University College
Northern Arizona University

FYLI/FYS/SYS PEER TA (TEACHING ASSISTANT) ACTION GUIDE
(intended audiences - FYLI Coordinators, FYLI/FYS/SYS Instructors, and FYLI/FYS/SYS Peer TAs)

This FYLI/FYS/SYS Peer TA Action Guide is designed to help Peer TAs support First Year Learning Initiative courses at Northern Arizona University. It is not meant to supersed the faculty member’s expectations and assigned roles, but rather to give Peer TAs a base for understanding FYLI goals and purposes. Visit the FYLI and FYS websites for more!

Vision Statement
The First Year Learning Initiative (FYLI) and FYS/SYS (First and Second Year Seminars) programs focus on socializing students for excellence, using best practices in course design and teaching, and coordinating among multiple sections. As a Peer TA in a FYLI or FYS/SYS course, your efforts and unique knowledge, expertise and experiences are all important for continuing to improve the program.

Overview—Purpose and Intent
The main purpose of the Peer TA program is first and foremost to enable instructors to carry out active learning in their FYLI courses. For Peer TAs, the program may also serve as a professional development experience. Lastly, the Peer TA program may provide other benefits such as helping Peer TAs review class material or providing motivational “role modeling” for students in FYLI/FYS/SYS courses.

Roles and Responsibilities of a FYLI/FYS/SYS Peer TA

What is a Peer TA?
A peer is someone who is on equal standing with you; a TA is a Teaching Assistant. As a Peer TA, you will primarily facilitate active learning.

What does a Peer TA typically do in a course?
Faculty and coordinators determine the best way to utilize Peer TAs’ work in their courses; FYLI/FYS/SYS does not place restrictions or offer a standardized “job description.” Generally, the Peer TA responsibilities complement the active pedagogy used in FYLI courses.

Examples include:
• Circulating among small discussion groups during class to help keep discussion on track and check progress.
• Holding office, tutoring, study sessions or studio hours for students (this is particularly helpful when done on weekends or other times when faculty are not on campus).
• Grading small-stakes assessments, such as in-class “minute paper.;”
• Participating in and helping monitor online discussions.
• Inputting daily class participation, attendance, or assessment data.
• Participating in leadership activities.
• Sharing ideas and listening to other ideas.
• Helping students learn about self-advocacy.
• Leading scenes and role-plays to help students think about how they want to act in certain situations.
• Leading activities to help students think about their future.
• Helping students find information about their community and about subjects that interest them.
• Encouraging students to think for themselves and problem-solve

(Steven Jacobs of NAU Computer Science has shared the following document that you may find helpful as a model for CS110: Peer TA Roles and Responsibilities.)

Who manages a Peer TAs work?
It is up to individual faculty and coordinators to guide and supervise the work of the Peer TAs. FYLI/FYS/SYS does not collect timesheets or evaluations; it is up to the Peer TAs, faculty, and coordinators to ensure that time invested matches the 10-hour per week commitment and that responsibilities are being fulfilled. To be an effective TA in your course you need to remember LIFT:

• **Lead** by example: be prepared, vocal, and active in your course.
• **Interact** positively with students: students will approach you for help if you are collaborative and constructive.
• **Form** good relationships with your faculty supervisor and students. Keep open and frequent communications on expectations, potential concerns, or any other issue that needs addressing.
• In a **Timely** manner, respond to questions/emails—24-hour turnaround time for email response is optimal.

Peer TA Employment
FYLI Coordinators, FYLI Instructors and FYS/SYS Instructors select their Peer TAs by... following the guidelines at [http://nau.edu/University-College/Your-First-Year/Learning-Initiative/Peer-TA-Program/](http://nau.edu/University-College/Your-First-Year/Learning-Initiative/Peer-TA-Program/).

The hiring process requires you to complete the UC Student Employment Form online (sent via NAU email by instructors or coordinators). If you have worked for NAU within 6 months prior to the start date of the Peer TA position, this is the only step needed to be hired. All Peer TAs must complete a new UC Student Employment Form each semester for each class they will work.

If you have NOT worked for NAU within 6 months prior to the start date of the Peer TA position, you must also complete the entire NAU hiring process. All steps must be completed prior to the start date.

If you need to resign your position, you must notify your instructor and FYLI@nau.edu immediately with the last date you work. (Delays could result in you having to pay back any overpayment.)
In the event a Peer TA is not meeting the expectations of the supervisor, s/he may be subject to disciplinary action (and possible termination) as a temporary employee at the supervisor's discretion.

