

Welcome to the Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science!

1) COVID-19 RELATED INFORMATION

<https://coronavirus.uiowa.edu>

2) FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- Some new graduate students in our department receive financial support as teaching assistants (TA). Note that QTA (10 hours per week) and HTA (20 hours per week) also come with tuition scholarships. As a process of renewing contract for the next year, these students will receive an email that ask them to fill out a “request for support” form in late January.
- Expectations for continued support.
<https://stat.uiowa.edu/graduate/funding#graduate-student-scholarships>
No financial support beyond five years in the program.
Examples:
 - **attain GPA ≥ 3.00** , that is, a grade of B, by second year or support will most likely not continue.
 - Pass SPEC test at grade B or higher before start of second year (international students only), otherwise support will most likely not continue.
- Decisions regarding support are based on these priorities:
 1. Number of TA allocations given to the Department by the College
 2. Department’s needs (Occasionally, a TA position opens up right before a semester due to new offering of classes, illness or visa issues of existing TAs. Then we will look to offer the position to our unsupported students. But these positions are unlikely to last beyond one semester.)
 3. Merit
E.g., adequate progress towards degree; job performance as teaching and/or research assistants.
- Possible support other than Teaching Assistantships:
Research assistantships maybe available from professors who has projects supported by grants. These opportunities might come up inside or outside our department.
Internal Fellowships from the graduate college <https://grad.uiowa.edu/funding/fellowships>

Note: a graduate student's total appointment at the University of Iowa should be no more than 50% (20 hours per week). Exceptions are possible by permission from Graduate College.
<https://grad.uiowa.edu/funding/graduate-student-employment-standards/hours-work>

3) TEACHING OR GRADING ASSIGNMENT

- a) Current/Past Director of Graduate Studies, will determine what courses you will be teaching or grading at the beginning of the semester. It will be based upon the department’s need, but does take into consideration possible conflicts with the courses each student is registered to take.
- b) The textbook assigned to this course will be checked out to you after your start-up meeting. See Margie in 241 SH to check out books (preferably in the first week of classes). At the end of the semester, please remember to return it. Try not to write in these books as they will be reused in the future.

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4) AVAILABILITY

- a) You need to be around and **available from three days before the start of each semester** until the Tuesday after finals week. The actual dates are given below. Please do not make conflicting travel plans without first obtaining approval from your supervising instructor.
- b) For those who teach discussion sections, if for some reason you cannot attend a discussion section, it is permissible to have someone substitute for you. **It is your responsibility to find a substitute.** You should work out a contingency substitution plan with your fellow TAs early in the semester. **Make sure to let the instructor know what is going on.**

Academic-Year Appointments Schedule of Working Days

Wednesday, August 20, 2025	First day of the fall appointment (three working days before the semester begins)
November 24-28, 2025	No working days during the Fall Break
Tuesday, December 23, 2025	Last day of the fall appointment (two working days after finals week)
December 24, 2025 – January 14, 2026	No working days during the Winter Break
Wednesday, January 14, 2026	First day of the spring appointment (three working days before the semester begins)
March 14-22, 2026	No working days during the Spring Break
Tuesday, May 19, 2025	Last day of the spring appointment (two working days after finals week)
May 20 – August 18, 2026	No working days during the Summer Break

Wednesday, August 19, 2026	First day of the fall appointment (three working days before the semester begins)
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5) PREPARING FOR THE FIRST CLASS MEETING

- a) Consultation with the course supervisor to see if you need to create a short syllabus for your students on the first day. If so, the syllabus should include contact information (e.g. office number, phone, email, office hours) and relevant course information (meeting times and places, exam dates, etc.). **The information in your syllabus should be compatible with the information in the course syllabus**, which is prepared by the course instructor/supervisor.
- b) Begin the semester by **letting students know about your expectations and class policies**. This information should appear on your syllabus or the course syllabus.
- c) **Talk to experienced TAs**. Find out what they have done on the first day and if they have teaching materials that you can borrow.

6) PROPER DRESS

- a) Dress casually, but professionally. Remember you are an employee of the University of Iowa, and while you are in the classroom, you represent the University.

