

**PENN STATE DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS**  
**Graduate Teaching Associate Program**

1. BACKGROUND TO THE TEACHING ASSOCIATE PROGRAM

Over the last two years the PSU Mathematics Department has put in place a multi-layered program of induction, training, and assessment for new graduate teaching assistants (TAs). Elements of this program include a three day induction and TA training course, which all new TAs are required to take on arrival; a committee of faculty who take individual responsibility for overseeing the teaching of each TA; a more intensive peer-to-peer mentoring program for the first course taught by each new TA; new teaching awards; and a Departmental Teaching Seminar attended both by TAs and by faculty members. We believe that this program is effective in preparing our new graduate students for teaching and in improving the educational experience of undergraduates and graduates alike.

The Department will now implement a procedure for distinguishing those TAs who have completed the training program and have shown a record of successful classroom teaching. Such TAs will be promoted to a new status, which we will refer to as that of 'teaching associate'. There are three reasons for developing such a procedure:

1. It is appropriate to grant official recognition to the effort that TAs have made through their participation in the training program. Such recognition raises the status and visibility of teaching, and will be an important qualification in TAs future job search.
2. The availability of a pool of experienced and certified TAs will be a benefit to the department when decisions concerning course assignments have to be made.
3. Such a certification process is an aspect of our public responsibility as a department, and will demonstrate that we are pro-actively seeking to maintain and improve our teaching standards.

The department hopes that most TAs will choose to seek, and eventually will attain, Teaching Associate status.

## 2. QUALIFYING FOR TEACHING ASSOCIATE STATUS

Teaching Associate status will be granted on the recommendation of the GTA Oversight Committee. A graduate student must have at least two years standing to be granted Associate Status, though he or she may begin to prepare a portfolio at any time. Both PhD and MA students are eligible. A PhD candidate must have passed all necessary qualifying examinations before Associate status can be granted.

A graduate student who wishes to work towards Teaching Associate status should prepare a portfolio that will document the fulfillment of the following requirements.

- The GTA has attended the Induction and Training Program.
- The GTA has taught for at least two semesters, including one class under the direction of a mentor, and the mentor has reported that his or her performance is satisfactory.
- The GTA has produced satisfactory course support materials, including a written syllabus that meets ECOS requirements, and a course web page.
- Student evaluations from the GTA's classes are satisfactory.
- The GTA has attended at least four meetings of the Departmental Teaching Seminar.
- By a written essay on teaching methodology or philosophy, and/or an oral interview, the GTA has demonstrated to the Committee that he or she is a competent and reflective educator.

The preparation of the portfolio will take several semesters. Once it is completed it should be submitted to the GTA Oversight Committee for their approval. The student's assigned GTA-Committee person will be available to advise on the portfolio requirements.

TAs presently (spring 2003) in post who wish to apply for Associate Status may do so. The requirement of attendance at the Induction and Training Program will be waived for those admitted before fall 2001, but the other portfolio requirements will normally remain as stated above. However, accelerated admission to Associate Status will be available to all those TAs still in post who have, in fall 2000 or later, received a departmental or College teaching award.

TAs presently in post who wish to be considered for Associate Status should consult their assigned GTA-committee person who will be pleased to advise them.

### 3. BENEFITS OF TEACHING ASSOCIATE STATUS

Graduate Teaching Associates will receive the following benefits.

1. A certificate signed by the Department Chair.
2. A salary increase of one grade point. Thus, PhD students who have passed qualifying examinations, who are presently on grade 12, will be elevated to grade 13 on the grant of Associate status. The increase in grade will apply from the beginning of the next fall or spring semester following the award of Associate status. (This arrangement will not apply to students in the VIGRE program, who already receive an enhanced stipend.)
3. Priority access to summer teaching appointments. For a variety of reasons, summer semester teaching in Mathematics is a more demanding activity than teaching in the other semesters. GTAs with summer semester classes have to exercise more responsibility with less oversight. Therefore, we will normally aim to schedule qualified Teaching Associates for these positions.

A GTA who is awarded Teaching Associate status should be sure to draw attention to this in his or her resumé. The award is likely to be an effective recommendation for future academic teaching positions.