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**The University of North Carolina**  
**Report to the President on the Training, Monitoring,**  
**and Evaluation of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)**

**Academic Year 2012-2013**

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**The University of North Carolina**  
**General Administration**  
**Research and Graduate Education Office**

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## Executive Summary

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In Academic Year 2012-2013, eleven UNC institutions employed a total of 6,156 graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) to perform course, laboratory, and other assignments. Nine of those institutions employed a total of 351 international teaching assistants, representing 6% of all GTAs employed that academic year. Contracts and appointment letters, English proficiency tests and standards, and required observations and evaluations by faculty mentors have become standard procedures since the GTA policy and guidelines were adopted by the Board of Governors in 1994. Several institutions have developed comprehensive approaches to providing pedagogical and other trainings for GTAs. Campuses with appreciable numbers of GTAs engage them in institutional governance and committees and recognize outstanding GTAs at the campus and department levels.

Twenty years have passed since the adoption of the BOG policy and guidelines on GTAs. Many aspects of training, monitoring and evaluating GTAs have arguably become institutionalized. Further, language in the guidelines may not adequately reflect many effective practices currently in place at our institutions. The UNC Graduate Council is poised to review existing guidelines and make recommendations to the President for any needed updates.

## Introduction

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This report to the President responds to the Board of Governor's Policy and Guidelines on Training, Monitoring and Evaluation of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) for the 2012-2013 academic year (*see Section 400.3.5 and UNC 400.3.5.1[G], UNC Policy Manual*). The effective use of GTAs, particularly in universities with high research activity, is essential to meeting the demands for both undergraduate instruction and graduate education. GTA appointments are vital for the professional development of graduate students and their preparation for positions in academia, industry, and the public sector. This report is focused on those GTAs who are assigned full responsibility, under faculty supervision, to teach courses in a lecture or laboratory setting.

## Utilization of GTAs

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Table 1 shows the number of GTA positions, by institution and type of position, for academic year 2012-2013. The annual figures represent number of GTA positions, not headcount of GTAs. For example, the same person holding a GTA position in both the fall and spring semesters is counted as two positions for the purposes of reporting. Table 1 includes all graduate positions that support the teaching mission, such as graduate laboratory assistants, but does not include graduate research assistants. Institutions are listed in descending order based on their percentage of the total number of GTAs employed across UNC.

UNC institutions reported a total of 6,156 GTAs related to the instructional mission of the University during academic year 2012-2013. UNC Chapel Hill and NC State University accounted for 59% of all GTA positions within UNC.

According to the data reported, 30% of GTAs were assigned in lecture sections and 22% of GTAs were assigned in laboratory sections. These GTAs had full responsibility (under faculty supervision) to teach these sections. Assignments for the remaining 48% of GTAs did not involve full course responsibility but rather instructional support such as recitation sections of large lecture courses, laboratory preparation, tutoring, grading, or course development.

At universities with high research activity, GTAs are utilized across a wide range of disciplines. As research activity decreases, the scope of use of GTAs also narrows. Even at less research intensive institutions, GTAs make important contributions to the teaching mission. For example, Appalachian State University uses GTAs primarily in Biology, English, Mathematics and Psychology. NC Central University utilizes GTAs in disciplines ranging from history to computer science to assist in class preparation, homework grading, and proctoring of quizzes and exams.

**Table 1. GTA Positions by Institution and Type of Position, AY12-13**

Campus	GTAs in Lecture Sections		GTAs in Lab Sections		GTAs in Other Positions		Total	% of UNC Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
UNCCH	821	45%	485	36%	559	19%	1865	30%
NCSU	344	19%	366	27%	1052	35%	1762	29%
UNCC	76	4%	13	1%	495	17%	584	9%
ECU	77	4%	82	6%	271	9%	430	7%
UNCG	278	15%	42	3%	105	4%	425	7%
NC A&T	48	3%	129	10%	187	6%	364	6%
ASU	62	3%	25	2%	194	7%	281	5%
UNCW	88	5%	92	7%	77	3%	257	4%
WCU	31	2%	99	7%	0	0%	130	2%
NCCU	0	0%	23	2%	34	1%	57	1%
UNCSA	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%
ECSU	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
FSU	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
UNCA	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
UNCP	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
WSSU	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1826</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>1357</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>2974</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>6156</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 shows the number and percent of international teaching assistants (ITAs). Overall, ITAs comprised 6% of the total number of GTAs in AY12-13. Campus processes to ensure English proficiency of ITAs are discussed later in this report.

