

HANDBOOK FOR THE ASSIGNMENT, TRAINING, & EVALUATION OF GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS, GRADUATE ASSISTANT INSTRUCTORS, & GRADUATE ASSOCIATE INSTRUCTORS

Adopted April 15, 2018 . Revised October 1, 2019 . **Last Updated August 31, 2020**



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| I. Introduction | 1 |
| II. Graduate Teaching Assistants | 1 |
| A. Qualifications..... | 1 |
| B. Duties | 2 |
| C. Supervision | 2 |
| D. Training & Teaching Development..... | 2 |
| E. Evaluation..... | 3 |
| III. Graduate Assistant Instructors | 4 |
| A. Qualifications | 4 |
| B. Duties | 4 |
| C. Supervision..... | 4 |
| D. Training & Teaching Development | 5 |
| E. Evaluation..... | 5 |
| IV. Graduate Associate Instructors | 6 |
| A. Qualifications | 6 |
| B. Duties | 6 |
| C. Supervision..... | 6 |
| D. Training & Teaching Development | 7 |
| E. Evaluation..... | 7 |
| V. Documentation & Reporting | 8 |
| A. Departmental/Program Records | 8 |
| B. Centralized Reporting..... | 8 |
| C. Timeline for Graduate Assistant & Instructor Training & Evaluation..... | 8 |
| D. Calendar for Reporting to the Office of Institutional Accreditation..... | 8 |

I. Introduction

Graduate students who support or directly offer instruction are essential members of the academic team. They offer supplemental or direct instruction to students while also gaining critical teaching experience that will serve them in later professional and scholarly endeavors. The purpose of this handbook is to define the roles and responsibilities of graduate students with instructional responsibilities, support their delivery of quality instruction and instructional support, and ensure that they meet the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) credentialing requirements for graduate teaching assistants¹, which are as follows: master's in the teaching discipline or eighteen (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 (SACSCOC [Standard 6.2.a.f](#) [*Faculty qualifications*] of the *Principles of Accreditation*).

The guidelines presented here cover three classifications of graduate student teaching positions—Graduate Teaching Assistant, Graduate Assistant Instructor, and Graduate Associate Instructor—responsible for support or direct delivery of instruction. The guidelines do not apply to student employees who do not (and should not) deliver instruction, including Graduate Assistants (GAs) and undergraduate assistants.

Graduate student instructors and graduate teaching assistants are hired on a semester-by-semester basis. For more information on the selection and appointment of graduate student instructors and graduate teaching assistants, please refer to UTRGV Graduate Assistantships Guidelines, linked here and available from the Graduate College.

II. Graduate Teaching Assistants

A. Qualifications

Job Advertisement Information

Job Class Code: 10064

FLSA: Exempt

Salary: Varies by departmental criteria

A Graduate Teaching Assistant must meet the following minimum qualifications:

- be in good academic standing
- hold a bachelor's degree or higher appropriate to the area of service
- be registered full-time for the respective semester—nine (9) semester credit hours during the fall semester, nine (9) semester credit hours during the spring semester, or three (3) semester credit hours during the summer session or be registered in the required number of semester credit hours to fulfill the only remaining requirements of the degree plan.

Required and preferred qualifications that are discipline-specific will be determined by the hiring department. Hiring graduate students without eighteen (18) hours of graduate coursework to serve as Graduate Teaching Assistants in a non-teaching capacity is encouraged. A Graduate Teaching Assistant qualifies for an out-of-state tuition waiver when teaching activities are assigned for a total of twenty (20) hours per week (50% FTE) per [Texas Education Code Section 54.212. Teaching or Research Assistant](#).

¹ SACSCOC uses the term “Graduate Teaching Assistant” to refer to any graduate student assigned as instructor of record in the classroom or lab. UTRGV uses the titles Graduate Assistant Instructor, and Graduate Associate Instructor for graduate students assigned as instructor of record. The title of Graduate Teaching Assistant is assigned to graduate students with less than 18 graduate hours in the discipline and who support instruction.

B. Duties

Graduate Teaching Assistant responsibilities will be determined by colleges, departments, and/or programs. Such duties include, but are not limited to, providing feedback and/or grading student work; monitoring/proctoring course activities; leading and/or supervising laboratory sessions, discussion sessions, or recitation labs; providing assistance to students during scheduled office hours; and performing clerical tasks associated with course instruction. The maximum amount of time allowed for assigned duties is twenty (20) hours per week. The workload of the assigned Instructor of Record will be determined by departments/programs (see ADM 06-501).

C. Supervision

To support Graduate Teaching Assistants, a supervision structure and plan will be defined and documented by the college, department, and/or program. This plan will define supervisors, any other supporting supervisory roles, and the areas of supervision.

