



GUIDE TO BEING A TA IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CMMB

USF and CMMB Policies and Procedures

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CMMB, USF

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I. OVERVIEW OF EXPECTATIONS, TA ELIGIBILITY, HOW TAs ARE AWARDED AND MAINTAINING THE TA

Welcome to CMMB and the experience of being a teaching assistant (TA). This is a wonderful opportunity to learn the craft of teaching and management of a classroom. This position is an earned privilege but carries with it high expectations. First and foremost, TAs are paid employees of USF and represent the department of CMMB. We have high standards for our course instructors and a TA carries the same high standards to deliver the highest quality educational experience. This means that TAs should always act in a professional manner, be on time and maintain control of the classroom. It also means understanding the policies and procedures of USF and the department of CMMB that are outlined in this and other documents. TAs are encouraged to use all resources and to bring any questions of teaching or policy to the Graduate and Undergraduate (UG) Directors.

The CMMB Graduate Committee awards the TA on a semester-by-semester basis. All eligible graduate students who would like to be considered for a TA can apply when requested by the CMMB Graduate Committee. Full-time enrollment is required of all teaching and research assistants. A minimum of 9 graduate semester hours is defined as a full-time load (summer excluded). TAs must maintain an overall GPA of at least 3.0 or their TA position will be revoked.

For graduate students newly admitted to the department, TAs are awarded based on grades, GRE scores, and previous TA experience. TA assignments in subsequent semesters are based on the needs of the department, the productivity of the graduate student, course grades, the status of the student in the program (how close to graduation for example) as well as student and lab coordinators reviews of previous TA assignments. MS students are eligible to TA up to 5 semesters while PhD students are eligible to TA up to 10 semesters. Graduate students may request an extension of their eligibility for teaching assistantships by submitting the following information:

- Master's students: Submit a memorandum justifying the extension and a letter of support signed by all members of your committee. One semester can be granted.
- Ph.D. students: Submit a memorandum justifying the extension and a letter of support with signatures of all committee members. Extensions are granted, one semester at a time. An extension of one full year can be granted.

Deadlines for submitting TA extension requests are Feb 1 (Fall Semester) and October 1 (Spring Semester).

An overall average of 3.0 (B) must be attained in all major courses required by the advisory committee. No grade below C will be accepted toward a graduate degree, but all grades will be counted in computing the overall average. Students with TA assignments must maintain a 3.0 GPA or they will lose their support.

II. THE LAB COORDINATOR AND CHAIN OF COMMAND

The *lab coordinator* (LC) is the CMMB faculty member assigned to supervise the course. This may be a tenure-track professor, an instructor or the teaching laboratories manager. It may also be the faculty member teaching the lecture portion of the course. During the semester, the LC will be the immediate supervisor of the prep and lab section TA and will provide evaluation of performance at the end of the semester. For lectures TAs, the CMMB faculty member assigned to the course will be the immediate supervisor.

The LC is expected to prepare the TA for the lab sections they are assigned as well as provide guidance and supervision to the TA during the semester. The TA should never enter the lab or classroom without having

the required course material and being formally prepped by the LC. The LC is expected to provide the TA with all the materials needed to run the class or laboratory including:

- i) A lab manual
- ii) A course syllabus that details policies and procedure specific to a given lab
- iii) A detailed overview or demonstration of the experiments that are to be completed
- iv) Training in the use of any equipment
- v) Quiz or test banks to be used in drafting quizzes or complete quizzes or exams.
- vi) It is also appropriate for the LC to provide the materials for any pre lecture that is to be delivered prior to the lab (i.e. PPT presentations, transparencies, demos, etc).

Thus, the TA is not expected to spend inordinate amounts of time developing content for the laboratory they are teaching.

The LC is also responsible for assigning the TA to a specific lab section. This may be done in the first prep meeting of the semester and there are several points that need to be understood regarding the assignment process. Whenever possible, a TA with two or more semesters of experience in the course or the prep TA will be assigned the 1st laboratory section of the week. This will provide experienced leadership for training of newer TAs as well as a TA that knows what to look for in assessing whether the reagents are working properly. ***TAs new to a course must be available during the first lab period, or another section designated by the LC, and will be expected to attend the designated lab section during the course of the semester to observe how the lab is administered.***

It is also the responsibility of the LC to set a specific day and time to hold the weekly TA pre-lab meetings to go over the upcoming lab as well as review the results from the past week. ***Attendance at all TA pre-lab meetings IS A REQUIREMENT of the TA position regardless of the experience of the TA or how many times they have been through the course.*** It is important to remember that most courses will generally have a number of inexperienced TAs assigned to it and the presence of experienced TAs is help with leadership. There is also no point in any assignment where one cannot learn something new. During the TA pre-lab meeting the LC should review the previous lab, discuss any issues that occurred and any new policies (another reason for the experienced TAs to attend). In addition the LC will review lesson plans, grading guidelines, quiz questions etc. for the next exercise and go over any new protocols or the operation of new equipment. In some instances, the LC (or prep TA) may run a mock lab session to demonstrate the experiment to new TAs, thus the TA pre-lab meeting may last 1-2 hrs in any given week.

It is critical for both the TA and LC to understand the ***chain of command*** for dealing with course issues. If any lab or student issues occur that the TA cannot resolve, the TA should take the issue directly to the LC. If the issue is a serious one, the LC will discuss the issue with the Director of UG Studies who may need to meet with the TA to better understand what has occurred. Specific issues that should always be brought to the attention of the LC are detailed in section XV. The chain of command is detailed below.

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| TA → LC → Director of UG Studies → CMMB Chair |
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From the student point of view, the chain of command will always begin with the TA. The TA should assess the situation and determine the appropriate action. As indicated throughout the rest of this document, the next course of action will be to have the TA see the LC. Students should be told to bring all issues to the TA. At no time should students approach the LC with issues that have first not been discussed with the TA (see section IV).

