



TEACHING ASSISTANT SUPERVISOR'S HANDBOOK

Third Edition



[The Florida State University](#)
[The Program for Instructional Excellence](#)

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction.....	3
II.	Supervising Teaching Assistants	4
A.	Defining Tasks	4
	Example 1 - TA Job Description	5
	Example 2 - Graduate Assistant contract.....	6
	Example 3 - Supervision of Teaching Assistants contract.....	7
B.	Defining the Relationship	8
III.	Providing Support for Discussion Leaders, Lab Instructors and Graders.....	9
A.	Pre-semester Meeting	9
B.	Weekly Meetings	10
C.	Grading	10
D.	Teaching	11
IV.	Providing Support for TAs with Full Course Responsibility	12
V.	Providing Feedback and Evaluation	13
A.	Observations	13
B.	Early Feedback for Instructional Improvement.....	14
C.	Mid-semester Evaluations -TABS.....	14
D.	Summary.....	14
VI.	PIE Associate Program as Departmental TA Training Resource	15
A.	Appointment Responsibilities to PIE.....	15
B.	Appointment Responsibilities to the Department	15
APPENDICES		
A.	University-wide Standards for Teaching Assistants at FSU.....	16
B.	Principles of Best Practice for TA Development	21
C.	Graduate Assistantships	23
D.	Sample Outline for Departmental TA Handbook.....	24
E.	Campus Resources	27

Introduction

This handbook was written to help faculty work more effectively with their teaching assistants. Preparation for teaching is an important part of graduate student education at The Florida State University. Teaching assistants (TAs) are an indispensable part of instruction. As instructors with primary responsibility, they teach a substantial portion of the undergraduates as graders, discussion leaders, and lab instructors; they make valuable contributions to courses taught by faculty. Departments that manage graduate teaching assistantships effectively save time and effort for everyone. Mentoring graduate students in relationship to their teaching responsibilities should be part of the departmental culture.



It is important to prepare TAs, not only to ensure immediate high-quality classroom instruction, but also to prepare them for teaching careers when they have completed their degrees. Increasingly, search committees require job candidates to show evidence of their teaching ability, and many departments have discovered they can improve placement of their graduate students by providing training and practice in teaching.

The TA, although primarily a graduate student, is nevertheless an employee; therefore, the TA Supervisor is a manager. Management tasks include setting minimal standards for instruction, determining whether TAs are meeting those standards, and, if necessary, removing TAs who are not meeting the needs of students.

At FSU the Graduate Policy Committee (GPC) and the Faculty Senate have responsibility for development of policy relating to TA matters, and The Graduate School oversees implementation of these policies. Departments assume primary responsibility for training their teaching assistants and are expected to ensure that new TAs receive training in either the Program for Instructional Excellence program (PIE) or an equivalent departmental program, or both. PIE is a University-wide program which provides TAs with support for teaching enhancement. The same teaching support services given to faculty are available to TAs. Although the training of TAs is primarily the responsibility of academic departments, PIE works closely with the academic departments to enhance the effectiveness of undergraduate education.

Supervising Teaching Assistants

Traditionally, graduate TAs learned their vocation through practical experience working under the supervision of skilled faculty. Unfortunately, we often don't have time to provide the kind of structured experiences that are necessary for the model to work effectively under this method. A true preparation program requires:

- (1) experience leading from simple tasks to more complex ones;
- (2) careful instruction in each stage of work by the supervisor;
- (3) evaluation of the TA's work and growing skill level; and
- (4) certification that the TA has mastered the work.

A departmental program in which training or preparation has a structured approach is recommended. To develop a departmental program for TAs, the faculty supervisor should:

- define the TA's tasks as specifically as possible;
- define the professional relationship you will share;
- provide advice, training, and support as the TAs learn;
- provide feedback and evaluation.

Defining Tasks

All new TAs experience anxiety about their jobs, because it is usually the first time they assume the role of teacher after having been students all their lives. Moreover, many new TAs simply do not know what their basic responsibilities will be. A job description is an excellent way to summarize these duties and describe how these duties should be performed. Clearly state the parameters of freedom and responsibility within which the TAs will operate (see Example 1). A TA contract should be signed by the TA and the supervisor and filed in the office. Examples of blank TA contracts are presented in Examples 2 and 3.

Job descriptions alleviate TA anxiety and provide the foundation for evaluation of TA performance. As part of their introduction to the job, TAs should be told how their work will be monitored and evaluated and how that process will help them become better teachers.

At FSU, individual departments determine job responsibilities, number of work hours per semester, salary, period of employment, and most other conditions of employment. Each department is required to prepare a TA manual detailing its procedures for teaching assistants; this manual should be given to all TAs.

