# Osaka University
# Teaching Fellow Handbook

**March 2021**

*This Handbook provides general information about the TF System of Osaka University. For specific details about the tasks of a TF, you are required to participate in a training session held by the schools/faculty or graduate schools offering the course for which you will serve as a TF and follow their instructions.

# Contents

# I. Things you need to know before working as a TF

Unlike a Teaching Assistant (TA), a Teaching Fellow (TF) is responsible for developing a plan for teaching support tasks and implementing the plan while monitoring the progress of the coursework in charge under guidance of the instructor. You are expected to engage in the job of a TF with awareness that you can enhance your educational planning and development skills through the experience of working as a TF.

This Handbook focuses on issues specific to the tasks of TFs only. For information on tasks and requirements common to TAs and TFs, refer to the Teaching Assistant/Teaching Fellow Handbook.

## I-1. Outline of the TF System

### (1) Qualifications to work as a TF

To work as a TF, you should meet all the following requirements and be accepted by the school/faculty, graduate school or center that seeks TFs.

For more information, refer to Q2 on page 9.

- Graduate students in doctoral degree programs; students in the third and subsequent years of the five-year doctoral degree program of the Graduate School of Frontier Biosciences; and doctoral students of the Graduate School of Medicine, Graduate School of Dentistry and Graduate School of Pharmaceutical Sciences; with outstanding academic performance
- Students who have experience of working as a TA for more than 18 hours*[1]
- Students who have completed a TF training session conducted within the past four years from the date of acceptance as a TF*[2]

*1 This does not apply to students who are deemed to have equivalent teaching experience at universities or other educational and research institutions.

*2 You may be exempt from attending the TF Training. Please check its requirement for KOAN.

### (2) Compensation

A TF is paid ¥1,600 per hour.

### (3) Reporting obligation

Each TF and his or her instructor are obligated to submit “TF Activity Report and “TF Evaluation Report” respectively at the end of the course in each term. Please contact the graduate school for details.

## I-2. Scope of responsibilities of TFs

### (1) Tasks specific to TFs

Depending on the subject, you are required to undertake all or any of the following tasks as a TF in addition to the conventional tasks of a TA.

(A) Prepare resumes, teaching materials, exercises, lecture materials, etc.

As a TF, you are responsible for planning, design and preparation of resumes, teaching materials, exercises and lecture materials for the practice- or lecture-based subject in charge. The prepared materials will be inspected by the instructor before being used.

(B) Implement laboratory work, practical training, exercises, seminars, and fieldwork

TFs are allowed to be involved in the teaching of the above practice-based subjects in all the sessions of the courses in such subjects throughout a term, while developing a teaching plan, preparing teaching materials, and monitoring the progress of the coursework, under guidance of the instructor. When the instructor teaches a practice-based subject, the TF can teach the same subject at the same time separately in a nearby classroom.

*In principle, TFs are not allowed to give a lecture. However, TFs may teach up to around 20% of all the sessions of the course in a lecture-based subject with the attendance and under guidance of the instructor if approved by the educational affairs committee of the school/faculty or graduate school that offers the course.

(C) Provide make-up classes

TFs are allowed to provide make-up classes to teach students the subject in charge during extracurricular hours.

(D) Correct and rate reports and quizzes

TFs are allowed to correct and rate students' reports and quizzes under guidance of the instructor, provided that the instructor makes a final check and assumes the final responsibility for the process and results of such correction and rating.

Tasks relating to students' reports and quizzes should be done at the University, and the reports and quizzes should be kept by the instructor.

(E) Mentor and supervise TAs

As a TF, you may work with the instructor to mentor and supervise TAs in charge of the same subject to ensure you can teach the subject effectively as a team.

(F) Assist in scoring term-end exams

You may assist the instructor in scoring term-end exams of the subject in charge only when the instructor provides you with model answers and full consensus is achieved on the grading policy. You are not allowed to score term-end exams without model answers.

