

**TENTH ANNUAL REPORT ON THE TRAINING, MONITORING,
AND EVALUATION OF GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS (GTAs):
ACADEMIC YEAR 2003-2004**

Executive Summary

This tenth annual report responds to the Board's Policy and Guidelines on *Training, Monitoring, and Evaluation of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)*. (See Section 400.3.5 and 400.3.5.1[G], *UNC Policy Manual*.) The report describes GTA training, monitoring, and evaluation, especially at the nine UNC institutions employing significant numbers of GTAs (over 100 GTA appointments) during the 2003-2004 academic year. The report's emphasis is on those GTAs who are assigned full responsibility, under faculty supervision, to teach courses in a lecture or laboratory setting.

According to data supplied by UNC institutions, 5,300 GTA appointments were made across UNC during the fall 2003 and spring 2004 semesters, an increase of approximately 6% over the 4,981 GTAs employed in 2002-2003. Only 51% of these GTAs had full or primary responsibility for lecture or laboratory instruction under faculty supervision. UNC-CH and NCSU made the most extensive use of GTAs, representing 34% and 28% of the total GTA appointments respectively. (See Table 1.) Nine UNC institutions employed 671 international teaching assistants (ITAs), representing 13% of total GTA appointments at those institutions. (See Table 2.)

UNC institutions have developed extensive programs for the training, evaluation, and supervision of GTAs, including careful screening and placement of international teaching assistants. Many institutions provide English as a Second Language and other instructional programs to ITAs before they assume primary responsibility for lectures or laboratories. GTAs are given ample opportunity for involvement with campus or departmental committees and other bodies and are eligible for a number of awards and honors in recognition of their contributions to the teaching mission of their institutions. Both NCSU and UNC-CH have developed enhanced programs for preparing the "faculty of the future," with extensive opportunities to learn about and prepare for the multiple responsibilities that make up the faculty career.

As has been noted in previous reports, the effective use of GTAs, particularly in research extensive and intensive universities, is essential to meeting the demands for both undergraduate instruction and graduate education. GTAs allow faculty to increase the time spent on course development and design, increase the University's ability to teach more undergraduate students in smaller classes, and help ensure that undergraduate students receive more one-on-one, specialized attention, particularly in large lecture sections taught by faculty. In addition, GTAs can be effective role models for undergraduates, encouraging them to consider pursuing advanced degrees. Although use of GTAs as undergraduate classroom instructors has raised some concern, the GTA experience has a positive impact on the teaching mission of the University and on the professional development of graduate students, who will be the next generation of the professoriate.

GTA appointments are essential to the professional development of graduate students and their preparation for positions in academia, industry, and the public sector. Through their appointments as GTAs, graduate students enhance their personal learning and develop important interpersonal, organizational, and leadership skills, as they manage and communicate in a classroom environment. They develop a deeper understanding of the field in which they teach as well as of the mission and operations of their department and the University. Perhaps most importantly, GTAs receive essential preparation for assuming their own positions as university faculty members.

At a future meeting, the Board of Governors Committee on Educational Planning, Policies and Programs will be asked to consider revisions to the Section 400.3.5, which is a 1994 report from the Graduate Council with guidelines and recommendations for implementing reporting on the training, monitoring and evaluation of GTAs, and Section 400.3.5.1 [G], which duplicates the guidelines recommended in Section 400.3.5. If approved, the current documents will be replaced by an amended Policy and a new set of Guidelines issued by the President (400.3.5.1[G]). In light of the progress UNC institutions have demonstrated in the training, monitoring, and evaluation of GTAs, the proposed Guidelines would change the reporting schedule from annual to every three years; this change will maintain the University's commitment to adequate preparation and oversight of GTAs but eliminate the duplication that occurs in annual reporting, providing an opportunity for periodic reporting on changes and improvements to campus programs for GTAs.

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Preface

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This report on the training, monitoring, and evaluation of GTAs during 2003-2004 demonstrates that UNC institutions take seriously their responsibility to adequately train, supervise, and evaluate GTAs. The report includes quantitative data on the use of GTAs by UNC institutions and provides an update to previous reports on the ways in which institutions ensure the competency of GTAs, promote communications with them, and recognize their accomplishments. The last section provides examples of effective practices and recent initiatives at UNC campuses.

