A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

2015 – 2016

This handbook provides basic guidelines for Teaching Assistants (TAs) and answers most questions that TAs commonly ask.

Contact Igor Popov (iapopov@stanford.edu), TA Coordinator for 2015 – 2016, if you have questions that are not answered by this handbook.

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Appendix 1. OUR WONDERFUL STAFF
1. UNIFORM POLICY: Teaching Assistant Guidelines and Responsibilities

Each academic quarter, the Department of Economics offers graduate students and others the opportunity to serve as teaching assistants. Working as a teaching assistant (TA) provides a unique opportunity to improve one’s communication and pedagogical skills, help students learn economics, and collaborate with a faculty member. For many, the TA experience is personally very rewarding.

Teaching assistants contribute critically to the quality of Economics Department classes. The Department takes its teaching quality very seriously and expects its TAs to meet their responsibilities in maintaining this quality.

This document outlines the Department’s policies relating to TA responsibilities. The Department has developed a common set of human resource management policies for all courses taught in the Department. These policies apply to all TAs regardless of whether they are hired from within the Department or from outside.

We hope that this document will make the responsibilities clear, so that TAs will be able to focus on their teaching and spend little time seeking clarification as to their duties. First and foremost, the role of a TA is to assist the course instructor. In certain cases, individual instructors may modify the requirements for their own TAs to suit idiosyncratic pedagogical needs. However, unless an instructor explicitly offers an alternative plan, the requirements described here apply.

It is the responsibility of both the instructor and the TA to meet and discuss these responsibilities before the quarter begins or as early into the quarter as possible.

1.1 Attendance

- Class attendance - TAs are required to attend all class meetings
- Exam attendance - TAs are required to attend and “proctor” (sit outside the exam room) exams unless otherwise notified.
- TAs are expected to return to Stanford no later than the first day of classes
- TAs are expected to remain at Stanford through the final exam period and until after grades have been submitted by the instructor. TAs should not ask an instructor permission to leave prior to the date by which instructors must submit grades. This is typically the Tuesday following the last day of finals. Final exam dates may be viewed on Axess.

1.2 Sections

TAs are required to be present for all of their regularly scheduled sections. The default arrangement is that each TA will lead two 50-minute discussion sections, typically scheduled on
Friday. TAs should anticipate teaching on Fridays and be available to lead sections at the times determined by instructor and student needs. They should not schedule job interviews, family visits, etc. on Fridays when they are scheduled to teach section. Should an emergency (medical problem or death in family) surface, the TA should immediately notify the instructor and find a replacement among his/her peers. In addition to regular weekly sections, TAs may be asked to hold special review sections prior to midterm and final exams, outside of normal section times. In the case of Econ 101, instructors will typically not require TAs to lead sections, but will require them to hold additional office hours.

1.3 Grading and Solution Sets

TAs are required to grade all assignments and exams for students in their sections or for an evenly divided share of students according to the grading scheme selected by the instructor. As they grade, TAs should keep records of the reasons for point deductions, so as to have a paper trail should a re-grade request surface, as well as to compare notes with the instructor or other TAs. Alternative grading arrangements are made only at the discretion of instructors, and not upon TA demand. TAs are also responsible for preparing solution sets to problem sets and exams. In some instances, the instructor may provide the raw materials. In others, TAs will need to solve problems and prepare handouts with detailed solutions on their own.

1.4 Communication

TAs may be required to meet with instructors and/or other TAs on a weekly basis to prepare for section or to discuss other course issues. TAs are responsible for being available on campus to attend such meetings in person. TAs should also maintain regular communication with instructors and students, checking email and Coursework regularly.

1.5 Office Hours

TAs must hold a minimum of two regularly scheduled office hours each week, and communicate the time and location of office hours to Mandy Pabst (apabst@stanford.edu) in the academic office at the beginning of the quarter. Mandy can help with finding rooms for office hours. In general, TAs are not required to meet with students outside of their regularly scheduled office hours. However, following midterm exams, TAs are encouraged to meet with students identified as struggling to assess their difficulties and offer strategies for improvement.

1.6 TA Training

All first-time TAs must attend a mandatory TA Orientation session in the Department. This will typically be scheduled for the first week of the quarter in which the TA is starting to teach. TAs may find additional training resources at VPTL at https://vptl.stanford.edu/teaching-learning. First-time TAs must also attend VPTL’s university-wide orientation, usually held the Friday before fall quarter begins, and first-time TAs who are international students must pass a university English screening test. First-time TAs also have to complete online sexual harassment training prior to the beginning of the quarter.
1.7 Time Commitment

With the exception of external workers who may be paid on an hourly basis for work performed, TA compensation is based on a half-time work week, that is, 20 hours of work per week. Over the course of the quarter, the average TA workload should be about 20 hours per week. The workload may vary from week to week. It is likely to be relatively heavy in weeks where exams need to be graded. In the event that a TA finds the workload to consistently exceed 20 hours per week, he or she should document his/her hours, and contact the professor as well as Igor Popov (iapopov@stanford.edu), the TA Coordinator, about this. In this event Igor and the instructor will explore how work responsibilities can be redistributed.

1.8 TA Evaluations

All TAs, from veterans to first-timers, will receive feedback from both mid-quarter and end of quarter student evaluations. Mid-quarter evaluations provide feedback that TAs may use in real-time to improve their pedagogy, while providing the TA Coordinator and faculty useful information about the performance of each TA. While the end-quarter TA evaluations are set up by the university, each TA will have to set-up his/her own “Online Mid-quarter Evaluation” via the Center for Teaching and Learning (https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/teaching-services/midterm-student-feedback). The mid-quarter evaluations should be completed and shared with the TA Coordinator, Igor Popov (iapopov@stanford.edu), by the end of the fifth week of the quarter. At request, he will review the mid-quarter evaluations with each TA and provide constructive suggestions for improvement. Any serious cases of under-performance that are identified in the evaluations process will be referred to the TA Program Director for further possible action as noted below.

