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# UTA Missive

Meta-TAs and The Directors of Undergraduate Studies

*August 30, 2022*

## 0 About this document

This document is intended to outline the various responsibilities of undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs) within Brown University's Department of Computer Science. It is far from exhaustive, as every course has its own approach to teaching. However, it should serve as a description of the role of the UTA within the department, as well as a guide to our departmental policies and procedures. For an explanation of the specific TA duties for a given course, please contact that course's head teaching assistant(s) (HTA) or professor.

This document is a living document and is reviewed and enhanced by the Meta-TAs and the Directors of Undergraduate Studies each year.

## 1 Introduction to the UTA program

Our department's commitment to an enriched undergraduate experience is reflected in its unique undergraduate teaching assistant program. Every semester, nearly 400 undergraduate students assist faculty members in the administration of courses, both large and small. With a UTA-to-student ratio of approximately 1:10 (lower in intro courses), we are able to offer more personalized instruction and meaningful feedback to our students.

### 1.1 Structure

Every computer science course with undergraduate TAs is assigned at least one head teaching assistant. Large courses often have multiple HTAs. HTAs are responsible for handling most of the administrative and logistical details of running a course, delegating tasks to a staff of UTAs, and overseeing their work. The chain of command for a CS course is typically: professor  $\rightarrow$  HTA  $\rightarrow$  UTA. However, this may differ in smaller courses or according to the professor's preferences.

The UTA program is coordinated by the Meta-TAs, who handle administrative and technical details, including the hiring and onboarding of TAs. The Meta-TAs report to Director of Undergraduate Studies Thomas Doeppner. HTAs and UTAs should contact the MTAs about administrative issues (such as hiring additional TAs, onboarding issues, payroll issues, and logistics of scheduling lab and hours rooms). Issues regarding the course itself should go to the course professor. If there are issues with the professor, reach out to a Director of Undergraduate Studies (Tom Doeppner or Kathi Fisler) or the CS Department Chair.

## **1.2 Relevance**

The UTA program is one of the most important aspects of an education in computer science at Brown University. Our dedicated staff of TAs allows us to assign more interesting coursework, offer more detailed feedback, and hold more office hours. The TAs themselves benefit from working closely with other undergraduates and a professor, developing the types of skills sought after by employers and graduate schools, and having the great satisfaction of helping their peers learn the material. Ultimately, the UTA program is indispensable to our department's culture.

## **1.3 Candidate eligibility**

Actively enrolled undergraduate and Masters students are eligible to serve as undergraduate teaching assistants. PhD students usually serve as Graduate TAs and are hired through a separate process. Most often, undergraduate teaching assistants will have taken the course before and head teaching assistants will have TA'ed the course before but in some courses, usually non-concentrator or upper level courses, this may not be the case.

Students who have been convicted of academic code violations must wait at least a year after the offense and then must petition the Director of Undergraduate Studies to get permission to serve as a UTA or HTA. Permission is not granted automatically, but depends on the severity of the violation. Students must be in good academic standing to serve as UTAs or HTAs. Thus, students on academic warning may not serve.

## **2 UTA duties**

Each course will assign its TAs different duties based on how the professor wishes to approach the material. However, some basic responsibilities are expected of all TAs.

### **2.1 Essential functions**

Most, if not all, UTAs are expected to:

- hold office hours during which students may approach them with questions regarding assignments or material covered in class;
- grade assignments (written and/or programming), exams, etc. according to standards and criteria established by the professor;
- respond to communications from their HTAs and professor regarding course coordination;
- respond to student questions on Ed Stem or another online platform used by the course;
- attend TA camp, a preparatory period before the start of the semester, and TA trainings organized by the Meta-TAs and Student Advocates;

- adhere to all university and department policies and procedures, including but not limited to those described in this document;
- attend regular staff meetings; and
- conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times, both inside and outside of the CIT.