Institutional Use of GTAs

A. Number of GTA Positions.

Table 1 combines the number of GTA positions, by institution and type of position, for the fall 2003 and spring 2004 semesters. The figures refer to positions, rather than to individual GTAs. For example, the same person holding a GTA position in both the fall and spring semesters is counted as two positions for purposes of reporting. Table 1 includes all graduate positions that support the teaching mission, such as graduate laboratory assistants, but it does not include graduate research assistants. The institutions are listed in descending order based on their percentage of the total number of GTAs employed across UNC. Data are included for the number of GTA positions involving full responsibility (under faculty supervision) to teach sections of lecture or laboratory courses.

Table 1 also includes the proportion of these assignments to the total campus GTA positions. For example, according to the data reported by NCSU, 22% of the GTA positions were assigned to teach lecture sections with full course responsibility; 33% of the GTA positions were assigned to teach laboratory sections, and the remaining 45% of GTA positions at NCSU were assignments not involving full course responsibility but in instructional support such as recitation sections of large lecture courses, laboratory preparation, tutoring, grading, or course development.

Including all graduate teaching assistant assignments related to the instructional mission of the University, UNC institutions reported using a total of 5,300 GTA positions during the 2003-2004 academic year (Table 1). Nine institutions (UNC-CH, NCSU, NCA&T, UNCG, UNCC, UNCW, ECU, ASU, and WCU) made extensive use of GTAs, each with over 100 GTA positions. The research extensive universities (UNC-CH, NCSU) accounted for 62% percent of all GTA positions within UNC. Three UNC institutions (FSU, UNCA, and WSSU) did not

employ any GTAs. Three institutions (ECSU, NCCU, and UNCP) used only a small number of GTAs, while NCSA used GTAs on a limited basis.

B. Scope of GTA Activities. As indicated in Table 1, for the 16 UNC institutions combined, 51% percent of GTAs had full responsibility to teach sections of either lecture or laboratory courses, while the remaining 49% percent served in instructional support positions. Courses employing GTAs typically are introductory-level courses within the general education program, such as freshman English, basic mathematics, introductory science laboratories, and physical education activity classes. Instructional duties for GTAs include a wide range of activities: classroom lecturing or laboratory responsibilities under faculty supervision; assistance in laboratory, recitation, performance, and discussion sections; and individual and small-group tutoring assignments.

Non-instructional graduate assistant positions contributing to the instructional mission include activities such as laboratory preparations, equipment and computer maintenance, drafting examination questions, grading exams and papers, providing audio-visual support, or working in academic support units.

Even at smaller institutions, GTAs provide limited but important contributions to the teaching mission. At UNCP, 8 GTAs serve as instructors in physical education activity courses. NCSA employed 42 GTAs as assistants to faculty members in laboratory sections within the School of Design and Production and the School of Music. ECSU employed GTAs for the first time in 2003-2004; three GTAs in the Department of Biology assisted the faculty coordinator in biology laboratories.

**Table 1. GTA Positions by Institution and Type of Position
(2003-04 Academic Year)**

Institution	GTAs in Lecture Sections		GTAs in Laboratory Sections		GTAs in Other Positions		Total	% of UNC Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
UNC-CH	532	30%	7	<1%	1,251	70%	1,790	34%
NCSU	332	22%	500	33%	674	45%	1,506	28%
UNCG	356	68%	163	31%	2	<1%	521	10%
UNCW	38	9%	187	47%	177	44%	402	8%
UNCC	86	22%	55	14%	250	64%	391	7%
ECU	91	47%	84	43%	20	10%	195	4%
NCA&T	39	25%	68	44%	49	31%	156	3%
WCU	16	12%	37	27%	83	61%	136	3%
ASU	47	36%	53	40%	31	24%	131	2%
NCSA	0	0%	0	0%	42	100%	42	1%
UNCP	0	0%	0	0%	8	100%	8	<1%
ECSU	0	0%	0	0%	3	0%	3	<1%
NCCU	0	0%	0	0%	19	0%	19	<1%
FSU	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
UNCA	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
WSSU	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	1,537	29%	1,154	22%	2,609	49%	5,300	100%

Note: Laboratory sections are those primarily involving experimentation, testing, or practice.

