

**University of Maryland, College Park  
Department of Philosophy**

# **Guide for Incoming Teaching Assistants**

**Prepared for Fall 2001 by Professor S. Kerstein,  
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## **Mentoring**

Each graduate teaching assistant is assigned a faculty member to serve as her or his mentor. The mentor is usually the person whom the graduate student serves as a teaching assistant. If, however, the graduate student is assigned a course of her or his own, a faculty member is assigned to mentor her or him.

The mentor's duties are: to advise the TA concerning graduate student teaching; to oversee and monitor the graduate student's overall performance as a graduate teaching assistant; to observe and evaluate the graduate student's class performance at least once a semester; to report to the graduate student concerning the quality of his or her performance as a teaching assistant; and to file a semester report with the committee on graduate student teaching (Sam Kerstein and Jack Odell) regarding the quality of the graduate student's performance as a teaching assistant.

## Suggestions for Leading Discussion Sections

- Don't be afraid to repeat yourself. Try to find a number of different ways of expressing key points as an aid to understanding.
- Try to phrase your questions as "why questions," or open-ended questions, rather than "yes or no questions." That helps to get discussion going. However, if you are lecturing (reviewing material, for example), then you might want to take periodic surveys using yes or no questions (to see whether your students are following you, or whether they are even awake).
- Patience! The hardest thing to do is to wait while the students think (or at least we hope they're thinking).
- Call on your students, especially the ones who don't talk all the time. You might announce as a policy at the beginning of the semester that if anyone doesn't want to talk at all during class, then he has to come see you at least once during office hours to discuss whatever topic you are covering. This is a discussion section, after all.
- Let your students finish their comments. Of course, sometimes they can go on forever, so you might interject with a comment such as "so your conclusion is?" Still, cutting students off discourages them from talking in the future.
- Be supportive toward those who are easily discouraged, and firm toward smart-asses. This is a matter of judgment, but you probably have a rough idea of what is meant.
- Impress upon your students that we are concerned with arguments, not people's opinions or character. That means two things – first of all, we can criticize people's arguments without criticizing them personally. We all make mistakes, so there is nothing wrong with criticizing someone else's argument, or being criticized. Second, when people can't think of a reason why they believe something, they'll just repeat their belief. You don't have to make them think that if they can't come up with a reason to support their belief, then they shouldn't hold that belief (although sometimes you might want to do that). Instead, you can say something like "I know you believe X, but what would you say to someone who was unsure about this issue in order to help her share your belief?"
- Use examples. Students often find it easier to grasp a theoretical point (say about what makes an act morally obligatory) if they can apply it to a specific case. Including some of your own students in a made-up example is also a helpful way to interest your students in philosophical discussion. Be careful when it comes to discussing actual situations involving your students, however. The line between criticizing someone's argument and criticizing the individual can be hard to maintain in such cases.

- Take extreme positions. The right answers are often messy and complicated, but taking an extreme position (especially in Contemporary Moral Issues) makes people angry and gets them talking. Be careful, however, of the “you’re just an idiot” response – if they think you’re too crazy, they’ll decide that it’s not worth their time arguing with you.
- After a while, you will know which side of a debate (in moral issues) your students take. Have them argue for the opposite side; oftentimes this will help them to focus on the arguments for or against a certain position, rather than merely stating their beliefs.
- Use some humor. There is a fine line to walk here – you don’t want to get too concerned with entertaining them, nor should you let your desire to be liked lead you to make too many jokes. Still, if you can show that you don’t take yourself too seriously, then your students will be friendlier, and so more willing to talk.
- Reformulate your students’ comments. Sometimes you may be fortunate enough to have a discussion where you don’t have to do anything more than organize who talks next. Other times, however, your students will speak too imprecisely to be useful (if they even make sense. “You know, like, if people are bad, then like, . . . there is nothing wrong with the death penalty” can be rephrased as “Bad people deserve to be punished”). You might want to rephrase your students’ comments and then ask, “Does anyone see a reason to disagree with this?” or something like that.
- Use the chalkboard! Write down students’ arguments, write down the arguments from lectures, diagram arguments. This will encourage your students to take notes, and it also gives you something to point at (repeatedly) as the same point comes up, or as you indicate the troubling premise of an argument. Also, drawing on the chalkboard slows down your lecture (if you are lecturing), which gives your students a chance to digest what you’ve said.
- Change the design of your classroom. You don’t have to sit up front all the time. You may want to have your students form a circle, with you sitting at the far end away from the chalkboard.
- Break your students up into groups. Sometimes your students won’t be comfortable talking in front of the whole class. Divide them up into small groups (of four or five) and give each group a question to discuss. Let them talk for five minutes and then go back to a general discussion, with each group sharing its private discussion.
- Learn your students’ names! Knowing names is power. It allows you to control discussion, it makes your students pay more attention (after all, you know who they are), and it also makes your interaction with them more personal. Try to learn something about your students – where did they grow up, what are their majors, where do they live,