## 2.2 Additional tasks

Many courses will also require TAs to:

- run lab sessions;
- prepare and present help sessions for projects and upcoming exams;
- hold interactive grading sessions for design checks and programming assignments;
- assist the instructor in developing new assignments (which may entail writing new support code) and/or lectures and improve old ones; and/or
- manage a course web site.

## 2.3 Tasks not handled by UTAs

Some tasks are out of the scope of a UTA's responsibilities. For example, UTAs do not:

- assign final grades and enter them in Banner;
- teach courses, unless invited to give a guest lecture by the professor;
- work with SAS on student academic accommodations;
- confront students about possible violations of the academic code;
- prosecute cases of alleged academic misconduct; or
- grant extensions or incompletes to students.

## 2.4 UTA Leave Policy

During the semester, UTAs may find that they need to take a leave from their duties for health reasons. A leave of absence entails a hiatus of some or all of TAs responsibilities. If you feel, at any point during the semester, that you would benefit from a leave of absence you can follow the steps below to initiate a leave.

1. Contact Thomas Doepfner, the Director of Undergraduate Studies, or the Office of the Dean of the College to have an in-person check in to discuss the leave. The Health and Wellness advocates may assist you with setting up the meetings.
2. Once the leave has been approved by Tom and/or the Academic & Advising Deans, contact the Professor to schedule a meeting to discuss the leave. Tom, MTA(s) or the Health and Wellness advocate can also do this on your behalf if you are uncomfortable.
3. Fill out the form and submit to Tom or Health and Wellness advocate (who may submit the form to Tom on your behalf). The forms will be kept by

Tom. Once the form is submitted and approved, the TA is officially on leave.

4. When the listed date on the form for the check-in is reached, the student will have a check-in with Tom and/or an Academic & Advising Dean to reevaluate their situation. If an in-person check-in date cannot be determined, (say the student will be off campus for an indeterminate amount of time), a phone call or an email can take its place.
5. If needed, more time on leave can be given. If the TA feels ready to begin working again they may.

## 2.5 Substandard performance and (non) Causes for Termination

First things first: TAs are rarely fired.

If you are not performing the basic duties of your job (grading, office hours, or whatever your course assigns to you) or behaving unprofessionally, your HTAs (and perhaps the professor) will talk with you about the problem and give you a chance to turn things around. If the underperformance continues, the situation will be raised with the directors of undergraduate studies (typically Tom Doeppner, who oversees the TA program). Such situations can result in termination; they are handled on a case-by-case basis.

If you are found to have violated the Academic Code (whether as a student or as a TA), you will immediately lose your TA position and be banned from TAing for at least another year.

Finally, you could be dismissed if you repeatedly fail to log your hours, to the point that you are causing excess work for the CS department administrative staff. This will not happen without prior warning from the professor or a director of undergraduate studies.

### 2.5.1 Raising concerns will NOT affect your TA position

Your raising concerns about how things are running in your course—whether to HTAs, the professor, the director of undergraduate studies, etc—will NOT affect your current or future employment as a TA. The MTAs and directors of undergraduate studies strongly request that you raise problems directly with an appropriate person (rather than jumping to the BDH, Blueno, or other venues). Brown’s Code of Conduct applies to everyone at Brown (UTAs, MTAs, faculty, administration, etc). It clearly states that we must all treat each other with respect (section 3.2) that you should raise issues with the supervisor of the person or course component where the problem lies (section 3.3.8). If that proves ineffective, raise it one level higher. The supervisory chain for UTAs is (HTA and/or professor), director of undergraduate studies, the department chair, then the College.

We understand that many of you will be uncomfortable doing this. That said, learning how to navigate reporting structures is an important professional skill, and at Brown CS we offer a supportive and non-retaliatory environment in

which you can do so (backed by the Code of Conduct). If you need a third-party sounding board to help you figure out how to approach raising an issue, the CS Health and Wellness advocates, CS Diversity advocates, and Christina Smith in the Sheridan center (who helps with TA training) are all available for this. Note, however, that none of these people are in a position to address any issues, so issues should eventually be brought to an appropriate person with authority over the issue.

