

GSI Ethics and Professional Responsibilities (Page 1 of 32)



Scenario: Returning Homework (Page 2 of 32)


Consider the following scenario:

A GSI in your department often takes two weeks or more to return students' graded work. The GSI has a heavy workload, and is frequently behind in their own work.

Does failure to return student work in a timely manner present an ethical problem?

▼  **No, the GSI has a heavy workload, and it is expected.**

Incorrect. While there is no standard amount of time to return assignments, students need timely responses to their work in order to benefit from the GSI's feedback. The GSI should speak to the instructor of record about expectations for returning student work and about any GSI workload issues related to the course.

▼  **Yes, it is a problem.**

Correct. While there is no standard amount of time to return assignments, students need timely responses to their work in order to benefit from the GSI's feedback. The GSI should speak to the instructor of record about expectations for returning student work as well as about any GSI workload issues related to the course.

Expectations about timely return of student work are addressed in greater detail later in the module.

Preview of Module 1 (Page 3 of 32)

The public standards of ethics that apply to GSIs' work on campus come from several sources, including the professional codes of their academic and professional disciplines, the University of California Faculty Code of Conduct, and laws and campus policies such as those you will learn about in the modules of this course.

UC Berkeley recognizes that GSIs are in the process of mastering the professional competencies of teaching that are held as standards for faculty. This first module outlines professional ethics and standards associated with good teaching, and suggests a number of practices that will enhance student learning and advance your professional abilities.

Topics

In this module, **GSI Ethics and Professional Responsibilities**, you will explore



- ethics and standards in teaching;
- understanding your responsibilities as a GSI;
- managing the instructional environment;
- advising and appropriate relationships with students;
- fair evaluation of student performance; and
- student information and privacy rights.

Lynn Huang, Former GSI, Department of English

Learning Objectives

After exploring these topics, you should be equipped to take steps and find resources to meet the following objectives:

- identify standards of professionalism and ethical behavior for GSIs and apply these standards successfully to ethical dilemmas;
- identify your responsibilities and those of the instructor of record;
- create an instructional environment that is conducive to student learning and safety;
- establish professionally appropriate relationships with students and refer them to appropriate campus resources;
- ensure that student performance is evaluated fairly; and
- protect the privacy rights of students regarding grades and other personal information, and

identify who has the right to know this information.

Ethics and Standards in Teaching:

Professional Codes of Ethics (Page 4 of 32)

Many professions have codes of ethics that outline the standards and expectations of acceptable professional behavior. In many academic fields, professional associations and funding agencies now require training in the professional standards and ethics of research. Many professional organizations also directly address ethical standards and behaviors in teaching.

Below are listed the ethical codes of several scholarly societies. The purpose is to give you a starting point for familiarizing yourself with the ethical codes around teaching in your discipline. To proceed:

1. Select the discipline that is closest to your own. Read the excerpt from the professional code of ethics that pertains to teaching in that discipline. While reading, see if there is anything mentioned that is new to you, that seems particularly important to you, or that you would like to know more about.
2. Select a second discipline and read the excerpt from that code of ethics. As you read, think about the similarities and differences between this code of ethics and the first one you read.

American Chemical Society

[Academic Professional Guidelines](https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/careers/career-services/ethics/academic-professional-guidelines.html) ➞ [_ \(https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/careers/career-services/ethics/academic-professional-guidelines.html\)](https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/careers/career-services/ethics/academic-professional-guidelines.html)

Scroll down to “Faculty Members,” point six on teaching

American Historical Association

[AHA Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct](https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-and-standards-of-the-profession/statement-on-standards-of-professional-conduct#Teaching) ➞ [_ \(https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-and-standards-of-the-profession/statement-on-standards-of-professional-conduct#Teaching\)](https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-and-standards-of-the-profession/statement-on-standards-of-professional-conduct#Teaching)

Scroll down to Section 5: Teaching

American Psychological Association

[Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, Standard 7: Education and Training](http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx?item=10) ➞ [_ \(http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx?item=10\)](http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx?item=10)

American Sociological Association

[Code of Ethics \(pdf\)](http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/images/asa/docs/pdf/Ethics%20Code.pdf) ➞ [_ \(http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/images/asa/docs/pdf/Ethics%20Code.pdf\)](http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/images/asa/docs/pdf/Ethics%20Code.pdf)

Scroll down to Section 18: Education, Teaching, and Training


Modern Language Association (MLA)

[MLA Statement of Professional Ethics](https://www.mla.org/Resources/Guidelines-and-Data/Reports-and-Professional-Guidelines/Statement-of-Professional-Ethics/Read-the-Statement-Online)  **[_ \(https://www.mla.org/Resources/Guidelines-and-Data/Reports-and-Professional-Guidelines/Statement-of-Professional-Ethics/Read-the-Statement-Online\)](https://www.mla.org/Resources/Guidelines-and-Data/Reports-and-Professional-Guidelines/Statement-of-Professional-Ethics/Read-the-Statement-Online)**

Scroll down to “Ethical Conduct in Teaching and Learning”

This exploration is meant to familiarize you with professional codes in teaching in various disciplines. If the specific code of your field or profession is not listed here, you can very likely find it in a web search.

University of California Faculty Code of Conduct (Page 5 of 32)

UC's Faculty Code of Conduct draws on the [Statement on Professional Ethics of the American Association of University Professors \(AAUP\)](http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/statementonprofessionalethics.htm)  (<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/statementonprofessionalethics.htm>). As you read this statement, notice how the code overlaps with the statements you just read from the professional associations:

As teachers, the professors encourage the free pursuit of learning of their students. They hold before them the best scholarly standards of their discipline. Professors demonstrate respect for students as individuals and adhere to their proper roles as intellectual guides and counselors. Professors make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct and to assure that their evaluations of students reflect each student's true merit. They respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student. They avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students. They acknowledge significant academic or scholarly assistance from them. They protect their academic freedom. [1]

The later modules in this course also have connections with the professional responsibilities addressed in the various codes of ethics.


Currently, no formal campus code of ethics specifically addresses the teaching done by GSIs. In the absence of such a document, segments of the UC Faculty Code of Conduct, in conjunction with the statements you have just read from selected professional associations, should serve as useful models for GSI standards of professional behavior.

In the process of articulating ethical ideals, the Faculty Code of Conduct lists types of behaviors that instructors should avoid:

1. Failure to meet the responsibilities of instruction, including:
 - a) arbitrary denial of access to instruction;
 - b) significant intrusion of material unrelated to course;
 - c) significant failure to adhere without legitimate reason to the rules of the faculty in the conduct of courses, to meet class, to keep office hours, or to hold examinations as scheduled;
 - d) evaluation of student work by criteria not directly reflective of course performance;
 - e) undue and unexcused delay in evaluating student work.
2. Discrimination, including harassment, against a student on political grounds, or for reasons of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, national origin, ancestry, marital status, medical condition, status as a covered veteran, or, within the limits imposed by law or

- University regulations, because of age or citizenship or for other arbitrary or personal reasons.
3. Violation of the University policy, including the pertinent guidelines, applying to nondiscrimination against students on the basis of disability.
 4. Use of the position or power of a faculty member to coerce the judgment or conscience of a student or to cause harm to a student for arbitrary or personal reasons.
 5. Participating in or deliberately abetting disruption, interference, or intimidation in the classroom.
 6. Entering into a romantic or sexual relationship with any student for whom a faculty member has, or should reasonably expect to have in the future, academic responsibility (instructional, evaluative, or supervisory).
 7. Exercising academic responsibility (instructional, evaluative, or supervisory) for any student with whom a faculty member has a romantic or sexual relationship. [2]

Sources

[1] [American Association of University Professors Statement on Professional Ethics](http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/statementonprofessionalethics.htm)  (<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/statementonprofessionalethics.htm>), 1966; Revised, 1987 and 2009. This passage is also included in the UC Faculty Code of Conduct (see below), p. 5.

[2] [UC Faculty Code of Conduct](https://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/_files/apm/apm-015.pdf)  (https://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/_files/apm/apm-015.pdf) (pdf), pp. 5–6.

Exercising Professionalism and Ethics in Your GSI Role (Page 6 of 32)

As a GSI you have responsibilities that involve authority, accountability, and the appropriate negotiation of power dynamics between you, your students, and the faculty member in charge of the course, who technically is also called the “instructor of record.” [1] (The terms “instructor of record” and “faculty member” will be used interchangeably throughout this course.)

To be an effective GSI, you must understand what your course responsibilities are and how to carry them out in a professional and ethical manner. GSIs should inform themselves of their rights and responsibilities using the following sources.

Documents that Apply to Your GSI Appointment

- **Your particular position and related responsibilities** are outlined in the Academic Student Employee (ASE) Appointment Notification Letter and Supplemental Documentation that your employing department sent you. The Appointment Notification Letter also identifies the faculty member who will supervise your GSI work.
- **Campuswide guidelines and policies regarding GSI appointments** can be found in the Academic Senate’s [Graduate Council Policy on Appointments and Mentoring of GSIs \(pdf\)](http://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/committees/gc/gc_policy_on_appt_and_mentoring_gsis.pdf) (http://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/committees/gc/gc_policy_on_appt_and_mentoring_gsis.pdf); the [Guide to Graduate Policy](http://grad.berkeley.edu/policy/) (<http://grad.berkeley.edu/policy/>), Section H; and the [Graduate Student Appointments Handbook](http://grad.berkeley.edu/financial/appointments/handbook/). (<http://grad.berkeley.edu/financial/appointments/handbook/>)
- GSIs should also inform themselves of their **rights and responsibilities under the collective bargaining agreement** [↗](http://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx-contract.html) (<http://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx-contract.html>) between the University and the United Auto Workers (UAW), which represents readers, tutors, and GSIs. It is posted on the University of California Human Resources website.

Clarify Faculty Expectations

To ensure a smooth working relationship, you should meet with the instructor of record before the class begins to discuss such issues as the following:

- course policies
- course requirements
- your specific roles and responsibilities

- how to handle instances of academic misconduct
- responsibilities in implementing disability accommodations

The [Graduate Council Policy on Appointments and Mentoring of GSIs \(pdf\)](http://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/committees/gc/gc_policy_on_appt_and_mentoring_gsis.pdf) (http://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/committees/gc/gc_policy_on_appt_and_mentoring_gsis.pdf)

holds faculty members responsible to meet with GSIs at the beginning of the semester to discuss these matters.

Please see the fuller list of questions to address with the instructor of record in the [Checklist for Getting Started as a GSI \(pdf\)](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jsj9IYMCgTgrQrfHofs7fSHdkBB4VI4maDsv3kHpX4/edit?usp=sharing) (<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jsj9IYMCgTgrQrfHofs7fSHdkBB4VI4maDsv3kHpX4/edit?usp=sharing>) in the [Teaching Guide for Graduate Student Instructors](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/>).

GSI vs. Faculty Responsibilities

While the instructor of record can invite input from or delegate to GSIs, the instructor of record has ultimate responsibility for most course-related matters, including (but not limited to) the following:

- approving all course descriptions and representative reading lists for courses taught by GSIs (this must be done by a Senate faculty member)
- establishing grading and other course policies
- implementing approved academic accommodations for students with disabilities
- determining sanctions for academic misconduct
- approving and submitting final grades

The responsibilities of the faculty member in charge of the course also include providing you, the GSI, with mentorship in teaching.

