

TA Pool : How it Works and What the Rules Are

Each department (MBS, IB, NEU and Marine Biology) and BIO has a certain number of TA positions allocated to support courses. The goal of BIO is to make the best possible TA assignments to each class.

Required TA Training (TA Bootcamp)

Every TA appointed through BIO must attend TA Bootcamp (2 days in August) prior to their first TA assignment.

How the Process of Assigning TAs works

1. The Graduate Coordinators ask research faculty which students from their labs require TA positions.
2. By a particular deadline, set for each semester, the Graduate Coordinators turn in their final counts for requested TA positions to the TA coordinator in the BIO office (currently, Greg Browning – g. browning@austin.utexas.edu).
3. Within a few days, the BIO Office provides Graduate Coordinators with the total number of TA positions that can be provided to their program. (This number will be equal to or less than the number requested in step 2. Usually, the number of TA positions available is close to the number of graduate students for whom positions were requested.)
4. Each program is responsible for filling ALL of their allocated slots – so do not request more slots in step 2 than your program can fill.
5. The Graduate Coordinators submit the names of their TAs to Greg, who puts them in the TA Matching System (TAMS).
6. BIO will notify TAs in the pool to make their TA selections.
7. TAs rank order the available courses, taught by specific professors at specific times, that they would like to teach (#1 - #5).
8. BIO will notify faculty to make their TA selections. Faculty are able to see which TAs chose their class and their ranking number for that class. Faculty will rank potential TAs for their courses (#1-#5; if they have more than 1 TA for their course then, they can put 2 #1's, 2 #2's and so on for the total number of TAs in their courses).
9. BIO closes the system by a specified date to complete the matching process based on TA and Faculty rankings.
10. The TAMS coordinator (currently, Greg Browning) will review the matches with the Associate Chairs of each Department and the BIO Director to obtain final approval for the TA assignments.

11. Once TAs are assigned, each TA and Faculty member will be notified of his or her TA assignment.
12. TAs must sign and return their assignment letter by the due date. This assignment is *not* optional; neither the TA nor their faculty supervisor is allowed to pull them out of the TA pool.
13. BIO will process all TA appointments.

• Faculty and Student Commitment Policy

When a faculty member requests a particular number of TA positions for their graduate students for a given semester, that faculty member is committing himself or herself to providing that number of similarly qualified students as TAs.

When a faculty member asks for a TA slot on the students' behalf, that student is committed to accepting the TA position assigned to them for that semester. Students may consult in advance with potential Course Instructors to determine whether they would be appropriate TAs and together both potential TA and Course Instructor can pre-arrange to rank each other as number 1 on their lists.

If a student or faculty supervisor wants out of this commitment to a TA position, the responsibility for finding an appropriate replacement TA resides with that particular faculty member and student. The desire to opt out should be communicated immediately to their graduate coordinator and Greg Browning in BIO. Greg will work with the Associate Chairs and Graduate Coordinators to help find a suitable replacement student.

• Consequences if an Appropriate Replacement TA Cannot be Found:

If a student and faculty member fail to honor their commitment to a TA position and no suitable replacement is found, the consequences will be:

1. The faculty member will lose the TA for their course that semester in order to provide a TA for the course from which their student opted out.
2. If the faculty member has no TA that semester, one of their departmental colleagues will lose their TA for their course.
3. The student will lose their eligibility for a TA assignment in the future.
4. Repeat offenses could mean that future students in that faculty member's laboratory will no longer be allowed to enter the TA pool. The graduate coordinator and program director or GSC chair will be notified, and future graduate students will be warned of this situation.

Approved by: Karen Browning (Assoc. Chair, MBS), Janice Fischer (Director, BIO), Kristen Harris (Assoc. Chair, NS), Claus Wilke (Assoc. Chair, IB).