Example 1

TA Job Description

Job Title: Teaching Assistant, English Department

Salary: varies per department

Reports to: Professor John Doe

Educational Requirements:

*See University-wide Standards for Teaching Assistants at The Florida State University in Appendix A.

Job Requirements: _____

Performance Standards

List any other skills not covered by the University-wide standards, such as computer proficiency.

Duties:

The TA will:

- check with the instructor 15 minutes prior to class to make sure all materials for class are ready,
- set up the classroom (turn on computer project, etc.),
- grade homework, quizzes, and exams (TA will do about ½ of the grading),
- hold office hours at scheduled times to counsel and tutor students,
- publish grades weekly,
- maintain class roll,
- lecture at least twice during the semester, and be videotaped once,
- review the videotaped lecture with the course instructor and a PIE staff member,
- create exam sessions from text and lecture,
- hold review sessions prior to each exam,
- monitor quizzes and exams,
- perform other duties as assigned,
- notify the instructor in advance if she/he cannot be present,
- grade assignments, quizzes and exams in time for them to be returned at the next class meeting, and
- post a notice in advance if she/he cannot keep scheduled office hours.
The notice will include the time of rescheduled hours.

Example 2

Graduate Teaching Assistant Contract

Department of _____ Contract for Teaching Assistants (TAs)

Student _____

Supervising Professor _____

Nature of Assistantship/Position _____

Hours per week _____

Section 1: Responsibilities of Graduate Student

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Section 2: Responsibilities of Supervising Professor

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Professor's Signature _____ Date _____

Reviewer's Signature _____ Date _____

Reviewer's comments:

Example 3

Supervision of Teaching Assistants Contract (for TAs with Primary Classroom Responsibility)

Name of teaching assistant _____

Name of supervising faculty _____

Class (course & section) _____

Semester & year _____

The syllabus for this course (explain here how the syllabus for the course will be developed or used) _____

We have agreed that the supervisor will visit the class on the following dates:

_____ (prior to midterm)

_____ (after midterm)

We have agreed that drafts of examinations will be given to the supervisor by _____ and _____
and returned to the instructor by _____ and _____.

We have agreed to the following dates for conferring about the course (these may be coordinated with class visits):

Signatures:

Graduate Student Instructor _____

Faculty Supervisor _____

Please forward the completed and signed form to the Department Chair no later than the first day of classes.

Signature of Chair _____

Date received _____

Defining the Relationship

The professional relationship faculty members share with TAs affects their job, the quality of their performance, how much they care about teaching, and even how they feel about the department. Departmental values and traditions often play an important role in shaping this relationship. For example, in some departments a teaching assistantship is viewed primarily as a form of financial aid; TAs are encouraged to do the job and not let it interfere with their graduate program. The supervisor's relationship is defined as that of employer to employee and, as a consequence, TAs often feel that they are merely cogs in a machine and show little enthusiasm or commitment to their jobs. By contrast, in some departments, teaching assistantships are seen as a significant part of graduate preparation and TAs are treated as junior colleagues by their supervisors. Under these conditions, TAs demonstrate a high degree of personal commitment to their work and strive to do a professional job.



As a rule, successful supervisors show that they respect TAs as professionals-in-training and allow them to achieve a measure of independence and self-fulfillment in their jobs. The balance between control and autonomy in this relationship depends on a variety of factors: course objectives, class size, nature of TAs' duties, and their level of experience. Supervising six novice discussion leaders in a survey class with an enrollment of 350 obviously requires a greater amount of control than supervising two experienced discussion leaders in a smaller upper-division course. If you are supervising TAs as independent teachers, you can encourage their autonomy and independence, but even experienced TAs can get into trouble and need to know that you are available for help and support.

Effective supervisors also treat TAs as partners in the teaching enterprise. Some professors make this aspect of the relationship explicit by introducing their TAs to the class on the first day, giving them instructional roles to play during lectures, and acknowledging their contribution to the course on the last day of class. These practices not only make TAs feel like members of a team, but also raise their status among the undergraduates. Also, if you consistently solicit TAs' ideas for improving the course, you underscore their responsibilities as members of the team and show that you respect them and value their insights as developing teachers.

Providing Support for Discussion Leaders, Lab Instructors and Graders



Your own early teaching experiences can be a useful guide to the kind of support, advice and training that your TAs require. As anxious beginners, TAs need straightforward answers to basic questions. For example, how do you get students to participate in discussion sessions? What skills do you need in order to grade essay questions? How does lab instruction differ from other kinds of teaching? PIE can supply you with materials that answer many of these questions. [Instruction at FSU](#) and sessions presented at the [PIE Graduate Student Teaching Conference/TA Orientation](#) provide material that other faculty members have found useful in training their TAs.

Pre-Semester Meeting

Before each semester begins, meet with your TAs to discuss the job description and to emphasize duties you feel are particularly important. This is also the appropriate time to discuss questions about their work load and what to do if they feel they are being overworked.

