



Guidelines for teaching assistants on courses at the Department of Physics

In *PM för kursansvariga* (available on the internal web pages of the Department of Physics), the rules and guidelines for course responsables and examiners are outlined. In this document, the guidelines for teaching assistants (usually PhD students) and their relation to the course responsible at the Department of Physics are outlined.

Background

PhD students can often spend up to 20% of their time as teaching assistants on courses. They are often given tasks like leading problem solving sessions, taking care of laboratory exercises, leading tutorials, and similar tasks. Even if the assistants often are very engaged in their teaching duties, they also have a PhD to finish and are not as experienced in neither the teaching situation nor the subject of the course as the course responsible teacher. The purpose of this document is to clarify what the teaching assistants can be expected to do on a course and what tasks the course responsible cannot (usually) hand over to the teaching assistants.

Guidelines for course responsible and teaching assistants

The course responsible should

1. in good time before the course starts assemble the teachers and assistants on the course to plan the course. The course responsible should outline the general idea of the course, its contents, teaching methods and examination. It should also be made clear who is responsible for what. This initial meeting should usually be held 2–4 weeks before the course starts, but could happen much earlier than this if there are more preparations needed than usual for the course.
2. decide on the content for each session the teaching assistant has with the students. This should normally be done at least one week before the teaching session in question (when extensive planning is needed it needs to be decided earlier than this). The content can e.g. be lab instructions, a set of problems to go through, topics (with appropriate material) for a tutorial, etc. The teaching assistants are normally expected to go through the material on their own to prepare their teaching, but the course responsible should be available to answer questions, help solving particular problems etc. The course responsible should normally provide answers to the problems for a problem solving session and go through possible solutions with the teaching assistant.

3. be the main responsible for all the teaching and examination on the course. The course responsible cannot in general hand over the responsibility to design a teaching activity or examination from scratch to the teaching assistants. These tasks are normally within the duties of the course responsible. If agreed upon with the assistant director of studies, the teaching assistants can of course take a larger part than usual in these tasks, e.g. to write lab instructions or help the course responsible in designing a new teaching or examination session or material. The course responsible cannot decide on such tasks on his/her own, it has to be agreed upon with the assistant director of studies. Teaching assistants that want to have a larger than usual responsibility for the planning of courses or parts of courses can express their interest to the assistant director of studies.
4. communicate the goals and rules for each examination task the teaching assistants participate in. The examiner (usually the course responsible) is always responsible for all the examination on the course, but part of it can be handled by other teachers or teaching assistants. The examiner is always responsible for setting the grading criteria to be used.
5. communicate the main purpose of the teaching session or assignments to the teaching assistants. The teaching assistants need to see where their teaching and examination tasks fit into the big picture of the course.
6. communicate any changes to the planning as swiftly as possible. If changes affect the teaching assistants' work, they should be informed and be given the opportunity to give their comments before the decision is made.

General guidelines

The department holds a fall meeting with all the assistants. Apart from general information, this meeting should also include a session on discrimination and a session on how to deal with troublesome situations with students (the teaching assistants are often the first to encounter such problems). This latter part could e.g. be held from someone from Studentavdelningen.



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