



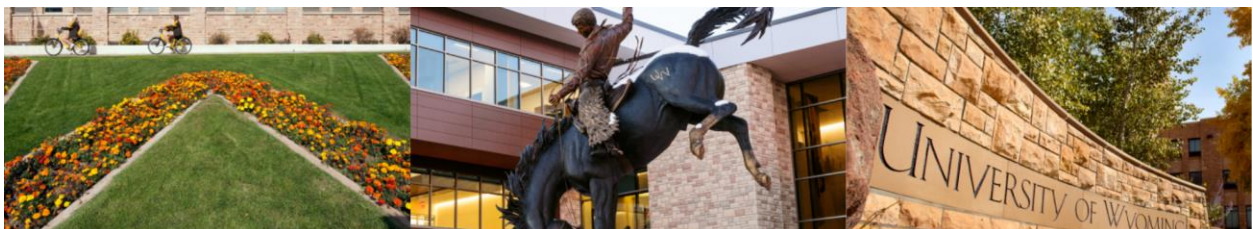
UNIVERSITY  
OF WYOMING

School of  
Graduate Education

**University of Wyoming**

**Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook**

2024



School of Graduate Education | Knight Hall 250 | 1000 E. University Avenue  
University of Wyoming | [GradEd@uwyo.edu](mailto:GradEd@uwyo.edu) | (307) 766-647

Congratulations on your appointment as a graduate assistant! For many of you, this is an important chapter in your life, as you transition from undergraduate studies to becoming an independent scholar and representative of the university. New responsibilities are added to your role as a student, and you are about to make important contributions that are critical to the



University of Wyoming. In addition to your academic experiences, you will now serve in research and creative work, provide instructional support, and offer undergraduate student mentorship. The diversity of these complementary activities is intended to strengthen your expertise and facilitate your professional development. Regardless of your primary responsibility here, we encourage all our graduate assistants at UW to excel both as learning scholars and as teachers of the knowledge and skills of their disciplines and awareness of the theoretic underpinnings and critical thought essential to creation of new knowledge.

The experience you will gain is invaluable to your preparation for your professional career. To facilitate your growth as an effective instructor for UW's students, we provide this Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook as an introduction to your training in pedagogy. We also provide our students a range of learning opportunities and environments.

Learning takes place in traditional classrooms, studios, and laboratories, and also in the field and in the community. UW's most effective teachers are constantly learning by testing new strategies and approaches to convey topics to facilitate higher levels of understanding within their students. Because students learn most effectively when they are actively engaged, university educators learn to employ a range of strategies to facilitate student learning. In this handbook, you will find a number of these strategies and approaches. Some will work for you, some will not fit your particular uses. Pick and choose wisely, for that is the role of the effective instructional graduate assistant. We wish you the very best in all of your endeavors at the University of Wyoming and look forward to sharing the day you receive your graduate diploma.

Sincerely,

**Jim Ahern, Associate Vice Provost for Graduate Education**

---

Introduction .....4  
     *Graduate Assistantships* .....4  
 Getting Started.....5  
     *First Day*.....5  
     *Get to Know Students* .....5  
     *Syllabus*.....6  
     *Meet With Your Supervisor*.....6  
     *Course Objectives and Outcomes* .....6  
 Inside the Classroom .....7  
     *Create an Engaging Classroom* .....7  
     *Classroom Management* .....7  
     *Accessibility*.....8  
     *Inclusive Classroom for All Learners* .....8  
     *Technology Integration* .....9  
     *Academic Integrity*.....9  
     *Artificial Intelligence (AI)*.....9  
 Outside the Classroom.....10  
     *Office Hours* .....10  
     *Responding to Emails*.....10  
     *Time Management and Work Life Balance* .....10  
     *Family Rights and Education Act (FERPA)* .....11  
     *Grading Responsibilities* .....11  
     *Talk With Other GTAs*.....11  
     *Professional Development*.....11  
 Resources and Support Services .....12  
 Glossary .....15



## Introduction

### ***Graduate Assistantships***

A Graduate Assistantship is a financial award provided to a student by the university to aid a student's graduate education. Graduate Assistantships carry work and academic expectations. Eligible students apply for assistantships through a department or unit offering the positions. Selections are competitive, and appointments are contingent on the availability of funds. Selection criteria include standardized test scores, grade point averages, recommendations, experience, past performance, collegiality, and suitability. Reappointment is contingent on eligibility, satisfactory performance, and availability of funding.

Graduate Assistantships may fall into different categories like teaching, research, and administration; in this handbook, Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) are the focus.

- [Graduate Assistantship Information](#)
  - [Job Descriptions and Time Limits](#)
  - [School of Graduate Education](#)
  - [Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure](#)
-



## Getting Started

### *First Day*

You are a student and an expert in your field of study. It is time to start sharing your knowledge with others. All new GTAs must attend the University of Wyoming's (UW) Graduate Teaching and Learning Symposium, organized by the Office of Graduate Education, and facilitated by the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning, before the start of classes. The symposium is meant to support GTAs in their new role.