Review the semester schedule to identify points when demands may be put on their time to see if any scheduling problems are likely to arise.

Tell your TAs how you want them to handle student complaints about the class so they will not be caught between you and your students.

- Review the course syllabus and show them how their work fits into the course and how objectives in the lab or discussion sections relate to course objectives.
- Encourage new TAs to consult with experienced TAs who worked with you in the past.
- Establish a flow of information among TAs which will help to save new TAs from making common mistakes.
- Let the TAs know well in advance of any departures from the course schedule or changes in the original objectives.
- Review University policies/University-wide standards for teaching assistants and how these regulations may affect their work. TAs can easily get into trouble if they are not aware of these rules (e.g., the teacher's responsibilities under the honor code, rules for final exams, procedures for grade appeals, and FSU's policies regarding sexual and racial harassment). Most of these policies can be found in the [Student Handbook](#), [University General Bulletin](#), and [Faculty Handbook](#).

Weekly Meetings

Weekly meetings with TAs are indispensable for coordinating their work and addressing problems and concerns as they arise during the course of the semester. Teaching Associates would be effective discussions leaders in these weekly sessions. This time could be used to:

- Explain common student difficulties with upcoming material and suggest specific ways TAs should approach it in their discussion sections.
- Review the instructional purpose of each discussion section meeting and suggest teaching strategies that will successfully achieve the objectives.
- Provide opportunities for TAs to share successful teaching techniques. Many times TAs develop effective methods on their own, but, unless their ideas are shared, only a few students will benefit. These meetings are an appropriate forum in which to bring up suggestions for improving the course and passing on information about how well students are handling difficult parts of the course.
- If TAs are expected to help develop and grade exams, talk about testing techniques and grading criteria at these meetings. Ask TAs for sample test items and have the group discuss ways to improve them. If you are using essay tests, ask the TAs to write model answers for each question and discuss their answers. Whether or not TAs contribute to the construction of exams, it is essential that they all understand and agree upon the grading criteria if they are to grade exams fairly and accurately.



Grading

One of the most common problems in using TAs as graders is not having uniformity across graders. It is a good idea to ask TAs to provide samples of "A" through "F" papers for you to check before grades are recorded. Some supervisors require their TAs to grade papers together and compare samples of their "A" through "F" papers. This system allows the more experienced TAs to teach the less experienced ones about grading. In the process of discussion, any disagreements about the criteria are worked out through consensus. If you choose this strategy, it is advisable for you to be present at least at the beginning of the grading session in case you need to clarify any of your expectations about the test or the grading process. Also, it may be advisable to have TAs grade papers from discussion sections other than their own to avoid the temptation to reward (or punish) students in their sections.

Teaching

Teaching is a skill and the only way to acquire a skill is through practice. Over time, TAs should have the opportunity to practice all tasks associated with teaching, not just grading or leading discussions. Some departments have career ladders in which graduate students move gradually from limited assistantships to full course responsibility. An additional training component is naming a course coordinator for each course offered by the department. The course coordinator is responsible for supervising and coordinating TAs and faculty who are teaching the course.



Although these training components may not be practical in every department, faculty supervisors can involve their TAs in a variety of teaching activities within their own courses. You can choose three or four classes during the semester that exemplify particular teaching techniques and use them as models for your TAs. Meet with your TAs the day before class and explain what you hope to accomplish and how you plan to do it. You might wish to focus on one element of teaching at a time, such as how to encourage student participation or how to deliver a stimulating lecture. After the TAs have observed the class, meet with them and discuss their impressions of the strategies that you used and whether or not they were successful.

TAs should have the opportunity to put their new knowledge into action as soon as possible. Ask them to lead the next set of class discussions and observe their techniques. Repeat the process for lecturing or any other technique that you normally use in your courses. In any case, provide immediate and balanced feedback about their performance, mentioning both strengths and weaknesses. All your comments should be directed toward helping them improve their classroom techniques and develop their teaching styles.

Providing Support for TAs with Full Course Responsibility

Training TAs at FSU varies across campus. Some departments at FSU have formal training programs and some rely on programs offered by the [Program for Instructional Excellence \(PIE\)](#), a unit of [The Graduate School](#). If you are supervising TAs who teach independently, they need more comprehensive training, and this process should begin the semester before they teach. In the event your department does not provide graduate students with an option of a “teaching in the disciplines” course, PIE offers an online general teaching series for all graduate students from all disciplines at no cost. For information about this online series “Basics of Teaching @ FSU” go to the PIE website.



Some departments rely on the system of assigning faculty members as mentors to individual TAs. Mentoring requires that the professor help the TA design the syllabus, select course materials, and develop effective tests. Good mentors also observe the TA’s classroom performance and provide feedback as part of the training experience.