work, etc. The more of a personal relationship you have with your students, the better your discussion will go. (Remember, however, that you are their teacher, and in some cases, a mentor, but not their friend). Moreover, the belief that you have helped some specific individual to learn something new can be one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching.

- If a student asks you a question you don't know the answer to, or that is too advanced, or goes too far off topic, then tell her you can speak to her after class about it.
- Be on time. If you arrive late (consistently), then so will your students.
- Some days, the magic just won't be there. No matter how good you are, there are some days when your students just won't want to talk. Don't take it personally.

## Advice concerning grades

- Each professor handles his or her grading policy a bit differently. Be sure to check grading procedures with individual professors at the beginning of the semester.
- It is usually a good idea to mention problems that arise, particularly over grade disputes, to the other TAs you are working with, as well as the professor for whom you are a TA. This has the double benefit of advising them as to the kinds of problems that they may encounter, while at the same time ensuring that you have not made an error.
- Many professors will sit down with their TAs to correct a few exams, so as to determine how each question will be scored and to make sure that all those who are grading are (roughly) doing so using the same scale. Even so, problematic answers to test questions are bound to arise; for example, where it is unclear how much partial credit a given answer should receive. To a certain extent, each TA must use his or her own judgment. Still, it is often a good idea to send out an e-mail to the other TAs for the class as well as to the professor asking how a particular answer should be scored (and perhaps suggesting an answer to this question).
- When you pass out exams and/or papers, announce your policies concerning questions on grades to the students. Here are a few policies you might want to adopt:
  1. Do not take questions on grades the day you distribute an exam or paper. There are almost always a few students who are disappointed or angry about the grade they have received, and it is best to let them calm down before speaking with them about their grade. Instead, remind them of your office hours, and invite them to come see you then to discuss any questions they may have.
  2. Remind your students that they can appeal the grade or score you have given them to the professor for whom you are a TA. However, ask them to discuss the grade with you first. You may have made an error, or you may change your mind as to what score to assign a student. Should you meet with a student, explain your reasons for giving the student the score you did a couple of times, and if he or she continues to argue with you, then you should bring the conversation to a close by advising the student to meet with the professor.
- Right after you collect a student's exam/paper it's a good idea to record the fact that the student has turned it in. This way, if you lose students' work you'll know it.
- Keep at least two copies of your students' grades for a class, in case (for example) the disk you have saved their grades on should disappear. Also, be sure to record your students' grades before you return their exams to them. Recollecting exams is

annoying; when some of your students have thrown them out, it can become a serious problem.

- Remember, unless he or she expressly states otherwise, final decisions on grades are the professor's.



