items
 - Each matching item should contain only homogenous material.
 - Keep lists of items short with brief responses on the right.
 - The list of responses should be longer than the list of premises to provide an uneven match.
 - Directions should clearly state the basis for matching and whether the responses can be used once or more than once.
 6. Short-Answer Items
 - State item so a single, brief answer is possible.
 - State item as a direct question whenever possible.
 - Place blanks at the end of the statement.
 7. Essay Test
 - Restrict each question to the measurement of complex learning outcomes.
 - The thought processes involved in answering essay questions should have been demonstrated and practiced prior to the testing situation.

Adopted with permission from *Teaching Today*, vol. 2, November 1995. Buffalo State University: Center for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching.

Final Exams

When and where do I hold the final exam?

From the WMU *AAUP Contract*:

38. §3 FINAL EXAMINATIONS. In every class taught, all faculty shall give a final examination, i.e., some form of comprehensive evaluative academic exercise appropriate to the course content and according to the published schedule of examinations, during the last week of the semester (which shall be set aside for final examinations), or at or near the scheduled conclusion of the session. The final evaluative exercise may be distributed before the time scheduled for the final exam providing that it is due and collected on the day during the final week of the semester on which the final exam has been scheduled. Exceptions to the requirement of scheduling a final examination (or other appropriate evaluative activity) may be granted, in writing, at the discretion of the appropriate chairperson and dean, upon request from the faculty member.

WMU has an official “exam week” at the end of Fall and Spring semesters. Exams for courses which meet during daytime hours are to be given during that week at special times other than the normal class times. A schedule of those times is available through the Registrar’s website, wmich.edu/registrar/calendars. Contact the department/school office coordinator with any questions.

All final exams are held in the normal classroom, unless other arrangements have been made with the Registrar's Office. Be sure to list the final exam time on your class syllabus.

The first day and beyond:

Maintaining authority and a professional demeanor

First impressions are very important. A successful first day of class is essential for establishing instructor-student relations and setting the dynamics of your classroom. Below are some tips on how to accomplish this as well as how to maintain authority throughout the semester.

Look and act professional. While this should go without saying, your students expect that you will look and act professionally and will react accordingly. Many new TAs are not very much older than their undergraduate students, so establishing an instructor-student relationship based on both scholarly and personal professionalism is of the utmost importance. Extensive knowledge of the material is not the sole guarantor of a successful teaching experience.

- Show up for class on time and prepared. Start class at the designated hour.
- Your demeanor, dress, diction, and manner of expression should be professional. Grooming and attire set the tone and reflect the importance we attach to the work of teaching and learning.
- Cover your syllabus completely on the first day. Be sure to establish the nature of the intellectual inquiry for your course.
- Students appreciate clarity.
- Get your class started on the first day with activities that engage students in the subject matter. Alternately, conduct an ice-breaking activity that allows students to get to know one another and you to know them.

Confidence and arrogance are often difficult to distinguish: Students appreciate and react positively to instructors who are self-assured and teach with confidence. Arrogance will gain you nothing but negative reactions, will alienate the students, and result in an undesirable classroom experience for everyone.

Take your students seriously: Differential knowledge bases among students exist invariably, but you should aim to treat students with respect and to acknowledge their intellectual abilities and potential despite such differences.

- Speak *to* your students, not *at* them.
- Encourage students' use of outside material.

Maintaining effective instructor-student relations throughout the semester requires effort on your part: Consistent personal and instructional presentation will make the semester go more smoothly. To maintain authority consistently:

- Each TA must learn to be appropriately friendly and open to students without succumbing to the temptation to be "one of the guys" or a "buddy." As a TA, you are not "one of them." You are the instructor or the assistant with legitimate authority and responsibility to maintain the student-teacher relationship. You'll establish more trust, more confidence in your fairness to all, if you treat all students impartially.

- Establish a rapport of respect through a “slow windup” with attention-getting reiteration of material from the previous session. This jars memory and lessens the burden of redundant repetition of material for you.
- Make an effort to wrap up treatment of each session’s new material five minutes early and “informally” remain in class to disengage students with ease by answering questions.

Disruptive students are a reality of the teaching experience. Work to prevent such situations prior to their arising and/or to handle them without appearing to have lost control of the classroom, by:

- Stating your ideas about students’ purpose for being at the University and in your particular class from the outset.
- Using humor. Things like “let us in on your secret” or “would you like to share that with us” which draw attention in a non-threatening or non-sarcastic manner to disruptive students can be very effective.
- One way of sensitizing students to what you expect in terms of classroom comportment is to recall that people at home talk persistently in front of the TV and carry that behavior over from the privacy of their homes into public environments. The notion of boundaries between public and private space has become further eroded with the pervasive use of cell phones. Encourage your students to respect the boundaries of classroom decorum in the same way that is still expected with film, lecture, or concert attendance.
- Some students will not understand your initial presentation and may “tune out” or create a disruption as a result; don’t be afraid to forfeit some content to get through their resistance. Be sensitive to their problems but sensible with regard to time expenditure. Tell them, “I’ll explain it as best I can for now, but let’s follow up outside of class”.