If a full-fledged course is not practical for your department, PIE will help you develop a program that will meet your particular training needs.

Peer review/peer observation is used by some departments for the improvement of instruction in academia. Classroom observations are a good time-honored method of faculty evaluation, undertaken in most instances in conjunction with other sources of feedback on teaching. Observation of TAs’ teaching by their peers can result in more effective teaching, particularly if the TA being observed participates in the process through self-evaluation and through pre- and post-visit discussions with the observer. Because teaching is often a solitary occupation, the peer review/observation experience is a way of drawing together two professionals in the spirit of constructive dialogue. A peer review program can pair experienced TAs with inexperienced TAs, often resulting in a successful departmental program.

Regular meetings with TAs who have full course responsibility are still advisable. Often their problems are more serious and difficult to solve than those for discussion leaders. For example, TAs who are teaching for the first time may impose impossibly high standards on their students. Even if the TA’s classroom techniques are good, students can be frustrated, angry or demoralized if they believe the grading scheme is unfair. Other TAs may set very low standards and give high grades in the belief that they will get higher student evaluations. Also, some TAs underestimate the amount of time it takes to teach a course independently, and, if they are at a crucial stage in the graduate program, their academic careers may suffer. TAs in these situations need your help for their professional growth and development.

Providing Feedback and Evaluation

TAs should know how their work will be monitored and evaluated. Make sure they understand that the purpose of evaluating their performance is to provide feedback that will help them improve as instructors and not to grade or punish them.

Observations

Plan to observe your TAs at least once during the semester, but, if you can afford the time, two or more observations, spaced well apart, would be better.

TAs should know in advance the dates on which they will be observed; their day-to-day performance will not differ markedly from the times that they are observed, and knowing the dates will help to alleviate anxiety.

Another way to observe your TAs in action is to arrange for them to be videotaped by someone in your department and give the tape directly to the TA afterward. TAs can review their tapes privately using a checklist to evaluate their performance. The form is also a teaching device, because the items are based on effective teaching practices.

You can view the tapes at your convenience and meet with the TAs individually to discuss their techniques. TAs can also request videotaping on their own and, if they like, discuss their teaching with a member of the PIE staff.

Observations are most useful when they focus on specific activities and provide concrete and specific feedback rather than generalized statements about their performance. It is a good idea to use a checklist or other standards when observing your TAs (in person or on tape) so that you focus on the most important elements of their teaching. As with all forms of evaluation, TAs should be given a copy of the form before they are observed so they know the criteria on which they will be judged.

In some departments, PIE Associates organize informal peer observations where TAs show each other their videotapes. This approach allows TAs to get feedback and advice in a nonthreatening environment.



Early Feedback for Instructional Improvement

Traditionally, student evaluations are administered at the end of a course, when it is too late for the teacher to change anything. New teachers need to get early feedback from their students so they can make adjustments in the structure of the course or their teaching methods. The best time to conduct such an exercise is when the class is about one-third into the semester, after both the teacher and the students have settled into the course routine. One simple feedback exercise, TABS only takes ten minutes of class time and a TABS form.



Mid-Semester Evaluations – TABS

Teaching Assessment by Students (TABS) is a formative evaluation instrument, which is administered in the fourth to sixth week of the semester. It is intended as an individualized approach to improving instruction in the classroom. This instrument was developed to improve university teaching, the process provides the instructor with the opportunity to look at her/his teaching from the students' perspective before the course is over.

A variety of instructors have participated in the TABS process. Teaching assistants and faculty curious about the teaching and learning process, those with special concerns or difficulties, and those who want to take a general look in the mirror have tried it. Instructors at almost every point in their careers have found the process useful and stimulating.

[For TABS details and instructions](#)

Summary

We have suggested a variety of strategies for supervising and training teaching assistants in this handbook. Only you can decide which strategies best match your teaching situation, conditions in your department, and the needs of your TAs. Perhaps the most important point to remember about supervising TAs is your function as a role model. If you demonstrate that you value teaching and constantly strive to improve your technique, your TAs will do the same.

*Ideas and material have been adapted from *TAs and Professors as a Teaching Team: A Faculty Guide to TA Training & Supervision*, Center for Teaching and Learning, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

PIE Associate Program as Departmental TA Training Resource

The PIE Associate Program helps to improve teaching across campus by helping departments enhance their TA training programs and establish interdisciplinary connections and community among graduate students at FSU. A PIE Associate is an experienced graduate student teaching assistant (TA) nominated by his/her academic department and trained by the Program for Instructional

Excellence (PIE). They serve as mentors for other TAs in the department and assist PIE with conferences and other events. The PIE Associate receives a stipend of \$2000 paid by [The Graduate School](#) for the academic year and is a liaison between PIE and individual departments. The appointment carries obligations to both PIE and the department. For more information visit the [PIE website](#).