III. THE COURSE SYLLABUS

The LC should supply all TAs with a comprehensive syllabus that details all the aspects of the management of the course. The syllabus should include a schedule of laboratories and all assignments as well as attendance policies and grading guidelines. It is essential for the TA to read and understand all the policies that are outlined in the syllabus and to run the course in accordance with the syllabus. It is important that TAs carefully cover the syllabus with the class during the first laboratory section. It is very important to understand that the syllabus is considered the “law” of the course and test dates and grading guidelines should never be changed unless there are extenuating circumstances (such as loss of a lab day due to hurricane, or USF is shut down for other reasons). Serious deviations from what is specified in the syllabus (such as changing assignment due days or being lax on attendance policies) can be cause for student grievances.

IV. TA RULES TO LIVE BY

There are several key “rules to live by” that can help the TA experience run smoothly.

- A. Always arrive at the lab at least 20 minutes before the start of class to make sure that the lab is set up and to assure you know where everything is. If the previous lab has not released its students, the TA should assemble the class outside the lab so as not to disrupt the ongoing lab. If the TA knows that another lab runs immediately after their session, they should make all attempts to finish on time.
- B. Always review the lab procedures and be prepared to explain all aspects of the experiment
- C. Always dress professionally and according to USF safety guidelines for laboratory work. This includes wearing close toed shoes, long pants and a lab coat. Failure to follow appropriate dress codes will result in a verbal warning, and may result in the loss of TA support in future semesters.
- D. Always treat students with respect.
- E. If issues with a student cannot be resolved, refer the student to the LC or Director of UG Studies. Do not engage in unproductive discussions that you do not have the power to resolve.
- F. Always finish the grading of any assignments and enter them in Canvas prior to the next lab section.
- G. Always attend your scheduled office hours and all prep meetings
- H. Promptly answer student emails even if it is to tell them to see you during office hours
- I. NEVER discuss or distribute grades to students or any third parties via email. Grades can only be given to the student. Even parents are not entitled to receive the student’s grades.
- J. Keep grades in an Excel or other spreadsheet independent of Canvas.
- K. Do not let students attend lab sections for which they are not enrolled unless prior arrangement to attend your lab section has been approved by the LC. Refer all issues related to attendance to the LC.

- L. Do not swap lab sections with another TA without approval of the LC

V. DUTIES OF TAs

A. Prep TA

Typically assigned to a veteran TA

The job of the prep TA is to make sure that the lab is prepared for each lab section and that all reagents and equipment are available and functioning. The prep TA should always check the results of the first lab of the week to make sure that all reagents are working and if not, to trouble shoot the problem so that the subsequent labs will not have the same problem. The Prep TA should know when each lab section is occurring and make all efforts to be responsive to needs should they come up during a particular section. This may include visiting the lab over the course of an exercise to make sure that enough reagents/supplies remain for the next lab. This is very important for those courses (Bio I, Gen Micro) where many labs sections are run during the day and there is only 15-20 minutes between lab sections.

Description of Duties

- A) Set up the laboratory prior to each lab.
- B) Make sure that the carboys are filled with ddH₂O and other high use reagents
- C) Prepare, label and aliquot all solutions and reagents needed for each lab.
- D) Where appropriate, confirm that the reagents are correct and functioning properly.
- E) Provide lab coordinator or teaching labs manager with orders for supplies. Follow up that the orders have been placed.
- F) Test all equipment and make sure it is functioning prior to the start of each lab.
- G) Make sure the TAs know the location of all reagents and send follow-up emails after the TA pre-lab meeting if necessary (to summarize what was discussed and for prep that may be done after the meeting).
- H) Follow-up after the first lab section to confirm that everything is working.
- I) Keep the laboratory clean and replace bench paper on a weekly basis as directed by the LC or lab manager.

The best prep TAs tend to be organized and are **PROACTIVE** in thinking about what reagents run out and which lab section TAs may go through supplies faster than others. It is not uncommon for example, for TAs new to a course to go through more supplies and not monitor their usage as well as experienced TAs. The best approach is to try and catch problems before they are encountered and not to wait for them to happen and then point fingers.

B. Lab Section TA

Typically assigned to beginning as well as senior graduate students.

The job of the lab section TA job is to oversee and manage the lab sections that they are assigned. A

typical lab section TA assignment will be two lab sections in the same course. This TA works closely with the students and is responsible for making sure that the scheduled experiments are completed and the students know how to interpret the data and carry out any calculations. It is expected that the lab section TA works well with undergraduates, has patience and is an effective teacher.

Lab Section TA Duties:

- A) Be prepared and knowledgeable about the lab exercise
- B) Be aware of the chain of command for dealing with any issues related to the lab
- C) Attend all TA meetings and assigned lab sections as scheduled by the lab coordinator (LC) *New TAs are expected to attend non-assigned labs to observe the operation (as specified by the LC)*
- D) Deliver the pre-lab lecture and quiz (when appropriate)
- E) Make sure the appropriate students are attending the lab (*students that are not enrolled in the sections ARE NOT TO BE ADMITTED to the lab unless specifically approved by the LC*)
- F) Supervise the classroom and make sure the lab runs smoothly
- G) Grade all assignments and input the grades in Canvas in a **timely manner**
- H) Identify any issues related to academic dishonesty (i.e. plagiarism on lab reports or assignments, cheating on lab quizzes) and immediately bring them to the attention of the LC or lab manager with appropriate documentation
- I) Carefully monitor supplies and reagents and notify the prep TA and LC **BEFORE** any problems present themselves
- J) Hold a minimum of 1h of regularly scheduled office hours per week. For those students teaching 2 sections, you must schedule an additional 1h per week, although you are entitled to make this 2nd slot by appointment only.
- K) Immediately communicate any student issues that cannot be resolved to the LC
- L) Calculate all final grades and place them in Canvas for review and submission in a time frame specified by the LC or lab manager
- M) **CLEAN UP THE LAB** and turn off all equipment after the session is over and check that general lab supplies are there for the next lab. *Many labs run back to back with little time in between. As such, it is unacceptable to leave the lab a mess for the next TA. Think of it this way: Is that what you would like to walk into? If this happens to you be sure to bring it up at the prep meeting or to the LC in private.*

It is NOT the duty of the Lab Section TA to:

- A) Prepare the course syllabus or schedule for the lab course. (*Provided by the LC in the first prep meeting of the course*).