1.9 Consequences for Failure to Perform

Any instructor who encounters a TA who is unable or unwilling to perform his or her responsibilities should contact the TA in the first instance, cc-ing Igor Popov (iapopov@stanford.edu). If the problem is not resolved by the instructor and TA in the first instance, or with the involvement of the TA Program Director in the second, the Department Chair may deal with the matter. A TA who does not meet his or her teaching responsibilities may face a reduction in compensation or termination of employment.
2. BEFORE THE QUARTER BEGINS: TA ASSIGNMENTS

2.1 How are assignments made?

The TA Coordinator, in consultation with the Student Services Officer, makes the TA assignments based on both the TAs’ indicated preferences and the department's needs. Although the department tries to accommodate everyone's wishes, it is not possible to give each TA his or her first choice. The department also considers a TA's past performance; outstanding TAs may get special consideration for the more popular TA positions.

2.2 Which course do I want and how do I get assigned to it?

You should first consider your interest in, and command of, the material. You will be far more effective as a TA if you are teaching material that interests you; remember that your enthusiasm for the course and material is infectious to the students, as is your ennui. Also consider how useful the subject will be to your research or general economics education; the course might generate new research ideas, and you never really know a subject until you have taught it. You should also consider whether you want to make contacts with specific professors. Be sure to keep your course preference list up to date with the TA Coordinator.

Occasionally an instructor and TA will make arrangements for an assignment before the quarter begins. We cannot guarantee to honor these agreements, although we will try to do so if at all possible.

2.3 How do I find out what my assignment is?

The TA Coordinator will begin to make tentative assignments about two weeks before the start of each quarter. The TA Coordinator will get in touch with you to let you know your preliminary assignment during that time, but feel free to email the TA Coordinator about the status of your assignment.

2.4 What do I do once I'm assigned?

Introduce yourself to the course instructor before classes start. Inform the instructor if your assignment is likely to change during the first week of class (as indicated by the TA Coordinator). You should arrange to meet with the instructor before classes start to discuss his or her expectations for your participation in the course (see Section 3).

2.5 How many other TAs will I be working with?

Generally speaking, the number of TAs assigned to a class depends on enrollment. The department works to have a ratio of 50 students to 1 TA. If the ratio rises far above that, then, depending on circumstances, we will assign a 10-hour per week grader to assist you. There are some exceptions to this – Econ 101 always has a TA regardless of enrollment.
3. GETTING STARTED

3.1 What are my duties?

The TA Guidelines and Responsibilities (Section 1) is the uniform department policy which outlines your basic obligations as a TA. Make sure you meet with the professor as soon as possible to discuss the TA Guidelines and Responsibilities and how they apply to your specific course. Review the TA Guidelines point by point and ensure that you have the same expectations regarding your responsibilities and duties for all aspects of the course. Remember that you are a teaching “assistant”; do whatever is necessary to help the professor teach his or her course. Your responsibilities will vary with the nature of the course and the particular instructor.

Do not undermine the professor's authority! Do not tell students how you would run the course differently. Never criticize the professor or decisions the professor makes. You are on the teaching team and must stand firm with the professor, not play a game of “Good Cop, Bad Cop”. If you have serious concerns or misgivings, discuss those with the TA Coordinator or TA Program Director.

3.2 What should I discuss with the course instructor?

Arrange to talk to the professor about your TA duties before classes start if possible. In addition to discussing the TA Guidelines and Responsibilities, you should discuss how you can assist the professor and all expectations he/she has for you.

Specifically, ask whether the professor needs help putting together a course reader, creating a Coursework website, putting materials on reserve, getting computer accounts set up, etc. Request a course syllabus. Sometimes the professor will be very organized and will be able to tell you many of your duties, but this is not always the case.

Courses in the department are expected to follow the common economics syllabus (http://economics.stanford.edu/undergraduate/economics-common-syllabus). Ask the professor if there will be any deviations from the common syllabus, e.g. regrade policies, late assignments, etc.

Be sure to discuss the following topics:

- When should the TA hold office hours?
- How should assignments and exams be graded?
- If there are several TAs,
  - Will each TA grade assignments from their section only?
  - Who is responsible for creating the section material?
- How many exams, quizzes, problem sets, and papers will be assigned?
- Will section material be used on exams?
- When will problem sets be assigned and who will write them?
- Will the students receive answer keys? Who will write these?
- What is expected of the TA for the exams?
- Who decides what topics the TA will cover in section?
- How should the TA run sections? (See Section 5)
- Should the TA conduct extra review sessions/office hours before exams?
- How quickly should the TA grade assignments and exams?
- What does the professor feel the distribution of grades should be?
- If the TA has access to materials from previous iterations of the course (e.g. past exams), should the TA share these materials with the students?
- Will the TA hold sections the first week of the quarter?

Any other questions you have about your responsibilities should be discussed before the course begins.

### 3.3 Must I attend class lectures?

**Department policy requires you to attend lectures unless the professor specifically tells you that your class attendance is optional.**

Even if the professor tells you that your attendance is optional, you may still want to attend class for two reasons. First, attending as many lectures as possible allows you to keep in touch with what's being covered in class. This is useful in preparing sections (see Section 5.5 for more on this topic). Second, if you are interested in garnering the fame and fortune that come with the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, you should know that students have strong preferences for TAs who attend class. A common complaint students make about their TA is that the TA doesn't attend lectures and thus doesn't know what to cover during sections. Being accessible before and after class is an excellent way to establish a good rapport with your students and signal your interest in them.

### 4. SCHEDULING SECTIONS

#### 4.1 How do I schedule sections?

All sections are scheduled and modified on Coursework (http://coursework.stanford.edu/) by the professor or TA. Discussion sections have pre-reserved times, days, and locations scheduled by the Registrar’s Office and can be viewed in Explore Courses. Meet with the professor and determine if the automatically scheduled sections will work for the course and which TA should be scheduled to which section. You or the professor can manually assign TAs to specific sections on Coursework. Once the sections are decided, notify the Econ Undergraduate Administrator, Joanne DeMarchena (jdemar@stanford.edu), and she will update Axess with the TA names and, if necessary, request more sections, different days, and times or locations through the Registrar’s Office. Joanne will email a confirmation notice to you as soon as the Registrar’s Office has made the changes.
Recent procedures for room scheduling require that you reserve a room by the end of the first week of classes, so please make every effort to arrange section times before the end of the first week. If the sections would benefit from certain classroom configurations or equipment, such as a projector, visit the assigned room as soon as possible and request a new room if necessary.

