

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 the teaching process 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 to see other aspects of life in academia.

Teaching assistants can fulfil various tasks, based on their qualifications and capabilities; however, a member of teaching staff will carry the responsibility for the general organization of classes and student evaluation, following the principles outlined in the University of Tartu Study Regulations.

Teaching assistants are chosen based on the student's academic track record and interest towards the course. It is possible to apply for a position of a teaching assistant before the beginning of each semester either by approaching any instructor directly or via an open call announced in student mailing lists. A training will be provided before the start of new semester by the Institute or lecturer, responsible for the course, for those teaching assistants who take up the position for the first time.

Tasks of a teaching assistant

In general, the main tasks of a teaching assistant are to help the instructor with:

- Organizing and carrying out 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 studying at the BA or MA level can do the following:

- Carry out seminars and practical sessions, where the learning outcomes and content are developed by a 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 lecturer responsible;
- 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 lecturer responsible;
- Help the lecturer with the administration of the course (e.g. take attendance, administer the course in Moodle, answer students' questions regarding the organization of the course, forward instructors' feedback, provide technical support in cases of hybrid/ remote teaching, etc.);



- Assist non-native instructors with correcting Estonian-language homework and exams. The final grading will still be the responsibility of the lecturer responsible.

Teaching assistants who are doctoral students can do the following:

- Carry out seminars, practical sessions and lectures, where the learning outcomes and content are developed in coordination with the lecturer responsible. 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 lecturer responsible;
- Carry out the initial evaluation of exam papers, the results of which will be confirmed by the lecturer responsible;
- Help the lecturer responsible 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 provide adequate feedback;
- Assist the lecturer with the administration of the class (e.g. take attendance, administer the course in Moodle and SIS, answer students' questions regarding the organization of the course, forward feedback, provide technical support in cases of hybrid/ remote teaching, etc.).

It is not the responsibility of teaching assistants to carry out teaching and examination, grade assignments and supervise final theses independently. The organization of studies according to the regulations of the University of Tartu is therefore the responsibility of the instructor, not of the teaching assistant.

Teaching assistants usually carry out tasks assigned to them on an *ad hoc* basis by a certain member of the academic staff and their work is usually 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, for BA and MA students 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).¹ The workload will be determined by the lecturer responsible, based on the tasks the student fulfils. In case of doctoral students who are junior researchers, the tasks of a teaching assistant may be counted into their workload, which can be specified in the employment contract.

Additional information:

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¹ For more information, please see the internship website: <https://sisu.ut.ee/skytteinternship>