**(2) Difference in tasks between TFs and TAs**

The following table shows the difference in tasks between TFs and TAs.

(Tasks common to TFs and TAs are omitted.)

| Task | TF | TA |
|---|---|---|
| Prepare resumes, teaching materials, exercises, lecture materials, etc. | ○*1 | × |
| Mentor and supervise TAs | ○ | × |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Implement laboratory work, practical training, exercises, seminars, and fieldwork | ○ | △ |
| Give lectures | △*2 | × |
| Give advice on self-study, write answers to questions | ○ | △ |
| Correct submitted reports | ○ | △ |
| Rate reports and quizzes | ○ | × |
| Provide make-up classes | ○ | × |
| Score term-end exams | △*3 | × |

△ = Task TFs are allowed to perform only under guidance of the instructor

*1: TFs can make these materials on their own (without guidance of the instructor) when they conduct laboratory work, practical training, exercises, seminars, lectures, etc.

*2: In principle, TFs are not allowed to give a lecture. However, they may teach up to around 20% of the course in a lecture-based subject (e.g. 20% of all the sessions of the course or 20% of the time allotted to each session of the course) if approved by the educational affairs committee of the school/faculty or graduate school that offers the course in the subject.

*3: TFs are allowed to score exams on a preliminary basis only when model answers are available.

For information on other tasks that are common to TAs and TFs, refer to the Teaching Assistant/Teaching Fellow Handbook.

**(3) What TFs cannot do**

TFs should not perform the following tasks. If you are requested by the instructor to do any of the following, please consult the section in charge of TAs/TFs of the relevant school/faculty or graduate school.

(A) Develop a syllabus, make term-end exams, evaluate students' grades

The responsibility to develop a syllabus, make term-end exams, and evaluate students' grades lies with the instructor in charge. TFs are not in a position to perform these tasks that entail a huge responsibility.

(B) Work during non-teaching periods and in the absence of the instructor

TFs cannot work during non-teaching periods or when a class has been cancelled or the instructor is absent due to a business trip.

(C) Engage in tasks not related to the course in charge

It is not the responsibility of TFs to work for purposes not related to the course in charge, undertake tasks for an academic conference or for operation of a seminar and lab, and provide research assistance.

(D) Work beyond contracted working hours

The time required for tasks done outside of class hours, such as preparing for class and rating reports, should be counted as working hours. If you feel you have been working for far longer hours than the contracted working hours, discuss with the instructor the appropriateness of the volume and nature of the tasks assigned to you. Especially when working in telework, be careful if your working hours are ambiguous. If the situation does not improve, consult the section in charge of TAs/TFs in the relevant school/faculty or graduate school.

## II. Things TFs should keep in mind

The things you should keep in mind while on duty as a TF are shown in the following sections titled “What to do before class,” “What to do during class” and “What to do after class.” Read these sections thoroughly so that you can provide high-quality service as an educator.

### II-1. What to do before class

#### (1) Check the syllabus

The first thing you should do after being accepted as a TF is read the syllabus (Ikeda *et al*. 2001, Sato 2010). The three most important components of a syllabus are learning goals (achievement goals), class plan, and grading policy, which constitute the basis of class design.

Most importantly, you should be aware of the learning goals, namely the kinds of knowledge and skills students are supposed to acquire in the class. As a TF, you are expected to assist students in achieving the learning goals.

#### (2) Prepare handouts that are easy-to-understand and easy-to-read

You should stick to the principle of KISS – Keep It Short and Simple. When preparing handouts, you should always make them simple and clear, and never cram in a huge amount of complex information at random. Make sure to provide the necessary amount of information that students truly need.

#### (3) Ensure safety of the classroom and lab

TFs, as well as their instructors, are obligated to ensure safety of both themselves and students. Before each class, therefore, you should inspect the classroom and lab taking into consideration all possible natural disasters and human errors such as earthquake, fire, tsunami, over-turning and mistake in operating a machine. If you find something in a location that may cause danger, move it to a safe place.

