

Graduate Council
Policy on the Appointment and Use of Graduate Student Instructors for Graduate Courses
 September 2023

Graduate Council recognizes that Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) appointments for graduate courses can provide unique opportunities for graduate students, including advanced teaching and valuable professional development experience, regardless of prior teaching experience. Graduate Council also considers that instances of graduate students assuming instructional roles for graduate classes should be rare, and shares the concern articulated by the University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) and Coordinating Committee on Graduate Affairs (CCGA), about graduate students through their instructional titles holding positions of authority over their peers. We concur with UCEP's and CCGA's (2008) insistence that no graduate student take on an instructional role for which they can influence the grade of another graduate student's performance, unless faculty oversight of the assessment process is sufficient to prevent any semblance of conflict of interest. Graduate Council deems that the degree of faculty oversight of the assessment process for graduate students teaching graduate courses must include listing the faculty mentor/supervisor as co-instructor for the proposed graduate course.

Graduate Council will, *on a case by case basis*, consider requests for a graduate student to be appointed as a GSI for a graduate course. Typically, requests are for graduate pedagogy and TA training courses, although other types of courses may be considered. Graduate Council, however, expects that each approved GSI will be closely mentored by a faculty member who will serve as co-instructor for the course, a responsibility that includes commitment to oversee the grading and student performance assessment in the course to ensure that the GSI is not in a position, or the appearance of a position, to influence the grade of an enrolled graduate student. Consistent with Senate Regulation 750¹, Graduate Council approval must be sought for each offering of a graduate student to serve as a GSI for a graduate course. Each request will be carefully evaluated and approvals are not automatic.

Requests to designate a graduate student as a GSI for a graduate course will be considered for appointment as either a *Teaching Fellow* or *Associate In* title. This form should be used for requests to appoint GSIs to teach graduate courses only. For GSI appointments to teach undergraduate courses, please contact the Committee on Courses of Instruction (CCI) for guidance.

Graduate Council criteria for approval of GSI appointments includes the following: (see also APM 410 and UCSC CAPM 700.411)²:

For Associate In Ph.D. Students

- A master's degree or equivalent training
- At least one year of college teaching experience, either as an instructor, co-instructor, or a teaching assistant

For Associate in MFA Students

- Should be in their second to last or last quarter in the program
- At least one year of college teaching experience, either as an instructor, co-instructor, or teaching assistant

For Teaching Fellow

- Advancement to candidacy for the doctorate.
- At least two years of college teaching experience, either as an instructor, co-instructor, or a teaching assistant

Additional criteria for GSI appointments include (a) teaching is judged to be good or better based on evaluations from the three most recent teaching quarters; (b) course sponsoring unit head/department chair attests to the student's competence to teach the course in terms of subject knowledge and teaching ability; (c) faculty supervisor serves as co-instructor for the course and provides a mentoring plan; (d) Graduate Division confirms that student is in good academic standing and meets the criteria for appointment at the GSI level as indicated in the request.

¹ <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/bylaws-regulations/regulations/rpart3.html#r750>

² [APM 410](#); [CAPM 700.411](#)

Preparing a Request for Exception to Designate a Graduate Student as GSI for a Graduate Course:

Requests should be submitted to Graduate Council for approval and include the following documents:

- ☐ Department/Program Chair Cover Letter: cover letter summarizes the request (including course information, candidate qualifications, and faculty co-instructor oversight of the assessment process and mentoring of the GSI)
- ☐ Request Form with all sections completed
- ☐ All attachments included (Candidate CV; required signatures—can be email confirmations)

GSI Appointment Request Form

Student Information

Student Name:

Last: _____ First: _____

Title Requested (See Criteria Above) : *Teaching Fellow* OR *Associate In*

AIS Student ID Number: _____ # of Quarters Served in a GSI/TA Title: _____

Confirmed Student is in Good Standing & making normative progress to degree

Course Information

Course Sponsoring Agency: _____ Quarter to be offered: _____ Course Number: _____

Course Name: _____ Expected enrollment: _____

Describe whether this course satisfies a graduate program requirement (i.e. elective, core course, other):

Candidacy (for Teaching Fellow Only):

Check if this request is for Associate In and move to the next section

For Teaching Fellow Request:

Date student advanced to doctoral candidacy: _____ Expected date of advancement (if not advanced): _____

Teaching

Graduate Council requires that evaluations of the student's UCSC teaching history as a TA or GSI be reviewed by the course sponsoring unit head/chair prior to submitting this request. Graduate Council does not require the actual evaluations be submitted, only that they have been reviewed and confirmation provided that they are "Very Good" or better by the requester.

