

TA Faculty Advisors at UC San Diego

In response to recommendations of the UC President's advisory committee on undergraduate education,¹ the UC San Diego Graduate Division implemented the requirement that all UC San Diego TAs receive appropriate training and evaluation. This task is carried out by the academic departments, working in cooperation with the Teaching + Learning Commons @ Geisel (The Commons)².

Role and Responsibilities

To ensure implementation of the TA training requirement and to achieve effective communication among all involved units, the Graduate Division asks academic departments to identify a faculty member responsible for TA training oversight. These faculty members are called TA faculty advisors.

The TA Faculty Advisor is expected to conduct an annual review of departmental statements that delineate the responsibilities of TAs and faculty instructors and to ensure that TAs are receiving meaningful evaluation and feedback regarding their performance.

Faculty advisors are asked to work with their departmental colleagues and The Commons to create a TA training and evaluation program appropriate for the specific needs of their graduate teaching assistants, the department, and its faculty. TA Faculty Advisors may also be called upon to resolve conflicts between supervising faculty and Teaching Assistants as needed.

TA Faculty Advisors should establish practices (e.g., setting aside time to meet with TAs as a group mid-quarter) to bring to light and address any problems and conflicts (e.g., support for TAs grappling with academic integrity issues in a course). While TA Faculty Advisors may be able to solve only a subset of problems without assistance, they can

¹ The campus requirement, established in 1978 by the TA Development Advisory Committee, states that all new TAs must participate in introductory workshops on teaching and in a follow-up program that includes observation by and consultation with an experienced teacher (a faculty member, a departmental senior TA, or a Commons' staff member). This requirement also includes mid-quarter feedback from students, which is incorporated into the consultation process. (Watson, J. (1989) *Enhancing Undergraduate Education in the University of California: The Next Steps: A Report from the President's Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Education*. University of California.)

² The Teaching + Learning Commons' role includes preparing graduate students for teaching undergraduates at UC San Diego and for the teaching they will do in future academic and nonacademic careers.

call upon colleagues, The Commons, and the Graduate Division for consultation and support.

TA Faculty Advisors are expected to participate in the quarterly UC San Diego TA Faculty Advisor meetings conducted jointly by The Commons and the Graduate Division. These meetings provide an important venue for sharing concerns, problems and unmet needs and for identifying viable steps to solve or ameliorate these problems.

TA Training Components & Role of The Teaching + Learning Commons

To implement the TA training and evaluation requirements, faculty and the departments are encouraged to draw on the resources available at The Teaching + Learning Commons. The Commons is poised to assist academic departments in the mentoring and teaching preparation of TAs via support for custom-designed departmental training, campus-wide orientations, observation, consultation, and workshops. The Commons is committed to cooperating with departments to help achieve the mission of enhancing undergraduate education at UC San Diego.

Elements of a comprehensive training program within a department include:

- An introduction before classes begin for TAs to learn about their instructional role, basic teaching skills and concepts, policies affecting TAs, and resources available to instructors in their department;
- Individual mentoring and feedback by faculty, senior TAs, and instructional improvement professionals, based on observation, student evaluations, and/or videotaping;
- Ongoing seminars and workshops on teaching, as well as access to materials from which TAs can learn independently; and
- Formative and summative evaluation of TAs, based on procedures developed by departments in consultation with TAs.

Departmental TA Training Evaluation

Evaluation of TA training programs may be included in the regularly scheduled graduate program reviews conducted by the Academic Senate and the Graduate Division.