4.2 When should I schedule my sections?

Ordinarily, each TA teaches two sections on Friday. Sometimes TAs hold sections on Thursday or Friday afternoon or even Thursday evening. Some classes hold sections the first week of the quarter, while other classes start sections during the second week of the quarter. Be sure to let students know whether the sections will start the first or second week. You should work with the professor to schedule section times that work for the students. Make sure that you have section times nailed down as soon as possible – having indeterminate times is very frustrating for students and will only encourage confusion. Additionally, it might be very difficult to schedule rooms after the first week of the quarter.

4.3 How large should my sections be?

The department can assign one TA per 50 students except for special classes (50, 51, 52, 101, 102, and 103). Each section should have no more than 25 students; schedule 2 sections per TA if there are more than 25 students per TA.

4.4 Should I formally assign students to specific sections?

There are several registration options available in Coursework for sections; for example the course might allow students to register and switch sections, or it might only allow for manual registration by TAs or the professor. Usually, the professor opts to allow students to register for and switch sections by themselves. Sometimes, especially if the professor is zealous about uniform enrollment, the professor will manually assign students to sections, or have the TA manually assign students.

When there are several TAs or section times, some students may begin attending sections that they are not registered for and create inequalities in section attendance. Although this practice is legal, it should be discouraged, as one TA may be overburdened with difficult to manage sections and office hours. Make sure to hand back problem sets to the section in which the student is enrolled, not the section in which they attend; this usually provides enough of a cost to prevent significant switching. Significant section switching may indicate a teaching deficiency. Talk to your professor and/or the TA Coordinator as soon as possible if you notice that your section and office hour attendance is below that of the other TAs.

5. TEACHING SECTIONS

5.1 What is a section?
Most classes meet Monday through Thursday and are taught by a faculty member. Friday is usually reserved for sections, less formal class meetings led by the TA for reviewing class material and solving problems. Sections give students in large classes a chance to have a more intimate learning environment. Section is also an opportunity for students to ask questions that they otherwise wouldn’t get a chance to ask in lecture.

5.2 What material should be covered in section?

Usually the professor will indicate what you will cover during section. Commonly the TA is assigned to review difficult material from lecture or to work through problems related to the lectures. If the instructor leaves it up to you to decide what to cover during section, think about what material would be most helpful for students in understanding difficult course material, preparing for exams, and solving homework problems. This is where attending lectures is particularly helpful. Use your sections to focus on material that you watched students struggle with in lecture, perhaps presenting it in a different way, or reinforcing it with insightful problems.

5.3 How do I prepare for section?

The best way to prepare for section is to attend class lectures regularly.

You should attend all lectures. Most professors require attendance anyway. Bring a note pad and jot down ideas for section. By attending class, you will know which topics the professor has covered, and whether the professor covered them well or poorly. You can also tell from the students' attention level whether they understand the material and with what topics and problems they struggle. If you are unable to attend a class, check with someone who did (another TA, the professor, or an informative student).

Write out detailed notes for section. You should write notes in enough detail so that a student could use your notes as a substitute for attending section. By writing detailed notes, you will be able to confidently lead well-organized and coherent sections. However, do not allow students to borrow your notes. Encourage them instead to arrange to borrow section notes from other students. Always practice any graphs you plan to draw on the board.

When preparing for section, think about questions students might ask you and how you would respond. Figure out the intuition behind all of your results; you will be far more effective if you illuminate the intuition behind the answer. Because students are different types of learners, consider how you might present the same material in multiple ways. For instance, consider whether you can supplement a mathematical derivation with a graphical interpretation.

5.4 How should I teach my sections?

No matter how you and the class instructor decide to use your sections, you should let the students know what they can expect when they go to section and students should know whether they are responsible for the material covered in section. Here are some tips to running an effective section:
Get to know your students. Print off a picture list of your students (the professor has access to the students’ pictures in Axess) and make it your goal to memorize everyone’s name. Students are far more responsive when you call them by name and just the fact that you know their names makes section more personal which in turn increases attention and eliminates a lot of behavioral problems. Even if you have trouble remembering names, students truly appreciate TAs who make an honest effort to learn their names and take a personal interest in their academic success.

Make sections fun! The more intriguing, entertaining, and stimulating you make section, the more material the students will retain and the easier it will be to learn what you are presenting. Call students up to the board to solve problems. Divide students into groups and have them race against each other or the clock. Tell jokes. Break out into dance when you arrive at a solution. Show videos relevant to lecture or discuss news articles relevant to your material. The goal isn’t to be too goofy or over-the-top, but to make section fun and relaxed. You might not be able to pick what you are presenting, but you certainly choose how it is presented.

Take command of your section and set expectations on Day 1. Students are going to test how much they can get away with. They will play on their cell phones, surf the internet on their laptops, talk to each other, and even sometimes try to subvert and undermine you. Let them know that this behavior is unacceptable, allowing this behavior in your section ruins the learning experience for everyone and will make it impossibly hard to teach. By knowing everyone’s name you will be able to call out those demonstrating undesirable behavior and ask them to put away their laptop/phone or stop talking. Calling students who are being disruptive up to the board to solve problems usually eliminates undesirable behavior.

Be especially well prepared for your first section. First impressions are very important. Students may stop attending if the first section is not helpful. Try to count the number of students in each section. If you notice a decline over time, consider why students have stopped attending and bring this up with the professor.

