A STATEMENT OF POLICY ON THE APPOINTMENT, ASSIGNMENT, PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES, NON-REAPPOINTMENTS, AND TERMINATIONS OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN THE SCHOOL OF PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

1. Appointments and re-appointments

Teaching Assistants shall be offered appointments and re-appointments in the following ways:

(a) New graduate students: The Director of Graduate Studies, upon recommendation of the Graduate Admissions and Recruiting Committee, shall offer teaching assistant positions to students in this category for a one-year term, renewable for the second year subject to satisfactory performance of duties and satisfactory progress toward a degree in physics, as mentioned in Article 3 below.

(b) Enrolled graduate students who have not been offered a teaching assistantship: TA offers to students in this category shall be made by the Director of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the student's graduate advisor. The term of appointment may be on a semester-by-semester basis.

(c) Re-appointments: Offers of re-appointment shall be made by the Associate Head after consultation with and on the recommendation of a student's graduate advisor and the Director of Undergraduate Studies. The term of the appointment offered shall be established in consultation with the student and his/her advisor.

(d) Preference for advanced students: A student in his/her second or later year of graduate study may request an appointment as a teaching assistant for a specified length of time. It is understood that students who request and accept these offers have obligated themselves to serve as teaching assistants until the end of the semester, regardless of alternate forms of financial support (fellowships, research assistantships) which may become available at a later date. Students who request and are denied a position under the conditions here may avail themselves of the grievance procedures described in Article 7.

(e) Students enrolled in other graduate programs: Students enrolled in graduate programs outside of the School of Physics and Astronomy may be employed as teaching assistants in Physics or Astronomy under the terms of this policy statement but with the following modifications:

Appointments and re-appointments normally will not be offered to such students when qualified Physics and Astronomy graduates are available to fill the positions.

The duration of such appointments and re-appointments shall be arranged for one or two semesters to match the teaching needs of the School of Physics and Astronomy.

Such appointments and re-appointments will be contingent upon written certification by the department or program in which the student is enrolled that he/she is making satisfactory progress toward a graduate degree. It shall be the responsibility of the prospective teaching assistant to insure that this written certification is provided to the School of Physics and Astronomy.

2. Change in appointments, terms and conditions

If a student has accepted a position in writing, and if other forms of University support become available to him/her at a later date (fellowships, research assistantships, etc.), then he/she may be released from his/her position only if, in the judgment of the Associate Head, a satisfactory replacement is available or if the circumstances have made it possible to maintain the teaching program without his/her services. It is the policy of the School to permit such changes when possible and when they are in the interest of the graduate student concerned; but the undergraduate teaching program must be protected.

3. Performance and evaluation

(a) satisfactory performance of teaching duties, and

(b) satisfactory progress toward a graduate degree

These specifications and criteria are included in Appendix to this Statement of Policy.

4. Duties of a physics teaching assistant

Graduate student teaching assistants may be assigned a variety of duties under the supervision of one or more faculty members. These assignments may vary from semester to semester as the needs of the teaching program vary. They may include serving as laboratory instructor, conducting recitation and problem-help sessions, development of new course material, grading examination papers from lecture courses, and tutoring individual students. Usually, these work assignments will be made at the beginning of each semester, but unusual situations may necessitate changing an assignment during a semester.

5. Outside employment

A Physics graduate student employed as a teaching assistant in the School of Physics and Astronomy must inform the Director of Undergraduate Studies of any other regular employment which he/she holds, either inside the University or with an outside employer. It is the policy of the School of Physics and Astronomy that students may hold no more than a total of 50% of full-time employment. This will serve as a guideline for outside employment, although here each case will be considered as it affects the two primary responsibilities of the teaching assistant - his/her teaching performance and his/her progress toward a graduate degree.

