

Graduate Teaching Assistant Recommendations

In summer 2007, the Graduate Student Association (with sponsorship from the Graduate Studies Office) surveyed UW graduate students regarding their attitudes towards teaching assistantships. The survey polled graduate students on their perceptions of fairness and equity in TA appointments and of training and preparedness for responsibilities, work load, settlement of disputes, and reporting of academic offences

Over 1,100 students (38%) responded, and the results of the survey¹ indicated a number of areas for improvement. Graduate students were concerned that they did not always have sufficient training in some areas (especially language training), did not receive much feedback regarding their work during the term, and did not always have equitably assigned duties compared to other TAs in the same course or in different courses.

This document has been prepared by the Graduate Student Association with recommendations on how academic units can improve teaching assistantships in response to the concerns identified by the survey.

Recommendations:

- **Mid-term feedback:** Instructors should formally meet one-on-one with graduate TAs mid-way through the term to offer verbal feedback on work done so far, covering such topics as marking technique, background knowledge and technical skills relevant to the course. Also, this meeting will provide an opportunity for TAs to raise any concerns, such as workload or time constraints.
- **End-of-term feedback:** Instructors should provide TAs with written feedback at the end of the term on their performance, including suggestions for improvement in future terms and recommendations for any appropriate additional training. A sample feedback form is included with this document.
- **Training:** Instructors should identify opportunities for TAs to improve skills with additional language, teaching, marking, or technical training. This information should be provided to the graduate chair and the student's supervisor so that they are aware that the student may be taking the time needed to complete this training. Language training is available from Renison College's English Language Institute and teaching training is available from the Centre for Teaching Excellence.
- **Appropriate TA duties:** In distributing TA assignments, departments should ensure that students have the necessary background knowledge for the course or understand that the student will need additional time to prepare for their TA duties.
- **Appropriate workload:** Departments and instructors should ensure that the workload is appropriate for the number of hours paid and is equitably distributed among multiple TAs assigned to a course.

For more information, please feel free to contact the Graduate Student Association Funding Committee via its chair, Andrew Robertson (ad2rober@uwaterloo.ca).

¹ The results of the survey and a summary of recommendations are available online at <http://www.gsa.uwaterloo.ca/governance/council/committees/funding/>.

Graduate Teaching Assistant End-of-Term Feedback Form

Instructor: _____

Student: _____

Course: _____ Term: _____

What has the student done well?

How could the student improve?

Please evaluate the student's work on the following topics:

- | | | | | | |
|----------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Marking | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Good | <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor | <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable |
| Tutorials/Labs | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Good | <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor | <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable |
| Office Hours | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Good | <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor | <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable |
| Administrative | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Good | <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor | <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable |

Would you recommend additional training for the student?

- Written language training (Language training offered by Renison College, www.renison.uwaterloo.ca/english-language)
- Spoken language training
- Teaching and pedagogy training (Teaching training offered by Centre For Teaching Excellence, www.cte.uwaterloo.ca)
- Marking
- Background / technical skills relevant to the course

Cc: student, departmental Associate Chair for Graduate Studies, student's supervisor