### **3 Hours**

Most UTAs hold two or more office hours a week, in addition to hours held by their professor. In some situations, such as right before a major assignment is due, TAs may hold supplemental hours in addition to their scheduled office hours. In general, you should only be helping one student at a time during technical hours, and other students seeking your expertise should wait either outside the room you are holding hours or at a node in another room. Sometimes, you will find it more convenient to help a few students who have the same question at the same time, but be aware of how crowded your space is becoming.

#### **3.1 Location and timing**

You should hold your office hours at the time and in the place assigned by your HTA(s). Hours are always held in public places, never in private areas, such as a dorm or apartment. Almost all courses hold their hours in specially-designated rooms on the first and second floors of the CIT, though holding hours in the undergraduate computing labs (Sunlab and MS-Lab) is not permitted. The MTA-facilitated hours rooms are:

- Motorola (CIT 165)
- Sat-Lab (“Satellite Lab”) (CIT 201)
- CIT 203
- CIT 205
- The Nook (CIT 207)
- The Outback (CIT 219)
- The Moonlab (CIT 227)
- CIT 267
- CIT 269
- The Fishbowl (CIT 271)

Some courses will also hold hours outside of these rooms using Astaff-facilitated rooms such as CIT 101, CIT 102, and Swig (CIT 241). Please check with your HTAs which room your office hours have been assigned to.

Please respect whatever facility you are assigned to. Throw away any trash that may have accumulated during your hours and erase any whiteboards you may have written on. Keep the door to the room you are in open, but do not prop the doors to any of the stairwells. If you shift around monitors or chairs, put

the room back together before leaving. Also, if you are the last TA to leave the room at night, turn off the lights and close the door after you.

It is your responsibility to arrive at your hours on time and to be appropriately prepared. Do not be late, do not wander away from your post, and do not cancel your hours at the last minute. If you know in advance that you will be unable to attend your hours, make every effort to trade times with another TA.

If no other TA is available, then contact your HTA(s) to reschedule your hours for another time that week. **Do not attempt to use a room for TA hours without confirming with your HTAs that the room has been reserved for your office hours.** If there is ever a change to your course's hours schedule, notify your students of this change.

Priority usage for machines in rooms used for TA hours is as follows:

1. TAs on hours, using a machine to help a student;
2. TAs on hours, using a machine for other TA-related work;
3. TAs on hours, doing their own work;
4. TAs off hours, doing any TA-related work; and finally,
5. TAs off hours, doing their own work.

If someone with a higher priority than you needs a machine, you may be asked to log off.

Students may work in 203, 205, and 207 when TA hours are not in session. If there are students working in these rooms while you are holding TA hours, you may ask them to work somewhere else if your space is becoming overcrowded.

### 3.2 Hours queues

Most courses have a system for managing office hour signups. One department-supported tool is <https://hours.cs.brown.edu/>. Other courses use Google forms and sheets that do additional tracking of relevant data. (If SignMeUp is offline, you can have students write their name on a whiteboard instead.) TAs should keep an eye on their hours queues. You may need to cut off your hours queue if it is still growing towards the end of your shift and you are the last TA on hours. You may also want to request backup from your fellow TAs if the list gets out of hand.

You may discourage students from adding their names to the end of the hours queue immediately after being helped. This is especially important in introductory courses, where some students will continue returning to TA hours without attempting to make progress independently on the assignment. Some courses may place a limit on when students can sign up again after being helped. If your course does this, make sure you are enforcing the limit even if your hours are not very busy.

If there is no one on your hours queue, you may feel free to continue helping a student for as long as you like. However, if you have other students waiting

for your help, you may need to limit the attention you give to each individual. Fifteen minutes is generally regarded as a decent upper limit for how much time to spend with a single student when others are waiting. (Each course sets their own policies in regards to time limits at TA Hours, so check with your HTAs as to what your course's policies are.)

