

Proposed Policy for Computer Science Department Office Hours  
Written by the JEDI Committee

**Purpose:**

To make office hours more inclusive and productive for all students.

**Motivation:**

The department has found that holding office hours in a public venue can be quite productive. It creates a community among the students, and enables broader group discussions for general assignment issues. As such, many classes have moved their office hours from offices into the common area on the SEH 4th floor. While this has been generally well received, it is not without its complications. Informal survey results and discussions with students show that some students are

- uncomfortable asking questions when many students are present,
- unable to be productive when students are socializing during and in the same location as office hours, and
- find that they are competing for attention when office hours have little structure; help may be disproportionately given to louder or more confident students.

Thus, the JEDI committee recommends the following policies.

**Policy:**

*Group and One-on-One Options*

Instructional staff should offer both group office hours and one-on-one office hours.

1. **Group Office Hours:** All students in a class are welcome to attend freely without prearrangement. They occur at advertised, regular times and locations (whether in person or online).
2. **One-on-One Office Hours:** Individual students may attend in private when they prearrange the time by selecting from options made available by the host (GTA, UTA, or LA). We suggest that one-on-one office hours are offered in addition to group office hours.

*Location*

We suggest that GTAs, UTAs, and LAs host their group office hours either in person in SEH4040 or Tompkins402 or some other reserved space or remotely. GTAs, UTAs, and LAs are required to host one-on-one office hours in a formal location or remotely. Faculty can coordinate at the start of the semester around space usage.

*Queues*

GTAs, UTAs, and LAs should maintain a queue of students (for example by allowing students to add their name to a list on a whiteboard) from which students are assisted in order and each for a maximum of some time limit. The time limit can be set depending on the context (material, types of questions, number of people, etc), but ten minutes is a suggested initial choice. GTAs, UTAs, and LAs can ask the professor for dry-erase markers (available in the front office) to maintain the queue.

*Syllabi*

Instructors should specify the format of office hours in their syllabi, including a suggestion that students arrive at office hours with specific failing test cases, specific lines of code, or specific questions prepared to use time efficiently.

**Definitions:**

Instructional staff - The instructor(s) and instructional assistant(s) for a course including

GTA - Graduate Teaching Assistant

UTA - Undergraduate Teaching Assistant

LA - Learning Assistant

Formal location - A space which is being used during office hours solely or primarily for office hours. In particular, a space which is not being used as a common area for socializing concurrently with the office hours. A recommended formal space for one-on-one office hours is SEH4450. Other feasible locations include unused classrooms and conference rooms.