Appointment Responsibilities to PIE

- A primary responsibility is to serve as small group leaders and mentors during the PIE Teaching Conference. Attendance at the two-day training is required of all PIE Associates the week before the conference.
- Attend university-wide workshops held during the academic year.
- Attend PIE Associate group meetings scheduled during the academic year.
- Serve on university committees such as [Preparing Future Faculty \(PFF\)](#) as agreed upon by the PIE Associate and PIE Program Director.

Appointment Responsibilities to the Department

- Assess the needs of the department's teaching assistants.
- Design a program and write a proposal addressing identified needs.
- Submit the design proposal to the department.
- Schedule a meeting with the department liaison to present the proposal for approval.
- Develop departmental training activities.
- Evaluate departmental activities at the end of each semester. The evaluation report should include a description of the departmental TA program, its evaluation by the department's TAs, and the Associates' recommendations for training activities for next semester.

Appendix A

The University-Wide Standards for Teaching Assistants at Florida State University

These are University-wide standards that any student must meet prior to assuming one of the various instructional roles. These are meant to be University-wide minimum standards; departments may adopt additional or more stringent standards. Graduate programs which do not use graduate students in instructional roles would not be affected by these standards. They are meant to cover the formal use of teaching assistants in course instruction. Extra help sessions and voluntary tutorials in addition to regular class meetings would not normally fall under these requirements.

Certification of General Teaching Competence

Each semester in accordance with guidelines of the Commission on Colleges (SACS) and the standards outlined in the following sections, the Academic Dean of each College is required to certify in writing to the Dean of the Faculties and the Dean of the Graduate School that each student who serves as a Teaching Assistant is competent to teach and, for International Teaching Assistants, that they are also competent to teach in spoken English.

General

It is recommended that each program has a discipline-specific teaching manual for its teaching assistants to supplement the university teaching manual, [Instruction at FSU](#); this manual can be viewed online or ordered as a print copy.

Minimum Requirements for Different Levels of Instruction

1. Grader
 - a program specific statement of standards for graders
2. Proctor for Computerized Exams and Laboratories
 - undergraduate majoring in the discipline
 - PIE fall conference or departmental equivalent
 - PIE workshop on Sexual Harassment or equivalent
(See below)
 - supervision by the faculty member teaching the course
3. Lab section
 - undergraduate majoring in the discipline
 - specific instruction in laboratory demonstration
 - PIE fall conference or departmental equivalent
 - PIE workshop on Sexual Harassment or equivalent (see below)
 - direct supervision by senior lab assistant /or faculty member in the teaching discipline
 - planned and periodic evaluations of the teaching assistant
4. Recitation/discussion section
 - undergraduate degree in discipline or related field
 - some graduate work completed or enrolled for
 - PIE fall conference or departmental equivalent
 - PIE workshop on Sexual Harassment or equivalent (see below)
 - direct supervision by faculty member in the teaching discipline
 - planned and periodic evaluations of the teaching assistant

Course level types 5-8 presume the teaching assistant is providing the primary instruction in the course.

5. Lower-level course
 - 18 hours of graduate work in teaching discipline
 - PIE fall conference or departmental equivalent
 - PIE workshop on Sexual Harassment or equivalent (see below)
 - student participation in a “teaching in the discipline” course or equivalent departmental orientation
 - direct supervision by faculty member in the teaching discipline
 - planned and periodic evaluations of the teaching assistant
6. Liberal studies course
 - 18 hours of graduate work in teaching discipline
 - PIE fall conference or departmental equivalent
 - PIE workshop on Sexual Harassment or equivalent (see below)
 - student participation in a “teaching in the discipline” course or equivalent departmental orientation
 - direct supervision by faculty member in the teaching discipline
 - planned and periodic evaluations of the teaching assistant
 - Upper-level non-major non-liberal studies course
 - Master’s degree or equivalent
 - PIE fall conference or departmental equivalent
 - PIE workshop on Sexual Harassment or equivalent (see below)
 - student participation in a “teaching in the discipline” course or equivalent departmental orientation
 - direct supervision by faculty member in the teaching discipline
 - planned and periodic evaluations of the teaching assistant
8. Upper-level major course
 - Master’s degree or equivalent
 - enrolled in doctoral level course work and strongly encouraged to have completed two semesters of doctoral level course work
 - PIE fall conference or departmental equivalent
 - PIE workshop on Sexual Harassment or equivalent (see below)
 - student participation in a “teaching in the discipline” course or equivalent departmental orientation
 - direct supervision by faculty member in the teaching discipline
 - planned and periodic evaluations of the teaching assistant

Certification of Spoken English for Graduate Teaching Assistants

As noted, above Academic Deans are required to certify to the [Dean of the Faculties](#) and the [Dean of the Graduate School](#) that the TAs in the college are competent to teach. This statement should also include certification that all graduate TAs whose native language is not English are competent to teach in spoken English.

