Spring 2020

CS Dept

TA/CA Training
The ABCs of assisting our courses

- Academics
- Being Professional
- Coordinating with others
Academics

- FERPA
- Ethics
- Grading
- Helping students
- Platforms
Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act

- student grades and schedules are only the student's business!
- we must protect the confidentiality and privacy of all that transpires with our students, including grades, special accommodations, etc.
- do not use names, SSNs, Hopkins ID numbers or anything personally identifiable in any public grade postings (just avoid public postings)
- do not let students pick up or see the grades of other students (when returning papers for example)
Ethics

- know the CS integrity code
- know the JHU ethics policies
- be vigilant and inform your professor immediately if anything seems amiss
  - when grading
  - when proctoring
  - during office hours
- do not discuss the contents of any tests with anyone before or after grading!
Grading - Heads

- Create rubrics
  - Important for consistency, even if only one grader
  - Test them out on some sample submissions, edit rubrics or add clarifications
- Set realistic grading deadlines
  - CAs usually need the weekends to get things done
  - Minimal goal should be to return grading to students before the next assignment is due
  - Turn-around time should be about a week per assignment, too much longer and the feedback usefulness degrades quickly (and students get pissed)
  - Follow-up with team to make sure it’s getting done
- Review grading (spot check) for consistency
Individual feedback is super important!
  ▪ Be specific about point deductions: what was wrong and improvements that should or could be made
  ▪ Add qualitative feedback to help the students improve their understanding and skills

Use rubrics
  ▪ important for consistency, even if only one grader
  ▪ ask if in doubt about deductions, especially for large courses to maintain consistency

Step back – is the overall score reasonable for the general quality of work?

Meet deadlines! Or let your team leader know in advance if you can’t; ask for help, give help
ABET Needs (for Heads)

- Assessment Grade Breakdown
  - ask your professor in advance what will be needed!
  - may need to keep sub-grades for homework parts, questions or pages on tests, etc.
  - Gradescope can be really helpful for this...
Class-wide Impact

- share class statistics for each graded item with all students
- notify students in trouble
  - invite to office hours
  - ask prof to do a starfish report
- share common mistakes and misconceptions with all students (& prof!)
- make sure that all regrade requests are handled consistently
- grading errors must be fixed for all students, not just one (check with prof)
Helping Students

- ask them to explain how they understand the concept to you, then adjust misconceptions
- listen carefully to questions and give targeted answers
- draw pictures, use whiteboards or paper, be descriptive in explaining concepts
- ask pointed questions to draw students towards figuring things out for themselves
What not to do

- solve the problem for them
- pretend to know something you don't
- tell students to "look it up" on the web unless that is a particular expectation for the course
- spend all your time with one student when others are waiting for help
  - consider having students explain things to each other if a group is working on the same problem
Platforms

- Blackboard
  - convenient evil for collecting homework, giving feedback and grades
  - your professor must add you to the course site and activate it
- Piazza
  - great discussion forum, can post materials too
  - recommend that you force students to only ask questions there, not by email
  - can use private posts for all course staff communications
More tools

- Gradescope
  - good for consistent grading of written assignments and exams
  - features for auto-grading programs
  - provides statistics on parts of assignments/tests
  - new code similarity and other features

- Slack can be good for team communication, but keep Heads and Profs in the loop

- Moss (Measure of Software Similarity)
  - code plagiarism detection
  - https://theory.stanford.edu/~aiken/moss/
Academics Questions?

- What did I miss?
Be... Professional

- Responsiveness
- Preparedness
- Attitudes
- Biases
- Relationships
- Grooming
Responsiveness & Preparation

- Reply to prof/head TA questions in a timely manner, particularly if it affects scheduling and only requires a quick answer.
- Reply to student questions as thoroughly as possible (see Piazza in Platforms).
- Read assignments, review material, etc. before your office hours or review sessions.
- Your prof will let you know if you need to attend class sessions.
- Submit timesheets weekly (see Payroll).
Attitude

- With students: be approachable, positive, encouraging, patient and respectful
- With team: be respectful & collaborative
- There are no "dumb questions"
- Avoid sarcasm, snideness, sharing stress, eye rolling, etc.
- Avoid being too casual: no slang, cursing, texting language – use proper English

- Every day is a good day for a good day!
Conscious or subconscious - we all have them!
- stereotypes
- prior experiences

Combating biases
- when a student asks for help, ask yourself if you are making any assumptions about the student based on looks, name, other characteristics
- avoid knowing student names when grading
Sexual harassment and any kind of discrimination are taken very seriously

- avoid any behaviors that might make others uncomfortable
- report any trouble that you witness to the Office of Institutional Equity and/or the Dean of Student Life

Avoid dating: professors, students in your class

Friendships might be construed as favoritism; maintain professionalism and objectivity

Let your prof know if you are close to anyone in the course (dating, siblings, etc); you must not grade them yourself!
Grooming

- What's your user interface?
- Shower regularly (daily)
- Wear deodorant
- Do a smelfie & clean up if necessary, particularly before interacting with students
- Avoid bad breath with mints or gum
- Avoid wearing clothes that are too revealing or too casual during office hours/labs
What did I miss?
Coordinating with others

- Payroll
- Office Hours
- Review Sessions
- Exam Period
- Staff Help
Payroll Paperwork

- I-9 form in student employment!
  - you absolutely may not work until this is done
- Personal Data Sheet
  - if new to CS dept payroll, or updates
- CA Contract
  - everyone must do this!

- Email to CS-CAhelp@jh.edu
All hourly employees must submit their actual hours worked on a weekly basis

Google form

Dates must be **sequential from Monday to Sunday** on each form

Submit hours every Monday for the prior week!!

- Will get a reminder email
Getting paid

- Faculty need to approve hours after submitted.
- Hours need to be manually entered into payroll from the form submissions, so expect a week or two turn-around before you see the money.
- (All) Pick-up paychecks in student employment twice a month (15th & 30/31st).
Office Hours

- Where – depends on course
  - Malone 216 for Heads for many courses (uppers, theory)
  - Ugrad lab (Malone 122) for core courses (220, 226, 229)
  - Kreiger 160 (HacLab) for Gateway

- When
  - evenings and weekends usually best for students
  - make and keep a regular schedule, keep due dates in mind when picking days of the week
  - get substitutes instead of making changes; when absolutely necessary: notify students of any changes well in advance so they can plan ahead
Review Sessions

- **Logistics**
  - Heads usually do these
  - Good to do before exams minimally
  - Some courses might hold them weekly
  - Poll students if possible for good times
  - Do two per exam at different times for large courses
  - Will need to request a room - ask front desk staff (Rachel/students) in Malone 160 for help

- **Preparation**
  - Solicit questions or topics from students in advance
  - Prepare material in advance, such as solutions to practice questions or homework
  - Distribute materials afterwards to students if the prof allows
Exam Period

- Expect to work!
- Ask your professor about
  - proctoring the exam
  - grading the exam
- Make sure you know dates in advance (check the registrar’s schedule) and plan your travel accordingly
Staff in Malone 160 can help with
- room reservations
- making copies
- scanning tests
- general supplies
Coordinating Questions?

- What did I miss?
Wrap-up

• More training & tips
  • Center for Educational Resources (http://www.cer.jhu.edu/)
  • CSTeachingTips.org

• Other questions, tips, tricks?

THANK YOU!!!
We could not do our jobs without you.