Policy on Teaching Assistant Evaluation and Training at the University of Northern Iowa

Graduate assistants may be assigned to teaching functions, either as classroom or lab assistants or tutors, and in some cases may also be given primary responsibility for courses, with proper training, supervision, and assessment. The policy statement below is intended to serve as a guide for both faculty supervisors and graduate assistants assigned to teaching roles.

I. Training and Preparation of Graduate Teaching Assistants

Graduate Teaching Assistants at the University of Northern Iowa will carefully be selected based on qualification in their specific disciplines. Students should also be proficient in oral and written communication. Departments that assign GAs the responsibility of teaching (either as primary instructor of record, or as assistants working with students under the guidance of a professor) are responsible for ensuring that the GA has the necessary preparation for the task. This may require coursework in pedagogy or other preparation/experience as appropriate to the discipline. It may also include pre-service training or orientation regarding departmental policies and procedures. The TA will be held to the same requirements on oral competency which exists for faculty.

II. Supervision and Instructional Support

Supervision of teaching GAs should include:
1. Regular meetings with departmental supervisor;
2. Classroom observation of teaching assistants by departmental supervisor, with verbal and/or written feedback and assistance if needed.
3. Instructional support should be provided for all teaching GAs; this may take the form of teacher-preparation seminars or classes, meetings with faculty mentors or mentors from the CETL, or other support as appropriate to the discipline and available to the department.

III. Teaching Performance Evaluation/Course Evaluation

Departmental supervisors should rely on a combination of direct observation and regular systematic assessments of teaching performance. Graduate teaching assistants should be evaluated at least once each semester by the departmental supervisor, specifically addressing preparation and planning for the course, instructional practices and teaching materials, effective classroom management, and knowledge of subject matter. GAs who are primary instructors of record for courses will also be required to participate in student assessment each semester, using the university’s student assessment instrument. Any problems or concerns will be addressed by the department supervisor and may include remedial work, ongoing supervision and instructional support, or if necessary, a change in assignment.

Approved by the Graduate Council on April 12, 2018