- B) Write or prepare the lab manual that will be used in the course. (*Provided by the LC in the first prep meeting of the course*)
- C) Order or copy the lab manuals or individual exercises
- D) Generate policy documents related to management of the labs
- E) Make decisions on whether students can make up or switch lab sections. (*The Lab Section TA should NEVER make decisions regarding the make up of labs for excused or unexcused absences or allow students to attend sections for which they are not enrolled and do not have LC granted permission. All issues related to attendance should be immediately brought to the attention of the LC*)
- F) Make decisions regarding academic dishonesty (*see item H in previous section*)
- G) Set up and run an additional lab section for students that have not attended during their scheduled lab time
- H) Meet with students outside of normally scheduled lab time to makeup lab activities in the lab.

It is appropriate for the lab section TA to bring issues related to course management by the LC to the Director of UG Studies.

C. Lecture TA

Typically assigned to a veteran TA with many semesters of TA experience and a keen knowledge of the subject matter covered in the course.

The job of the lecture TA is to facilitate management of large enrollment courses and provide grading support to the instructor. This TA works closely with the instructor/s that are in charge or delivering a lecture course. It is expected that the LTA have exceptional communication skills, keep in close contact with the course instructor and be on site at all times so that issues can be dealt with in a timely manner.

Duties MAY include the following (not inclusive):

- A) Attend all class sessions
- B) Run review sessions and tutorials as directed
- C) Serve as a proctor for all exams
- D) Grade assignments as directed and take and retrieve exams from scanning center
- E) Hold office hours and meet with students so they can review exams or homework assignments
- F) Manage the class web site and upload grades into Canvas
- G) Field questions via email
- H) Set up and manage Excel spreadsheet that is independent of Canvas
- I) Review exams and make sure that they are copied and ready for exam day

Each instructor will manage the LTA differently and may not require the TA to carry out all the duties listed above. It will be expected that the workload of the LTA will not exceed the 20-hrs/wk maximum

as stipulated in the TA contract. The instructor of record should also make all attempts to structure the workload of the LTA so that there is ample time to have large blocks available for research.

D. Online Course TA.

- *CMMB now offers 4-5 online courses (depending on the semester)*
 - *BSC 1020 – The Biology of Humans*
 - *BSC 2010 – Bio I – Cellular Processes*
 - *PCB 3023 – Cell Biology*
 - *PCB 3063 – General Genetics*
 - *PCB 4234 – Principles of Immunology*

The TA assigned to any of these courses should have some experience with Canvas and strong time management skills.

The job of an online course TA can be summarized as such: 1) Helping the students with the course material; and 2) Supporting the course instructor with grading.

All online courses in our department are offered completely online. Students enrolled in these courses access all material through Canvas, USF's learning management system. The course lectures typically come in the form of narrated PowerPoint slides, which are prepared by the course instructor. The assessments come in different forms, depending on the course. In all cases, however, students have to take examinations on campus, or at other testing centers that are approved by the course instructor.

All courses also employ graded quizzes, which are taken on Canvas, or the textbook publisher's online platform. Other types of course assessments include: homeworks, reflection essays, process of science activities. All of these assignments are submitted via *Turnitin* on Canvas. This is a plagiarism-detection tool, which enforces academic honesty. In many courses, students are also required to participate in discussion boards by posting original comments and replies to other students' posts.

The TA is expected to grade the written assignments in *a very timely manner*. To do so, the TA utilizes a very good function of Canvas called SpeedGrader. The rubric and grading instructions are provided by the course instructor. The TA is also asked to send collective feedback to his/her students regarding the most common mistakes/misconceptions from the assignment.

Online course TAs are expected to check their emails on a daily basis to ensure timely answers to questions about course assignments, regardless whether they are from students or the course instructor.

Other specific TA duties and responsibilities may differ a little between the various courses - However, some general things you will be doing:

- A. Attend regular TA meetings to discuss course assignments and grading issues
- B. Tabulate midterm and final grades based on a specific format supplied by the instructor
- C. Identify any issues related to academic dishonesty (i.e. plagiarism on course assignments, cheating on exams) and immediately bring them to the attention of the course instructor with appropriate documentation
- D. Proctor all on-campus examinations and make-up exams

Online TAs are also expected to hold office hours

- Full-time TA = Two hours
 - One virtual office hour via Blackboard Collaborate on Canvas
 - One face-to-face office hour
- Half-time TA = One hour (either virtual or face-to-face)

Online TAs may also hold review sessions prior to exams

It is NOT the duty of the Online Course TA to:

- A) Prepare any portion of the course syllabus
- B) Deliver course content
- C) Make decisions on whether students can make up a late assignment
- D) Make decisions regarding academic dishonesty
- E) Submit final grades

It will be expected that the workload of the discussion TA will not exceed the 20-hrs/wk maximum as stipulated in the TA contract. Indeed, all courses have been designed in such a way to structure the workload of the TA so that there is ample time to have large blocks available for research or other academic endeavors.

VI. PROCTORING ASSIGNMENTS

A. General Guidelines

Part of the assignment of all TAs is to serve as proctors during exams in the lecture portions of large enrollment classes. *The proctoring assignment IS NOT OPTIONAL and takes priority over lab meetings, vacations, and all other meetings except scheduled classes.* All attempts will be made to provide the proctoring schedule during the first two weeks of the semester and keep the total number of assignments to 5-6 a semester. All attempts will be made to schedule assignments in the course that the TA is most familiar with.