- [Graduate Teaching and Learning Symposium](#)
- [Survivor Strategies: Teaching Large Enrollment Classes](#)
- [Designing for Discussion-Based Teaching](#)
- [Lecture Based Learning](#)

### *Get to Know Students*

Forging genuine connections is the key to unlocking students' curiosity. Try to learn and use students' names regularly. It shows you care and builds trust with students. Icebreaker activities are a great option to get your class acquainted with one another and with you.

- [Active Learning Spectrum](#)

## ***Syllabus***

Understanding the course syllabus is essential for effective teaching. It serves as the foundation for the course, outlining lessons, assignments, and expectations. The syllabus design and terminology create an impression of you and your course.

- [Syllabi Resource page](#)
- [UW Syllabus Regulation and Template](#)
- [Syllabus Requirements](#)

## ***Meet With Your Supervisor***

Meet with your supervisor to discuss expectations for teaching, grading, and other responsibilities. Establishing a solid working relationship with faculty is crucial for adequate support and a successful GTA experience.

## ***Course Objectives and Outcomes***

Knowing the course objectives helps align your lessons and teaching with student learning outcomes. Ensure that your teaching methods contribute to the achievement of these goals. Every instructor should strive to increase student learning with excellent teaching.

- [Student Learning Outcomes](#)
  - [Rubrics](#)
-



## Inside the Classroom

### *Create an Engaging Classroom*

Move beyond traditional lecturing to facilitate discussions, encourage peer-to-peer learning, and ask open-ended questions when appropriate. Offer insightful prompts and celebrate diverse perspectives. Try to walk around the classroom during labs and lectures. Seek out the quiet students; a friendly interaction with a student can turn them into engaged participants. Make yourself approachable and show your investment in student learning.

Remember, your classroom is not just about delivering information but about fostering a shared journey of discovery. By making connections, you become more than a teacher – you become a navigator, a motivator, and a fellow learner. Students will perceive authenticity as trustworthy, so be passionate about your teaching and share your experiences.

- [Active Learning Spectrum](#)
- [Strategies for engaging and motivating students](#)

### *Classroom Management*

Clearly defining expectations for your students sets the tone for the course and helps manage student behavior. Ask your students their expectations and create a social contract between you and your students. Communicate classroom policies regarding attendance, participation, and late assignments. Highlight key aspects of the syllabus to reinforce expectations. Encourage students to ask questions about expectations to avoid misunderstandings.

- [Classroom Management Basics](#)
- [Managing your online course](#)
- [Valuing space and place in classroom learning](#)

## ***Accessibility***

Ensure your materials are as accessible as possible to everyone. Use clear and concise language, provide alternate text descriptions for images, and offer captions or transcripts for multimedia content. Create written forms of class lectures and information to give students before class. Employ various teaching methods by incorporating lectures, discussions, group work, hands-on activities, and visual aids to keep everyone engaged.

- [UW Disability Support Services](#)
- [UW Accessibility Resources](#)
- [The National Disability Rights Network](#)
- [Disability Support Services](#)
- [Designing for Accessibility with POUR](#)

## ***Inclusive Classroom for All Learners***

Go beyond simply meeting minimum accessibility standards and ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to participate and learn, regardless of their ability level. A vibrant classroom thrives on the richness of different backgrounds, perspectives, and abilities. As a GTA, cultivating an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and supported is an ethical imperative and a key to maximizing learning for all.

Be open to feedback from students and colleagues on improving inclusivity in your teaching. Reflect on your practices and be willing to adapt your approach to meet the needs of your learners. Creating an inclusive classroom is an ongoing process, not a one-time achievement. Stay involved in professional development opportunities and resources on accessibility and inclusive teaching.

- [Higher Education Inclusion Guide](#)
- [The National Center for Universal Design for Learning](#)
- [Columbia's Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching](#)



## ***Technology Integration***

WyoCourses is UW's branding of Canvas, our learning management system (LMS). Every course has a WyoCourses course shell. Whether you teach entirely online, hybrid, or in a physical classroom, WyoCourses can be the interactive hub of all your course content. In this place, students find resources, receive, and submit assignments, access feedback and grades, collaborate, and interact with each other, with you, and with the course content. Explore WyoCourses to become familiar with course organization, discussion forums, and assignment submission processes. Incorporate multimedia, discussion boards, assessment tools, and integrations within WyoCourses to enhance the learning experience. Multimedia creation tools can enhance live lectures and written course materials. Brief videos, audio recordings, and images can engage students and support diverse ways of learning.