These responsibilities are outlined in the [Graduate Council's Policy on Appointments and Mentoring of GSIs \(pdf\)](http://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/committees/gc/gc_policy_on_appt_and_mentoring_gsis.pdf) (http://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/committees/gc/gc_policy_on_appt_and_mentoring_gsis.pdf), established by the Graduate Council of the UC Berkeley Academic Senate. [Section III of the policy](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/faculty-departments/core-gsi-policies/gradcouncil-gsipolicy-excerpt/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/faculty-departments/core-gsi-policies/gradcouncil-gsipolicy-excerpt/>) pertains specifically to the preparation of GSIs and articulates the responsibilities that rest with departments and departmental faculty for providing GSIs with pedagogical mentorship. The policy also conveys the expectation that GSIs assume responsibility to strengthen their competencies as instructors.

Notes

[1] Definition of instructor of record: "On the Berkeley campus, officers of instruction who have responsibility for the content and conduct of a course are commonly known as 'instructors of record.' One or more instructors of record are assigned to each course being taught. All instructors of record must be faculty members, or approved by the Committee on Courses of

Instruction [COCI] to be an instructor of record, and are individually responsible for submitting final grades to the Office of the Registrar by the specified deadline” ([COCI Handbook, Part 3](https://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/coci-handbook/3.1)) (<https://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/coci-handbook/3.1>).

[2] As you will read in Module 3, students obtain approved academic accommodations from the Disabled Students’ Program. Faculty members are responsible for implementing approved accommodations, though they may delegate to GSIs as necessary.

Professional and Ethical Behaviors (Page 7 of 32)

With the UC Faculty Code of Conduct and those of the professional associations in mind, we will now consider how to respond professionally to a range of situations, dilemmas, and responsibilities you may encounter as a GSI. Recommendations and best practices are offered so that you can avoid problematic behavior, develop your professional competencies as a teacher, and execute your responsibilities in a professional and ethical manner.

Coming to Class Prepared to Teach

Consider this scenario:

A GSI in your department approaches you in a panic. He thought he would have time last night to prepare for today's class, but an unexpected visit from a family member kept him from getting the work done. Now, with only one hour before discussion section, he still doesn't have a lesson plan for the class.

Could this have been avoided?

There is always a risk that something unexpected may interrupt your preparation for class, but investing sufficient time to understand the course material and to prepare to engage students with the material is part of your responsibility as a GSI, irrespective of other demands or interruptions. Schedule specific times that will be devoted to preparing for your class, and protect this time. Create a lesson plan that lays out the following items:

- The learning objectives you have for the class — what you want the students to take away from the class session.
- The particular teaching strategies that will help you achieve those objectives (for example, writing activities, debates, discussion, collaborative problem solving, etc.).
- The amount of class time you expect to spend on each activity.

For tips on time management and a planning tool to help you create effective activities for your section, see [Plan the First Day's Session \(http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/pre-semester-intro/first-day-plan/\)](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/pre-semester-intro/first-day-plan/) in the [Teaching Guide for GSIs \(http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/\)](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/).

Punctuality and Office Hours

Maintaining regular office hours is an important part of the responsibilities of a GSI. Being punctual and dependable conveys professionalism to students.

Consider this scenario:

A GSI in your department often arrives ten or fifteen minutes late for her office hours, and sometimes has to leave early to make her next class. Often, there are students left waiting by the time she has to leave. On occasion, there is just a message canceling office hours altogether.

How could this situation be avoided?

- Be realistic in scheduling your office hours. Select a time when you can arrive punctually and leave on time for your next course or appointment.
- If you must cancel or reschedule your office hours, let students know in advance whenever possible. Inform the instructor of record and departmental staff of the change.

Changing Course Policies or Syllabi

Consider the following scenario:

A GSI announces to the class that she has fallen behind on the section syllabus. In order to cover the material adequately, she has decided to add an additional meeting time for section to cover one of the topics from the syllabus that was originally scheduled for a regular section meeting. Since everyone has classes during the week, she tells the class she has planned the extra session for a Saturday morning. Two students tell her they have jobs on the weekends, and two others have religious conflicts with attending class on Saturday. She apologizes and says it's the best she can do.

Is this a problem?

While it is appropriate for an instructor to consider changing the syllabus or policies in order to be helpful or to accommodate students' need for more time with course material, date changes and additional meetings often pose irresolvable schedule conflicts for students and should be avoided if possible. To ensure that you maintain fairness in your policies and syllabus, consider the following:

- Be realistic in creating a section syllabus. Think about what is truly possible within the given time.
- If changes to the section syllabus or policies are necessary, work together with students to find a suitable solution.
- If date changes are necessary, consult the [University's official academic calendar](https://guide.berkeley.edu/academic-calendar/) (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/academic-calendar/>).

- Review [Campus Policies and Guidelines Concerning the Academic Calendar, RRR Week, Exams and Commencement \(https://teaching.berkeley.edu/academic-calendar-and-student-accommodations-campus-policies-and-guidelines\)](https://teaching.berkeley.edu/academic-calendar-and-student-accommodations-campus-policies-and-guidelines) so that you will know how to respond appropriately if a student requests to take an exam on an alternate date due to religious commitments, extracurricular activities, illness, disability, parenting duties, or hardship.
- Don't change policies midstream about grades or other important course requirements.

Pedagogical and Content Competencies

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Having a strong command of one's subject is the hallmark of teaching professionalism. As a GSI, however, it is possible that there will be instances when you are grasping course concepts as you teach.

Consider this scenario:

You have been assigned to a course that has topics outside your area of expertise.

Is this teaching experience doomed?

There is no reason to assume so. The following three recommendations apply to all teaching situations, but they are particularly useful when teaching material that is new to you:

- **Keep course content relevant.** Instructors have an obligation to introduce course material that respects the course description, the educational goals, and the purpose of the course. You may be tempted to fall back on other areas of expertise when engaging with new material, but do so only if that area of expertise is relevant to the course content at hand. In addition, course content that you introduce should address the knowledge and abilities of the student audience and the overall goals that the faculty member has established for the course.
- **Make accurate representations.** GSIs have a duty to accurately interpret and present course material. Be sure that you stay ahead of your students with the readings and understand the material before assigning it to your students. Consult with the instructor of record or fellow GSIs if you need clarification or assistance with your own understanding of the material.
- **Be honest.** When confronted with a question that you cannot answer, it is best to be honest and admit that you do not have the answer. More will be said of this issue on the next page.

Scenario: Authoritative Teaching Style

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Consider this scenario:

GSI Chris is excited and a little nervous about his new teaching opportunity. During the first week of class a student asks a question about the course topic that catches Chris off guard.

After this embarrassing incident, Chris vows to convey expertise in the subject matter by always being extra prepared. Chris therefore spends a lot of time crafting detailed lectures for each section. In fact, Chris has so much material to cover that there is often little time for discussion or questions.

Caught Off Guard

Being caught off guard by a student's question happens to all instructors, regardless of their level of expertise.

Here are things Chris can do:

- **Think in advance about standard responses** to such questions. For example, "That's an interesting question, but I'll need to research it/think it over. I can answer you next time, or message you through the course website."
- **Turn the question back to the students** as a learning opportunity: "Good question. How would you (or other class members) go about answering that question?" This is a good way to give students practice actively thinking through course material.
- **Take a moment** to consider whether the reason you do not have an answer prepared is that the question is only tangential to the course topic or could lead the class discussion astray. In that case you can thank the student for the question and defer a response to the individual to office hours, bCourses, or email.
- **Be prepared to say "I don't know"** if that is the honest answer. Be reassured that it is okay not to have all the answers about the subject. Many highly competent faculty members hear novel questions from students that they cannot answer right away. Let students know you will research the question and get back to them. Be sure to follow through.
- **Consult with the instructor of record.** As supervisors, faculty members understand that GSIs are constantly growing in expertise and do not expect GSIs to know everything. Faculty appreciate GSIs who seek out clarification of course material so that they can communicate accurately and effectively with students.

Having a response ready for such circumstances will help you keep on course with your teaching and rein in your impulse to react hastily.

Effects on Student Learning


There are distinct disadvantages to a teaching style that takes up all of the class time with the instructor “covering the material” and not permitting substantial questioning and active engagement from students.

For example:

- A teaching style that does not allow for student participation can impede students’ interest and motivation.
- Additionally, brain research suggests that students learn more effectively when they play an active role in learning. (For more information, see Daniela Kaufer’s talk [What can Neuroscience Research Teach Us about Teaching](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/programs-services/hsl-project/hsl-speakers/kaufer/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/programs-services/hsl-project/hsl-speakers/kaufer/>) on the GSI Center website.)

Recommendations for Strengthening Pedagogical Competency (Page 10 of 32)

The paradigm in higher education has shifted from an older “teaching and teacher-centered” model to a “learning and student-centered” model. This shift has emerged from research on how people learn. It is important to develop pedagogical skills that address and serve the learning processes of our students.

- **Create a lesson plan** prior to each class session that lists objectives — what you want the students to take away from the class or be able to do. The plan should list the topics you wish to cover; but more importantly, it should include the steps or activities you will use to have the students reach those objectives. The plan should also indicate the amount of time you will allot for each activity. This will help you set realistic goals for the class and manage your time well.
- **Communicate the learning objectives** to students. Write your learning objectives and a list of tasks that will achieve those objectives on the board or on a slide, should you be teaching remotely. This will enable your students to be clear about the purpose of the class activities.
- **Use a variety of instructional methods or strategies**, since all students learn best from multiple kinds of activities. Incorporate visual, verbal, auditory, individual, and group learning activities into your teaching. Employ the principles of [Universal Design for Learning](https://udlguidelines.cast.org/)  (<https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>), a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn.
- **Encourage participation.** Student participation can cement understandings of course material as well as generate new understandings and knowledge that may benefit the entire class.
- **Assess learning.** How do we know that our teaching is effective and that learning is taking place? Consider informal classroom assessment techniques such as the “minute paper” or the “muddiest point” to monitor what students are learning and what remains unclear. [Sample classroom assessment techniques](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/improve-intro/five-ways/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/improve-intro/five-ways/>) are available in the online [Teaching Guide for GSIs](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/>). In addition, more formal midterm and end-of-semester evaluations are also useful tools for gauging student learning.
- **Take steps to develop your teaching skills** and foster your professional development. In addition to the mandatory pedagogy course for first-time GSIs in your department, you can foster your teaching skills by attending teaching-related workshops and conferences. The GSI Center offers a series of [Workshops on Teaching](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/programs-services) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/programs-services>

[/workshops-seminars-institutes/](#))_ each semester, as well as the [Teaching Conference](#) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/programs-services/conference/>)_ the week before each semester begins. Your department may also hold teaching-related events.

- **Get to know the literature on teaching and learning in your discipline.** Most professional associations publish a journal or newsletter on teaching. Use that publication to keep apprised of discipline-specific teaching strategies.

PDF Version of the above recommendations (https://bcourses.berkeley.edu/courses/1525797/files/86436652/download?download_frd=1)

For more detailed information on these topics, see our online [Teaching Guide](#) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents>), in particular [Teaching Discussion Sections](#) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/discussion-intro/>), [Facilitating Laboratory Sections](#) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/lab-sections-intro/>), and [Five Ways to Improve Your Teaching](#) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/improve-intro/five-ways/>).