What Constitutes Good Teaching?

Effective teaching can take many forms. Students and faculty know good teaching when they experience it, but often find it difficult to articulate the specifics of good teaching. The many approaches to understanding teaching have been addressed in broad reviews of the research literature on post-secondary teaching.

One such review synthesized 31 studies in which students and faculty members specified characteristics important to good teaching. The analysis revealed extensive similarities across studies and between the two groups. In these studies, students and faculty members at the same institutions (universities, four-year colleges, and two-year colleges) were asked to describe attitudes or practices important to good teaching; some studies asked respondents to characterize “best” or “ideal” teachers. Both students and faculty members gave high rankings to the following seven categories (although students placed somewhat more emphasis than faculty on instructors’ stimulation of interest and their elocutionary skills).

Faculty and students agree that good teaching involves:

Sensitivity to, and Concern with, Class Level and Progress:

- Instructor communicates effectively at a level appropriate to students’ understanding
- Textbook is of appropriate difficulty for students
- Instructor seems to be concerned with whether students learn the material
- Instructor determines if one student’s problem is common to others

- Instructor realizes when students are bored or confused

Preparation; Organization of the Course:

- Instructor is well-prepared for class
- Instructor organizes the course in a logical manner
- The course organization assists students in developing basic concepts
- New information is presented in a logical progression and is related to ideas already introduced
- Students perceive the instructor as well-organized
- Lectures are easy to outline

Knowledge of the Subject:

- Instructor demonstrates comprehensive knowledge of the subject
- Instructor knows the current research and literature in the field
- Instructor knows his/her field of specialization very well

Enthusiasm (for Subject and for Teaching):

- Instructor seems interested in teaching the course
- Instructor is able to convey interest and enthusiasm for subject matter
- Instructor is dynamic and energetic

Clarity and Understanding:

- Instructor explains clearly and attempts to answer all questions
- Students are able to follow and understand class lectures/presentations
- Instructor relates concepts in a systematic manner that helps understanding
- Instructor uses well-chosen examples to clarify points
- Instructor summarizes major points
- Instructor interprets abstract ideas and theories clearly

Availability and Helpfulness:

- Instructor encourages students to see him/her if having difficulty
- Instructor is readily available to students outside class for consultation
- Instructor has rapport with students
- Special “group help” sessions are provided for students who need it
- Instructor is conscientious in keeping appointments with students
- Instructor is willing to give personal assistance

Impartiality of Evaluation; Quality of Examinations:

- Concepts emphasized in class are those emphasized in exams
- Exams cover material on which students expect to be tested
- Exams require students to do more than recall factual information
- Exams allow students to adequately demonstrate what was learned in the course
- Grades are based on a fair balance of course requirements and content
- Students are quizzed frequently

- Instructor announces tests and quizzes in advance
- Instructor uses more than one type of evaluation device

Reference:

Feldman, K. A. (1998). "Effective College Teaching from Students' and Faculty's View; Matched or Mismatched Priorities?" *Research in Higher Education*, 28(4), 291–344.

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Strategies for Classroom Success

Begin class on time: close the door, take roll, answer questions about upcoming assignments, introduce the agenda for the day. Your beginning on time models punctual, professional behavior to students. Beginning the class with an occasional quiz is often a good way to reinforce your intention to keep the class starting on time.

End class on time: allow time for a final question, briefly summarize the main points you've covered, remind the class of an assignment that's due, announce the topic for next class. Show courtesy to both your students and your colleagues by dismissing class at the scheduled time.

Learn and use your students' names: perhaps no other single teacher behavior is more valued by students.

Build in flexibility in planning each class: allow for coverage of both more and less material than you think can be covered in the class time allotted. Many teachers have horror stories to tell of their novice days when they completed all the material they had with them in the first 10 minutes.

Make sure your PowerPoint presentations are appropriate:

- use a large-size type font (18 pt. is recommended);
- present only a small amount of information (no more than six main items or lines);
- use a horizontal rather than vertical presentation of information;
- can be easily read from the back of the room

If you use a white board, make sure your writing is large and clear enough to be read at the back of the room, and that you don't turn your back on the class while you're writing. At the end of class, be sure to erase the board as this is a simple courtesy to your colleagues.

Communicate effectively through

- projecting your voice to the back of the room;
- enunciating clearly;
- avoiding overuse of "okay," "you know," and other annoying speech habits;
- maintaining eye contact with students, rather than speaking to the floor, walls, or ceiling;
- smiling when appropriate;
- letting your sense of humor show.