Typically, TAs will receive a spreadsheet early in the semester that lists all of the proctoring dates, times as well as the course and instructor. It is essential for the TA to go over the assignments when they are received and make a clear note of the days and times they will be proctoring. If there is a conflict with classes, labs or the student is scheduled to be away for a scientific meeting, the TA should send an email to the CMMB Graduate Program Assistant, Anthony Macedo (amacedo@usf.edu) as well as to the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr Lindsey Shaw (shaw@usf.edu) describing the conflict. **THIS MUST BE DONE IMMEDIATELY NOT HALF WAY THROUGH THE SEMESTER!!** All attempts will be made to resolve the conflict. Prior to any proctoring assignment, the TA will typically receive an email reminder, but this may not always happen due to workload of the administrative assistant, so the TA should NOT rely on this to keep track of their assignments. *Missing a proctoring assignment is a serious breach of the conditions of the TA assignment and can result in the loss of the TA in subsequent semesters.*

B. Duties

Proctors are responsible for following all instructions given to them by the course instructor. TAs should always check in with the course instructor TWO DAYS prior to scheduled exam date (either in person or via email) to obtain additional instructions. Duties of the proctor may include:

- A) Arriving up to 20 minutes early at the lecture hall, to receive instructions or assist in disseminating the exams
- B) Disseminating the exams
- C) Assisting the instructor in transporting exams to the lecture hall
- D) Actively proctor the entire exam, to police potential academic dishonesty
- E) Collecting the completed exams from students
- F) Alphabetizing exams after the test is completed
- G) In the event of academic dishonesty, assisting the instructor with prosecution of the case; this may include meeting with the instructor to review evidence for dishonesty, writing a statement of what was observed and/or meeting with the instructor and student, to confirm the identity of a student

C. There is an emergency that prevents the TA from meeting a proctoring assignment

If an *immediate* emergency arises that will prevent a TA from meeting the proctoring assignment, it is essential to contact the CMMB office (974-8088) as well as the instructor for the course in which the TA is assigned. If a conflict arises during the semester in advance of the assignment, the TA may arrange to switch assignments with another TA. A swap should only be used in emergency cases and should not become a common practice. Should switching proctoring assignments be necessary, the TA of record is required to inform the CMMB Graduate Program Assistant and CMMB Graduate Director of the change immediately, so that we may record it in the schedule. *It is important to note that it is the TA of record who is responsible for the assignment and for making sure that the assignment is met.* Since the assignments are set up at the beginning of the semester it is understood that the TA can schedule around the assignments.

VII. FIRST DAY OF CLASS POLICY AND LAB ATTENDANCE POLICIES

First and foremost, CMMB laboratories are designed to provide a hands-on experience that cannot be duplicated in a lecture-based course. Successful completion of the course REQUIRES that students attend all scheduled labs to learn how to set up and carry out experiments and interpret data. A first principle is that labs cannot be missed and if students foresee that they will have multiple absences (whether for legitimate reasons or not) they should not take the course because they will not pass. THIS POLICY SHOULD BE STATED DURING THE FIRST CLASS MEETING.

All CMMB labs are generally capped at 24 students. This is due to the size of the labs, the number of seats, the available equipment and the fire code. Thus, the number of students in the lab should not exceed this, and it is critical that the enrollment DOES NOT EXCEED the cap of the lab after the first lab session (in the first lab session students who are not enrolled may show up with the hope of adding to the class). The TA and LC must monitor enrollment during the first few weeks of the course as this is where most of the problems occur with extra students who are not officially enrolled. The course cap MUST be enforced and students that do not belong in the lab must not be allowed to remain in the labs. **Only students currently registered for the lab course are permitted in the lab.** Most enrollment issues

are typically resolved by the second-class meeting since students may not enroll without consent after the first week of classes. Students will try to get away with swapping lab sections and attending labs that they are not enrolled in. ***Under no circumstances is the TA to permit more than 24 students in a lab unless they are told it is OK by the LC.***

A. First day of class policy. USF policy states that students who do not attend the first scheduled class are dropped from the course.

- 1) All TAs will print the class roll from Canvas the day of the first lab meeting. Any student that does NOT attend the first lab session shall be circled.
- 2) TAs will double-check the attendance to certify that the student that is circled is not present.
- 3) TAs are to make no agreements with any students about their ability to get into the labs ..
- 4) The TA will login to Canvas immediately following the class and drop students that were not in attendance. The TA will maintain a copy of the class roll in case of any discrepancy.

B. Late Additions. Students may not enroll in classes after the first week without approval. TAs **ARE NOT TO SIGN** any late add forms and should refer all issues related to late adds to the LAB COORDINATOR

By consulting Canvas, TAs will be able to determine correct enrollment during the second-class session and should not permit additional students to attend their section unless they show that they have registered (a student may not show up in Canvas if they were permitted into the class earlier in the day). If the TA takes attendance of the 24 students based on Canvas, and it matches, **NO OTHER STUDENTS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN THE LAB AND THEY SHOULD BE TOLD TO LEAVE.**

A key issue that always comes up during the semester is attendance. The official CMMB lab attendance policy is provided below. Any updates to this will be provided from the LC in the syllabus each semester.

C. CMMB Lab Attendance Policy. Lab attendance is **MANDATORY** and arrival to lab **must be on time**. Students who miss a laboratory **without a documented, valid excuse will be penalized 5% of the possible laboratory points for the entire semester (course specific point value) for the first occurrence and 10% of the possible laboratory points (course specific point value) for each a second or third occurrence**. Due to the hands-on nature of laboratory courses, more than three absences, whether excused or unexcused, will result in a failing grade (F) for the course.

