



mentor TA

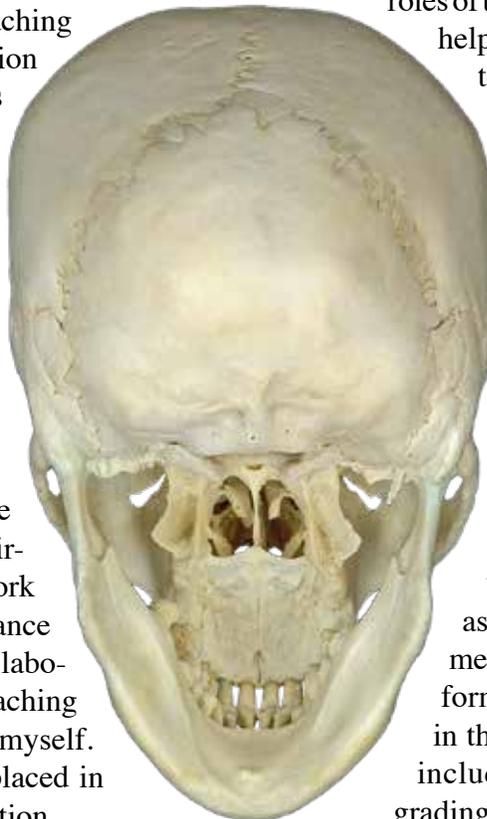
Purpose

The mentor teaching assistant program provides an opportunity for undergraduate students to further their anatomy education at the University of Utah while receiving a teaching stipend. The term of the position is for an academic year. This may be terminated short of this period and can be renewed for additional year periods.

This is a job, albeit a great job, but nonetheless a job that carries much responsibility. It affords undergraduates an exceptional opportunity to become outstanding anatomists, accomplished teachers, responsible leaders and trainers, while requiring them to fulfill necessary work assignments for the maintenance and upkeep of a busy anatomy laboratory. I consider the mentor teaching assistant to be an extension of myself. Great confidence and trust is placed in the individuals the fill this position.

This chapter outlines the commitments and responsibilities of the mentor teaching assistant. It is the mentor's **job** to fulfill these responsibilities. The mentor teaching assistant should also

review and be familiar with the responsibilities of the apprentice teaching assistant, as you will be their trainer and will need to help them understand their responsibilities. One of the most important roles of the mentor teaching assistant is to help train and prepare the apprentice teaching assistants as they strive to become competent teachers in the laboratory.



Time Commitment

Accompanying this paid position is a series of required responsibilities throughout the semester. Each week the mentor teaching assistant teaches three labs, one of which they are responsible for its administration; trains apprentice teaching assistants; attends a weekly staff meeting and colloquium; and performs weekly maintenance work in the lab. Additional commitments include: proctoring examinations, grading examinations, attending review labs, and participating in the end of the semester lab clean-up. The table at the top of the next page is an approximate summary of the time involved each week.

Description	Hours per Week
Lab - teaching, setting up, cleaning up, etc.	7
Staff meeting - Friday 3:30 to 5:30 PM	2
Anatomy colloquium - Friday 2:15 to 3:15 PM	1
Training - meet with apprentice TA	3 to 4
Personal preparation/administration	2 to 3
Grading, proctoring exams, etc.	1
Work assignments	1
Total	17 to 19

The bottom line — running a quality program requires significant time and effort. To a large degree the quality of the anatomy laboratory is a reflection of the mentor teaching assistants’ time and effort.

Lab Session Responsibilities

Each mentor teaching assistant is assigned to teach in three lab sections, one of which they are responsible to administer. Mentors must attend these lab sections weekly throughout the semester prepared to teach the designated anatomy. It is the mentor’s responsibility to be prepared to teach the anatomy the students are required to learn.

Each mentor teaching assistant is in charge of administering one of the lab sections. This requires the mentor to introduce the lab each week, prepare a weekly quiz, grade the quizzes, maintain the grades on the computer, work with the apprentice teaching assistants assigned to that lab, proctor that lab’s practical exam, and be generally responsible for the flow of the lab.

Mentors assigned to 12:55 labs must arrive one hour early to prepare the lab for the day. This hour of preparation includes getting out body parts, organizing the lab, placing quiz paper on each desk, etc.

Mentors assigned to 2:50 and 4:45 labs must arrive 10 minutes early. At this time they should help get quiz paper out for the next lab, spray and cover the body parts, and help organize the lab for the next session. At the end of lab they should repeat these steps in preparation for the next lab.

Mentors in the 6:40 labs must participate in cleaning up the lab after the students leave. This involves putting away the cadavers, cleaning the demonstration trays, and cleaning the laboratory (sinks, desktops, etc.) for the next lab or next day. This will take approximately a half-hour to forty-five minutes.