Demonstrating Respect for Students, Colleagues, Faculty, and the University (Page 11 of 32)

Consider these scenarios:

During weekly GSI meetings for a large enrollment course, the GSIs delight in telling each other stories about the “weird” or “stupid” comments made by students in their sections. In these stories, the identity of students is often obvious.

A student comes to GSI Wendy’s office hours and says she is struggling with another GSI, Terry. Wendy is also frustrated with Terry and makes a negative comment about Terry in front of the student.


A GSI in your department disagrees with the way the professor has organized the course and the professor’s teaching style. The GSI frequently tells his students about his disagreements, which is causing the students to be uncertain about what they are learning in the course.

How should these situations be handled?

- Treat other GSIs and the instructor of record with dignity and respect. Avoid undermining each other’s authority, especially in front of students.
- In general, shelter students from disagreements among members of the teaching team about course management.
- If there is a pedagogical value to helping students understand differing intellectual perspectives on a course topic, discuss the perspectives with students in a rational and respectful way, as though the person you disagree with were present.
- Be respectful of different ideas, opinions, and points of view. Correct misunderstandings without demeaning anyone.
- All students should be treated with courtesy and dignity. Never humiliate, embarrass, ridicule, or make fun of a student, publicly or privately.
- Demonstrate respect for the educational goals and policies of the University by striving for teaching excellence and adhering to University policy.

Managing the Instructional Environment

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GSI's have an ethical responsibility to foster an instructional environment from which all students can benefit. GSI's must avoid any kind of discrimination and harassment against students (per the [Faculty Code of Conduct \(pdf\)](http://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/_files/apm/apm-015.pdf)  http://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/_files/apm/apm-015.pdf); GSI's should also set the tone for student-to-student interactions through their own demeanor and through the expectations they communicate to students. One way to convey expectations is to distribute, as part of the section syllabus, community agreements such as the following, and to review them with students in the first class session:

In this course section, it is essential to promote fairness and equal participation so that everyone has the same chance to learn and so that we can all learn from one another. Practices that promote this type of learning environment include:

- Being open to views very different from our own
- Listening to everyone's ideas whether we agree or not
- Trying to learn from other people's perspectives, even if we do not agree with them
- Monitoring ourselves so we don't hold the floor for too long and dominate discussion
- Coming to section well prepared to participate in learning activities
- Discussing as a group any discriminatory language or stereotypes that come up in class, and trying to learn from the experience without attacking or demeaning anyone
- Having once spoken, allowing for others to speak before speaking again
- Working collaboratively and learning from one another

It is expected that all students will use these practices.

Another approach is to work with the students to collaboratively create a set of community agreements for class discussion, ideally within the first week or two of the term. (Community agreements within a GSI-led section are separate from the instructor of record's course syllabus and policies.) Establishing community agreements cooperatively with students encourages them to consider each agreement's purpose, gives them a greater investment in adopting them, and motivates them to assume part of the responsibility for the quality of the section.

In courses that directly address issues people have strong feelings about, such as race, ethnicity, gender, or politics, it becomes all the more important for class members to take part in establishing community agreements that promote inclusion and community.

A third, more flexible approach is to briefly discuss during the first class session the need to

respect class members and listen to each other's ideas, then return to the topic a couple of weeks later in more detail. Once students have seen the need to address the topic in the section, you can ask them what they have found makes discussions work well or poorly. Together the class can articulate norms that will help them contribute positively while making a rigorous inquiry of the course topics.

For detailed descriptions of methods for developing community agreements to guide class discussion, see [Creating Community Agreements \(http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/discussion-intro/discussion-guidelines/\)](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/discussion-intro/discussion-guidelines/) in the [GSI Center's Teaching Guide for GSIs \(http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/\)](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/).

In some contexts the Instructor of Record may set discussion guidelines for GSI-led sessions, but this is a matter of faculty preference. Campus policy does not hold the instructor of record responsible to do this.

CARE Model

The *CARE Model* is a framework often used in bystander intervention to help individuals take action in situations where harm may occur. This model may also be helpful in addressing classroom situations.



Consider this example to help frame use of the CARE Model:

A student provides an answer to a question that is not correct. Another student speaks over them to provide the right answer, and under their breath says, "I thought Asians were supposed to be smart." (Feel free to change the example).

C - Confront the Situation. Directly address what was said, and why it isn't okay. "What you have said is harmful and is not an acceptable way to speak in this classroom. You are welcome to leave if you cannot behave respectfully."

A - Alert Others. If this behavior continues, are there others on the teaching team who can support you in talking to the student? Would it be appropriate to bring the issue to the faculty mentor? "Might you be able to meet with me and this student so we can help him understand the impact of his language?"

R - Redirect Attention. Sometimes, confronting a situation directly can bring more attention and

cause harm, and redirection can be the best method. "As (first student) said, XYZ is relevant to our course because.."

E - Engage After. Sometimes, you miss the moment or can't respond right away. It can still reduce harm to check in with the target or the person who caused harm after the fact. "Hey (student one), I heard what (student two) said, and I'm sorry I couldn't address it in the moment. How can I support you now and in the future in the classroom?"

Advocacy in the Classroom (Page 13 of 32)

Are any of these instructor behaviors problematic?


- Partisan politicking during the class period
- Using personal religious beliefs to teach course material (or vice versa)
- Advocating for your political stance without acknowledging other relevant approaches
- Giving students extra credit for participating in a demonstration or strike
- Using class time to register students to vote

Points of View

Instructors have an obligation to acknowledge relevant competing points of view on an issue. Providing students with the skills to understand, analyze, and evaluate different views is what will enable students to develop knowledge and critical thinking skills.

One-sided advocacy of a cause is a different matter, and must be avoided.

University Policies Regarding Speech and Advocacy

The University's policy regarding student speech and advocacy is part of the [Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations and Students \(PACAOS\) \(pdf\)](http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2710523/PACAOS-30)  (<http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2710523/PACAOS-30>). This policy — 30.00 Policy on Speech and Advocacy — states the following:

30.10

The University is committed to assuring that all persons may exercise the constitutionally protected rights of free expression, speech, assembly, and worship.

30.20


It is the responsibility of the Chancellor to assure an ongoing opportunity for the expression of a variety of viewpoints.

30.30

The time, place, and manner of exercising the constitutionally protected rights of free expression, speech, assembly, and worship are subject to campus regulations that shall provide for non-interference with University functions and reasonable protection to persons against practices that

would make them involuntary audiences or place them in reasonable fear, as determined by the University, for their personal safety.

The policy supports free expression and professional standards for teaching, while also recognizing that students should not be treated as a captive audience to an instructor's views. Unless it is an explicit educational objective of the course, instructors should not teach a single set of political ideas or values without providing for alternate understandings or perspectives.

The [UC Faculty Code of Conduct \(pdf\)](http://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/_files/apm/apm-015.pdf)  http://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/_files/apm/apm-015.pdf also addresses the issue of advocacy. It states that instructors should avoid “use of the position or power of a faculty member to coerce the judgment or conscience of a student.” GSIs should observe this policy as well.

Implications for Teaching

- Be mindful that as instructors we are involved in a power relationship that can enable us to persuade students unfairly to agree with our personal, political, or religious views. Do not turn the course into a platform for one-sided viewpoints.
- Be sure that students are able to distinguish your personal views from the course content and understand how the topic is tied to the course learning objectives.
- Outline multiple approaches to an issue or controversy as appropriate, and encourage open discussion, debate, and even disagreement.
- Be mindful that when an instructor opens a discussion up for students to advocate for their own perspectives, some will feel more comfortable stating their views in class than others, and some may not speak up because they sense that their views will not be well received. Moreover, as a group the students in your class may not hold a “balanced” array of opinions. You therefore cannot assume that merely encouraging open conversation will result in a balanced discussion of a topic.
- For a productive student debate, ask students to represent positions and arguments that may differ from their own in order to understand an opposing perspective more clearly.

What to Do about Disruptive Behavior in Class (Page 14 of 32)

Students have the right to collegially express disagreement with others' views in the classroom, including the instructor's. Faculty and GSIs should welcome scholarly disagreement. This is different, however, from behaviors that disrupt the class learning environment.

Consider these scenarios:

Four people who are not part of your section enter your lab section loudly presenting their views on a topic unrelated to your course. Your students stop their work, waiting for the disruption to stop.

Two students in your section often engage in side conversations in chat during the GSI's presentation. Other students appear distracted and irritated.

What are some good ways to manage these situations?

Ask the Disrupter to Desist or Leave (CARE Model: Confront the Situation)

If visitors disrupt your section, ask them to stop. You may also ask them to leave the class. If they refuse to leave and persist in the disruption, contact the UC Police Department emergency number (510-642-3333) to remove them.

To prevent this type of disruption or unauthorized access to a Zoom session (Zoombombing) if you are teaching remotely, require Calnet authentication and a password to enter the Zoom session.

Community Impact & Agreements (CARE Model: Engage After)

If one of the students in your section disrupts the class, remind the student of the community agreements for discussion that prohibit the disruptive behavior. (If you have not yet established community agreements for discussion, your students might now be motivated to adopt some.) If the initial community agreements do not address the needs of the community, it's appropriate to revisit and revise based on the ever changing needs of the class. If the disruptive behavior persists, warn the student that disciplinary action could be taken. If the student leaves, they have the right to return for the next class meeting, provided that they do not repeat the disruptive behavior.

If the disruption or incident may be negatively impactful to the group, holding space to check-in with the class/individuals, and offering support services and resources dependent on student needs may be appropriate ways to engage after the incident.

If you are teaching remotely, establish guidelines for the use of chat in Zoom at the beginning of the semester. The following syllabus statement could be conveyed to your students at the outset of the semester:

In this course, we will use Zoom chat as a mechanism to build community and foster information and resource sharing among students. To these ends, chat will be enabled before class and during breaks. In addition, we will enable chat periodically to gather input on specific questions and activities to benefit the full group. The same expectations for respectful communication hold for chat as they do for face-to-face interaction.

Inform the Faculty Member (CARE Model: Alert Others)

You should also inform the instructor of record. If the disruptive behavior continues, a warning to stop the disruptive behavior should be given to the student both orally and in writing. Retain all emails between yourself and the student, and copy the instructor of record on your emails. The instructor of record, not the GSI, is ultimately responsible for the course; you have the responsibility to keep the instructor of record informed of issues such as this.

Seek Campus Assistance (CARE Model: Alert Others)

If a student persists in a disruptive behavior after being warned, you may consult with one or more of the following people or campus units:

1. the [Faculty Advisor for GSI Affairs \(https://gsi.berkeley.edu/basics-for-gsis/find-advisor-for-gsi-affairs/\)](https://gsi.berkeley.edu/basics-for-gsis/find-advisor-for-gsi-affairs/) in your teaching department
2. the department chair (through the instructor)
3. [Center for Support and Intervention \(https://sa.berkeley.edu/csi\)](https://sa.berkeley.edu/csi)
4. the [Ombuds Office for Students and Postdoctoral Appointees \(http://sa.berkeley.edu/ombuds\)](http://sa.berkeley.edu/ombuds) (confidential consultation)
5. the [UC Police Department \(http://police.berkeley.edu/\)](http://police.berkeley.edu/)

GSIs can find guidance from these offices in cases where there is no immediate concern for anyone's safety. If a student's behavior does threaten someone's safety, you should respond immediately by contacting 911 or the Campus Police Department emergency number (510-642-3333).

