XII. POLICY ON THE ASSIGNMENT OF TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS AND INSTRUCTORSHIPS TO GRADUATE STUDENTS  
Sociology Department University of Minnesota  
Approved by Faculty: March 2004

I. POLICY STATEMENT
In assigning Teaching Assistantships (TAs) and Instructorships the Department will balance 1) the need to maintain a high quality educational experience for our undergraduates, 2) each graduate student's relative entitlement to support, 3) each graduate student's need for teaching experience prior to entering the job market, and 4) allowing graduate students flexibility to engage productively in research.

II. OBLIGATION TO CARRY OUT TEACHING DUTIES DILIGENTLY.
A. The Department requires participation in several teacher training programs. First-year students are required to attend teacher training sessions as part of their orientation. Second-year graduate students are required to participate in the Department-sponsored portion of this teaching orientation so that they can share their practical experiences with first-year students. However, if second-year students know that they will not be TAing or teaching during their second year, they may (but need not) defer this requirement. Students who defer this requirement will be eligible for a TA or Instructorship appointment after they have made up the requirement. Finally, students are required to take Sociology of Higher Education (SOC 8011) or an equivalent course to be eligible for an instructorship.

B. Graduate students who fail to meet the teacher training requirements without making alternative arrangements will be ineligible for a TA or Instructorship during the year that they missed a requirement. Students in special circumstances (e.g., an emergency prevents them from fulfilling a requirement; teaching experience at another institution makes a requirement superfluous) may work with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) to waive a requirement or to make up a requirement in some other fashion (such as verified attendance at seminars offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning and designated by the DGS).

C. In addition to participating in all required teacher training programs, to be eligible for an instructorship, students must demonstrate a commitment to quality teaching. If a student has received an unsatisfactory evaluation from a supervising teacher and/or unsatisfactory student evaluations of teaching (an average of less than 4.0 out of 7 on the first question), the student must make arrangements with the Advisor and the Coordinator of Undergraduate Advising to take additional training tailored to the student's particular strengths and weaknesses.

D. All non-native English speaking graduate and undergraduate Teaching Assistants (TAs) must demonstrate proficiency in spoken English appropriate to the demands of their teaching assistantship. Proficiency is assessed in one of the following ways:
   1. Speaking section of TOEFL iBT (internet-based Test of English as a Foreign Language) [http://www.ets.org/toeflibt/about/content/](http://www.ets.org/toeflibt/about/content/)
   2. SETTA (Spoken English Test for Teaching Assistants) [http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/graduate/itap/learnaboutthesetta/index.html](http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/graduate/itap/learnaboutthesetta/index.html)
   3. English Language Proficiency (ELP) rating earned through coursework with the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) [http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/graduate/itap/index.html](http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/graduate/itap/index.html)

All non-native English speaking TAs assigned to teaching, grading, or advising duties must meet the following requirement to hold a teaching assistantship in Sociology.

Students scoring 27 and above (out of 30) on the speaking section of the TOEFL iBT test are eligible to teach and for all TA duties.

Those students scoring between 23 and 26 on the TOEFL iBT test can teach (or lead discussion sections) if they take the SETTA and receive a score of 2 or 3 on the English Language Proficiency (ELP) and enroll concurrently in coursework (5105) offered through the International TA (ITA) program (at the Center for Teaching and Learning).

Graduate students who fail to meet an ELP score of 5 (or score below an 18 on the TOEFL iBT) will be ineligible for a TA or instructorship. For an overview of the Spoken English Testing and TA Eligibility go to [http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/graduate/itap/settaeligibility/index.html](http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/graduate/itap/settaeligibility/index.html).

---

1 Teaching evaluation forms are produced by the College of Liberal Arts, which does not always consult with the Department of Sociology. As such, this definition of “unsatisfactory” is subject to change.
III. RANKING FOR ASSISTANTSHIPS
With respect to assistantships, graduate students who have satisfied the requirements of Section II shall be ranked by cohort. Members of the first-year cohort have priority for TA assignments over members of the second-year cohort; members of the second-year cohort have priority over members of the third-year cohort, and so on. Within cohorts, students will be ranked, first, by the nature of their funding guarantees (students with guaranteed funding for that year have priority over those who do not) and, second, by their timely progress toward the Ph.D. For students in the same cohort who are at the same stage in their progress toward the Ph.D., priority will be determined by considering past evaluations of teaching from undergraduate students or supervising faculty, students’ interest areas, abilities and preferences, and faculty preferences regarding TA assignments.

IV. RANKING FOR INSTRUCTORSHIPS
A. The Department will endeavor to provide graduate students with the opportunity to teach at least one class. Graduate students who have satisfied the requirements of Section II, have taken all of their required (core) courses while maintaining at least a 3.0 grade-point average, and have passed their third-year review, shall be eligible for instructorships. Subject to the exception in Part B of this section, students will be ranked in terms of their need for teaching experience. Thus, students who have not been instructors will have priority over students who have had one instructorship; students who have had one instructorship will have priority over students who have had two instructorships, and so on. Among students with the same level of instructorship experience, rankings will be determined by the factors listed in Section III.

B. It is important that graduate students agree to assume instructorships when the Department needs them. However, instructorships are undeniably more work than TAs, and there may be times when a student prefers a TA appointment over an instructorship (for example, during a semester when a student plans to write or defend a preliminary exam). To balance these competing interests, a student may choose a TA position over an instructorship position without losing his or her priority in the ranking, but a student may only do this twice during his or her matriculation. If an eligible student turns down an opportunity to be an instructor a third time, in future rankings the student will be treated as if he or she had accepted the instructorship.

C. A graduate student who has had continual research assistantships (RAs) since joining the Department should inform the Department Administrator in writing nine months in advance of the semester when they would like to be an instructor. The Department is not obliged to provide an instructorship to a student during a semester for which this advance notice was not provided.

V. OBLIGATIONS TO INSTRUCT ONCE TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS ARE MADE
The Department will make every effort to assign instructorships at least twelve (12) weeks in advance of a semester. Withdrawing from an instructorship once a contract has been signed is extremely unprofessional, as well as a major inconvenience for office staff and other instructors. It also tends negatively to affect the quality of undergraduate education. For this reason, withdrawing from an instructorship is greatly discouraged. Nevertheless, when serious unforeseen events make it impossible or very disadvantageous to teach, a student should inform the Department Administrator as soon as possible, in any event at least six (6) weeks prior to the start of the semester. The Department Administrator will make an effort to find a replacement teacher. If a student was assigned an instructorship at least twelve (12) weeks prior to the semester, requesting a replacement with less than six (6) weeks notice will be grounds for denying a student any future instructorships.

VI. APPROVAL NECESSARY TO HOLD MORE THAN A HALF-TIME APPOINTMENT.
College rules discourage students from holding teaching and/or research assistantships that in combination exceed a 50 percent appointment during a semester. Students must obtain approval from their Advisors before they can assume responsibility for appointments totaling more than 50 percent.

VII. PROCEDURE
The Coordinator of Undergraduate Advising and the Department Administrator will make the initial TA and Instructorship assignments. The assignments will then be reviewed by the Department Chair, the DGS, and the DUGS. Students may appeal decisions regarding their appointments to the Department Administrator.