## Meeting and Corresponding with Students

- Remind your students of your office hours, especially before exams or papers. Also, be prepared to have students who cannot make your office hours. Meetings with such students should be arranged via e-mail.
- If you have time, you might want to encourage your students to write rough drafts of their essays, and to discuss their drafts with you during your office hours. Not only will this help them learn the material and become better writers (and often, and most importantly from their perspective, improve their final grade), it will also make grading their final essays easier on you. It is better for them to meet with you in person to discuss a draft than for you to write comments and hand it back to them; and it is better for them to present a draft rather than an outline or an introductory paragraph. But (almost) anything is better than nothing. Be aware that some students will come to your office hoping that you will write their papers for them; this is when asking questions and being patient while they try to figure out the answers is most important.
- You may want to leave your door open when meeting with a student in your office. This can greatly reduce the possibility of uncomfortable, and potentially litigious, situations. If your office-mate, or someone in an office near yours, is trying to work, you might want to hold your office hours in the lounge (if it is not too crowded or noisy).
- Save all of the e-mails your students send you. This can be done by setting up a folder in your e-mail account, with the name of your class as the title. Old messages can be helpful in many ways, not least when students complain that they have not been able to contact you.
- On occasion, your students may come to you with problems outside the scope of the class. Such problems may include anything from trouble with some other class, or picking a major, to conflicts with family members, financial difficulties, psychological conditions such as depression or eating disorders, and even sexual violence. The University of Maryland has a number of offices set up to address these problems, and you may wish to help your students contact these offices. Useful offices include:
  1. Office of Financial Aid – 301-314-9000
  2. Counseling Center – 301-314-7651
  3. Health Center – 301-314-8184

## **Difficulties with the Professor**

Should any conflict between you and the professor for whom you are a TA arise the resolution of which you believe requires outside assistance, there are a number of people you can approach for help. These include the faculty members charged with TA oversight (currently Sam Kerstein and Jack Odell), the departmental ombudspersons (currently Allen Stairs and Judy Lichtenberg), and the University's ombudsperson for graduate students (see next section). Conversations with an ombudsperson (departmental or university) are strictly confidential.

## University of Maryland Ombuds Office for Graduate Students

### Role of the Ombudsperson

The Ombudsperson is an impartial, independent and confidential resource for graduate students at the University who helps to surface and resolve school issues. The Ombudsperson can also help to affect positive change by providing upward feedback on patterns of problems and complaints to appropriate senior officers.

The word "Ombudsman" originated in Sweden during the 19th Century, when the term applied to a public official appointed to investigate citizens' complaints against governmental agencies. The Ombudsperson is best described as "the person who has an ear to the people." The purpose of the Ombuds Office is to insure that the graduate student voice is heard, and that problems can receive impartial attention.

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### What can you expect of the Ombuds Office?

The Ombudsperson listens to your concerns, clarifies procedures, discusses options, and, when requested, may act as an intermediary. The Ombudsperson does not advocate for an individual. Rather, the Ombudsperson advocates for a fair process. The Ombudsperson works to promote the University's commitment to excellence in graduate education.

The Ombuds person will:

- Hear complaints and grievances.
- Help individuals candidly discuss issues and explore options.
- Open channels of communication.
- Serve as a neutral third party in conflict resolution.
- Work to achieve fair and equitable solutions to problems.
- Make referrals to appropriate University resources, so that you can go directly to the person who can best address your concerns.
- Suggest approaches for addressing and managing conflict.

- Collaborate with other University offices on issues of general concern.
  - Help obtain interpretations of University policies.
  - Offer recommendations for policy and procedure change.
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### **What makes the Ombuds Office unique?**

Confidentiality. The Office is firmly committed to maintaining the confidentiality of those who use our services. The Ombudsperson will not identify you or pass on your confidences to anyone without your permission, except when there appears to be imminent threat of serious harm.

We keep no official records of visitors' names, affiliations, or concerns. If you wish for a problem or complaint to go on record, we will refer you to the appropriate office or person.

Neutrality. The Ombudsperson does not take sides, but considers the interests and concerns of all parties to disputes, with the goal of achieving fair outcomes. The Ombudsperson does not arbitrate, adjudicate, testify, or participate in any formal grievance process.