Be prepared! Never cover material that you haven’t prepared beforehand! It is truly humiliating to do an example on the board in which you derive an incorrect answer and are corrected by a student in the section. You also don’t want any surprises, like a corner solution you didn’t intend or a computation far more difficult than you expect. It is a law of nature that no matter how well you think you know the material, if you try to solve a question you’ve never attempted, something will go wrong. Even if the question seems easy, do not underestimate how much harder it is to work through the problem on a blackboard while also managing the section. Students will lose confidence in you and your ability as a TA if you don’t prepare. Students instinctively know whether you are confident in the material you are presenting and will flee your sections en masse if you are not.

Be confident. Speak to the students, not to the blackboard. Speak and write clearly. Try to project confidence. If you are nervous about presenting material for the first time in front of a large group, practice your presentation beforehand, either in an empty classroom or with a friendly audience, such as the TA Coordinator or a fellow student.
Finally, try to create an environment in which students feel comfortable asking questions. *Ask them frequently if they have questions and give them enough time to come up with any questions (count to 10 in your head).* If a student asks a question that is off-topic, too advanced, too basic, or too tangential, feel free to invite them to speak to you after section or come to your office hours. Do not criticize students personally or directly. See the CTL Booklet *Teaching at Stanford* for advice on leading sections. Most of this advice about teaching sections should be followed when you are on the job market.

### 5.5 How can I improve my sections?

There are lots of people and resources at your disposal dedicated to improving your teaching. The TA Coordinator’s primary role is to ensure that your sections are being conducted successfully. Feel free to invite the TA Coordinator to attend your sections and give you feedback; you and the TA Coordinator can then form a game plan for improving your section.

The VPTL has numerous resources for improving teaching including numerous seminars, recording your sections, one-on-one feedback with a VPTL counselor, running a focus group with a sample of your students to identify problems, and providing you with additional training. Feel free to reach out anytime to the VPTL or the TA Coordinator to avail yourself of these opportunities.

Also consider asking a more experienced TA or professor if you can attend their section/lecture. This might give you ideas on how to more effectively run your section.

### 5.6 How is my section evaluated?

At the beginning of a TA’s first quarter of instruction, the TA Coordinator will visit his/her section. The TA Coordinator will give feedback and suggest areas for improvement. The TA Coordinator might also visit other sections to make sure every section is running smoothly and that TAs are following the department guidelines and best practices presented in this manual. Each TA is required to schedule a mid-quarter TA evaluation in which students will rate the effectiveness of section. Students also evaluate each TA at the end of each quarter. These evaluations are the basis of the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award.

If a TA is struggling to be effective (as indicated by student or professor comments, mid-quarter or end-of-quarter evaluations, or observations from the TA Coordinator), the TA Coordinator, under the supervision of the TA Program Director, will work with the TA to improve his/her teaching and motivation. For example, if the TA receives feedback that section is poorly managed, he/she might be required to attend a section taught by one of the department’s more experienced TAs and develop concrete strategies to improve sections. Other actions could involve enrolling in a VPTL seminar or a visit by the VPTL staff to the struggling TA’s section.

The department wants to ensure that all TAs are given the motivation and resources to become masterful teachers and ensure a high standard of teaching excellence in the department.
6. OFFICE HOURS

6.1 Scheduling office hours

You are required to hold two office hours each week.

You may hold one two-hour session or two one-hour sessions. If you choose the second option, you should vary the times at which you hold office hours. For example, don't schedule your office hours on Monday and Wednesday from 1:00 to 2:00 because students who cannot come at 1:00 on Monday probably cannot come at 1:00 on Wednesday either. You must coordinate your office hours with the professor and other TAs so that a wide variety of office hours are available to students throughout the week. Make sure you choose a time that you will be able to make consistently throughout the quarter; students will become frustrated if you are constantly rescheduling your office hours every week.

Once you have finalized your office hours with the professor, reserve a room for your office hours for the entire quarter. Make sure you always have a room reserved before using it, even if you suspect the room will be unused. Here are options for scheduling a room:

1) Econ 350 and Econ 360 have been set aside specifically for office hour use from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. every weekday. The TA Coordinator will send around a spreadsheet for you to sign up for your office hours during the first week of class.
2) Econ 350 and Econ 360 can only hold about 6-8 students comfortably. If you TA for a larger class (Econ 50, Econ 102a), or find that several students are attending your office hours every week, consider reserving a larger room.
3) If Econ 350 and Econ 360 are unavailable, or you want to reserve a larger or different room, speak with Mandy Pabst (apabst@stanford.edu) and she will submit a room request for you ahead of time. Reserve your section room as soon as possible; selection becomes very limited after the first week of class.
4) Use 25 Live (https://25live.collegenet.com/stanford/#home_my25live[0]) to see the different room options on campus and what times they are available.
5) For rooms on the weekends or evenings, Econ 140 or Econ 139 are good options because they have separate entrances, but be sure to reserve them through Mandy Pabst.
6) Remember that the department is locked after 5 p.m. If you have office hours after 5 p.m., consider the rooms with a separate entrance or make sure you will have a way to let the students into the building without propping the door.

Please be courteous to your fellow TAs and take care of Econ 350 and Econ 360. Return the room to how it looked before your office hours. Replace non-functional markers and erasers with working ones from the supply room. If the whiteboard is messy, take the time to clean it during down times or after your office hours are finished. There are whiteboard cleaning supplies in the supply room.

Note that if you want to use any of the general use classrooms in the economics building, (106, 139, 140, 208, 218) you should definitely reserve these rooms beforehand as they are utilized intensively.
Please DO NOT use your cubicles or the computer lounge for office hours. By using your cubicle you may disturb others who are trying to work. Additionally, DO NOT use the department lounge for office hours. The department lounge is meant to be a common community space for all to use and not a classroom, so please refrain from taking over that space.

Most undergraduates find it helpful if the TA schedules office hours the day before problems sets are due.

Mandy Pabst will request your office hours as soon as the TA assignments are firm. She will post office hours both inside room 136 and outside on the glass bulletin board.

6.2 What are office hours for?

*During office hours, you should be a personal tutor rather than a lecturer.* However, don't become a slave to your students! If a student is demanding a disproportionate amount of your time, refer them to the Center for Teaching and Learning which provides free tutoring services to undergraduates (more on the CTL in Section 14). Never reveal answers to problem sets or reveal topics or questions covered on an exam.

