

7 Ways to Support Graduate Students' Pedagogical and Professional Development

1) Clearly communicate professional norms and expectations

- Talk about teaching with graduate students frequently and frankly
- Anticipate graduate students' concerns about navigating academic power dynamics and the challenges of juggling competing demands of teaching, coursework, and research
- Meet with your TAs throughout the quarter to ensure mutual understanding of course policies and course goals
- Articulate clear expectations about TAs' roles and responsibilities
- Assign tasks that are commensurate with TAs' experience
- Check in about TAs' workload and make adjustments as needed

2) Open up the black box of course design and lesson planning

- Discuss your syllabus with your TAs: Why did you organize it as you did? What are your goals for the course? What did and didn't work well the last time you taught the course?
- Meet in advance of major assignments to construct rubrics together (this can also help with grade norming)
- Suggest supplemental or background references for TAs unfamiliar with (or highly interested in) your course topics
- Suggest supplemental videos or online media TAs might use for discussion sections
- Meet with TAs, especially first-year grad students, to come up with lesson plans and activities for discussion sections

3) Foreground TAs' roles as undergraduate educators

- Enlist your TAs' input on course design and student learning before, during, and after your course
- Encourage graduate students to develop their own teaching philosophies and pedagogical commitments
- Engage graduate students as active members of the department, for instance in developing undergraduate curricula
- Consider opportunities for co-teaching with advanced graduate students

4) Invite and provide feedback on teaching

- Solicit TAs' informal input on how the course is going throughout the quarter
- Ask undergraduate students for a joint midterm evaluation that addresses both the lecture and discussion sections
 - Meet with TAs before and after midterm evaluations to manage expectations and decide together how to address student feedback
 - Example midterm feedback question: *"To improve your learning in the second half of the class, what can you as a STUDENT a) start doing; b) keep doing; c) stop doing. To improve your learning, what can your INSTRUCTOR OR TA a) start doing; b) keep doing; c) stop doing."*
- Offer to observe TAs' teaching at some point during the quarter, if they would like
 - Remind undergraduates in advance and during the observation that you are there to observe the TA, not the students
 - Include positive and constructive feedback
 - Set aside time to meet after the teaching observation to discuss your feedback

5) Recognize the potential of the "research/teaching nexus"

- When possible, invite graduate students to give a guest lecture on topics related to their research
- Encourage TAs to incorporate their own research into the curriculum in other ways (through case studies, readings, or discussions)
- Consider collaborating with graduate students to conduct research on your teaching

6) Help TAs build teaching skills throughout graduate school

- Tailor your supervisory or mentoring approach to TAs' level of experience. For example, first-year graduate students might benefit from coaching on course management and professional norms, while senior students might benefit from opportunities to guest lecture for your class
- Create or share workshops and other opportunities for professional development in teaching
- Share your favorite teaching tips, tools, and resources, and explain why you find them useful

7) Support graduate students preparing for teaching careers

- Ask graduate students about their teaching-related career goals
- Be honest about the challenges graduate students will face on the academic job market and in early-career teaching positions
- Write letters of recommendation speaking to graduate students' teaching skills, and let your TAs know you are willing to do this

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