Mentor teaching assistants must fully attend to each lab assignment as outlined above. It is not just the responsibility of the mentor teaching assistant in charge of the lab and the apprentice teaching assistants to fulfill these responsibilities.

It is the mentor teaching assistant's job, for which money is being paid, to fulfill assigned lab sessions. If, for some reason, a session must be missed it is the mentor's responsibility to find a replacement for that session and pay the replacement \$15.

Preparation

Preparation for labs is just as important for the mentor teaching assistant as it is the apprentice. One of the easiest habits for mentor teaching assistants to fall into is thinking they are prepared because they have done it before. When this becomes the modus operandi, you cheat yourself and those you teach because you are not allowing yourself to be as good as you possibly could have been with the proper preparation. It is true that the amount of preparation diminishes with experience, but never overlook the power of self evaluation in preparing anew each time you come to lab.

It is also easy to become lulled into complacency as one becomes more competent with their job. There is no room for this attitude in the teaching arena. Remember, even though you know a lot of anatomy, you have only scratched the surface. Great teachers never quit being students. Try the following challenge: learn something new about anatomy each day. It will not take that much time and it will enhance your teaching abilities, especially if you think critically about the new things you learn.

Weekly Staff Meetings

This is an opportunity for all staff members to prepare to be better anatomists and teachers of anatomy. The primary objective of the meeting is to introduce, review, and prepare for the upcoming week of labs. The meetings are often review for mentor teaching assistants, but a new experience for the apprentices. Because of this, the mentor teaching assistant has a very important role in the meeting. That is — the role of a mentor.

One of life's greatest teachers is experience. Mentor teaching assistants all have experience in teaching the labs. If this experience can be shared with the new teaching assistants then the slope of their learning curve can be reduced, producing a more effective teaching staff. It is the mentor teaching assistants responsibility to attend and actively contribute at the staff meeting. Share your experiences, be a positive role model, and help the apprentice teaching assistants become assimilated into our teaching staff.

Mentor TA Demonstration

During the first staff meeting mentor teaching assistants will have the opportunity to present demonstrations to their colleagues. The objective of this demonstration is to show exemplary teaching skills to the apprentice teaching assistants. For this reason, it is important to be well prepared. A subset of the lab material should be selected that allows the mentor to clearly demonstrate anatomy and the teaching skills to present that anatomy. This should be thought out in advance, not just presented on the spur of the moment. Remember, the example starts with you.

Apprentice TA - Mentor TA Meeting

To facilitate the apprentice learning and preparation process, each apprentice teaching assistant will be assigned a mentor — a member of the regular teaching staff. The apprentice teaching assistant will meet with their mentor at least once a week for 3 to 4 hours (or as long as is necessary to satisfactorily meet the teaching requirements for that week's material and assure that the apprentice teaching assistants are ready to teach the students). The purpose of these sessions is:

- 1) the development of organized, effective, concise demonstrations;
- 2) the discussion of effective teaching techniques;
- 3) the review of demonstration techniques and methods.

The mentor teaching assistant is responsible to see that the apprentice accomplishes these goals and is ready to enter the lab.

There is no one-right-way for this meeting to occur. Individual discretion is left up to the mentor teaching assistant as to the proper approach to meet these goals. Although there is no dyed-in-wool, cut-in-concrete, or carved-in-stone process to follow, there is one guideline that everyone **must** follow, that is, I want the apprentices to teach the mentors the demonstrations at this meeting. Practice, practice, practice is the goal. The only way anyone can become a better teacher, is by teaching. **This meeting should involve apprentices teaching their mentors and the mentors giving them constructive feedback and advice.**

Proctoring and Grading Exams

During the semester apprentice teaching assistants, along with the mentor teaching assistants, will grade and monitor examinations. These are responsibilities that demand concentration and care. Refer to the chapter on grading and proctoring examinations for more information. The time involved in these activities will average out to approximately an hour per week over the entire semester.

Work Assignments

As part of their paid position, all mentor teaching assistants participate in work assignments necessary for the proper upkeep and maintenance of the anatomy laboratory. These work assignments are as important a part of your position as is teaching in the lab. They should be taken seriously and accomplished efficiently and on time. The assignments are made during the first staff meeting of each semester. For more information, see the section on work assignments in this manual.

Colloquium

All teaching assistants, both mentor and apprentice, are required to attend the anatomy colloquium. This occurs every Friday afternoon from 2:15 to 3:15 PM. This is an opportunity to learn more anatomy and its related topics, something I believe to be paramount to good teaching. This is a graded course for which a mentor teaching assistant may register for one hour of credit each semester. Teaching assistants do not have to register for the credit, but if they do not register they still must attend the colloquium.