Absences are dealt with on a case by case basis and are seldom excusable. Absences will be excused for documented, legitimate reasons according to university guidelines (unforeseen: e.g. medical emergency, death in the immediate family; and special circumstances: e.g. jury duty, day of religious observance, USF-sponsored academic conference participation). Documentation may be a medical doctor's note, hospital admission papers, legal or a funeral notice that documents the specific date & times of the missed lab period. Lab absences due to inclement weather, unless classes are canceled as a result of University closure, do not represent excusable special circumstances.

The proper supporting documentation for an excused absence must be presented to the TA/instructor **within one week** of the absence or the absence will be considered unexcused. The TA/Instructor should be contacted **at the beginning of the semester (by the second week of class) for foreseen excusable absences** (special circumstances) and **within 48 hours of the missed lab period for unforeseen excusable absences** to make arrangements for making up the lab exercises where possible and/or turning in assignments due/completed during the missed lab period. Failure to contact your TA

within this timeframe will result in late penalties for any assignments missed due to excused absences. Where possible, you may only attend a different lab section **with the specific direction** from the Lab Coordinator/TA. Laboratories cannot be made up beyond the week that a particular lab is scheduled, and it is not guaranteed that there will be space available to schedule attendance in another lab section. Only documented, excused absences are considered for rescheduling.

If you find that you are absent for several classes due to illness or other circumstances, it is recommended that you drop the class. Please be aware that absences due to work obligations are not excusable and will result in unexcused absence point penalties.

Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class due to a major religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to their TA/Instructor, in writing, by the second week of classes. If an exact date for a major religious observance is not known in advance, the student needs to instead provide notice of the anticipated week of the religious observance by the second week of classes.

Late arrival or early departure is disruptive to the class and can often result in students missing important information. **Late arrival up to 15 minutes** after the lab is scheduled to begin is permitted, but will count against the student's participation points, as will leaving early prior to completion of that day's lab work. Students arriving late, but within 15 minutes of the start of class, must check-in with the TA/Instructor prior to participating in lab exercises. If quizzes are given at the beginning of class, late arrivals will be given any remaining time to complete the quiz. No time extensions on quizzes will be granted for students arriving late to class. If students arrive after or as quizzes are being collected, the student will not be allowed to make up the quiz and will thus receive a 0 for that quiz. **Students leaving early, within 15 minutes of completion of lab activities**, without a valid documented excuse, will lose all participation points for that day.

Students arriving 15 minutes or later past the start of class will be turned away and not allowed to complete that day's exercise. This will count as an unexcused absence. If you encounter an unforeseen circumstance and are going to be late, please notify the TA/Instructor as soon as possible. **If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, please do not show up to lab as you will not be permitted to stay** unless you have obtained prior permission from your TA/Instructor for an excusable, documented circumstance. **Students leaving more than 15 minutes prior to completion of the lab activities** without prior permission for an excusable, documented circumstance will also receive the point penalty for an unexcused absence.

Attendance Policy: Adjusted number of allowable absences for lab courses meeting **bi-weekly during Fall and Spring Semesters**

Lab attendance is **MANDATORY** and arrival to lab **must be on time**. Students who miss a laboratory **without a documented, valid excuse will be penalized 2.5% of the possible laboratory points for the entire semester (course specific point value) for the first occurrence and 5% of the possible laboratory points (course specific point value) for each subsequent occurrence.** Due to the hands-on nature of laboratory courses, more than **five** absences, whether excused or unexcused, will result in a failing grade (F) for this course.

Attendance Policy: Adjusted number of allowable absences for lab courses meeting during Summer C Semesters

Lab attendance is **MANDATORY** and arrival to lab **must be on time**. Students who miss a laboratory **without a documented, valid excuse will be penalized 5% of the possible laboratory points for the entire semester (-25pts) for the first occurrence and 10% of the possible laboratory points (-50pts) for**

a second occurrence. Due to the hands-on nature of laboratory courses and compact schedule in the summer C semester, more than two absences, whether excused or unexcused, will result in a failing grade (F) for this course.

All issues related to attendance should be immediately referred to the LC and the TA should not engage in protracted “negotiations” about whether the absence is excused or not. It is critical that these policies are stated in the course syllabus and that they are discussed with the students during the first lab. If the policies are enforced, there should be minimal issues throughout the semester. If on the other hand students figure out that attendance policies are lax, they will manipulate the system!

VIII. COURSE GRADING AND OTHER STUDENT POLICIES

Each LC may have grading policies specific to a given lab, but there are several unifying policies that exist to alleviate confusion between students and the TA, as well as between the TA and the LC. During the first pre-lab meeting the LC should go over the specifics of grading.

A. Keeping and Posting Grades. All grades for the course should be submitted to the grade book in Canvas. This will allow each student to access their grades in a secure environment and also allows the LC to monitor grades and evaluate consistency across the numerous lab sections. TAs should use appropriate grading guidelines for all assignments (supplied by the LC) when appropriate and immediately inform the LC of any issues related to grading (i.e. confusion of point values, etc.). The TA should also download and backup the Canvas csv file or keep grades in a spreadsheet that is outside of Canvas. There have been instances where students are mistakenly dropped from a course and their grades are wiped from Canvas. Having another spreadsheet will allow the TA to restore the grades without a problem.

B. Calculation and Submission of Final Grades. All final grades should be calculated based on the grading guidelines that are posted in the syllabus. The TA should never adjust individual grades even if they feel circumstances justify such action (i.e. the student was very nice but had some personal difficulties that may have affected performance). The LC should confirm the guidelines that will be used to assign A, B, C etc. during the final pre-lab meeting and also indicate the latest date that they should be posted by. **FINAL GRADES SHOULD NEVER BE POSTED SO THAT THEY ARE VISIBLE TO THE STUDENTS** until LC permission is received to unmute final grades. The TA should mute the grades in Canvas so that the LC can review all labs and make sure that all sections have been graded in a consistent manner. The LC will notify the TA when the grades are fine to release to the students and if/when they should submit them. If the TA is given the responsibility to release and submit the grades, it must be done immediately as there are deadlines at the end of each semester. **Thus, TAs are expected to be on site and available through the end of the semester and during finals week regardless of whether the lab has been completed.**

C. Incomplete Grades. INCOMPLETE GRADES can only be given if a student is PASSING the course when the incomplete is requested and when there is a minimal amount of work remaining to be completed. For example, a student that shows up for lab #1, misses #2 for an unexcused absence and then wants an incomplete, may technically be passing the course, but has completed an insufficient amount of work to get an incomplete. In addition, many students who miss the drop deadline and are failing the course request an incomplete. These students are not eligible because they are failing. The TA should not engage in discussions with the students about incomplete grades and should refer the student to the LC. Any incomplete grades offered by the LC need to be done in consultation with the Director of UG Studies.