All international graduate students who are not native speakers of English, and who are going to be TAs, should take the SPEAK test when they arrive on campus (as noted below, students who scored 26 or higher on the speaking portion of the IBTOEFL may be exempted from taking the SPEAK test). The Center for Intensive English Studies (CIES) administers and scores the SPEAK test, CIES also offers courses in spoken English (EAP courses). The SPEAK test is administered several times in the week(s) prior to the beginning of each semester, and the scores are available within three to four days of the date the test is administered. Departments are urged to take advantage of this opportunity to receive an initial estimate of speaking ability. In addition, the SPEAK is routinely administered as an end-of-term evaluation for students enrolled in EAP courses. TAs not enrolled in EAP courses may also take the test at that time. Course offerings, as well as test dates for SPEAK tests, are published in fliers distributed periodically to departments, as well as via email to TA coordinators. This information is also available on the [CIES web site](#).

The standards for certification of spoken English are as follows:

- A score of 50 or higher on the SPEAK test, or 26 or higher on the speaking portion of the IBTOEFL, certifies a student to teach at any level.
- A score of 45 certifies a student to teach at levels 1-2, and to teach at levels 3-4 if also enrolled in an appropriate CIES English language course.
- In unique instances a Department Chair or Dean may appeal the application of these standards by submitting a request to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean of the Graduate School will convene a committee to consider the request. The committee will consist of the Director of the FSU Center for Intensive English Studies; the Chair (or designee) of the Undergraduate Policy Committee; the person making the appeal; and the Dean of The Graduate School.

Equivalent Previous Experience and Emergencies

With the exception of the 18-hours-in-the-discipline rule for primary instruction and in accordance with guidelines provided by the Commission on Colleges (SACS), the following options will be available to deal with special circumstances:

A student, who through previous preparation or teaching experience has demonstrated knowledge and strong teaching skills, can be exempted from some of the requirements in 3-8, as appropriate, by certification of the program chair.

In an emergency a department may appoint a graduate teaching assistant who has not met all the University-wide requirements for that level of appointment if there is an assurance that the student will meet the requirements by the end of the term in which the student is teaching.

PIE Workshop on Sexual Harassment Policies and Equivalency

University policy on sexual harassment training is provided by the [Office of Audit Services](#). The office provides training sessions at the PIE Teaching Conference. In addition PIE sponsors a workshop in the spring usually during the second week of classes. Departments can also set up departmental training by contacting the Office of Audit Services, and this office also offers training online.

Revised 4/2007 by the Graduate Policy Committee and approved by the Faculty Senate on 4/17/07.

Appendix B

Principles of Best Practice for TA Development

1. Best Practice Requires Administrative Support

Administrative support is essential to the success of student preparation activities at the graduate as well as the undergraduate levels. It is at the administrative level that policy can be set, funds contributed, and rewards offered. Administrators can provide stable and continuous centralized support while encouraging inter- and intra-campus collaboration.

2. Best Practice Encourages Across-Campus Liaison

Across-campus liaison is essential for the successful preparation of graduate students to teach in classes, recitations, and laboratories during their graduate studies. This work could be viewed as an in-service approach to making sure that undergraduates receive appropriate levels of instruction from all levels of instructional staff. Graduate student government officers can work with the Graduate School and with their departments to encourage teacher training for graduate students. Faculty from all departments can assist with TA training through centralized activities bringing their individual expertise to a broader university audience. Instructional staff can share ideas through listserves, through participation in teaching center activities, and through campus publications.

3. Best Practice Encourages Campus-Wide TA Development Efforts

Centralized TA development programs provide continuity, the possibility of introducing new ideas to a wide range of departments, and support for graduate students whose departments provide little mentoring or teacher training. Centralized programs also can serve as catalysts to stimulate interest in and development around teaching within the departments on campus.

4. Best Practice Requires Departmental TA Training

Departmental TA Training programs stimulate community, scholarship, and excellence in teaching within the discipline. They give graduate students a home base from which they can develop expertise in content-specific pedagogy, learn technology that supports teaching in the discipline, and learn appropriate assessment techniques for the discipline. They support the research function of graduate departments in the sense that they teach graduate student teachers to express the language of the discipline proficiently and on a level comprehensible to the general public.

5. Best Practice Encourages Active Faculty Supervisors or Mentors for Graduate Students

In many graduate departments, graduate students have effective research mentors who guide them over the course of their studies. Sound TA development practice encourages mentorship of teaching that follows a continuum of responsibilities faced by graduate students as they progress through various roles or responsibilities within the department. Faculty supervisors or teaching mentors view teaching, curriculum development, and the job search as aspects of graduate preparation that improve the department's overall function, while preparing graduate students for future roles in their profession.

