

Graduate Council

TA Training and Compliance Modules

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June 23, 2021

Emily Carter
Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost

RE: TA Training

Dear EVC/Provost Carter,

In February 2017, the Graduate Council sent the following set of resolutions to then Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Scott L. Waugh regarding TA training:

Be it RESOLVED that-

I. All departments and programs hiring TAs must ensure that those TAs enroll in a 495 course before or during their first quarter as a TA. 495 courses can be coordinated among units, if best. Funding must be made available to departments and programs for hiring Teaching Assistant Consultants (TACs), and TAs should receive credit for this disciplinary training course in accordance with current practice and previous guidelines from the Graduate Council. A review of the TAC program should yield recommendations for improvements. Academic programs and the faculty who teach in them should remain the primary units responsible for TA training, experience, supervision, and concerns.

II. Basic training in pedagogy (e.g., on inclusive classrooms, classroom management, fairness and accuracy in evaluation) should be offered in a consistent (and presumably centralized) fashion for all new TAs, who should complete the basic training before or during the quarter in which they begin teaching. That training could be offered via a conference, a series of workshops, or in other formats. Because the material covered involves in-person engagement and group dynamics, we do not envision this as an online-only training experience. This training should be relevant to all disciplines, and any programs that originate in one corner of the campus should not be taken to scale until inclusiveness is demonstrated. TAs should be fairly compensated for this training, and a system of credits should be offered in lieu of pay only if those credits are useful to TAs.

III. Basic compliance training modules should be developed as soon as possible, likely in an online format on the model of Berkeley.

IV. The Graduate Council can envision any number of institutional configurations to provide mandatory TA training and provide services for additional TA training and evaluation to departments and programs, faculty, and TAs themselves. It is imperative that the coordinating unit be organized in an inclusive, cross-campus way, with strong leadership, a focus on teaching, and a system of accountability both to administration and to the Senate. The Graduate Council should serve as the approval body, should be consulted on any proposals, and should approve any changes to the current system of TA training on the campus.

V. UCLA could explore offering an advanced track – perhaps a certificate program – for graduate students wishing to develop advanced teaching expertise. However, this is less urgent than ensuring basic quality and disciplinary training for the TA workforce.

This series of resolutions from the Graduate Council resulted in the first campus-wide requirement for TA training, as described under resolution I. Currently, TAs on campus are required to undergo TA-specific Title IX training and enroll in a 495 course either prior to or concurrent with their TA appointment. However, depending on the academic year, 30-40% of new TAs have not enrolled in any 495 course. Furthermore, some departments and programs do not offer their own 495 course, and there is a wide variation of topics covered and time spent on those topics.

The Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) has developed and piloted a program in basic pedagogy, referred to as the Foundation series (comprising five 90-minute workshops). The Graduate Council chose not to require the Foundation series when it was first proposed in 2016 and instead urged CAT to collect data in order to analyze its effectiveness. It is worth noting that CAT has spent several years collecting this data and recently presented it to the Graduate Council.

The Graduate Council expects that TA training be mandatory at UCLA. In order to ensure that all students receive consistent training in basic pedagogy, the Council provides you with the following guidelines, as endorsed by its membership, in implementing resolutions II-IV of the 2017 memo:

TA training should include, at minimum, the following components:

- 1) Compliance modules (offered online as a course in Canvas) and Title IX training
- 2) Basic pedagogy (Foundation series or equivalent content in a 495 course)
- 3) Disciplinary training (495)

These guidelines add one new requirement to TA training: compliance. Because a recent syllabus analysis showed only a few 495 courses cover the basic pedagogy offered in all five Foundation series workshop topics, and many do not cover basic pedagogy at all, the Graduate Council is explicitly requiring training for all TAs in basic pedagogy, which can be satisfied by the Foundation series. If departments and programs offer 495 courses that cover some or all of the elements of basic pedagogy offered in the Foundation series, they can request an exemption for their students from this requirement by demonstrating the necessary topics are covered in their 495 seminars. For departments that do not have independent 495s, CAT or other teaching centers on campus should develop and offer 495 courses that are discipline-specific (i.e., STEM, humanities, etc.) so that all students can meet the 495 requirement in a course that meaningfully prepares them to teach. The Council recognizes and appreciates that some of these discipline-oriented courses already exist in units such as CEILS. The Council expects that this comprehensive approach to compliance training and training in basic as well as discipline-specific pedagogy may result in more consistent or universal training of all TAs at UCLA.

This comprehensive TA training program will be piloted for two years, beginning in Fall 2021. The effectiveness of this training will be reviewed annually. An advisory committee will be formed to provide feedback on the TA training program and closely monitor the campus-wide pilot, with meetings convened at least twice per year. The Council expects that continual and meaningful data analysis, evaluation of the effectiveness of the program, and scaling be explicitly addressed and discussed by the advisory committee.

