**Department of Social Work**

**Undergraduate Teaching Assistantship: Rationale and Process**

Social workers engage in both learning and teaching across their professional career. In our roles as social work educators, we recognize the many strengths that our students bring to our courses and wish to provide additional opportunities for students to extend the breadth and depth of their social work skillset. With this in mind, we provide students additional opportunties to demonstrate leadership and substantive expertise. Being an undergraduate teaching assistant (TA) can be an important learning experience. It gives students the opportunity to see the process of teaching from the teacher's perspective, provides the opportunity to begin to learn how to teach, and requires that the course material be learned in-depth (as there is no better way to learn something than to teach it). Additional benefits for students include opportunities for professional development, praxis experience, leadership development, and advancing your interests in graduate school. Benefits to the instructor can include hands-on help with students and course materials.

This document outlines the qualifications required of students who are interested in serving in this role, the process that students will engage in to work with a Department of Social Work faculty member as an undergraduate TA, and the expectations for students and faculty participating in the teaching assistantship program.

**Qualifications of a TA:**

* Must have already taken the course for which they will be serving as a TA with a grade of B or better in the course; and
* Must have demonstrated record of outstanding academic performance within Social Work classes, as evidenced by a recommendation from a Social Work faculty member; and
* Must sign up for the 3 credit TA course (SPS 4500) that will provide student’s support for their work. Students will send their name and 900 number to the faculty member with whom they will be working to facilitate course enrollment. This course will substitute for an upper-division social work elective. This course will introduce additional information about teaching, provide additional support for TAs, and enable greater engagement in teaching and learning in social work. See course syllabus for more information about course requirements; and
* Must have availability congruent with the course for which they will be serving as a TA.

**Process for applying to serve as a Department of Social Work Undergraduate TA:**

Teaching Assistants may be identified in a number of ways. A primary way is that faculty teaching a Social Work course may identify an exemplary student and invite them to consider applying to serve as a TA with them in the future. Students may also indicate their interest in serving as a TA to a faculty member or to the BSSW Program Director, who could help match them with faculty who are seeking TAs for an upcoming semester. Once a connection has been made between a student with interest in serving as a TA and a faculty member interested in working with a TA in an upcoming class, the faculty member will conduct an interview with the student to assess their readiness to step into this important role and to make sure the student meets the TA qualifications. Once the faculty has interviewed all qualified students, the faculty member will offer the TA position to selected student(s). If the student accepts this position:

1. The student will send the faculty member with whom they will be working their 900# so that they can be registered for the TA course.
2. The student and faculty will meet to complete the TA contract and plan their work together.

**Other requirements for Social Work TAs:**

* Meet with the BSSW Program Director once over the semester to discuss their experiences as a TA.

**Department of Social Work**

**Undergraduate Teaching Assistantship: Contract**

It is important that faculty/TA pairs have a clear understanding of the tasks that are expected as the student completes their duty as a TA. The faculty mentor and TA will have an initial discussion of the expectations listed below and then complete this contract. Once the contract is completed, please make sure there are two copies available: one for the teaching assistant, one for the faculty mentor, one for the BSSW Program Director, and one for the SPS 4500 course instructor.

**Expected Roles for Course Instructor, Faculty Mentor, and TA:**

**CPS 4500 Course Instructor:** The instructor will provide a forum for students to learn about the basic skills of teaching. The course instructor will provide meaningful assignments to assist students in practicing the skills being learned in the classroom.

**Faculty Mentors:** TAs are participating in a learning experience. As time permits, faculty mentors are expected to discuss teaching philosophy, teaching techniques, class management dynamics, and other relevant issues with teaching assistants. Faculty mentors should provide adequate time to train TA’s to do the tasks they are asked to complete as part of their commitment. Faculty mentors need to be available to TA’s for ongoing questions during the semester. Therefore, it is expected that mentors will meet on a regular basis with TAs. Faculty mentors should not take on a TA if they do not have adequate time to mentor the TA.

**TAs:** TAs are expected to assist the faculty mentor through time spent attending class, reading, grading, or other duties directly related to assisting with the course. TAs are also expected to attend all scheduled classes related to the accompanying course (SPS 4500).

