

Isenberg School of Management
Business Communication Program
Appointment and Re-Appointment Procedures

First note that the SOM Business Communication Program is not a degree-granting department, but rather is a program under the auspices of the SOM Undergraduate Matters Office and the Dean's Office of the School. Our primary duty is to offer courses that enable SOM undergraduates to fulfill their Junior Year Writing Requirement. Our Business Communication Program is one of 55 such academic units on campus, all operating either in departments or in collaboration with departments, in affiliation with the University Writing Program. To these ends, the SOM Business Communication Program advertises for, interviews, and selects Teaching Assistants from a wide variety of departments on campus, to fill teaching assistant slots on a for-hire/as-needed basis.

Our program relies on graduate students' primary degree-granting departments to seek input from their graduate students concerning revisions to appointment and re-appointment policies. The Business Communication Program expects that student representatives serve on the various "feeding" department committees; our program has no independent policy committee. Graduate directors from those programs (the profile may change from semester to semester) provide feedback to the SOM Dean of Undergraduate Matters, or to the Business Communication Program Director, who then acts accordingly.

The need for TA assistance is determined by the Business Communication Program Director, and a call for TAs is broadcast – via the University Writing Program web site, by emailing an announcement to JYW Programs across campus, by calling specific departments who historically have had large numbers of TAs to place, and by other means when feasible.

When they respond to calls for Teaching Assistants to teach sections of SOM 310, applicants who are in good academic standing in their degree programs are guided to write a letter to the Business Communication Director -- outlining their qualifications. Candidates are selected based on the degree to which they have higher education teaching experience, business experience or management education, rhetoric and composition background (advanced courses in the teaching of writing or relevant degrees), experience teaching oral communication, demonstrated ability to work as a team member, competence with Microsoft Windows/Office/Internet applications. It is assumed that TAs will come into the program with the required skills; the program does not train TAs in their disciplines.

Respective departments from which we select TAs may have additional academic performance requirements that may or may not be communicated to the Business Communication Program. We try to honor such requirements when they are made clear to us, and when they are feasible for us to implement.

Applicants must submit their resume or curriculum vita, copies of their most recent teaching evaluations, 1 letter of reference (preferably a teaching reference), and samples of their business or technical writing. A face to face interview with the program director is required.

Applicants are selected by the Business Communication Program director, sometimes in collaboration with the assistant director, and are notified by email. The Assistantships usually remain in effect for only 1-2 semesters, and are renewable each semester or annually, depending on program needs and on the performance of the teaching assistant. Appointments are made between July and September and run for 19-38 weeks, beginning September 1. Appointments are always contingent on demonstrated teaching and team performance of the individual TA.

Standard SRTI evaluations, in addition to the observations of the director and/or assistant director, determine performance. Unsatisfactory performance, demonstrated by less than satisfactory student evaluations, or skipped or canceled classes or office hours, or failure to attend team meetings, among other critical responsibilities, will result in a mandatory meeting with the director. If performance continues to be unsatisfactory, the candidate will be notified that his or her TA contract will not be renewed at the end of the semester.

At the request of various “feeder” departments, a policy is in place to ensure that teaching assistantships are made widely available, and in keeping with that objective, business communication program TA contracts are not renewed after 3 years (6 semesters), regardless of performance. If a graduate student is terminated from his or her degree program, s/he may complete the semester, but may not be re-appointed. Complaints about a TAs performance are reported to the respective Ph.D. program director.