I. Intent of the TA system and dos and don'ts for TAs

1. Intent of the TA system

University of Tsukuba has introduced a teaching assistant (TA) system for the following purpose:

> [Purpose of the TA system]
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> The purpose of the TA system is to provide high-quality graduate students at the University of Tsukuba with opportunities for enriched education at the university and for teacher/instructor training by having them engage in educational assistance work, based on educational considerations, and to improve the financial conditions of graduate students by providing remuneration for their work. (Treatment of Teaching Assistants at the University of Tsukuba, a ruling of the President of the University of Tsukuba dated March 23, 2006)

According to a recommendation by the Central Council for Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology entitled "Further improvement on the basis of verification of substantiation of graduate school education," a TA system "not only serves as a simple mechanism of economic support but also helps students fixate the knowledge that they have acquired through education and research experiences, and fulfills an important function of developing university faculty members, etc., who have high expertise and can teach knowledge and skills while commanding a bird's eye view of the whole of education," and it has an important role in "improving students' ability for education and research guidance."

2. Dos and don'ts for students serving as TAs

In accordance with the above intent, students serving as TAs need to fully understand that the TA system not only improves the financial conditions of graduate students but also provides opportunities for enriched education and for learning as teachers/instructors. Though engaged in "educational assistance" work, TAs are members involved in education at the University of Tsukuba and are part-time employees of the university. Therefore, develop self-awareness as a TA and behave properly. Furthermore, discuss with a faculty member in charge of a course and confirm the actual job description in advance.

However, though working as a TA, your primary duty is research; therefore, ensure that your academic work is not adversely affected.

1) Understanding class content

Understand the purpose, delivery method, and content of classes by referring to the syllabus and discussing with the faculty member in charge of the course. You must fully understand class content, especially if you are expected to respond to questions from students. If there are designated textbooks and references, read them in advance to get acquainted with them.

2) Communicating with students

TAs, who are close in age to students and are therefore easy to talk to for them, are expected to play an intermediary

role of ensuring smooth communication between faculty members and students. Actively communicate with students and create an atmosphere where students can easily ask questions and seek consultation. However, being "easy to talk to" is different from being "overly friendly." As an educator, use appropriate words and ways of speaking to communicate with students in a respective manner. In addition, some students are shy and not good at speaking up; it is also important for you to find students who seem to be willing to speak to you.

3) Dealing with harassment

Words and actions that strip others of their dignity and make them feel offended, in connection with a wide range of matters related to personality, constitute harassment. Understand the rules and regulations relating to harassment prevention, etc., at the University of Tsukuba, and make sure to avoid words and actions that may lead to harassment against other TAs or students. If you yourself fall victim to harassment by faculty members, etc., immediately consult with the Academic Service Office, your academic supervisor, etc.

4) Appropriately managing exam questions, etc.

As TAs engage in duties such as assisting in preparation of examination questions or assignments and printing out exam questions, they sometimes get to see exam questions before students do; this causes a risk of information leakage. To take one example of a major cause, when a TA is asked to print out exam questions or assignments, he/she may leave relevant documents or data in the photocopy room, and some students may get to see them. For another example, when a TA sends or receives exam questions or assignments via email, he/she may send them to the wrong addresses. Since it has recently been easy to take photos with a cell phone, smartphone, etc., students who obtain exam questions or assignments beforehand may spread them on the internet, social media, etc. Therefore, you are expected to appropriately manage exam questions and other information.

5) Protecting personal information

TAs are in a position to access students' personal information through duties such as managing student attendance and assisting in scoring of exams and papers. Since students' names, ID numbers, papers, etc., are important personal information, you cannot use them for purposes other than those related to TA work, and you must strictly manage them. So handle personal information with sufficient care under the responsibility of the faculty member.

3. Dos and don'ts for faculty members in charge of courses

Faculty members using the TA system need to understand the above intent and operate the system appropriately. In addition, they must revise the content of their classes as necessary, giving due consideration to the following matters. In other words, faculty members should ensure that their classes enable students serving as TAs to experience teacher/instructor training through their work, and that they make the utmost use of the advantages of the TA system, which is supposed to contribute to improving the quality of classes. Furthermore, faculty members must fully inform TAs of their job descriptions beforehand.

Meanwhile, TAs are essentially students, and their primary duty is research. Make sure to appropriately manage TAs'

working hours and prevent their academic work from being adversely affected.

1) Strictly managing working hours

TAs engage in work based on part-time employment contracts. Therefore, ensure strictly that TAs work within designated working hours. The number of hours spent by TAs to print out materials, etc., and manage student attendance outside class hours is included in the total number of working hours; therefore, ensure that the actual total number of working hours does not exceed the number of working hours determined at the time of employment. The maximum number of working hours per day for part-time employees at the University of Tsukuba is seven hours and 45 minutes in accordance with the provisions of the university's employee work regulations. Given that students' primary duty is research, their working hour schedule is unlikely to exceed the maximum number. However, when setting working hour schedules for TAs, take extra care by, for example, confirming their working hours for other jobs at the university.

2) Harassment

Words and actions that strip others of their dignity and make them feel offended, in connection with a wide range of matters related to personality, constitute harassment. Understand the rules and regulations relating to harassment prevention, etc., at the University of Tsukuba, and make sure to avoid words and actions that may lead to harassment against TAs or students.

3) Sharing information with TAs

Ensure smooth information sharing with TAs. It is especially important to provide detailed instructions to TAs on what duties are expected of them. Furthermore, make sure to enable TAs to assist in classes without hesitation by discussing with them in advance about their roles in classes. For example, discuss with TAs about how they should facilitate discussions in accordance with class goals, how they should respond to questions from students, and how they should perform tasks during laboratory practicals. Information feedback from TAs during or after classes is also effective in improving the quality of classes.