Best Practices for TA/Readers
School of International and Public Affairs

1. *Statement of Integrity and Professionalism for all TA/Readers*

   TAs and Readers are expected to uphold the highest standards of integrity and professionalism. SIPA has adopted the following statement to be signed by all students accepting an assistantship and shared with all faculty supervisors:

   > By accepting this assistantship, I agree that I will uphold the highest standards of integrity and professionalism, including but not limited to the following: I will treat any information about performance by individual students as confidential and not to be shared with anyone other than the professor and other members of the teaching team. I will exercise the utmost fairness in any grading conducted for the class. I will promptly inform the professor if there could be any possible "conflict of interest" or appearance of conflict of interest with a student; this could include, but is not limited to, roommates, capstone partners, friends, family or romantic partner (or former partner), as well as individuals with whom I might have had a serious argument or dispute. (*TA/Readers do not have to tell the professor about the nature of the potential conflict of interest.*)

2. *Professors' Initial Meeting with TA/Readers*

   It is recommended that professors meet with their TA/Readers in advance of classes to cover the following matters and anything else necessary to prepare for the course.

   a. *Responsibilities, roles and expectations*

      Professors should review the statement of integrity (above) with their TA/Readers, and professors should clearly define roles and responsibilities of TA/Readers, as well as their own role in the course.

   b. *Confidentiality*

      TA/Readers should be advised not to engage in gossip or rumors about students or faculty. If TA/Readers receive material from students during the semester (e.g., problem sets, exams, papers, any other material with student's information), the TA/Reader should return all documents no later than the end of the semester to the appropriate student or professor (according to guidelines established by the professor). If TA/Readers use semi-public university computers (e.g., labs, libraries, etc.) to process scores, grades or any students' material, the TA/Reader should delete any relevant files at the end of the session (including emptying the "recycle bin"). TA/Readers must use their CU email account for any email exchanges with students.

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c. *Grading*

The professor should remind the TA/Reader that the final responsibility for all grading rests with the professor. SIPA TA/Readers should in no instance grade major essays or papers (PhD TAs may grade longer papers). If the professor provides clear guidance about expected answers, TA/Readers may grade problem sets, exercises or short-answer exams or short memos. Short memos should be no more than three pages in length (preferably two pages) and worth no more than 20% of course grade.

Instructions for grading may be developed with the assistance of the TA/Readers but are the final responsibility of the professor. These instructions should include specific point allocation for each element of a correct answer (or deductions for incorrect answers). Some professors distribute grading rubrics for specific exercises to students, either in advance of the exercise or when it is returned. It is recommended that the TA/Reader and the instructor separately grade a sample memo or answer, and then discuss the expectations for that item and their respective grading of it. If the TA/Reader has any doubts about the answer key or grading rubric, point allocation or any other aspects of grading, he or shoe should contact the professor.

It is recommended that the professor consider instructing students to put their name or UNI on the back side of a separate page at the end of the exam or memo, so it is not visible to the grader until they finish grading and looks for it.

One useful strategy to reduce any appearance or possibility of bias is to have students' exams graded by two TA/Readers. This will only be feasible if a class has more than one TA/Reader, and instructors will have to exercise judgment about whether this is the best way to use the time of the TA/Readers, but it is a possibility to consider.

The professor should discuss the process for responding to students' concerns about grades. Best practice is to maintain an explicit policy that allows students to appeal to the professor for a re-grade if they have concerns about the grading by the TA/Reader.

d. *Academic Integrity*

The professor should remind TA/Readers that, in the event of suspected academic dishonesty, the TA/Reader must immediately inform the professor. The professor will determine how to proceed, and the TA/Reader should not contact the student involved in such matters, unless requested to do so by the professor.

3. *Information for Students about Grading*

The professor should make clear to students in the syllabus and/or at the initial class session:
- the specific responsibilities of TA/Readers;
- that the final responsibility for all grading rests with the professor;
- how grades are determined and the process to appeal grading by TA/Reader.

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