6. Best Practice Encourages Graduate Students to Engage in Their Own Professional Development

Graduate students must engage in their own personal and professional development and become active participants in their own learning. If they truly want to serve in the profession, they must learn what teaching, research, and service mean within the context of their own and different institutions. They must build their knowledge, skills, and performance levels and prepare themselves for success, not only in their research, but also in their classrooms, on their campuses, and in their profession.

7. Best Practice Encourages Diversity in Personnel, Curricula, and Programs

Knowledge about and comfort with diversity is essential in the preparation of graduate student teachers, who need to be able to respond effectively to all students. As preparers of materials, graduate student teachers need to be aware of the pitfalls inherent in a curriculum that is lacking in diversity and, conversely, of the benefits that can be derived from integrating diverse perspectives into their courses. As teaching assistants or graduate student instructors on campus, they need to be aware of the continually growing diversity of undergraduate student populations. And, finally, they need to be able to encourage undergraduate students from underrepresented groups to pursue graduate education and careers as faculty.

8. Best Practice Encourages the Application of Theory in the Content of TA Development Programs

Many university researchers have developed theories about effective ways to educate teachers and students. It is up to the TA developers to apply appropriate theories to their work with TAs. Research has demonstrated that effective postsecondary instructors understand the subject matter of their disciplines, the pedagogical content of their disciplines, and pedagogical knowledge in general. TA development programs should address these three areas.

9. Best Practice Encourages Effective Program Evaluation

TA development programs support the teaching and learning mission of the institution and should undergo regular program review just as other academic programs do. Departments should include their TA development programs in their program reviews. Data derived from such evaluations should be used formatively to improve the programs. Program effectiveness should be viewed in the short-term for its impact on undergraduate instruction and in the long-term for its effect on graduates' career success.

[Border, L. L. B. \(2006\). Two inventories for best practice in graduate student development. Journal on Excellence in College Teaching, 17 \(1&2\), 277-310.](#)

Appendix C

Graduate Assistantships

Recommendations for student and graduate assistant appointments originate in departmental offices. See the Personnel Procedures Manual for the details for processing.

M9182 Graduate Research Assistant

This Graduate Research Assistant shall be classified as a degree-seeking graduate student who performs research duties that are related to that student's academic program. The appointee must be admitted to and meet the requirements of The Graduate School, be fully admitted to a graduate degree program, and be under the supervision of an appropriate graduate faculty member. EXAMPLE: A science student doing research in a science lab.

M9184 Graduate Teaching Assistant

This Graduate Teaching Assistant shall be classified as a degree-seeking graduate student who has earned a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours and performs primary teaching duties that are related to that student's academic program. The appointee must be admitted to and meet the requirements of the Graduate School, be fully admitted to a graduate degree program, and be under the supervision of an appropriate graduate faculty member. EXAMPLE: A graduate student having full instructional responsibilities for a credit class.

W9185 Graduate Assistant (Teaching)

This Graduate Assistant shall be classified as a degree-seeking graduate student who assists in the teaching function, but does not have primary responsibility for teaching. The appointee must be fully admitted to and meet the requirements of the Graduate School, be fully admitted to a graduate degree program, and be under the supervision of a graduate faculty member. EXAMPLES: Graders, tutors, recitation leaders, lab supervisors, assistant to faculty instructor.

Z9185 Graduate Assistant (Research)

This Graduate Assistant shall be classified as a degree-seeking graduate student who assists in a degree-related professional or academic research function, but does not have primary responsibility for the task. The appointee must be fully admitted to and meet the requirements of The Graduate School, be fully admitted to a graduate degree program, and be under the supervision of a graduate faculty member.

For more information go to: [Dean of the Faculties](#) and [Finance & Administration](#)

Appendix D

Sample Outline for Departmental TA Handbook

- I. Introduction
 - a. Purpose of handbook
- II. General Information
 - a. TA roles
 - b. Definition and responsibilities of a teaching assistant (TA)
 - c. Criteria for appointment as a teaching assistant
- III. FSU Policies and procedures governing the teaching assistantship
 - a. University-wide TA standards
 - b. Ethics and unacceptable conduct
 - c. Students with disabilities
 - d. Confidentiality of student records
 - e. Sexual harassment policy
 - f. Academic honor code
 - g. Student attendance
 - h. Family Education Right & Privacy Act (FERPA)
 - i. Copyright
- IV. Administration
 - a. Organization of department
- V. Department Policies and Procedures
 - a. Student attendance
 - b. Instructor attendance
 - c. Tardiness
 - d. Religious holidays

- e. Classroom safety (what to do in an emergency)
- f. Managing the classroom environment
- g. Supplies
- h. Department services (media equipment, etc)

VI. Professors

- a. TA faculty relationship
 - i. TA responsibility
 - ii. faculty responsibility

