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Help Rooms
The Mathematics Department maintains two Help Rooms, established as places for providing one-on-one and small group sessions to undergraduates who seek assistance in their mathematical course(s). These Help Rooms are staffed by both undergraduate and graduate Teaching Assistants.

Hours of Operation

- **Barnard Help Room – 333 Milbank – Calculus I to III and lower Math**
  
  Mon – Thurs: 10 am to 10 pm
  
  Fri: 10 am to 4 pm

- **Columbia Help Room – 406 Math – Calculus IV and higher Math**
  
  Mon – Thurs: 9 am to 6 pm
  
  Fri: 9 am to 4 pm

Teaching Assistant Duties
Undergraduate Teaching Assistants (TAs) are hired on a part-time, semester by semester basis. Continued employment is contingent upon positive performance, attendance record, and punctuality during the previous semester(s).

Individual duties required from each TA will vary depending on many factors, such as the course level, size, and instructor’s needs. Undergraduate TA positions involve, on average, 5 hours per week of effort.

There are three main duties of Undergraduate TAs in the Mathematics Department:

1. Weekly Office Hours in the help room (2 hours/week, fixed)
2. Grading homework (2 hours/week, on average)
3. Answering emails and communicating with students and instructor (1 hour/week, on average)

Qualifications
Applicants must meet the following criteria to be considered for employment:

1. Must be a **CURRENTLY ENROLLED, FULL TIME UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT** of Columbia College (CC), School of Professional Studies (SPS), General Studies (GS) or the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS). Due to University policy, we regretfully cannot hire students from Barnard, Teacher’s College, or other schools.
2. Successful completion of the class s/he wishes to support with a grade of A (or higher). A recent copy of the student’s **unofficial transcript** must be submitted as verification. An unofficial transcript may be printed from your SSOL account at any time.
3. A printout of your **Academic Profile** from SSOL indicating “full time” enrollment status for the semester of desired employment.
4. The names and contact information of two academic references that are familiar with the applicant’s academic and/or teaching skill.

Hiring Process
Submission of Applications

All applications must be submitted to the Undergraduate Program Administrative Assistant in Room 410 Math. Applications will be accepted any time, but are reviewed in the following manner:

1. A pool of potential TAs will be identified before the beginning of each semester, once grades from the previous term are released. This occurs:
   a. For Fall appointments, in late May
   b. For Spring appointments, in late December
2. Applicants will be informed of the completeness of their submission or, if necessary, advised as to which pieces of documentation are missing.
3. Applicants who meet the minimum criteria and can fulfill a need for the department will be contacted for an interview.
4. Those not selected will be notified that their application has been placed on hold or rejected.

Interviews

Interviews will be conducted by the Undergraduate Program Administrative Assistant. At the interview, a brief overview of the program will be given. Pay rate, scheduling, and expectations regarding time and attendance will be discussed. In addition, the interviewer will look for the applicant’s ability to communicate effectively and clearly.

Hiring Decisions

Applicants will be evaluated for hire based on the following criteria:

- Applicability of prior experience to the position
- Grade in the course(s) for which TA would like to work
  - Must have received minimum grade of ‘A’
- Interpersonal skills / ability to communicate effectively
- Scheduling and hours of availability
  - The Department prefers to hire TAs who are able to work a single 2-hour stretch in the Help Room each week, as opposed to small blocks of time throughout the day

After consideration of the above criteria, as well as department and instructor needs, a final decision will be made. Possible outcomes will consist of an offer of employment, holding the application on file, or rejection of the application. Students who are not selected are welcome to apply again for employment in subsequent semesters.

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1 To download and complete an application, please visit: [http://www.math.columbia.edu/programs-math/undergraduate-program/teaching-assistant-resources/](http://www.math.columbia.edu/programs-math/undergraduate-program/teaching-assistant-resources/)
The hiring process can often extend into the first or second week of an academic semester, so please be patient while final decisions are reached by the department.

Continuing Appointments

The Mathematics Department expects to re-hire TAs, provided the individual has received a positive performance evaluation and has consistently demonstrated good attendance and punctuality. This encourages a mix of both experienced and new TAs.

To be re-hired, current TAs must submit an unofficial transcript and enrollment status verification to the Undergraduate Program Administrative Assistant in Room 410 after final grades are released each semester:
- To be rehired for the Fall, submit your transcript/enrollment in late May
- To be rehired for the Spring, submit your transcript/enrollment in late December

Evaluations

The Undergraduate Program Administrative Assistant will prepare a brief evaluation concerning areas such as weekly attendance and work attitude. S/he also gathers feedback and performance evaluations from course instructors and Courseworks for each TA for both recordkeeping and rehiring purposes. TAs who fail to meet the standards outlined in this handbook may not be renewed for future semesters.

Weekly Attendance Sheets

TAs must use the weekly attendance sheet to ensure that the Mathematics Departments Administrators know which TAs are showing up at their scheduled Help Room hours and the number of students served at a specific time.

TAs also need to remember, and should remind students at the start of each session, to write their names, course(s) tutored and signatures on the weekly attendance sheets for each walk-in session.

Example: A student stays for two consecutive hours: the first session at 1:00 pm and the second session at 2:00 pm. The student should write his/her name, course(s) and sign for both hours on the weekly attendance sheet column.

Appointment Details

Undergraduates who are hired by the Department receive an official University appointment as a “Teaching Assistant III”. This is a part-time (5 hours/week), Student Officer level position. You may receive compensation from other departments on campus, provided that your total workload does not exceed 20 hours per week. This will generally be paid to you as “additional compensation”. Please notify the department IMMEDIATELY if you accept another position on campus, or at the time of hiring, if you are already employed with another department.