6. Terminations or serious changes in the conditions of employment which are not mutually agreeable to both parties shall be made only for stated cause and given to the appointee in writing. Acceptable causes for such action by the School of Physics and Astronomy shall consist of:

(a) Unsatisfactory performance of duties (see conditions listed in Appendix A).

(b) Unsatisfactory progress toward a graduate degree, as specified in Appendix A of this statement.

7. Grievances and appeals

Grievances or appeals from any of the above-mentioned actions shall be handled informally by a grievance committee. Matters may be brought before the grievance committee, either anonymously or otherwise, through the following channels:

Head, School of Physics and Astronomy
Associate Head, School of Physics and Astronomy
Director of Graduate Studies
Director of Undergraduate Studies
Graduate Advisors
Office for Conflict Resolution (www.umn.edu/ocr)
Graduate School Academic Grievance Committee

Where appropriate, the grievance committee may recommend action to the Head or to other faculty committees. Appeals from findings of this grievance committee or from resulting action may be carried to a grievance panel of the College of Science and Engineering.

8. Paid vacation

The University of Minnesota has a clear policy on vacations. Graduate teaching assistants do not receive paid vacation other than official University of Minnesota holidays. The University does not recognize the time between terms as holidays. TAs are paid to work as a TA throughout the academic year. Although the Physics Department typically does not assign TA duties after final exam grades are recorded, TAs are obliged to carry out any duties associated with teaching assistantship even if they fall during the break time. TAs should check with his/her professor before making holiday plans which involves leaving town to ensure that there are no outstanding TA duties to attend during that time. In particular, do not plan to be away right up until the day before the new semester starts as some of the planning meeting for the new class may take place up to a week before the actual start of the new semester.

Appendix A
Requirements for Satisfactory Performance of Teaching Assistants

Teaching Assistants must maintain satisfactory performance of teaching duties and satisfactory progress toward a graduate degree.

Performance evaluations shall be made by the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the faculty member responsible for the course. Performance evaluations by the students may also be used.

The "Graduate Student Handbook" prepared by the School of Physics and Astronomy outlines the year-by-year progress expected of a graduate student.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

A graduate student may hold an appointment as a Teaching Assistant in the School of Physics and Astronomy if he/she is in good standing with the University of Minnesota Graduate School and is making satisfactory progress towards a graduate degree with a major in the School of Physics and Astronomy.

The Graduate School provides a "warning" concerning a student's status for each semester if the student is deficient in one of the factors listed below. If the deficiency is not remedied by the beginning of the following semester, a "hold" is placed on registration and the student cannot register until the deficiency is removed. Registration in Graduate School is a prerequisite for holding the position of Teaching Assistant.

Criteria for a "warning" on a student's registration are the following:

1. The grade point average for work since entering graduate school must not fall below 2.8 for MS students and 3.3 for Ph.D. students.

2. The number of incomplete credit hours must not exceed six.

3. A student registered as working towards a Master's degree should have submitted his/her master's program degree plan by the time he/she has completed 10 credits of graduate work.

4. For satisfactory progress, students who pass the graduate written examination should find a research advisor during their second year in graduate school. They should file a graduate degree plan and pass the preliminary oral exam during their third year in graduate school.

A graduate student receiving a "warning" should take prompt action to remove the deficiency before the end of that semester so his/her status for the following semester will not be in question.

Satisfactory Performance of Teaching Duties

The task of teaching large numbers of students is one which requires the coordinated efforts of many people; the lecturer, the laboratory and discussion instructors, technicians, the students, and several others. As members of this group, the Teaching Assistants should cooperate with the others in the teaching process and in its evaluation, review and improvement. By doing so, they will contribute to their own development as well as to the effective functioning of the Physics program and the University of Minnesota.

As a member of the teaching staff, the Teaching Assistant's primary responsibility is in helping the School of Physics and Astronomy provide its students with as rewarding and challenging an exposure to physics as possible. This means responsibilities both to the undergraduate enrolled in the TA's classes and to the other members of the staff with whom he/she works.

