

# March 5, 2012: Appointments and Mentoring of Graduate Student Instructors

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Graduate Council

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The education and preparation of 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 education on this campus also means that effective preparation of GSIs will improve the quality of education at Berkeley.

## DEFINITIONS

This policy addresses the preparation of all first-time and continuing GSIs. First-time GSIs are those teaching for the first time at Berkeley (even though they may have teaching experience at other universities). First-time GSIs normally assume responsibilities associated with roles (a) and (b) below. Continuing GSIs are all GSIs who have completed at least one semester of teaching as a GSI at Berkeley.

There are four different GSI roles, each giving the GSI a different level of course responsibility. (These roles are not equivalent to GSI steps that are based on experience or advancement to candidacy.)

**Role (a):** GSI who teaches secondary sections of a larger course. This is the most common type of GSI position.

**Role (b):** GSI who functions as the instructor of one of a number of courses in which the curriculum is prescribed, but the GSI is responsible for selecting readings, for how the material is presented, and for grading student work. Examples of this may include language, studio, or Reading and Composition courses.

**Role (c):** Head GSI who functions as coordinator of other GSIs and/or performs other teaching or administrative duties.

**Role (d):** Acting Instructor-Graduate Student (AI-GS) who has sole responsibility for curriculum, textbook, and assigning grades. These appointees are the Instructors of Record in the courses they teach.

## **POLICIES**

### **I. Recruitment and Appointment.**

The procedures for recruiting and selecting GSIs should be public, transparent, and managed at the department level, rather than be controlled by private arrangements between course instructors and GSIs.

- A. At the time of recruitment, the department Chair must make available the criteria required for appointments to GSIships and the criteria involved in determining the selection of GSIs.
- B. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that postings are widely circulated within the eligible pool and are in compliance with the ASE contract.
- C. The Chair is responsible for making GSI appointments.

### **II. Guiding Principles Determining Workload.**

- A. The Chair and the Faculty Adviser for GSI Affairs are responsible for explaining principles associated with workload in accordance with departmental needs and the current union contract.
- B. It is the responsibility of the supervising faculty member to ensure that workload is consistent with the appointment percentage.

### **III. Preparation of GSIs for Teaching.**

#### **A. Responsibilities of First-time GSIs**

1. Every first-time GSI must attend the Teaching Conference sponsored by the GSI Teaching and Resource Center on the Friday before classes begin. First-time international GSIs (IGSIs) must also attend the International GSI Teaching Conference, scheduled on the Thursday before classes begin in the fall semester. International GSIs who anticipate being appointed in the spring semester must attend the international GSI conference in the fall.
2. Every first-time GSI must successfully complete, no later than the end of the second week of classes, the online course Professional Standards and Ethics for GSIs.
3. Every first-time GSI must either have completed or be enrolled in a 300-level semester-long pedagogy seminar on teaching in the discipline offered by the GSI's department. The pedagogy seminar may only be taken in another department with the advice and approval of the Faculty

Adviser for GSI Affairs in the teaching department and with the consent of the 300-level course instructor in the other department. First-time GSIs who fail to pass the 300-level course must retake and pass the course before they are eligible to teach again.

## B. Responsibilities of First-time and Continuing GSIs

1. All graduate students who teach require faculty supervision. At the beginning of the semester, all GSIs in roles (a), (b), and (c) are required to meet with the faculty member responsible for the course to go over the course syllabus, to clarify GSI responsibilities in the course, and, in the case of discussion sections and labs, to discuss the relationship of sections to lecture.
2. First-time and continuing GSIs in roles (a), (b), and (c) must also meet regularly throughout the semester with the faculty member in charge of the course to discuss the logistics of curriculum, assignments, tests, grades, etc., and pedagogical matters related to their teaching of the course or sections of the course.
3. GSIs must abide by other department-specific obligations that may include attendance at lectures or GSI meetings and meeting with faculty mentors to discuss more effective ways of teaching.
4. Continuing GSIs whose 300-level course did not include the development of skills needed to teach Reading and Composition (R&C) courses must enroll in either a 300-level course in another department tailored to the teaching of R&C or the short course taught in the spring by the GSI Teaching and Resource Center prior to or concurrent with teaching an R&C course.

## C. Departmental Responsibilities

1. Departments must include the teaching preparation requirements for first-time and continuing GSIs in GSI letters of appointment and ensure that the requirements are met.
2. All departments that hire GSIs must offer a semester-long 300-level seminar on teaching in the discipline, frequently enough so that first-time GSIs can take the course in or before their first semester of teaching. If a department has fewer than four new GSIs in any given year, the department may make arrangements for the GSIs to take the course in another department. If a department does not plan to offer a 300-level course in the spring semester, GSIs to be appointed in the

spring for the first time should be advised to take the 300-level course in the preceding fall. The course must:

- 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.

The GSI Teaching and Resource Center can assist departments in developing 300-level courses through consultations, workshops, and grants.

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's GSI Teaching and Resource Center each time the course instructor changes.

Departments must schedule 300-level courses so as to minimize scheduling conflicts with other graduate-level courses. The departmental Faculty Adviser for GSI Affairs is responsible for resolving remaining schedule conflicts for the 300-level course.

3. In the case of GSI role (b) appointment, in which a GSI may have primary responsibility for curriculum, textbook selection, and evaluation of student work, 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.
4. GSIs with the title of Acting Instructor-Graduate Student (role 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.
5. Departments must make a faculty mentor available to GSIs holding the title Acting Instructor- Graduate Student (role d).

6. Departments are responsible for taking steps to ensure that GSIs receive feedback on their teaching. These steps may include observation by a faculty member, the review of mid-term evaluations of teaching, or other steps appropriate to the discipline.
7. The Department Chair is responsible for providing regular departmental practices for the review of end-of-semester GSI evaluations.

#### D. Responsibilities of Faculty Members who Teach with GSIs

1. 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 (roles a, b, and c) 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.
2. All faculty members who teach with GSIs must meet regularly with new and continuing GSIs in roles (a), (b), and (c) to discuss the logistics of curriculum, selection of topics, assignments, tests, grades, etc., and pedagogic matters related to their teaching of the course or sections of the course.

### **IV. Rewarding Faculty for the Systematic Preparation of GSIs for Teaching**

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

### **V. Policy Dissemination**

A. Departmental Chairs should provide faculty members a copy of these policies or the URL where they are located along with specific department guidelines at the beginning of each semester in which they teach courses with GSIs.

B. 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>.

