

Last updated July 2025

Teaching Compact

Teaching introductory lectures is the primary source of funding in the PhD program and an important part of PhD students' training. In GWS we very much value teaching and pride ourselves on excelling at it. We also strive to mentor students to become excellent teachers with strong teaching portfolios and to support instructors in their roles as mentors and leaders of teaching teams. To this end, the department has devised the following teaching guidelines:

Instructors are expected to -

- Share weekly learning objectives
- Assign volumes and levels of readings appropriate for undergraduates
- “Walk” teaching assistants (TAs) through a typical discussion section
- “Walk” TAs through key components of the CANVAS course page
- Provide TAs with lesson planning resources
- Share expectations and guidelines about grading, extensions, artificial intelligence, and other assessment-related matters
- Clarify how power/authority is split between lecturer and TAs and among TAs (i.e. who is in charge of what)
- Specify what course materials TAs can/cannot modify (syllabi, CANVAS course page, learning outcomes, quizzes, handouts, course policies, etc.)
- Provide TAs with a detailed breakdown (grading, office hours, attending lectures, etc.) of how they should expect to allocate their 20-hour work week
- Observe TAs in a discussion section no later than week 7 of the semester
- Provide TAs with written feedback on their teaching by the end of the semester
- Provide written guidelines and procedures for addressing conflicts/complaints about lecturer, TAs, and/or enrolled students
- Share rules on [mandated reporting at UW](#)

Teaching Assistants are expected to -

- Attend all lectures in person (or watch lectures in select cases when doing so is part of a University approved accommodation)
- Teach assigned discussion sections in person
- Teach assigned discussion sections using a prepared lesson plan
- Prepare and utilize lesson plans that explicitly engage with and “unpack” the content of the instructor’s lectures as well as the assigned readings, films, and other materials
- Attend weekly teaching team meetings during contracted work periods (including the week before teaching starts)
- Hold weekly office hours
- Be familiar with and prepared to work in CANVAS
- Grade in a timely manner (typically 1-2 week maximum “turn around”) using the rubric or guidance provided by the lead instructor

- Respond to student, supervisor, and fellow TA emails in a timely manner (typically within 48 working hours)
- Be familiar with university sick leave policies
- Communicate all sick leave to supervisor and department administration
- Work 20 hours per week (on average)
- Ask questions and seek help from the lead instructor and/or fellow TAs when confused or unclear
- Be prepared to teach students with diverse learning styles and from diverse academic, socio-economic, and geographic backgrounds
- Empathetically engage with students and maintain appropriate, professional student-teacher boundaries