

Discussion notes from 20 May 2016 Grad Council meeting on the College of Engineering request to allow GTAs to grade in 500 level courses if they sign a conflict of interest statement and receive training.

Grad Council members made the following observations and raised the following concerns:

- In the past, complaints came from students regarding the practice of having their “peers” serve as instructors and graders in graduate level courses. The students asserted that they did not come to graduate school to be taught by other graduate students and want the attention of faculty.
- The conflict of interest policy needs to be expanded to allow students to come forward at any time to declare a conflict of interest for any reason with the GTA grader.
- Faculty member would need to step in and grade for all students who have a conflict.
- The Grad Council would restrict the activities of GTAs in graduate courses to grading.
- If grading rubrics could be developed and GTAs trained to use them to minimize subjectivity, that could be helpful.
- Professors, not GTAs, need to assign final course grades in all cases. All issues related to grading need to be resolved by the professor. Students need to have an appeal process.
- The Grad Council suggests that students’ names be hidden from the GTAs and a coding system be used to anonymize student work. Only the faculty member should have the key for matching codes to student names.
- A question could be added to the student evaluations of teaching asking if the students have any problem with GTAs grading for the course.
- The College of Engineering is encouraged to think about other approaches to handling the grading of student homework instead of resorting to GTAs for graduate level courses. The College of Public Health and Human Sciences has made changes in the way that they approach their courses to address this same issue.