**Table 2. GTA positions held by International Students by institution, AY12-13**

Campus	Int'l TAs	Total GTAs	Percent of all GTAs
UNCCH	173	1865	9%
NCSU	80	1762	5%
NC A&T	41	364	11%
UNCC	21	584	4%
UNCG	17	425	4%
NCCU	7	57	12%
ECU	5	430	1%
WCU	4	130	3%
UNCW	3	257	1%
ASU	0	281	0%
UNCSA	0	1	0%
UNC TOTAL	351	6156	6%

## Procedures to Assure Competence of GTAs *(UNC 400.3.5.1[G], Sections II.1, 2, 6)*

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**Minimum requirements and Contracts.** GTAs must be graduate students in good standing in their programs, as defined by each institution. Teaching contracts are used across institutions to outline duties, expectations, terms of service, and other guidelines (ASU, ECU, NC A&T, NCCU, NC State, UNC Chapel Hill, UNCC, UNCW, WCU). UNCG utilizes an appointment letter that specifies eligibility for the assistantship, benefits provided, and responsibilities of the position.

**Training programs.** UNC institutions offer a wide variety of training opportunities for GTAs both at the campus- and department-levels. Campuswide trainings are often initiated through the Graduate Schools or centers for teaching and learning. At NC State, all new GTAs are required to attend a University-wide teaching orientation. GTAs at NC State can also take advantage of the Graduate Student Summer Teaching Institute, Fundamentals in Teaching (FIT) workshops, Certificate of Accomplishment in Teaching (CoAT), Mentoring and Teaching Practicum (MATP), or Preparing the Professoriate (PTP). All GTAs at ASU attend required training on legal and ethical issues. At Western Carolina University, all GTAs receive pedagogical training through a G.A.T.E (Graduate Assistant Teaching Experience) workshop series facilitated by the Coulter Faculty Commons. NC A&T's Graduate School requires GTAs to attend online GTA certification workshops, and GTAs can take advantage of their Academy of Teaching and Learning workshops and resources. UNCW GTAs participate in the annual Teaching Assistant Institute facilitated by the Center for Teaching

Excellence. At ECU, all graduate students participate in a daylong orientation program that includes material related to graduate teaching responsibilities. UNCG requires an all-day training for all first year teaching assistants.

Some notable newer initiatives have also launched. NCCU began its two-day training program in instructional support in 2012-2013, targeting graduate assistants in large sections of general education courses. UNC Charlotte launched a Graduate Teaching Initiative in 2011 that includes GTA general training, GRAD 6001/8001 Teaching at the College or University Level courses, and workshops.

Departments also offer credit-bearing courses or workshops for the training of their GTAs. These trainings often focus on working with diverse student populations, campus policy around student conduct and safety, university resources for students, and effective pedagogical practices (ASU, ECU, NC A&T, NC State, UNC Chapel Hill).

**English proficiency.** International students are screened and trained as needed in English proficiency. At ASU, UNCW and WCU, no international student can serve as a TA unless the TOEFL score is at least 79, and other campuses also require that GTAs possess the same satisfactory TOEFL or other scores required for admission to graduate school (ECU, NC A&T, NCCU). UNCG requires one of the following: written TOEFL of 550, TOEFL iBT of 79, or IELTS of 6.0 with some variations by program. At NC State, international TAs complete the Spoken English Assessment Test (SPEAK) administered in the Foreign Language Laboratory. UNC Charlotte utilizes an instrument developed by nationally recognized specialists in the training of international teaching assistants to evaluate English proficiency.

Trainings specific to international teaching assistants are most often handled by the departments. In addition to department-level trainings, the Graduate School at UNC Chapel Hill administers the Preparing International Teaching Assistants Program (PITAP), two 2-credit courses that are strongly encouraged for international graduate students who plan to be graduate teaching assistants.