Independence. The Ombudsperson is outside the usual administrative structure of the University. The Ombudsperson reports to Dr. Chuan Liu, Interim Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School, and is authorized to work with all members of the University community to resolve problems.

Flexibility. The Ombuds Office provides an alternative to the formal grievances and complaint process.

The Office emphasizes non-adversarial, problem-solving options, rather than formal, rights-based options. While formal processes are appropriate in many situations, they emphasize pursuing justice through rules and regulations. Problem-solving options go beyond seeking justice to address underlying issues that may have given rise to disputes, so that future disputes can be avoided.

## Resources

- **Joanne DeSiato, Graduate Student Ombudsperson**  
2103 Lee Building  
301.405.3132. FAX: 301.314.0685  
jdesiato@gradschool.umd.edu
- **Graduate Student Legal Aid Office**  
1221 Stamp Student Union  
301.304.5807
- **Office of Judicial Programs**  
2118 Mitchell Building  
301.314.8204

Source: [www.gradschool.umd.edu/Ombuds/](http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/Ombuds/)

## University Of Maryland Policy And Procedures On Sexual Harassment

Approved by the President 1 August 1991

### A. POLICY

UM is committed to maintaining a working and learning environment in which students, faculty, and staff can develop intellectually, professionally, personally, and socially. Such an environment must be free of intimidation, fear, coercion, and reprisal. The Campus prohibits sexual harassment. Sexual harassment may cause others unjustifiable offense, anxiety, and injury. Sexual harassment threatens the legitimate expectation of all members of the Campus community that academic or employment progress is determined by the publicly stated requirements of job and classroom performance, and that the Campus environment will not unreasonably impede work or study.

Sexual harassment by University faculty, staff, and students is prohibited. This constitutes Campus policy. Sexual harassment may also constitute violations of criminal and civil laws of the State of Maryland and the United States. For the purpose of this Campus policy, sexual harassment is defined as: (1) unwelcome sexual advances; or (2) unwelcome requests for sexual favors; and (3) other behavior of a sexual nature where:

- a. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or participation in a University-sponsored educational program or activity; or
- b. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for academic or employment decisions affecting that individual; or
- c. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic or work performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or working environment.

In assessing whether a particular act constitutes sexual harassment forbidden under this policy, the standard shall be the perspective of a reasonable person within the College Park Campus community. The rules of common sense and reason shall prevail. Allegations of sexual harassment shall be judged with attention to the facts particular to the case and the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred. Conduct prohibited under this policy may manifest itself in many different ways. Sexual harassment may, for example, be as undisguised as a direct solicitation of sexual favors, or solicitation accompanied by overt threats. Harassment may also

arise from behavior which has the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or working environment. In this regard, the following types of acts, if pervasive and continuous, are more likely-than-not to result in allegations of sexual harassment: unwelcome physical contact, sexual remarks about a person's clothing, body or sexual relations, conversation of a sexual nature or similar jokes and stories, and the display of sexually explicit materials in the workplace or used in the classroom which are without defensible educational purpose.

Sexual harassment may occur within a variety of relationships. It may occur among peers. It may occur where no relationship exists between the parties other than being co- employees or co-students. Especially injurious, on the other hand, is harassment in relationships characterized by inequality of power, where one party has institutional authority over the other. Inherent in these relationships is the power and fear of reprisal. Typically, such relationships are found between employer and employee; senior faculty and junior faculty; graduate teaching assistant and undergraduate; and faculty and student, when the student is enrolled in a faculty member's class or when the student is in a continuing position to require evaluation of work or letters of recommendation from the faculty. Such relationships can be immediate, here and now, or based upon future expectations, e.g., the need for future evaluations and references. Sexual harassment may occur between persons of the same or different genders. Education and awareness are the best tools for the elimination of sexual harassment. The Campus is committed to taking appropriate action against those who violate the provisions of the policy. The Campus is committed to protecting targets of harassment from retaliation.