D. Religious Observances. Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class due to a

major religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor in writing, by the second class meeting. The University policy on this matter can be found in the USF Undergraduate Catalog. Thus, students who request absences in the middle of the semester should not be allowed to have an excused absence.

E. Disabilities Issues. USF policy specifies that all programs are open to students with disabilities. Students are required to provide appropriate documentation and give reasonable notice to the LC prior to requesting an accommodation. A TA faced with disability issues should consult with the LC and Director of UG Studies on how best to provide accommodations.

IX. STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICY

CMMB adopted the following policy in 2007.

- A. A student must email the LC to initiate the resolution of a disputed grade. When contacting the LC, the student must include all pertinent information (name, U#, class, section, and details of the discrepancy).
 - a) A student has (2) weeks to notify the instructor about the issue.
 - b) If the instructor has not responded within a week, a second notification should be sent.
- B. If the situation has not been resolved within (3) weeks, the student shall file a notification letter to the CMMB Undergraduate Director. Please contact the CMMB Undergraduate Office (ISA 2015, 974-8088) for Undergraduate Director information.

The letter to the Undergraduate Director should include a concise summary of the situation. The letter must include information pertaining to how, in the student's opinion, University policies or procedures were violated. The CMMB Undergraduate Director shall provide a copy of this statement to the instructor.

- a) The student must attach hard copies of their email requests to resolve the issue with the instructor.
 - b) The student is responsible for providing evidence that proves that the instructor's decision was incorrect.
- C. If the issue is still unresolved, please refer to the University's grievance procedure (<http://ugs.usf.edu/catalog/>).

X. PLAGIARISM POLICY

Unfortunately, this has been a major issue over the past several years. There are several points at which the TA may encounter academic dishonesty. The most important rule of thumb is that any issue of academic dishonesty needs to be discussed immediately with the LC and where appropriate the Director of UG Studies. *TAs should not engage in any discussion of academic dishonesty with the student. All communication of these issues must be through the LC or Director of UG Studies.* All TAs should adhere to the following policies when addressing issues of plagiarism.

- A. **Cheating during proctoring of an exam.** If the TA notices academic dishonesty during an exam, they should immediately inform the instructor of record. They should also be prepared to offer a statement detailing what was observed. It is not the responsibility of the TA to deal with the academic

dishonesty; this lies with the course instructor. The course instructor should inform the TA of his/her policy regarding academic dishonesty prior to the start of the exam.

- B. **Plagiarism on a lab report or assignment.** Most lab courses require students to submit all assignments electronically through Turnitin in Canvas. This mechanism will evaluate a particular assignment against all those submitted in the class, assignments submitted from previous semesters and information that is available on the Web. The TA must access the evaluation of each assignment and review the score (0-100%) to determine if there are direct matches with the literature. When this is encountered, the TA should take a detailed look at the report and assess whether the area of the report and the identified material are indeed matching. A direct comparison with the matching parts highlighted will be needed to document the plagiarism. The TA must understand that **ANY MATERIAL IN AN ASSIGNMENT THAT MATCHES SOMETHING ALREADY PUBLISHED AND IS NOT CITED OR MATCHES MATERIAL TURNED IN BY ANOTHER STUDENT, IS CONSIDERED PLAGIARISM.** If Turnitin is not used and a TA notices plagiarism through another mechanism, the exact sources and plagiarized areas of the report should be documented. It is important to understand that in any instance of plagiarism there is no valid excuse that the student can offer. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an excuse. If the TA notes a case of plagiarism, it should be **brought to the attention of the LC immediately.** The TA should withhold posting any grades for the offending students until consultation with the LC is complete. The LC will then evaluate the situation and provide the TA with the outcome. The LC will be responsible for communicating the penalty to the student and will provide further guidance to the TA on how to handle posting the grade. The decision on severity of the penalty imposed is that solely of the LC and/or the CMMB UG Director – the TA will have no role in determining this. *The TA should refer all questions about the incident to the LC and not engage in any discussion with the student about the incident whatsoever.*
- C. **Cheating during a lab quiz or practical.** The TA is the authority figure for all quizzes or assignments that are administered during a lab session. If academic dishonesty is observed during a lab session the TA must document the offense and bring the incident to the immediate attention of the LC. The TA should withhold posting any grades for the offending student until consultation with the LC is complete. In all cases the TA will abide by the decision of the LC regarding outcome and any penalties. The LC will talk directly with the offending student - this is not the responsibility of the TA.

XI. LABORATORY SAFETY POLICIES

Safety is a key issue for all CMMB laboratory classes. All students must sign the CMMB lab safety forms on the first day of class, which should then be handed into the Teaching Lab Manager. It is important to understand that many of the reagents that are used in labs are toxic! Follow all TA and prep instructions carefully. Those students who do not follow all safety rules endanger themselves and their fellow students. *Students showing continuous and flagrant violations of safety rules should be expelled from the lab and dismissed from the course.* Consult with the LC and Director of UG Studies.

The following Safety Guidelines are to be strictly adhered to in all teaching laboratories. These rules apply to students, teaching assistants, and instructors. The Teaching Lab Manager must maintain records of all the signed documents.

