



# CS Dept TA/CA Training – Part I

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# The ABCs of assisting in our courses

- **Academics (Part I)**
- **Being Professional (Part II)**
- **Coordinating with others (Part II)**

# 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.
  - only post grades in ways that students can access by having to authenticate through an account
  - 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
  - [for undergrads](#), [for grad students](#)
- 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 with 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 – do...

- 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 I

- Blackboard
  - convenient evil for collecting homework, giving feedback and grades
  - your professor must add you to the course site and activate it
  - online testing features
- Gradescope
  - consistent grading of written assignments and exams
  - features for auto-grading programs
  - provides statistics on parts of assignments/tests
  - code similarity and other features
  - “online assignment” for remote testing

# Platforms II

- Piazza
  - good 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
- 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/>

# Remote meeting platforms

- Zoom
  - Host office hours with your own [bluejay accounts](#)
  - Individual help options
    - waiting room
    - breakout rooms
    - screen sharing (students)
    - whiteboard (in screen sharing)
- Microsoft Teams
- Discord

# More resources

- JHU's [Center for Educational Resources](#)
  - Much more info on tools & platforms
  - Lots of training videos
- [CSTeachingTips.org](#)
  - Curated by CS educators, funded by NSF
- [SIGCSE](#) – ACM special interest group on CS education



# CS Dept TA/CA Training – Part II

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# The ABCs of assisting in our courses

- **Academics (Part I)**
- **Being Professional (Part II)**
- **Coordinating with others (Part II)**

# Being Professional

- Responsiveness
- Attitudes
- Bias
- Relationships
- Personal Interactions

# 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

# 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

# Diversity & Inclusion

- Explore [implicit associations](#) you might not realize you have through a variety of tests developed at Harvard
- Take JHU's [SafeZone training](#)
- Use the CS department's [feedback form](#) to share experiences and make suggestions

# 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!

# Personal Interactions

- What's your user interface?
- Grooming: shower regularly (daily), wear deodorant, avoid bad breath
- Avoid wearing clothes that are too revealing or too casual during office hours/labs
- Zoom options
  - virtual backgrounds
  - profile picture



# Coordinating with others

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

# Office Hours

- When (Head TA coordinates staff schedule)
  - 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
- Where – depends on course and mode
  - Zoom/MS teams/Discord if remote
  - Malone 216 for Heads for many courses (uppers, theory)
  - Ugrad lab (Malone 122) for core courses (220, 226, 229)
  - Kreiger 160 (HacLab) for Gateway

# 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
  - Request room/instructional studio
- 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 accordingly

# 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](mailto:CS-CAhelp@jh.edu)

# Timesheet Submission (CAs)

- All hourly employees must submit their actual hours worked on a weekly basis
- Dates must be **sequential from Monday to Sunday** on each form
- Specify the tasks
- Submit every Monday for the prior week
- Reminder email with link to the online timesheet form sent every week

# Getting paid

- Faculty need to approve hours after submitted
- Hours need to be manually entered into payroll from timesheet submissions, so expect a week or two turn-around before you see the money
- Sign-up for direct deposit through ESS on [my.jhu.edu](https://my.jhu.edu)

# Staff Help

- Staff in Malone 160 can help with
  - room reservations
  - making copies
  - scanning tests
  - general supplies
- [Ask Joanne](#) about reserving instructional studio space for review sessions



# Wrap-up

- More training & tips
  - Center for Educational Resources (<https://cer.jhu.edu>)
  - CSTeachingTips.org

THANK YOU!!!

We could not do our jobs without you.