

Information for Teaching Fellows¹
Boston University Department of Mathematics and Statistics

As a teaching fellow (TF), your main role is to assist in the teaching of courses. This is a great opportunity for you to gain teaching experience, but is also an important role that must be taken seriously, as both students and lecturers will be relying on you to carry out your duties in a responsible and professional manner. Your role as TF includes 20 hours each week of work. Your primary weekly responsibilities, along with their corresponding anticipated time commitments, are:

Responsibility	Time commitment per week
Attend lectures:	3 hours
Run discussion sections:	≤ 5 hours
Hold office hours:	2 hours
Tutoring Room:	1 hour
Preparation, grading, etc:	≤ 9 hours

In addition, you are required to assist in the proctoring and grading of any midterms and final exam associated with your course. This requires that you be on campus and available during the final exam period². Note also that some courses have midterms that take place outside of the usual weekly lecture hours, in which case you must be available during those times to help proctor.

Responsibility	Time commitment
Assist in proctoring midterms	as needed
Assist in grading midterms	as needed
Assist in proctoring final exam	as needed
Assist in grading final exam	as needed

The lecturer for your course will give you more specific details about what is expected of you during discussion sections, as well as regarding other duties such as preparation, grading, proctoring, etc. If at any point you feel like you are spending more than the above amount of time on your duties, you might consider looking for ways to manage your time more efficiently. If you feel like the duties expected of you by the lecturer you are working with are unreasonable, please reach out to the Director of Undergraduate Mathematics Instruction (DUMI) to discuss this. You can determine who the current DUMI is by looking at the Faculty Administrative Positions under People on the departmental webpage; the DUMI is likely the person who gave you your TF assignment. On the other hand, if at any point you are spending less than the above amount of time, you might want to think about whether you should be making more of an effort. Some things to keep in mind:

- **Be respectful. But know that you also deserve respect.** Please be respectful of students and their time. This includes answering emails in a timely manner, being sensitive to students'

¹Created August 27, 2019; Revised August 26, 2022. This document also applies to those whose official job title is "Teaching Assistant".

²There are some classes that do not have final exams. However, availability to assist in the proctoring and grading of final exams is assumed unless explicitly excused by the lecturer.

educational needs, and occasionally setting up time to meet with a struggling student if they are unable to attend your office hours. On the other hand, students should also be respectful of you and your time. You need not be “on call” to answer emails or meet with students at all hours. If, for example, any individual student is making a large number of requests to meet with you, consider letting your lecturer know, to see if there is another way to get help for that student.

- **All of the above duties are mandatory.** We frequently get complaints from students saying their TF did not know what was going on in lecture, which then negatively affects the ability of the TF to help the student; this is why it is important that you attend lecture³.
- **If you must miss a discussion section, office hour, or tutoring room hour:** ideally please find someone to cover for you. (And please be helpful in covering for other TFs.) If this is not possible, please call (617-353-2560) or email (mathdept@math.bu.edu) the front office so that someone can put a sign on the appropriate door letting students know about your absence. If there are extenuating circumstances that will require you to be absent on several occasions, please let your lecturer or the DUMI know as soon as possible.
- **Be mindful of the language you are speaking in.** In general group settings such as in the classroom or tutoring room, please work with students in English so that everyone has an opportunity to follow the conversation and participate. It is particularly important that you only use English when speaking with students while proctoring quizzes, midterms, exams, etc. If you are having a one-on-one conversation with a student that is not within the context of proctoring and you both share a language other than English, it can sometimes be helpful to use that language to communicate, particularly if the student is having a hard time understanding the concept in English. However, please be mindful of encouraging students to become comfortable communicating about mathematics in English, and of the fact that there may be other students around (eg in the tutoring room) who may feel excluded or unable to join your conversation if you are not speaking in English.
- **Be visible in the tutoring room.** Make it clear to the students that you are the tutor; some people even put a sign in front of them saying “Tutor.” You should also make an effort to look available. If the tutor looks too busy doing their own work (eyes down, never looking up at the room, etc) students often don’t feel comfortable asking for help.
- **Keep your office door open.** When students are in your office, keep the office door open, even if a student requests that it be closed. This is to ensure accountability and to help everyone feel comfortable with the interaction. Also, do not hold office hours at odd hours or off campus.
- **Get help if needed.** If you encounter any difficult students, difficult situations, or any scenario in which you are unsure what to do, please get help. The best people to contact are your lecturer, the DUMI, or any faculty member with whom you feel comfortable discussing the situation.
- More information can be found on this webpage from the BU Center for Teaching and Learning:

[http://www.bu.edu/ctl/teaching-resources/preparing-to-be-a-teaching-fellow/
responsibilities-of-graduate-teaching-fellows/](http://www.bu.edu/ctl/teaching-resources/preparing-to-be-a-teaching-fellow/responsibilities-of-graduate-teaching-fellows/)

³The lecturer may have other/additional methods for keeping the TF informed and up to date with lecture. However, attendance at lecture is assumed unless explicitly excused by the lecturer, and it is absolutely required to assist in proctoring exams and other similar situations.