- No food, drinks, smoking, chewing gum, or applying cosmetics and contact lenses in labs/studios/shops or clinics.
- Splash goggles are to be worn when there is a risk of chemical or biological material splashing. Eye protection needs to be worn when there is the possibility of an object impacting the eye.

- Footwear that covers the entire foot must be worn at all times. Therefore sandals, flip-flops, ballet-flats, backless and open-toed shoes are not acceptable.
- Clothing appropriate for laboratory safety must be worn. Clothing (pants or skirt) must be worn which completely covers the entire leg from the waist to the ankle. Clothing (shirt, blouse, etc.) must be worn which completely covers the torso from the waist to the neck. Shoulders must be completely covered and sleeves must be worn that cover the arm from the shoulder to at least halfway to the elbow. Therefore, tank tops, halters, shorts, cutoffs, etc. are not acceptable. Some lab courses may require the use of a lab coat/apron and/or gloves.
- Long hair should be tied back.
- Long, dangling jewelry, such as necklaces or earrings with the potential to interfere with or be contaminated by an experiment, should not be worn.
- Backpacks should be placed in the shelving units provided and not in the walkway.

Safety Suggestions

- Waste materials are to be disposed of immediately after use in the designated containers.
- All containers are to be labeled completely with full chemical names and a hazard description. For example: “6M Hydrochloric Acid: CORROSSIVE”
- Never leave an experiment unattended.
- Never leave a solution on a hot plate unattended.
- Hotplates that have been turned off, but are still hot, should have a warning note in front of them.
- Working alone is not recommended.

IF THERE IS A SERIOUS ACCIDENT, CALL 911 OR UNIVERSITY POLICE IMMEDIATELY. NOTIFY THE TEACHING LAB MANAGER.

XII. STUDENT EVALUATIONS

CMMB policy requires that all TAs obtain student evaluations prior to the end of the semester. Student evaluations are currently completed using a software program called eXplorance Blue. TAs should encourage their students to complete the online evaluations. If written evaluations are performed in addition to the online evaluations, the LC will provide the necessary documents and direct the TAs regarding evaluation delivery. Evaluations are critical for helping TAs improve and are one measure of TA performance. The student evaluations are also one of the mechanisms used in assessing TA awards (see section XII).

XIII. TA EVALUATION BY THE LC

Every CMMB TA will be evaluated by their LC during each semester. This will involve the LC sitting in on at least 1 laboratory class for every TA, and completing a standard evaluation form (which can be found on the last page of this manual). During the following semester, TAs will be provided with their evaluation for review and may discuss it with the LC if they have any questions or concerns. These evaluations become part of the student’s permanent HR record with the University, and are a major factor in assessing TA performance, and the assignment of positions in subsequent semesters.

XIV. CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

As a TA for the CMMB department, and a USF employed instructor, all teaching assistants are required to adhere to University policies regarding student privacy. As such, CMMB is adopting the policy that no TA may discuss their students, past or present, in any form. This includes verbally with other people (including other CMMB TAs), or electronically, via the use of email or social networking websites. TAs may discuss concerns regarding student progress, well-being or performance with the LC or other CMMB faculty. Discussion of students among TAs may only occur in a professional setting, such as weekly TA meetings. Any CMMB TA found to be in breach of this policy may have their TA revoked in subsequent semesters.

XV. TAMPA RESIDENCY POLICY

All teaching assistants are expected to be resident in Tampa during the entire semester in which they teach. This applies to all forms of TA, including online and lecture TAs. The reason for this is that there are tasks associated with being a teaching assistant that necessitate being on campus (proctoring, meeting with students to review exams, recitation sessions etc.). In addition, students engaged as a TA are still expected to meet their research and/or academic obligations, which also requires being present in Tampa. Short term absences to attend conferences and other academic related activities are permissible, however the LC, Graduate Director and Graduate Program Assistant must be made aware of such instances at the beginning of the semester. It then becomes the TAs responsibility to arrange cover for these short terms absences, and keep the LC, Graduate Director and Graduate Program Assistant apprised of matters. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in immediate termination of the TA, and/or a lack of TA support in future semesters.

XVI. MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES

- A. *How long to keep student assignments.*** USF requires assignments and lab reports to be kept for 2 semesters after the course has been completed. The Canvas class will remain in the system after the course has been completed, but it is still wise to keep your excel file and store it in a folder on your computer for immediate access if needed. There have been times when grades or assignments have been disputed a semester or two after the course was over; in such cases the Excel backup becomes useful to show that an assignment is listed in both, or to cross reference that it was actually entered into Canvas
- B. *Outstanding TA Awards.*** The department of CMMB makes an award each year based on outstanding teaching. TAs will be recognized during the departmental spring commencement celebration that is held each year in late April/early May. The Laboratory Coordinator or any CMMB faculty member familiar with their work as a TA may nominate a student. The CMMB Graduate Committee will review nominations and make the award based on the strength of the nomination, input from additional CMMB faculty as well as student reviews of all previous semesters. The CMMB Graduate Committee reserves the right to make multiple awards or no award in a given year, should they deem it necessary.
- C. *What about copies of course material?*** For any item that ALL lab sections will be distributing, it is the duty of the LC to provide enough copies to the TA. This includes course syllabi, quizzes, handouts etc. If the TA has an item that is specific to their lab section, it will be their responsibility to get the copies made.

XVII. WHAT TO DO IF.....

This section deals with policy for issues that have come up over the past several years. A general rule of thumb is to communicate any lab issue immediately to the LC. If the LC is not available, and the issue needs immediate attention, contact the Director of UG Studies. Keep notes of items that need to be

discussed so that you can recall them and bring them up in a subsequent prep meeting. It is imperative that any lab issues be dealt with in a timely manner so that the needs of the student can be addressed during the week in which a particular lab is active (in case they need to attend a different section). In all cases the TA needs to act in a professional manner regardless of how abusive a student may become.