7) CLASS PREPARATION

- a) **Be prepared for your discussion sessions**. Have some examples worked out ahead of time. It helps to look at your material the night before and in addition, if possible, just before class to refresh your memory. Also look over the homework that was assigned that week and be sure you can solve every problem.
- b) **Emphasize problem solving**. Your duties do not include lecturing on material presented in class. A quick review of the high points is all that is appropriate. This, along with some specific examples will be more helpful.
- c) **Use the same notation and formulas and problem solving approach as the instructor**. You may know a shortcut to do the problems; but if the students are exposed to more than one approach, it will often just confuse them.
- d) **Keep things intuitive**. Statistics is supposed to be an intuitive subject. Make your examples short and to the point.
- e) **Don't cancel any of your classes**. If for some reason you cannot attend your discussion section, it is permissible to have someone substitute for you. It is your responsibility to find a substitute. You should work out a contingency substitution plan with your fellow TAs early in the semester. Make sure to let the instructor know what's going on.
- f) **Consult with your instructor before you announce extra study or exam preparation sessions**. In multiple-section courses, study (or exam prep) sessions that are available to a select few sections will appear unfair to the excluded students.

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8) LECTURE ATTENDANCE

- a) The policy of TAs attending the lecture varies from instructor to instructor. Know the policy of your instructor/supervisor. If he/she requires attendance, you need to attend. **If you are teaching a course for the first time, attendance will be mandatory.** If you are not required to attend the lectures, you are still required to know what is going on in the class.
- b) When you go to lectures, pay attention. Even though you may know the material thoroughly, each instructor has their own style, and it helps students when TAs teach in a manner that is consistent with the style of the instructor. Please don't remain engrossed in some other work during lectures. Look for the points of emphasis and the topics which are particularly difficult. Make note of any announcements the instructor makes. You should repeat these in your discussion section.

9) TEACHING TIPS

- a) **Be prepared.** (Read Item 5(a) above.) Come to class with a couple of additional examples in mind so that if there are no questions on the homework, you can go through your additional problems.
- b) **Go slowly.** Also, key ideas and useful problem solving techniques are worth repeating to your audience.
- c) **Keep it simple.** Stick to the basics, try not to give overly complicated examples. It is usually best to only discuss concepts that are explicitly covered in lecture. Especially in introductory courses, it is important to use notation that is consistent with the textbook and/or the instructor.
- d) **Keep the blackboard organized.** When starting a new problem, erase an entire panel of the board. Don't squeeze new problems into a messy area. (By carefully erasing a well-defined area on the board you are also buying time to think about the problem before you start.) Finish problems on the board and leave them up as long as possible so that students can refer back to them, even if you have moved on to another problem. Use delimiters such as a vertical chalk line to separate distinct problems.
- e) **Always complete your examples.** After a while it is tempting to say that this problem is similar to ones we have done previously and allow the students to complete it. This is usually not good policy. Remember that this is the students' first exposure to statistics and they do not understand it as well as you do. They may have even forgotten something which was previously covered. Working things to the conclusion gives the students a guide for future problems.
- f) **Encourage questions and comments.** Most students will not participate unless you force them to. It's sometimes good policy to call on a student who may not know the answer and see if you can coax it out of her/him. Always try to remain positive when a student answers a question even if the answer is wrong.
- g) **Stay in charge.** You are in control, so you dictate what happens in class. It is okay for the students to ask questions or pose problems (in fact, it's preferable), but you make the final decisions about what is to be covered.
- h) Always take your book and the answer manual to class with you (and perhaps an extra piece of chalk just in case the room doesn't have any). **Never give the answer manual to the student.**
- i) **Start class on time.** Do not start early and do not start late.

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- j) **Dismiss class at the appropriate time.** Do not dismiss late and do not dismiss early. On the one hand, a good way to get students upset with you is to frequently dismiss class late. Remember they have other classes to get to. On the other hand, if your class knows there is a chance of early dismissal, the good students may feel pressured NOT to ask questions towards the end of the session because they do not want to be viewed as the cause of a prolonged discussion. If there is time remaining and the students have no questions, go over a relevant prepared problem.
- k) **The main instructor is your supervisor.** Know the instructor's policies and apply them for your class. Keep a copy of the syllabus handy in case of a question.

10) PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS, FROM STUDENTS AND FOR STUDENTS

- a) **Encourage your students to ask questions.** These can be on the homework problems or on something the instructor has mentioned in class or an example of a particular type. This is the primary purpose of the discussion section.
- b) **If you don't know the answer to a particular problem, just say so.** Don't guess and don't pretend to know. Tell the student that you will find out and will give her/him the answer in the next class period. No one knows the answer to every question so there is no shame in occasionally not knowing something.
- c) **Check with the instructor if there is something about which you are not sure.** You are the liaison between the instructor and the student. The students will feel better if you let them know that you will present their case strongly to the instructor.
- d) Very rarely you will find that **a student will give you a problem.** This is your class and you can handle the problem as you see fit. It is best to leave the problem to after class to avoid embarrassment to either party. If you cannot settle the problem to your satisfaction or if you are uncomfortable with handling it on your own, let the instructor know and they will take care of it. Make sure you are treated with the respect that you deserve.

11) CHEATING

- a) Let the instructor set the policy.
- b) **You don't want to catch someone cheating; you want to prevent it from happening.**
- c) If you suspect someone of looking on their neighbor's paper, move them. No accusations need to be made.
- d) **Let the instructor know if you suspect something.** Let him/her decide on a course of action. It is very difficult to catch someone cheating and be able to prove it to the satisfaction of an outside authority.

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12) MISCELLANEOUS

- a) **Add-Drop:** Each instructor does things differently so check to see how they want you to handle adding students. Students may make registration changes through the first five days of the semester via MyUI. This option ends at 11:59 p.m Sep 8 for the Fall 2025 semester (<https://registrar.uiowa.edu/course-deadlines>).
- b) **Room Changes:** If you have a room which is intolerable, you may be able to change it. Talk to the department (Heather) for assistance. Let the instructor know what is going on so that it can be announced in the lecture. Also announce it several times in your discussion section and post a note outside the old room.
- c) **Office Hours:** You need to be available to the students outside of class. Consult with the instructor before setting up office hours. Set up some office hours a couple of different times during the week. Make sure that you are in your office (or zoom meeting room) during that time even if you don't expect anyone to drop by. Announce your office hours, your office location (zoom meeting links) and your email via which you can be reached.
- d) **Study (or Exam Prep) Sessions:** Consult with your instructor before you announce any extra study or exam prep sessions. In multiple-section courses, study (or exam prep) sessions that are available to a select few sections will appear unfair to the excluded students.

13) QUIZZES and EXAMS

- a) **Don't teach for the quiz.** If you have a few examples prepared that just happen to cover the material on the quiz, that's fine. However, if you had planned to cover something else, don't change. This is unfair to the other students.
- b) Typically, grading the quizzes is your job.
- c) You are also responsible for proctoring the exams. Remind the students of the date and location of the exam early and often. Arrive at the exam early. Make the students sit in every other seat. Move any students you suspect of cheating to the front row. During the exam you should occasionally walk around the class. Let the students know that you are watching them. Don't bury your head in a book at the front of the room.
- d) **You may be required to grade exams.** You will give back the exams to the students. Hand back the exams individually. Don't give an exam to a friend. You should keep a copy of each student's grade on the exam along with quiz grades.
- e) **Never release any instructor's past exams/quizzes or questions from them, not even sample/practice exams.** These belong to the instructor and having access to that material does not mean you have the authority to release them. Releasing such questions without the instructor's permission may be considered as academic misconduct and a similar procedure will be followed as in the case of undergraduate academic misconduct: <https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/undergraduate-teaching-policies-resources/academic-misconduct>. Whenever in doubt you should first consult with the instructor. If you plan to make review questions for exams, always show the questions to the instructor. Remember that the instructor is your supervisor and they should be aware of everything.

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- f) **Students who miss a quiz for an approved reason must either be given a makeup or not have that quiz counted against them.** The instructor sets the policy. Approved University activities such as band, athletics, etc. are considered excused absences. You should receive a notice from the University concerning such students. Illness is also a valid excuse. It is best to consult with the instructor regarding their policy for missed assignments, quizzes, exams. Try to get the students into the habit of letting you know beforehand if they cannot attend.

14) WEEKLY MEETINGS

- a) For most large courses there will be a meeting of all TAs once a week during the semester. Attendance is mandatory.
- b) At this meeting you should bring up any problems or questions that you have.
- c) Announcements are made during this meeting, write these things down.
- d) The quizzes are typically passed out at these meetings.

