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## **University-wide Standards for Graduate Teaching Assistants at Florida State University**

These are University-wide standards that any graduate 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. Programs that do not use graduate students in instructional roles would not be affected by these standards. They are meant to cover the formal use of graduate teaching assistants in course instruction. Extra help sessions and voluntary tutorials in addition to regular class meetings would not normally fall under these requirements. The companion policy, University-wide Standards for Undergraduate Teaching Assistants at Florida State University details the policies that apply to the use of undergraduates as teaching assistants.

### **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 Vice President of Faculty Development and Advancement and the Dean of The Graduate School that each graduate student who serves as a graduate teaching assistant (TA) in the classroom or online is competent to teach and for international graduate teaching assistants (ITA) that they are also competent to teach in spoken English. (see SACS statement below)

### **General:**

Administrative responsibility for the teaching assignment rests within the department in which the student is employed as a graduate teaching assistant (TA). Each department is responsible for providing orientation, training, supervision and evaluation of its graduate student TAs, and for assigning a faculty member to work closely with the individual graduate student to assist him or her in carrying out teaching responsibilities and to facilitate professional development. There should be a departmental orientation for TAs prior to beginning their teaching responsibilities. It is also recommended that all TAs attend the PIE Teaching Conference sponsored by the Program for Instructional Excellence (PIE) before beginning their teaching responsibilities.

It is recommended that each program have a discipline-specific teaching manual for its graduate teaching assistants to supplement the university teaching manual, *Instruction at FSU* that may be viewed on line

(<http://distance.fsu.edu/instructors/instruction-fsu-guide-teaching-learning-practices>)

## **Graduate Assistantship Job Code:**

To monitor compliance with university policies and Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requirements, it is imperative that the proper appointment classifications be used for graduate teaching assistants. It is the responsibility of departments that employ graduate teaching assistants to establish the appropriate job code according to teaching responsibility. The

Graduate School and the Human Resources Office will verify the requirements for each classification and are the offices to contact if there are any questions. Job codes to be used for graduate students can be accessed:

[http://hr.fsu.edu/PDF/Forms/compensation/NRA\\_Job\\_Codes.pdf](http://hr.fsu.edu/PDF/Forms/compensation/NRA_Job_Codes.pdf)

As a general rule:

Levels 1 & 2

W9185 Graduate Assistant (Teaching) - Stipend (FLSA Exempt)

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 University, be fully admitted to a graduate degree program, and be under the supervision of a faculty member. EXAMPLES: Graders, tutors, recitation leaders, lab supervisors, assistant to faculty instructor.

Levels 3 & 4

M9184 Graduate Teaching Assistant – Stipend (FLSA Exempt)

This Graduate Teaching Assistant shall be classified as a degree-seeking graduate student who has a master's degree in the teaching discipline or at least 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline and performs primary teaching duties as the Instructor of Record (IOR) that are related to that student's academic program. The appointee must be admitted to and meet the requirements of the University, be fully admitted to a graduate degree program, and be under the supervision of an appropriate faculty member. EXAMPLE: A graduate student having full instructional responsibilities for a credit class.

## **Minimum Requirements for Different Levels of Instruction**

Level 1. This level may include a variety of duties, but assignments cannot involve routine direct contact with a group of undergraduate students in face-to-face or online instructional support roles. Limited one-to-one engagement e.g., office hours is permissible. Examples include grading, the setup of laboratory demonstrations, and course management. If routine instructional contact support with a group of

undergraduates is expected, then the Teaching Assistant must meet the English language competency standard required for a Level 2 appointment (see p. 5).

- program specific guidelines for the specific duties
- undergraduate degree in discipline or related field
- some graduate work completed or enrolled in
- must attend Day 1 of the Fall PIE Teaching Conference before the commencement of one's teaching duties. Day 1 includes required training on the Sexual Harassment Policy, Academic Honor Policy and the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Day 1 also includes training in the use of Blackboard for instruction, time management for Teaching Assistants, and interacting professionally with one's students. Equivalent preparation offered by the academic unit (that has been approved by the Graduate School) may be substituted for Day 1 of the Fall PIE Teaching Conference, and this alternative must include training in the specific policies noted above.
- supervision by a faculty member in the teaching discipline
- planned and periodic evaluations of the teaching assistant

Level 2. This level assumes a greater degree of interaction with undergraduate students than Level 1 and thus requires a higher level of competency in spoken English (see p. 5). This level includes a variety of duties e.g., grading, tutoring, proctoring of computerized exams and laboratories, assisting with laboratory sections, leading recitation and discussion sections.