A Graduate Teaching Assistant cannot be an Instructor of Record (IOR), meaning that all Graduate Teaching Assistant duties will be carried out under the supervision of departmental faculty. Direct supervision does not require physical presence or continuous observation; however, it does require regular (weekly) documented meetings and interaction as outlined in section E. Evaluation. The Instructor of Record always has final responsibility for ensuring the success of a course section. Furthermore, the IOR should be prepared to initiate action if a Graduate Teaching Assistant's performance is not acceptable.

Possible Supervisors

- Instructor of Record
- Graduate Coordinator
- Program Coordinator
- Laboratory Coordinators
- Department Chair
- Assistant Dean
- Associate Dean

Possible Supporting Roles Contributing to Supervision

- Peer Mentors (other graduate student with teaching responsibilities)
- Faculty Mentors (other than the instructor of record)

Possible Areas of Supervision

- Training
- Performance Evaluation (observation of teaching, if applicable, teaching reflection, or other evaluative activities/documents)
- Timecards
- Grade Submission
- Early Warning Message Distribution

D. Training & Professional Development

Graduate Teaching Assistants will have required trainings and teaching development activities in alignment with requirements for university employees. For example, Graduate Teaching Assistants who are grading must complete FERPA training and receive specific instruction on grading to ensure reliability. Also, students performing lab maintenance duties must receive lab safety training. All Graduate Teaching Assistants must complete Title IX training as part of their onboarding process. Additionally, wellness support services training should be incorporated into college/department orientation activities. Other recommended orientation topics include academic integrity, student conduct and disciplinary procedures, and Student Accessibility Services accommodation procedures.

In addition to required trainings, each assistant will attend and document a minimum of three (3) additional professional development training activities/sessions per semester. The supervisors/supervisory unit will develop and document a plan for additional required professional development aligned with the position's duties. Trainings will be incorporated into paid work time.

Required Trainings

- HR New Employee Orientation and UTRGV Employee Required Trainings: As part of the onboarding process, Human Resources assigns all new employees with training modules in Blackboard. These modules cover general policies and procedures of working in the University setting (e.g., FERPA training, asset safeguarding, and others as appropriate to the assignment). As part of our overall compliance efforts, these modules are to be completed in the time allotted by Human Resources.
- Title IX training
- Wellness support services training (may be completed as part of department/college onboarding/orientation process)
- Department-determined discipline-specific and course/lab-specific training
- Teaching Strategies (to be developed)
- Faculty & Student Processes and Support Services (to be developed)

Resources for Additional Professional Development

- Graduate College
- Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), including recorded trainings and tutorials
- Center for Online Learning & Teaching Technology (COLTT)
- Office of Faculty Success & Diversity
- Human Resources Organizational Development and Training programming and e-Learn Employee Enrichment
- The Writing Center

E. Evaluation

To support the quality of work performed by Graduate Teaching Assistants, an evaluation process will be defined and documented by college, department, and/or program aligned with the duties of the graduate student.

Possible Types of Evaluation

- Weekly documented meetings for assessment of previous week's activities and planning of the following week.
- Formative Evaluation during the beginning of the semester or summer session, such as an observation. An improvement plan may derive from this evaluation, if needed, and a follow-up evaluation before the end of the semester/session.
- Summative Evaluation once at the end of each semester, including a documented comprehensive review of their performance.

Possible Evaluators

- Instructor of Record
- Graduate Coordinator
- Program Coordinator
- Laboratory Coordinators
- Department Chair
- Assistant Dean
- Associate Dean

III. Graduate Assistant Instructor

A. Qualifications

Job Advertisement Information

Job Class Code: 10064

FLSA: Exempt

Salary: Varies by departmental criteria

Graduate Assistant Instructors must meet the following minimum qualifications:

- be unconditionally enrolled as a master's student
- be in good academic standing
- hold a bachelor's degree or higher appropriate to the area of service
- have successfully completed eighteen (18) hours of graduate coursework in the assigned teaching discipline
- be registered as a full-time student for the respective semester (nine (9) semester credit hours during the fall semester, nine (9) semester credit hours during the spring semester, or three (3) semester credit hours during the summer session) or be registered in the required number of semester credit hours to fulfill the only remaining requirements on the degree plan

Graduate Assistant Instructors qualify for an out-of-state tuition waiver when teaching activities are assigned for a total of twenty (20) hours per week (50% FTE) per [Texas Education Code Section 54.212. Teaching or Research Assistant](#).

B. Duties

As Instructors of Record, Graduate Assistant Instructors will function as auxiliary teaching staff and are employed to teach courses scheduled at the undergraduate level. (For additional requirements associated with teaching assignments see the UTRGV Faculty Teaching Qualifications Policy.) The maximum number of teaching hours for a semester is six (6) and the maximum amount of time allowed for assigned duties is twenty (20) hours per week. Discipline-specific required and preferred qualifications are determined by the hiring department. The criteria for assigning courses will follow college and department guidelines.

