

Columbia University
School of Professional Studies
Associate Handbook
Fall 2019

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An Introduction to SPS

I. Who are our students?

We have a diverse group of students, from recent university graduates to executives with decades of experience in their field. We have local students from New York City as well as students from across the United States and around the globe. In Fall 2018, 51% of our students were international students, 51% were part-time students, and 59% were female¹. The diversity of students can create challenges when deciding how to teach students, but can also be a huge benefit for both students and instructors. Faculty of all levels often report that they benefit--as instructors and practitioners in the field--from having such a diverse group of students with a wide variety of backgrounds.

II. How do our students learn?

Our students are adult learners, who have enrolled in these programs to gain training and experience that will help them in their careers. Our students learn best from seeing the direct connections between the content they are learning and how to use it in professional settings. The Associate's experience and expertise in the field is crucial for helping our students understand how to apply the course content into real-world experiences.

III. Who are our faculty?

The School of Professional Studies follows the Scholar/Practitioner model, meaning that many of our instructors enter the role having extensive experience as practitioners in their respective fields. We believe that experience working in the industry is important for properly preparing our students for their careers, and rely on our faculty to provide their expertise as practitioners. 93.1% of our faculty (including Associates) are part-time and working in the industry while they are teaching, which gives our students valuable connections and access to relevant context about how to apply the skills and knowledge they are acquiring in the real world. Our full-time faculty have extensive experience either in the industry or in academia, and are dedicated to interdisciplinary scholarship that connects theory and practice. Our full-time faculty are active members of their field and are engaged in publishing, presenting at conferences, consulting, and more.

The Associate Role and Guidelines

I. The Associate Role²

An Associate is a part-time faculty member who supports the course Instructor of Record (the Full- or Part-time Faculty member assigned as the primary instructor of the course), assisting with course facilitation and instruction. Associates typically serve in course sections that have at least twenty-five enrolled students or are conducted online, and require content-specific expertise in the subject area. Serving as an Associate is an excellent opportunity to bolster teaching skills while building a relationship with Columbia University and building your reputation in the academy. Although Associates report directly

¹ From the Columbia University Statistical Abstract, <https://provost.columbia.edu/content/statistics-and-facts>

² From the Part-time Associate Role Overview: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1X8nJGSLxk5b2oO3vg85qrhKKTV_Znzjo

to the Academic Director of the program, their responsibilities are delegated by the course Instructor of Record.

Primary responsibilities:

- A. *Supporting the Students.* First and foremost, an Associate (much like the Instructor of Record) supports student learning. Associates play a pivotal role in making sure that each student has the tools they need to succeed in class, answering questions about logistics, the syllabus, and assignments.
- B. *Supporting the Instructor of Record.* One key way in which Associates support the students is by helping the Instructor of Record create the best learning environment possible both in and out of the classroom. Associates can do this by helping with logistical issues (e.g., setting up technology prior to class, moving chairs or tables if applicable, managing the Canvas site, hosting the Zoom session for online classes, etc.). Associates should also be available to help with responding to student questions or facilitating group discussions.
- C. *Providing Expertise.* The Associate's role and expertise are crucial to the success of the students. Through leading breakout sessions or group discussions, helping students with their projects and assignments, or working with the Instructor of Record to contribute additional perspectives, Associates serve as an important resource for students to turn to as they navigate the course.

II. Guidelines

The following section describes the Associate and Instructor of Record roles in SPS. Understanding both of these roles and how they intersect will help the Instructor of Record and Associate better fulfill their respective responsibilities and ensure that they provide a high-quality experience for the students. Though the School may list these as responsibilities of Associates, it is ultimately up to the academic directors of respective programs to define how the Associate and Instructor of Record manage the work of administering a course.