Code of Conduct Violations

Certain behaviors constitute violations of UC Berkeley's Code of Student Conduct. For example:

- obstruction or disruption of teaching, research, administration, disciplinary procedures, or other University activities
- physical abuse including but not limited to rape, sexual assault, sex offenses, and other physical assault; threats of violence; or other conduct that threatens the health or safety of any

person

- disorderly or lewd conduct
- sexual, racial, and other forms of harassment of any person by a student [1]

Some of the behaviors listed are criminal offenses as well as conduct violations. For emergencies contact the UC Police Department emergency number at 510-642-3333; for non-emergencies the number is 510-642-6760.

Violations of the Code of Student Conduct should be reported to the [Center for Student Conduct \(https://conduct.berkeley.edu/report/\)](https://conduct.berkeley.edu/report/). Sexual harassment complaints should be directed to the Title IX Office, [ask_ophd@berkeley.edu \(mailto:ask_ophd@berkeley.edu\)](mailto:ask_ophd@berkeley.edu). (Sexual harassment and sexual violence are treated in Module 5 of this course. You will learn more about the Center for Student Conduct and the Code of Student Conduct in Module 4.)

If you have grounds for longer suspension or disciplinary action, you must consult with the instructor of record. A student cannot be removed permanently from a class without a formal review through a student disciplinary hearing conducted by the Center for Student Conduct.

The numbers and contact information for the offices listed above are included on the resource list at the end of this module.

[1] [UC Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct \(https://conduct.berkeley.edu/code-of-conduct/\)](https://conduct.berkeley.edu/code-of-conduct/), section II.

Classroom Safety and Emergency Evacuation (Page 15 of 32)

Evacuation

Consider this scenario:

A GSI is teaching her regular discussion section when the fire alarm sounds. Students gather their belongings and file out the door, down the stairs, and out of the building. However, one student is in a wheelchair and cannot manage the stairs, and the elevators are off limits during emergency evacuations. The GSI does not know how to assist the student.

How could the GSI have prepared?

Solicit Student Input

Campus policy holds students requiring assistance responsible to have safety plans in the event of a building evacuation. Instructors can remind students to prepare and to communicate any needs they have by including the following statement in the section syllabus or information sheet:

Students who have disability-related needs in the event of an emergency or evacuation should inform the faculty member or their GSI of any special arrangements that need to be made. Please contact us in office hours or by email.

Having affected students inform you in this way will enable you to prepare as needed. Please see the [Campus Access Guide \(https://dac.berkeley.edu/welcome\)](https://dac.berkeley.edu/welcome) for more information. (We will learn about working with students with disabilities in Module 3.)

Know Your Building's Emergency Plan

Before the first day of class, you should know the evacuation plan for the building in which you are teaching and what numbers to call in the event of a safety or medical emergency. Each building has a Building Coordinator and an established evacuation plan that includes assisting people with disabilities; ask your department's staff for details about your classroom or lab area. Familiarize yourself with the Emergency Assembly Area (EAA) for your classroom's building. Signs are posted in each building directing you to the EAA for that area of the building.

Campuswide Emergencies (Page 16 of 32)

Know the Campus's Emergency Plan

In addition to the safety and emergency plans for your building you should also learn about the campuswide emergency plan, including what to do in the event of an earthquake, power outage, fire, hazardous materials release, bomb threat/explosion, or other emergency. Information about University emergency plans and preparedness is available through the website of the campus [Office of Emergency Management \(http://oem.berkeley.edu/\)](http://oem.berkeley.edu/).

Active Shooter

Consider this scenario:

During class, several students tell you they are receiving a text-alert notification about an active shooter on campus. You check your phone and find you have received the same notification.

What would you do?

Again, preparation is key: be informed of the campus's recommended course of action. In brief, the UC Police Department recommends fleeing to avoid danger if possible, or hiding in place if it is not possible to flee safely. For detailed instructions, see [Tools to Survive Targeted Violence \(https://ucpd.berkeley.edu/safety/tools-survive-targeted-violence\)](https://ucpd.berkeley.edu/safety/tools-survive-targeted-violence) on the UCPD website.

Campus Alerts

To receive campus emergency alerts via text or phone, see the [WarnMe Emergency Alert Service \(https://warnme.berkeley.edu/\)](https://warnme.berkeley.edu/) page.

Scenario: Angry Student (Page 17 of 32)

Consider this scenario:

In your discussion section, you have noticed that one student has responded irritably to other students on several occasions when working in small groups. Today, after you asked him to act as spokesperson for his small group, he stood up, slammed his fist on his desk, and rushed out of the room. Some students confided in you after he left that they were concerned that he could become violent.

What should you do?

This kind of behavior is rare among students, but GSIs do well to understand the issues and options in this and other unusual circumstances that may arise.


Recommendations

There are two needs to address here: the behavior of the student who left in anger, and classroom safety. If the class feels an immediate threat, call the UC Police Department emergency number for assistance (510-642-3333). Before you leave the class, it would be best to assure the students that you value their concerns, and the maintenance of a stable and friendly classroom environment, and that you will follow up with the student who left before the next class meeting.

Before following up with the angry student, you need to assess your own sense of safety with his behavior. If you do not feel threatened and you feel confident that you and he can talk through his situation calmly, you can email him and ask what went wrong and arrange to follow up with a face-to-face meeting before he rejoins the class. It could be that the student is overly stressed, or that he reacted to a class dynamic you had not recognized. You should also inform the instructor of record of the incident.

If you are uncomfortable approaching the student, you can ask the instructor of record for assistance. The instructor of record may want to deal with the student, or meet with both you and the student, to resolve the student's concerns.

Alternatively, you can make a call to Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS, 510-642-9494) to discuss the situation with an advising counselor. The CAPS counselor will help you analyze the situation and refer you to any other resources that you, the student, or the class might find helpful.

Lastly, if you feel that the student's ongoing behavior raises concerns, you are encouraged to **submit a care report**  [_ \(https://berkeley-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/index.php/pid362652?\)](https://berkeley-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/index.php/pid362652?) to the **Center for Support and Intervention (CSI)** [_ \(https://takeaction.berkeley.edu\)](https://takeaction.berkeley.edu). The Center for Support and Intervention (CSI) and their reporting process will be explained later in this module.

Advising and Appropriate Relationships with Students (Page 18 of 32)

Consider this scenario:

A GSI in your department is popular with her students. She is often invited to and frequently attends their parties. She thinks that attending these parties increases the students' trust in her and demonstrates that she is genuinely interested in them as both students and individuals.

Might her attending undergraduate parties present an ethical problem?

▼  **No, it definitely would not.**

Incorrect. Although the GSI's motivation seems good, attending her students' parties can create situations that compromise her professional boundaries and her work with students.

▼  **Yes, it might.**

Correct. Although the GSI's motivation seems good, attending her students' parties can create situations that compromise her professional boundaries and her work with students.

Instructors want to get to know their students and establish a climate of trust. However, confusing these objectives with friendship or developing personal relationships with students can create ethical dilemmas.

What does this GSI need to consider?

Professional Boundaries Matter

Consider these questions:

- What if a GSI begins to favor one student over others because of a friendship?
- What if a student perceives a GSI-student friendship with another student as allowing an unfair advantage for that student?
- What if an overly casual relationship undermines the GSI's authority in the classroom?

Because of these possibilities, we recommend that GSIs avoid mixing professional and personal roles. There are better ways to get to know students without overstepping ethical boundaries, for example by creating classroom-related events or activities that enhance relationships within professional limits (such as visits to campus facilities related to the course topic). (See [Campus](#)

Professional Boundaries and Social Media

Consider this scenario:

A few weeks into the semester a GSI receives friend requests from two of his students on a social media site (e.g., Facebook). The GSI's profile has privacy settings that will prevent the students from knowing any of his personal information, so he feels it is okay to accept the friend requests. He also thinks that adding the students as friends is best because he doesn't want the students to think he isn't interested in them as individuals.

A number of issues arise for GSIs in the casual use of social media with students:

- **Perception of favoritism:** Friending some students but not others may suggest that the GSI has a more favorable relationship with the friends.
- **Access to compromising information:** The student's privacy settings may not be configured to keep the GSI from seeing content that could bias the GSI's view of the student and unconsciously affect his or her evaluation or treatment of the student. Conversely, the GSI's privacy settings may not be adequately configured to protect potentially uncomfortable information from the student's view.
- **Unequal access to instructional materials:** Some instructors have posted course content to social media. Not all students will have accounts with the particular social media service that a GSI uses, so any course-related materials the GSI might post there may not be accessible to all unless the GSI provides an alternative way to access the information.
- **Discomfort for students:** If a GSI sends friend requests to a student, the teacher-student relationship may make the student feel obligated to accept the request even when they are uncomfortable doing so.
- **Students left hanging:** If a GSI responds to the student's request by clicking "Ignore Request" with no explanation, the student may be left wondering why the GSI is not responding, and whether it is a question of the GSI not liking or not respecting the student.

For these reasons, we recommend not friending students through social media. Use the course bCourses site and keep relations professional and course-related. Decide on a policy regarding social media sites before the semester begins. Announce the policy to the class, and reiterate it individually to any students who send you a friend request. Your policy might be something like this: "In order to maintain professional relationships with students, I do not accept invitations to be on social media sites with students in my class. Electronic communication about course-related matters will be done via bCourses or email."

If there is any likelihood that you may be asked to evaluate the work of a student in the future

(e.g., in a letter of recommendation or in another class in which you will be the GSI), we recommend that you not friend students even after the semester is over.

Further Recommendations for Use of Social Media with Students

- Use bCourses to communicate with students, to minimize the chance of crossing appropriate professional boundaries and to ensure equal access to instructional communication.
- There can be cases in which well-defined digital sharing helps students process course content. If you or one of the other instructors in your course wants to have students use, for example, Twitter, it is best to create a feed just for the class activity and embed the feed in the course website. Make sure students who are not on Twitter also have a way to add their posts, for example through one of the instructors. Without these arrangements, use of social media could create unequal student access to course content.
- On the social media sites that you use, adjust your privacy settings to make sure that your personal information is not accessible to students in your classes.
- Do not access photos or information about your students using social media sites.
- Do not distribute photos of your students or leave them easily accessible to others, as they constitute protected student data. (Protected data will be addressed in the “Student Information and Privacy Rights” section of this course module.)

Unwanted Student Attention (Page 19 of 32)

Your role as instructor is a powerful one; you may become the object of unwanted student attention. There are many reasons this may occur. You may be close in age to students, enabling you to share some extracurricular interests with them; this may attract the attention of one of your students who may want to become your friend. Some students can even become infatuated with you as their academic role model and perhaps distort the student-instructor relationship.

Consider this scenario:

A student comes to your office hours regularly just to visit and say “hello.” As the semester goes on, this student sends email greeting cards and even gifts. This attention makes you feel uncomfortable.

What should you do?