Procedures to Assure the Competency of GTAs

A. Teaching Contracts. Each of the nine UNC institutions making appreciable use of GTAs provides formal contracts or letters of appointment for GTAs, usually through the Graduate School. These documents outline the basic requirements, policies, and procedures pertaining to GTAs. In addition, many departments provide more detailed statements outlining the specific course responsibilities for each GTA.

B. Training Programs. UNC institutions employing GTAs offer pedagogy courses or workshops either prior to or concurrent with the GTA appointment. A general orientation typically is provided to acquaint new GTAs with campus-wide resources (e.g., teaching centers, teaching consultants, writing centers, academic computing centers), as well as policies and practices regarding undergraduate instruction (e.g., academic and honor codes, grading, prevention of sexual harassment and discrimination, health and safety practices, and effective teaching techniques). The campus teaching and learning center is typically involved in these orientations, as well as in continuing seminars or courses in effective teaching.

Frequently, individual departments provide additional GTA training, tailoring their approaches to the discipline, the nature of the courses to be taught, and the specific needs of their students. For example, at UNC-CH, the fall orientation is offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning, and the Graduate School offers a course in effective teaching open to students from all fields. More than a dozen departments also offer their own courses in effective teaching within the discipline.

Research extensive campuses in particular have targeted approaches to the training and preparation of graduate students. The Center for Teaching and Learning at UNC-CH, with the Graduate School, maintains a network of departmental GTA coordinators and liaisons, which facilitates planning and communication related to GTA preparation. NCSU has developed a special program, "Preparing the Professoriate," which pairs fellowship recipients and other graduate students with faculty mentors; mentors work with GTAs to develop their teaching philosophies, refine teaching materials, and develop teaching portfolios, which not only can be used in the evaluation of GTAs but also provide a record of the graduate student's teaching experience for prospective employers.

C. English Proficiency for International Teaching Assistants. The English language competency of international students who serve as GTAs is an important concern at institutions which have substantial foreign graduate student enrollments. Extensive procedures are in place, consistent with the best practices nationally, to ensure the adequate English language proficiency of international teaching assistants (ITAs) involved in classroom, recitation, or laboratory instruction.

At NCSU, for example, ITAs must pass two levels of screening for language competency by attaining a minimum score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and by passing an oral English proficiency screening interview. Based on the results of the screenings, ITAs are placed in one of four categories: 1) clearance for any teaching responsibility; 2) assignment only to those teaching responsibilities that require relatively limited verbal interaction with students; 3) provisional clearance for teaching responsibilities that require relatively limited verbal interaction with students; and 4) assignment to teaching support responsibilities that require no verbal interaction with students (e.g., grading, lab set-up). Prior to clearance for an instructional role involving increased verbal interaction with undergraduates, ITAs in the second category are required to be re-screened and receive an acceptable score for

full clearance. ITAs in the latter two categories are required to take one or more English as a Second Language (ESL) courses and pass a re-screening to receive an appointment involving significant verbal interaction with students.

Similar screening and evaluation practices for ITAs for whom English is a second language are in place at UNC-CH. ITAs who will have significant contact with students (i.e., those with full-course responsibility, recitation and lab leaders) must demonstrate oral proficiency in English before their appointment. Currently, determining the oral English proficiency of graduate students is the responsibility of individual departments. If graduate students do not have sufficient command of spoken English, the department either refers them to a course offered by the Graduate School, “Communicating in the American Classroom,” or assigns them as teaching assistants with limited student contact or as research assistants.

UNC Charlotte’s English Language Training Institute has developed an extensive program of support for ITAs, including videotaping to assess English language competence and a two-semester non-credit communications course required of all ITAs who need to improve their English competency. These students are assigned to non-teaching duties until their language assessments meet the required level. The other UNC institutions using ITAs have screening, training, and evaluation practices for ITAs consistent with the needs of ITAs employed.

Table 2 compares ITA positions to total GTA positions at the nine UNC institutions giving ITAs primary responsibility for lecture or laboratory sessions. No other UNC institutions employed International Teaching Assistants.