Remember your students are a mix of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. Many teachers teach only to their own learning style, but your challenge is to meet the needs of all students, not just those who learn the way you do.

- Visual students will need to see information and will appreciate charts, graphs, videos, pictures, and other visual images.
- Auditory students need to hear information, and lectures that list important material will work well with them.
- Kinesthetic students need experiential approaches and hands-on work to learn effectively.

Allow time for answers when asking questions. Some research suggests that most teachers wait only about one second before answering the question themselves! Allow a minimum of three or more seconds, keeping in mind that silence may simply mean that students are thinking about the questions.

Grade and return student work promptly. Students need your feedback to perform effectively. Keeping grades on e-Learning, can assist in making the recording and reporting process efficient and effective and allows students to know exactly where they stand in the class at all times.

Save time at the end of class for returning major papers, unless you intend to devote the entire class session to talking about them. Although no approach is ideal for students, when you return papers at the beginning student attention becomes focused not on what is happening in class, but on the grade they've received.

Use anonymous, informal classroom assessments/evaluations on a regular, ongoing basis. This allows students to give honest feedback on their impressions of your class and how well they are learning without fear of reprisal.

Prepared by Mary Ann Bowman, Ed.D.

Classroom Discussion

Classroom discussion can be a means of review, explanation, clarification, analysis, critique, application, and expansion of course content. But meaningful discussion of this sort comes about only with a great deal of preparatory work by both teacher and students; if either is unprepared, discussion will not be productive.

Just as preparation of a lecture requires defining the objectives of the lecture and organizing the materials in a logical way, so does preparation for a discussion. It will probably be harder, in fact, to set up and facilitate a good discussion than to prepare a good lecture.

The Students: When you want an effective discussion to take place, be sure that you give a clear assignment and let students know what topic or topics they'll be expected to discuss during the next class session. Sometimes it is useful to assign responsibility for some parts of the discussion to certain students and to tell them in advance that during the next session they'll need to be prepared to lead certain parts of the discussion.

The Instructor's Role: The instructor will of course review the material for the lesson and define the objectives for the discussion. Do you want the discussion simply to be a recitation and review—an exercise in recall? Should the discussion clarify the difficult points? Are there inferences to be drawn or implications to be noted? Will you be expecting analysis or interpretations? Are there

debatable or controversial aspects to the material? Do you want students to be able to apply concepts to practical situations?

You will need to develop questions that will elicit the kinds of responses that will lead to the mental operations necessary to the objectives you plan. If the day's lesson is to solve a certain mathematical problem, discussion will probably involve the students in re-stating the problem and the steps or strategy for solving it. If you're learning a sociological theory, you'd probably want the students to review the theory and then to discuss its implications and applications. Sometimes there are grounds for challenging prevailing notions or offering variable interpretations. Sometimes the discussion might raise more questions than answers, might identify more problems than solutions.

Ground Rules:

It is probably useful to set some ground rules—especially if the materials might promote debate or controversy or strong differences of opinion. Here are some sample ground rules for discussion:

- Anyone who has read the materials has the right to contribute to the discussion.
- Statements should be supported by evidence from the assigned material or other appropriate outside sources.
- Students have the right to disagree with, qualify, or challenge another student's statements or opinions, but they need to do so respectfully.
- No one or two persons should dominate the discussion. Students who do may be asked to sit out for a time.

Just as you would summarize the main points of a lecture or presentation as you bring it to an end, take time toward the end of discussion to review the points or ideas that developed during the discussion.

Prepared by Shirley Clay Scott, former dean, WMU Graduate College

Dealing With Difficult Students: Even in well-planned courses where goals, instructional objectives, and evaluation criteria are clearly spelled out, explained, and adhered to, there are possibilities for misunderstandings or interpersonal conflicts to arise. The following section contains suggestions for dealing with these problems or conflicts if they arise.

Being thoughtful with your students can save you from many problems. If you phrase questions and criticism carefully, you will generally avoid defensive or hostile responses. If you are supportive, encouraging, and respectful of student ideas in class, then you may correct wrong answers, point out feeble arguments, or highlight weak points in a positive manner without discouraging your students. Rather than asking what is wrong with a written paragraph or a problem solution, ask how it could be improved. Instead of asking what the weak point of an argument is, ask how well it applies to or uses the material from the class. Rather than dismissing an idea immediately, ask the student to clarify using the class material. Don't, on the other hand, respond with "good point" when the idea was in fact poorly presented.

You are more likely to work smoothly with your students if you resolve any conflicting feelings you may have about your authority as a teacher. Students are confused by, and often alienated from, a teacher who alternately acts as a friend or peer, then as a stern authority figure. You must also be careful about teasing or using sarcastic humor since these are too easily misinterpreted. On the other hand, don't lose your sense of humor or the ability to laugh at your own mistakes.