15) GRADING

- a) **Do NOT post scores or grades on your door.** Do NOT post scores anywhere without the approval of the course supervisor. (FERPA Regulation).
- b) **Do NOT leave graded homework outside your door for the students to pick up.** (FERPA Regulation).
- c) **Your grading should be fair and consistent above all else.** Your grading policy is up to you, within the guidelines set up by the instructor--consult your supervisor on issues of partial credit, point deductions, etc. Any complaints should be handled by you. Go to the instructor in case of an intractable argument.
- d) **Get graded work back to the students in a timely fashion.** Ask your supervisor about turnaround expectations.
- e) **Give students a limited time to ask questions about grading.** For example, you might state in your syllabus that questions about grading must be asked within one week from the time the graded work is handed back.
- f) **You are responsible for keeping a grade book.** Make sure any electronic grade books are backed up. (You might print out a hard copy every so often.)
- g) **At the end of the semester the TAs will gather for the ritual of giving final grades.** The grade cutoffs are the responsibility of the instructor. You may be asked to calculate the final average and to transcribe the final grade onto the final class list. Don't make any plans to leave town until you know when this will be done.
- h) **You will be required to give a copy of your grade book to the instructor in case of a question about the grade.** Keep a neat grade book with everything well marked. You can get a grade book from the department office.
- i) **If the instructor has asked you to print handouts or quizzes, the department staff will print these for you.** Send the file to stat-staff@list.uiowa.edu and tell us how many copies, when you need them, do

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you want them printed on both sides, do you need them stapled? Once you send this request, you get a bounce back email from the University of Iowa LISTSERV Server. Open this email message and select the link to APPROVE this message. After that is selected, the email will be sent to Heather, Tammy and Margie and they will print it and place it in your mailbox in 241 SH. **We like to have 24-hour notice** but are willing to do it at a last minute (only if necessary).

- j) **If you plan to prepare your own typed notes** you should ask for your instructor's permission before classes start regarding whether they should be posted on ICON or printed. Printing budget may permit printing only essential items like quizzes and exams, so make sure you ask before printing.

16) APPROPRIATE USE OF OFFICES

- a) TA and RA offices are University property and as such they should be used only for University business. As fellow members of a community of scholars, TAs and RAs must refrain from any activity or behavior that interferes with the work of their office mates.
- i) Accordingly, the following are lists of appropriate and inappropriate activities within your offices. Neither list is exhaustive; they are just illustrative.
 - (1) Appropriate Activities
 - Any activity related to your TA or RA duties; for example, preparing for a discussion section, grading, holding office hours, etc. Some care needs to be exercised so that meeting with students during office hours won't prevent your office mates from studying.
 - Any activity related to your course work or research; for example, studying, computing, doing problems, etc.
 - (2) Inappropriate Activities
 - Allowing friends or relatives to utilize your office, office computer, office phone, office supplies, etc., regardless of whether you are present in the office or not.
- ii) In addition, your office mates would appreciate it if you would keep a reasonably tidy desk, free of dirty dishes, sweaty socks, etc.
- b) Office space is limited and the assignment priority (in this order) includes: Ph.D. and Fellowship candidates, research assistants, half-time teaching assistants, quarter-time teaching assistants. Half-time teaching assistants must have 3 hours of posted office hours. Quarter-time teaching assistants must have 1.5 hours of posted office hours. Graders or Research Assistants do not necessarily have office hours, unless there are such requests from their supervisors.
- c) Graduate Assistants (TA, RA and Graders) will receive office hours cards to fill out (they will be found in the package of supplies placed in your mailbox in 241 SH). TAs and Graders, please fill out these cards completely (including your office hours and your class schedule) and then POST one on your office door. (RAs do not need to post these to their office doors). Margie may also email you a form to fill out so she can easily post to our web pages.

17) USE OF COMPUTERS. Some points to remember:

- a) TA computers are a resource provided to students, not personal machines.
- b) If there is a computer on your desk that you'd like removed, please contact the department office (241 SH); likewise, if you would like to have a computer on your desk, please contact the department office.
- c) No equipment should be moved. We need to keep track of it, and to make certain it's installed properly.
- d) The computers will be either printing to a local printer in the room, if not should be mapped to print to printers found in 346 and/or 350 SH.
- e) Computers may need to be re-loaded periodically, which involves erasing the hard drive. For this reason, it is essential that you do not store any permanent files on the hard drive – you can use the H: Drive.
- f) There is very little extra hard drive space, so storing files and installing programs may drastically affect the performance of the machine.
- g) Remember that these machines as well as the drives are for official university only. If you're interested in the University policy, see <https://opsmanual.uiowa.edu/>

h) Do:

Use your computer for e-mail and web browsing.