- A. ***There are immediate safety issues during class (FIRES, CHEMICAL SPILLS, THREATENING INDIVIDUALS).*** The TA should immediately call 911 or USF police at 974-2628 and attempt to remove students from the immediate area of danger. The TA should always know where to evacuate students to in the case of a fire or spill, and make this clear to the students on the first day of class. After the appropriate emergency personnel have been contacted and the students have been moved to safety, be sure to contact the LC.
- B. ***There is a disruptive student.*** For any student that presents a disruption in the lab while you are teaching (as defined in the syllabus), the student should first be pulled aside and given a verbal warning. If the student continues the disruptive behavior, the TA has the right to refuse the student from being in the lab. For all such issues, the TA must inform the LC and UG Director by email within 24h of the occurrence, with a brief synopsis of the situation. ***TAs should never attempt to subdue or confront an individual who is acting in a threatening manner.***
- C. ***There is an injury or incident in the lab.*** If a student is injured during a laboratory exercise (cut by broken glass; spill of a lab chemical, something in the eye, etc) the TA should respond to the incident, and when it is under control, immediately contact the LC and the Teaching Labs Manager (974-5905). If the incident is serious enough to warrant an ambulance the TA should first call University Police (974-2628) or 911 depending on the severity of the situation. Once the incident is under control, an ***injury report*** must be completed. Injury report forms can be found in all labs or obtained from the Teaching Labs Manager. **FORMS MUST BE FILLED OUT:** Failure to document an incident could facilitate legal action by the student.
- D. ***There is abuse of email and veiled threats.*** In past semesters students have used the message and discussion function in Canvas to post “questionable” messages to the class. “Questionable” messages take many forms such as selling tickets or cars, questioning grading policies of instructors or threatening students that are doing well in class. ***The students must understand that the message and discussion functions in Canvas are for the sole purpose of class related topics and are not to be used for any other purpose.*** If there is any question of whether a message is appropriate, the TA should immediately forward it to the LC *and* the Director of UG Studies. The TA should not contact the student and should leave the issue to the LC and Director of UG Studies.
- E. ***A student is uncomfortable with a classmate.*** In many instances students are required to work in groups for the lab exercises. If a situation arises in which a student is uncomfortable with a student that they are paired with, all attempts should be made to move the student to another group. Even if this means creating a group of three, this is a better solution than having a student work in an uncomfortable environment. If this type of situation arises, the TA should immediately inform the LC, and should also inquire whether the student would like to make a formal complaint. These issues should be referred to the LC who will confer with the Director of UG Studies for a resolution. Many of these cases involve a male-female pairing, and need to be dealt with immediately, and with the appropriate sensitivity. Please be aware that in compliance with Title IX and under the USF System Policy, educators must report incidents of sexual harassment and gender-based crimes including sexual assault, stalking, and domestic/relationship violence. If a student discloses any of these situations in class, in papers, or personally, you are required to report it to OSSR or DIEO for investigation. Contact the USF Center for Victim Advocacy and Violence Prevention: (813) 974-5757.

- F. **A student is pregnant and afraid to work with specific chemicals.** Students are required to wear protective goggles and gloves, and to dress appropriately when working with potentially hazardous chemicals. Proper lab attire and personal safety protections should protect students from exposure. However, there is flexibility in dealing with pregnant students when working with chemicals such as ethidium bromide. In most labs students work in pairs, and it is appropriate to allow the lab partner to perform additions of these chemicals as long as the pregnant student observes the procedure. If the student in question refuses to do any work, they should be referred to the LC. Please note that medical decisions regarding the student's exposure to certain hazards in lab is the responsibility of the student and their doctor. TAs should never provide medical advice to students.
- G. **You have a student with a disability in your class.** TAs are required to follow all USF policies regarding students with disabilities, as set forth by Students with Disabilities Services (<http://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/student-disabilities-services/>). TAs in such a situation are required to meet with the LC to discuss how the student will be accommodated, and students should be instructed to provide the LC with a copy of the accommodations memo. Additionally, students with disabilities with acknowledgment from SDS may provide notification of a disability via a memorandum at any time during the semester.
- H. **TA is sick or has an immediate emergency.** The lab for which a TA is responsible can never be cancelled and typically cannot be rescheduled. This is a big mess that deviates from the syllabus and causes all types of problems. Nearly all lab courses run 8:30AM –9:00PM each day of the week and there are typically no places or times available to reschedule a lab. In addition, Fridays are usually reserved for pre-lab meetings and departmental seminars. Thus, in the case where a TA is too sick to cover a lab, or has an immediate emergency that will prevent them from covering a lab, the TA **MUST** contact both the LC and Director of UG Studies so that another TA can be found to cover the section. ***The TA should never go directly to another TA and request coverage of a lab without first conferring with the LC or Director of UG Studies.*** The TA is required to schedule research activities around the TA assignment and since the schedule is set at the beginning of the semester, the TA should know exactly when they must meet the duties of the TA assignment. ***Vacations, collecting trips, days at the beach and the like do not constitute an acceptable reason for needing another TA to cover the lab. TAs THAT ENGAGE IN SECTION SWAPPING OR ACCUMULATE A SERIES OF LAB ABSENCES WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR TA ASSIGNMENTS IN SUBSEQUENT SEMESTERS. If the TA foresees specific days that require them to be away from the university during the semester for research purposes, they should make sure that their lab sections are not scheduled on those days.***
- I. **The TA wishes to discuss issues with course management by the LC.** If the TA experiences any issues with the LC, chain of command dictates that the issues be brought to the Director of UG Studies. Should the Director of UG Studies also be the LC for the TA, issues should then be brought to the Director of Graduate Studies. Should the Director of UG and Graduate Studies be the same person, the TA should bring the issues to the CMMB Chairperson.

XVIII. IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Immediate Emergency: 911
University Police: 974-2628
CMMB Office: 974-8088

Colbi Gemmell 974-5905
 Teaching Laboratories Manager
cgemmell@usf.edu

