

### **A “do” and “don’t” list for supervising graduate student teachers**

- DO be clear about expectations. Write a memo for new T.A.s telling them what your expectations are and how they can meet them. Include the various duties of the course (e.g., lectures, recitations, office hours, test preparation, review sessions, grading and final evaluation) and who is responsible for what – both faculty and T.A.
- DO use structure to organize communication, but not to substitute for it.
- DON’T imagine that a first-semester T.A. will have the time, energy, or confidence to perform without considerable guidance. Investing in the early training of a T.A. will pay off for the T.A., for you, for your colleagues, and for the students. There will be plenty of time for creativity later; at first, a lot of structure and clear expectations make life easier for everyone. This is particularly true for running recitations or discussion sections. These often represent considerable course time, so help the students and the T.A. use it well.
- DO remember that being a T.A. is a job as well as a training experience.
- DON’T exploit T.A.s. Encourage them to keep an informal time sheet of weekly hours, and if it is grossly over 20 hours/week, help them make adjustments appropriately.
- In courses where you have more than one T.A., DO encourage an equal division of labor, consistency in material and approach, and lots of communication. Request at least one experienced T.A. in classes with 100+ students, preferably one who has T.A.’d the same course (preferably with you).
- DO help graduate students learn how to balance their teaching, research, and coursework. Set a good example by being available to discuss problems and achievements without spending endless time obsessing over difficulties.
- DO include time spent preparing course materials for recitations and supervising and training graduate student teachers in your time spent in course preparation. Obviously, this is a bigger investment the first time you teach a course than it is for subsequent iterations.
- If you maintain a teaching portfolio yourself, DO help your T.A. or T.F. maintain one.
- DO recommend that your T.A. or T.F. take advantage of classroom videotaping services. Have the student watch the tape and then select and review with you the “best” and “worst” 5 minutes of the tape. After the first semester, suggest that T.A.s and T.F.s have themselves taped at both the beginning and the end of a course, to document improvement.
- DO sit down with your T.A.s and T.F.s and review standardized student evaluations. Interpreting and eventually responding to student evaluations is a tough job and a real skill; this is an important part of mentoring their teaching.
- If you intend to include observation of recitations or classes as part of evaluating T.A.s or T.F.s, be sure to schedule more than one visit if possible, at more than one time slot (for recitations). Note both strengths and weaknesses, and document your observations both for later review with the graduate student and for inclusion of a formal report in the student’s teaching portfolio.
- DO specify the tasks you expect a beginning T.A. to perform after a semester of working with you, the skills involved, and measures of success for evaluation at the end of the term.
- DO give T.F.s materials to use in teaching (especially labor-intensive items such as a syllabus, choice of reading materials, Web-related materials, and even lectures).
- DO give positive reinforcement, take pleasure in graduate students’ growth and accomplishments as teachers, and encourage creativity when they have the experience on which to build.

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