Table 2. ITA Positions* compared to Total GTA Positions by Institution (2003-04 Academic Year)

Institution	ITAs	Total GTAs	Percent of all GTAs
UNCCH	315	1,790	18%
UNCC	187	391	48%
NCSU	87	1,506	6%
UNCG	50	521	10%
NCA&T	16	156	10%
UNCW	8	402	2%
ECU	4	195	2%
WCU	3	136	2%
ASU	1	131	1%
UNC TOTAL	671	5,228	13%

*with full or primary responsibility for classroom instruction

D. Evaluation. Each of the UNC institutions making appreciable use of GTAs has established procedures for their evaluation. Classroom observation with feedback to the GTA is an integral part of training and evaluation. Written records from mentor observations and undergraduate student evaluations are maintained, usually becoming a part of the GTA's personnel file. Faculty members are involved in one-on-one mentoring with most GTAs. In addition, each institution ascertains that GTAs are in good academic standing in their degree programs.

E. Supervision. GTAs typically report to a designated department or college GTA coordinator who is responsible for their general supervision and assignment of duties. Faculty mentors are used to ensure that GTAs are given ongoing training to develop teaching skills and techniques. Some are involved in team-teaching with GTAs. Mentors also review course materials (e.g., syllabi, lectures, exercises, examinations) prior to their use in the class. In some units, supervision is extensive, with a faculty member assigned full-time to the development and monitoring of GTAs. In others, teaching contracts incorporate expectations for faculty supervision, indicating specific times the faculty member will meet with the GTA to review course planning and work and to observe teaching.

Communications with GTAs

A. Representation of GTAs on Committees. Participation of GTAs on University committees is encouraged to facilitate communication and graduate student input into policy making. In many departments, GTAs serve on curriculum committees that review course curricula and decide on classroom resources such as textbooks. Besides frequent appointments to departmental- and school-level committees, GTAs often serve on University-wide groups involved in areas such as academic policies, planning, graduate education issues, and research. Most institutions have campus-wide graduate student associations, as do many departments. Involvement in these activities is part of the professional development of GTAs, preparing them for institutional, departmental, and disciplinary service that will be expected of them as faculty members.

B. Institutional Brochures on GTAs. Brochures and handbooks are widely available to educate GTAs about their responsibilities and duties, campus services, University policies, and University resources for teaching and learning. Many of these handbooks are available on the World Wide Web. Examples at selected institutions include the following:

NCSU

Graduate Teaching Assistant Guidelines, the Graduate Student Brochure, Resources for Graduate Students, the International Teaching Assistant Policy Statement, and other relevant publications

<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/grad>

Preparing the Professoriate

<http://www.fis.ncsu.edu/grad/ptp>

Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning GTA Development Programs

http://www.ncsu.edu/fctl/Programs/Graduate_Students/

UNC-CH

Center for Teaching and Learning: Teaching Assistant Development

<http://ctl.unc.edu/tad.html>

UNCC

Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook

http://www.provost.uncc.edu/epa/handbook/chapter_IX.htm

UNCG

Teaching Assistant Handbook

http://www.uncg.edu/grs/current/ta_handbook_special_teaching.html

In addition, many departments provide department-specific handbooks. There is also an increasing effort to inform undergraduate or prospective students and their families about the role of GTAs, including the distribution of brochures and discussions at freshman orientation programs.

C. Administrative Office Responsible for GTAs. At most UNC institutions, the graduate school is responsible for general oversight of GTA activities, including appointment and contracts, information and guidelines, and general training and evaluation. At UNC-CH, the Office of the Provost administers the University's program for GTAs primarily through the resources of the Center for Teaching and Learning. The Center oversees the implementation process associated with the *GTA Guidelines*. At NCSU, the Graduate School staff includes a Director of Graduate Student Teaching Programs who administers ITA screening and the "Preparing the Professoriate" program.