- Take action to reduce the intensity of student interest.
- Be business-like and discourage too much social talk.
- Restrict the amount of time you spend in your office alone with this student.
- Inform the instructor of record or course supervisor.
- Raise the problem directly with the student privately. In the conversation, be sensitive but also firm.
- Copy the instructor of record on any emails you send to the student to document your handling of the situation.

If the attention turns toward harassment or stalking, contact the [Center for Support and Intervention \(CSI\)](https://takeaction.berkeley.edu) (<https://takeaction.berkeley.edu>), [Center for Student Conduct](https://conduct.berkeley.edu) (<https://conduct.berkeley.edu>), the [Title IX Officer](http://ophd.berkeley.edu) (<http://ophd.berkeley.edu>), or the UC Police Department. (You will learn more about these offices and how to contact them later in this course.)

Academic Advising (Page 20 of 32)

In your role as a GSI, you are likely to be asked for advice from students about their academic progress in the course, about different career paths, or whether to attend graduate school. Students may also come to you with other academic questions, issues, or concerns that extend beyond your area of expertise or responsibility.

Consider this scenario:

A student comes to your office hours. The student is interested in pursuing graduate studies but is worried that this may not be an option because of low grades in some classes.

How do you respond?

Seeing a student share your enthusiasm for your field is a gratifying experience, and it is okay to share aspects of your grad school admission story that you think may help the student. In addition, you should refer the student to the appropriate campus resource offices that have specific expertise that could be helpful to the student.

- **Academic advising** is available to undergraduates through advising offices in the individual colleges and, once students have declared a major, through their departments. Peer advising is also available and an important part of advising on campus. Check with the student affairs officer in your teaching department for contact information. You can also look up the advising services by college or school by going to [Schools and Colleges at UC Berkeley](https://www.berkeley.edu/academics/schools-colleges/) (<https://www.berkeley.edu/academics/schools-colleges/>).
- [The Career Center](https://career.berkeley.edu/) (<https://career.berkeley.edu/>) offers **career counseling** to students, as well as access to job and internship postings and assistance with resumé writing and interview preparation.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/counseling/individual) (<https://uhs.berkeley.edu/counseling/individual>) offers **individual counseling and a career counseling library** to students who are struggling with career-related issues such as identifying their interests.

If you are not sure which campus office is responsible for advising about a particular aspect of student life, ask the Instructor of Record or contact the [GSI Teaching & Resource Center](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/about/#location-hours) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/about/#location-hours>).

Advising a Distressed or Depressed Student (Page 21 of 32)

When working with a distressed student, the following general tips can be helpful in framing your response:

Safety First: The welfare of the campus community is our top priority. When a student displays threatening or potentially violent behavior, do not hesitate to call for help.

Listen Sensitively & Carefully: Use a non-confrontational approach and a calm voice. Avoid threatening, humiliating, and intimidating responses.

Be Proactive: Engage students early on, setting expectations for appropriate behavior.

Be Direct: Ask students directly if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, feeling confused, or having thoughts of harming themselves or others.

Follow Through: Ensure that the student gets connected to support, and follow up to express ongoing care.

Consultation & Documentation: Always document your interactions with students experiencing distress and consult with your department chair or supervisor after any incident.

Consider this scenario:

A student comes to your office hours in tears. She explains that she hasn't received her financial aid money and that she is about to be evicted from her apartment. She asks you for a one-week extension on the midterm assignment because she can't concentrate on getting her coursework done.

How do you respond?

It is crucial to respond to this student with sincerity and commitment to the student's well-being. The student is presenting two kinds of issues, one academic (the extension request) and one personal (the financial and housing situation).

If your course policies on granting extensions can accommodate the student's academic request, you should feel comfortable granting it. However, if you feel granting this request would violate the policy as stated in the syllabus, making it seem unfair to other students who don't know what the student in question is going through, you should check with the faculty member to decide the best course of action.

Although the student is not asking for help with her financial difficulty, it may alleviate some of her distress to recommend campus services that would be helpful — in this case the [Financial Aid Office](http://financialaid.berkeley.edu/) (<http://financialaid.berkeley.edu/>), which administers emergency loans to students or the [Basic Needs Center](https://basicneeds.berkeley.edu/home) (<https://basicneeds.berkeley.edu/home>), which supports students who are experiencing housing and food insecurity. If the student is better resourced, she will be able to focus more effectively on her coursework. A GSI's awareness of campus resources to recommend to students can be extremely helpful. The [Annotated Campus Resource List](https://gsi.berkeley.edu/programs-services/ethics-course/ethics-annotated-list/) (<https://gsi.berkeley.edu/programs-services/ethics-course/ethics-annotated-list/>) in this course shows several.

If a student comes to you with an issue that extends beyond your expertise as a GSI or your knowledge of the campus, express concern while maintaining and protecting the boundaries of your academic role.

If a student begins to disclose an incident involving sexual harassment or sexual violence, inform them that as an employee of the University, you are required to report it and that you can instead refer them to a confidential advocate to disclose their experience to if they prefer. (Module 5 will explain this issue in detail.)

Recognizing your professional boundaries highlights the importance of guiding the student to others who have the specific expertise a distressed student needs. Set limits, and don't take on more responsibility in these situations than your experience, knowledge, or authority allow.

Assisting Students Who Are Experiencing Psychological Distress

Students may approach you about personal, emotional, or psychological difficulties that extend beyond the instructional relationship. Because GSIs have regular interaction with students, you may be one of the first people to recognize that a student needs help. You may observe signs such as marked behavioral changes, lack of attention to grooming or hygiene, or expressions of distress.

Consider this scenario:

A student has had a series of personal setbacks that include the death of a family member, continuing disagreements with a roommate, and the loss of a part-time job. He comes to your office hour, breaks down, and it becomes hard to track what he is saying. You express concern and try to get him to refocus, but he isn't able to respond.


What should you do?

Compassion and Boundaries

Express compassion for the student while maintaining the boundaries of your academic role. GSIs are not expected to provide counseling. You can ask the student whether he knows about or has contacted [Counseling & Psychological Services \(https://uhs.berkeley.edu/counseling\)](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/counseling) (510-642-9494). As of Fall 2021, all CAPS appointments are now scheduled on the **same-day and first-come-first-served basis** in order to increase access, shorten the “long wait time”. To normalize the student’s situation, you can let him know that a large proportion of college students experience difficulties that make it hard to focus, and that assistance is available. (About 30% of college students in a recent nationwide study reported that at some point in the last year they were so depressed they could not function.)

While recognizing the limits of the GSI’s role and expertise, there are important ways you can assist a student: noticing possible indicators of distress, knowing about campus resources that may benefit the student, and being familiar with the campus protocols for assisting students in distress.

Care Reports and the Center for Support and Intervention (CSI)

If you are concerned about a student who is experiencing or causing distress, you may consider [submitting a Care Report](https://berkeley-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/index.php/pid728921?)  (https://berkeley-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/index.php/pid728921?) to the [Center for Support and Intervention \(https://csi.berkeley.edu/\)](https://csi.berkeley.edu/) (CSI). Case Managers in CSI work collaboratively with faculty, staff, and GSIs to identify concerns, recommend strategies, and help students access and navigate campus resources and services. In some cases, Case Managers will meet with students to better understand their needs and provide direct support.

As part of its process, CSI convenes and coordinates with members of the [Students of Concern Committee \(https://csi.berkeley.edu/socc-when-to-refer/socc/\)](https://csi.berkeley.edu/socc-when-to-refer/socc/) (SOCC). The SOCC draws on the expertise of a number of campus units, including Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), the Center for Student Conduct, the Disabled Students’ Program (DSP), Financial Aid, the Basic Needs Center, the UC Police Department, and several other units. When students exhibit behaviors of high concern, and/or could potentially pose a threat to themselves and/or others, CSI and the SOCC will coordinate a proactive effort to manage the situation.

For more information about when you should submit a Care Report, what this process entails, and how to manage concerns about students, review the UC Berkeley [Gold Folder \(https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/ucb_goldfolder.pdf\)](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/ucb_goldfolder.pdf) (see below).

Promoting Student Mental Health Guide, the Gold

Folder, and other Resources

The following resources, provided through Berkeley's [Counseling & Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/counseling), can assist you in responding to students in distress. We encourage you to take time to familiarize yourself with these resources so that you can respond appropriately.

The Gold Folder: A Reference for Faculty, Staff, and GSIs to Assist Students in Distress

A four-page, quick guide that addresses:

- Indicators of distress: what to look for (academic, physical, psychological, and safety risk indicators)
- Resources for students (and instructors) on campus and in the community
- Tips for the manner in which you refer a student to one of the resources
- Flow chart to determine whom to contact when a student becomes distressed or disruptive or whose behavior becomes a cause of concern

[The Gold Folder](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/ucb_goldfolder.pdf) is available here as a [pdf](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/ucb_goldfolder.pdf).

Other helpful resources include:


[Webinar for GSIs: Supporting Students in Distress: GSIs and the Gold Folder \(90 min\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qo7G7GWf_o&feature=youtu.be)  [\(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qo7G7GWf_o&feature=youtu.be\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qo7G7GWf_o&feature=youtu.be)



[\(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qo7G7GWf_o&feature=youtu.be\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qo7G7GWf_o&feature=youtu.be)

[What You Need To Know about College Students and Suicide](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/cps-collegestudentsandsuicide.pdf)

Promoting Student Mental Health: A Guide for UC Faculty, Staff, and GSIs

View the [Promoting Student Mental Health Guide](https://www.ucop.edu/student-mental-health-resources/_files/pdf/PSMH-guide.pdf)  [\(https://www.ucop.edu/student-mental-health-resources/_files/pdf/PSMH-guide.pdf\)](https://www.ucop.edu/student-mental-health-resources/_files/pdf/PSMH-guide.pdf). This manual, derived from writings and best practices from university counseling centers in the University of California system and across the country,

includes sections on the following topics:

- Recognizing Students in Distress
- Indicators of Distress
- Knowing When and How to Take Action
- Cultural Diversity
- Responding to Distressed & Distressing Students
- Supporting Graduate/Professional Students and Postdoctoral Scholars
- What Can Faculty & Staff Do to Reduce Stress?

An Important Caution

GSI's must be careful about approaching students about any potential problems, especially if students do not ask for your input. Students may feel that you are unfairly singling them out, diagnosing them, or prejudging them. A possible way to address the situation, when you see signs that a student may need additional help, is to state your concern and ask if they know about resources on campus that might be helpful. For example:

I've noticed that your grades have dropped and you've made comments about feeling depressed. Do you know that we have a counseling center and other offices on campus to work with students when things are interfering with their academics?


Scenario: Suicidal Student (Page 22 of 32)

Consider this scenario:

You receive an email from a student who hasn't been to class for four weeks. He says that he does not know how he can improve his grades in order to do well in the course. He also says he wishes he could just die because neither you nor anyone else can help him at this point. He then apologizes for inconveniencing you and for not being a better student.

How should you respond?

The email suggests that the student feels trapped and does not know how to improve his situation. It also contains alarming statements that allude to suicide as a way to end his problems, and he makes an apology that could be interpreted as a final goodbye to the GSI. These should be taken very seriously. The student may be clinically depressed and feeling suicidal.

