

Policy Title:	Teaching Assistants
Policy Number:	2.1.0
Effective Date:	11/06/2003
Last Revision Date:	11/06/2003
Approved By:	ME Executive Committee

Policy:

1) NATURE OF THE JOB

- a) Teaching Assistants (TAs) engage in professional activities of such a nature that the output produced or the result accomplished cannot be precisely measured in relation to a given period of time. In determining the amount of time expected for a TA assignment, consideration is given to such factors as type of instruction, number of students instructed, and all other factors, including those specific to the course or group of courses being taught. Fluctuations above and below the hours reflected in the appointment level are expected, corresponding to individual distinctions such as experience.
- b) The appointment level (33.3%, 50%, etc.) is based on the Department's determination of the amount of time it should normally take to perform the assigned duties including orientation and training. Satisfactory performance of those duties should not require an effort exceeding 360 hours per semester for a 50% appointment and 240 hours per semester for a 33.3% appointment. It is essential that TAs keep their activities within the hours allotted to their appointment percentage. If at any time it appears that this may be a problem, the TA must notify their supervising faculty in a timely fashion so that adjustments can be made.
- c) The duties typically performed by TAs include:
 - i) Attending course lectures of, consulting with, and being trained by, supervising faculty
 - ii) Preparing for and leading classroom/lab sessions
 - iii) Holding regular office hours
 - iv) Grading examinations and other course assignments
 - v) Maintaining grade book(s)
- d) The supervising faculty has formal responsibility and authority for directing and monitoring the TA's activities. Much of the education progress of our students depends on the quality of the relationship between TAs and faculty. It is the responsibility of all parties to maintain an effective working relationship, but if problems occur that cannot be resolved, it is the responsibility of all parties to inform the (Asst./Assoc.) Chair.
- e) TAs are subject to the University's work rules and the agreement between the State of Wisconsin and the Teaching Assistants' Association (TAA).

- f) TAs must distribute teaching evaluations in their courses at the end of every semester.

2) SATISFACTORY PROGRESS FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

- a) Overall grade point average:
 - i) Masters students must maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average;
 - ii) Ph.D. students must maintain at least a 3.25 grade point average and obtain approval of their program from the Graduate Committee in a timely manner. (A Ph.D. student is defined as a student who has passed the qualifying exam.)
- b) Enrollment:
 - i) At least 8 graduate credits per semester if less than 50% time appointment
 - ii) At least 6 graduate credits per semester if 50% time or greater appointment
 - iii) 3 graduate credits per semester if a dissertator
 - iv) At least 2 graduate credits if teaching summer school
- c) Advisor: TAs must have an advisor at all times.
- d) Progress toward degree: Advisor must agree that student is making satisfactory progress with respect to the qualifying exam, preliminary exam and thesis completion.
- e) Fees: All tuition fees must be paid according to University rules.

3) MISCELLANEOUS

- a) International students on F-1 and J-1 Visas are at risk concerning their immigration status if they are employed for more than 20 hours per week during the academic year. This means the sum of an individual international student's TA, PA (Project Assistant), and student hourly help appointments may not exceed 20 hours of work or 50% time per week.
- b) A student who is a non-native speaker of English and is applying for their first teaching assistant position must have a minimum TOEFL score of 26/30 or must pass a SPEAK test before further consideration (50 or greater is passing). SPEAK tests are offered throughout the year by the University's Program in English as a Second Language. For further information and scheduling, see the ESL web page

- c) TAs are required to attend College of Engineering and Department training sessions at the beginning of each semester that they teach. Absence must be excused in advance by the Department so that arrangements for alternative training can be made.

Related References (if applicable):

Graduate School: University of Wisconsin-[Madison Maximum Levels of Graduate Assistantship Appointments Policy](#); Graduate School: Academic [Enrollment procedures \(see Enrollment requirements\)](#) ; Graduate School: [Teaching Assistant \(TA\) Orientation and Training](#)

Procedure:

- 1) After TA openings have been announced (late each semester for positions the following semester), applicants may obtain an application form from the Department's website (www.me.engr.wisc.edu) or Student Services Office, and must return it by the deadline announced. In general, only a limited number of teaching assistantships are offered to incoming students.
- 2) TAs must be graduate students (undergraduate students can be Undergraduate Assistants under certain, limited circumstances).
- 3) When evaluating applicants, the (Asst. /Assoc.) Chair of the Department or faculty member designated by the Chair, in consultation with instructing faculty, will consider:
 - i) Pre-existing contractual commitment, if any (A graduate student with "guaranteed support" will be employed as stipulated in the original letter of appointment unless their graduate record or prior performance as a teaching assistant prove unfavorable.);
 - ii) Factors relating to the academic mission of the department including
 - iii) The applicant's ability to effectively and safely teach courses,
 - iv) The Department's need for courses, and
 - v) Ensuring that graduate students in the Department have opportunities to obtain experience teaching in their profession;
- 4) Demonstrated proficiency in essential technical skills (e.g. welding) may be required in some courses;
- 5) Excellent English speaking abilities and comprehensibility;
- 6) Academic record, letters of recommendation, previous relevant industrial or teaching experience, record of satisfactory performance
- 7) Satisfactory progress in degree program including grades in graduate course work, status not probationary, satisfactory fulfillment of MS, passing preliminary

examinations, becoming dissertator (see Section C below, also see Regulations Governing Graduate Study for deadlines);

- 8) Compliance with all applicable University rules and regulations, including good standing in the Graduate School;
- 9) The Department will consider graduate students from other departments only when there are no qualified applicants from the Department of Mechanical Engineering;
- 10) Favored consideration will be given to applicants who have previously taken and excelled in the course(s) for which they have applied;
- 11) When applicants for a position are equally well qualified, consideration will be given to whether an applicant has available alternative sources of funding;
- 12) The Department does not employ a teaching assistant for more than six semesters without approval each semester of the graduate student's advisor, the Graduate Committee of the Department and the (Asst./Assoc.) Chair of the Department.
- 13) TAs are evaluated using:
 - i) Numerical ratings by students
 - ii) Qualitative comments by students
 - iii) Written evaluations by supervising faculty
- 14) The Department requires supervising faculty to evaluate inexperienced (first two semesters) TAs during the fifth or sixth week of their first two semesters. The evaluation will usually involve a planned visit to a classroom/lab section and a subsequent conference with the TA.
- 15) TAs may request assignment to particular courses, and when in the Department's judgment the TA is qualified to teach the course, the course supervisor is agreeable to the assignment, and the department can staff its courses in a manner which it deems satisfactory, the TA's request shall be granted.
- 16) The Department will notify appointed TAs of their tentative course assignments, if known, by August 1 for fall semester courses and by December 1 for spring semester courses.