**Evaluation.** GTAs are evaluated one or more times each semester by faculty mentors through one-on-one reviews or faculty/peer observations (ASU, ECU, NC A&T, NCCU, NC State, UNC Chapel Hill, UNCC, UNCG, UNCW, WCU). GTAs are also evaluated through standard in-class or online student evaluations (NC A&T, NC State, UNC Chapel Hill, UNCG, UNCW, WCU). GTAs who participate in formal professional development programs are evaluated and receive feedback specific to the goals of the programs (NC State, WCU).

## **Communication and Leadership** *(UNC 400.3.5.1[G], Sections II.4,5)*

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Institutions engage GTAs in the broader university community in several ways. The Graduate School is typically the unit responsible for appointments, hiring, and some level of training of GTAs (ASU,

ECU, NC A&T, NCCU NC State, UNC Chapel Hill, UNCC, UNCG, UNCW, WCU). Most institutions maintain a Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook or some other assemblage of online policies or resources to communicate to the broader campus about the role of GTAs and the opportunities for them (ECU, NC A&T, NC State, UNC Chapel Hill, UNCC, UNCG, UNCW).

Graduate student associations exist at the campus- and sometimes department- levels and represent issues of importance to graduate students, including GTAs, to the campus administration (ASU, ECU, NC State, UNC Chapel Hill, UNCC, UNCG, UNCW, WCU). Many departments include GTAs on departmental committees, such as curriculum, hiring or academic affairs committees (ECU, UNC Chapel Hill, UNCG). GTAs are sometimes included on committees to select outstanding faculty for campus- and system-level awards (ECU, NC State, WCU).

## **Recognition of GTAs** *(UNC 400.3.5.1[G], Section II.3)*

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Campuses that make appreciable use of GTAs recognize their outstanding contributions with awards at the campus level (ASU, NC State, UNC Chapel Hill, UNCC, UNCG, UNCW) and at the department level (ECU, NC A&T, UNC Chapel Hill, UNCC, UNCG). Typically, GTAs are nominated for these awards by their departments, faculty mentor, or students. At WCU, GTAs are eligible to be nominated for several university-level teaching awards. GTAs are offered other honorific opportunities on several campuses, such as participation in competitive professional development programs that may come with small stipends (NC State, UNC Chapel Hill, UNCG, UNCW).

## **Impact of GTAs**

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GTAs work collaboratively with faculty to provide high quality undergraduate instruction and in this way make a considerable impact on our campuses. GTAs provide cost effective instruction and instructional assistance while gaining valuable professional development experiences. ASU, ECU and UNCW each note that GTAs are essential to providing more sections and seats and one-on-one attention for large, general education courses and laboratory sections.

Campuses also cited specific examples where GTAs contribute to overall institutional goals for student learning. For example, UNC Charlotte's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is focused on first-time freshmen, and GTAs expand UNCC's ability to provide freshmen with individualized feedback on their writing and to meet the goals of the QEP.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

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Campuses note that budget cuts over recent years have reduced the opportunities to engage GTAs and also resulted in limiting or eliminating some programs that support training for GTAs. NCCU noted that assistantships are not always at a sufficient funding level to meet the financial needs of

their graduate students. As a result, these students sometimes engage in external employment and experience struggles with workload balance. Some campuses reported administrative challenges, such as ensuring that assignments are made in a timely manner and that these students are identified properly in campus data sources. Several campuses noted steps already taken to address identified weaknesses. For example, WCU's new 0-credit course, Career Pathways: Professional Skills for Graduate Students, was developed to assist all graduate students in recognizing and developing their transferable skills. ECU recently launched an orientation workshop to review university policies and standard syllabi statements and policies with GTAs.

One recommendation of the UNC Graduate Council's 2014 report, Graduate Education Measures of Success, is to maintain activities that support and evaluate teaching assistants. The UNC policy and guidelines in place will help facilitate the Council's initiatives regarding this recommendation; however, the guidelines should be reviewed and potentially updated to better reflect advancements in our knowledge and practices over the last twenty years.