- program specific guidelines for the specific duties
- undergraduate degree in discipline or related field
- some graduate work completed or enrolled in
- must attend Day 1 of the Fall PIE Teaching Conference before the commencement of one's teaching duties. Day 1 includes required training on the Sexual Harassment Policy, Academic Honor Policy and the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Day 1 also includes training in the use of Blackboard for instruction, time management for Teaching Assistants, and interacting professionally with one's students. Equivalent preparation offered by the academic unit (that has been approved by the Graduate School) may be substituted for Day 1 of the Fall PIE Teaching Conference, and this alternative must include training in the specific policies noted above.
- supervision by a faculty member in the teaching discipline
- planned and periodic evaluations of the teaching assistant

Note: The distinction of Levels 1 & 2 recognizes that the extent of interaction with undergraduates, and thus the necessary spoken English competency of the TA, varies across disciplines though the position title is the same.

***Course level types 3-4 presume the graduate teaching assistant is the Instructor of Record.***

Level 3. *Lower-level undergraduate courses (1000-2000 level)*

- a minimum of 18 hours of graduate coursework in the teaching discipline
- must attend Days 1 & 2 of the Fall PIE Teaching Conference before the commencement of one's teaching duties or an equivalent offered by the academic unit (that has been approved by the Graduate School).
- Days 1 & 2 of the Fall PIE Teaching Conference address the following policies which are required at this level: Sexual Harassment Policy, Academic Honor Policy, the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), American with Disabilities Act (ADA), Grading Policies, Textbook Adoption Procedure Policy, Syllabus Policy, Class Attendance Policy, Final Exam Policy, Copyright Law Regulations (Copyright Revision Act of 1976 "fair use") and Course Evaluation Policy. Days 1 & 2 also include training in a number of topics that are of value to instructors e.g., the use of Blackboard for instruction, time management for Teaching Assistants, interacting professionally with one's students, dealing with distressed students, diversity in the classroom, grading and assessment.
  - NOTE: Alternative "equivalent training" that is provided by an academic unit must include training in the specific policies indicated above.
- student participation in a "teaching in the discipline" course or equivalent academic unit orientation
- direct supervision by a faculty member in the teaching discipline
- planned and periodic evaluations of the teaching assistant

Level 4. *Upper-level undergraduate courses (3000-4000 level)*

- Master's degree or at least 30 hours of graduate coursework in the teaching discipline
- must attend Days 1 & 2 of the Fall PIE Teaching Conference before the commencement of one's teaching duties or an equivalent offered by the academic unit (that has been approved by the Graduate School).
- Days 1 & 2 of the Fall PIE Teaching Conference address the following policies which are required at this level: Sexual Harassment Policy, Academic Honor Policy, the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), American with Disabilities Act (ADA), Grading Policies, Textbook Adoption Procedure Policy, Syllabus Policy, Class Attendance Policy, Final Exam Policy, Copyright Law Regulations (Copyright Revision Act of 1976 "fair use") and Course Evaluation Policy. Days 1 & 2 also include training in a number of topics that are of value to instructors e.g., the use of Blackboard for instruction, time management for Teaching Assistants, interacting professionally with one's students, dealing with distressed students, diversity in the classroom, grading and assessment.
  - NOTE: Alternative "equivalent training" that is provided by an academic unit must include training in the specific policies indicated above.

- student participation in a “teaching in the discipline” course or equivalent academic unit orientation
- direct supervision by a 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 Vice President of Faculty Development and Advancement 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 ([www.cies.fsu.edu](http://www.cies.fsu.edu)).