- [WyoCourses Help](#)
- [ECTL Knowledge Base](#)
- [Classroom Technology Support](#)

## ***Academic Integrity***

Students may have the best intentions at the beginning of a semester. They are not planning to take significant shortcuts that involve plagiarism on papers or cheating on exams. By the end of a semester, however, some instructors report being discouraged by problems with plagiarism.

Instructors can make relatively small changes in their courses and teaching to help students engage in their assignments and manage their time. The payoff will be evident in better all-around performance on assignments and reduced plagiarism or cheating. Take the time to teach students how to properly paraphrase content, conduct their research, and understand classroom expectations. Talk to students about the points in the semester when they may experience more significant difficulties with time management that may interfere with completing assignments. Remind students about upcoming assignments.

- [ECTL Plagiarism Resources](#)
- [Dean of Students/Registrar/UDSS/Academic Dishonesty](#)
- [Grammarly Plagiarism Checker](#)

## ***Artificial Intelligence (AI)***

Instructors should include a section focused on permitted/unpermitted AI technology use in the syllabus, generally in the location of their Student Academic Dishonesty statement.

- [UW AI Resources](#)
- [AI: Responding to the Challenges and the Opportunities](#)
- [ASU AI Resources](#)



## **Outside the Classroom**

### ***Office Hours***

If your position requires you to hold office hours, you must be available to meet with students during published office hours. Let students know if you are unavailable during office hours or in a location other than your office. GTAs should be available to work scheduled class times, research hours, office hours, meeting hours, exam hours, study session hours, and any other hours required by your supervisor.

### ***Responding to Emails***

Timely responses to emails contribute to a supportive and responsive learning environment. Communicate your expected availability response time to students. Address urgent queries promptly and provide a timeline for more complex issues. You will not likely be available to your students 24 hours a day. It is okay to answer emails only during prespecified times of the day.

### ***Time Management and Work-Life Balance***

Balancing teaching responsibilities with your coursework and personal life takes time and effort. Set realistic goals and priorities and develop strategies for maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Do not hesitate to seek help if your mental health is declining. UW offers free counseling services to students.

- [Student Organizations](#)
- [UW Counseling Center](#)

### ***Family Rights and Education Act (FERPA)***

Do not release information regarding a student to parents or others without written permission from the student. Do not post identifying information in hallways, such as names or social security numbers, and do not leave graded materials outside the classroom for students to pick up. Posting grades to WyoCourses is appropriate.

- [FERPA](#)

### ***Grading Responsibilities***

Understanding the grading rubric and providing constructive feedback to students is crucial. Maintain fairness and consistency in grading and communicate the schedule to students so they know when to expect feedback and grades. You are also required to have your grades recorded accurately and promptly. Be sure to enter your grades before the end of the semester.

- [UW Grading and Academic Status](#)
- [Rubrics](#)

### ***Talk With Other GTAs***

Make a point of meeting and talking to other GTAs in and outside your department. You can learn a lot from their experiences, and it is nice to know that other people can empathize with your situation.

- [GTA ECTL Programs](#)

### ***Professional Development***

Take advantage of opportunities for professional growth, like workshops, seminars, and conferences. Participating in these events will help build a network within the academic community. The Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning (ECTL) recognizes that graduate students are essential in the UW teaching and learning community. The ECTL encourages students to utilize their programs and resources to develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities as instructors. They offer and promote educational development opportunities for GTAs.

- [ECTL](#)
  - [GRAD 5910 Course](#)
-



## Resources and Support Services

Resource	Location	Email	Phone (307)
Academic Affairs	Old Main 312 <a href="http://www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs">www.uwyo.edu/acadaffairs</a>		766-4286
Associated Students of the University of Wyoming	UW Union 20 <a href="https://www.uwyo.edu/asuw/">https://www.uwyo.edu/asuw/</a>	<a href="mailto:asuwgov@uwyo.edu">asuwgov@uwyo.edu</a>	766-5204
Clothing Cottage	310 E University Ave, Laramie, WY 82072		745-0625
Counseling Center	341 Knight Hall <a href="https://www.uwyo.edu/ucc/index.html">https://www.uwyo.edu/ucc/index.html</a>	<a href="mailto:uccstaff@uwyo.edu">uccstaff@uwyo.edu</a>	766-2187
Disability Support Services	Knight Hall 128 <a href="http://www.uwyo.edu/udss">www.uwyo.edu/udss</a>	<a href="mailto:udss@uwyo.edu">udss@uwyo.edu</a>	766-3073
Ellbogen Center for Teaching & Learning	Coe Library 510 <a href="http://www.uwyo.edu/ctl">www.uwyo.edu/ctl</a>	<a href="mailto:ellbogenctl@uwyo.edu">ellbogenctl@uwyo.edu</a>	766-4847
Emergency			911
Graduate Education	Knight Hall 250	<a href="mailto:GradEd@uwyo.edu">GradEd@uwyo.edu</a>	766-6478

