

**CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE
IN TEACHING &
LEARNING (CETL)**
Web: <http://www.clarku.edu/department/cetl>
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**Ethics, Legal
Rights
and
Responsibilities**

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Take-home messages

- As a Teaching Assistant, you are part of the teaching staff at Clark.
- You have a responsibility to your department and Clark.
- You are responsible for knowing what (not) to do.
- When in doubt:
 - Err on the side of caution;
 - Ask a professional.

The rules (and common sense)

- Academic honesty
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Record keeping
- Avoiding (perception of) harassment
- Fairness
- Students with disabilities
- Dealing with challenging students

Academic Integrity (Clark Academic Integrity Policy)

- Definition, procedures
 - <http://www2.clarku.edu/offices/aac/>
- Responsibilities of faculty
 - Report suspected or proven violations of academic integrity to Associate Dean of the College
 - Make recommendation for sanction, where appropriate

Academic Dishonesty (Clark Academic Integrity Policy)

- Responsibilities of TAs
 - Things you should do
 - Be vigilant.
 - Grade normally.
 - Make copies.
 - Turn in reports/copies to instructor and point out the problem.
 - Things you must not do
 - Confront or threaten the student(s).
 - Discuss the situation with anyone besides the instructor.

Privacy and confidentiality (FERPA / “Buckley Amendment”)

- Grades and other academic information must be kept strictly **confidential**.
- Things you must not do:
 - Post lists of grades by name or ID#.
 - Allow students to see other students' graded papers or grade records.
 - Discuss a student's academic progress with anyone except the student or other course staff.

Record keeping

- Grade records are arguably the most important records that Clark maintains!
- TA responsibilities
 - Double check *every* grade calculation and entry
 - Keep copies of graded papers for at least a year
 - Back up your grade file frequently, on a disk or separate computer, or Dropbox

Harassment (Clark policy, federal and state law)

- Definition—
 - sexual advances
 - creation of a hostile environment
- Your responsibility: treat students in a friendly but *professional* manner
- Things you must *not* do:
 - Touch a student inappropriately
 - Date a student
 - Use offensive language
 - Display offensive material

Fairness and favoritism (ethics, state and federal law)

- Equality is the law—gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation
- You may not like every student equally, but you owe them all a fair share of your time and attention
- You must treat everyone equally
- You must not pre-judge or display bias
- Avoid *perception* of favoritism—e.g. gifts, nicknames, out of class socializing

Students with disabilities (federal law, institutional policy)

- Definition/examples
- **Student responsibility:** Get documentation from Disability Services Coordinator
- **Faculty responsibility:** Provide accommodations as requested by DSC
- **TA responsibility:** Administer accommodations as requested by DSC and faculty (extended time, quiet testing, assistive technology); maintain confidentiality

Dealing with challenging students

- Don't take the behavior personally.
- Maintain an even temper; show tolerance.
- Do not tolerate disrespect to yourself or others.
- Never hold a grudge when grading student work.
- Enforce safety rules, without threats or physical contact.
- Let course instructor make most determinations.
- If there is an immediate threat to safety or property, call University Police.

Case Studies

- For each, discuss
 - What are the issues?
 - How can this situation be best handled?
 - What should the TA do?



Case Study 1.1

- You think one of the students in your class is attractive. She comes to see you during late afternoon office hours. After you have helped her with some difficult material, she invites you to dinner as a “thank you”.

Case Study 1.2

- You share an office with another TA in your department. A student who comes to your office hours complains to you that the screen saver (a caricature of a political leader) on the other TA's computer is offensive.

Case Study 2.1

- You lead a weekly discussion section and one student consistently arrives late. At least once during each class, he gets up from his seat at the back of the room and leaves the room and then returns a few minutes later, distracting you each time.

Case Study 2.2

- It is past closing time and a student team refuses to leave the lab. When you ask them again one of the students tells you “I’m paying your salary with my tuition, I’ll stay as long as I want” and continues to ignore you.

Case Study 3.1

(Conversation between two students)

- Sue - “Hi Dan, I talked to the TA about my grades. S/he showed me the grade sheet and I noticed you failed the last exam. I would be happy to help you on the next one.”

Case Study 3.2

(Phone call from parent)

- Parent to TA - “I would like to talk to you about how my daughter is doing in your class.”
- TA to Parent - “What do you want to know?”
- Parent to TA - “Everything, I’m paying the tuition after all!”

Case Study 4.1-2

- Two homework papers are essentially identical, including the same errors.
- Two students sitting next to each other in an exam have nearly identical solutions to one problem. One of the exam sheets looks like it has been erased.

Case Study 5.1-3

- A TA is repeatedly late for discussion sections, and often not prepared.
- A TA leaves campus the day after classes end, and returns the day the next semester starts.
- A TA turns in a set of grades for an assignment that are all either A or A+.

For more help

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL)

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) offers programs and services to enhance the quality of education at Clark University. These programs are designed to serve faculty and PhD students, are created in response to faculty-identified needs, and are guided by the CETL Strategic Objectives. The CETL website also serves as a resource for information related to pedagogy and the learning process.

MENTORING PROGRAM
All teaching and research faculty on multiple-year contracts will be assigned peer mentors and invited to a monthly workshop.

WORKSHOPS
Workshops are offered for faculty and first-year learning workshops in the calendar of events.

FIRST YEAR INTENSIVES
Resources for faculty and advisors teaching first-year students. (resources login)

CONSULTATION
Individual confidential consultations on teaching are offered to faculty and TAs.

For Graduate Students

- Teaching Assistant Evaluation
- Teaching Assistant Workshop Materials
- Tips for Teaching Assistants
- Opportunities and Resources
- CETL Teaching Resources [pdf]
- Funding Opportunities
- Teaching and Course-Related Resources

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