An important obligation is the need for the Teaching Assistant to meet his/her laboratory sessions, recitations sections, office hours, proctoring assignments, and instructional team meetings promptly and reliably. If circumstances arise which prevent fulfilling any of these appointments, it is the TA's responsibility to arrange, either directly or through the Physics Office, for someone to serve in his/her place. The TA must also inform the Physics Office and the faculty member in charge of the class of any replacement arrangements which are made directly by the TA.

To make the interactions with his/her students as effective as possible, the TA is expected to familiarize himself/herself thoroughly with the subject being studied, the laboratory equipment and procedure, and/or the problems assigned for recitation sections. This includes attendance at all meetings of the course team of which the TA is a member. The TA is also expected to participate in all training sessions offered by the School, either before the beginning of classes or while classes are in session. Mentor TAs are here to help you become a better TA. See the mentor TAs if you have questions or concerns.

To help students improve their performance, it is important that material handed in be evaluated carefully and returned promptly. Grades should be determined with care and recorded accurately and by the deadline established by the faculty for the course.

Each laboratory instructor should see that his/her students take reasonable care of the equipment they use, and *he/she should endeavor to leave the laboratory facilities in good condition for use by the following class*. He/she should report to the laboratory technician equipment which does not function properly. Equipment problem requests can be emailed directly to labhelp@physics.umn.edu

The preferred method for submitting introductory lab problems/questions is through the labhelp system on every lab computer. There is an icon/link on each desktop that allows problems to be submitted by students and TAs when logged in with their x.500. The lab instructor also can mail directly to labhelp@physics.umn.edu.

Since the general development and improvement of our courses is influenced by the response of the students, the Teaching Assistants are encouraged to be aware of the reaction of the students to the teaching of the course and to share this information with the supervising faculty members and colleagues. To facilitate this exchange of information, Teaching Assistants must attend the periodic meetings of those concerned with each course.

Description of Specific Duties

TA Seminar:
All new TAs are expected to take PHYS 5072: Teaching Introductory College Physics in both fall and spring semesters. This course will helps TAs prepare for teaching and deals with various issues that can occur in classes. TAs should take PHYS 5072 for one credit in the fall and two credits in the spring.

Proctoring:
TAs are often required to proctor exams during the semester. While proctoring, TAs are responsible for answering student questions and deterring/reporting cheating.

Before the exam:

- Pick up exams from the student services office the day of the exam, at least 25 minutes before the exam if the exam is held on West Bank
- *TAs are not allowed to print exams on their own*

At the start of the exam:

- Read any special instructions from the professor to the class
- Remind students that they should put their names, student ID numbers, and x500 all papers including bubble sheets for identification purposes.
- Explicitly tell students what materials (calculator, crib sheet, etc.) they may use
- Ensure that students are sitting in every other seat
- Announce what time the exam ends and write it on the board

During the exam:

- Count the number of students in the room
- Announce when there are five minutes remaining
- Quietly walk around the room watching students work
- Answer student questions quickly and quietly
- Have students who finish early turn in exams quietly and leave the classroom
- Confiscate any unapproved calculators, to be returned at the end of the exam
- Watch for suspicious behavior/cheating
    - If cheating is suspected, TAs should discuss this with their fellow proctors and instructor

After the exam:

- Have remaining students turn in complete exams in an orderly fashion
- Check the room for any lost items
- Bring all test materials to the students services office right away after the exam
    - Count and separate each problem (and bubble sheet) of the exam into separate piles and record in the *Proctor Log*
    - Turn in separated problems, bubble sheets, scratch paper, extra exams, blank paper, and bubble sheets in neat stacks to the Undergraduate Program Coordinator

Grading:

TAs may pick up their problem for grading as soon as the proctors turn the papers in to the office. Graders must count the papers and record the number in the *Grader Log*. Upon returning the graded exams, the exams must be counted again and recorded in the *Grader Log*. Grades must be submitted electronically via MyPhys. Emailed grades will not be accepted.

