

Guidelines for UGTAs in BIO Courses

- **TRAINING:** Unless they have taken BIO372C or CH372C, UGTAs must take either the TA Training Course offered by the Biology Instructional Office that is mandatory for TAs, or the one offered by TIDES.
- **CLARITY ABOUT THEIR ROLE:** Instructors, TAs, and UGTAs should meet jointly at the beginning of the semester to decide who is going to do what and put it in writing.
- **UGTA/STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS:** UGTAs must be asked at the beginning of the semester to reveal if any student in the course is a romantic partner or a close friend. University policy states that a UGTA cannot work in a course in which a romantic partner is enrolled. (This is the case even if the UGTA has no direct authority over their romantic partner.) UGTAs should neither have direct authority over nor handle the grades of close friends. UGTAs cannot begin to date students in the course, whether they have direct authority over those students or not; they need to wait until the course is over.
- **UGTA/STUDENT INTERACTIONS:** UGTAs should meet with students in the course only during official times – such as Discussions or Office Hours and only in classrooms or other official locations arranged by the Biology Instructional Office. Office hours should not be held in dining halls, restaurants, or other casual locations. UGTAs cannot give preferential treatment to specific students – they should hold meetings only if they are accessible to all students in their charge. One-on-one help sessions are OK if all of their students can arrange to have one.
- **PROFESSIONAL DRESS:** UGTAs should be advised to dress professionally when they are interacting with students. (Smelly gym clothes and revealing clothing, for example, are inappropriate.)
- **PROFESSIONAL TONE:** UGTAs must adopt an appropriate professional tone with the students. The Instructor and the UGTA are all on the same team whose mission is to help the students learn. UGTAs are not meant to side with the students against the Instructor, nor is the job of a UGTA to help the students “deal” with the Instructor.
- **FERPA:** FERPA stands for Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The bottom line of what you need to know is the following: In your role as UGTA, you will have access to student grades and other information about the students. All information about the students is private information that you must not disclose to *anyone*. If the student is over 18, that includes the students’ parents. It is against FERPA for any one of us to even acknowledge to a parent of a person over 18 that the person is or is not a student at UT. See the website below for more details.
<https://registrar.utexas.edu/students/records/ferpa/faculty>
- **WHAT TO DO IF YOU’RE CONCERNED ABOUT A STUDENT’S HEALTH / BEHAVIOR:**
You can do one or all of the following.
Contact the Behavior Concerns Advice Line: <https://besafe.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line>
Contact the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center: <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>
Contact the CNS Counselor in Residence, Andrea Ortega: https://cmhc.utexas.edu/CARE_ortega.html
ALSO: Let me (Janice) know about serious student behavior issues.
- **READ THE UGTA RESOURCES ON THE UT - TIDES WEBSITE:**
<https://cns.utexas.edu/tides/faculty/ugta-resources/students>