However careful you are, you may still run into students who present specific types:

The Arguer: If a student insists that you are not “allowing him (or her) his opinion” when you disagree with a statement he/she has made, point out that you disagree because the statement does not correlate well with the course material for that class. If the student begins to disrupt the discussion, offer to talk privately after class or during office hours. Remain calm and nonjudgmental, no matter how agitated the student becomes. Always use evidence when disagreeing with a student. Using the authority of your position as a teacher rarely proves anything in a disagreement and might inhibit discussion. You can largely avoid students feeling that you put them down by not beginning critical statements with “I.” Often instructors find it helpful to tell students that any critical position should be examined with healthy skepticism—including the comments of the professor. Phrase criticism with reference to the material from a class or other commonly shared information.

If a student is stubborn and refuses to postpone a disagreement until after class or office hours and completely disrupts a class, remain calm. If the student is agitated to the point of being unreasonable, ask him or her to carry the grievance to a higher authority (e.g., the department head or dean). Make apparent your willingness to discuss the issue calmly, but do not continue trying to reason with a student who is highly agitated. If you remain calm in the presence of the group, the student may soon become cooperative again. In an extreme case, you may have to ask the student to leave the classroom, or even dismiss the class. Try to respond as calmly as possible. Avoid making an issue out of a small incident. The hardest part of such a situation is to maintain your professionalism, and not to respond as if you feel personally attacked.

The Over-Talkative Student: Over-talkative students can deaden a class. If a student is dominating a section, try to elicit responses from other students. Call on someone else even though the over-talkative student volunteers. Emphasize to the group that it is the quality, not the quantity, of responses that most interests you, but do so carefully. You don’t want to unnecessarily discourage students who lack self-confidence. Make sure class members see that you consider the class’s goal a communal, and not a competitive, activity. If the over-talkative student does not recognize the importance of listening to other members of the group, talk with him or her about this privately. Do not ridicule an over-talkative student or make comments to other students in the class, but try as tactfully as possible to keep the group’s activity going without reinforcing one student’s talkative behavior.

The Silent Student: The student who never speaks out in class also presents a problem. By making sure that all members of a class (if small enough) know each other by name, thus creating a safe environment, you will sometimes overcome the silent student’s fear of speaking. Occasional small group activities where the students discuss issues in pairs, for example, may also make it easier for a shy student to join the discussion. As with the over-talkative student, do not ridicule or put the silent student on the spot, but do try to elicit answers from him or her—at first once every class and later more frequently—when he or she begins to appear more comfortable about responding.

Talking with the student privately may also help. Reasons for a student being silent vary. One silent student may merely enjoy listening. Another may feel too dumb to contribute. The latter is very common among first-year students. Some students simply have quiet personalities; others may be undergoing personal stress that inhibits their speaking in class. Even after you gently encourage students to speak, they may remain silent. This is their right, which you must ultimately respect.

Requiring all students in your classes to talk with you during office hours at the beginning of the course—assuming your classes are small enough to make this feasible—helps alleviate both over-talkativeness and silence.

The “Grade Grubber”: You may find that some students will unrelentingly pursue you if you give them a lower grade than they expected. Many faculty and TAs complain that they have even had ‘A’s vigorously contested! There are ways to minimize such incidents. Make it clear from the beginning of the course exactly what you expect in papers or tests. If possible, hand out guidelines for a good essay or examples of a superior exam answer. When you do give a grade, note in some detail weak or strong points of the work and suggestions for improving performance. You might give students the option of handing in an initial draft that you will not grade but will comment on.

When students actually come to you to contest grades for term work, indicate that when you reconsider their paper, assignment, or problem-set mark, you retain the right to adjust their grade either up or down. If you are the TA, advise students that in the case of unresolved differences, the professor will make the final decision. (Be sure to discuss this with the professor beforehand!) When no resolution is possible, brief the student on which office to turn to (such as the department chair, dean’s office, or the Ombudsman’s office) to pursue an appeal. Although grade grubbers may discourage you and appear to undermine the academic enterprise, remember that this generation of students is under pressures you may not have had as an undergraduate. Competition for employment and graduate and professional schools is fiercer and the appeal to counter-culture options more muted. You will have more success with these students if you listen to and respond to their anxieties as well as their complaints. Remember also that it’s possible that you’ve made a mistake in evaluating a student’s work and a re-evaluation might be in order.

Troubled Students: As mentioned back in the section on “Campus Safety and Security”, sometimes students exhibit troubling behavior that may be indicative of an unstable mental status or some other problem such as domestic abuse, alcoholism, drug abuse, etc. The Office of Student Affairs investigates reports of concerns about a student’s mental health or well-being. If you have such concerns about a student in your class, you may report such concerns on a confidential form available at: wmich.edu/studentaffairs/concern.

