GUIDE FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Students at all levels of study at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies (hereinafter: the Institute) may serve as teaching assistants. Using teaching assistants for (mostly technical) assistance allows the instructors to focus more on actual classroom teaching and on improving the content of their classes, thereby raising the overall quality of their teaching. For the student, the role of a teaching assistant offers a chance to increase their involvement with the university and also to see other aspects of the life in the academia.

Even when student assistants are involved in a course, the principles outlined in the University of Tartu Study Regulations will be observed, meaning that the member of teaching staff who is responsible for the course will carry the responsibility for the general organization of classes and student evaluation. Teaching assistants can fulfil various tasks, based on their qualifications and capabilities.

Teaching assistants are picked from among the strongest students. It is possible to apply for a position as a teaching assistant at the beginning of each semester.

Tasks for the teaching assistant

In general, the task of the teaching assistant is to help the instructor with:

- Organizing and carrying out of seminars and practical sessions;
- Reviewing and correcting homework, tests, and exam papers, as well as giving feedback to the students;
- Organizing e-learning.

Teaching assistants who are studying at the BA- and MA-level, are allowed to:

- Carry out seminars and practical sessions, where the study outcomes and content are developed by the member of the teaching staff responsible for the course. If the participation of students is graded during the course, the teaching assistant can make suggestions to the instructor regarding grading;
- Correct tests (multiple choice tests, short answers) where the questions and answers are provided by the responsible lecturer;
- Review parts of papers and essays that do not require evaluation of the content (e.g. teaching assistants can check the correctness of different solutions, the structure, technical and grammatical correctness etc.). Evaluation of the content, as well as the provision of feedback, remains the task of the responsible lecturer;
- Help the lecturer with the administration of the course (e.g. take attendance, administer the course information in Moodle and SIS, answer students’ questions regarding the organization of the course, forward instructors’ feedback etc.);
- Assist foreign-language instructors with correcting Estonian-language homework and exams. The final grading will still be the responsibility of the responsible lecturer.
Teaching assistants who are doctoral students are allowed to:

- Carry out seminars, practical sessions and lectures, whose study outcomes and content is developed in coordination with the responsible lecturer. If the participation of students is graded during the course, the teaching assistant is allowed to do the initial grading which will be confirmed by the responsible lecturer;
- Carry out the initial evaluation of exam papers, the results of which will be confirmed by the responsible lecturer;
- Help the responsible lecturer with the development of tasks and evaluation criteria for homework and seminars/practical sessions and, based on these, carry out the initial grading of all tasks as well as providing adequate feedback;
- Assist the lecturer with the administration of the class (e.g. take attendance, administer the course information in Moodle and SIS, answer students’ questions regarding the organization of the course, forward feedback etc.).

It is not the responsibility of the teaching assistants to individually carry out teaching and examination, grade homework, tests, exams and other papers and to supervise final theses. The organization of the studies according to the standards and regulations of the University of Tartu is therefore the responsibility of lecturers and researchers, not of the teaching assistants.

Teaching assistants usually carry out tasks given to them on an ad hoc basis by a certain member of the academic staff and their work is quite flexible regarding the place, time and method of work. Depending on whether the teaching assistant fulfils simpler tasks (e.g. compiling study materials, correcting multiple choice tests etc.) or more difficult ones (correcting essays, carrying out consultations etc.), their workloads may differ.

Teaching assistance can be counted towards the fulfilment of the curriculum as working practice, under the courses SORG.00.053 (3 ECTS) or SORG.01.072 (6 ECTS), for doctoral students under the course SORG.00.016 (6 ECTS). The work load will be determined by the responsible lecturer based on the tasks the student fulfils.

Additional information:

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