*Don’t solve the students’ problem sets for them.* Your goal is to get them to solve the entire problem themselves. Answer their questions with questions to get them thinking about the problem. Most of the time students know how to solve the problem but just don’t want to put in the time to think hard about how to solve it when there is a TA who will guide them through the problem. Constantly ask, “what have you done so far?” or “what is your strategy for solving the problem?” Solve a similar question if the student needs additional help. Empower the students with the skills to solve the problems themselves.

Beware of students seeking help on problem sets who haven’t even attempted the problem or put in any work. Request that they spend time on the problem and then you’ll be able to answer their specific questions via email or at the next office hours or ask them to solve the problem while you observe. Several students are in the bad habit of coming to office hours expecting TAs to guide them through the solutions without putting in any effort. If a student feels so lost he/she doesn’t even know where to begin, tactfully diagnose the best resources for the student including CTL tutoring.

*Encourage students to come to office hours with explicit questions.* Otherwise, you’ll get a hoard of students coming to your office hours expecting you to go through the problem set problem by problem. Make sure that every student who attends your office hours gets an opportunity to ask questions, this prevents one student from dominating the discussion and ensures that students aren’t showing up expecting free answers.
Do not perform re-grades during office hours with the student present. Some Stanford students are beyond shameless; they will hound you until you give them a higher grade. Your course should have an explicit re-grade policy (see Section 9).

During office hours, remain at your post the entire time that you are scheduled to be there. If you must leave temporarily, post a note stating when you will return.

7. EXTRA OFFICE HOURS AND REVIEW SESSIONS

7.1 Should I hold extra office hours or meet with students individually?

In the past, some TAs have held extra office hours to accommodate students who cannot attend their regular office hours or to reduce the sheer volume of students attending their regular office hours. TAs who did this, however, found many students then expected the TAs to meet with them at night or during a weekend, and sometimes students stopped attending their regular office hours altogether. While students might be very appreciative of your extra sessions, keep in mind that students will expect you to be very generous with your time throughout the quarter.

If a student cannot make your office hours or meet with you before or after class, invite the student to make a specific appointment with you or to ask you questions via email. You may also refer them to the professor’s office hours, another TA’s office hours, or to the VPTL for individual tutoring. You do not need to accommodate a specific student and a student who requests multiple individual appointments should be referred to the VPTL for tutoring instead.

The course instructor may expect you to hold extra office hours around exam time. You should discuss this topic with the instructor before classes start.

Depending on the course, office hours can turn into one big session for answering questions about the relevant problem set. This makes it difficult to spend individual time with students who are struggling with core concepts from the lectures. You can always consider holding a separate ‘conceptual questions only’ office hours apart from the regular hours, or meeting with these students individually. Students who are working hard but still struggling will appreciate this effort, but make sure you are not spending all your teaching time catering to individual students.

8. EXAMS AND GRADING

8.1 What do I need to do?

In most courses, the professor writes the exam. Often the professor welcomes or even solicits TA input. The TAs and the professor should decide who will administer the exam. Be aware of the Stanford honor code, which forbids proctoring. The instructor should be present at the beginning and end of the exam and available outside of the classroom during the exam. Blue books are available in the academic office.
Before you begin grading, establish with the professor how the exams should be graded. Will partial credit be given? Is there a target mean? How should points be allotted within and between questions? How will the grades be recorded and sent out? When do the exams need to be graded by? Does the TA need to create a solution set to distribute to students? Where will the exams be returned? There’s nothing worse than presenting a set of graded exams to the displeasure of the professor who makes you regrade them.

Here are some guidelines that ensure that grading is done in an equitable and consistent way.

**First, to achieve consistency, each question should be graded by only one TA.** A TA should not grade entire exams for a subset of the class. It is recommended that each question be placed in a separate blue book.

**Second, make sure that you have solutions to the problem and have decided how to award points and partial credit before you begin grading.** If you are unsure about how to grade a question or how to allocate partial credit, consult the professor. It is strongly recommended to look through 25 or 30 blue books first to get a feel for the range of answers before deciding on how to allocate points and partial credit.

**Third, work when you are careful and attentive.** Although it can be useful to grade many blue books at once so you can remember the grades you give to similar answers, it is inadvisable to grade for an extremely long stretch, especially late at night. Even though most students will bring your errors to your attention, it is best not to make errors in the first place.

Record students’ scores after you have finished grading all the exams so that you can double check your work and arithmetic.

**With the professor’s permission, you should provide detailed answer sheets to the students when you return their exams.** This minimizes the number of individual questions you must answer. Typically, each TA writes up the answer for the question(s) he or she graded and one TA compiles and duplicates the answers. A good answer sheet provides both the correct answer and an explanation of how the grader allocated partial credit.

Final grades need to be submitted by a deadline set by the registrar. This is usually 4 full days after the final exam. Some professors prefer to assign grades themselves; others ask the TA(s) to do it. In either case, the professor must submit grades no later than the Registrar’s deadline. Ask the professor how you can help them meet the grading deadline. The grade assignment process is done via Axess, and the instructor can appoint you as a proxy grader to allow you access to the grading tab in Axess. Grade changes can also be made on Axess.

**8.2 Should I give out copies of old exams?**

Students usually ask to see copies of past exams. The Ombudsman's Office has ordained that instructors may only make copies of past exams available by either handing them out to all students in class, putting them on reserve in Meyer Library, or posting them on the course website and informing students that the materials are there. Refer students asking for materials to the professor.
Starting in 2012, the TA Coordinator has maintained a voluntary database of past course materials. If you use any of these materials, please consult the professor. Particularly with past exams or past problem sets, the professor may not want you to hand these out or even use questions as section material.