## B. PROCEDURE

Individuals who believe themselves subjected to an incident of sexual harassment should be aware that there are many ways to bring it to the attention of the University, and, where proper, obtain redress or protection. There is an informal route. There are also more formal procedures of long-standing which are sufficiently broad to deal with sexual harassment. Preventing sexual harassment is a responsibility of the entire Campus community. The Campus has made this a priority, but ultimately, no satisfactory investigation or resolution of a complaint can occur without the initiative and continuous cooperation of the person who feels injured. Similarly, allegations of sexual harassment are extremely serious, with potential for great harm to all persons if ill-conceived or without foundation. Procedures which implement Campus policy recognize the potential. The Campus is committed to protecting the rights of the alleged offender as well as the offended.

### 1. Informal Consideration

An incident of sexual harassment may be reported to:

- a. any Campus or University official or faculty member, including an individual's supervisor, the department chair or dean;

- b. the Director of Personnel (405-5648);
- c. a Departmental or College equity officer;
- d. the Director of the Office of Human Relations (405-2839); or
- e. the President's Legal Office (405-4945).

When an individual receives a report of sexual harassment, he or she will notify the Legal Office prior to taking any action to investigate or resolve the matter informally. The Legal Office will normally manage and coordinate all matters relating to complaints. Complainants will be advised of relevant campus policies and procedures, and the informal and formal means of resolving the matter will be explained. While a written complaint is not required to initiate an informal investigation, the Legal Office generally will ask for a signed complaint from the offended person. If the matter is to be investigated, consideration shall be given to the situation and the wishes of the complainant. The investigation of a complaint will include discussing the matter with the person accused of sexual harassment. The findings of the investigation shall be confidentially reported as required to the President and to the relevant vice president, dean, chairman, or supervisor for any necessary action. Sanctions for sexual harassment may range from reprimand to termination, depending upon the circumstances of the case.

## 2. Formal Complaints

Formal grievance procedures for resolving sexual harassment complaints are available based on the classification of the aggrieved person.

- a. Faculty members may file with the dean of their academic unit under the Faculty Grievance Procedure contained within the Faculty Handbook of the College Park Campus, University of Maryland.
- b. Associate Staff employees may file with the Employee Specialist under the Associate Staff Grievance Procedure contained within the Personnel Policies and Rules for Associate Staff Employees of the University of Maryland, Office of Personnel, Administrative Services Building (405- 5651).
- c. Classified employees may file with the Employee Specialist under the Classified Grievance Procedure contained within the Handbook of Classified Employees, Office of Personnel, Administrative Services Building (405-5651).
- d. Students may file under the Code of Student Conduct, Office of Judicial Programs, 2108 Mitchell Building (314-8204).



- e. Faculty, associate staff, classified employees, and students may file under the UM Human Relations Code with a Campus unit equity administrator or the Campus Compliance Officer, Office of Human Relations Programs, 1107 Hornbake Library (405-2839).

Following is a Statement on Sexual Relationships and Professional Conduct. While sexual relationships in the supervisory context are not prohibited in the sense that penalties attach to such conduct, all members of the Campus community are urged to consider the ethical concerns that may arise as a result of such relationships.

### **STATEMENT ON SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

The basic function of a university is the discovery and transmission of knowledge, activities which are founded upon the free and open exchange of ideas. In order for productive learning and the work that supports it to occur, members of the Campus community--faculty, students, and staff personnel--should pursue their responsibilities guided by a strong commitment to principles of mutual trust and confidence and professional codes of conduct.

