

Policy on Appointments and Mentoring of Graduate Student Instructors (Revised March 7, 2005)

The education and training for Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs) at Berkeley are essential to the educational mission of the campus. Faculty supervision and preparation of GSIs improves the preparation of graduate students for their future roles as teachers in academic institutions. The important role that GSIs play in undergraduate education on this campus also means that effective preparation and training of GSIs will improve the quality of undergraduate education at Berkeley.

Mentoring of Different Types of GSIships

Preparation and guidance of GSIs in their teaching roles depend in part on a GSI's level of experience and the level of responsibility for teaching a particular course. There are four general types of GSIships, each giving the GSI a different level of course responsibility.

Type (a): Beginning GSI: first appointment; no previous undergraduate teaching experience; primarily leads discussion sections or labs; appointed at GSI step 1.

Type (b): More experienced GSI: leads discussion sections or labs; appointed at GSI step 2, 3, or 4.

Type (c): GSI who functions as the Instructor of one of a number of courses in which the curriculum is prescribed, but the GSI is primarily responsible for selecting readings, for how the material is presented, and for grading students; appointed at GSI step 1, 2, 3, or 4.

Type (d): Graduate students who have sole responsibility for curriculum, textbook, and grading students. These appointees hold the title Acting Instructor-Graduate Student (AI-GS) and are the Instructors of Record in the courses they teach.

Policies

A. Recruitment and appointment.

The process of recruiting and selecting GSIs should be open and centralized, rather than controlled by private arrangements between course instructors and GSIs. In the following statement of principles, our definition of "fairness" refers to the clarity and equity of the process, not to the equal distribution of GSIships to all graduate students.

1. The responsibility for making GSI appointments rests with the Chair. He or she may delegate this responsibility to a faculty committee, but the Chair should make certain that fair recruitment and selection processes are in operation in the department.

2. As provided in the contract between the University and the United Auto Workers, in the “Posting” article, departments must, by March 15 of each year, post appointment opportunities for GSI positions on the campus Web site: <http://hrweb.berkeley.edu/labor/asejobs.htm>. The information posted includes the number of positions anticipated, a statement of non-discrimination in employment, a general description of the duties performed, the minimum qualifications as established by the University, a statement that exceptions to these qualifications may be granted by the University, and a statement of the application procedures or contact person for hiring GSIs in the department. In addition, departments may wish to post notices about available GSI positions in the following ways:

- a well-marked notice on a bulletin board indicating that GSI positions are available, see [designated person] in the department office for information;
- notices in department e-mail;
- notices on the department Web site (information should state whether the unit is willing to consider appointing students from outside the department).

When appointments outside the department are acceptable, bulletin-board and electronic notification of openings should be provided and an announcement and description should be forwarded to Career and Graduate School Services, 2111 Bancroft Way, MC 4350.

3. It is advisable that GSI vacancies that occur during the first week of instruction and that must be filled on an emergency basis should be posted for at least two full working days, unless the department is prepared to fill them on the basis of a previously established waiting list of GSI applications.

4. Criteria required for appointments to GSIships, and criteria involved in determining selection of students, should be made available to graduate students in advance of the appointment. Different criteria may be appropriate for different types of GSIs. At the beginning GSI level (type a above), if the department can assume that all entering graduate students have basic preparation in the course material, issues of distributing student support may be primary. For appointments that involve more active planning and teaching responsibilities, issues of previous experience in teaching and competence in the subject matter may be of first importance.

B. Guiding principles determining workload.

1. As provided in the “Appointment Notification” article of the UC-UAW contract, departments must provide written notice of appointment, by letter or e-mail message, to those who are offered GSI positions as soon as is practicable after hiring decisions are made. This notice must follow Labor Relations guidelines (see <http://hrweb.berkeley.edu/labor/aseltrl.htm>), and include the title

of the appointment, its percentage or the range of hours to be worked, effective dates, the stipend, the benefits, the name of the hiring unit, the contact person in the hiring unit, the requirement that the appointee respond to the offer, a statement that the position is covered by the union contract, and the contract Web site address.