- Call Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS, 510-642-9494) and speak with an advice counselor about how to respond to the student's email and the next steps in getting help to the student. After hours and on holidays you can speak with a mental health specialist using the After Hours Assistance Line (855-817-5667).
- If the student seems at immediate risk and/or CAPS is closed, call the UC Police Department (510-642-3333) and share the email and your concerns. Depending on the severity of the circumstances, the UCPD may attempt a welfare check on the student at his or her residence or current location.
- Contact the instructor of record in your department.
- Submit a [Care Report](https://berkeley-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/index.php/pid365280?)  (https://berkeley-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/index.php/pid365280?) to the Center for Support and Intervention (CSI). While the Care Report is not an emergency response, it is important to share these concerns so that CSI and the [Students of Concern Committee \(SOCC\)](https://csi.berkeley.edu/socc-when-to-refer/socc/) (<https://csi.berkeley.edu/socc-when-to-refer/socc/>) can ensure that students get connected to appropriate resources.

Overwhelmed GSI (Page 23 of 32)

GSIs can get stressed. After all, you are balancing your graduate work, your teaching, and your family and personal life.

Consider this scenario:

Lately you haven't been feeling like yourself. You are stressed about your research and not sleeping well. It has become more difficult to prepare for your teaching, and you have been missing office hours. Your personal life feels like it is falling apart. Today, when a student in your class asked a question, you found yourself irritable and snapping at her.

What can you do?

- Learn to identify when you are stressed, to assess your boundaries and expectations, and to manage your stress before it overwhelms you.
- Be aware of the resources available for graduate students at [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/cps_gradstudents.pdf) (https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/cps_gradstudents.pdf). CAPS is a useful resource for graduate students at any stage of their graduate programs, and there are satellite offices (away from the Tang Center) just for graduate student appointments. Please note that due to the COVID-19 crisis, these appointments are being conducted by phone or virtually.
- Make an appointment with Dr. Amy Honigman (ahonigman@berkeley.edu (<mailto:ahonigman@berkeley.edu>)), Graduate Assembly Wellness Specialist.
- Online information and resources for managing stress are available on the Tang Center's [Be Well Game Plan](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/bewell) (<https://uhs.berkeley.edu/bewell>) page.

Fair Evaluation of Student Performance

(Grading) (Page 24 of 32)

As a GSI, you have an important responsibility to evaluate student work fairly. There are different points of view about which grading policies and practices are more useful for evaluating student work and promoting student learning. This course on GSI professional standards and ethics will not address these different approaches but instead will focus on specific issues that may influence your ability to grade fairly. (The chapter [Grading Student Work \(http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/grading-intro/\)](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/grading-intro/), in the online [Teaching Guide for GSIs \(http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/\)](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/), addresses grading more thoroughly.)

Grading the Work, Not the Person

Consider these scenarios:

A GSI in your department explains that when he grades, he takes into account that certain students know the material even though their answers don't always reflect this knowledge, and that certain students seem to have put in more effort than others have. He adjusts grades slightly so that all students get the credit he thinks they deserve.

A GSI in your department says that she is "lenient" in grading papers written by non-native English speakers.

Are these practices ethical?

- Though you should be concerned about your students' learning and want them to succeed, **uneven grading practices jeopardize equity** by favoring one student over another. These unfair practices also provide unreliable feedback to students about their understanding of course material.
- **Try not to refer to students as "A" students or "B" students**, as this limits your ability to recognize the range of talents a particular student may have and/or develop over time. **Instead, refer to a student's work as an A-level exam or B-level paper.** Using **grading rubrics** can assist you in using uniform criteria when grading student work. (More information on grading rubrics appears below and on the next page.)
- **Avoid thinking of some students as "ESL students"** (English as a Second Language). In grading written work, use the same rubric for all students. The rubric should lay out specific grading criteria in the context of the kinds of learning that the assignment is meant to show. A native English command of grammar is likely not a major objective of the assignment. For a

fuller discussion of working with the writing of multilingual students whose writing in English appears unclear, please see [Working with the Writing of Multilingual Students: Frequently Asked Questions](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/student-writing-intro/esl/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/student-writing-intro/esl/>) in the online [Teaching Guide for GSIs](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/>).

- Consider “anonymous grading,” in which measures are taken to hide the identity of the student whose work is being graded. This will help you avoid subjective decisions based on your prior knowledge of the student.

Promoting Uniform Grading among GSIs

Consider this scenario:

You are a GSI for a large-enrollment course working with six other GSIs. One GSI constantly complains that Berkeley undergraduates are “anti-intellectual” and lack the academic rigor of students at her prestigious alma mater. Several weeks before the first midterm, you note that many of this GSI’s students ask if they can transfer into your section because they are intimidated by her condescending demeanor and teaching style. After the graded exams have been returned, students from different sections compare their grades and find that this GSI seems to have employed her own grading standards, which are much harsher than any other GSI’s.

How might this be avoided?

Equity in grading is a critical concern, especially in a large-enrollment course in which more than one person is grading student work. Here are suggestions for ensuring equity in the grading process:

- Speak with the instructor of record and other GSIs about creating a single grading rubric or answer key for all GSIs to use. This will contribute to uniformity in grading across the sections. (Guidelines for creating rubrics can be found in the [GSI Teaching & Resource Center’s online Teaching Guide](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/>).
- Ask the instructor of record to use part of the weekly GSI meeting to go over a sample test and model how one would grade it. This can be particularly useful when exam questions require grading that goes beyond a simple determination of whether an answer is right or wrong. An advance discussion of how to grade will help you calibrate your grading with that of the other GSIs in the course, making it more equitable across sections.
- Consider grading in pairs or in a group. This will allow you to compare grading decisions and ensure uniform grading.
- Split the grading up in such a manner that each GSI corrects a specific question for all of the sections. This will provide uniformity in grading. If this method is used, make sure to review your students’ exams before returning them so that you can see where they are having difficulties.

If there are student complaints about disparate grading among GSIs, the instructor of record should be informed.

Grading and GSI Evaluations

Consider this scenario:

A GSI who is planning to go on the academic job market knows that positive student evaluations will be interpreted as evidence of her teaching skills. Some students will not be happy with the grades they are about to receive from her on a major paper assignment. She is concerned that they will express their unhappiness by giving her negative teaching evaluations. She is thinking about adjusting some of the grades slightly so that students will be more likely to focus on her talent as a teacher when they fill out the evaluation forms, rather than on their disappointment with their grades.

Why shouldn't she go ahead with her plan to adjust student grades?

Adjusting student grades for the sake of positive student evaluations constitutes a failure to grade responsibly and fairly and is a breach of ethics. We all want to be liked by our students, particularly because it can be a positive reflection of our abilities as teachers. Moreover, student evaluations are considered important for attaining recognition, promotion, and career advancement — though there are welcome signs that fuller evidence of good teaching is becoming increasingly important.

In addition to the ethical consideration, there is no evidence that students give higher ratings to instructors who are “easy graders.”

Giving Students Feedback (Page 25 of 32)

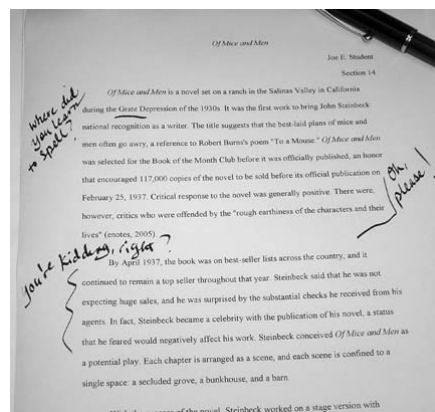
Using Respectful Language

Consider this scenario:

A GSI reads a student's paper and writes "what!!??" and "yuck!!" in the margin to express displeasure with the ideas conveyed by the student. The paper receives a D.

Is this acceptable?

- When grading or evaluating student work, be conscious of the tone and language you use in written or oral feedback. A comment that a GSI might find humorous could be hurtful to a student and affect their motivation moving forward.
- Be constructive with your feedback, not punitive or condescending, and try to go beyond pointing out problems to suggest ways of improving the work.
- Instead of overwhelming the student with comments, focus on 2-4 issues that are related to the central goal of the assignment and make suggestions about how to improve these.
- Your comments should communicate to the student the ways in which their work met or did not meet the assignment objectives and grading criteria so that they can use this information to move forward in their learning.
- Respect the student's learning process and be supportive of the effort they put into it.



More suggestions for giving evaluative feedback on student writing can be found in the [Working with Student Writing \(http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/student-writing-intro/\)](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/student-writing-intro/) section of the [Teaching Guide for GSIs \(http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/\)](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/).

Timeliness in Responding

Consider this scenario:

Students completed their midterm exams two weeks ago. Because of your own academic obligations, you have postponed grading the midterm exams. Students are repeatedly asking when they will get their graded exams back.

Why might students need their exams back sooner?

Students are more motivated to incorporate your feedback when an assignment or exam is fresh in their minds, and they use grades and comments to gauge their progress and make decisions as to the amount of time or kinds of study they may need to devote to the course over the coming weeks. Professional codes of conduct for professors call for timely and constructive return of students' graded exams and other assignments because the feedback that students receive from instructors is a necessary component of their learning process.

Discuss with the instructor of record in advance of the midterm exam their expectations for timely return of student work. Also, at the beginning of the semester, chart out the dates for the midterms and other assignment due dates. In planning your own academic program for the semester, make sure you anticipate which weeks will be particularly busy. If you have options as to when you can do work for other courses, such as presentations or papers, work them into your overall schedule so that they will not fall due at the same times as the midterm exams in the course you are teaching.

Communicating about Grades (Page 26 of 32)

Consider this scenario:

You have just returned a quiz to your students. Now they are sending you emails, and descending upon your office hours like never before. Everyone wants an explanation about how the grades were calculated.

How can GSIs avoid this situation?

In conjunction with the instructor of record and other GSIs teaching in the course, create a grading rubric or answer key that establishes the criteria by which grades are assigned. Share this rubric or key with students so that they can understand how their grades were determined.

Consult the online Teaching Guide for GSIs for [examples of general grading policies](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/grading-intro/before-you-grade/policies/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/grading-intro/before-you-grade/policies/>). GSIs should consult the [detailed examples and guidance on creating and using rubrics](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/grading-intro/grading-rubrics/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/grading-intro/grading-rubrics/>) as a key resource for developing rubrics appropriate for your own class assignments.

Handling Requests for Re-Grades

Consider this scenario:

The midterm is over and a student approaches you insisting that there has been a mistake in the grading of his exam. The student wants it re-graded.

How should you respond?

At the beginning of the semester, you should ascertain from the instructor of record what the policy is regarding re-grades, as well as the process by which requests for a re-grade will be handled. Include this policy as part of your section syllabus.

It is highly recommended that you ask students to put their concerns in writing, specifying which element(s) of the exam or graded assignment they think should be re-examined. They should also state why their paper or exam merits a second look. This reflection on the student's part makes communication with the instructor more efficient, and it sometimes convinces the student that their exam or paper was in fact fairly graded in the first pass. Many instructors also warn students to consider that in the process of re-grading, other errors may surface that result in a lower grade

than the one originally assigned.

For a fuller treatment, please see [Grading Student Work \(http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/grading-intro/\)](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/grading-intro/) in the online [Teaching Guide for GSIs \(http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/\)](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/).

