

## **Best Practices**

### **Graduate Teaching Fellows and Course Assistants**

Graduate teaching is an integral part of the graduate school experience and often represents the only pedagogic training graduate students obtain prior to receiving faculty appointments.

The following guidelines, developed by the Committee for the Support of Teaching are designed to clarify the responsibilities of the teaching fellow, to explain departmental expectations, and to serve as a jumping off point for activities within departments to train teaching fellows to be more effective at their craft. They also represent an attempt to establish best practices for teaching fellows (as far as possible) in the interest of departments/program chairs, faculty members, graduate students, and the undergraduates for whom they serve as teaching fellows.

#### **Responsibilities**

When the course assignment is made graduate students and faculty members will discuss course requirements, attendance policies and the range of teaching fellow responsibilities (in class, outside the classroom, administrative duties, technical assistance, e.g. running a projector, etc.).

In order to encourage an open, cooperative relationship between the teaching fellow and faculty member, meetings should be held (on regular basis, once a week, etc.) to discuss the progress of the course.

The teaching fellow will advise the faculty member of any problem arising in the course as soon as possible so that the faculty member and graduate student can cooperate in addressing it.

If the teaching fellow is to grade undergraduate papers or exams, the faculty member and TF will discuss the number of assignments, the grading procedures (letter grade/pass, fail/comments only, grading in pencil, expectations for student writing ability) and an expected range of grades.

If the teaching fellow is required to hold weekly office hours, the scheduling of those hours should be discussed with the faculty member as are any ancillary responsibilities related to office hours [e.g. tutoring].

Faculty members will advise teaching fellows on policies for academic honesty and sexual harassment at the beginning of the term as described in "Rights and Responsibilities Handbook" <http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/rr/index.html> and discuss procedures for alerting the proper university officers and dealing with such matters.

Faculty are expected to introduce their teaching fellows to their classes at the beginning of the semester and to outline for undergraduates what they can expect from the teaching fellow with respect to their responsibilities for grading papers and examinations,

the number of office hours teaching fellow will hold, and how the teaching fellow will be working to assist the faculty member and the students in the course.

### **Evaluation/Oversight/Professional Development**

First time teaching fellows are invited to the Graduate School's TF Orientation in late August. The program changes each year but usually includes information about the demography of the Brandeis undergraduate student body, information about plagiarism and harassment, and guidelines about what to expect in the classroom. Presentations are made by faculty, administrators, and experienced graduate students from the several schools.

Teaching fellows are encouraged to discuss teaching with faculty members and program chairs and to attend teaching workshops sponsored by the Graduate School.

In consultation with faculty members, teaching fellows are encouraged to make use of mid-term evaluations, videotaping facilities, etc. to improve their own performance in the classroom.

Every attempt should be made to resolve difficulties between teaching fellows and faculty members involved. If such resolution is impossible, official grievances should be made to the program chair or teaching coordinator and in the final instance to the Graduate School Dean.

Teaching fellows should be encouraged to document teaching experiences for future job searches by keeping copies of syllabi, assignments, and end-of-semester student evaluations. Faculty members, after agreeing to provide letters of reference for teaching will furnish them in a timely fashion, and they will be added to the student's departmental file.