Recognition of GTAs

A. Awards. UNC institutions making appreciable use of GTAs reward and recognize their contributions to the teaching mission of the University. Although most have awards at the departmental level, many institutions also have expanded the college or campus-wide awards presented annually at a formal ceremony or convocation to recognize GTAs. Typically, GTAs are nominated by their departments and/or by students, and an awards committee makes the final selections based on student and faculty evaluations as well as a review of syllabi and course materials. Honors may include financial awards, plaques, certificates, and letters of commendation.

B. Honors. Some institutions use means other than awards to recognize GTA contributions to teaching. For example, the Center for Teaching and Learning at UNC-CH annually selects several Graduate Teaching Consultants through a competitive departmental selection process. After intensive training, the Consultants lead orientation sessions for new GTAs, assist with the annual planning retreat for school and departmental liaisons, offer workshops throughout the year, and organize a spring colloquium on teaching for GTAs. UNC-CH also offers a "Future Faculty Fellowship" program that offers special opportunities to strengthen course development and teaching skills, working with award-winning faculty members. At NCSU, participation in "Preparing the Professoriate," which pairs graduate students with faculty mentors, provides fellowship recipients and other outstanding graduate students with enhanced professional development opportunities and a close working relationship with a faculty role model.

Problems Reported by UNC Campuses

In their annual GTA reports, UNC campuses are asked to report any problems associated with GTA employment. Overwhelmingly, the campuses report that the stipends they are able to offer GTAs are often significantly below those of other institutions and do not allow them to be competitive in recruiting graduate students. In addition, the campuses identify the limited number of tuition remissions available across the system as a problem in recruitment; when tuition remissions are not available, many GTAs must pay their own tuition and fees. The lack of tuition waivers, in conjunction with relatively low stipends, significantly affects the

campuses' ability to recruit the most talented graduate students.

Examples of Effective Practices and Recent Initiatives

Effective practices common to UNC institutions are highlighted in earlier sections of this report. Additional examples of institutional “good practices” and new initiatives are provided below.

UNC-CH

- The Center for Teaching and Learning conducts a fall retreat for departmental GTA liaisons and faculty coordinators to plan programs and services for faculty working with GTAs.
- Graduate Teaching Consultants, working through the Center for Teaching and Learning, have incorporated discussion of the newly updated Honor Code and issues of academic integrity into all workshop discussions.
- The Teaching Assistant area of the Center for Teaching and Learning website has been enhanced with additional workshop materials and teaching resources.
- Outstanding GTAs work with faculty on mini-grants funded by the Center for Teaching and Learning to improve instruction in their departments.
- In addition to university-wide awards, eighteen departments present special awards or honors to outstanding GTAs.

NCSU

- The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning offers a required all-day “Orientation to Teaching for New Graduate Teaching Assistants,” and departments employing GTAs offer specific teacher training workshops or courses.
- The Graduate School has also developed a workshop for International Teaching Assistants, “Tips for International TAs,” encompassing cultural, language, and pedagogical issues.
- GTAs participating in the “Preparing the Professoriate” program develop extensive teaching portfolios, which include their teaching philosophy as well as syllabi, teaching materials, and examinations developed for their classes.
- Each GTA is assigned a mentor who may observe and evaluate classes, team-teach classes with GTAs, and assist them with development of teaching portfolios.
- In addition to five university-wide GTA awards, 69 outstanding GTAs were recognized in 2003-2004 at the Graduate Student Association awards ceremony; departments also recognize GTAs for outstanding contributions to teaching.

UNCG

- The Graduate School offers an intensive workshop for GTAs each August; a number of departments offer courses which must be taken prior to receiving a GTA appointment.
- In addition to five University-level awards to recognize the teaching contributions of graduate students, a number of departments offer awards for GTA contributions.
- Departments employing GTAs require them to enroll in training or introduction to graduate study courses.
- In the English Department, GTAs have access to a list serve where they can exchange information, ideas, plans, opportunities and news.
- Other departments videotape lectures and provide opportunities for feedback and self-critique, pair new GTAs with more experienced peers, and offer assistance with the development of teaching portfolios.