Writing Letters of Recommendation (Page 27 of 32)

In your role as a GSI, you may be asked to write letters of recommendation for students who may be applying to graduate school or for jobs. Such requests often come to the GSI, not the professor, because the GSI is more familiar with students' work.

Consider this scenario:

At the end of the semester, a student asks you for a letter of recommendation for his graduate school application. At the beginning of the course, this student seemed thoroughly engaged in the subject matter and often made very insightful contributions to class discussions; however, his overall effort and performance throughout the term have become increasingly lackluster. During office hours, the student readily admits that despite his genuine interest in the class, he has been suffering from an acute case of "senioritis." His final grade reflects this downward trajectory.


Should you write a letter of recommendation for this student?

- If you cannot write a favorable letter of recommendation or do not have sufficient information, be kind yet truthful by saying, "I am not the best person to write this letter." Tell the student that it would be in their best interest to find another letter writer who could speak to the student's strengths.
- Students may not realize that a letter from a faculty member will have more influence than a letter from a GSI. If you are (or were) a student's GSI in a large enrollment course, consider writing a detailed letter that both you and the instructor of record will sign.
- The letter that you write should be detailed; support your comments with concrete examples. If you are unclear about the specific qualities of a student's work, ask the student to provide assignments completed in the course.
- Avoid inappropriate information, such as information that might disclose the student's marital status, religion, ethnicity, or disability status.

More detailed information about how to write a letter of recommendation, as well as a sample letter, can be found in [Writing Letters of Recommendation \(http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/fostering-your-professional-development/writing-letters-of-recommendation/\)](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/fostering-your-professional-development/writing-letters-of-recommendation/) in the [online Teaching Guide for GSIs \(http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/\)](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/).

Student Information and Privacy Rights

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Student information such as grades, exam papers, test scores, and evaluations are considered private information to which third parties may have access **only if the student provides written authorization**. This regulation, and the disclosure of information from student records, is governed by the federal [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html)  (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>). (Certain parties, such as departmental staff and administrators, do have access to student records if they have a “legitimate educational interest,” defined below [1].)

Consider this scenario:

Student midterms are graded. Many were handed back during lecture. The remaining graded exams are placed in a box outside of the GSI's office so that students can pick them up at their convenience.

Is this arrangement acceptable?

No, it is not. Students' graded exams are a type of student academic record. Leaving graded exams in a box in the hallway makes it possible for third parties to see students' grades and is a violation of FERPA.

Understanding Student Records

Student records information falls into two general categories: directory (public) information and confidential information.

Directory information is information that may be disclosed without prior written consent.

Examples:

- Name of student
- Addresses (local/permanent/email)
- Telephone numbers
- Major field of study
- Date and place of birth

Even though directory information is considered public, **individual students are permitted to treat some of the directory information as confidential**. If they do, this limits access by third

parties. You may not receive notice that a student has done this. You therefore cannot safely assume that you are free to provide directory information to third parties without violating student privacy.

Confidential information is information to which third parties may have access **only if the student provides written authorization**, or the third party has a “legitimate educational interest.”

[1] Student records such as grades, exam papers, and class schedules fall under this category.

Third-Party Requests for Student Information: Questions

What if a parent or another third party requests information about your students?

Do not release to inquisitive parents or any other third party any information about a student’s location, attendance, course work, grades, GPA, or other confidential information, **unless you have written authorization from the student**. If you receive a request from a parent or partner for information about a student, refer the requestor to the UC Police Department or the Office of the Registrar. They have specific protocols for locating students in an emergency. Remember foremost that it is your obligation to protect the privacy rights of students.

What if I contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) with concerns about a student?

According to FERPA guidelines, CAPS qualifies as a third party who has a “legitimate educational interest” [1] in the student’s academic information because it impacts their ability to provide a service such as counseling to the student.

What if a staff member of the Athletic Study Center asks me for a “progress report” on a student in my section?

The Athletic Study Center (ASC) is responsible for monitoring the academic and degree progress of the University’s student athletes, as mandated by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). ASC staff members occasionally send out requests for progress reports to faculty members and GSIs, so that ASC can provide appropriate academic support to academically vulnerable student athletes they work with. Thus the ASC also qualifies as a third party with a “legitimate educational interest” in the student’s academic information in order to provide services to the student.

If a GSI receives such a request, the GSI should consult with the instructor of record about how to respond to the ASC staff member, whether to contact the student directly, and what information to provide. Further information is available on the [Faculty and Staff \(https://asc.berkeley.edu/resources/faculty-staff\)](https://asc.berkeley.edu/resources/faculty-staff) page of the ASC website.

[1] According to the [Disclosure of Information from Student Records \(pdf\)](#)

<http://registrar.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/FERPAFaculty.pdf>)_ policy, **Legitimate**

Educational Interest (LEI) means:

- a. The information or record is relevant and necessary to the accomplishment of some task or determination that is in support of the student's education; and
- b. The task or determination is an employment responsibility for the inquirer.

Sources

UC Berkeley [Disclosure of Information from Student Records policy](https://registrar.berkeley.edu/academic-policies-procedures/ferpa).

<https://registrar.berkeley.edu/academic-policies-procedures/ferpa>); UC Berkeley Office of the Registrar, [Disclosure of Information from Student Records: A Quick Reference for Faculty and GSIs \(pdf\)](http://registrar.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/FERPAFaculty.pdf) (<http://registrar.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/FERPAFaculty.pdf>); Athletic Study Center, [Faculty and Staff](https://asc.berkeley.edu/resources/faculty-staff) (<https://asc.berkeley.edu/resources/faculty-staff>).

Privacy of Student Information: Summary

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Here are some key ways GSIs can help protect the privacy of students' personal information.

- Exams and papers are considered confidential student records. They should not be left in a public area for pick-up without first obtaining written authorization from each student. It is much better to distribute exams and papers in class, or leave them with a departmental staff member who can distribute them upon verifying the identity of each student.
- Under no circumstances should you post a list of student I.D. numbers and grades in a public area. Student I.D. numbers and grades are confidential information, and posting such information is a violation of FERPA regulations. Particular care should be taken with the student I.D. number, given that it is now one of two keys used for accessing student records electronically.
- For final grades, do not post a grade list in a public area. Instead, refer students to CalCentral, where they will be able to view their grades online.
- Confidential student data should not be stored where it is easily accessible on laptops or thumb drives. Paper copies should not be thrown away or recycled when no longer needed; instead they should be shredded.
- You should only share students' telephone numbers or email addresses with other students after first obtaining express written permission from the students. Although as a GSI you probably have access to this information, students may have designated their directory information as confidential. Therefore, you should treat all telephone numbers and email addresses as confidential unless students give written permission for them to be shared. Physical and cyberspace stalking of students do occur. Protecting students' directory information may protect their health and safety.
- Do not post or circulate student photos, not even for classroom use, without student written permission.
- Photos should not be easily accessible on laptops or thumb drives, nor should paper copies of photos be recycled or thrown away when no longer needed; they should be shredded.
- Students may if they wish post their own photos or images as avatars in bCourses.

Source

Adapted from UC Berkeley Office of the Registrar, [Policy Governing Disclosure of Information from Student Records](http://registrar.berkeley.edu/academic-policies-procedures/ferpa) (<http://registrar.berkeley.edu/academic-policies-procedures/ferpa>).

Instructor Guidance Regarding the Coronavirus (Page 30 of 32)

The resumption of in-person classes has been made possible by the widespread availability of vaccines and high vaccination rates within the campus and surrounding communities. Being vaccinated is the most effective way for instructors and students to protect themselves against COVID-19, and also helps protect those members of our community who can't be vaccinated.

What to do

As an instructor, you are expected to:



☐ **Comply with all campus requirements and keep apprised of updates:**

See the [Coronavirus \(https://coronavirus.berkeley.edu/\)](https://coronavirus.berkeley.edu/) page for a complete list of requirements, including:

- [Mask requirements \(https://coronavirus.berkeley.edu/masks/\)](https://coronavirus.berkeley.edu/masks/)
- [Vaccination and booster policy \(https://uhs.berkeley.edu/requirements/covid19\)](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/requirements/covid19)

☐ **Plan ahead for absences and be prepared to pivot**

Plan ahead for what you'll do if you're not able to be on campus. This could include moving to remote instruction in the event of fires or smoke, change in campus health guidelines, the need to take care of a family member or if you get sick yourself.

- In the event that students are absent due to COVID and ask that the class be recorded, please consult with the instructor of record. Unless your class is in a course-capture enabled classroom, recording in-person classes is at the discretion of the instructor.
- Instructors are advised to be prepared for potential transitions to remote instruction in response to power outages, air quality issues, or changing public health guidance. One set of handouts provided at the Teaching Conference for First-time GSIs provides guidance on remote teaching, should this become necessary.
- For GSI medical or family leave, please see [Article 17, Leaves](https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx/docs/bx_article_17-leaves_2018-2022.pdf)  (https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx/docs/bx_article_17-leaves_2018-2022.pdf), of the [Academic Student Employee union contract](https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx/contract.html)  (<https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx/contract.html>).

What not to do

ⓧ **Ask about vaccination status**

Do not ask students if they are vaccinated or request proof of vaccination.

ⓧ **Require face coverings if not required by campus**

You're allowed to request that students wear a face covering in your classroom, but if campus policy does not require face coverings, it is not okay to exclude, retaliate or penalize those who choose not to wear a mask.

ⓧ **Share information about positive cases**

University Health Services has a process for notifying students and employees of potential exposures. You should not communicate about positive cases without express permission due to privacy concerns.

Module 1 Campus Resources (Page 31 of 32)

This information below is included in the coursewide [Annotated Campus Resource List](https://bcourses.berkeley.edu/courses/1525797/pages/annotated-campus-resource-list-2023-2024) (<https://bcourses.berkeley.edu/courses/1525797/pages/annotated-campus-resource-list-2023-2024>).

GSI Teaching & Resource Center

(<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/>)

The GSI Teaching & Resource Center is an academic unit in the Graduate Division that provides pedagogical support and guidance for GSIs. Programs include teaching conferences for first-time GSIs, workshops, course improvement grants, teaching awards, confidential consultations, the GSI Professional Standards and Ethics in Teaching course, the Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, and the Language Proficiency Program for multilingual GSIs. The Center maintains the online Teaching Guide for GSIs and houses a physical library of books, articles, videos, and other reference materials on teaching.

GSI Teaching & Resource Center

301 Sproul Hall

510-642-4456

gsi@berkeley.edu (<mailto:gsi@berkeley.edu>)

Resources of particular interest:

[Online Teaching Guide for GSI](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/>)

[Teaching Discussion Sections](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/discussion-intro/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/discussion-intro/>)

[Facilitating Laboratory Sections](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/lab-sections-intro/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/lab-sections-intro/>)

[Conducting a Midterm Evaluation](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/improve-intro/conducting-a-midterm-evaluation/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/improve-intro/conducting-a-midterm-evaluation/>)

[Grading Student Work: Grading Rubrics](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/grading-intro/grading-rubrics/) (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/grading-intro/grading-rubrics/>)

[Award-Winning Teaching Ideas: GSI Teaching Effectiveness Award Essays](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/programs-services/award-programs/teaching-effectiveness/tea-recipients/)
(<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/programs-services/award-programs/teaching-effectiveness/tea-recipients/>)

These are short essays by outstanding GSIs identifying and responding to a problem they encountered in a class, laboratory, or section they taught. The GSIs' experiences span nearly 60 different departments and programs on campus. GSIs report that adapting these ideas for use in their own classroom helps them save time so they don't need to reinvent the wheel.