A. Primary Responsibilities of the Associate

1. Attend each class session unless otherwise approved by the Instructor of Record and/or Academic Director.
2. Meet with the course Instructor of Record prior to the first class session of the semester to review the course structure and content, and discuss expectations and responsibilities. Weekly meetings (or daily for block-week courses) are required in advance of each class session. Associates working with a Course Faculty Team are expected to attend weekly check-in meetings to ensure consistency across class sections.
3. Respond promptly to Instructor of Record's emails or requests.
4. Complete work assigned by Instructor of Record on the timeline approved by the Instructor of Record.
5. Manage the Canvas pages according to the Instructor of Record's preferences (e.g., manage discussion board posts, publish pages, update information in syllabus, manage assignments, etc.)
6. Other tasks as assigned in the Associate's contract.
7. *First-time Associates must complete Canvas training before the end of their first semester.*
8. See [Part-time Associate overview](#) for more details of responsibilities.

Additional Responsibilities for Associates in Online Courses:

1. Manage the Zoom environment according to the Instructor of Record's preferences (e.g., serve as co-host of meeting, set up and manage breakout rooms, monitor student questions in the chat, etc.)
2. *First-time Associates for online courses must complete Zoom training before the end of their first semester.*

B. Primary Responsibilities of the Instructor of Record

1. Attend each class session, or arrange for another Columbia faculty member (including the Associate) to serve as a substitute (see the [CUSPS Attendance Policy](#) for more information).
2. Meet with the Associate prior to the beginning of the semester and hold weekly check-ins in order to set expectations and assign relevant work to the Associate.
3. Provide periodic feedback to Associate on their performance in completing their Associate responsibilities.
4. As applicable, work with Associate to identify opportunities to develop their professional or pedagogical skills (e.g., through formal or informal mentorship, networking, providing guidance on pedagogical practices, etc.).
5. See [Part-time Lecturer overview](#) for more details of responsibilities.

C. Possible Associate Roles and Responsibilities of the Associate (with approval and supervision of Instructor of Record)

1. Share experiences related to the course material as approved by the Instructor of Record.
2. Facilitate classroom discussions (or moderate online discussion boards).
3. Evaluate student work (e.g., review it and provide recommendations/feedback).
4. Conduct a first pass of grading, to be reviewed by the Instructor of Record.
5. Monitor student participation and engagement in the class.
6. Field student questions about course logistics (e.g., assignment due dates, syllabus changes, etc.).
7. Answer student questions about course materials.
8. Provide feedback to Instructor of Record on teaching, activities, and assignments.
9. Draft and present lessons or activities based on own professional experience (with Instructor of Record's approval and supervision).

Limitations on the Role of the Associate

1. Associates may not create assignments or rubrics unless otherwise directed by Academic Director and/or Instructor of Record.
2. Associates may not teach more than one class session per semester (please consult with Academic Director for more information).
3. Associates may not assign final grades.

E. Assessing Associate Performance

1. *Student evaluation surveys.* In the end-of-semester student evaluations, students are asked to rate their Associate as well as evaluate the effectiveness of the Associate.
2. *Instructor of Record evaluation surveys.* Additionally, the Instructor of Records may be asked by their program or by the school to evaluate their Associate's performance in fulfilling their job requirements.
3. *Individual Feedback from Instructor of Record.* If an Associate wants to receive feedback from their Instructor of Record, they may request it at any time. If an Associate would like

guidance in requesting feedback or would like a form for their Instructor of Record to fill out, contact the Faculty Assessment and Development Team.

III. Associate Role FAQs

What is the difference between an Associate and a TA?

The Associate position is a faculty line created to draw on the knowledge and expertise of experienced practitioners, people with advanced degrees who may or may not also have advanced experience in industry, and alumni who have deep knowledge of the program. Associates may or may not have experience teaching in front of a classroom, but they generally have experience in the field and/or involvement in the program as a former student or administrator.

Teaching Assistants are full-time students currently enrolled in classes at Columbia University, who are brought in to assist with the administration of the class. Teaching Assistants are not permitted to provide instruction to the class.

Can Associates teach the course in place of the Instructor of Record?

No, but Associates who wish to gain teaching experience may, with explicit approval from their Instructor of Record and Academic Director, teach one class session under the supervision of the Instructor of Record. Associates may also work closely with students through breakout sessions, office hours, responding to emails, providing feedback, helping grade student work, etc. The Instructor of Record may also permit the Associate to give short lessons about a topic or area of expertise. However, the Instructor of Record is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the class content is taught to the students and that the students are graded fairly and appropriately. Instructors of Record should oversee the Associates' work closely to ensure that their presentation of material and feedback offered to students are in line with the Instructor of Record's expectations.