2. As provided in the same article of the contract, before the teaching term begins or as soon as practicable thereafter, a second notice is sent to the appointee that includes the supervisor of the course to whom the appointee reports, the course that is assigned, the location of the course, the duties that may be required, and other information that the department deems appropriate. When the duties are changed significantly, the department provides advance notice.

3. GSI appointments ordinarily do not exceed half time. The limit of workload for such an appointment will not exceed 340 hours per semester, as specified in the “Workload” article of the contract, and this standard will apply proportionately to other percentages of appointment. A GSI with an appointment of 50 percent or less shall not be assigned a workload of more than 40 hours in any one week. The number of hours worked in excess of twenty (20) hours per week may not total more than 77 hours per semester. Workload is defined in terms of hours rather than of student headcount. If a GSI anticipates that the workload will exceed these levels, the GSI should initiate discussions with the course supervisor as soon as possible. The course supervisor should advise and support GSIs in balancing their teaching responsibilities with other responsibilities involved in graduate education.

4. Graduate students who are Acting Instructors are responsible for a workload consistent with the normal workload of the course.

5. Disputes regarding workload are subject to the Workload Dispute Resolution Procedures of the contract as found in the “Workload” article. All other matters that the contract makes grievable are subject to the provisions of the “Grievance and Arbitration” article of the contract.

C. Preparation of GSIs for teaching.

In this section, policies and procedures are defined that describe the mutual responsibilities of faculty and GSIs in making certain that undergraduate students receive the best possible educational experiences, and GSIs receive the best possible pedagogical training.

1. Leading discussion sections or teaching stand-alone sections requires complex teaching skills, and first-time GSIs accordingly require training in both the logistics and pedagogical issues of undergraduate teaching. Resources for this purpose include campuswide GSI orientations and workshops, department GSI orientations, and department 300-level courses. The Graduate Council, in

collaboration with the GSI Teaching and Resource Center, will circulate a list of resources available for preparing new GSIs.

Each department must inform the Dean of the Graduate Division and the Graduate Council about the specific ways in which it provides new GSIs with appropriate preparation before they enter the classroom and during their first year of teaching.

2. First-time GSIs must either have completed or be enrolled in a 300-level semester-long pedagogy seminar on teaching in the discipline offered by the department. In those departments in which a low number of GSIs makes it infeasible to offer such a course, the pedagogy seminar should be taken in another department, with the advice and approval of the GSI's department and with the consent of the course instructor. The GSI Teaching and Resource Center will maintain a list of 300-level courses on its Web site. –First-time GSIs who fail to pass the 300-level course must retake and pass the course before they are eligible to teach again.

The course would normally:

- be taught by a faculty member;
- address the practical and theoretical knowledge needed by new GSIs in the specific discipline;
- have a syllabus that specifies topics week by week, identifies readings, and describes the basis for evaluation
- have a meaningful number of units and student contact hours (2-4 units);
- have a course reader or textbooks;
- have specific assignments for which GSIs are accountable and on which GSIs will be graded.

Departments are required to apprise the Graduate Division each semester of the name of the faculty member teaching the course and to submit a copy of the 300-level course syllabus to the Graduate Division each time the course instructor changes. The GSI Teaching and Resource Center can assist departments in developing such 300-level courses through consultations, workshops, and grants.

The 300-level course requirement must be stated in letters of appointment for first-time GSIs.

3. All graduate students who teach require faculty supervision. At the beginning of the semester, the faculty member responsible for the course is required to meet with GSIs (types a and b) to go over the course syllabus, to clarify GSI responsibilities in the course, and, in the case of discussion sections and labs, describe the relationship of sections to lecture.

In the case of GSI type c, in which a GSI has primary responsibility for curriculum, textbook selection, and student evaluation, a Senate faculty member

or members must oversee and approve all course descriptions and reading lists in keeping with the needs and standards of the University.

GSI's with the title of Acting Instructor-Graduate Student (type d) serve as the Instructor of Record and have full course responsibility. However, all course descriptions and representative reading lists must be overseen and approved by a Senate faculty member or members within the relevant department before submission of a graduate student's appointment to the Graduate Division and the Committee on Courses of Instruction for approval.