### 3.3 Regrade requests

If a student comes to you during hours to contest a grade, politely turn them away unless you graded that problem or project. Do not look over their answer. Do not comment on the grade or the grader. Regrade requests can only be handled by the TA who assigned the grade in question or an HTA. Some courses will not allow any TA to review grade disputes at hours, even if that TA was the original grader—consult your professor and HTAs for your course's policy.

If you graded their problem or project, listen to their request and decide whether a grade change is in order. If you agree that there was an error, follow your course's process for changing a grade. If you disagree, politely tell the student that based on the grading standards you cannot give them a grade change. If the student is dissatisfied by your response, you can suggest they talk to an HTA about the matter. If you aren't sure about a regrade request, it is a good idea to reach out to the rest of your staff to come to a consensus to maintain consistency.

### 3.4 Teaching tactics

Arrive to your hours well-rested, well-fed, and sober. Make sure you are well-versed in the material that has been covered recently in class. Take a look at whatever assignment is currently out; if you do not feel confident in your ability to solve the problems or your memory of the project is fuzzy, go over the solution key or your old code. Do not bluff your way to an answer; if you are not sure, ask another TA, or tell the student you will investigate and get back to them shortly. Giving bad advice or incorrect information at TA hours is harmful not only to the student but also to the TA and the course.

### 3.5 Handling problematic students

Some students under pressure may be emotional when they come to you on hours. If a student seems under extreme duress and it is clear that they will not be able to finish the project or homework before the deadline, gently suggest they have something to eat, get some sleep, and take a late penalty. **Do not offer to give the student an extension or Incomplete or even comment on the likelihood of such an exception;** only a professor can award these, and the latter will likely involve a recommendation by a Dean who will talk to the student about their special circumstances. If the student asks about an extension, refer them to your professor, but do not comment on the likelihood of an extension being granted. If a student is particularly aggressive, we encourage



you to leave wherever you usually hold your hours and retreat downstairs to the public atrium (where a Department of Public Safety officer is stationed). Similarly, if you are holding hours virtually, you should feel free to leave the video call or remove the problematic student from the call.

Some students will pressure you for more help than you are allowed to offer them. Do not give them answers or snippets of code. It is not your job to supply your students with the answers; it is your job to help them figure out the answers for themselves. If a student is constantly pressuring you for more help than is acceptable, you may wish to bring the situation up with an HTA or your professor who can help you talk to the student or talk to the student themselves about what kind of help should be expected at TA hours.

The department discourages TAs from discussing course material with students outside of official TA hours—virtually all courses have a written policy that states that TAs will refuse to help students outside of official hours. If you are approached by a student with questions about the course while you are not on hours, you are not obligated to answer them. It is to your benefit and that of your co-TAs that no TAs provide help outside of hours as students will not expect that any TA will help them outside of hours and will refrain from making such requests.

## **4 Grading**

UTAs grade most of their students' assignments, including design checks, problem sets, programs, and exams. These grades are considered a measure of performance and are used by the professor in determining the students' final grades. It is important to note that while UTAs may grade students' work and, for some courses, assist in the development of grading rubrics and guidelines, the ultimate responsibility for course grades and rubrics lies in the hands of the professor. In particular, UTAs and HTAs should not comment on or directly assist with the assignment of final letter grades for the course. In addition, UTAs and HTAs should not be solely responsible for the development of grading rubrics.

Grading systems vastly differ between courses. For more information on the grading system of a given course, including its grading meetings, rubrics, late policy, etc., please talk to that course's HTA(s) or professor.

### **4.1 Basic guidelines**

Grade in a place your students do not have access to, such as the TA labs (348 and 367) or your room. Do not grade in spaces such as the Sunlab, the Fishbowl, 201, or the Moonlab. Grades are a private matter and should not be discussed in public. If a student is present in the area you intend to use for grading, find another space or politely ask them to leave. Courses may reserve the TA labs for grading meetings in which case they may ask other TAs to leave during their reservation. When not reserved, the grading labs are on a first-come first serve

basis. If a student in your course is already grading, you'll need to find another space or wait until they are done.