Resolving Conflicts: Sometimes serious conflicts do arise between teacher and student concerning charges of poor instruction, irregular or unfair grading, deviation from announced procedures about course requirements, or the use of nonacademic criteria in computing grades. Although you may assume such problems are rare, in fact they are not; even experienced instructors face these kinds of issues.

Ideally, such problems should be averted by carefully formulating and announcing classroom policies, especially regarding grading. Once a problem does arise, however, you should first try to resolve it through discussion with the student. If you are a TA, involve the supervising professor early on. Fortunately, most conflicts can be worked out cooperatively at this stage. Otherwise, informal or formal discussions or procedures at the departmental or faculty level may lead to a satisfactory resolution.

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If you experience an excessively disruptive or intimidating student in the classroom, take the following steps:

1. In the case of an immediate threat, call campus police (387-5555) or ask a student in the classroom to do so for you.
2. If there is not an immediate situation, arrange to talk with the individual about the disruptive behavior and make clear the expectations for the class. If you are not comfortable meeting with the student alone, it would be helpful if the instructor of record or another faculty member could participate in the conversation. It is most important to document any behavior and subsequent follow-up.
3. If the behavior is such that you feel that you need additional assistance beyond your department in resolving the concern with the student, completion of the student concern form (available at wmich.edu/studentaffairs/concern) is the most expedient route to get the information to the Office of Student Affairs. That office will then assist the instructor in resolving the issue with the student.

Helping First-Year Students Study and Learn

Few freshmen can keep pace with their courses if they study only an hour between classes and if their only study activities are reading, highlighting, and copying their notes. Faculty expect more, and those who teach freshmen play an important role both in making expectations about college work explicit and in helping freshmen develop their study skills. What then, might we do to get students to spend more time studying and to study in more productive ways?

Set the stage for new study practices by stressing that learning in college involves more than memorizing. One reason students spend so much time underlining, taking verbatim notes, and then copying them over is that they try to memorize information, often exactly as it was presented. For a variety of reasons—some experiential, others developmental—freshmen tend to equate learning with memorizing. If we aim for more—if understanding and thinking are important goals—we must explain in understandable terms what those goals entail.

Showing students the types of questions they can expect on exams or papers is a good way to start. Point out that they will need to know some things in order to address these questions, but answering them requires more. They must be able to apply their knowledge to examples, problems, issues, or situations that may not have been discussed in class or in their texts. This ability to use knowledge in new situations requires study activities different from memorizing.

Talk about good study practices early in the course and in the syllabus. What techniques and strategies might help students learn more from the readings and from class? Many freshmen need to see demonstrations and to practice these activities before they can use them, but describing them in the syllabus signals their importance and reminds students what their responsibilities for learning include. Also discuss more general questions about work outside class. How much time should students expect to spend studying between classes? How do class meetings, readings, and other assignments connect? Should students read assignments before they are discussed in class or afterwards?

Teach students how to take notes in your class. Even students who are good note-takers or who have participated in study skills workshops benefit from help in adapting those skills to particular classes. What cues do you provide in lecture for helping students identify key ideas? Should they record examples in their notes? How much detail should they try to get down? What about taking

notes during discussions or other class activities? Suggest, too, that students should do more than simply read over or copy their notes between classes. Recommend instead that students go back over their notes, identify the key ideas, and write them in the margins. Then tell them to cover their notes and try to explain the ideas in their own words, as if they were teaching the material to someone else. Paraphrasing may go slowly at first, but it is an important step toward understanding, synthesizing, and remembering ideas.

Early in the course, take some time to model good note-taking and to provide guided practice. Ten or fifteen minutes into a lecture, stop and show students the notes you would have taken. Ask them to identify differences between their notes and yours. What did they miss and why? Are they trying to write down too much detail? What should they try to do differently? Repeat the exercise once or twice more during class. Follow up in the next class by showing them how you identified key ideas or issues in your notes and how you would paraphrase an explanation.

Plan similar instruction on strategies to learn from reading. Keeping up with the reading is a source of anxiety for most freshmen. Once enrolled, many students discover they must improve their reading comprehension skills in order to succeed. Fortunately, research shows that students benefit from instruction in how to learn from reading.

Begin by stating explicitly what students should try to get from the reading so they know what expectations you have in mind. Suggest that they skim the assignment to identify main ideas before they read. Help them see how the book is organized and what cues the authors provide to signify main ideas. Then encourage them to *actively* read with pen in hand, marking the main ideas or writing them in the margins. Most importantly, urge them to stop every ten minutes, to look back at the key ideas and to try and summarize what they've read. Stress that pausing to review is at least as important as reading itself. The periodic review helps one maintain concentration, process information more deeply, and remember it longer.

To illustrate, show students your text. Talk about what you have marked and why, what cues you used to know these were important points. Then model how you review and summarize what you read, what you say to yourself during those pauses to review. Ask students in pairs to try the same thing with the next two sections, each taking a turn in identifying the main ideas and summarizing.