If you find any problem with facilities or equipment, ask the instructor to have the problem resolved. (Enhance the earthquake resistance of experimental instruments, lighting equipment, electric devices, shelves, etc.) You should also confirm the locations of emergency exits and fire extinguishers.

### II-2. What to do during class

#### (1) Teach clearly

The basic principle for teaching clearly is “to show, let students do, and make them check.” First, explain to students the work they are expected to do or show them how to do the work. In doing so, you should be clear, fully prepared, and patiently explain “what,” “to what extent,” “why” and “how.”

One common mistake is to teach too much at one time. If students are given too much information at one time, they will struggle to understand and remember it. Therefore, you should give small amounts of information in stages to enable students to fully absorb it. This method is known as the Theory of Small Steps (Kogo 2015, Ishida 2015).

After explaining the process of the work, let students practice doing the work. Simply giving information will not enable students to do the work themselves. To achieve learning goals, students must be given the

opportunity to explain the process, write a paper, or do an experiment themselves.

After students finish practicing, check whether they have achieved the expected level of proficiency. In this process, it is easy to focus on the students' failings, and give no or little feedback on work that was well done, but this is not recommended. You should encourage students by making positive comments such as "you are doing well" and "keep doing what you are doing." Give such feedback frequently at first, and then gradually reduce the frequency as students become better at the work. This will make students self-motivated in their studies.

**(2) Introduce the active learning method**

Active learning is any type of learning that involves the active participation of students, in contrast with passive learning in which students listen to a one-way lecture focusing on the transmission of knowledge (Nakai, 2015).

To be specific, pair work, group work, writing, and making presentations are part of active learning. You are encouraged to introduce these opportunities in the class to help students develop motivation and deepen their studies. TFs are closer to students and thus are expected to play a leading role to encourage active learning.

**(3) Facilitate group work**

Even if you introduce group work into your class, you may find that some groups do not actively engage in their work. There may be several reasons, including: that you didn't do enough ice-breaking (to ease the tension among group members); that the group members do not understand the significance or meaning of the work or discussion; the theme of discussion is not relevant to the group members; that students are not given enough time; that chairs and desks are not arranged appropriately; that the instructor or TF has not facilitated the discussion properly; that the knowledge and information necessary for the discussion are not shared among group members; that the group members do not know how to present an opposite view or ask questions; and that roles are not properly assigned to group members. Check these points and take appropriate measures to facilitate group work.

**(4) Distribute and collect handouts efficiently**

The following measures can be taken to enhance the efficiency of distributing and collecting handouts.

- Put together all handouts in a single set and distribute the set when the class meets for the first time.
- Make handouts accessible on the Internet and ask students to download and print them in advance (use CLE).
- Group students by student number or name and prepare an envelope for each of the groups. Use these envelopes when collecting and distributing handouts.
- Divide students into groups and ask the leader of each group to distribute and collect handouts for the group.

**(5) Prevent students from engaging in misconduct**

You may find some students engaging in misconduct when checking student attendance, supervising exams, or rating reports submitted by students. In some cases, instructors and TFs can prevent such misconduct by

providing relevant guidance and information beforehand and letting students know what will happen in case of misconduct. Each misconduct has a reason behind it. You should discuss with the instructor how you can prevent misconduct by students.

**(6) Effectively warn students against behavior that disturbs the class**

Behavior that disturbs the class refers to chatting and sleeping during class, refusing to participate in pair work or group work, and any other behavior that adversely affects the studies of other students as well as the misbehaving student. You should discuss with the instructor beforehand what measures will be taken to prevent such behavior and to deal with the student. The key to effectively preventing such behavior is to give appropriate guidance as early as possible after the class starts.

**II-3. What to do after class**

**(1) Grade students' works effectively and fairly**

Students' works such as reports and exams need to be graded as efficiently as possible to reduce your grading time and effort, but it is also important to be careful to maintain a fair grading procedure.

