

ADMINISTRATIVE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT Training, Monitoring, and Evaluation of
Graduate Teaching Assistants

NUMBER 349

DATE September 22, 1994

I. Introduction

In September 1993 the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina adopted a report entitled Tenure and Teaching in the University of North Carolina. One major section of the report dealt with faculty development designed to improve instructional effectiveness. With respect to graduate teaching assistants, the report made the following observation:

...It is encouraging to note that in all of these efforts some of our institutions, most notably the research universities, North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, have begun to give more conscious and serious attention to developing and strengthening the teaching skills of graduate teaching assistants. These two institutions employ the overwhelming majority of teaching assistants within the University, but other applicable institutions must also address this matter.

Recommendation No. 6 of that report addressed issues related to graduate teaching assistants and reads as follows:

That greater efforts be made to develop and strengthen the teaching skills of graduate students, and that the Board of Governors ask the President to prepare, in consultation with the University-wide Graduate Council, a report with specific guidelines and recommendations for the training, monitoring, and evaluation of graduate students who teach courses in UNC institutions.

At the President's request the Graduate Council, consisting of graduate deans and representatives of the graduate faculties at the various institutions, drafted a proposed set of guidelines and recommendations for consideration by the President's staff. Following the staff review and consideration by the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs, the final report was adopted by the Board of Governors on June 10, 1994.

This administrative memorandum summarizes the guidelines, recommendations, and reporting requirements applicable to the training, supervision, evaluation, and support of graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) who are assigned full responsibility, under faculty guidance, for teaching courses in a classroom setting. Each institution also is expected to consider appropriate adaptations of the recommendations for GTAs who provide laboratory instruction.

II. Guidelines

The use of graduate teaching assistants within the University is subject to the criteria of the regional accrediting body, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The following University guidelines are consistent with the SACS requirements and have been established to assure that graduate teaching assistants receive the appropriate training, monitoring, and evaluation.

1. Graduate teaching assistants must possess a demonstrated competence in the subject matter that they will be teaching as determined by experts in the field. They should have an appreciation for the theory and practice of the subject matter as well as a developing understanding of the major themes and divisions of their field. They should have an appreciation for the teaching and learning enterprise acquired from their own undergraduate and graduate academic programs, as well as by means of both *required* and optional teacher training seminars, symposia, workshops, publications, and university staff resources. Competency to teach includes an effective command of the language of instruction, usually American English, and an appreciation for the culture of the American university classroom.

Appropriate procedures to assure competence include the following:

- GTAs will be offered a Teaching Contract from the hiring department which outlines (a) educational requirements, (b) job requirements, (c) duties, and (d) performance standards. A logical and effective match must be demonstrated between the level and requirements of the teaching assignment and the experience and knowledge of the prospective GTA.
- In departments where teaching assistantships range from grading and discussion-group leadership to full-course responsibility, GTAs will be assigned to independent classes only after they have performed effectively in a less independent setting.
- Formal training and evaluation programs will be provided for GTAs who are assigned the responsibility for teaching an undergraduate class. At the beginning and during that assignment, the hiring department will provide resources and opportunities for continued growth and development of the GTAs in the theory and practice of teaching. These resources may be school-wide programs, departmentally based programs in discipline-centered pedagogy, programs developed by several participating departments, off-campus programs and professional associations, or individual mentoring with faculty.
- Departments will provide GTAs and their faculty supervisors with appropriate written guidelines on academic procedures and provisions for formal training and evaluation. The information should include a directory of other university resources available for the further development and training of the GTA.
- The hiring department will verify that GTAs whose first language is not English possess adequate English language proficiency and communication skills. This verification will be in the form of a standardized test which includes an evaluation of verbal skills, supplemented by a personal review by the department's supervising faculty mentor. For the new non-native speaking GTA who may have full course or recitation responsibility, verification will also include a preliminary lecture/audition or a demonstration with the opportunity to answer questions before a class or a faculty committee. Developmental courses and activities, or alternative opportunities for assistantships, will be provided to the GTA who does not meet acceptable standards of English language proficiency. However, the campus hiring unit is under no obligation to provide long-term financial assistance for a GTA who does not have the requisite English language proficiency.
- If a campus has an Office of International Studies, it will be requested to cooperate with campus and departmental programs for international graduate teaching assistants (IGTA)

to facilitate their awareness of the culture of the American university classroom and the approaches to communicate effectively to typical undergraduate students.

- Faculty members who train, supervise, mentor and evaluate GTAs do so as a component of their academic assignment. Such faculty will be recognized for their work and accorded opportunities for additional training and professional development.
2. Graduate teaching assistants must be graduate students in good standing in their programs, which requires maintaining a minimum B average, or, at some campuses, receiving no grade lower than B.
 3. Universities will honor effective graduate teaching assistants by establishing appropriate awards and honors to recognize them for outstanding teaching.
 4. Universities must establish and maintain effective channels for communication and dialogue between all populations of the University community affected by the work of graduate teaching assistants.

This communication may be facilitated in the following ways:

- Appropriate representation of GTAs on campus-wide and departmental student-faculty committees. The nature of this representation will be determined by each constituent campus in accord with its administrative policies and procedures.
 - The preparation and appropriate distribution of a brochure by each campus which discusses the role, selection, preparation and supervision of GTAs.
5. It will be the responsibility of the Graduate School, or another appropriate administrative unit as designated by the Chief Academic Officer (CAO), to oversee and facilitate the training, mentoring, supervision and evaluation of graduate teaching assistants. To insure the implementation of these guidelines, the following policies and procedures will be continued, or if not in place, established at institutions which use graduate teaching assistants to teach undergraduate courses:
 - The Office of Graduate Dean, or other appropriate administrative unit as designated by the CAO, will prepare a report or a section of the unit's annual report on the effectiveness of GTAs, their utilization on campus, their compensation, training, and the impact of their teaching on the overall teaching mission of the school.
 - The Graduate Dean, or other appropriate administrative unit as designated by the CAO, will document annually to the CAO the impact and effectiveness of teaching by graduate students on the graduate students' learning and professional development. The report will certify that there is on record an explicit evaluation of each GTA by a faculty member to whom each GTA is assigned. The graduate teaching assistantship can be an integral part of graduate students' learning experience. Many departments require some teaching experience as a regular part of a student's graduate degree program.
 6. Every program that utilizes graduate teaching assistants must file annually with the appropriate administrative unit, as determined by the CAO, a plan for the selection, funding, training, mentoring, supervision and evaluation of graduate teaching assistants. This must include a formal training program, at least one preliminary lecture before a faculty observer, and explicit procedures for supervision and evaluation of GTAs. Formal evaluation of each GTA by an assigned faculty member must be on record. Programs and departments with small numbers of GTAs will be encouraged to pool resources and training opportunities with appropriately similar programs. The plans will include:
 - Definition of the teaching tasks and responsibilities

- Provisions for support, supervision and training for each type of teaching assignment
- Provisions for feedback and evaluation.

7. **Each campus shall report annually to the President on the implementation of these guidelines.** The Chancellors will be expected to transmit their annual report to the UNC General Administration by November 1, covering the previous academic year. The first report will be due on November 1, 1995 covering the Academic Year 94-95. Format requirements for the annual report summary will be transmitted directly to the Chancellors and Chief Academic Officers.



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cc: Chief Academic Officers