It should be understood by all members of the Campus community that sexual relationships that occur in the context of educational or employment supervision and evaluation are generally deemed very unwise because they present serious ethical concerns. Many professional codes of conduct prohibit sexual relationships that occur within the context of one's profession. Accordingly, faculty and supervisors are warned about the possible costs of even an apparently consenting relationship. The element of power implicit in sexual relationships occurring in the supervisory context can diminish a subordinate's actual freedom of choice. There is doubt whether any such relationship can be truly consensual. In addition, sexual relationships between a professor or supervisor and subordinate create an environment charged with potential conflict of interest. Questions of favoritism frequently arise. As a result, such conduct may subvert the normal structure of incentives that spurs works and learning advancement and interjects attitudes and pressures which are not consonant with the education and employment policies and principles to which the Campus is committed.

Source: [www.inform.umd.edu/CampusInfo/Departments/PRES/policies/vi120a.html](http://www.inform.umd.edu/CampusInfo/Departments/PRES/policies/vi120a.html)

## Academic Dishonesty

Student Honor Council: 314-8204

Academic dishonesty is a corrosive force in the academic life of a university. It jeopardizes the quality of education and depreciates the genuine achievements of others. Apathy or acquiescence in the presence of academic dishonesty is not a neutral act. All members of the University Community -- students, faculty, and staff -- share the responsibility to challenge and make known acts of apparent academic dishonesty. Any of the following acts, when committed by a student, is an act of academic dishonesty.

**A. Cheating:** Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise.

1. Students completing any examination should assume that external assistance (e.g., books, notes, calculators, conversation with others) is prohibited unless specifically authorized by the instructor.
2. Students must not allow others to conduct research or prepare any work for them without advance authorization from the instructor. This comment includes, but is not limited to, the services of commercial term paper companies.
3. Substantial portions of the same academic work may not be submitted for credit or honors more than once without authorization.

**B. Fabrication:** Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

1. "Invented" information may not be used in any laboratory experiment or other academic exercise without notice to and authorization from the instructor.
2. One should acknowledge reliance upon the actual source from which cited information was obtained.
3. Students who attempt to alter and resubmit returned academic work without notice to the instructor would be in violation of the Code of Student Conduct.

**C. Facilitating Academic Dishonesty:** Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

**D. Plagiarism:** Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise.

1. *Direct Quotation:* Every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by

appropriate indentation and must be promptly cited in a footnote. (Proper footnote style for many academic departments is outlined by the MLA Style Sheet or K.L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*.)

2. *Paraphrase*: Prompt acknowledgment is required when material from another source is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in your own words.

3. *Borrowed Facts or Information*: Information that is obtained in one's reading or research; which is not common knowledge among students in the course, must be acknowledged. Materials which contribute only to one's general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography and need not be immediately footnoted.

**Academic dishonesty is a serious offense which may result in suspension or expulsion from the University.** The normal sanction for academic dishonesty is a grade of "XF", denoting "failure due to academic dishonesty." That grade will normally be recorded on the transcripts of students found responsible for acts of academic dishonesty in addition to any other action taken (e.g., suspension or expulsion). A forty member Student Honor Council has the responsibility to investigate allegations of academic dishonesty and to convene Honor Boards to adjudicate charges. In specified circumstances, the Student Honor Council will accept petitions to remove the grade of "XF" from a transcript and replace it with the grade of "F".

The *Code of Academic Integrity* is reprinted in full in the Undergraduate catalog for further information, to report Academic Dishonesty or to inquire about serving on the Honor Council call 301-314-8204.

Source: [www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/dishonesty.html](http://www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/dishonesty.html)

## University of Maryland Center for Teaching Excellence

The University of Maryland's Center for Teaching Excellence is an initiative of the Office of the Associate Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Studies. Its purpose is to support the campus-wide efforts to enhance and reform undergraduate education and to offer tangible assistance to individual faculty and TAs as well as to the departments and colleges in which they work.