Are Associates allowed to assign grades to students?

The Instructor of Record must assign final grades to all student work. However, the Associate may have the expertise and experience to provide valuable feedback to students and assist in the grading process. The Instructor of Record may wish to have the Associate review student work and provide feedback, or to provide preliminary grades for review or grade simultaneously in order to ensure inter-rater reliability. However, the Instructor of Record has the final say in all student grades and all grade disputes should be handled by the Instructor of Record.

In some cases, the Instructor of Record may wish to have the Associate input grades into Canvas. In these cases, the Instructor of Record should review the entered grades periodically to ensure it is done accurately. If grading is not done anonymously, students should be made aware that while the Associate is assisting in entering grades, it is being done on behalf of the Instructor of Record, who is responsible for student grades.

How can an Associate become a Lecturer (Instructor of Record)?

If an Associate is interested in moving into a lecturer position (in which they serve as the Instructor of Record), they will need to apply to the job through the [SPS careers website](#). Criteria for lecturer positions

vary by program, so contact the program's Academic Director for more information. In most cases, the decision to hire a past Associate will depend on student evaluations, Instructor of Record evaluations, and a review of the candidate's CV for evidence of expertise in the content area you wish to teach. The interview process will also typically include a teaching demonstration.

Please note that serving as an Associate does not automatically qualify you for a Lecturer position, so Associates with an interest in moving into a Lecturer position should talk to their Academic Director to learn more about program needs and requirements for Lecturers.

Is the Associate position a stepping stone to a Lecturer position?

No. An Associate role is a separate position with different duties from a Lecturer position. In order to become a Lecturer, the Associate must apply for a specific Lecturer position and go through the selection process. Whether the Associate is given a Lecturer position will be based on program need and the Associate's qualifications for the role.

If an Associate does not wish to become a Lecturer, there is no expectation that they will do so.

Characteristics of Effective Associates

At the end of each semester, the SPS administers surveys for each class asking students to evaluate the course, their Instructor of Record, and their Associate. In addition to rating the Associates, students are asked to evaluate the effectiveness of their Associates. In order to help Associates understand how they can best support the learning environment and create a positive environment for students, examples of positive teaching qualities are provided below.

In general, a good Associate will:

- *Contribute well in class.* A good Associate is able to leverage their experience to contribute positively to the class. Whether that means helping the Instructor of Record explain difficult concepts and respond to student questions, providing good feedback during group discussions, or helping develop and deliver course material, a good Associate is able to help the students learn the course material effectively.
- *Be on the same page as the Instructor of Record.* Good Associates contribute to the class in ways that support and add to the Instructor of Record's content. Associates should be sure that their contributions are not directly contradicting the Instructor of Record, or merely repeating it. Associates should also be up-to-date on the Instructor of Record's policies and plans for the students, so that they can address student questions and concerns when asked and ensure that they are helping to implement class policies.
- *Provide clear and timely feedback to students.* Associates may be called on to provide feedback to students--by reading their papers, talking through projects, or reviewing presentations. The best feedback is:
 - Timely. Providing feedback within a week (by the next class session) is best, especially for smaller assignments. If you are going to need more time, be sure to communicate the timeline with students.
 - Specific. Comments like "Good work!" or "No!" don't give students any information about how they can improve. Better feedback would be suggestions like "Strong thesis statement," "Good organization of information," or "Avoid using jargon here."

