Appendix D – FHS TA / Tutorial Policies & Procedures

FHS Policies and Procedures for Assigning TAs, Tutorials, and Laboratories
Effective Date – Fall 2015 Semester  (Approved FC, Oct. 23, 2014)

Background:
The following policy is intended to guide the approval of TA requests, the assignment of TAs, and calculation of salary units ("base units"). The policy is intended to protect the integrity of our undergraduate programs, ensure a clear and transparent process of decision-making, and describe important decision points. Changes to the initial policy document approved in 2008 are necessitated by changes to the TSSU collective agreement, budgetary concerns, and a need to ensure that TA assignments are provided fairly to both students and faculty.
This policy was developed in discussion with the FHS Program Directors, Program Managers, the Associate Dean-Education, and the Dean. It was also developed in the context of a review of how other Faculties, Departments, and Programs outside of FHS handle TA resources.

Definitions:
A tutorial-based teaching assistant (T-TA) is a graduate student (or in some cases an exceptional undergraduate student) who meets one or more small group sections of a lecture course. TAs who assist in laboratories are for purposes of this policy also referred to as T-TAs.
An "open lab" teaching assistant (O-TA) is a TA who is available to larger groups of students, typically in a scheduled, drop-in type of lab (e.g. a biostatistics lab). An open lab TA does not meet regularly scheduled tutorial sections. An open lab TA is compensated for prep time and the hours that they staff the open lab. We have not used O-TAs much in FHS, though in some departments (e.g., Archaeology), only O-TAs are used. In concordance with the TSSU policy (Collective Agreement, p.20), 3 hours of open laboratory will be considered equivalent to 1 hour of tutorial.

A marking TA (M-TA) is a student who primarily or exclusively assists an instructor with grading, and in some cases discussion or small group activities in the context of a lecture class. An M-TA does not lead tutorials and may be restricted from having contact with students unless arranged otherwise. M-TAs are not to be confused with “tutor markers” who are a special class of teaching assistants assigned to teach on-line courses through the Center for Online and Distance Education (CODE) and are paid through CODE according to their metrics. As we begin to offer more online courses in FHS, more tutor-marker assignments will become available.

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<th>T-TA</th>
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<th>O-TA</th>
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<td>Course Preparation</td>
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<td>Laboratory Preparation</td>
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<td>Lecture Attendance</td>
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<td>Tutorial</td>
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<td>Online supervision</td>
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A. TA Assignment Policy:

1. Priorities for granting resources for tutorial TA (T-TA) support will be in the order that follows:
a. Core HSCI courses required for completion of the degree and for which the responsible faculty have designed the course so that tutorials/labs are essential to meeting learning objectives.
b. Designated writing-intensive (W) HSCI courses.
c. Undergraduate HSCI courses are prioritized over graduate courses, except for core graduate courses that have labs or been approved for tutorial support (e.g., HSCI 801, HSCI 802).

2. All undergraduate courses, with the exception of W courses, which enroll 40 or more students will be considered for marking TA (M-TA) support.
   a. Courses that enroll between 40 and 80 students and have M-TA support will be provided an M-TA with a maximum of 3.17 base units. The M-TA may be required to attend class.
   b. Courses that enroll between 81 and 120 students and have M-TA support will be provided an M-TA with a maximum of 4.17 base units. The M-TA may be required to attend class.
   c. Courses that enroll between 121 and 160 students and have M-TA support will be provided an M-TA with a maximum of 5.17 base units. The M-TA may be required to attend class.
   d. Courses that enroll between 161 and 200 students and have M-TA support, will be provided an M-TA with a maximum of 6.17 base units. The M-TA may be required to attend class.
   e. Courses that enroll 201 or more students and have M-TA support, will be provided an M-TA with a maximum of 7.17 base units. The M-TA may be required to attend class.
   f. Courses that enroll over 300 students and have T-TA or M-TA support will be provided an additional base unit for supervisory/administrative TA duties.
   g. With approval of the TA Assignment Committee (see section B below), instructors may be provided more TAs, and more base units per TA, that may include requirements that the M-TA attend the course, hold office hours, and respond to student emails.
   h. A split of base units between two different M-TAs may be advisable with large class sizes (e.g. ≥ 150 students).
   i. Fractions of a Base Unit shall not be assigned, e.g. 4.67, unless dictated by D.5 below.

3. Faculty must design tutorials and impart this design approach to the T-TAs. Faculty must provide a tutorial and laboratory guide to T-TAs at the beginning of the semester. Similar practice should be in place for O-TAs.

4. Consideration of base units will be given to the extra time and workload required for teaching new courses and the needs of new faculty.

5. Graduate and Undergraduate Studies Committees will be responsible for reviewing course proposals under item 1 above, and prioritizing which courses should have tutorials, and which courses should be provided with M-TA, O-TA, or tutor marker support.

6. Deviations from these practices can be made through appeal to the Graduate and Undergraduate studies committees at least one semester prior to the beginning of the course. For example, for a fall course, the negotiation must take place before the beginning of the summer semester prior to the fall.

7. Faculty members will be expected to work within that budget, and the Faculty will not normally increase base units except under extraordinary circumstances. If, upon the required workload review before the end of the fifth week of classes, TAs are working more hours than available within their contracted appointment, the expectation will be that the faculty member shall reduce the TAs work requirements to ensure that the base unit expectations are met and not exceeded.
8. In consultation with ‘TA Assignment Committee’, and in the context of budget guidelines provided by the Dean, the Associate Dean-Education will make final decisions of assignments and base units allocated based on this prioritization.

