Supporting 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
     o Meet with TAs before and after midterm evaluations to manage expectations and
       decide together how to address student feedback
o 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
  o Remind undergraduates in advance and during the observation that you are there to observe the TA, not the students
  o Include positive and constructive feedback
  o 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. UCI’s Teaching and Learning Research Center is a resource for how to do this (http://tlrc.dtei.uci.edu/cirtl-tar-at-uci/)

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. See UCI’s Division of Teaching Excellence and Innovation for current programs (http://dtei.uci.edu/workshops-and-colloquia/)
- 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
References