- Constructive. Rather than just telling the student what they've done wrong, tell them what they can do to improve (e.g., rather than saying "You didn't cite your sources", say "Be sure to cite your sources using APA format")
- Tied to Course Learning Outcomes. It can be tempting to correct every error- especially grammatical mistakes- but too much feedback can be discouraging or lead students to miss the most important suggestions. Look to the course's learning outcomes to see what kinds of feedback are the most important.
- *Use fair and transparent grading practices, when applicable*. In cases where the Associate is participating in the grading process, it is important to use a rubric (if one is not provided, an Associate should discuss the possibility of developing one with their Instructor of Record) that clearly indicates the criteria that will be used to grade the work. Students should be made aware of the rubrics in advance, so they know how their work will be assessed.
- *Be available, approachable, and responsive*. It is important to remember that both Instructor of Records and Associates are here to serve students and help them learn and succeed. The best Associates are proactive in making sure students know they can come to them for help and advice, quick to respond to requests for help or information, and willing to be accommodating to students. A major part of this role is being prepared to provide information about course logistics, so it is important that the Associate and Instructor of Record meet frequently and that the Associate keeps up with any changes made to the course. .
- *Serve as representative and advocate for the students*. Things don't always go smoothly over the course of the semester. Students may get overwhelmed by work or confused by the timelines or course requirements. The best Associates listen to students' needs, assess the issues at play, and approach the Instructor of Record on behalf of the students to help clarify or solve these situations.

Professional Development and Networking Opportunities

SPS faculty have a number of opportunities for professional development, both in developing pedagogical skills and in widening professional networks. The Faculty Assessment and Development (FAD) team within Faculty Affairs is here to provide Associates with the resources and guidance they need to succeed as an Associate and, if desired, help gain the pedagogical training and experience they need to become an Instructor of Record. Here is a summary of services offered:

1. Faculty Workshops

The FAD team offers multiple workshops in person at orientation and online throughout each semester. Some of the workshops currently being offered include:

- Best Practices in Instruction
- Effective Presentation Skills
- Creating a Positive Classroom Climate
- Intercultural Pedagogy
- Assignment Creation, Grading, and Feedback
- Building Your Teaching Toolbox: Supporting Engagement in the Classroom
- Building Your Teaching Toolbox: Self-Assessment and Reflection
- The Science of Learning
- Facilitating Learning in Large Courses
- Principles and Practices of Inclusive Pedagogy

More workshops are being developed each year, so keep an eye out for emails for more information. We welcome suggestions for further professional development opportunities from faculty of all levels.

2. Faculty Forums

Bi-weekly, one-hour informal teaching forums are offered as a venue for faculty to discuss collaboratively topics of pedagogical interest in a welcoming environment. These forums are thematically based, but the conversation shifts according to participants' interests/needs. The forums will be offered both in-person and online. To be added to the list of interested participants, please complete the following form: <http://bit.ly/TeachingForumsSignup>

3. The Associate Training Program

For Associates who wish to bolster their pedagogical knowledge and skills, the Faculty Assessment and Development Team is developing a program to provide a strong foundation of pedagogical knowledge and skills to help all faculty succeed in the classroom. In the Associate Training Program, Associates will participate in workshops and/or teaching forums, provide a demonstration of their teaching skills (either in the classroom or in a microteaching workshop), and prepare a teaching philosophy or reflection on their experiences in the program and in the classroom more generally. The program can be a great opportunity for Associates who wish to apply for Lecturer positions to bolster their pedagogical skills and demonstrate their commitment to quality in teaching, but is open to all who wish to learn more about effective instruction. If you are interested in the program, please contact Colleen Davy at cd3082@columbia.edu for more information.

Managing Relationships with the Instructor of Record

One key ingredient for maintaining a strong relationship between Associate and Instructor of Record is having clear expectations about what responsibilities each faculty member has regarding the class work. Prior to the beginning of the term, and weekly (or daily in the case of block courses), the Associate and Instructor of Record should meet to discuss expectations regarding the Associate's tasks, responsibilities, and participation in class. [Here](#) is a template that Associates and their Instructor of Record may wish to use to put their expectations in writing, or to spark a conversation about expectations.

Here are some basic expectations of what Instructors of Record and Associates can expect from one another:

The Instructor of Record can expect that the Associate will:

1. Attend each class session unless otherwise indicated and assist in classroom management or content presentation as requested.
2. Participate in managing breakout sessions, grading and providing feedback to students, responding to student emails, etc. according to the Instructor of Record's expectations and as allowed by their contract.
3. Communicate any issues that may arise in completing their work and work with the Instructor of Record to develop a plan to ensure the work is completed in a timely manner.