9. UNIFORM POLICY ON RE-GRADING

This can vary from course to course, but the regarding policy should be firmly established in the syllabus of the course. The Economics Common Syllabus states:

VI. Correcting Errors in Grading
This section lays out rules and procedures for requesting a correction of a grading error. Requests for grading correction should clearly and succinctly state the unambiguous error you believe has occurred. Errors in grading due to illegible or garbled answers are not subject to correction. Students who have been graded incorrectly should petition for a correction in writing to the Professor, copying the Director of Undergraduate Studies, Pete Klenow (klenow@stanford.edu).

Students must not approach either instructor or TA with an oral request before making their written request. Requests should be extremely short and must focus on the specifics of the grading error. Requests should occur within a week of the work being returned (for example, within a week of the work being placed in the academic office.)

The entire graded work (problem set or examination) should be resubmitted; there is no guarantee that grades will rise as, statistically, positive and negative errors in grading are equally likely. If the request arises because you think different students have been graded differently, all the affected students should submit their work as a group (there is no guarantee that only upward adjustments will occur.) Note that this policy applies only to specific and unambiguous errors, not to such items as disputes over grading policies, protests about the form or content of an examination, or claims of learning not displayed in the work. Requests for a correction which do not state, with particularity and specificity, the error to be corrected will be rejected.

Here is the appropriate form of a request to correct an error grading:
"Dear Prof. X:
I am a student in your economics 999 course. I believe that the grades on my midterm were added up incorrectly. As you can see from the bluebook I left in your mailbox, I have 25 on each of the four questions, but 73 on the exam. I have not spoken with you or any of the TAs about this, and am copying the DUS on this email.
Sincerely,
Fred."

Requests after the end of the term are further limited by the University's policies. See http://registrar.stanford.edu/students/grades/inc_chg_rpt_grades.htm#rev_end_qtr_grades
If there is no specific regarding policy laid out in the syllabus or by the professor, refer the student to the Common Economics Syllabus regarding policy.

10. SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

10.1 Where do I get supplies?

Chalk, whiteboard markers, whiteboard erasers, and pens are available in the second floor Xerox room supply cupboards; ask the office manager if they are locked. Mandy Pabst can provide you with exam blue books. Mandy can give you copies of any textbooks or course readers used in the class.

10.2 How do I make copies?

For copying handouts, problem sets, or answer sheets, you can use one of the department copy machines. Teaching assistants can use the 2nd floor copy machine in the materials room, the code is 0259.

10.3 How do I distribute course materials to students?

Problem sets, section materials, solutions, and course materials are usually distributed electronically on Coursework. Graded exams and problem sets should be returned to the students directly in section or class with extra materials returned to the academic office. For graded work, make sure you consider the students’ privacy. Hand the work back to the individual students and record the grade on the second page if possible.

11. PROBLEMS

11.1 What do I do if a student has threatened suicide, has disclosed severe emotional or psychological distress, or I am concerned about a specific student?

Sometimes students will feel a special bond or friendship with a TA and will admit to suicidal thoughts or feelings or feelings of depression. If you feel the situation is an emergency call 911 immediately. Otherwise, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (650) 723-3785 who counsel with Stanford community members concerned about a student. If the circumstance warrants, they will guide you on how to refer the student to counseling.

11.2 What if I observe suspicious behavior in a student?

If you suspect something suspicious about a student (the student might pose a risk to themselves or others), report the behavior to the Stanford Department of Public Safety. If it is an emergency, call 911.
11.3 What do I do if I suspect there has been an Honor Code Violation?

If you suspect that a student has violated the Honor Code, speak with the professor immediately. If the professor cannot be reached, contact the office of judicial affairs 725-2485 or judicialaffairs@stanford.edu, who will guide you on what steps to take. Handle these matters with utmost discretion.

11.4 What do I do if a complicated or difficult situation arises?

Feel free to contact the TA Coordinator or TA Program Director to discuss any problem.

11.5 What do I do if I have problems with the course instructor?

Contact the TA Coordinator or TA Program Director if valiant attempts at solving the problem between you and the professor are not fruitful.

12. EVALUATIONS AND AWARDS

TAs are evaluated by their students and the faculty member teaching the course. Course evaluations are handled online. Because we take evaluations seriously, we ask that you encourage all your students to fill out the evaluations. Remind them that these evaluations are important and help improve the quality of teaching. You are also encouraged to solicit additional feedback from your students, either formally via evaluations administered through the CTL, or informally through evaluations you create yourself. Many TAs find mid-quarter evaluations to be particularly useful.

You may obtain your student evaluations online through Axess. These evaluations play a large role in determining both the Outstanding Teaching Assistant awards and future TA assignments. Prospective employers also occasionally request evaluations of teaching skill.

The professor teaching the course also evaluates the TAs. In addition, the TA Coordinator gathers general impressions by discussing performance with students and professors and makes specific observations by visiting sections. The TA Coordinator visits sections quarterly to provide constructive feedback to TAs.

Each quarter, the department designates up to six Outstanding Teaching Assistant awards for economics graduate students. These awards are split between the IEC (those TAing in Econ1 series) and non-IEC TAs as follows:

1. The IEC will submit at most two names per quarter of TAs, and no more than a total of three names over the entire academic year, to the TA awards committee via the TA Coordinator.
2. Such a named TA will be eligible for a departmental TA award and considered as part of the department's evaluation of the TAs for that quarter.
3. The number of departmental TA awards presented each quarter will be between 5 and 7.
4. Some of the considerations for deciding on a TA award include:
The department awards a check to each of the winners. These awards may be useful in the job market. The student services officer and TA Coordinator choose the award winners based on the evaluations mentioned above. In addition, every other year the department nominates several TAs for the "Centennial TA" award, a School of Humanities and Sciences award that involves more money and glory. Two past TAs, Hugh Pill and Luke Stein, have received Stanford's highest teaching award, the Gores Award.

13. THE VICE PROVOST FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING (VPTL)

13.1 What does the VPTL do for me?

If you would like feedback from your students before the end of the quarter, the VPTL offers a mid-quarter evaluation service (Small Group Evaluation) which can be very helpful. This is not a substitute for department evaluations, but it can give you insight into which aspects of your teaching students appreciate and which need improving. Someone from the VPTL meets with your students during part of a section to gather structured feedback and then delivers the feedback to you.