All new Undergraduate TAs are required to fill out a hiring packet with the Department’s Human Resources Manager in Room 509 Math in order to be placed on the payroll. All paperwork must be completed within the first two weeks of the semester, or you will not be allowed to work for the
department. Exceptions will only be made in unusual circumstances, and are handled on a case-by-case basis.

Currently, undergraduate TAs receive $1,800 per semester in salary. This is paid on a semi-monthly schedule (15th and the last day of each month) over the duration of the appointment (Sept 1 - May 31 for academic year appointments, Sept 1 – Dec 31 for Fall appointments, or Jan 1 – May 31 for Spring appointments). TAs are strongly encouraged to enroll in direct deposit as the preferred method for receiving their paychecks.

If it is determined that a TA cannot meet the demands of the course and/or instructor (for example, the TA does not submit homework grades in a timely manner, does not show up for office hours as expected, does not communicate or behave appropriately, etc.) employment may be terminated at any point during the term.

Expectations
Treat your duties as a TA as you would any opportunity of employment. As an employee of the Mathematics Department and Columbia University, you are expected to uphold the standards, policies, and procedures which come with being a representative of the University.

Refer to the Faculty Handbook (http://www.columbia.edu/cu/vpaa/handbook/) for information on University employment. Students are held to the same standards as faculty officers of instruction and research with regards to University policies and procedures.

- Availability: Students have limited time to work with his/her TA, and therefore have the right to expect each TA to be present, punctual, and fully attentive during help room hours. Undergraduate Students with significant time restrictions should not accept TA offers. TAs must be present on campus by the first day of classes, and must not leave at the end of the semester until all their TA responsibilities are fulfilled (unless they have been given explicit permission by their course instructor).

If you accept a TA position, you are expected to have sufficient time (5 hours per week) during each term of your appointment. If you have additional academic or other activities, ensure that you have enough time to commit to this position. Furthermore, TA availability should match the needs of their course, since roughly half of the duties involve helping students in the Help Rooms.

Students who experience a drastic change in availability during the course of the semester and can no longer meet the position’s time requirement should consult with the Undergraduate Program Administrative Assistant immediately.

- Grading: Grade your assigned work in a timely manner. This ensures that students receive quick feedback on their work. If the amount of grading proves to be too much in any given week, the TA should discuss this with the instructor and formulate an agreed upon plan (slightly longer time to finish grading, grade only a certain subset of problems, etc.).
Help Room Hours: Undergraduate TAs are required to staff the Math Help Rooms 2 hours per week. These help room hours are held in 333 Milbank Hall (Barnard), or Math 406 (Columbia). On or before the first week of classes, TAs should discuss their help room hours with their course instructor. If multiple TAs are assigned to the same class, please coordinate your help room hours with the course instructor and other TAs to avoid overlapping schedules and better accommodate student needs.

Course Planning: Instructors usually contact TAs the week before classes start, or in some instances, during the first week of classes to have an organizational meeting. If you have not heard from your instructor by the first week of classes, please email them and alert the Undergraduate Program Administrative Assistant.

Staff Meetings: Many classes hold occasional staff meetings with instructors and TAs. All TAs (graduate and undergraduate) are expected to be present during these staff meetings, unless excused with the permission of the course instructor. These meetings are important for organizing, planning, and sharing teaching tips and other critical course information.

Textbooks: The Department has a limited number of course textbooks (compared to the number of TAs), and cannot provide textbooks to everyone. TAs of the same course are encouraged to share or borrow textbooks from other TAs, or from the course instructor.

Absence/Tardiness: Students depend on their Teaching Assistants (TAs) to be available according to the posted schedules; absences and tardiness disrupt the learning environment. As a result, attendance is carefully monitored. A consistent pattern of absence, tardiness or negative work ethic may result in non-renewal or termination of employment.

TAs are expected to be present for all their scheduled Help Room hours. If another commitment conflicts with your Help Room hours, you must notify the course instructor and Undergraduate Program Administrative Assistant at least a week in advance, and find another TA to cover for you. In case of illness or other emergency, you should notify the course instructor and Undergraduate Program Administrative Assistant as soon as possible about the unexpected absence.

Communication: TAs are required to check their email regularly and respond to the course instructor, other TAs, department staff, or student inquiries in a timely manner---generally within one or two business days.

Conflicts of Interest: TAs are expected to inform the course instructor of any possible conflicts of interest due to previous or present personal relationships with students in the course, and should never accept money or personal gifts from other students.

TAs should not grade the work of anyone they are closely related to, or with whom they have a close personal relationship. If you are assigned to TA a course with students whom you know well, please notify the instructor immediately. Instructors can set up procedures, such as having
other TAs grade the student’s work, in order to safeguard all parties.

- **Student Records Confidentiality:** TAs have access to personal and academic records in order to perform their duties. Per Department and University policy and Federal law, TAs should actively protect student’s privacy and confidentiality at all times.
Important Contacts

Undergraduate Administrative Assistant

◆ Crispina Pincus
  410 Mathematics
  pincus@math.columbia.edu
  212-854-2432

Human Resources Manager

◆ Abbygale Dove
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  212-854-6366

Director of Undergraduate Studies

◆ Professor Ovidiu Savin
  409 Mathematics
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  212-854-8233

Director of Calculus

◆ Professor Michael Woodbury
  525 Mathematics
  mw2807@columbia.edu
  212-854-2622