An Associate can expect that the Instructor of Record will:

1. Provide a clear outline of the Associate's roles and responsibilities over the course of the semester regarding their participation in the class, how often the Associate and Instructor of Record will meet outside of class sessions, expectations for responding to student emails and queries, grading student work, and so on.

2. Ensure that the Associate's workload is manageable and within the bounds of the Associate's contract.
3. Provide guidance on their expectations for students, so that the Associate can respond to student questions consistently with the Instructor of Record's expectations.
4. Give feedback on how well the Associate is meeting expectations with clear, concrete suggestions on how to develop their performance as an Associate.

Managing Conflicts

In the event that a conflict arises between the Associate and the Instructor of Record, the first step should be for both parties to discuss the issue. Often, issues arise simply as a result of miscommunication. If a faculty member is not sure how to proceed, the Faculty Assessment and Development team is available to help talk through any issues as they relate to managing conflicts. Here are a few issues that may arise, and suggestions on how to manage them:

An Associate disagrees with the Instructor of Record's teaching style, classroom policies, or grading methods.

Because the Instructor of Record is responsible for administering the class, the Instructor of Record has the final say in all issues related to what happens in the classroom, how students are graded, and classroom policies. Unless the Associate feels that the Instructor of Record is using policies or practices that are against SPS or program policies, the Associate must cooperate with and defer to the Instructor of Record's for the duration of his or her contract.

An Associate would like to teach a class session but the Instructor of Record is not supportive.

Again, because the Instructor of Record is responsible for the class, if they do not wish for an Associate to teach a class session, it is their decision. If an Associate wishes to teach, the best course of action is to discuss potential options for future semesters with respective Academic Directors who may be able to pair him or her with an Instructor of Record who is interested in allowing Associates to teach a class session.

An Instructor of Record has assigned an Associate work that is outside the scope of contractual responsibilities.

If an Instructor of Record expects an Associate to complete tasks outside of his or her contractual responsibilities, even after bringing it to the Instructor of Record's attention, the Associate should discuss this situation with their Academic Director as soon as possible.

The Associate is not attending class sessions, or is arriving late or leaving early, without having prior approval.

According to their contract, associates are required to attend classes, and the expectation is that they will arrive on time and leave after the class has ended. Should Associates need alternative arrangements they should get prior approval from the Instructor of Record and/or their Academic Director. If Associates are not attending class, the Academic Director should be immediately informed.

The Associate is not able to complete grading or respond to student emails in a timely manner or is otherwise not completing the tasks expected of them.

If the Associate finds that they are not able to complete the work in the agreed-upon time frame, they should immediately bring this to the attention of the Instructor of Record in order to come up with alternative plans for ensuring that the work is completed. If the problem persists, or is unable to be resolved, the Instructor of Record should bring it to the attention of their Academic Director.

If either the Instructor of Record or Associate feel uncomfortable coming to class or fulfilling contractual responsibilities due to their relationship with one another.

We highly recommend bringing these concerns to the attention of the Academic Director, so that they can understand and address the situation. If the faculty member is not comfortable doing this, however, they may reach out to the Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs within the Academic Affairs division at SPS, who can help address the situation. The Ombuds office and the EOAA office are also available as resources for all members of Columbia University.

[SPS Office of Faculty Affairs](#): Please reach out to Melinda Starmer, Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs to discuss any questions or concerns you may have. She can be reached at melinda.starmer@columbia.edu.

[Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action](#) (EOAA): If you feel you are being discriminated against or are a target of sexual harassment, the EOAA office is here to help. You can obtain information about EOAA policy and the complaint process at the link above.

[The Ombuds Office](#): If you are not ready to report an issue or are not sure how to proceed, the ombuds office has specialists trained in managing interpersonal conflict in the workplace who can help you work through the issues you are experiencing and decide how to proceed. The ombuds office is a confidential and neutral source of guidance and is available to all faculty, staff, and students at the university.