The VPTL will also videotape your section if you request them to (the department will cover the cost). It would be even better to request the TA Coordinator to record the section and give you detailed feedback. Someone from the VPTL will review the videotape with you and provide advice. If you are interested in emphasizing your teaching skills to employers, you can buy the tape from VPTL for a small fee and include it in your job market portfolio. The VPTL sometimes hires Economics Department TAs to provide this feedback. The VPTL provides training to these evaluators.

The VPTL also organizes workshops on teaching. You will be informed about these workshops by the TA coordinator and encouraged to attend.

The VPTL is located in Sweet Hall and their Office Hours are 9:00-12:00 and 1:00-5:00. Their website is https://vptl.stanford.edu/teaching-learning.

14. THE TEACHING ASSISTANT COORDINATOR

The TA Coordinator revises the TA handbook and all other teaching and evaluation materials. The TA Coordinator also runs a TA orientation at the beginning of each quarter, and advises the student services officer on TA assignments and TA awards. During each quarter, the TA
Coordinator attends sections and offers advice to TAs. The TA Coordinator is also a mentor TA, and you should feel free to bring any problem or question about teaching to him or her.

15. SERVING AS AN ACTING INSTRUCTOR

If you wish to be an acting instructor in the summer (or during the academic year), see the Teaching Coordinator before winter quarter starts as their recommendation could be instrumental in obtaining a teaching position. Serving as an acting instructor is very time-consuming; talk to someone who has done it before you decide to teach a class. Acting instructors must have advanced to candidacy and usually will have completed residency. They are entitled to office space, library privileges, and as many TAs as the course enrollment warrants.

16. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

As an employee of Stanford University it is your responsibility to maintain a professional working environment.

For the official Stanford sexual harassment policy, see http://adminguide.stanford.edu/23_2.pdf or http://harass.stanford.edu/.

Stanford University defines sexual harassment as: “Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other visual, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

(a) It is implicitly or explicitly suggested that submission to or rejection of the conduct will be a factor in academic or employment decisions or evaluations, or permission to participate in a University activity; or

(b) The conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s academic or work performance or creating an intimidating or hostile academic, work or student living environment.

Please familiarize yourself with the policy. One thing to point out is that if you ever become involved with someone that you are teaching, you should immediately recuse yourself from evaluation of any of that person’s work.

17. OFFICE OF ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION (OAE)

Students who have a disability, which may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in a class, must initiate the request with the OAE (formerly the Disability Resource Center). The OAE will evaluate their requests and make appropriate recommendations. Any recommendation will be clearly stated in a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made.
It is the student’s responsibility to notify the TA and instructor regarding any special accommodations (room, exam time allowed, etc.) that need to be made for exams. These accommodations must be made a ‘reasonable’ amount of time before the exam begins. Oftentimes the student will reserve a room in the OAE (done through their staff). It is the TA’s responsibility to deliver and pick up the exam at the designated room. Be sure to have the student sign the honor code.
Appendix 1. OUR WONDERFUL STAFF

Department Manager: Trudy A. Haley (thaley@stanford.edu)

Office Manager, Assistant to the Chair: Erin Buckminster (ebuckmin@stanford.edu)

Student Services Manager: Susie Gilbert (srgilbert@stanford.edu)

Undergraduate Administrator: Joanne DeMarchena (jdemar@stanford.edu)

Academic Office Assistant: Mandy Pabst (apabst@stanford.edu)

Finance Manager: Susan Taylor (taylors@stanford.edu)

IT Services: Michael Parievsky (mikepar@stanford.edu)

IEC Administrator: Judy Low (jlow@stanford.edu)

Receptionist: Marilyn Watson (marilynw@stanford.edu)
Appendix 2. University Resources and Offices

Academic Computing
http://acomp.stanford.edu/

Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning
http://vptl.stanford.edu/

Counseling and Psychological Services
http://vaden.stanford.edu/caps/index.html

Community Standards (formerly Judicial Affairs)
http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/communitystandards

Office of Accessible Education
http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae

Sexual Harassment Policy Office
http://harass.stanford.edu/

Sexual Harassment and Consensual Sexual or Romantic Relationships

Tutoring Resources
https://undergrad.stanford.edu/tutoring-support
Appendix 3: Common Economics Syllabus

Beginning with autumn quarter, 2003-04, courses taught in the Department of Economics are covered by a common set of course management policies approved by the Faculty.

Students are responsible for knowing and abiding by these course policies.

I. Attendance

a. Courses have individual policies regarding class attendance.

b. Exam attendance

Exam attendance at the specified time is required. There are a few exceptions to this rule, and if you are requesting one of these exceptions you must email the course instructor, copying the Director of Undergraduate Studies, Pete Klenow, (klenow@stanford.edu)

The exceptions, detailed below, are health emergencies, death in the immediate family, Stanford business that takes you away from Campus, and documented disabilities. There are no other exceptions. (There will be no exception for students attending job interviews or beginning jobs or internships before the end of the term, or for other non-educational reasons would prefer not to be at the University when the exam is scheduled.) Since the exceptions are narrow and clear cut, your email asking for an exception should be short and to the point.

i. Death of an immediate family member may require you to travel away from campus to attend services. Immediate family members are your parents, siblings, spouse, and children.

ii. Health emergencies are when you are in the hospital or clinic during the time of the course exam. Vaden physicians will certify when the student with the health emergency was seen. Documentation from the health care facility must follow your email.

iii. Absence from campus on Stanford business is usually for athletic competition. Work through the AAC in order to take your exam at the same time (or slightly earlier, if absolutely necessary) as other students in the course. The only difference will be the test location.

iv. Disabled students who are working through the SDRC may, in some circumstances, take examinations at a different place than the rest of students. See SDRC section below.
Students are responsible for making sure, at the beginning of the term, that they can attend the exams. Registering for a course means that you certify that you will be present for the exam (unless one of the explicitly stated exceptions above arises.)

Economics courses enforce the every other seat rule for examinations, and exams are to be taken either in the examination room or the designated overflow room if one is needed.

c. On time exam attendance

Students who arrive late will have less time to finish the exam. The exam time is never extended.