VII. Preparation to Teach

- a. Course planning
- b. Syllabi
- c. Objectives
- d. Use of space and resources in the classroom
 - i. PowerPoint
 - ii. Overhead projector
 - iii. Computer
 - iv. Boards
- e. Office hours
- f. Presentation
 - i. tips
 - ii. strategies

- g. Teaching tips
 - i. time management
 - ii. prioritizing

VIII. Grades and Grading Practices

- a. Posting student grades
- b. Grade appeals
- c. Fairness and consistency
- d. Returning papers and exams
- e. Late papers and incompletes

IX. Your Teaching File

- a. SPOT forms
- b. TA performance evaluations

X. Resources

- a. The Graduate School
- b. Program for Instructional Excellence (PIE)
- c. Preparing Future Faculty (PFF)

XI. Index of Appendices

- a. Sexual harassment policy
- b. Academic honor code policy
- c. University-wide TA standards
- d. TA evaluation form

Appendix E

Campus Resources

[Career Center](http://www.career.fsu.edu/): has many resources to assist in achieving career-related goals as you follow your path through graduate school. The staff can help you identify tools associated with the job search, credentials, internships, job listings, career expos, marketing your skills, professional associations, relocation information, executive search firms, life changes/transitions, and financial aid resources.

<http://www.career.fsu.edu/>

[Center for Assessment & Testing \(CAT\)](http://cat.fsu.edu): offers a range of scanning services to persons and units within the University, as well as to the community in general. The University requires instructors (faculty, adjuncts, and graduate assistants) who teach undergraduate or graduate courses with ten or more students in fall and spring terms to administer course evaluations.

<http://cat.fsu.edu>

[Center for Intensive English Studies \(CIES\)](http://cies.fsu.edu/): teaches English to international citizens from all parts of the world and is known as the school “where the world comes to learn English.”

<http://cies.fsu.edu/>

[The Program for Instructional Excellence \(PIE\)](http://pie.fsu.edu): supports the FSU graduate student teaching community in pursuit of instructional excellence by providing a broad range of instructional support services designed for all types of teaching formats.

<http://pie.fsu.edu>

[Dean of the Faculties](http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/): serves faculty members by providing information about academic policies, administering personnel activities related to the University Faculty, and facilitating the operation of the Faculty Governance System at The Florida State University. One of these academic policies, The Academic Honor Policy, outlines the University’s expectations for students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty throughout the process.

<http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/>

[The Graduate School](http://www.gradstudies.fsu.edu/): supports graduate students in every program. The staff provides assistance in academic matters, advice on University-wide degree requirements, information on the availability of financial assistance including assistantships, fellowships and scholarships, as well as approval for theses and dissertations.

<http://www.gradstudies.fsu.edu/>

[Human Resources](http://www.hr.fsu.edu/): is responsible for all aspects of employment-related services including recruitment and hiring, new employee orientation, diversity compliance, labor relations, training and development, benefits administration, developing and implementing HR policies and procedures.

<http://www.hr.fsu.edu/>

[The Office of Audit Services](http://www.auditservices.fsu.edu/): is responsible for investigating any complaints of sexual harassment.

<http://www.auditservices.fsu.edu/>

[Office of Research](http://www.research.fsu.edu/): provides faculty, staff and students with support for performing research and creative activities
<http://www.research.fsu.edu/>

[Preparing Future Faculty \(PFF\)](http://gradstudies.fsu.edu/Professional-Development/Preparing-Future-Faculty-PFF): assists doctoral students (and others headed toward academic careers) to get ready for faculty work.
<http://gradstudies.fsu.edu/Professional-Development/Preparing-Future-Faculty-PFF>

[Program for Instructional Excellence \(PIE\)](http://pie.fsu.edu): is a teaching resource for graduate student teaching assistants (TAs) and departments. It is important to prepare TAs, not only to ensure immediate high-quality classroom instruction but also to prepare them for teaching careers when they have completed their degrees.
<http://pie.fsu.edu>

[Technology Enhanced Classroom \(TEC\)](http://tecs.fsu.edu/): offers classroom support for equipment that is available in TEC classrooms. You must sign up for an account to be able to sign onto any TEC computer on campus.
<http://tecs.fsu.edu/>

[University Counseling Center \(UCC\)](http://counseling.fsu.edu/): is a department within the Division of Student Affairs that provides confidential psychological counseling and consultation services to currently enrolled FSU students. The center offers brief counseling and therapy to support students' growth and help them optimize their emotional, interpersonal and intellectual development.
<http://counseling.fsu.edu/>

[University Registrar](http://registrar.fsu.edu/services/staff/ferpa_info.htm): is where to find FERPA information. Each semester The Florida State University publishes information for students and the public regarding their rights and protection of their education records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended.
http://registrar.fsu.edu/services/staff/ferpa_info.htm