
Effective Mentoring Includes:

Attention to the Socialization of TAs

1. Shared departmental commitment and sensitivity to the diversity of TAs in terms of cultural, racial, gender and ethnic backgrounds
2. Guidance for international TAs in understanding the cultural, linguistic and pedagogical requirements in teaching in the North American classroom
3. Inclusive vocabulary (we) used in departmental language to include TAs as part of the team
4. Faculty and administrators who demonstrate confidence in TAs' abilities by giving praise and publicizing accomplishments
5. Increased visibility of TAs as part of the team
6. Constructive criticism and help in trouble-shooting problems
7. Departmental atmosphere of mentoring, collaborating with and challenging TAs to become better instructors

Cooperation and Departmental Support

1. An administration which functions as a provider and enabler for the instructional role of TAs
2. An administration which expresses departmental investment in the personal and professional development of TAs
3. Professional interactions with a view of improved teaching as departmental, not just individual, responsibility
4. Access to phones, student workers, AV aids and secretarial support including typing, xeroxing and computer technology for instructional purposes
5. Publication of the contact person or approved substitute list within the department in case of illness or unavoidable absence
6. Departmental information about skill development workshops and conferences
7. Networking within the department to link resources with interests and to communicate changes in teaching assignments

Developmental Support

1. Observing or team teaching with faculty or experienced TAs
2. Departmental structure to accommodate peer mentoring and support which may include a lead TA who acts as a liaison to faculty
3. Curriculum-based teaching workshops to discover teaching options and to integrate them with personal teaching strategies
4. Opportunities to observe master teachers applying different strategies within the discipline
5. Teaching assignments to reflect degree of instructional experience
6. Close monitoring by coordinator or lead TA early in the quarter for formative purposes
7. Clearly stated teaching competency requirements and opportunities for student evaluations
8. Opportunities for self-reflection and growth in teaching strategies to promote confidence
9. A variety of teaching assignments linked to individual interests and career goals
10. Intellectually challenging and interesting responsibilities that reflect future faculty roles
11. Help in documenting teaching effectiveness

Managing and Mentoring Graduate Teaching Assistants at The University of Georgia



Effective Management Includes:

Pre-class Planning

1. Awareness of the University policy regarding the screening and training of all graduate teaching and laboratory assistants
2. An extended orientation to support services for new TAs who will have major instructional responsibilities before the semester begins
3. Regular TA meetings as part of departmental course schedule and TA responsibility
4. Early distribution of assignments and materials to all TAs to avoid last-minute preparation
5. Inclusion of all TAs in formulating the objectives for the section they will teach and in creating a syllabus that details those objectives
6. Departmental mechanism for sharing class material
7. Team teaching a course with a professor or experienced TA for at least one quarter before becoming the teacher of record for a course

Detailed Job Description

1. Departmental explanation of the role and time commitment expected of TAs and a cross-campus perspective of the instructional mission of The University of Georgia
2. Departmental consensus of job responsibilities and priorities
3. Job description, in writing, before the course begins
4. Professional goals which can be accommodated within the teaching framework and teaching assignments to link interests with resources as much as possible
5. A teaching support system including faculty contact, peer mentors, secretarial help, substitute list and the chain of command within the department
6. Discussion and posting of University policies that directly affect instruction and relevant issues of safety, liability and harassment
7. An explanation of departmental policies on grading and cheating

Frequent Contact

1. Regular meetings to discuss class progress and instructional strategies
2. Peer mentoring to provide new TAs with daily support
3. Access to faculty to discuss specific instructional issues
4. Well-publicized departmental seminars to promote teaching excellence for both faculty and TAs including:
 - Strategies to deal with student diversity (gender, racial, disability and life-style issues)
 - Time management
 - Organizational skills
 - Content-specific teaching strategies
 - Testing
 - Classroom management
 - Motivational techniques
 - Establishing rapport
5. Adequate office space for TAs that is not isolated from faculty if possible

The impetus for creating this publication came from faculty and graduate coordinators who were seeking ways to teach larger classes better by increasing the instructional impact of graduate teaching assistants. In addition, many GTAs want to use the graduate teaching experience to prepare for careers in higher education. The suggestions in this pamphlet are based on the actual experiences of graduate teaching assistants at The University of Georgia. Strategies which both faculty and graduate teaching assistants find realistic and helpful are detailed in this brochure. Departments which manage the graduate assistantship well, find good management saves time and effort for everyone and the dialogue on teaching benefits both TAs and faculty.