

ANATOMY

of a 20-hour-a-week teaching assistant appointment

If you've never been a TA, it may be hard to imagine exactly what you've signed on for. It's easy to think you're getting paid for more than you're doing – but believe us, **YOU'RE NOT!** By the end of the semester, a conscientious TA will have earned every penny of his or her stipend. Here's a look at how. (Keep in mind these numbers are averages – no single TA will have exactly this experience.)

Semester Length and Total Work Hours

- ◆ Most semesters are 13 to 15 weeks long. 15 weeks makes for easy math, so let's start there.
- ◆ **15 weeks X 20 hours a week = 300 total work hours a semester**

The Average Week

- ◆ **20 hours a week breaks down like this:**
 - + 3 hours actual class time
 - + 2 hours office hours
 - + 5 hours preparation (including processing notes, reading, lesson planning for sections)
 - = 10 hours EVERY WEEK**
- ◆ **Which leaves extra hours for course exams/assignments:**
 - ◇ 10 hours a week to add to your EXAM/ASSIGNMENT EXTRA HOURS POOL
 - ◇ 10 hours x 15 weeks = 150 hours exam/assignment extra hours for the semester
 - ◇ Most classes have some combination of 3 major exams and graded assignments, so divide 150 hours by 3 = **50 hours per exam/assignment**

50 Hours for Each Major Exam/Assignment

- ◆ **Which breaks down like this:**
 - + 6 **extra** office hours/appointments with students prior to the exam
 - + 6 **extra** office hours/appointments after the exam
 - + 38 hours grading, including:
 - ◇ 3 hours to consult with the professor and fellow TAs to ensure consistency in grading
 - ◇ 2 hours to record grades
 - ◇ 33 hours for **actual** grading of each assignment

 - = 50 total hours
- ◆ **Sounds like a lot, no? Once again, break it down the 33 hours (1,980 minutes):**
 - ◇ if you have 60 students, you're talking 33 minutes per exam
 - ◇ if you have 80 students, about 25 minutes per exam
 - ◇ if you have 100 students, about 20 minutes per exam
 - ◇ Eventually, you will get to the point where you can **grade and provide constructive comments** on three multi-page essays in 25 minutes, but it takes practice and experience.
- ◆ **Be honest with yourself, your fellow TA's and the professor you work with about how much time it's taking you to fulfill your responsibilities. Ask for help if you need it.**