

# **A Guide to Writing a Teaching Assistant Review Letter**

- This guide is intended to help instructors of record create letters of review for the Teaching Assistants (TAs) they supervise each semester. These letters should provide useful feedback that can help TAs improve their teaching skills and direct their professional development. TA review letters also may be used as part of the student's teaching portfolio when applying for future jobs.
- If the TA is conducting a **discussion section/sections**, the faculty member is expected to observe at least one such section per semester for each of the TAs they supervise.
- Faculty should submit one review letter for each TA under their purview each semester. The due date to submit the letter for Fall 2022 is **Friday, December 16, 2022**. The review letter is confidential, and will only be shared with the DGS, the Graduate Program Coordinator, and the Teaching Assistant being reviewed.
- In addition to the written letter, a meeting between the faculty member and the TA is recommended at which verbal feedback is given for the purposes of mentoring.
- If you become aware of serious problems with a TA's performance during the semester, please do not wait until the end of the course to address those problems and instead discuss them with the TA as soon as possible (and notify the DGS if necessary).

## **PART I: GENERAL COMMENTS**

**This part is intended to evaluate the TA's duties separate from conducting discussion sections.**

Please, provide the following information in the heading of your letter: 1) faculty member's name; 2) Teaching Assistant name; 3) Course to which the TA was assigned; 4) Semester and Year.

Feedback should be clear and constructive and include specific examples where appropriate. The following categories are intended to provide some general criteria for evaluating the TA's performance, but you are welcome to adapt or add to these criteria to reflect the particular duties and expectations of the position under review.

### **1. Class Management/Administrative Duties**

How effective was the TA in fulfilling administrative duties related to the class? Please, consider the following questions, if applicable. Did the TA keep

accurate record of attendance and assignment completion? Did they maintain and enforce confidentiality about sensitive information? How competent was the TA in assisting with technical support such as Blackboard and Zoom? Were they punctual and reliable? Did they arrive adequately prepared for lectures and/or discussions?

## **2. Communication and Engagement**

Please, elaborate on the issues of communication and engagement demonstrated by the TA. You may consider the following questions. Did the TA demonstrate interest in the course and the class material? Did they communicate openly and regularly with the faculty supervisor? How effective were they in mentoring individual students? Did they maintain sufficient office hours and were generally available to students? Did they use varied instructional techniques to meet individual students' needs? Did they encourage students' engagement, and collaboration? Did they encourage respectful interaction among students?

## **3. Grading**

How effective was the TA's grading? Please, consider the following questions. Did the TA adhere to instructor's guidelines of criteria for grading? Were the grades impartial and overall fair? Did they return the graded assignments in a timely manner? What was the quality of feedback provided to students?

**4. What were the main strengths of the TA performance?**

**5. What areas, if any, need improvement?**

**6. Additional Comments**

## **PART II: DISCUSSION SECTION OBSERVATION**

**This part is intended to evaluate the TAs, who are conducting discussion sections.**

**1. Teaching skills**

Provide comments on the TA's teaching skills in conducting the discussion section. Consider the following questions: Was the discussion well structured? Were explanations clear? Did the TA make effective use of the Blackboard and/or other instructional media? Were the goals of the discussion session clearly articulated? Did the class meeting accomplish those goals?

**2. Classroom atmosphere and teaching style**

Provide comments on the class atmosphere and the TA's teaching style. Consider the following questions: Was the TA on time? Was the session well attended? Did the TA have good rapport with the students, treating them respectfully and encouraging their participation? Were the students engaged and in what way? Was the climate in the classroom conducive to learning? Were the conditions in the classroom conducive to voicing different perspectives?

**3. What were the main strengths of the TA performance in leading the discussion?**

**4. What areas, if any, need improvement?**

**5. Additional comments:**