Submit your grades on time. If you feel you will not be able to do so, alert your HTA(s) or professor as soon as possible. Missing a deadline reflects poorly on you, your course, your professor, and ultimately our department.

## **4.2 Fairness**

Grade in a fair and consistent manner. If you are grading problem sets, try to have each TA grade only one problem to help maintain consistency. Reach a consensus on how many points to take off for a given mistake and remain faithful to that decision. Such decisions should be documented for later review (if you use a computer-based tool with rubric features, such as Canvas or Gradescope, this is automatically tracked). Remember: the last student you grade should be judged according to the same standards as the first. If you feel that you have made an error in grading, by grading too harshly or too generously or inconsistently, go back through the assignments you graded and adjust accordingly.

It is important that your grading look fair in addition to being fair. Explain whatever point deductions you make and leave clear feedback. When a thorough explanation would be very lengthy to write out, it is ok to write a summary and ask the student to stop by your hours if they have further questions.

## **4.3 Suspicious handins**

Familiarize yourself with your course's collaboration policy at the start of the semester. These policies vary from course to course; for example, some programming courses will allow students to debug one another's code while others forbid so much as looking at another student's screen. Many courses allow for some amount of collaboration on homeworks, but may not permit taking notes away from collaboration sessions. If you do notice anything suspicious, such as extremely similar code or problem sets, alert your HTA(s) and professor immediately and discretely. Do not mention these cases to other UTAs or the students who are potentially involved. Possible cases of academic misconduct will be handled by your professor.

## **4.4 Blocklisting**

The blocklist may sound ominous, but it is commonly used by TAs who have pre-existing relationships with their students. Your blocklist is a list of students in your course whom you are unable to grade due to a conflict of interest. Potential conflicts of interest include: significant others, former significant others, relatives, close friends, roommates, etc., as well as people with whom you have a personal/professional disagreement or business relationship. It is also important to consider that even if you are comfortable with grading a particular student they may feel differently. It is much better to err on the side of caution if you are not sure if you should blocklist someone.

Your HTAs will give you guidance as to how your course's blocklist system works at the beginning of the semester. Create your blocklist at the start of the semester and add to it when necessary. Never grade a student on your blocklist. For most electronic grading, scripts will handle this. If grading by hand, make sure to use a system such as a list of Banner ID's that you cannot grade or similar. Your blocklist should be private to only you. You should never be asked by another member of your staff about your blocklist nor should you reveal any information about who is on it. Make sure that if your blocklist is stored in your course's directory the permissions are set such that only you may read it.

In addition to relationships outside of courses, think of CS UTAs as forming a directed graph and avoid cycles. You should not grade TAs of courses you are currently enrolled in, and they should not grade you.

## **5 Professionalism**

As an undergraduate teaching assistant, your behavior reflects on not only your values, but also the culture of our department as a whole. It is critical that you comport yourself in a polite and professional manner at all times.

### **5.1 Your conduct**

Do not speak ill of your students, co-TAs, HTA(s), professor, or course. Do not make disparaging comments about other courses, TAs, professors, or the department in general. As a UTA, students will look to you as an example. You will set the tone that they will use to describe their experiences within your course and, by extension, the CS department.

Try to appear approachable while on hours. Be patient with your students. Encourage them to ask questions or request that you slow down or repeat explanations. Remember that students may need some guidance when using unfamiliar software, such as Linux. Direct them to an online tutorial or consultant if you think they need help using the machines. If a student is asking for too much help, or asking inappropriately, however, alert the HTA(s) and the professor.

Consider the message your behavior, tone, and appearance sends to your students. Everything right down to your desktop background should communicate that you are a professional, respectful individual. If a student does not reciprocate this respectful behavior, ask them to continue their discussion with your HTA(s), who will have more experience with these types of situations and may in turn refer them to your professor.

### **5.2 Interacting with students outside of the CIT**

Do not engage in unprofessional relationships with your students. If you find yourself at a social event with one or more of your students, remain professional. Do not consume alcohol or other mind-altering substances with your students.