The Graduate Council is committed to advancing and supporting institutional priorities that promote excellence and innovation in teaching and education. That said, we would be happy to confer with you further on these issues or assist in any way as you determine the best administration of TA training.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via Graduate Council Analyst, Estrella Arciba, at earciba@senate.ucla.edu.

Sincerely,



Andrea Kasko, Chair
Graduate Council

cc: James Bisley, Incoming Vice Chair, Graduate Council
April de Stefano, Executive Director, Academic Senate
Susan Ettner, Interim Dean, Graduate Division
Adriana Galvan, Dean, Undergraduate Education
Kumiko Haas, Director, Instructional Improvement Programs (CAT)
Jody Kreiman, Vice Chair/Chair-Elect, Academic Senate
Adrienne Lavine, Associate Vice Provost, Center for the Advancement of Teaching
Leah Lievrouw, Incoming Chair, Graduate Council
Megan McEvoy, Chair, Undergraduate Council
Michael Meranze, Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate
Emily Rose, Assistant Provost and Chief of Staff to the EVCP
Shane White, Chair, Academic Senate
Daniel Wong, Assistant Dean, Graduate Division
Estrella Arciba, Principal Policy Analyst, Graduate Council

February 28, 2017

Scott L. Waugh
Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost

RE: TA Training

Dear EVC/Provost Waugh,

The Graduate Council is committed to advancing and supporting institutional priorities that promote excellence and innovation in teaching and education. To that end, the Council has discussed TA training on multiple occasions this year, in the hopes of articulating a clear vision for Teaching Assistant (TA) training on the UCLA campus as a matter of general principle. It is the Council's view that, prior to or during their first teaching quarter, TAs should be introduced to universal teaching and learning issues, core pedagogical principles and practices, and strategies for promoting and assessing student learning outcomes. TAs should be prepared to perform teaching or teaching-related duties including, but not limited to, developing teaching materials, leading discussion sections, evaluating and grading examinations, and promoting inclusive classrooms.

With these considerations in mind, we provide you with the following resolutions, voted on by the Council's membership, in hopes that they offer a guiding framework for ongoing discussions regarding the future of TA training on our campus:

Be it RESOLVED that-

I. All departments and programs hiring TAs must ensure that those TAs enroll in a 495 course before or during their first quarter as a TA. 495 courses can be coordinated among units, if best. Funding must be made available to departments and programs for hiring Teaching Assistant Consultants (TACs), and TAs should receive credit for this disciplinary training course in accordance with current practice and previous guidelines from the Graduate Council. A review of the TAC program should yield recommendations for improvements. *Academic programs and the faculty who teach in them should remain the primary units responsible for TA training, experience, supervision, and concerns.*

II. Basic training in pedagogy (e.g., on inclusive classrooms, classroom management, fairness and accuracy in evaluation) should be offered in a consistent (and presumably centralized) fashion for all new TAs, who should complete the basic training before or during the quarter in which they begin teaching. That training could be offered via a conference, a series of workshops, or in other formats. Because the material covered involves in-person engagement and group dynamics, we do not envision this as an online-only training experience. This training should be relevant to all disciplines, and any programs that originate in one corner of the campus should not be taken to scale until inclusiveness is demonstrated. TAs should be fairly compensated for this training, and a system of credits should be offered in lieu of pay only if those credits are useful to TAs.

III. Basic compliance training modules should be developed as soon as possible, likely in an online format on the model of Berkeley.

IV. The Graduate Council can envision any number of institutional configurations to provide mandatory TA training and provide services for additional TA training and evaluation to departments and programs, faculty, and TAs themselves. It is imperative that the coordinating unit be organized in an inclusive, cross-campus way, with strong leadership, a focus on teaching, and a system of accountability both to administration and to the Senate. The Graduate Council should serve as the


approval body, should be consulted on any proposals, and should approve any changes to the current system of TA training on the campus.

V. UCLA could explore offering an advanced track – perhaps a certificate program – for graduate students wishing to develop advanced teaching expertise. However, this is less urgent than ensuring basic quality and disciplinary training for the TA workforce.

Please note that the Graduate Council chose to remain silent on the institutional structure best suited to planning and administering TA training. This resolution is not intended as a direct response to ideas emanating out of the Graduate Division, the Office of Instructional Development, or other innovative campus units. That said, I hope it goes without saying that we would be happy to confer with you further on these issues, to invite you to Graduate Council to discuss them, or to assist in any way as you determine the best administration of TA training.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at jesscatt@anthro.ucla.edu or the Graduate Council Analyst, Estrella Arciba, at earciba@senate.ucla.edu.

Sincerely,



Jessica Cattelino, Chair
Graduate Council

cc: Onyebuchi Arah, Vice Chair, Graduate Council
Susan Cochran, Chair, Academic Senate
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April de Stefano, Assistant Dean-Academic Services, Graduate Division
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