UW SCHOOL OF GRADUATE EDUCATION

	<a href="https://www.uwyo.edu/uwgrad/index.html">https://www.uwyo.edu/uwgrad/index.html</a>		
Interfaith Good Samaritan	712 Canby St, Laramie, WY 82072 <a href="https://www.laramieinterfaith.org/">https://www.laramieinterfaith.org/</a>	<a href="mailto:info@laramieinterfaith.org">info@laramieinterfaith.org</a>	742-4240
Information Technology	<a href="http://www.uwyo.edu/infotech/">www.uwyo.edu/infotech/</a>	<a href="mailto:userhelp@uwyo.edu">userhelp@uwyo.edu</a>	766-4357
Laramie Connections Center	920 E. Sheridan Street Laramie, WY 82070 <a href="https://www.laramieconnections.com/services">https://www.laramieconnections.com/services</a>	<a href="mailto:info@laramieconnections.com">info@laramieconnections.com</a>	206-0607
Laramie Soup Kitchen	104 S 4th St, Laramie, WY 82070 St. Matthews Church Lower level <a href="https://www.laramiesoupkitchen.org/">https://www.laramiesoupkitchen.org/</a>	<a href="mailto:Info@LaramieSoupKitchen.org">Info@LaramieSoupKitchen.org</a>	460-1605
Learning Resource Network	Coe Library 105 <a href="http://www.uwyo.edu/learn">www.uwyo.edu/learn</a>	<a href="mailto:first-year@uwyo.edu">first-year@uwyo.edu</a>	766-4430
Libraries at UW	Multiple locations <a href="https://www.uwyo.edu/libraries/index.html">https://www.uwyo.edu/libraries/index.html</a>		766-3190
UW Police Department	1000 E. University Ave. Dept. 3124 <a href="https://www.uwyo.edu/uwpd/index.html">https://www.uwyo.edu/uwpd/index.html</a>	<a href="mailto:uwpd@uwyo.edu">uwpd@uwyo.edu</a>	766-5179
University Food Pantry	<b>New! See the <a href="#">interactive map of food cabinets on campus</a></b>  <a href="https://www.uwyo.edu/food-security/access_food_uw/index.html">https://www.uwyo.edu/food-security/access_food_uw/index.html</a>	<a href="mailto:asuwexc8@uwyo.edu">asuwexc8@uwyo.edu</a>	

UW SCHOOL OF GRADUATE EDUCATION

University Testing Center	Knight Hall 4 <a href="http://www.uwyo.edu/utc">www.uwyo.edu/utc</a>	<a href="mailto:utc@uwyo.edu">utc@uwyo.edu</a>	766-5250
Writing Center	COE Library Level 1 <a href="http://www.uwyo.edu/writingcenter">www.uwyo.edu/writingcenter</a>	<a href="mailto:writing@uwyo.edu">writing@uwyo.edu</a>	
WyoCourses Instructional Support	<a href="http://www.uwyo.edu/wyocourses">www.uwyo.edu/wyocourses</a>	<a href="mailto:wyocoursesinst@uwyo.edu">wyocoursesinst@uwyo.edu</a>	766-5250
WyoCourses Technical Support	<a href="http://www.uwyo.edu/wyocourses">www.uwyo.edu/wyocourses</a>	<a href="mailto:wyocourses@uwyo.edu">wyocourses@uwyo.edu</a>	766-4357



## Glossary

**Graduate Assistant:** A general name for any Teaching (GTA), Research (GRA), or Administrative Assistant (GA).

**Instructor:** Any teacher in a course, including the Instructor of Record who leads the course, any academic staff who teach in the course, and any Teaching Assistants who also offer instruction. The term "instructor" refers to any person in an official role teaching a course.

**Graduate Teaching Assistant:** A graduate student enrolled in the University of Wyoming System who is regularly assigned teaching and related responsibilities (other than manual or clerical) under the supervision of a faculty member. Teaching Assistants do various kinds of instruction in different programs, from leading small breakout discussion sections to running entire sections of their own. In all cases, Graduate Teaching Assistants are instructors and should consider their teaching experience part of their education.

**FERPA:** Family Rights and Education Act

**Instructor of Record:** The instructor in a course who has overall responsibility for developing the course syllabus, managing the delivery of course material, ensuring that learning outcomes are met, and issuing final grades. GTAs sometimes assist a faculty or academic staff member who is the instructor of record and occasionally serve as the instructor of record.

**Plagiarism:** The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own.

**Supervisor:** All GTAs are employees and have an official supervisor responsible for assessing their performance and providing feedback and guidance.

**UDL:** Universal Design for Learning is an educational framework based on research in the learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience, that guides the development of flexible learning environments and learning spaces that accommodate individual learning differences.