Best Practices for Preparing Doctoral Students for Teaching

General Preparation

- Graduate educators and mentors should advise graduate instructors about the duties and time commitment involved in graduate teaching assignments.
- Doctoral students should receive increasingly more independent and complex teaching assignments, including opportunities to serve as course instructors.
- Doctoral instructors should be prepared to use a wide range of pedagogical practices and instructional technologies with a diverse student body.
- Graduate directors should introduce doctoral instructors to the University’s Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) and encourage their participation in CTE workshops and programs (e.g., the University Teaching and Learning Program, Help on Teaching Program).
- Each graduate program should establish and maintain regular contact with CTE, ensuring that graduate instructors can take advantage of its resources and reducing redundant efforts to support teacher development across campus.
- Each department (or college) should hold an annual meeting on graduate instructor preparation to bring professors and graduate instructors together, provide them with learning opportunities, and share teaching resources and methods.

Departmental Oversight of Doctoral Student Teaching

- Graduate directors should be responsible for assuring that teaching assistants are trained and supervised in their teaching. To achieve this goal, departments may offer orientation sessions, periodic workshops, a course on teaching in the discipline, and in-class visitations.
- The department, college, and/or University should review departmental use of teaching assistants as well as teaching assistant workloads and make recommendations as to how teaching assistant lines might be used more effectively.
- Colleges should consider developing a college teaching course that would teach students to design and develop a course (including syllabus, classroom activities, assignments, exams, and grading rubrics), compose a teaching philosophy, and prepare a teaching portfolio. CTE offers UNIV 798: Learning and Pedagogy: An Introduction to College Teaching, which will serve as a model and may satisfy this requirement.
- Departments should institute a mid-semester review for new teaching assistants; following this review the graduate director should review the evaluations with each teaching assistant.
- Departments and colleges should consider developing a Graduate Assistant Awards program (similar to the one organized by the CTE recognizing graduate students who have demonstrated excellence in their role as classroom instructors.

Faculty Mentoring for Doctoral Instructors

- Graduate directors should provide a formal system to mentor students about the responsibilities of teaching.
- Faculty mentors should provide feedback on graduate instructors’ course materials, instructional techniques, classroom activities, and examinations, and make periodic visits to the graduate instructor’s classroom.
- Graduate instructors should be encouraged to participate in Preparing Future Faculty (http://www.preparing-faculty.org/) or similar mentoring programs, which may enhance students’ ability to teach and navigate the academic system, as well as become productive members of the professoriate.
- Senior graduate students should work with new graduate TAs for a semester to offer guidance and support and foster collegiality among doctoral students.

Classroom Climate and Management

- Graduate educators should assist graduate instructors in planning for and maintaining a healthy classroom community and climate, including ways to manage classroom disruption.
- Graduate educators should ensure that graduate instructors are familiar with the appropriate resources for supporting students with disabilities.
- Graduate educators should help graduate instructors understand how to solicit and respond to student feedback.
**Instructional Technology**
- Graduate educators should teach students to use instructional technologies including but not limited to PowerPoint, VCRs/DVD players, and student response (“clicker”) systems and ensure they understand how to use these tools to support course goals. Graduate instructors should also take advantage of OIT’s excellent training programs for such technology.
- Graduate instructors should be trained to use the University’s WebCT (Web Course Tools) system, including student correspondence, course material collection and distribution, online discussion, and course tools and resources.

**Assessment of Student Learning**
- Graduate educators should assist graduate instructors with creating and evaluating assessment tools, including grading rubrics for class assignments.
- Graduate instructors should demonstrate competence in the following areas of grading (specified by University policies): mid-semester warning grades, incompletes, submitting grades using UMEG, retaining final exams, arbitrary and capricious grading, accommodations for students with disabilities, and academic integrity/dishonesty.

**Academic Integrity**
- Graduate instructors should understand the University’s policy on Academic Integrity and have a plan for establishing and maintaining an honest classroom environment (see CTE).
- Graduate instructors should be familiar with and confident in navigating the University Office of Student Conduct in situations that threaten academic integrity.

**Professional Development**
- Graduate instructors should participate in the University Teaching and Learning Program (http://cte.umd.edu/UTLP/index.html), which enables students to create a teaching portfolio with a full statement of teaching philosophy, observe teachers, give presentations on teaching and learning, advise peers, attend workshops and lectures on teaching/learning, and complete a teaching project.

**Professional Conduct**
- Graduate educators and mentors should ensure that doctoral instructors follow ethical practices of the academic profession (University Policies on Professional Behavior). The University of Maryland Handbook for Graduate Assistants covers policies addressing sexual harassment, sexual relationships and professional conflict, and equal opportunity. (http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/Fellowship/handbooks/gradasst.html#conduct)