



Most TAs are required to hold office hours as a part of their assistantship. Office hours represent a time that you make yourself available to your students, and are an opportunity for your students to seek help, clarification, or just to say hi. As a TA you should also think about ways to make your office hours more inclusive for students, thereby increasing your impact.

"Office hours are actually good for the teacher. We choose them because they are good for us, not because they are good for the students. Therefore, the easiest time to engage with students is right before class starts and right after class ends" - Dr. Gary Green, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs & Professor of Natural Resources, Recreation and Tourism Management

STRATEGIES & BEST PRACTICES FOR EFFECTIVE OFFICE HOURS

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

It is important that you explicitly communicate the purpose of office hours to your students. You should set expectations that office hours are a time that you are available to help them. At the same time, it is also important that you provide flexible times for your students to attend. Recognizing that not all students can attend office hours outside of class time, keep in mind that there are multiple ways that office hours can be held. For example, office hours with your students can occur online, before or after class. Adopting multiple communication options with your students can foster a more inclusive and accessible learning environment.

Questions to Ask Yourself About Setting Expectations for Office Hours

- Have you communicated the purpose of office hours with your students?
- Can you make yourself available before and after class for office hours?
- Are your office hours mandatory (are students required to attend any number of office hours)?
- Are your office hours by appointment, during a scheduled time, or online?
- Do you expect students to come with specific questions when they meet with you?

Ask Your Supervisor

Many departments require that teaching assistants maintain office hours for student consultations. Because expectations vary from department to department, have a conversation early on with your supervisor about norms in your department. For example, you might ask them:

- How many office hours are you expected to hold per week? (2 hours is common)
- Where are you expected to meet with students?
- If you must cancel an office hour, what is the protocol for announcing the cancellation? Are you required to make up the office hour?

USING OFFICE HOURS WELL

Office hours can be a very useful way for students and their instructors to build rapport, which helps to create a more engaging learning environment. Because of this, it is very important for instructors and teaching assistants to be present and available to assist students during regularly scheduled office hours, office hours should be selected carefully to avoid conflict with your other responsibilities. Be sure to inform your students if ever you need to make changes to your office hours and provide alternative methods for instructional support if possible.

Strategies for Using Office Hours Well:

- **Provide a list of questions.** Consider providing students with a list of potential questions that they can ask during office hours.
- **Create a sign-up** sheet for students to indicate when they are coming. You may also ask the student to email you beforehand any concerns they plan to address (e.g., feedback on an assignment, questions about a concept).
- **Form small groups.** Allow students with similar questions to attend in small groups.
- **Require a drop in:** Require students to attend office hours as part of their first assignment. There are benefits and drawbacks to requiring attendance. The benefits include getting a chance to meet your students outside of class, students understanding where your office is located, and reducing some of the anxiety about visiting. The downside is that this may not be possible for all students, given work, other class, etc. Therefore, it is important that you are flexible with your times and maybe provide times before and after class.
- **Actively listen** to determine where your students are most stuck.

ADDITIONAL OFFICE HOURS RESOURCES

- [University of Washington](#)
- [Duquesne University](#)
- [Faculty Focus](#)
- [Vanderbilt University](#)

KEY CAMPUS RESOURCES FOR UGA STUDENTS

- [The Office of Student Care and Outreach](#)
- [Division of Academic Enhancement](#)