Benefits of Peer TAs
Peer TAs enable faculty to engage in more active pedagogies and provide needed support for the frequent graded work that is typical of FYLI/FYS/SYS courses. They may also provide other important benefits. Research in social and cognitive psychology strongly suggests that having a relatable role model – such as a fellow undergraduate student – is particularly powerful for increasing student motivations and feelings of self-efficacy.

Peer TAs themselves are also likely enjoy a number of positive outcomes from the experience. These may include having an important work experience to add to a resume/vita, opportunities to revisit and strengthen material learned in earlier courses, and building professional relationships with faculty. A recent study* of undergraduates who had served as Peer TAs found that those who went on to become graduate TAs were more comfortable in that graduate TA role. In general, Peer TAs in this study rated the experience as being very beneficial, particularly when they had a relatively high level of responsibility in their Peer TA positions.


Assessment / Semester Survey: Input from TAs, Faculty, and Coordinators
Beginning Spring 2015, at the end of each semester, Peer TAs will be asked to complete a Survey and a brief Reflection Summary to help pinpoint areas where the program might be improved, but also to reflect on the good work that you are doing! (Faculty and Coordinators will also be asked to add their comments to your Summary.)

Peer TA Events
Each semester Peer TAs are expected to attend mandatory workshops as well as optional training sessions provided based on needs identified. Visit the Peer TA Events webpage for events scheduled for current and future semesters.

Getting Connected / Contact Information
Kevin Ketchner, FYLI Professor and Associate
Peer TA Steering Group (in development)
BbLearn shell for Peer TAs (in development)
Kevin.Ketchner@nau.edu, 523-7100

Cheryl Slee, University College Administrative Assistant
Peer TA hiring
Cheryl.Slee@nau.edu, 523-8804

Lauren Berutich, FYS & ARTs Program Coordinator, Sr.
Lauren.Berutich@nau.edu, 523-5509

Madison Ledgerwood, FYS Instructional Specialist
Madison.Ledgerwood@nau.edu

Liane Sims, University College Coordinator
Liane.Sims@nau.edu, 523-4283

Michelle Miller, FYLI Co-Director
Campus Resources

- Resource Connect: [http://nau.edu/University-College/Student-Resources/Resource-Connect/](http://nau.edu/University-College/Student-Resources/Resource-Connect/)
- Student Learning Centers. Supplemental Instruction and Tutoring: [http://nau.edu/student-learning-centers/](http://nau.edu/student-learning-centers/)
- Gateway Center. Advising: [http://nau.edu/gateway/](http://nau.edu/gateway/)
- Counseling Services: [http://nau.edu/counseling-services/](http://nau.edu/counseling-services/)

Be a source of knowledge to the students in your class by providing the campus resources that you may have used and experienced. Notify your supervisor immediately of any student who appears to be in significant distress - do not attempt to counsel these students yourself!

In Development
The Peer TA Steering Group has begun meeting and …. Awards for recognizing outstanding Peer TAs are …. **A Reflection Summary has been created based on your input and will be ready for distribution at the close of the Spring 15 semester.**

Checklist for FYLI/FYS/SYS Peer TAs
Complete these steps before you start your work as a Peer TA.

**FYLI/FYS/SYS Peer TA Process Checklist**

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<th>If you are an International Student,</th>
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<tr>
<td>STOP!!!</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Contact CIE &amp; HR before proceeding to Step 1</td>
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<td>Center for International Education (CIE)</td>
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<td><a href="http://nau.edu/cie/">http://nau.edu/cie/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>928.523.2409</td>
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<td>Human Resources (HR)</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:hr.contact@nau.edu">hr.contact@nau.edu</a></td>
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<td>928.523.2223</td>
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Online Employment
http://nau.edu/ucstudentemployment

Online Hiring Packet (initiated after enrollment if needed)
http://nau.edu/Human-Resources/Management-Resources/Administrative-Tools/Hire-Xpress/

I-9 Verification

Online Trainings
http://nau.edu/Human-Resources/Employee-Resources/Training/Required/

Follow up:
☐ Correct Pay Received
  ☐ If not, notify FYLI@nau.edu immediately

☐ Must Resign - notify Instructor & FYLI@nau.edu immediately with last date worked

Not an International Student?
Go directly to Step 1