After grading is complete, TAs must enter grades into the class templates using the following procedure *on a physics network computer*:

1. Download the class template from the Gradebook Templates and uploads page, found under My Classes in MyPhys
2. Enter student scores
    a. **NEVER change or alter the template in any way. Do not change the name of the template, the order of the students, or delete students**
    b. If a student's name does not appear on the template, enter the name and score at the bottom of the student list
    c. If a student is listed in the template but did not turn in a paper, do not enter a score
    d. If a student did answer the problem, but did not receive any points, enter a zero
3. Save the file. **DO NOT CHANGE THE NAME OF THE FILE.**
4. Upload the template to the physics website (link found underMy Classes in MyPhys)
    a. Never upload more than one template
    b. See the Undergraduate Program Coordinator if you need to add or change the template
5. Once the templates have been uploaded, delete the files from any public computer, but keep a backup copy on a secure private computer. Do not keep old templates. New templates are posted for every quiz
6. Grade changes may be submitted online using the link found on the template webpage

Grading typically must be completed two business days after the exam. For example, if an exam is on Friday, grades are due to the office on Tuesday by mid-day. This give the Undergraduate Program Coordinator and faculty time to compile and review the gradebook and make any changes or score adjustments as needed before the papers are handed back during that week's discussion section.

Returning Exams to Students:

Exams will be available to be returned to students on the day of the discussion sections, pending instructor approval. Papers are not released from the office unless the entire exam has been turned in to the office and the Undergraduate Program Coordinator has faculty approval to return the exam. TAs need to sign out the exams in the *Returned to Students Log*. Papers typically go back to students the week after the exam is held, during the discussion section.

Final Exams: Most TAs will be expected to grade at least one final exam problem. *Final exams must be graded and turned in before students may leave campus* (see 8. Paid Vacation above). Because submitting final grades late to the registrar has a significant impact on undergraduate students (potential loss of financial aid, enrollment status, etc.), failure to grade and return final exams to the office before leaving campus will result in disciplinary action.

There are two types of final exams:

- Regularly scheduled final exam times are determined by OneStop (http://onestop.umn.edu/calendars/final_exams/). The procedure for regularly scheduled final exams is the same as the exam procedure outlined above.

- Common Final exam times are chosen by the Office of Classroom Management. These exams are for classes that have multiple sections (12xx and 13xx). Most sections will be split into multiple classrooms to accommodate every other seating, therefore more proctors are needed for the common final than for regular exams.

    - The common final always starts at 6:30pm. TAs should pick up final exams at least 25 minutes early from the student services office. TAs should follow normal exam procedure for proctoring and returning the exam to the office.

    - The exam ends at 9:30pm, so TAs should be back to the office no later than 10:00pm. After checking the exam problems in to the Undergraduate Program Coordinator, TAs may pick up problems for grading.

- There is a make-up final exam the morning after the Common Final, starting at 8:00am. TAs who are proctoring this exam (one from every class that has a student taking the final exam) need to pick up the exams from the Undergraduate Program Coordinator no later than 7:30am. Once the make final is over, exams must come back to the office right away to be distributed to the graders.

- The make-up finals and the finals taken at the Disability Resource Center are available for grading at 12:00pm the day after the Common Final.

Office Hours/Tutoring:
Office hours for introductory courses are currently held in Williamson 140. Students come to the tutoring room for one-on-one/small group tutoring. Most TAs will have at least one office hour each week in the tutoring room. The tutor schedule is determined by the student services office and the instructors. *Office hours are part of a TA's appointment and are not optional.* Failure to attend scheduled office hours will result in disciplinary action.

