

# University and Departmental Policies for AIs

## Handbooks and Forms

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### INDIANA UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC HANDBOOK

The Indiana University *Academic Handbook* summarizes information, policies, and procedures applying to all academic appointees, including Associate Instructors (<http://www.indiana.edu/~deanfac/acadhbk/>). Of particular relevance to AIs are the following Faculty Council Actions (<http://www.indiana.edu/~deanfac/acadguid/c.html#aibr>).

“The Bloomington Faculty Council has specified that graduate student instructors (Associate Instructors) shall:

- be employed under a written agreement,
- be provided copies of the Faculty (Academic) Handbook,
- be provided (by supervising faculty or departmental chairperson) a written set of guidelines dealing with the teaching objectives and administrative responsibilities established by the supervisor for the course in which the AI is to function,
- be tested to ensure adequate proficiency in English [foreign graduate students whose native language is not English],
- be provided parking privileges similar to those provided full-time appointees,
- be included on appropriate departmental committees (at least one AI per committee where possible),
- be assigned at an FTE which is commensurate with the amount of work performed, taking into consideration preparation time and office hours,
- be provided a minimum 50% stipend as established by the Budgetary Affairs Committee of the BFC, but preferably a stipend comparable to or better than students in peer units at other institutions,
- be terminated in mid-appointment only by the procedures specified by the Faculty Council,
- be selected according to the procedures and using the criteria specified by the BFC.”

### **DEPARTMENTAL AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATE INSTRUCTOR HANDBOOKS**

Several departments and schools distribute departmental handbooks to reinforce university policies, to introduce departmental teaching policies, and to provide guidance on common disciplinary teaching concerns. Most departments distribute paper versions of their handbooks during orientation. The guidelines and handbooks of the Departments of Anthropology, Chemistry, and History as well as the School of Music were featured in the 2007 AI brochure. Samples of school and department handbooks can be viewed at Campus Instructional Consulting (Franklin Hall 004). In addition, Campus Instructional Consulting maintains a three-part, web-based teaching handbook. This handbook includes information about planning a course, teaching methods, and creating a positive learning environment ([http://www.teaching.iub.edu/handbook\\_toc.php](http://www.teaching.iub.edu/handbook_toc.php)).

### **STUDENT APPLICATION AND AGREEMENT FORM**

By action of the Faculty Council, all student appointees, including Associate Instructors, must complete an application and agreement form to be eligible for their teaching assignment. This form specifies the period of appointment, the remuneration, and a general statement of the duties. This form, a copy of which is to be submitted to the Dean of the Faculties, can be viewed online (<http://www.indiana.edu/~deanfac/acadguid/c20.pdf>).

## THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

### QUESTIONS FOR AIs TO ASK THE LEAD INSTRUCTOR

Graduate students in the Department of Philosophy can be graders, discussion leaders, or instructors of their own course. The latter position is usually reserved for advanced graduate students who have already proved themselves in the former two positions. At the annual AI training week I meet the new graduate students (usually 6–12 of them), who normally have no teaching experience. They are often not aware of the complicated relationships they are facing as assistants to the lead instructors. One week before the fall semester, most have not yet met their lead instructor, are not familiar with the material or the textbook, and are not aware of the general or the specific departmental expectations of their roles.

One of the most useful discussions in the training concerns such information. The students and I generate a list of questions to ask the respective lead professors, which turns into an assignment to be completed by the new assistants within the first two days of the AI training. The assignment jumpstarts conversations during the orientation about further issues and potential problems in teaching. As a result of this assignment and the ensuing discussion the AIs' level of preparedness and confidence improves, as well as their relationships with the lead instructor (by avoiding likely conflicts) and with their students (by avoiding discrepancies in content and requirements between lecture and discussion).

*–Leah Savion, Senior Lecturer, Department of Philosophy*

### SOME EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS

#### **Course / Instructor**

- What office hours should I keep?
- How often shall we meet? Where and when? How can I contact you?
- Is my attendance in all lectures mandatory?
- Where can I find the textbook/reading materials?

**Discussion Sections**

- Are students required to attend discussion? If so, how should I take attendance? How does it count toward the grade? If not, how does non-attendance affect their grade?
- Will you assign reading or homework due in discussions?
- Is discussion participation (not just attendance) a part of the grade?
- Is discussion always an extension of the lectures, or can it be independent?
- Will you provide me with guidelines of the content/activities for each discussion, and the proportions of each topic within the 50 minutes?
- Would you need to approve my discussion plans before each Friday?
- Do I have the liberty to add readings? Discussion topics? Assignments? Special activities? Quizzes?
- Should I report problem students to you, or handle them myself?
- Should I report students' feedback on the lecture material to you?

**Grading**

- What exactly are my grading responsibilities?
- Who writes the tests/assignments/quizzes?
- Should I offer a review class before the midterm and the final?
- Will you provide the students with a guide for aspects of assignments/papers/test and their relative weight, or should I?
- Will you provide me with a guide for grading? Can I see old papers with various grades you have assigned?
- How detailed should my comments on assignments/papers be?
- How fast am I expected to complete all grading?
- Do you wish to review grades before they are recorded or handed back to students?
- Who handles grade disputes? Dishonesty? Learning disabled students?