Do not perform illegal activities in front of your students (or at all, for that matter).

### **5.3 Contributing to a positive work environment**

Humor should not come at the expense of others' comfort. Sexist, racist, and homophobic jokes are never funny. Any joke meant to alienate others is never funny. Be aware of the comments you make while around students and other TAs, even if you are speaking casually to friends. Something that may seem funny to you may make your fellow TAs or students uncomfortable in the course, which is unacceptable.

Harassment is any verbal, written, or physical conduct designed to intimidate, coerce, or make another person feel uncomfortable. Harassment may include unwelcome advances, physical touching, or offensive or unwelcome comments regarding a person's race, gender, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, or appearance. The undergraduate TA program has a zero-tolerance policy for harassment of any form.

Though the department encourages the social aspects of working in the Sunlab and the sense of camaraderie it can foster, do not let your socializing degenerate to the point where it makes the lab overly noisy and unpleasant for students who are trying to concentrate.

## **6 Compensation**

TAs are compensated for their work with either course credit or pay. Exceptions to this rule include:

- TAs who have already TAed twice for credit must TA for pay. (This is a University-established rule.)
- TAs who are graduate students must TA for pay. (The "TA for credit" course is an undergraduate-only course.)
- TAs for cs0150, who should refer to section 6.4; UTAs for these courses must TA for both credit and pay, and HTA(s) for these courses must TA for pay unless they have permission to do otherwise from the director of undergraduate studies.
- STAs must STA for pay. However, joint UTA-STAs may UTA for credit and STA for pay.
- HTAs who expect to work more than 20 hours per week are eligible to put 180 hours of work towards a course credit and the remaining hours towards pay.

### **6.1 Course credit**

If you "TA for credit" you will receive a course credit that appears on your transcript as compensation for your work. You may TA for credit at most twice. Additionally, note that all TAs receive monetary compensation for work done

during TA Camp and before the semester begins, including attending required training. Please read the section about TAing for pay to learn about logging the hours spent attending training and working during TA Camp.

If you choose to TA for credit, the course that will appear on your transcript will either be CSCI0081, “TA Apprenticeship: Full Credit”, or CSCI0082, “TA Apprenticeship: Half Credit”. cs0081 is a full-credit (1) course whereas cs0082 is a half-credit (0.5) course. TAs should enroll in cs0082 only if taking cs0081 would put them over their credit limit for the semester—i.e. if you are enrolled in 4.5 other credits, then cs0082 is the course for you. Regardless of whether or not you choose cs0081 or cs0082, your TA responsibilities and workload across the semester will generally be the same as if you were working for pay.

Like any other course, cs0081/cs0082 can be taken for a grade or S/NC. Some courses encourage their TAs to take the course S/NC. If you’re interested in taking it for a grade, please speak with your HTA(s) and professor about how you will be evaluated for a grade, as each course establishes different grading standards for their TAs working for credit.

During TA camp the Meta-TAs will send out a form asking if you would like to TA for credit. If you are TAing for credit, you should register for the appropriate course on CAB before the end of shopping period. **It is extremely important that you register for one of these courses before the last day to add a class, as if you are not registered by the deadline, it will be impossible to give you course credit for TAing if you are not registered.**

The credit you receive from cs0081/2 may not be counted towards a Computer Science concentration—it simply counts towards the 30 credits required to graduate from Brown.

If you have additional questions about these policies, feel free to reach out to the Meta-TAs or Thomas Doeppner.

## 6.2 Pay

UTAs and STAs are paid according to the following formula:

**UTA / STA pay = \$15.50 per hour**

To be paid, you need to fill out an I-9 form and a W-4 form. If you have worked for Brown before, you have already been cleared and do not need to worry about this as long as you are an undergraduate student, not an international student, and have not taken a leave of absence or studied abroad since I-9’ing.