Keep TA materials (grades and handouts) on the [H:](#) drive (**not the local hard drive**).

Use the computer to develop a web page for the course you teach.

Make sure your virus protection program is updated.

Ask the department office for help if you are not sure how to do this.

Report any problems to the department office.

i) Do NOT:

Install hardware or software of any kind. It is generally okay to install SAS or S-plus if you purchase a license; **however**, some machines may not have enough disk space, so you should contact the department office first. You must obtain special permission to connect personal equipment to the network – consult with the department office. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Store music files on the hard drive or H drive. The administrator will delete these files without warning and may restrict your H drive privileges. Using Napster, Limewire, etc. is also not allowed.

Play music using speakers, which may disrupt others in your office – use headphones.

Eat or drink while using the computer. It is too easy to spill food, which may damage the machine. If an accident does happen, contact the department office so it can be cleaned right away. Waiting too long makes it harder to clean, not to mention it is disgusting.

18) COMPUTER LABS.

- a) All over campus you will find ITC (Instructional Technology Centers). The one our department manages is in the lower level, room **41 Schaeffer Hall** -- It is also called the Myers lab. The daily schedule of open hours is posted on the doors.
- b) The **Linux Lab**, located in **346 Schaeffer Hall** and supported by CLAS Linux Group, provides an up-to-date learning experience for departmental majors and students who have Linux accounts. Students should be able to get an account following the steps here: <https://clas.uiowa.edu/linux/services/accounts>. The lab is also open to students and faculty in the departments of Computer Science and Mathematics.

19) SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION EDUCATION.

- a) All **graduate assistants** are required by the university to complete a one-hour Sexual Harassment Prevention Education course before a specified deadline (usually every three years). This is available online from your Self Service portal. Continued employment by the university is contingent upon completion of this course. Learners will receive the answers to common questions about harassment law such as: What is and what is not unlawful harassment? Where is the line drawn between consensual dating and harassment? Can a third party's conduct toward an employee cause unlawful harassment? Do harassment rules apply at institution parties or off-site events? When is a hug or a shoulder rub appropriate?
- b) "Not Any More" (ICON training) is required for all graduate students. Required Sexual Assault Prevention Program

20) REQUIRED ACE COURSE EVALUATIONS

- a) ACE online evaluation forms are required for every course including the TA sessions.
- b) All graduate assistants must encourage students to fill out the ACE course evaluations, however, procedures must ensure that the evaluations are anonymous and uninfluenced.

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-student-evaluation-teaching>

We are committed to creating a campus where all students can feel safe and successful. In support of this aim, we require all new graduate and professional students to take the Not Anymore sexual misconduct training. Not Anymore is an online, video-based sexual assault prevention program to prepare students with important skills and knowledge to address sexual misconduct (including sexual violence, sexual harassment, stalking, and dating/partner violence), safety, and bystander intervention. You will receive an email with information and instructions on how to complete the program prior to the start of classes. Be sure to keep an eye on your Hawkmial account (name-name@uiowa.edu). Please feel free to contact ui-ipv-prevention@uiowa.edu with any questions.

21) USEFUL LINKS

- Resources and Support available through the Center for Teaching

<https://teaching.center.uiowa.edu/teaching-resources>

- Information about FERPA and Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-student-records>

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/human-resources/sexual-harassment-prevention-training>

- Creating a coherent lesson plan for each class period

<https://pressbooks.uiowa.edu/teaching-handbook/chapter/developing-lesson-plans/>

- Using the ICON site

<https://teach.uiowa.edu/icon>

- Instructor guidelines for meeting classes, holding office hours, and covering absences (including departmental policies for securing substitutes)

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-time-committed-instruction>

- Meeting deadlines for class lists, student attendance, and submission of grades

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-class-lists-submitting-grades-and-student-attendance>

- Policies regarding student absences, student workload, student accommodations, final examinations, and textbooks and teaching materials

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-student-absences>

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<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-student-workload-guidelines>

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-accommodating-students-disabilities>

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-examination-policies>

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-textbooks-and-materials>

- Cultivating a welcoming and professional classroom atmosphere

<https://pressbooks.uiowa.edu/teaching-handbook/>

- The timely and effective grading of student work

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-grading-system-and-distribution>

- Handling academic misconduct. CLAS requires that reports about academic misconduct be submitted using the form found on the link below.

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-academic-fraud>

- Required ACE course evaluations

<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-student-evaluation-teaching>