

Policy on Graduate Teaching Assistants for whom English is their Second Language Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

- 1) Assignments of Graduate Teaching Assistants to courses is predicated on their ability to speak and communicate in English. Students whose English is inadequate to communicate effectively are not assigned to teaching duties until their spoken English improves to an acceptable level. Because we live in an international community of scholars, students speaking standard English but with accents are considered to have adequate communication skills. Students who are taking courses in which the GTA speaks with an accent that can be understood with modest effort should recognize that they also have a responsibility to make this effort and to treat the GTA with the same respect they would hope to enjoy when they travel abroad and speak a foreign language with an American accent. Speaking more slowly, rather than louder, is an effective ploy to make themselves better understood to the international GTA, and vice versa.
- 2) GTA assignments, especially for GTAs for whom English is already a challenge, will be to classes in which the GTA possesses the necessary vocabulary and skills to teach effectively. In general, this means making GTA assignments in the research area of the student so they have gained the expanded vocabulary of the subject.
- 3) GTAs are encouraged to attend the orientation sessions available within the university to gain insights into expectations, grading, appropriate student interactions, tips on classroom/lab presentations, etc.
- 4) GTA assignments are mentored by the faculty member in charge of the course. Students serving as GTAs should register for one or more credits of Supervised College Teaching and be graded by the instructor of the course. GTAs are evaluated on a separate course evaluation sheet from the head instructor of the course. The results of this evaluation is discussed with the GTA by the mentor with the goal of improving their teaching ability. Where possible, a midterm evaluation should be conducted, and/or continuous feedback given via the course WebCT site.
- 5) If repeated and serious difficulties are encountered with a student's TA performance, the faculty member mentoring the student should discuss the situation with the department Chair to find an appropriate remedy. In the case that the student is excused from their TA duties for reasons related to communication skills, the student will be given an Incomplete in Supervised College Teaching and will be required to make up the assignment in order to meet their teaching requirement for graduation.