If you have not completed the form, you must fill it out online on Workday and present your required identification in-person at the Brown Business Center (Page-Robinson Hall, 2nd floor). A passport or a combination of state-issued ID and social security card work nicely. You can also refer to the full list on page 3 of the I-9 here. If you have any confusion about the I-9 process, you can refer to the Brown Business Center website for more information. You’ll

need to complete the I-9 as part of your application process before you can be interviewed by courses.

W-4s are also completed online. To complete it log on to Workday here, then click the “Pay” circle, then click “Withholding Elections”. In both the “Federal elections” and “state elections” tab, click “Update” to fill out the form. You should complete the W-4 form as soon as you are on payroll.

### 6.3 Logging hours

To log hours for time spent working as a TA, you will use Workday. You can access Workday at [brown.edu/go/wd](http://brown.edu/go/wd). On the main Workday page, click the “Time” button and then “This Week”, which will bring you a page where you can log hours. Click within the box under a day to log hours for it. In the enter time popup, select “Regular Hours” and enter the start and end time of when you worked.

For any/all UTA jobs, log hours under the position titled “Computer Science Undergraduate Teaching Assistant” or something like it. Be sure to select this position when logging hours, not the “Student Employment” default. **If your position doesn’t show up after the date that the Meta-TAs have said it should be set up, please reach out to the Meta-TAs.**

If you have multiple positions, please make sure to submit hours for the correct position. If you held the same position in a semester prior, check with your payroll manager about which position you should log hours under.

Do not submit the week until you have logged all of the week’s hours. When you are ready to submit, click the large orange button below the calendar to finalize. Once you have submitted the hours, there will be a page with an empty box for comments at the bottom of the screen. You do not need to fill in this box.

The Workday week ends on Saturday and you must submit your hours by the following Monday at 11am. Once the week ends, you will be unable to edit or submit previous hours and may have to back-log, so please try to make this deadline. If you have any problems submitting hours or forgot to submit your hours, you’ll need to work with the current payroll manager to find a solution. TAs that consistently do not log hours in a timely fashion may be dismissed.

To be blunt, your failure to submit hours on time creates considerable time and paperwork for the CS admins who manage payroll (in accordance with university policies). Reporting hours late does not just delay when you get paid. It makes nontrivial additional work for others who are trying to support nearly 400 TAs at once. Be considerate of their time.

If you are interested in signing up for direct deposit, you can register on the Workday system by clicking the button labeled “Pay”, and then “Payment Elections”.

## **6.4 TAing for Credit and Pay (cs0150 TAs only)**

If you are a UTA for cs0150, then you are required to TA for both credit and pay. This means that you must register for cs0081 or cs0082. You should not register for more than 4.5 other courses so that you leave enough room for cs0081 or cs0082. If you fail to register for one of the two courses by the end of shopping period, you may be fired.

UTAs for these courses will be paid only for hours spent grading; the rest of their duties are performed for course credit. Therefore, the hours logged by TAs for these courses should only be for the hours spent grading assignments.

HTA(s) for cs0150 must work only for pay unless they have permission from the director of undergraduate studies. UTAs who have TA'ed for credit twice already must work only for pay. These TAs should log all of their hours in Workday.

If you are on financial aid, you may be excused from the mandatory Credit and Pay policy. Please contact Thomas Doeppner (twd@cs.brown.edu) to let him know that you would like to TA for pay only, who will then check your status with the financial aid office.

## **7 TA Camp**

Many courses hold TA camp before the start of the semester to prepare course materials and train their TAs in course specific procedures. Your HTA(s) will let you know if your course will be having TA camp and when it will be held.

### **7.1 Housing and compensation**

Since TA camp usually starts before the dorms officially reopen, the department will cover the cost of moving into on-campus housing early. The Meta-TAs will send out a form a few weeks before camp starts to collect early housing requests from TAs. All TAs, regardless of if they are TAing for credit or pay, are compensated for their hours during TA camp with pay.

