Pre-Semester Preparation: Checklist for Getting Started as a GSI

I. Things to Do
❑ Read over your appointment letter and finalize the hiring process.
❑ Familiarize yourself with policies pertaining to your GSI position.
❑ Get a copy of the course syllabus and review it.
❑ Familiarize yourself with the course readings and materials.
❑ Set your office hours (time and location).
❑ Create a section syllabus (see online Teaching guide for GSIs for information and examples).
❑ Visit the classroom or lab you will be teaching in.
❑ Get a copy of the roster for your section and practice saying students' names. You may also be able to see the photos through bCourses.
❑ Create your first-day lesson plan (see conference handouts for template).
❑ Copy handouts for the first day (e.g., section syllabus).

For first-time GSIs:
❑ Enroll in your department's 300-level course (most go by the number 375).
❑ Enroll in and complete the GSI Professional Standards and Ethics in Teaching online course. All first-time GSIs must complete the five modules with passing scores before interacting (in person or online) with students in their role as GSI.
❑ Register for and attend the Teaching Conference for First-Time GSIs held the week before classes start.
❑ Familiarize yourself with the Gold Folder, a guide to helping students in distress find appropriate campus resources.

II. Review syllabus and responsibilities with Instructor of Record
Have a pre-semester meeting with the faculty member teaching the course to review the course syllabus and your responsibilities. Most of the questions below will be addressed by the faculty member. However, there may be some that you will wish to bring to their attention. If the faculty member does not initiate this meeting, reach out and ask when it will be scheduled.

Course Logistics
❑ Do the GSIs have any responsibilities during lecture (e.g., taking attendance or passing out handouts)?
❑ What process can be put in place for GSIs to track their use of time and communicate with the faculty member so as not to exceed the workload and hours designated for the position?
❑ Find out how requests for accommodations will be handled. If the Disabled Students' Program (DSP) has provided a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) indicating the need for accommodations (for instance, extra time or alternative space), who will oversee the provision of the accommodation? Ask whether the faculty member can make one or more GSIs their proxy for the DSP portal to access Letters of Accommodation for their students. If they prefer not to, ask when/how they will share relevant letters with the GSIs.
❑ Do sections begin the first week of the semester or do they start later?
❑ How many office hours do GSIs need to hold?
❑ Find out from the faculty member what the regular faculty/GSI meeting time and location will be.

Remote-Friendly Considerations (for GSIs who may be teaching in online courses)

❑ How much of the course will the professor teach synchronously vs. asynchronously? Will the GSI be required to attend and assist during the instructor's synchronous sessions? For example, will the GSI monitor Zoom chat?

❑ How many hours per week are the GSIs expected to meet synchronously with their students and how many hours should they devote to preparing asynchronous learning activities (note that the Instructor of Record is responsible for this decision).

❑ Is student attendance in synchronous section meetings required?

❑ Does the professor expect the GSIs to record their synchronous sessions if conducted online? Does the professor want the recordings to be housed on bCourses or elsewhere?

Instructional Technology

❑ If using bCourses, has the faculty member created (or asked IT to create) separate bCourses section sites? This is advised since it gives GSIs full functionality to manage their sections. However, some faculty members may prefer to add you as "teacher" and have all student work centralized.

❑ If using sites other than bCourses, how will they be used and who will set them up?

❑ Does the classroom or lab have the necessary IT equipment installed or will you need to check out equipment?

❑ Will GSIs be responsible for picking up or setting up equipment for lectures? Regularly or on occasion?

Course Materials

❑ How are the books and/or readings made available to students? Will there be readings on electronic reserve in the library? If so, how and when can they be accessed?

❑ How do GSIs obtain and get reimbursed for any electronic texts not available at the University Library?

❑ Will lecture notes or slides be available to students and/or GSIs for the course?

Enrollment Information

❑ What is the policy or procedure for letting students in from the waitlist or dropping them from the course? When will decisions be made? Who is in charge of enrollment decisions?

❑ Are there prerequisites?

Student Assessment

❑ What quizzes, exams, and/or papers will students complete?

