

Guidelines for Faculty Who Supervise Doctoral Students in RAs and TAs

This document describes the expectations for SMLR faculty members who mentor and supervise IRHR doctoral students serving as the faculty member's teaching assistant (TA) or research assistant (RA). The statement serves to inform faculty of their obligations to the student and the school when they accept this role, and to inform the student of the expectations on the part of their advisor.

It is recognized that there is no formal feedback mechanism for the faculty member's performance on these guidelines. However, faculty should be aware that abuse of these recommendations may result in the denial of future Ph.D. student support.

In accordance with the Collective Agreement between Rutgers and the AAUP (the "Agreement"), the term of the work year for an RA or TA is from August 25 to Commencement. According to the Agreement, students are to work a maximum of 15 clock hours per week as an RA or TA. Separate and different arrangements may be made for the summer academic period. Please refer to the Agreement for further information. Students and faculty should also refer to the Expectations for IRHR Students Receiving Funding, which is a complement to this document.

Establishment of Performance Criteria

Faculty members who supervise RAs or TAs must complete an Evaluation of RA/TA Performance at the end of each semester. It is important for the student to understand the criteria upon which s/he is being evaluated. Advisors should establish performance criteria prior to the beginning of each semester and make clear to the student the expectations for satisfactory performance. Criteria would include items such as expected outputs, specific assignments, due dates, hours to be worked, etc.

Performance criteria may vary depending on the assignment and on the year/experience of the student. For example, performance requirements may be more easily defined for TAs than for RAs; or, the level of analysis or review should be greater for a fourth-year student than a first-semester student. In addition, the criteria may change during the semester, as unexpected events or opportunities occur to the faculty member. Any such changes should be communicated to the RA or TA. Students are encouraged to question the advisor if the instructions or expectations are not clear.

Performance Review

Establishing two-way communication is the key to a good student-advisor relationship. The faculty member should have periodic meetings with the student to review their progress on the performance criteria. This is especially critical if the advisor believes the student is not meeting expectations. Faculty must have a performance review with their RA or TA at least once a semester, and are strongly encouraged to also have a midsemester review.

Mentoring

A faculty member who is assigned a student has a larger role than just that of supervising the student's work; he or she should also serve as a mentor to the student. The overall learning experience of the student should be enhanced by a graduate or teaching assistantship. As a mentor, an advisor should:

provide the student with exposure and visibility. This is usually accomplished through presentations (in-house and conferences) and publications. Advisors should make students aware of these opportunities, encourage their involvement, offer authorship on joint papers where appropriate, and introduce them to research opportunities. Faculty members assigned to first-year students should also assist these students with identifying a topic for their master's thesis, since students must select a topic by the end of their first year of study.

coach the student. Advisors should provide practical tips on conducting research, writing papers, studying for qualifying exams, etc.

offer work assignments that result in an improvement in the skills necessary to succeed in the academic profession.

act as a role model. The advisor should provide a pattern of values and behavior that the student will emulate.

provide support and encouragement to the student.

provide assistance to students experiencing personal and/or school-related problems. Depending on the relationship between the parties, this may take the form of acting as a counselor or referring the student to appropriate assistance programs within the school.

Performance Evaluation Form (for IRHR Doctoral Students Serving as RA/TAs)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please complete and return this form by the end of Finals week for this semester.

A condition of continued funding for doctoral students is satisfactory performance in their assignments as research and/or teaching assistants. Thus, faculty evaluation of student performance is essential.

Please take a few minutes to describe the student's work in the position of RA or TA during the past semester. Then set aside time to discuss this evaluation with the student prior to returning your evaluation to me.

FOR Research Assistants

1. Briefly describe the research project(s) s/he worked on as part of the assistantship (1-2 sentences):

2. Briefly describe the specific contribution to this project that you expected from the student (1-2 sentences):

3. Please evaluate his/her performance as an RA:

Exceeded Expectations

Met Expectations

Unsatisfactory (Briefly state the major reasons for this evaluation)

FOR Teaching Assistants

1. Briefly describe the responsibilities s/he had as your teaching assistant (1-2 sentences):

2. Please evaluate his/her performance as a TA:

Exceeded Expectations

Met Expectations

Unsatisfactory (Briefly state the major reasons for this evaluation)

Note: For TAs who worked as instructors with full responsibility for a course, the University student evaluations will also be reviewed