

# **GUIDELINES AND POLICIES FOR GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

## **Introduction**

Education and research are at the core of the academic enterprise of the research university. Graduate teaching assistants (TAs) are important and essential links between the creation and dissemination of new knowledge and the learning environment that meets the needs and stretches the potential of undergraduate students. Whether they serve as graders, laboratory assistants, group discussion leaders, or have complete responsibility for a course, this group of additional teaching personnel enhances Tulane's ability to offer a broad range of courses to its students.

## **Selection and Appointment**

Teaching assistants are appointed each year by the colleges. To be eligible for appointment as teaching assistant, a nominee must be admitted to a graduate program without qualification. For reappointment, a nominee must be in good academic standing and making satisfactory progress toward an advanced degree.

Only graduate students who present satisfactory evidence of competence in English to read it, write it, speak it, and understand it when spoken are eligible for appointment as a teaching assistant. When proficiency in English is unproven or insufficient, international students will be required to successfully complete a class offered by the Tulane English as a Second Language Institute that is designed to focus on improving speaking and listening skills in English.

Only graduate students who have earned at least 18 credit hours of graduate course work are given complete instructional responsibility for a course offered by Tulane University.

A TA may be considered for reappointment if:

1. He or she meets the scholastic requirements for eligibility set by the department or college and is certified as being in good academic standing and making satisfactory progress toward the degree.
2. He or she has, in the opinion of the department or college, provided satisfactory service.

Teaching assistants are governed by the same standards of conduct in the performance of their academic duties as are members of the faculty and shall respect the rights and opinions of students and uphold the academic standards of the University.

## **Training**

The Center for Teaching Excellence, under the sponsorship of the Academic Centers for Learning, Research and Technology (ACLRT), offers two intensive workshops on teaching-related issues during the fall and spring semesters. The workshops cover issues such as effective lecturing, facilitating discussions, testing/grading, academic integrity, using technology in teaching, teaching as a performance art, and collaborative learning.

In addition, departments or programs, particularly in the liberal arts and sciences, have developed their own programs to prepare their graduate students for their roles in undergraduate instruction. These programs are usually tailored to the special requirements of the discipline. This training may include, but is not limited to, a discipline-specific introduction to issues of course design and planning, instructional methods, effective assignment sequencing, and issues of evaluation and grading.

## **Teaching Assistant Responsibilities**

Graduate teaching assistants perform a variety of roles related to teaching that represent different levels of independence and direct contact with undergraduate students. The level of responsibilities assigned to TAs is determined by the departments in consultation with the appropriate dean(s). To the extent possible, departments are encouraged to make assignments that contribute to the intellectual and professional development of graduate students.

Whether graduate TAs serve primarily as assistants to a faculty instructor, graders, laboratory assistants, discussion group facilitators, or as instructors of their own sections, they are governed by the same standards of conduct in the performance of their academic duties as are members of the faculty. They are expected to maintain the highest levels of professional and ethical standards.

## **Financial Payments to Teaching Assistants**

It is the responsibility of the colleges to determine how TAs are paid, whether on an hourly basis or on a set stipend. In the Graduate School, minimal stipend rates for departments are set for the liberal arts and sciences and engineering. The TAs are paid a fixed rate for their instructional services on a bi-weekly basis for the academic year.

Although the professional development of graduate students as teachers is considered an important part of doctoral training, the Graduate School, which handles most of the TA appointments, is committed to ensuring that the students have sufficient time for other, equally important, components of their doctoral education. No TA is expected to perform instructional duties that would take more than 20 hours per week.

## Termination of Appointment

Termination of a teaching assistant before the expiration date of the stated period of appointment will be only for good cause shown. The Graduate School approved the following regulations and procedures relative to the protection of the academic freedom of its graduate, teaching, or research assistants.

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### TULANE UNIVERSITY The Graduate School

#### Resolution Passed by the Faculty of the Graduate School on May 17, 1971 Pursuant to Article XII of the Statement on Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Responsibility

Resolved: Pursuant to the provision of Article XII of the Statement on Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Responsibility approved by the University Senate on March 1, 1971, and by the Administrators of the Tulane Educational Fund on March 2, 1971, the Graduate School hereby institutes the following regulations and procedures relative to the protection of the academic freedom of its graduate, teaching, or research assistants:

- (1) In no case will a graduate, teaching, or research assistant be dismissed from his assistantship before the end of the period of his appointment without having been provided with a statement of reasons and an opportunity to be heard by a duly constituted committee of the Graduate School. The department in question shall provide the statement of reasons along with the statement of intent to dismiss.
- (2) In any case when an individual in one of the above named categories is not reappointed, he will, upon his request, be provided with a statement of reasons. If the formal terms of his first appointment have given reasonable expectation of reappointment, and if he believes that a consideration violative of his academic freedom significantly contributed to his non-reappointment and if he can establish in writing a case for his belief to the satisfaction of a duly constituted committee of the Graduate School, he will be given an opportunity to be heard by that committee.
- (3) In all cases involving teaching assistants, it must be recognized that because this Graduate School maintains the policy that supervised teaching be made, wherever possible, a part of the graduate student's degree program, the teaching assistant is, in effect, a student-teacher, and it is the intent, therefore, of the foregoing paragraphs to safeguard the academic freedom of the individual in his role as teacher while preserving all necessary and reasonable limitation inherent in the faculty-student relationship.

- (4) In all cases the committee referred to in paragraphs (1) and (2) shall be a standing committee consisting of a representative of the Dean as Chairman, three faculty members of the Graduate Council, and three of the student Associates to the Graduate Faculty. The Chairman shall vote only in case of a tie vote.
- (5) In all cases, the committee will report its findings and recommendations to the Dean for appropriate action.

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