Please provide a summary of teaching history, including previous teaching evaluations: (Example Response: Fall 2010 – TA for Psych 100 x% of students rated the instructor's teaching effectiveness as Very Good or Excellent)

As judged by the teaching evaluations, does the student's teaching performance show evidence of appropriate teaching skill and expertise commensurate with this appointment?

Give a brief assessment of the student's competence to serve as GSI for the course in terms of subject knowledge and teaching ability.

Research

Assess the student's research competence as it relates to this course, if any.

Course Sponsoring unit head

*Signature

Date

*My signature indicates confirmation that the student meets the criteria above, including good standing, teaching experience, and subject matter expertise, as applicable. Acknowledgement in the signed cover letter is also acceptable.

Faculty Oversight and Mentoring

The faculty co-instructor will provide oversight and mentoring to the GSI. At a minimum, this entails a faculty member who will:

1. Meet with the GSI before instruction begins to discuss course content, pedagogy, logistics, tests and assignments, grading and evaluation, and the faculty code of conduct; Please elaborate in the section below, including outlining the specific plan for faculty oversight to ensure that the GSI is not in a position, or the appearance of a position, to influence the grade of an enrolled graduate student
2. Oversee the course description, reading list, and all grading and assessment of student performance;
3. Conduct at least one class visit, and follow-up meeting with the GSI
4. Be available to discuss matters related to the course throughout the quarter;
5. Review the last three sets of student evaluations for the appointee and meet prior to the beginning of the course to discuss any issues;
6. In those very rare instances where a GSI may be an instructor for a graduate course with assigned TAs, the faculty co-instructor will act as formal supervisor of any TA associated with the course. Please elaborate in the section below on the TA supervision plan, if applicable

Faculty Co-Instructor/Mentor Statement:

In the space below, the faculty co-instructor should outline the mentoring plan for the GSI candidate proposed to teach the course, expanding on the minimum requirements above. Council will closely review this information to ensure that no graduate student takes on an instructional role for which they can influence the grade of another graduate student's performance, unless faculty oversight of the assessment process is sufficient to prevent any semblance of conflict of interest. Also outline the TA supervision plan, if applicable. (1-2 paragraphs).

Name and signature of the co-instructor/faculty mentor.

Print Name

*Signature

Date

*My signature indicates agreement with the mentoring and supervision plan narrative, and also confirms agreement with the six points outlined above. An attached email signature/confirmation is also acceptable.

Graduate Division Confirmation

Graduate Dean (or designated authority) should confirm that the student is in good academic standing and meets the criteria for appointment at the GSI level as indicated in the request.

Graduate Divisional Dean	*Signature	Date
--------------------------	------------	------

*My signature confirms that the student meets the criteria for appointment as a GSI at the level indicated, and that the request can proceed to GC for review. An attached email signature/confirmation from the Graduate Dean's designated authority is also acceptable.

The completed proposal should be addressed to and sent electronically to the Graduate Council Chair and Graduate Council Analyst. Incomplete proposals will be returned to the requester.

The GC deadline for submission of requests is the end of the 4th week of the quarter prior to the quarter in which the course is to be taught, for example, the 4th week of spring quarter for a course to be offered in fall. For Summer Session, the deadline is the end of January.

Course-sponsoring units should bear in mind that GC approval is not automatic. It is strongly suggested sponsoring units have an alternate plan in mind for mounting the relevant course if needed.

Please contact the Graduate Council Analyst at (gc@ucsc.edu) with any questions.