Active reading takes practice. Acknowledge that students may feel awkward at first, but the more they read actively, the more skilled they will become. As they develop their skills, both their reading speed and comprehension will improve. Point out too that when they pause to review, they may find they cannot summarize the main ideas—a sure sign that they have not understood the section. They need to reread and then try again to summarize the main points. If they still cannot explain the ideas after two or three tries, tell them to formulate a question about the section, write it down, and bring it to class. Requiring that they submit questions on sections they do not understand discourages students from giving up too soon.

Develop assignments that actively engage students in study activities. Few freshmen will take the time to write summaries or look for additional examples or work problems unless an assignment prompts them to do so. If we want students to adopt new study practices, initially we will need assignments that require them to engage in those practices. To develop such assignments, it helps to think about the mental activities that characterize deeper processing of information. To involve students in organizing and connecting ideas, for example, ask them to make outlines or draw concept maps. Prod

them to make material meaningful by requiring that they paraphrase, summarize, or teach the material to someone else. To extend meaning and broaden connections, ask them to find additional examples in newspapers or media, to compare and contrast new ideas with those discussed earlier, or to rethink a position taken earlier in light of new material. Encourage them to consider ideas in a variety of contexts and situations by assigning problems drawn from different settings.

Help students to form study groups. Students learn more when working together in groups, but freshmen especially need help in forming study groups and getting started. During the first or second week, help students form their groups and set a meeting time and place. Describe the purposes of the study groups, the nature of the work to be done there, and the responsibilities of each member. Initially, at least, give specific assignments to provide structure and guidance. Check periodically to see how the groups are working by reviewing assignments completed in the study groups, for example, or by asking members to take turns writing and submitting minutes of their meetings. From time to time, invite students to evaluate the effectiveness of their study groups and the contributions of each member.

Encourage students to reflect on various study techniques and adopt those best suited to their learning styles and the material they are studying. Research on learning styles indicates that people differ in the ways they carry out basic information processing activities. We know, for example, that only meaningful information is transferred from working memory to long-term memory and that paraphrasing is a powerful strategy for making material meaningful, but paraphrasing can take different forms. Students who learn best by thinking things through in solitary study will likely prefer assignments that ask them to write a paraphrase or to think about different ways to explain the ideas. Students who learn by talking things through with others will benefit more from paraphrasing assignments in which they actually explain the material to someone else.

Getting freshmen to discover the most effective study strategies for them requires two things. First, we must expose students to a variety of study techniques, not just those that served us well. Second, we must encourage students to reflect on the usefulness of various study strategies for them. After modeling different forms of paraphrasing, for example, ask students to try them out and let you know their reactions. Did they find it easier to paraphrase by talking or in writing? Which do they think helped them more? Which technique will they most likely use on a regular basis? After the first quiz or exam is also a good time to get students to reflect on their study activities. Ask them to indicate how satisfied they are with their performance, to identify which study techniques they think helped them most, and to describe what they intend to do differently before the next exam.

Academic Integrity in the Classroom

What should I do if I suspect a student of cheating?

Academic Conduct Policy: The Office of Student Conduct is charged with coordinating the student academic conduct process as well as providing resources and information for faculty, staff, and students. More information is available at wmich.edu/conduct/. This office coordinates all hearings and procedures related to charges of academic dishonesty.

Academic Honesty Policy: If a student is uncertain about an issue of academic honesty, he/she should consult the faculty member to resolve questions in any situation prior to the submission of the academic exercise. Violations of academic honesty include but are not limited to:

Cheating: Cheating is intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids, or other devices or materials in any academic exercise.

1. Students completing any examination are prohibited from looking at another student's examination and from using external aids (for example, books, notes, calculators, conversation with other) unless specifically allowed in advance by the faculty member.
2. Students may not have others conduct research or prepare work for them without advance authorization from the faculty member. This includes, but is not limited to, the services of commercial term paper companies.

Fabrication, Falsification, and Forgery: Fabrication is the intentional invention and unauthorized alteration of any information or citation in an academic exercise. Falsification is a matter of altering information while fabrication is a matter of inventing or counterfeiting information for use in any academic exercise or University record. Forgery is defined as the act to imitate or counterfeit documents, signatures, and the like.

1. "Invented" information shall not be used in any laboratory experiment, report of results, or academic exercise. It would be improper, for example, to analyze one sample in an experiment and then "invent" data based on that single experiment for several more required analyses.
2. Students shall acknowledge the actual source from which cited information was obtained. For example, a student shall not take a quotation from a book review and then indicate that the quotation was obtained from the book itself.
3. Falsification of University records includes altering or forging any University document and/or record, including identification material issued or used by the University.

Multiple Submission: Multiple submission is the submission of substantial portions of the same work (including oral reports) for credit more than once without authorization from instructors of all classes for which the student submits the work.

