Deans and Department Chairs

The Graduate Council has approved two policy changes related to the appointment of Academic Apprentice Personnel. The first relaxes the criteria for graduate students to teach graduate-level courses. The second allows Departmental Scholars, undergraduate students who are simultaneously completing bachelor and master’s degrees, to hold appointments as teaching assistants for lower division courses. The Academic Apprentice Personnel Manual will be updated to reflect these changes by the end of September 2015.

1. Graduate Student Teaching Appointments for Graduate-Level Courses

Campus policy already permits graduate students to TA graduate courses. Departments interested in making such appointments submit their requests to the Graduate Division. In recent years, the appointments have been restricted to graduate students who are eligible to be appointed as Teaching Fellows: i.e., they have advanced to candidacy and have at least two years of UCLA TA experience. As a three-year pilot program, the Graduate Council is relaxing these criteria. Now, to be eligible to TA a graduate-level course, a graduate student must have:

- Completed 3 quarters of graduate course work at UCLA and be in good academic standing;
- Earned an A- or better in the course to which he/she will be assigned, or in an equivalent course taken at another institution.

The level of the appointment (teaching assistant, associate or fellow) will be commensurate with the student’s teaching experience and candidacy status. Departments are responsible for ensuring that the appointee receives appropriate training in ethics and standards in teaching, including fairness in evaluation and student privacy. These topics may be incorporated into the department’s TA training course (495) and in course 375, which the student takes while holding the appointment.

2. Lower Division TA Appointments for Departmental Scholars

Because Departmental Scholars are considered undergraduate students until they complete both their bachelor and master’s degrees, they have not been eligible to hold teaching assistant appointments at UCLA, although they could be appointed as readers for undergraduate courses. Under the new policy, Departmental Scholars are now eligible to be teaching assistants for lower division courses only (no exceptions). These appointments can only be made if the pool of qualified graduate students has been exhausted. Departmental Scholars holding a teaching apprentice appointment at 25% time will be eligible for full fee remission benefits.

Eligibility and appointment criteria:

- Must have a 3.5 GPA;
- Must have completed 12 quarters at UCLA if entered as a freshman or 6 quarters if entered as a transfer;
- Must have completed 8 upper division courses toward the undergraduate major;
- Must be enrolled in at least 12 units (i.e., full time);
- Cannot exceed 25% appointment as a teaching apprentice in any term;
- Must enroll in the same 375 and 495 TA training and pedagogy courses that are required of graduate students in their respective departments.

Departments are responsible for ensuring that the appointee receives appropriate training in ethics and standards in teaching, including fairness in evaluation and student privacy. Note that these TA appointments will count toward the UC 12-quarter TA limit.
Impact of the policy
Every effort should be made to ensure that this program does not negatively impact opportunities for graduate students and the participating Departmental Scholars.

Graduate Students: No Departmental Scholar should be offered a TA appointment for a course when a qualified graduate student is available.

Undergraduate Departmental Scholars: Before appointments are made, special consideration should be given to the structure of courses and the expected enrollment in the discussion sections or labs. The goal is to ensure the TA experience complements and enriches the student’s academic training, and does not hinder the student’s degree progress or thwart their efforts toward timely degree completion. The monitoring of Departmental Scholar TA workload and maximum working hours will fall primarily on the instructor and the school or divisional dean. The Assistant Vice Provost of Honors, who oversees the Departmental Scholar Program, will provide additional oversight by working closely with instructors and the dean in addressing any issues.

Evaluation of the policy
This policy will be rigorously evaluated by assessment staff in the Division of Undergraduate Education. Each year for the next five years, they will compile a profile of Departmental Scholars who held any academic apprentice appointment title; for teaching assistant appointments, this profile will include course evaluation data from the Evaluation of Instruction Program. The research team will also develop a survey to administer to participating Departmental Scholars, and will interview course instructors and departmental administrators to gauge the quality of the teaching experience for the Departmental Scholars, the impact of using undergraduate TAs on the quality of the course, and any other outcomes of this policy. The assessment team will issue a report for the College Faculty Executive Committee, the Undergraduate Council, and the Graduate Council no later than Spring 2020.

For more information about these new policies, please contact Ana Lebon, Director of the Graduate Division Fellowships and Financial Services Office at alebon@grad.ucla.edu or x6-4309.

With best regards,

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