

Independent Study and Research for Credit Contract

Student: _____ Student ID #: _____

Instructor: _____ Semester/Year: _____

Department: _____ Number of Credit Hours: _____

To be completed **by the end of the first week of classes** by the student with the advice of the professor who will supervise the work. Please send electronically in the following order: (1) to the Student, (2) to the Instructor (3) to the Student's Academic Advisor, (4) to the Department Chair, (5) to the Dean's Office. The Chair will copy the student's major department for the student's file.

Course No. _____
(Title of Independent Study Project)

Statement of project:

Rationale:

Project Activities and Anticipated Outcomes:

Method of evaluation of study/project:

Remarks:

Electronic Signatures (you can simply type in your name):

Student: _____ Date: _____

Instructor: _____ Date: _____

Advisor: _____ Date: _____

Chair: _____ Date: _____

cc: Dean's Office

Guidelines for the Use of Undergraduate Learning Assistants at SUNY Fredonia

These guidelines were developed to clarify the appropriate roles of undergraduate Learning Assistants at SUNY Fredonia. A point of pride for SUNY Fredonia is that students who enroll here are taught and evaluated by faculty. We have very few **“Teaching Assistants,”** a term that is used for Master’s-level students with an earned undergraduate degree who may have supervised teaching responsibilities as part of their graduate programs. However, some roles for undergraduate can be valuable for both the enrolled students in a course and the designated Learning Assistant.

A **Learning Assistant (LA)** is an advanced undergraduate student who assists an instructor with various learning activities in courses taken by less advanced students. The experience of being a Learning Assistant should be an opportunity for the LA to learn as well as to serve. Learning Assistants can be very valuable to faculty and fellow students in the delivery of a course.

There are many advantages to the proper use of LAs:

- In larger courses, enrolled students have the opportunity to work one-on-one and in small groups hence deepening their understanding of course material.
- Enrolled students have a role model of a good student in the field of study.
- Enrolled students may have another option for tutorial support.
- More reticent students in a class may find someone “less threatening” to interact with about the course material.
- The LA has an opportunity to review more basic material in his or her major.
- The LA can gain experience in some aspects of college-level instruction.
- The LA can add a valuable “resume builder,” especially if applying for graduate school.
- The instructor can do activities in more ways that would otherwise be difficult in a large class, such as engaged learning activities.
- The instructor could have one more opportunity for feedback, which helps improve course instruction and assignments.

Appropriate Uses of Undergraduate Learning Assistants

As approved by the Department Chair for a particular course, these roles are *appropriate* for LAs:

TUTOR

- Meet with students to coach on assignment criteria & format
- To ask questions –not give answers to guide student toward appropriate answer
- Meets with students to answer questions on course policies & assignments

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITY

- Have LA complete course assignments prior to assigning to students.

- Develop/provide guidelines and practice in use of tutorial procedures (e.g., those used by Learning Center tutors).
- Review documented course policies and practices with the LA.

DEMONSTRATOR/PRESENTER

- Occasionally deliver demonstration/lesson/content to the class under supervision of instructor.
- Occasionally design instructional materials (such as PowerPoint, webpage, wiki, handout, activity instruction) in collaboration with the instructor.
- Know and be able to use all course technology (such as ANGEL, specialized software, internet).

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITY

- Provide LA with content and/or sources of information to be presented in advance of presentation date and requirements (such as visual aids, handouts, examples).
- Provide training in use of presentation technology as needed.
- Review presentation materials with LA prior to delivery.
- Observe class presentation/demonstration and provide LA feedback on delivery.

DISCUSSION/FACILITATOR/GUIDE

- Take attendance as needed.
- Manage class or group activity/discussion based on protocol/procedures (e.g. activity guidelines, reviewing website, previewing video for discussion, etc.); for lab and studio courses this entails circulating around the room answering questions and making sure students are performing techniques safely and properly
- Notes/reports on student participation/involvement
- Answers student questions on activity

Instructor Responsibility

- Provide protocol/procedures and demonstration for conducting activity/discussion
- Debrief on LA experience conducting activity/discussion
- Be present/available during while LAs are leading/facilitating/guiding, except in extraordinary cases approved in writing by the Dean.

LABORATORY/STUDIO SET-UP

- Help instructor set up/out apparati and materials for lab/studio sessions
- Help instructor take down/put away apparati and materials to get ready to set up the next session

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITY

- Provide access to apparati and materials.
- Provide instructions for set up and clean up.

Inappropriate Uses of Undergraduate Learning Assistants

It is inappropriate for faculty, as individuals, to invite students to serve as Learning Assistants without departmental knowledge and approval. A student who registers for Individual Investigation with a particular faculty member, for example, should not be given LA tasks unless the Chair approves, based on the scope of appropriate activities for the LA as defined in these guidelines. The syllabus or contract, as explained in the next section, is an important feature of the learning experience for LAs.

These roles are *inappropriate* for Learning Assistants:

EVALUATOR (assignment and test scoring and recording)

Instructors alone are responsible for grading and entering grades or other information (e.g., attendance) into a grade book (electronic or otherwise). Grading/evaluating of any kind of LAs is inappropriate, as this practice violates FERPA regulations, relinquishes the important role of evaluator to an unqualified undergraduate, and puts the LA in a vulnerable position in relation to peers. Grade entry by LAs is also appropriate, and instructors should not give students access to their print or electronic grade book.

PROCTOR ROLE

Proctoring by a LA is inappropriate, as this puts the LA in a vulnerable position with peers.

Additional Guidelines for Undergraduate Learning Assistants

SYLLABUS OR CONTRACT

LAs who are earning academic credit for their work as Learning Assistants must be enrolled in a formal course to ensure regular meetings between the instructor and the LAs; to give the LAs documented academic credit for their experiences; to provide clear, written explanation (through the course syllabus) of the responsibilities and criteria for evaluation of LAs; to protect LAs legally; and to ensure the Department and Dean have proper oversight. In situations where the LAs are not enrolled in a course (e.g., being paid for their services), a learning contract must spell out the responsibilities of the LAs and instructor and be approved by the Department and Dean. This is similar to the expectation of a written agreement for a paid internship experience.

SELECTION OF LAS

LAs must be chosen carefully. LAs should be more experienced and mature students who have already taken the course with which they will work, and they should have done well in that course and other courses in the field. LAs should be responsible individuals who are known well by the Department.