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 all levels.
- A score of at least 40 on the SPEAK test is acceptable for a TA appointed at Level 1. Appointment at this level is appropriate if there is no or limited direct contact with undergraduate students e.g., is responsible for grading tests and/or only providing direct support to an instructor. If there is to be any routine direct communication with a group of undergraduate students whether face-to-face or online, the higher standard applies. Limited one-to-one engagement e.g., office hours is permissible.
- A score of 45 on SPEAK, or 23-24 on the Speaking section of TOEFL iBT, certifies a TA to teach at Level 1; and at Level 2 for up to two semesters if also concurrently enrolled in an appropriate CIES English language course. If, by the end of these two semesters, the student's skills have not improved sufficiently to achieve a score of 50 on the SPEAK exam, the student will be eligible to teach only at Level 1. The student will be allowed to teach at levels 2-4 by meeting at least one of the following two criteria:
  - Achieve a score of 50 on SPEAK.
  - Enroll in Advanced Spoken English for ITAs (EAP4831) and score 90 or better in the course.

- Student's scoring 40 or below on SPEAK should enroll in the appropriate CIES English language course(s) if the goal is to teach at Levels 2-4. Once a 45 on SPEAK is achieved such a student will be certified to teach at Level 2 for up to two semesters if also concurrently enrolled in an appropriate CIES English language course. If, by the end of these two semesters, the student's skills have not improved sufficiently to achieve a score of 50 on the SPEAK exam, the student will be eligible to teach only at Level 1. The student will only be allowed to teach at levels 2-4 by meeting at least one of the following two criteria:
  - Achieve a score of 50 on SPEAK.
  - Enroll in Advanced Spoken English for ITAs (EAP4831) and score 90 or better in the course.
- The standard for international students serving as ITAs in Modern Language and Linguistics is 45 (SPEAK) or 23 (TOEFL) if the student is teaching a course in their native language.

### **Exceptions:**

In general, if new graduate students are unable to attend the Fall PIE Teaching Conference prior to commencing their first semester of teaching they may only be appointed at Level 1. However, prior to the commencement of their teaching duties they must complete the online required policy modules (Sexual Harassment Policy, Academic Honor Policy and the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)) that are available through the Program for Instructional Excellence or undergo equivalent preparation offered by the academic unit (that has been approved by the Graduate School). If equivalent preparation is not available and if they are to continue teaching in the Spring or Summer and thereafter, they must attend the Spring PIE Teaching Workshop which is held the Friday of the first week of classes. Ultimately they must participate in training through one of the PIE options or through the academic unit in order to continue to serve as a Teaching Assistant.

If a student's first semester of enrollment is Spring and they are to be assigned teaching responsibilities they must complete the required online training modules and attend the PIE Spring Teaching Workshop or an academic unit equivalent (that has been approved by the Graduate School).

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.

### **Equivalent Previous Experience and Emergencies:**

With the exception of the minimum of 18 hours of graduate coursework in the teaching discipline 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 graduate student who through previous preparation or teaching experience has demonstrated knowledge and strong teaching skills can be exempt from some of the requirements, 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.

### **SACS Statement:**

Graduate teaching assistants: master's degree in the teaching discipline or 18 graduate semester hours in the teaching discipline, direct supervision by a faculty member experienced in the teaching discipline, regular in-service training, and planned and periodic evaluations. (Reference: Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS); Commission guidelines "Faculty Credentials" (Adopted Dec 2006).

### **Sexual Harassment, Academic Honor Policy and FERPA policies and equivalency:**

University policy on sexual harassment training is provided by the Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance (EOC) within Human Resources (<http://www.hr.fsu.edu>), the Academic Honor Policy training is offered by the Office of the Vice President of Faculty Development and Advancement (<http://fda.fsu.edu/>) and the FERPA training is offered by the Office of the University Registrar (<http://registrar.fsu.edu/>). These offices provide training at the Fall PIE Teaching Conference. In addition PIE offers online modules for those students who are unable to attend the Fall PIE Teaching Conference or who begin their enrollment in the Spring or Summer semesters.

### **Program for Instructional Excellence Conference and Workshops:**

The Program for Instructional Excellence (PIE) supports and complements departmental TA training programs. To prepare TAs for immediate undergraduate classroom responsibilities, PIE conducts an annual two day teaching conference the Wednesday and Thursday before classes start in the fall semester. The conference is free to participants and focuses on policies and services at FSU as they relate to teaching. PIE offers workshops on teaching during the fall and spring semester and an online training series the "Basics of Teaching @ FSU". PIE also assists departments in developing TA departmental training programs.

### **Approval of equivalent training**

The Graduate School is responsible for collating and validating the equivalent training options provided by academic programs and entering the information into an online database to facilitate the certification of graduate teaching assistants each semester.