The Center for Teaching Excellence provides:

- A range of campus-wide workshops and conversations related to teaching and learning issues;
- Assistance to departments and colleges in organizing and implementing faculty teaching workshops, TA training activities, and evaluation/support strategies related to improving teaching;
- Consultation with individuals on particular areas of concern in teaching and learning, research into teaching practice, and implementation of innovative teaching-learning strategies;
- A regular newsletter, CTE's *Teaching and Learning News*, which covers events and developments related to teaching across campus;
- An electronic listserv for the exchange of ideas about teaching using the university electronic mail system; and
- a library of video and print resources on teaching and learning.

CTE also facilitates the Undergraduate Teaching Assistants program, the annual Celebrating Teachers campus-wide awards program for outstanding teachers, the Lilly-CTE Fellows program, the Classroom Climate Training Project, the Instructional Improvement Grants program which supports innovations in teaching, and the Large Classes Project.

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Source: [www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/FacRes/CTE/intro.html](http://www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/FacRes/CTE/intro.html)

## **CTE's University Teaching and Learning Program**

Graduate students spend a good deal of time thinking about and doing research in their disciplines while in graduate school. If they are teaching assistants, they also spend a good deal of time teaching. But how much time, and with what kind of guidance, do graduate teaching assistants spend thinking about their teaching?

When graduate students apply for jobs—be it as professors or professionals—they often have ways to demonstrate strong research skills and experience. But how do graduate students applying for jobs demonstrate their experience and success in teaching?

We believe the professional development of graduate teaching assistants as college teachers is an important part of graduate study, and we believe that teaching is a scholarly, intellectual, public activity—just like research.

With these thoughts in mind, and with support from the Offices of the Dean for Undergraduate Studies and the Dean of the Graduate School, the Center for Teaching Excellence developed the University Teaching and Learning Program.

At the heart of the University Teaching and Learning Program is the philosophy that teaching is a scholarly activity, one which requires intellectual engagement and public conversation. To complete the Center for Teaching Excellence's program in University Teaching and Learning, TAs must fulfil requirements which reflect this philosophy. For example, teaching assistants will attend workshops which promote discussion among college teachers regarding successful teaching strategies. TAs will think about and evaluate the choices they make when they teach as they write reflective essays on their teaching practices for their teaching portfolios. And TAs will read published scholarship on teaching and learning for conversations about college-level pedagogy.

When TAs complete the University Teaching and Learning Program, they will be recognized at an annual reception to celebrate graduate teaching assistants at the University of Maryland and they will receive a certificate acknowledging their participation in the program. In addition, TAs will have tangible evidence of their thoughtful, scholarly, and collaborative engagement with issues central to college teaching.

The University Teaching and Learning Program is designed to accommodate TAs from a variety of disciplines, as well as TAs with a range of experience and success in the college classroom. Although there are specific requirements of the Program for certification (including attending workshops on teaching and learning, mentoring and

being mentored, reading published materials on teaching and learning, completing a larger project related to teaching and learning, and compiling a teaching portfolio), the Center for Teaching Excellence will be flexible with alternative requirements. However, alternative requirements must reflect the philosophy of the program and must demonstrate a commitment to, and an engagement with, college-level teaching and learning.

The University Teaching and Learning Program is a self-paced program. Graduate teaching assistants with at least one semester of college teaching experience are welcome to register for the program with the Center for Teaching Excellence. As TAs complete a requirement, they are expected to inform a coordinator at CTE. TAs may use prior experience, including experience in the University's Graduate Teaching Assistant Development Program or department or college TA activities, to fulfill requirements. When participants in the program have completed all of the requirements, they may apply for certification by meeting with a CTE staff member to review their program participation and supporting documents, including items such as the teaching assistant's compiled teaching portfolio.

For more information or to register for the Center for Teaching Excellence's University Teaching and Learning Program, please contact Gail Langellotto by emailing [gl37@umail.umd.edu](mailto:gl37@umail.umd.edu) or by calling (301) 314-1283.

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Source: [www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/FacRes/CTE/UTLPphilo.html](http://www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/FacRes/CTE/UTLPphilo.html)