### **7.2 Department-wide training**

During TA Camp, the department holds training for all TAs. All TAs should plan to attend these mandatory training sessions conducted by the diversity and inclusion advocates, and health and wellness advocates. Additionally, there will be a training session for new TAs on Canvas which TAs can complete asynchronously.

## **8 Your Own Workload and Mental Health**

On average, you should be working no more than 10 hours a week once the semester begins. In practice, many UTAs find it hard to stick to this, sometimes

for issues that aren't entirely within their control (such as a problem emerging with an assignment, long queues at hours, or the need to finish materials that weren't prepared sufficiently far in advance, ). Most TAs are focused on the experience of students in the course (a good thing), and quietly take on this additional load (a not-good thing).

If you end up working more than 10 hours and you are TAing for pay, you must claim those hours in Workday. We hear that students often refrain from doing this, fearing they will get in trouble or lose their positions. There is no retribution for claiming extra hours that you worked, either during the current semester or in future semesters. US Federal Law requires that you be paid for the hours you worked.

If you are frequently needing to go over 10 hours a week, however, that does suggest that something is off regarding how the course is running in practice (assignment prep timeframes, assignment difficulty, expectations of how long tasks would take). Alert your HTAs and/or your professor if you are routinely running over, especially if doing so is interfering with your own work.

Some TAs experience other stressors from the job, particularly when students get demanding or when hours lines are too long. Protecting your mental health is essential to your overall well-being. Please do not suffer in silence. Reach out to the professor, your HTAs, the MTAs, or the Health and Wellness advocates (basically, whoever you are comfortable talking to). If the professor or HTAs invite feedback on how your role is going, be honest and report concerns.

If you feel there are systemic problems with the course organization and TA workload or mental health that aren't being addressed within the course, raise the issues as described in section 2.5.1.

## 9 Miscellanea

You may find the following information useful during your tenure as an undergraduate teaching assistant.

### 9.1 Building access

During TA camp, you should ensure that your Brown ID card gives you access to the following rooms:

- the Fishbowl (CIT 271)
- the J-Lab (CIT 367)
- the B-Lab (CIT 348)
- the back and side stairwells

The elevators and stairwells lock after business hours. Undergraduate students not currently TAing a course should refrain from being on the upper-level floors (i.e., floors three, four, and five) after regular business hours.



If your course is holding an event on the upper floors after business hours, make sure that your students will be able to access the space and encourage them to make their way downstairs after the event is over.

If you hold hours in 201, 203, 205, or 207 and the room is locked you can ask the Sunlab Consultant on duty for a key. If you are holding hours in another room, you can ask the security guard to unlock it. If the security guard asks you to leave the building, please email the Meta-TAs for a copy of the building access memo (stating anyone with card access should be allowed in the building at any hour).

## 8.2 Email addresses

This document mentions a variety of folks that you may need to get in touch with during your time as a UTA. For your convenience, their email addresses are listed below.

- **Directors of Undergraduate Studies:** twd@cs.brown.edu, kfisler@cs.brown.edu
- **Meta-TAs:** mta@cs.brown.edu
- **Head STAs:** hstas@lists.cs.brown.edu
- **Payroll Manager for Undergraduates:** lori\_agresti@brown.edu
  
- **Payroll Manager for Master’s Students:** elena\_quinonez@brown.edu
- **Diversity and Inclusion Advocates:** diversity.advocates@lists.cs.brown.edu
- **Health and Wellness Advocates:** wellness.advocates@lists.cs.brown.edu
- **Head Sunlab Consultants:** head-consultant@cs.brown.edu
- **TStaff:** problem@cs.brown.edu

## 8.3 Reimbursement

Your course is awarded a small discretionary budget for “course development” purposes, which many courses generally use to purchase food for grading meetings. In general, your HTA(s) will take care of ordering and paying for food. However, if you do ever pay for food for your staff, make sure to keep your receipt. You should submit your receipt to your professor’s administrative assistant. If your professor doesn’t have an administrative assistant, you should submit it to Lauren Clarke. The department is unable to reimburse TAs for purchases they do not have receipts for. For more information, see your HTA(s).