C. Supervision

To support Graduate Assistant Instructors who serve as Instructors of Record, a supervision structure and plan will be defined and documented by college, department, and/or program. This plan will define supervisors, any other supporting supervisory roles, and the areas of supervision.

Possible Supervisors

- Graduate Coordinator
- Program Coordinator
- Laboratory Coordinators
- Department Chair
- Assistant Dean
- Associate Dean

Possible Supporting Roles Contributing to Supervision

- Peer Mentors (other graduate student with teaching responsibilities)
- Faculty Mentors

Possible Areas of Supervision

- Training
- Performance Evaluation (observation of teaching, if applicable, or other evaluative activities/documents)

- Timecards

D. Training & Teaching Development

Graduate Assistant Instructors who serve as Instructors of Record will have required trainings and teaching development activities in alignment with requirements for auxiliary teaching staff. In addition to required trainings, each instructor will attend and document a minimum of three (3) additional professional development training activities/sessions per semester. The supervisors/supervisory unit will develop and document a plan for additional required professional development aligned with each position's duties. Trainings will be incorporated into paid work time. All Graduate Assistant Instructors must complete Title IX training as part of their onboarding process. Additionally, wellness support services training should be incorporated into college/department orientation activities. Other recommended orientation topics include academic integrity, student conduct and disciplinary procedures, and Student Accessibility Services accommodation procedures.

Required Trainings

- HR New Employee Orientation and UTRGV Employee Required Trainings: As part of the onboarding process, Human Resources assigns all new employees with training modules in Blackboard. These modules cover general policies and procedures of working in the University setting (e.g., FERPA training, asset safeguarding, and others as appropriate to the assignment). As part of our overall compliance efforts, these modules are to be completed in the time allotted by Human Resources.
- Title IX training
- Wellness support services training (may be completed as part of department/college onboarding/orientation process)
- Department-determined discipline-specific and course/lab-specific training
- Teaching Strategies (to be developed)
- Faculty & Student Processes and Support Services (to be developed)

Resources for Additional Professional Development

- Graduate College
- Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), including recorded trainings and tutorials
- Center for Online Learning & Teaching Technology (COLTT)
- Office of Faculty Success & Diversity
- Human Resources Organizational Development and Training programming and e-Learn Employee Enrichment
- The Writing Center

E. Evaluation

To support the quality of work performed by Graduate Assistant Instructors, an evaluation process will be defined and documented by college, department, and/or program aligned with the duties of the graduate student. This process will include at minimum the following:

- Weekly documented meetings for assessment of previous week's activities and planning of the following week.
- A formative evaluation during the first month in each long semester and during the first two weeks in each summer session. An improvement plan may emerge from this evaluation if needed, in which case a follow-up evaluation must occur before the end of the semester.
- A summative evaluation at the end of each semester.

Possible Evaluators

- Graduate Coordinator
- Program Coordinator

- Laboratory Coordinators
- Department Chair
- Assistant Dean
- Associate Dean

IV. Graduate Associate Instructor (PhD Students)

A. Qualifications

Job Advertisement Information

Job Class Code: 10064

FLSA: Exempt

Salary: Varies by departmental criteria

Graduate Associate Instructors must meet the following minimum qualifications:

- be unconditionally enrolled as a doctoral student, having completed a majority of the requirements for the doctoral degree
- be in good academic standing
- hold a bachelor's degree or higher appropriate to the area of service
- have successfully completed eighteen (18) hours of graduate coursework in the assigned teaching discipline
- be registered as a full-time student for the respective semester (nine (9) semester credit hours during the fall semester, nine semester credit hours during the spring semester, or three (3) semester credit hours during the summer session) or be registered in the required number of semester credit hours to fulfill the only remaining requirements on the degree plan

Graduate Associate Instructors qualify for an out-of-state tuition waiver when teaching activities are assigned for a total of twenty (20) hours per week (50% FTE) per [Texas Education Code Section 54.212. Teaching or Research Assistant](#).

B. Duties

As Instructors of Record, Graduate Associate Instructors will function as auxiliary teaching staff and are employed to teach courses scheduled at the undergraduate level. (For additional requirements associated with teaching assignments see the UTRGV Faculty Teaching Qualifications Policy.) The maximum number of teaching hours for a semester is six (6) and the maximum amount of time allowed for assigned duties is twenty (20) hours per week. Discipline-specific required and preferred qualifications are determined by the hiring department. The criteria for assigning courses will follow college and department guidelines.

C. Supervision

To support Graduate Associate Instructors who serve as Instructors of Record, a supervision structure and plan will be defined and documented by college, department, and/or program. This plan will define supervisors, any other supporting supervisory roles, and the areas of supervision.