4. Departments are obliged to provide new and continuing GSI's (types a, b, and c) regular meetings with faculty who are responsible for the course to discuss the logistics of curriculum, selection of topics, assignments, tests, grades etc.

5. Departments are obliged provide new and continuing GSI's (types a, b, and c) regular meetings with faculty who are responsible for the course to discuss pedagogic matters related to their teaching of the course or sections of the course.

6. Departments are obliged to provide GSI's holding the title Acting Instructor-Graduate Student (type d), who have primary responsibility for course content, regular meetings with a faculty member designated by the Chair to discuss course logistics and pedagogical issues.

7. The faculty responsibilities to prepare GSI's are complemented by GSI obligations to prepare themselves for teaching roles. Included in these obligations are: attendance at classes, lectures, and GSI meetings; meeting with faculty mentors to discuss more effective ways of teaching undergraduates; seeking out opportunities for guidance and feedback concerning teaching; and attending orientation courses and workshops on pedagogy offered in the department or in the University.

8. As part of their classroom preparation, every first-time GSI must successfully complete, no later than the end of the third week of classes, instruction in the professional responsibilities involved in teaching. Developed and administered by the GSI Teaching and Resource Center, instruction will include information on academic freedom, political speech, confidentiality, plagiarism, sexual harassment, Title VI, Title IX, and other issues delineated in the Academic Code of Conduct. The Graduate Division will oversee enforcement of this policy, and this requirement is to be stated in GSI letters of appointment.

9. Every first-time GSI must attend the Orientation Conference sponsored by the GSI Teaching and Resource Center. An Orientation Conference is offered by the GSI Teaching and Resource Center each semester before classes begin. First-time international GSI's (IGSI's) must attend the International Orientation Conference, scheduled before classes begin in the fall semester. Because the IGSI Orientation Conference is only held in the fall, departments should anticipate the spring

appointments of first-time IGSI and instruct them to attend in the fall. The requirement to attend these Orientation Conferences must be included in the GSI letters of appointment.

10. Supervision of preparation of Reading and Composition course GSIs should be vested in a campuswide Reading and Composition Courses Committee. This committee will be overseen and appointed by the Dean of Arts and Humanities, who has overall responsibility for Reading and Composition courses.

11. As charged by the Dean of Arts and Humanities, and in consultation with the GSI Teaching and Resource Center, the Reading and Composition Courses Committee should: 1) convene, at least once each semester, a meeting of all Reading and Composition instructors of record to provide GSIs appropriate uniform standards, guidelines, and supervision, and 2) convene, at least once each semester, a meeting of all instructors of 300-level courses designed for training of Reading and Composition instructors to foster appropriate oversight and coordination.

D. Assessment of GSIs by faculty

1. First-time GSIs should be observed in the classroom by departmentally designated faculty and receive feedback on their teaching. Guidelines and workshops on how to conduct a classroom observation are available from the GSI Teaching and Resource Center.

2. End-of-semester evaluations of GSIs should be reviewed. A departmentally designated faculty member should meet individually with GSIs whose reviews are below average to set up a plan for improvement of teaching skills. This may involve repeating the department pedagogy seminar, or other appropriate remedial action.

E. Increasing faculty incentives to play a central role in mentoring graduate students as teachers.

1. Departmental reviews should include an assessment of GSI mentorship in their assessment of faculty teaching performance.

2. Budget Committee reviews should include an assessment of GSI mentorship in their assessment of faculty teaching performance.

F. Policy Dissemination

1. Departmental Chairs should provide faculty members a copy of these policies along with specific department guidelines at the beginning of each semester that they teach courses with GSIs.

2. A copy of these policies or the URL where they can be located, along with specific department guidelines, should be included in each GSI letter of appointment.

Assistance in developing guidelines for mentoring GSIs can be obtained by consulting the GSI Teaching and Resource Center. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to alter the provisions of the UC-UAW contract. The contract is available at <http://hrweb.berkeley.edu/labor/ase.htm>.