Examples of multiple submission include submitting the same paper for credit in more than one course without all faculty members' permission; making revisions in a credit paper or report (including oral presentations) and submitting it again as if it were new work.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of someone else's language, ideas, or other material without making the source(s) evident in situations where there is a legitimate expectation of original work. Plagiarism does not occur when efforts to promptly identify sources by making source use apparent to the audience of the submitted material are obvious. Plagiarism may not necessarily include mistakes in citation style.

A legitimate expectation of original work exists for numerous circumstances, including (but not limited to): scholarly writing, technical presentations and papers, conference presentations and papers, online discussion postings, grant proposals, patents, book and other manuscripts, theses and dissertations, class assignments, artistic works, computer code, algorithms, and other creative works.

This definition applies to the entire WMU community, which includes all faculty; students; staff; visiting faculty, scholars, administrators; and any other person governed by academic research and other policies of the University.

Additional information on Plagiarism: Plagiarism is intentionally, knowingly, or carelessly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the ideas, information, etc., are common knowledge. Instructors should provide clarification about the nature of plagiarism.

1. **Direct Quotation:** Every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and must be properly acknowledged, in the text by citation or in a footnote or endnote.
2. **Paraphrase:** Prompt acknowledgement is required when material from another source is paraphrased or summarized, in whole or in part, in one's own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: "To paraphrase Locke's comment,..." and then conclude with a footnote or endnote identifying the exact reference.
3. **Borrowed facts:** Information gained in reading or research which is not common knowledge must be acknowledged. Common knowledge includes generally known facts such as the names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, historic events, etc. Materials which add only to general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography and need not be footnoted or endnoted.
4. **Footnotes, endnotes, and in-text citations:** One footnote, endnote, or in-text citation is usually enough to acknowledge indebtedness when a number of connected sentences are drawn from one source. When direct quotations are used, however, quotation marks must be inserted and acknowledgement made. Similarly, when a passage is paraphrased, acknowledgement is required. Faculty members are responsible for identifying any specific style/format requirement for the course. Examples include but are not limited to American Psychological Association (APA) style and Modern Languages Association (MLA) style.

Complicity: Complicity is intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

Examples of complicity include knowingly allowing another to copy from one's paper during an examination or test; distributing test questions or substantive information about the materials to be tested before the scheduled exercise; collaborating on academic work knowing that the collaboration will not be reported; taking an examination or test for another student, or signing another's name on an academic exercise.

Working With Students With Disabilities

Western Michigan University maintains the office of Disability Services for Students (DSS; wmich.edu/disabilityservices) to help assure compliance with the rules and regulations set forth by various congressional acts, i.e., the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. This office has created an atmosphere of opportunity by providing services and mediating considerations for students. The primary goal of DSS is to ensure access for students with documented disabilities and to contribute to the development of self-advocacy and confidence of students with disabilities. DSS encourages students to take control of their own learning and to discuss the means for arranging types of appropriate support. In addition, the office serves as an advocate for students in determining appropriate considerations.

Disabilities include: specific learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, visual impairments, hearing impairments, chronic illnesses, traumatic brain injury, psychiatric disorders, physical disabilities, and temporary disability. Many students' disabilities are not apparent.

Services are based on documented need and could include:

1. Letters for instructors stating classroom accommodations.
2. Advocacy for classroom accommodation – additional time for tests (50% more time), quiet/distraction-reduced testing environment, copy of overheads/notes, test reader, sign-language interpreter, FM system, closed captioning, preferential seating, accessible classroom furniture, recommendation for regular contact with instructor.
3. Mobility information – information about campus travel, living arrangements, transportation, snow removal.
4. Alternative text format – scanned text material for use with screen reader.
5. Priority registration
6. Advocacy and liaison with professors and other campus offices.
7. Referral for disability evaluation.

Decisions About Disclosing a Disability: Students are encouraged to contact DSS to discuss their needs if they think they have a disability and register with the office to gain support and legal protection. Submitted documentation is confidential. Students can help decide the wording in letters to their professors. Accommodation is not typically retroactive so if a student decides not to disclose, they are not entitled to accommodation after the fact. Students may be hesitant to disclose because they do not think they will have difficulty, they're concerned about stigma or discrimination, or they assume instructors will automatically accommodate. Some graduate students either have not been diagnosed or they have acquired a disability since their undergraduate work.

Information for Teaching Assistants: Provide a statement in your syllabus similar to: "Any student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychological/emotional, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs reasonable accommodations must contact the instructor and/or Disability Services for Students at the beginning of the semester." If possible, this statement should be read aloud to the class to assure those students with print disabilities hear the information. This approach also demonstrates to students that you are sensitive to and concerned about meeting the needs of all of the students you teach. It further affords students the opportunity to make their accommodation needs known to you early in the semester.