TAs must sign in to the tutoring room in the *Tutor Sign In Log*. If a TA fails to sign in to the tutoring room, the TA is required to hold a make-up office hour in the next week. In the event of a conflict with a tutoring hour, TAs must find a replacement to cover the tutoring hour, except in an emergency. If the TA cannot find a replacement tutor, the TA must attend his/her tutoring hour. Missing a tutoring hour will result in holding an additional make up tutoring hour the following week. For help finding a replacement tutor, contact the Undergraduate Program Coordinator.

Department/University Policies and Resources

Disability Resource Center: Many students have course accommodations registered through the Disability Resource Center. These accommodations vary greatly and can include time extensions on exams, peer note takers, classroom aids, etc. If a student asks about accommodations, TAs must refer the student to the Undergraduate Program Coordinator and the instructor. Students will not receive accommodations unless they provide their accommodation letter to the Undergraduate Program Coordinator. The Undergraduate Program Coordinator handles all accommodations. Please do not offer any accommodations or information to students, as TAs do not have the authority to grant accommodations.

Legally, students do not have to disclose any information regarding why they have an accommodation letter, and TAs are not allowed to ask about the accommodation letter's circumstances. Respect students' privacy and do not discuss accommodations other than with the Undergraduate Program Coordinator, course instructor, and the student. Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action.

Away Exams: Sometimes students request away exams. Students who need an away exam must contact the Undergraduate Program Coordinator and the instructor to set up the away exam. Only the Undergraduate Program Coordinator and the instructor can determine whether the student can be allowed to take an away exam.

Student Privacy: The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects student data and allows students to review nearly all the information the University of Minnesota maintains on him/her. FERPA also protects private student data, such as student grades, ID numbers, social security numbers, and directory information (addresses/phone number) that has been suppressed.

Never post grades by Social Security Number, student ID number, or any other way in which the student could be identified. Exams, papers, blue books, or any other graded materials containing identifiable student information (such as name, student ID number) should be distributed directly to students or available for pick up in a private manner. Leaving a box of graded work outside your office/in mailboxes is unacceptable. TAs who violate FERPA will result in disciplinary action. Violations of FERPA can result in the University losing federal funding.

Teaching Evaluations: TAs and faculty both are provided with anonymous feedback via the Student Rating of Teaching (SRTs). SRTs take place at the end of each semester during labs for TAs, and during lecture for the instructor. The results of the SRTs are available several weeks after the semester has ended. TA SRTs are used to determine if a TA needs additional teaching development opportunities.

Support Staff

Student Services Offices – Williamson Hall 145

Undergraduate Program Coordinator
Kristina Cibuzar (612-624-7375, cibuzar@physics.umn.edu)

- -Managing TAs, including TA schedule, gradebooks, TA/faculty grievances
- -Textbook Orders
- -Room Reservations
- -Registration concerns, (including permission numbers, directed research/study)
- -Exam Procedures, (away exams and exams held in the Disability Resource Center)
- -Undergraduate Advising
- -Scholastic Misconduct

Graduate Program Coordinator
Amanda Hawkinson (612-626-5982, amanda@physics.umn.edu)

- -Point of contact for questions regarding graduate program

Assistant to Student Programs
Jennifer Kroschel (612-624-1625, jkrosche@umn.edu)

- -Student Privacy Rights
- -Student Grievances
- -Student Conduct Issues (harassment, threats, etc.)
- -Registration Concerns (class conflicts within the department)

Spaces and Facilities
Andrea Stronghart (PAN 321, 612-624-7886, astrong@umn.edu)

- -Key card access to labs and buildings after work hours
- -Scheduling PAN 334 and 434 conference rooms

To request access to a building/room, in to MyPhys, under General Resources, there is a link to the key/card access request form. Once the form is filled out, and the request has been approved, access is granted within several days.

Payroll
Mette Stewart (PAN 250, 612-626-6509, mette@physics.umn.edu)

Undergraduate Lab Specialist
Sean Albiston (WMSONH 101, 612-625-3598, sean@physics.umn.edu)