You can ensure efficient and fair grading by using assessment tools called Rubrics. Rubrics show what the instructor wants students to accomplish through an assignment (descriptions of dimensions) by means of a matrix and descriptions. The typical format of a matrix specifies what the instructor expects students to achieve (dimensions) on the vertical axis and a multi-level scale that indicates the levels of achievement on the horizontal axis, and descriptions of specific student performance and characteristics of assignment are given in each section of the rubric matrix as grading criteria. You can then grade students' works just by circling one of these sections.

By using the Rubrics, discrepancies in grading criteria can be minimized: for example, Rubrics allow the same criteria to be applied to the grading of the first page and the 50th page of a report, and eliminate discrepancies in evaluation between an instructor and a TF.

By letting students know the grading criteria, you can encourage students to change the way they work on the assignment, which will improve the quality of their work and eventually reduce the time required for grading. It is advisable to create Rubrics for your students with the instructor (Stevens *et al*., 2014).

**Recommended books and courses**

You are recommended to read the following books to enhance your TF skills.

- Terumasa Ikeda et al., *Seicho suru Tips Sensei – Jugyo Design no tame no hiketsu shu (Growth of Mr. Tips: Tips for Class Design)*, Tamagawa University Press, 2001 (¥1,400)
- Jun Ishida, *Kodo kagaku wo tsukatte dekiru hito ga sodatsu! Oshieru Gijutsu (Training Personnel using Behavioral Science: The Art of Instruction)*, Kanki Publishing Inc., 2011 (¥1,400)
- Chiharu Kogo, *Jozu na Oshiekata no Kyokasho: Nyumon Instructional Design (Textbook for Good Teaching: Introduction to Instructional Design)*, Gijutsu-Hyohron Co., Ltd., 2015 (¥1,980)
- Dannelle D. Stevens et al., *Daigaku Kyoin no tame no Rubrics Hyoka Nyumon (Introduction to Rubrics)*, Tamagawa University Press, 2014 (¥2,800)
- Hiroaki Sato (ed.), *Daigaku Kyoin no tame no Jugyo Hoho to Design (Teaching Method and Design for University Faculty)*, Tamagawa University Press, 2010 (¥2,300)
- Toshiki Nakai (ed.), *Active Learning*, Tamagawa University Press, 2015 (¥2,400)
- Barbara Gross Davis, *Jugyo no Dogubako (Tools for Teaching)*, Tokai University Press, 2002 (¥2,800)

To enhance your teaching skills, you are recommended to register for the courses in the following subjects for graduate students.

- Graduate Program for Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies: Future Faculty Program
- Course Design and Teaching I – III, Academic Writing: Writing and Teaching Method, Advanced Course on Career Design, etc.

## III. Q & A on the tasks of TFs

For tasks common to TAs and TFs, refer to the Teaching Assistant/Teaching Fellow Handbook.

Q1. What are the merits of becoming a TF?

A1. Other than the compensation, being involved in education as a TF can provide you with teaching and instructional skills. It is more effective if you are aware of this point. Also, you can list your TF position on your CV as an educational achievement.

Q2. How can I become a TF?

A2. Graduate schools, centers, etc. will solicit TF candidates, so please submit your application. (For details on how to apply, inquire at the office of the relevant graduate school or center.) You must have at least 18 hours experience as a TA in order to apply. You must also attend a TF training session (mandatory) targeting students who want to become a TF. (If you have already completed an STA training session, you don't have to attend a TF training session.) You may be exempt from attending the TF Training. Please check its requirement for KOAN. Note that this training only gives a qualification to work as a TF. Whether you are hired as a TF or not depends on the policies and tasks of the graduate schools/centers that seek TFs.

Q3. I am a Research Fellow ("特別研究員") of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). Can I be a TF?