As your mentor, I will be sure to teach you or explain to you the following (check all that apply):

\_\_\_\_\_ My teaching philosophy

\_\_\_\_\_ My grading policies and why I use them

\_\_\_\_\_ Techniques I use to stimulate interest in the subject

\_\_\_\_\_ How I write an exam and what do I think are the most important parts of an exam

\_\_\_\_\_ What do I look for in a movie to have it enhance the classroom learning experience

\_\_\_\_\_ What types of activities are valuable for stimulating learning

\_\_\_\_\_ How I grade written work and what I look for in a written project

\_\_\_\_\_ How I have developed my career after earning my bachelor’s degree

\_\_\_\_\_ What I believe is important in preparing for graduate school

\_\_\_\_\_ What are the ethical considerations I must have when teaching a class

\_\_\_\_\_ How to advance your own (the TAs) career path

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please write in other goals you have while working with your TA)

Faculty mentors and TAs should meet early in the semester and schedule time commitments that respect the peaks and valleys of schedules in teaching. Potential time conflicts should be discussed at this time and adjustments to expectations and workload should be made. TAs should not proctor exams or conduct any class in the absence of the mentor or other professor in the department. Further, TA’s should not be responsible for determining final grades in any class.

TAs can assist in two types of grading: objective and subjective. In the case of subjective grading such as reflection papers, research papers, or essay exams, the TA does an initial review of the assignment with training and a detailed rubric provided by the faculty member. However, the faculty member rereads each assignment and makes the final grade decision. "Grading" of subjective assignments by TAs serves more as a learning tool for the TA than something that assists the professor; the professor still needs to grade each assignment. The second type of grading assignment is objective. These assignments include multiple choice exams or fill in the blank exams. As these assignments are objective, the TAs can grade these exams with training and an answer key provided by the professor. The faculty member then needs to spot check every few exams to make sure that the answer key was properly followed.

All TA’s are required to either lead a portion of a class or multiple classes via lecture, online discussion, or class activity under close guidance and supervision of the faculty mentor.

TAs are expected to refer any conflicts or difficult situations with students to the faculty mentor immediately. Most university employees are **NOT** confidential, meaning that teaching assistants are required by the university to refer any report of sexual misconduct to the Title IX investigation officer in the office of Dean of Students.

TAs experiencing challenges with their faculty mentor should seek out additional support (as early as possible) from the course instructor as well as the BSSW Program Director to support them in addressing these issues.

**As a TA, your grade will be based on the following expectations:**

\_X\_\_ Meet with the instructor once a week for class updates Day of the week/Time of meeting: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Attend all regularly scheduled classes

Can miss \_\_\_\_\_ classes without penalty

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Hold office hours

Hours required per week: \_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Assist with creation of study guides for exams, discussions, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Conduct study groups before exams

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Assist with construction of exam questions

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Assistance with facilitation of classroom discussions

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Assist with construction of discussion questions

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Assist with grading student work

\_\_\_\_\_\_Written assignments Name of assignment: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_Quizzes Name of assignment: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_Exams Name of assignment: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_Online Discussions Name of assignment: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Assist with record keeping/input of student grades

\_\_X\_\_ Present a classroom lecture/create and facilitate online discussion

Lecture Topic: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Length of Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Other Expectations (e.g. handouts, PowerPoint, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Other Expectations (please describe)

Involvement within the class (in person or online) is an integral component of the TA experience. Below, please write down ideas of what expectations both the faculty mentor and teacher assistant have around what classroom involvement may look like**.** These are flexible ideas and may change throughout the course based on the both the faculty mentor and teacher assistant’s preference and what the specific course needs.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have met with my instructor/student and we have arrived at an agreement of our expectations of our working relationship as documented here. I have also discussed with the student the importance of they will adhere to the FERPA guidelines and that she/he many not disclose or discuss any student grades or other personal information about the student. If they do, they are liable for the consequences as they are serving as a Teaching Assistant for MSU Denver. The student will also be available to attend the course affiliated with this TAship.

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Signature of Faculty Signature of Student

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Name Student Name

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Email Student Email

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Student 900#

**Please attach a copy of student’s unofficial transcript to verify grade in course. Students will not be enrolled until all paperwork has been submitted and approved by the BSSW Program Director.**