

Guidelines for PhD Teaching Assistants (TAs) at SCGC

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Introduction meeting

Group introductions with Anne Lene Odegaard (EDCH) and Séverine Roque either on Zoom or in person.

Requirements

All PhD students at EPFL are required to teach besides their research. All PhD students registered with SCGC (Section of Chemistry and Chemical engineering) are required to teach a total of 580 h within the section during their studies. This amount should be reached by the thesis defense and every TA is expected to have at least one teaching duty per semester until this is reached. Teaching releases for candidacy exams or similar can be discussed with the Section. TAs are not expected to teach during their last semester, unless they are lacking an excessive amount of teaching hours.

Teaching hours are converted to “teaching credits” (not to be mistaken with ECTS credits) updated in IS-Academia at the end of every semester by the Section.

Procedure

Will be initiated by an email of the section – 3 phases

Phase 1 - about 3 months before semester start

Teachers are asked to indicate their needs in TAs. They can indicate the names of TAs they have already selected and informed. PhD students particularly interested in a specific course should contact the teachers early enough and inform the Section about any arrangement already made.

Phase 2 - about 2 months before semester start

PhD students are asked to select three still free options for their teaching, respecting the required competences. If they cannot teach, they should inform the Section with their reasons.

Phase 3 - about 1 month before semester start

The section makes the final teaching assignment, based on the teaching needs, the competences of the student and their choices. This assignment is final and mandatory (some mandatory assignments will be made for courses with a lack of TAs).

Replacement

Sessions of teaching should not be missed and the semester of teaching should be planned carefully by PhD students. However, in rare case, an assigned PhD student is allowed to miss a session of teaching, provided he/she finds a replacement who needs to be accepted by the teacher of the course. The section will not look for replacement. TP classes cannot be missed!

Attribution of assistants to courses

In theory, assistants are allowed only for TP and courses including exercise sessions (not for courses only) of more than 15 students. Exceptions need to be validated by the section during phase 1 of the teaching assistant attribution.

- exercises: max 1 assistant for 25 students
- bachelor laboratory works (TP's): max 1 for 10
- presence in lecture for assistants: in principle, only one teaching assistant is expected to follow the lecture as main assistant if needed (only for lectures with exercises and more than 15 students). However, if no assistant with sufficient knowledge in the topic of the course can be found, the teacher can require the assistants to follow the course after validation by the Section.

Attribution of teaching hours at SCGC

Usually, the hours giving at SCGC are effective working hours. Here are a few guidelines:

- Exercise session: 1 h exercise = 2 h teaching
- TP (laboratories): h presence time + about 25% for preparation/corrections
- Following courses: 1 h lecture = 1 h teaching
- Projects supervision (including Master's project): 56 h per student supervised
- Special work (lecture preparation, new exercise sessions, translation work, etc.): effective working hours with justification. For duties over 50 h, pre-validation by the section is required.
- Outreach/promotional events: to be announced to the Section beforehand
→ hours worked during the weekend are doubled

ATTENTION: when supervising an exchange/external student; teaching credits will only be attributed to the TA if the exchange student receives ECTS credits from his home university for his exchange.

Travel compensation

TAs travelling from EPFL antennas will receive an extra 3 h teaching credits per day spent teaching in Lausanne. Train tickets are to be arranged directly with the lab's secretary.

Language issues

The section is aiming to diminish the teaching duties in French. Currently, French cannot be required anymore for any EPFL-related teaching, but is still mandatory for some teaching to UNIL. The Section will advise.

Teaching excellence award

Every year in Autumn, 10 teaching excellence awards including a diploma and a prize of CHF 1'000 is attributed to TAs. Nomination are made exclusively by the teachers. Each TA can receive the prize only once and needs to have a working contract ending after the ongoing year.