A3. In principle JSPS Research Fellows are prohibited to receive compensation during their fellowship period. Because obstacles might be in progress of performing the research assignment.
However, only if you meet all the conditions JSPS demands, you will be allowed to receive compensation exceptionally.
For details, confirm "FY2019 Program Guidelines (Strategic Program / Short-term / Standard ) (i.e., fellows whose Fellowship ID starts with "GR19 / PE19 / P19") "
(Japan Society for the Promotion of Science website) https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-pd/index.html

Q4. Are the academic staff of Osaka University well informed of the TF System and roles of TFs?

A4. The primary purpose of introducing the TF System is to enhance the educational level at Osaka University. To ensure that the TF System fully contributes to this purpose, all academic staff of the University were given handouts about this system. However, how to teach the class varies depending on the instructor in charge. Therefore TFs, too, are required to have a good understanding of the TF System and consult the instructor to enhance the efficiency of class management.

Q5. I was asked by the instructor to score term-end exams. Is it OK? I think the responsibility is too heavy for me.

A5. As a TF, you are allowed to score term-end exams on a preliminary basis only when scoring criteria are specified by means of model answers and a full consensus is achieved on the scoring policy between you and the instructor. However, the responsibility for student grade evaluation and scoring of exams lies with the instructor, not the TF.

Q6. The instructor asked me to teach the class in his place. Is this OK?

A6. No. TFs are not allowed to teach class if the instructor is absent on a business trip or for a similar reason.

Q7. I was asked by the instructor to help with work related to an academic conference. Is this part of the responsibilities of a TF?

A7. No. Academic conferences are voluntary events for researchers and thus are not part of their University work. Therefore, they are not part of the responsibility of a TF.

Q8. I was asked by the instructor to mentor students in earlier years at the lab. Is this part of the responsibilities of a TF?

A8. No. Mentoring students in earlier years at labs is a daily practice and not a task to be undertaken as part of the TF System.

Q9. Preparations for work as a TF take a lot of time and I cannot prepare for my own research toward degree requirements. What should I do?

A9. The most important thing is to not let the TF job affect your studies. Before accepting a TF position, carefully consider whether working for the proposed hours would interfere with your studies or not. If the hours necessary for preparing for the TF job exceed the normal level on a daily basis, please consult the instructor about it, and if this is difficult or if the situation remains unaddressed, contact the section in charge of TFs in the relevant school/faculty or graduate school.

Q10. Why are TFs required to submit a TF Activity Report?

A10. The University requests each TF to submit the report to check how the TF has performed the assigned tasks, and use the findings for future improvements. We believe that by writing a report, TFs can review their performance, and this process will eventually lead to enhancement of educational quality. The report is only two A4 pages long, and should not take much time and effort to write.

## Afterword (Published in February 2017)

Since its inception, the TA System has become an integral part of education and research at Osaka University. The TA System currently in place was modeled after the U.S. system and adapted to meet the specific needs of Japanese universities. Its purpose is threefold: (i) to enhance education at universities, (ii) to provide graduate students with financial assistance to help them concentrate on their studies and (iii) to help graduate students develop their career as educators.

At Osaka University, the Working Group on Teaching Assistant/Research Assistant System was established in May 2010. As specific measures to enhance the TA System, the Working Group recommended defining the positions of students working under this system according to their experience, skills and responsibilities, and assigning tasks appropriate to the levels of the students, while emphasizing the importance of preliminary training. Against this backdrop, the Osaka University Teaching Assistant/Teaching Fellow Handbook was published, which all TAs are required to read.

Following the selection of Osaka University for the Top Global University Project, the Education Board of the University reviewed the conventional TA System to further improve the quality of education and decided to introduce a new “Teaching Fellow (TF)” position from AY2017 to help graduate students develop higher educational skills. The Osaka University Teaching Fellow Handbook you are reading provides guidance and requirements exclusively for TFs to ensure smooth and efficient class management under the new system. Students working as a TF are expected to read this Handbook along with the Teaching Assistant/Teaching Fellow Handbook to better perform the assigned tasks.

In concluding, we would like to offer heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Hiroaki Sato, Department of Teaching and Learning Support, Center for Education in Liberal Arts and Sciences, for his valuable contribution to the production of this Handbook.

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