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PREPARATION OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS

PURPOSE

To lay out principles and requirements for the assignment, preparation, supervision, and evaluation of graduate teaching assistants at Louisiana State University.

Excellence in undergraduate and graduate instruction is central to the mission of the University. Preparation in pedagogy in a variety of teaching situations is an integral part of the education of graduate students. Accordingly, the graduate faculty must be committed to designing appropriate programs for the assignment, preparation, supervision, and evaluation of graduate teaching assistants with the aim of enhancing graduate student preparation and undergraduate learning. This policy statement should be read in the context of the general institutional policy on graduate assistantships set forth in PS-21.

DEFINITIONS

Graduate teaching assistants - all graduate assistants assigned to any instructional duties, including exam and lecture preparation, grading, and laboratory supervision.

Departments - all units employing graduate teaching assistants, including interdepartmental programs, institutes, and centers.

Instructors of record - persons who have the primary responsibility for teaching courses and/or for assigning grades in courses.

Assignment of Graduate Teaching Assistants

Teaching assignments for graduate students must be consistent with the criteria established by accreditation agencies, with the current level of preparation of graduate students, and with the University's commitment to providing graduate students with effective preparation in pedagogy. Accordingly,

- 1) consistent with accreditation criteria of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), no graduate assistant with fewer than eighteen hours of graduate work in the assistants teaching discipline may be assigned as the instructor of any section of any course (with the exception of laboratory sections, discussion sections, and physical education activities classes). Departments may petition the graduate dean for exceptions for relevant non-academic experience or the possession of specific skills; departments must receive a favorable response to petitions for such exceptions before appointments are

made.

2) consistent with state law, SACS criteria, and University policy, international graduate students whose native language is not English may not be assigned duties requiring proficiency in spoken English until proficiency has been certified.

Preparation of Instructors of Record

The preparation of graduate teaching assistants who serve as instructors of record is a crucial mission of the University, with critical implications for both undergraduate and graduate education. Accordingly, administrators and the faculty must ensure that

- 1) during the first semester as an instructor of record, each graduate assistant be assigned a faculty mentor, an experienced teacher, charged with observing the assistant's classes, with reviewing the assistant's lesson plans, assignments, and grading, and with counseling the assistant in any and all aspects of pedagogy, grading, classroom management, etc.;
- 2) teaching assistants who are instructors of record be continued in the mentor program when the performance of the assistant does not meet acceptable classroom standards;
- 3) all graduate teaching assistants who are instructors of record and who are not required by their departments to take courses in pedagogy for credit are expected to participate in University-wide programs for teaching assistants;
- 4) all initial letters of appointment to teaching assistants make clear the foregoing requirements.

Evaluation of Graduate Teaching Assistants

Essential to the University's effort to ensure quality teaching at the undergraduate level and effective preparation of graduate teaching assistants is an ongoing program of evaluation, which must include the following items:

- 1) student evaluations for all courses in which the graduate assistant is the instructor of record;
- 2) an evaluation by a faculty mentor at the end of the first semester in which a graduate assistant serves as an instructor of record;
- 3) an annual evaluation of every teaching assistant's overall performance;

Department Responsibilities

Departments and the directors of interdepartmental programs bear primary responsibility for ensuring that the assignment, preparation, supervision, and evaluation of graduate assistants conform with the provisions of this policy. Departments must file with the Graduate School for approval a description of departmental preparation programs for teaching assistants, which must include, as stipulated in sections IV and V, above, a mentoring program and thorough-going evaluations of teaching performance. Departmental plans must ensure that teaching assistants (whether or not they are instructors of record) are prepared, supervised, and evaluated with due regard for the University's commitment to excellence in undergraduate instruction.

Appeals

The Office of Academic Affairs shall have oversight, through the Graduate School, of all provisions of this policy. Any appeals for exceptions to any provisions of this policy must be filed in writing with the Dean of the Graduate School, who shall establish an advisory Graduate Assistantship Council to hear appeals and to advise the Dean on all aspects of graduate assistantships, including the matters pertaining to teaching assistants addressed in this policy.