[Certificate Program in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education \(http://gsi.berkeley.edu/programs-services/certificate-program/\)](http://gsi.berkeley.edu/programs-services/certificate-program/)

Policies and Documents of Particular Interest to GSIs

[Graduate Council Policy on Appointments and Mentoring of GSIs \(pdf\) \(http://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/committees/gc/gc_policy_on_appt_and_mentoring_gsis.pdf\)](http://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/committees/gc/gc_policy_on_appt_and_mentoring_gsis.pdf)

[Graduate Student Academic Appointments \(http://grad.berkeley.edu/financial/appointments/\)](http://grad.berkeley.edu/financial/appointments/)

[Academic Student Employee Contract ➦ \(http://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx/contract.html\)](http://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx/contract.html)

[UC Systemwide Policy on Speech and Advocacy ➦ \(http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2710523/PACAOS-30\)](http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2710523/PACAOS-30)

[UC Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct \(http://sa.berkeley.edu/code-of-conduct\)](http://sa.berkeley.edu/code-of-conduct)

[UC Berkeley Religious Creed Policy \(http://guide.berkeley.edu/religious-creed-policy/\)](http://guide.berkeley.edu/religious-creed-policy/)

[Guidelines Concerning Scheduling Conflicts with Academic Requirements \(http://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/guide-acad-sched-conflicts-final-2014.pdf\)](http://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/guide-acad-sched-conflicts-final-2014.pdf)

[Office of the Registrar \(http://registrar.berkeley.edu/\)](http://registrar.berkeley.edu/)

120 Sproul Hall
510-664-9181

The Office of the Registrar is responsible for registering students, processing course enrollment, maintaining and protecting the privacy of student records, reserving classrooms, determining residency, and assisting special populations such as U.S. veterans.

Contact the Registrar if you have questions regarding the disclosure of information from student records.

[Disclosure of Information from Student Records \(FERPA guidelines\) \(pdf\) \(https://registrar.berkeley.edu/academic-policies-procedures/ferpa\)](https://registrar.berkeley.edu/academic-policies-procedures/ferpa)

Center for Support and Intervention

(<https://takeaction.berkeley.edu/>)

102 Sproul Hall

510-664-4218 or csi@berkeley.edu

Submit a Care Report ➞ (https://berkeley-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Students may be referred to the Center for Support and Intervention when they are exhibiting concerning behaviors related to their personal, physical, and emotional well-being. You should feel free to call for consultation prior to submitting a Care Report if you are hesitant, have questions, or need immediate advice. After reviewing a Care Report, the Center for Support and Intervention brings select cases to the Students of Concern Committee, when appropriate.

The purpose of the Students of Concern Committee is to provide a means for early intervention of at-risk students. The Committee includes representatives from the Counseling and Psychological Services, the Center for Student Conduct, the Office of the Dean of Students, the Disabled Students Program, the UC Police Department, and several other offices. When a case is brought to the committee by the Center for Support and Intervention, the committee collects additional information and identifies and enacts appropriate strategies for addressing the situation.

The Students of Concern Committee is not meant to be the sole mechanism of communication and does not take the place of services provided by Counseling and Psychological Services, the Center for Student Conduct, the University Police, or other established student services.

Basic Needs Center (<http://basicneeds.berkeley.edu/>)

Lower level of MLK Student Union (BNorth), Suite 72 (2495 Bancroft Way)

basicneedscenter@berkeley.edu (<mailto:basicneedscenter@berkeley.edu>)

The Basic Needs Center serves as a resource hub for basic needs resources and services, and a space for students to create community and access coordinated support for their basic needs. Services at the Basic Needs Center include Case Management for students who need support navigating unstable housing (including homelessness and emergency housing needs), access to food (including CalFresh application support, Food Pantry access, and other food assistance), and more. Students can be referred directly to the Basic Needs Center, or GSIs can submit a **Care Report** ➞ (https://berkeley-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/index.php/pid397421?) to request support from a Case Manager in the Basic Needs Center.

Campus Police Department (UCPD)

(<http://ucpd.berkeley.edu/>)

1 Sproul Hall

Emergency calls, including from cell phones: 510-642-3333

Business and non-emergency number: 510-642-6760

Crime Prevention Strategies and Services (<https://ucpd.berkeley.edu/services/crime-prevention-unit>)

The UC Police Department's safety guidelines for the campus community

Campus Police Department — Threat Management Unit

510-642-6760

Non-emergency phone line to report threats of harm to individuals, groups, or structures

Office of Emergency Management

(<http://oem.berkeley.edu/>)

The Office of Emergency Management is responsible for developing and implementing programs and projects in emergency planning, training, response, and recovery.

Emergency Preparedness for Disabled People (<https://dac.berkeley.edu/emergency>)

WarnMe Emergency Alert Service (<https://warnme.berkeley.edu/>)

Center for Student Conduct

(<https://conduct.berkeley.edu/>)

510-643-9069

The Center for Student Conduct administers the campus Code of Student Conduct, encouraging student accountability, promoting academic integrity, and connecting students to resources that foster their success.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

<http://uhs.berkeley.edu/students/counseling>

Located in University Health Services (UHS), Tang Center

2222 Bancroft Way

510-642-9494

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides brief counseling to students with personal, academic, and career concerns. Professional counselors can meet with students to talk about a number of concerns such as adjusting to school, deciding on a career or major, dealing with family or relationship issues, and coping with personal crises. All undergraduate and graduate students are eligible for CAPS services, regardless of their insurance coverage.

Selected Resources from Counseling and Psychological Services:

[Promoting Student Mental Health: A Guide for UC Faculty, Staff, and GSIs](http://www.ucop.edu/student-mental-health-resources/_files/pdf/PSMH-guide.pdf) 

http://www.ucop.edu/student-mental-health-resources/_files/pdf/PSMH-guide.pdf

[The Gold Folder: A Reference for Faculty, Staff, and GSIs to Assist Students in Distress](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/uch_goldfolder.pdf)

https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/uch_goldfolder.pdf

[Suicide Prevention at Cal — UHS Tang Center](http://uhs.berkeley.edu/students/counseling/suicideprevention.shtml) <http://uhs.berkeley.edu/students/counseling/suicideprevention.shtml>

[Be Well Game Plan](http://uhs.berkeley.edu/bewell/) <http://uhs.berkeley.edu/bewell/>

[Webinar for GSIs: Supporting Students in Distress: GSIs and the Gold Folder](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qo7G7GWf_o&feature=youtu.be) 

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qo7G7GWf_o&feature=youtu.be



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qo7G7GWf_o&feature=youtu.be

[What You Need To Know about College Students and Suicide](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/cps-collegestudentsandsuicide.pdf) <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/cps-collegestudentsandsuicide.pdf>

[Resources for Graduate Students at Counseling and Psychological Services](https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/cps_gradstudents.pdf)

https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/cps_gradstudents.pdf

[Ombuds Office for Students and Postdoctoral Appointees](http://sa.berkeley.edu/ombuds) <http://sa.berkeley.edu/ombuds>

510-642-5754

The Ombuds Office for Students and Postdoctoral Appointees provides a confidential service for students involved in a University-related problem (either academic or administrative), acting as a neutral complaint resolver and not as an advocate for any of the parties involved in a dispute. The Ombudsperson can provide information on policies and procedures affecting students, facilitate students' contact with services able to assist in resolving the problem, and assist students in complaints concerning improper application of University policies or procedures. All matters referred to this office are held in strict confidence. The only exceptions, at the sole discretion of the Ombudsperson, are cases where there appears to be imminent threat of serious harm.

Academic Accommodations Hub

(<https://evcp.berkeley.edu/programs-resources/academic-accommodations-hub>)

This hub will point you and your students to academic support services from a variety of units. The purpose of support resources and academic accommodations is to ensure all students have a fair chance at academic success. These resources are for everyone; students have a right to use them, and instructors should be familiar with them.

Quick Guide on Academic Support Measures for Instructors **([https://evcp.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files](https://evcp.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/quick_guide_on_academic_supportive_measures_for_instructors_4.pdf)**

[/quick_guide_on_academic_supportive_measures_for_instructors_4.pdf](https://evcp.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/quick_guide_on_academic_supportive_measures_for_instructors_4.pdf)

An abbreviated version of the Academic Accommodations Hub. GSIs should be aware of this information and should share it with students.

Covid-19 Resources

<https://coronavirus.berkeley.edu>

GSI Medical or Family Leaves

[Article 17, Leaves](#)  https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx/docs/bx_article_17-leaves_2018-2022.pdf, of the [Academic Student Employee union contract](#)  <https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx/contract.html>.

The information above is included in the [Annotated Campus Resource List](#) <https://bcourses.berkeley.edu/courses/1525797/pages/annotated-campus-resource-list-2023-2024>.

Module 1 Wrap-Up and Quiz (Page 32 of 32)

In this module, **GSI Ethics and Professional Responsibilities**, you have explored the following topics:

- ethics and standards in teaching;
- understanding your responsibilities as a GSI;
- managing the instructional environment;
- advising and appropriate relationships with students;
- fair evaluation of student performance; and
- student information and privacy rights.

Review

In the course of exploring these topics, it is hoped that you now are able to take steps and find resources to meet the following objectives:

- identify standards of professionalism and ethical behavior for GSIs and apply these standards successfully to ethical dilemmas;
- take steps to identify your responsibilities and those of the instructor of record;
- create an instructional environment that is conducive to student learning and safety;
- establish professionally appropriate relationships with students and refer them to appropriate campus resources;
- take steps to ensure that student performance is evaluated fairly; and
- protect the privacy rights of students regarding grades and other personal information, and identify who has the right to know this information.

If you wish, we invite you to respond to questions this module brings up or see what others say about the module content. In the bCourses window or tab, use the Discussions tool in the left navigation menu; from there select the Module 1 discussion. Or use this link to the [bCourses Module 1 Discussion page \(https://bcourses.berkeley.edu/courses/1525797/discussion_topics/6592894\)](https://bcourses.berkeley.edu/courses/1525797/discussion_topics/6592894). Discussion is optional. Please note: Your postings will not be anonymous.

After you finish reviewing, please move on to the Module 1 quiz, linked below.

Module 1 Quiz

The quiz for Module 1 will help you master the material by connecting the concepts introduced in the module and applying them to new scenarios. In addition to demonstrating your command of the course content, we hope this activity helps prepare you to clarify issues and discern the best plan of action in the situations you may face as a GSI.

You must score an 8 or higher out of 10 on this quiz. If your score is under 8, you are allowed to retake the quiz up to four times (that is, you have 5 attempts total). If you exhaust your five attempts and still have not passed, please contact the GSI Teaching & Resource Center (gsi@berkeley.edu) for assistance. Please click the link below to open the Module 1 quiz.

[Go to Module 1 Quiz \(https://bcourses.berkeley.edu/courses/1525797/quizzes/2430648\)](https://bcourses.berkeley.edu/courses/1525797/quizzes/2430648)