

Spring 2020

CS Dept TA/CA Training

The ABCs of assisting our courses

- **A**cademics
- **B**eing Professional
- **C**oordinating with others

Academics

- FERPA
- Ethics
- Grading
- Helping students
- Platforms

FERPA

- 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

Grading - CAs

- 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!

Biases

- 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

Relationships

- **Sexual harrassment 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

Being Professional Questions?

- 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

Timesheet Submission (CAs)

- 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 Help

- 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.