II. No make-up exams.

Other than the exceptions listed above, exams will not be rescheduled for a different time or place.

III. Withdrawals and Incompletes

Stanford provides an option for students to withdraw from courses. Students may withdraw up to the end of the 8th week of classes for any reason. Students may request incompletes after that deadline provided (1) the only work that is incomplete is the course final exam or final paper and (2) there is a health emergency or a death in their immediate family (these are clear cut boundaries, see the precise boundaries under "exam attendance, above.) Students should promptly (once healthy and past initial grieving) work out an arrangement for clearing an incomplete with the instructor. The typical arrangement is taking the final for the same course offered in a later term. The University rules about incompletes, such as that they turn into NP after a fixed period of time, apply here.

IV. Deadlines

Late work, whether problem sets, exams, papers, or other work, does not count for course credit. It gets a grade of zero. No exceptions.

V. Weighting

Weighting different aspects of students' work is, like the rest of grading, necessary. The relative weights on the different elements of the course work are set by the instructor. So are the rules that permit (or do not permit) dropping the lowest problem set score. The department has no set weights. One department-wide rule is that, if the course permits dropping the lowest problem set score, a student who has entered a course late and missed the first problem set drops that one, not a later one.

VI. Correcting Errors in Grading

This section lays out rules and procedures for requesting a correction of a grading error. Requests for grading correction should clearly and succinctly state the unambiguous error you believe has
occurred. Errors in grading due to illegible or garbled answers are not subject to correction. Students who have been graded incorrectly should petition for a correction in writing to the Professor, copying the Director of Undergraduate Studies, Pete Klenow, (klenow@stanford.edu). Students must not approach either instructor or TA with an oral request before making their written request.

Requests should be extremely short and must focus on the specifics of the grading error. Requests should occur within a week of the work being returned (for example, within a week of the work being placed in the academic office.)

The entire graded work (problem set or examination) should be resubmitted; there is no guarantee that grades will rise as, statistically, positive and negative errors in grading are equally likely. If the request arises because you think different students have been graded differently, all the affected students should submit their work as a group (there is no guarantee that only upward adjustments will occur.) Note that this policy applies only to specific and unambiguous errors, not to such items as disputes over grading policies, protests about the form or content of an examination, or claims of learning not displayed in the work.

Requests for a correction which do not state, with particularity and specificity, the error to be corrected will be rejected.

Here is the appropriate form of a request to correct an error grading:

"Dear Prof. X:

I am a student in your economics 999 course. I believe that the grades on my midterm were added up incorrectly. As you can see from the bluebook I left in your mailbox, I have 25 on each of the four questions, but 73 on the exam. I have not spoken with you or any of the TAs about this, and am copying the DUS on this email.

Sincerely,

Fred."

Requests after the end of the term are further limited by the University's policies. See http://registrar.stanford.edu/students/grades/inc_chg_rpt_grades.htm#rev_end_qtr_grades

VII. Honor Code Issues

The Honor Code is a very important part of student life, and the Department of Economics takes it seriously. The Department encourages course instructors to fully comply with their responsibilities to honorable students under the Honor Code. http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/communitystandards/policy/honor-code

The Department reserves the right to undertake procedures that will catch violations of the Honor Code, such as photocopying work before it has been returned.

VIII. Disability Issues
Students with documented disabilities: Students, who have a physical, psychological, or learning disability, that may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in a class must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE), not with the instructor. The OAE will evaluate the request along with the required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE in the first week of the quarter as timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk. Also see http://www.stanford.edu/group/OAE/

Be sure that your instructor, the OAE, and you have a common understanding, at least two weeks before any examination, of the precise logistical arrangements by which you will be accommodated.
Appendix 4: Honor Code and Fundamental Standard

A.4.1 Honor Code

The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work:

1. The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:
   1. that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;
   2. that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.
2. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.
3. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

Examples of conduct that have been regarded as being in violation of the Honor Code include:

- Copying from another's examination paper or allowing another to copy from one’s own paper
- Unpermitted collaboration
- **Plagiarism**
- Revising and resubmitting a quiz or exam for regrading, without the instructor’s knowledge and consent
- Giving or receiving unpermitted aid on a take-home examination
- Representing as one’s own work the work of another
- Giving or receiving aid on an academic assignment under circumstances in which a reasonable person should have known that such aid was not permitted

In recent years, most student disciplinary cases have involved Honor Code violations; of these, the most frequent arise when a student submits another’s work as his or her own, or gives or receives unpermitted aid. The standard penalty for a first offense includes a one-quarter suspension from the University and 40 hours of community service. In addition, most faculty members issue a "No Pass" or "No Credit" for the course in which the violation occurred. The standard penalty for multiple violations (e.g. cheating more than once in the same course) is a three-quarter suspension and 40 or more hours of community service.
A.4.2 Fundamental Standard

The Fundamental Standard has set the standard of conduct for students at Stanford since 1896. It states:

*Students at Stanford are expected to show both within and without the University such respect for order, morality, personal honor and the rights of others as is demanded of good citizens. Failure to do this will be sufficient cause for removal from the University.*

Over the years, the Fundamental Standard has been applied to a great variety of situations. Actions that have been found to be in violation of it include:

- Physical Assault
- Property damage; attempts to damage University property
- Theft, including theft of University property such as street signs, furniture, and library books
- Forgery, such as signing an instructor’s signature to a grade change card
- Sexual harassment or other sexual misconduct
- Charging computer time or long distance telephone calls to unauthorized accounts
- Misrepresentation in seeking financial aid, University housing, discount computer purchases, or other University benefits
- Misuse of University computer equipment or e-mail
- Driving on campus while under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Sending threatening and obscene messages to another student via e-mail, phone or voice-mail

There is no standard penalty which applies to violations of the Fundamental Standard. Infractions have led to penalties ranging from formal warning and community service to expulsion. In each case, the nature and seriousness of the offense, the motivation underlying the offense and precedent in similar cases are considered.