Disability information must remain confidential. The entire class should never be informed there is a student with a disability enrolled, except at the request of the individual student. Any information a student with a disability provides you is to be used solely and specifically for arranging reasonable accommodations for the course of study. DSS recommends that students with disabilities bring their accommodation letters to you during office hours or by special appointment, and not to hand them to you just before or after a class session. During the appointment, the particulars of arrangements for accommodations can be discussed and agreed upon in private. Please see DSS website: wmich.edu/disabilityservices.

If at any time you have questions about working with a student with a disability, please contact the office of Disability Services for Students at (269) 387-2116.

Your Professional Future

Satisfying as teaching, research, or service can be in its own right, a record of successful assisting has become increasingly important to Ph.D.'s seeking their first academic position. Even at research universities, search committees look for candidates who combine outstanding scholarly credentials with evidence of assisting ability. In fact, appointment papers at many universities now specifically include a section in which a candidate's promise as a teacher or researcher must be documented. In these days of five-figure tuition and student consumerism, colleges and universities cannot afford to provide inadequate levels of instruction.

When you apply for an academic position, you typically will be asked to include a curriculum vitae (CV) and three or more letters of recommendation. A CV should list the courses you have taught or assisted in and those you are prepared to lead, but this by itself is not very informative. You can increase the significance of your experience by making sure that at least one of your letters comments on it. This will not happen automatically; you have to plan in advance to make it happen. Here's how:

1. Make sure your faculty supervisors are aware of your future intentions in academia. Let them know that you will want a letter of recommendation from them.
2. Be visible. Your professors cannot praise your abilities if they never see or hear them. If you give some lectures, try to arrange for the professor to be present. If you mainly lead discussion or laboratory sections, arrange for an observation. At the very least, spend some time discussing the course and your contributions to it with the professor, making sure that you convey your enthusiasm and mention your good ideas (i.e., do not just talk about your problems).
3. Show evidence of organization and efficiency. Most assistants approach their initial assignments enthusiastically. They are willing to devote a great deal of time and effort toward making their section intellectually stimulating and informative. This kind of enthusiasm makes teaching and learning exciting, but remember not to neglect your own graduate work. Learn to budget your time carefully; the need to do so will probably stay with you the rest of your academic life. Your future job will probably require a number of things besides instruction, and you will only be able to accomplish this by developing an organized and efficient approach toward your classes. Therefore, you should realize that your faculty supervisor may not be impressed by the simple fact that you spend a great deal of time on your course or section; the best way to make a good impression is to show that you can juggle both your assignments and your own work. Be as systematic as possible in things like classroom preparation and grading. Keep your outlines, notes, classroom handouts, etc., in proper files; when the time comes to evaluate your performance (i.e., when the professor is writing that letter of recommendation) you can make these files available.
4. Arrange for student evaluations of your teaching and make the most of these. They can help you learn more about yourself and improve your techniques. But these evaluations can serve another purpose—to allow other people to judge how good you are. Many assistants design their own evaluation forms, but you may use a standard form instead to provide meaningful numerical data for future letters of recommendation. If you use mid-term evaluations, keep samples of them.
5. Consider putting together a professional teaching portfolio, a more comprehensive way of documenting, reflecting on, and strengthening your record of activities. With teaching becoming a more important factor in the academic job market, the portfolio is a practical

asset as well as a way to develop professionally. [The Office of Faculty Development can assist with developing your portfolio.]

Remember too that if you make the “short list” (list of final candidates) at a college or university where you have applied for a position, your instructional abilities may be directly or indirectly tested. You may have to present a seminar or either a traditional job talk or a pedagogical job talk (or both) or you may be asked, in the course of the on-campus interview, to describe in some detail the design of a course that you would be prepared to teach. In all these cases, if you have taught or used the GA opportunity to improve your skills, you are much more likely to appear confident and knowledgeable. Your publications or dissertation will also be crucial, of course, but search committee members often comment that it is the job talk or interview that makes the greatest impression and serves to separate the candidates.

Once you obtain your first academic position, your previous experiences will continue to serve you well. New assistant professors are expected to assume and be successful at multiple roles—teacher, researcher, university citizen (committee work)—very quickly. If you already know how to prepare courses, deliver lectures, lead reviews, and all the rest, then you will have more time for publishing and university service.

Later when you go for tenure, teaching—together with research—will again be a major determinant of your success. This is true even at the best research universities in the sense that even a brilliant scholar is expected to be competent in his or her teaching. Collect sample syllabi, tests, assignments from effective professors to use as guides when preparing your own courses.

Even if you do not stay in academia, your GA work will still have been a valuable experience. The more responsible a job you hold anywhere, the more likely that you will need effective self-presentation and interpersonal skills. These are precisely the areas which successful assisting requires that you develop.

Good luck and enjoy the experience!