UNCW

- The Center for Teaching Excellence has initiated a series of lunch-time workshops specifically for GTAs.
- Supported by an NSF grant, a new course for GTAs (GTA 501) has been initiated that is open to all GTAs.
- The Watson School of Education sponsors an array of activities for GTAs, including a luncheon with the Graduate Coordinator and the Dean to discuss issues of concern to GTAs and inclusion in all faculty professional development activities.
- The Creative Writing Department holds weekly meetings for GTAs assigned to the introductory course, to address concerns and share effective classroom practices. In summer 2004, Creative Writing GTAs served as coordinators, instructors, and counselors in the Young Writers' Summer Workshop.
- Graduate coordinators recognize outstanding GTAs with letters of commendation, and several departments present departmental teaching honors and awards.
- Each year, the Graduate School presents six Graduate Teaching Excellence Awards in recognition of outstanding teaching.

UNCC

- The Graduate School offers an all-University orientation and teaching-focused workshops required for all GTAs. Workshop sessions have included "Classroom Communication, Relationships and Behavior," "Teaching Tips," and "Getting the Most out of Mentoring."
- GTAs participate in annual Teaching Week activities, which provide an opportunity for them to interact with and learn from successful UNCC faculty on topics related to teaching undergraduates.
- In the English Department, graduate students are required to tutor in the Writing Resources Center in their first year before they are responsible for their own courses. All GTAs are required to attend a departmental orientation and take a two-term training sequence that introduces them to the skills of tutoring and to the theory and practice of classroom composition.
- The Mathematics Department requires a one-semester teaching training seminar that meets weekly. Each GTA is required to make an oral presentation which is critiqued by the professor and graduate student peers. GTAs undergo the same classroom peer review as faculty members.
- Several departments have increased regular one-on-one meetings between faculty mentors and GTAs and are establishing mentoring relationships between new and experienced GTAs.

NC A&T

- The School of Graduate Studies holds an annual orientation and training session required for all GTAs. Each department is also required to hold orientation and training sessions for GTAs.
- Graduate Studies has developed a standard evaluation tool for use by faculty supervisors in evaluating GTAs.
- The Academy of Teaching and Learning and the School of Graduate Studies co-sponsor a workshop on "Foundations of Good Teaching" for students interested in a teaching career; the workshop is conducted by an outside expert and is required for all GTAs.
- Brown-bag lunches on effective teaching are facilitated by Teacher of the Year award winners.
- Several schools and colleges present awards to outstanding graduate students, including GTAs.

ECU

- GTA training is primarily the responsibility of employing departments. A survey conducted by the Graduate School indicated that all units use a mentoring approach to ensure on-going development of graduate students' teaching skills.
- The Graduate School plans to collect departmental student opinion surveys in order to develop a campus-wide evaluation measure for GTAs.
- A webpage is being developed on the Graduate School homepage that will include the ECU GTA Handbook and links to resources from other campuses and organizations.
- The faculty GTA mentor in the Department of Mathematics is a recipient of both the Board of Governors Award for Teaching Excellence and the ECU Alumni Teaching Award.

WCU

- The Office of Research and Graduate Studies offers a required orientation session and teaching workshop for GTAs. The workshop includes presentations by the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning on the fundamentals of teaching and a panel discussion by distinguished instructors.
- Departments provide additional training and orientation for GTAs, and each GTA is assigned a faculty mentor.
- GTAs in Chemistry and Biology meet weekly with faculty mentors for guidance and instruction.
- In the Department of Health and Human Performance, GTAs are paired with faculty mentors for course planning and assessment.
- Several departments give outstanding GTA awards, and a Teaching-Research Student Award was presented to a GTA at the annual Graduate School Awards Banquet.

ASU

- The Graduate School sponsors a two-day workshop for GTAs focusing on such topics as classroom and library strategies, academic integrity, service learning, diversity, and professionalism in the classroom. An additional session features veteran GTAs who answer questions and share teaching strategies that have worked well for them.
- A university-wide teaching conference sponsored by the Faculty Development Center includes sessions addressing pedagogical and professional topics of interest to GTAs.
- GTAs have begun to participate as instructors in the Freshman Seminar program, going through the same training as faculty preparing to teach the course.
- In several departments, GTAs meet weekly with faculty supervisors to discuss readings on teaching issues and plan course materials.
- The Graduate School recognizes GTAs with annual Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant awards.

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