Possible Supervisors

- Graduate Coordinator
- Program Coordinator
- Laboratory Coordinators
- Department Chair
- Assistant Dean
- Associate Dean

Possible Supporting Roles Contributing to Supervision

- Peer Mentors (other graduate student with teaching responsibilities)
- Faculty Mentors

Possible Areas of Supervision

- Training
- Performance Evaluation (observation of teaching, if applicable, or other evaluative activities/documents)
- Timecards

D. Training & Teaching Development

Graduate Associate Instructors who serve as Instructors of Record will have required trainings and teaching development activities in alignment with requirements for auxiliary teaching staff. In addition to required trainings, each instructor will attend and document a minimum of three (3) additional professional development training activities/sessions per semester. The supervisors/supervisory unit will develop and document a plan for additional required professional development aligned with each position's duties. Trainings will be incorporated into paid work time. All Graduate Associate Instructors must complete Title IX training as part of their onboarding process. Additionally, wellness support services training should be incorporated into college/department orientation activities. Other recommended orientation topics include academic integrity, student conduct and disciplinary procedures, and Student Accessibility Services accommodation procedures.

Required Trainings

- HR New Employee Orientation and UTRGV Employee Required Trainings: As part of the onboarding process, Human Resources assigns all new employees with training modules in Blackboard. These modules cover general policies and procedures of working in the University setting (e.g., FERPA training, asset safeguarding, and others as appropriate to the assignment). As part of our overall compliance efforts, these modules are to be completed in the time allotted by Human Resources.
- Title IX training
- Wellness support services training (may be completed as part of department/college onboarding/orientation process)
- Department-determined discipline-specific and course/lab-specific training
- Teaching Strategies (to be developed)
- Faculty & Student Processes and Support Services (to be developed)

Resources for Additional Professional Development

- Graduate College
- Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), including recorded trainings and tutorials
- Center for Online Learning & Teaching Technology (COLTT)
- Office of Faculty Success & Diversity
- Human Resources Organizational Development and Training programming and e-Learn Employee Enrichment
- The Writing Center

E. Evaluation

To support the quality of work performed by Graduate Assistant and Associate Instructors, an evaluation process will be defined and documented by college, department, and/or program aligned with the duties of the graduate student. This process will include at minimum the following:

- Weekly documented meetings for assessment of previous week's activities and planning of the following week.

- A formative evaluation during the first month in each long semester and during the first two weeks in each summer session. An improvement plan may emerge from this evaluation if needed, in which case a follow-up evaluation must occur before the end of the semester.
- A summative evaluation at the end of each semester.

Possible Evaluators

- Graduate Coordinator
- Program Coordinator
- Laboratory Coordinators
- Department Chair
- Assistant Dean
- Associate Dean

V. Documentation & Reporting

A. Departmental/Program Records

Departments and Programs should retain the following documentation according to the UTRGV records retention policy:

- Copies of meeting minutes. The minutes should include the name(s) of Graduate Instructors attending and topics discussed.
- Proof of completion of training for each Graduate Instructor. These can be electronic certificates for online training or sign-in sheets for in-person training.
- Copies of individual observations/evaluations for each Graduate Instructor.

B. Centralized Reporting

In order to keep records of the training and evaluation of Graduate Assistants and Instructors in a convenient location for internal and external review, Chairs/Directors or their delegates will be responsible for collecting and submitting the required documentation to the Office of Institutional Accreditation per their established process.

C. Timeline for Graduate Assistant & Instructor Training & Evaluation

| When | Activity |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Before the beginning of the semester | Pre-semester training at the Department/School level |
| Each week of the semester | Weekly meetings with IOR |
| First 2-4 weeks of the semester | HR Blackboard training |
| | Formative evaluations |
| Middle of the semester | Additional University training sessions |
| | Follow-up evaluation (if necessary) |
| End of the semester | Summative evaluation |
| | Submission of documentation |

D. Calendar for Reporting to the Office of Institutional Accreditation

| Fall Semester Documents | Due Date |
|-------------------------|----------|
|-------------------------|----------|

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Listing of Graduate Teaching Assistants, Assistant Instructors, & Associate Instructors | End of Week 2 |
| | |
| End of term submission of checklist. (Random samples of documentation will be requested for compliance review purposes e.g., agendas, sign-in sheets, meeting notes, professional development completed, etc.) | Last Day of Finals |
| Spring Semester Documents | |
| Listing of Graduate Teaching Assistants, Assistant Instructors, & Associate Instructors | End of Week 2 |
| | |
| End of term submission of checklist (Random samples of documentation will be requested for compliance review purposes e.g., agendas, sign-in sheets, meeting notes, professional development completed, etc.) | Last Day of Finals |