B. TA Selection Processes:

Selection and evaluation of TAs are governed in part by the Collective Agreement between the SFU Board of Governors and the Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU, see articles XVI and XVII) and in part by the unit priorities established between the Faculty and TSSU. These latter priorities include language related to fairness and to prioritizing those students whose financial support includes a guaranteed TA-ship.

The ‘TA Assignment Committee’ is comprised of the Directors of the Graduate and Undergraduate Programs, the Managers of the Graduate and Undergraduate Programs, and the FHS TSSU Chief Steward. Appeals to the TA assignments made by the committee should be addressed to the Associate Dean-Education. Any impact on timing and existing course structure will be reviewed by ADE where relevant.

Availability of TA positions will be announced a minimum of 6 weeks prior to the start of the semester. All eligible students will have an opportunity to submit an application to serve as a TA in one or more courses. Applications and supporting documents will be made available to faculty members who will be requiring TA support (as per the guidelines above). It is desirable that faculty meet in person with applicants to determine their qualifications as TA for their course. Faculty are responsible for interviewing applicants whom they have not interacted with before, either in person or by phone, to ensure a good fit. If an applicant is hired who subsequently appears not to be a good fit, contracts cannot be revoked under any circumstances in accordance with TSSU requirements. Faculty will rank all TAs who have applied for the course based on the suitability of a candidate to serve as an effective TA. Based on these rankings and the time availability of applicants, the TA Assignment Committee will assign TAs. Faculty may not receive their first choice of TAs in this system, though every effort will be made to honor requests. It is also the general policy of the Faculty to ensure that all graduate students have an opportunity to serve as a TA if they so desire.

C. Tutorial and Salary Units (Base Units) Assignment Policy

Tutorials are separate meetings with students in courses that are provided to allow a small group atmosphere for learning. Tutorials should not be a recapitulation of lectures, but rather foster a novel teaching and learning approach to the course material that augments the regular lecture activities. The following are practices for assigning tutorials.

1. Tutorials are prioritized for courses that are required for completion of the degree and for which the responsible faculty have designed the course so that tutorials/labs are essential to meeting learning objectives. Current undergraduate courses with tutorials in the FHS:
   a. 100-level courses with tutorials include HSCI100 and HSCI130
   b. 200-level courses with tutorials include HSCI211, HSCI212, HSCI214, HSCI215, HSCI216
   c. 300-level courses with tutorials include HSCI319W, HSCI307, HSCI305
   d. 400-level courses with tutorials include HSCI426
2. Tutorials may be prioritized for other courses if approved by the Undergraduate Studies Committee.
3. Tutorials are one-hour (50 minutes) in length are equivalent to 1 base unit, unless specified otherwise.
4. Tutorials are aligned or assigned with courses and not instructors.
5. Instructors seeking to add or remove tutorials from courses should do so by discussion with the Graduate and Undergraduate Studies Committees with the following timeline: for a Fall course – March 1st; for a Spring course – July 2nd; for a Summer course – November 1st. These dates are subject to change in accordance with SFU Scheduling timelines. (Current SFU Scheduling deadline for the Fall is beginning of April, for Spring is beginning of August, and for Summer is beginning of December.)
6. Tutorial section sizes are generally 20-25 students. Scheduling of tutorials seeks to attain full enrollment.
7. Instructors seeking to change tutorial size or ensure a specific scheduling should do so by discussion with the Graduate and Undergraduate Studies Committees with the following timeline: for a fall course – March 1st; for a Spring course – July 2nd; for a summer course – November 1st. These dates are subject to change in accordance with SFU Scheduling timelines.

D. Laboratory Assignment Policy

HSCI Laboratory courses or courses with laboratory components are designed to offer students hands-on experience and application of course learning. A variety of rationales may be employed to develop and offer a laboratory-based experience and their support by TAs. Laboratory courses are different than lecture courses with laboratory components. The following are practices for assigning laboratories and TA support.

1. Laboratories must be supervised at all times by an instructor or a TA.
2. In the case of wet-bench experimental laboratories, additional support is provided by the teaching lab technician.
3. Laboratory course section size is generally 20-25 students. Laboratory components to lecture courses may be different sizes.
4. Each section of a laboratory course is assigned a T-TA and each hour of laboratory is considered equivalent to each hour of tutorial and thus equivalent to one base unit/hour. Thus, a 4 unit laboratory course section is assigned 4 base units for one T-TA.
5. Each section of laboratory component to a lecture course is assigned 4 base units for one T-TA. Each hour of scheduled laboratory is considered equivalent to a 1/2 hour of tutorial and thus equivalent to one base unit/2 hours. Thus, a 4 hour scheduled laboratory component course section is assigned 2 base units for one T-TA. Each hour of open laboratory is considered equivalent to a 1/3 hour of tutorial and thus equivalent to one base unit/3 hours. Thus, a 3 hour open laboratory component course section is assigned 1 base units for one T-TA.
6. Instructors seeking to change laboratory size or ensure a specific scheduling should do so through the Graduate and Undergraduate studies committees at least one semester prior to the beginning of the course. For example, for a fall course, the negotiation must take place before the beginning of the summer semester prior to the fall.
7. A laboratory course may offer additional meeting times outside of the course, but these should be scheduled in advance. Incorporation of extra meeting times must be done through discussion with the Graduate and Undergraduate Studies Committees at least one semester prior to the beginning of the course with the following timeline: for a fall course – March 1st; for a Spring course – July 2nd; for a summer course – November 1st. These dates are subject to change in accordance with SFU Scheduling timelines.