❑ What will be the format of the assessments: short answer questions, essay, multiple choice? Will they be timed or untimed?

❑ What additional assignments will be part of the course grade?

❑ When are the exams/papers/assignments due?

❑ When is the final exam, and how will students take it? Will it be proctored?

❑ What is the professor's policy for make-up exams or late papers?

❑ Do GSIs have the freedom to create low-stakes quizzes and other interim assignments to assist students in their learning?

Preparation for Exams and Papers

❑ Will there be a review session before each exam? If so, who will be responsible for running the session, posting materials, and determining the date and time?
❑ Will GSIs be asked to come up with questions for the exams/papers?
❑ What are the GSI responsibilities in managing and proctoring exams?
❑ If there are students who have accommodations through the DSP, who will oversee the provision of the accommodation?

Grading

❑ Will GSIs be responsible for grading? If so, what will they be grading and when will this take place in the semester?
❑ Are students required to use Turnitin.com before submitting their written work?
❑ How will grading be distributed among GSIs?
❑ How much time do GSIs have to grade each paper and/or exam? How quickly should papers or exams be returned to students?
❑ What are the procedures if a GSI thinks a student has plagiarized, cheated, or engaged in another form of academic misconduct?
❑ Who will be responsible for responding to requests for re-grades, the GSIs or the professor? What are the course policies for re-grades?
❑ Who will record and maintain student grades? Will there be a course list or separate lists for each GSI?
❑ How will students receive their graded work: in bCourses, Gradescope, etc.?

III. Setting up for the first week and beyond

After meeting with the faculty member, use the GSI Center's dedicated [webpage](#) to prepare for the semester and first week.

❑ Create a section syllabus (see the Sample Section Syllabus in conference handout packet).
❑ Access the course bCourse site to view the roster for your section and practice saying students' names. You may also see students' photos (if provided).
❑ Send out a [pre-semester survey](#) to collect relevant information to facilitate community building and gauge situational factors that may impact student learning a week before your section begins.
❑ Create your lesson plan for the first week (see [Sample Lesson Plan](#) in conference handout packet).
❑ Organize and have at the ready any documents you will need to refer to on the first day (e.g., section syllabus, lesson plan, roster)

Remote-Friendly Office Hours

❑ If holding office hours remotely is approved by your department, set up synchronous office hours through Zoom. For more information, see GSI Zoom Set Up Instructions (pdf): https://gsi.berkeley.edu/media/Zoom-Instructions_GSI.pdf.

IV. Other Resources in Your Department

Office Space and Supplies

❑ Do you have an office? Where is it? How do you get the office key?

❑ Can you hold office hours there without disturbing other GSIs, or do you need to find another location for office hours?
❑ Do you have access to computers and printers from the department?
❑ Where is the copier? What code do you need? Is there a limit to the quantity of copies you can make?
❑ How do you get access to teaching supplies (e.g. paper, chalk, index cards)?
❑ Where is your mailbox located?

Teaching Resources
❑ Is equipment available to GSIs should they need a laptop or other device to carry out their teaching responsibilities?
❑ In addition to the resources provided by the GSI Center, does the department have an electronic repository where teaching materials are kept? If so, where is it and how do you access it? What resources does it provide?

Other GSIs
❑ Can you get access to past section lesson plans for the course? The faculty member may be able to give you access or put you in contact with former GSIs for the course.
❑ Is there a "head GSI"? What is their role in relation to yours?

Go-To People for Addressing Concerns
❑ Should issues relating to your position come up, first speak to your supervisor, the faculty member teaching the course (instructor of record). Should you need further input, you should reach out to the Faculty Adviser for GSI Affairs in the department in which the class is being offered (each department that hires GSIs must have a Faculty Adviser for GSI Affairs who can advise GSIs on all matters pertaining to GSI appointments. See list at http://gsi.berkeley.edu/basics-for-gsis/find-adviser-for-gsi-affairs/). Should the issue not be resolved within the department, feel free to email the GSI Teaching & Resource Center at gsi@berkeley.edu.

Adapted with permission from handout by K. Blount-Matthews, Former GSI, Department of Psychology