

Materials linked from the May 20, 2016 Graduate Council agenda.

Date: Thu 5/12/2016 3:00 PM
To: Filtz, Theresa
Cc: Tadepalli, Prasad; Apte, Sourabh
Subj: GTA policy proposal

Hi Theresa,

I am writing about my upcoming meeting with GC on May 20.

As we discussed more about this, it became apparent that we have a more general problem regardless of the DPD course.

Our graduate committee approved the following proposal. Is it reasonable to bring this forward to the GC? I'll also be happy if you rule that this kind of arrangement is currently within our discretion.

Thank you for considering this.

Best regards,

Prasad

The current grad school policy is as follows:

Appointment as Teaching Assistant. For a graduate student to be appointed as the Teaching Assistant for a graduate course (including the 500-level component of a slash course), the Director of the Graduate Program must ensure that potential conflicts of interest are avoided to the maximum extent possible. This may include:

- Making alternative arrangements to evaluate the work of graduate students from the same unit/program as the Teaching Assistant, OR
- Ensuring that the Teaching Assistant has advanced to candidacy status (after prelims) and all graduate students in the class have not advanced to candidacy

The above policy presents several problems to EECS and possibly to other schools.

1. We have 400 graduate students in our school and some very large classes of up to 70 students. The current policy is too broad and impractical. At any time very few students would have passed the prelims, and they are usually supported by GRAs and are not available for TA'ing. It is a waste of instructors' time if they have to grade weekly assignments of dozens of students. It is a disservice to students if they are not given feedback on their work in a timely fashion. On the other hand there are many capable students who can TA.
2. The current policy does not address true conflicts of interest that might arise between individual students. For example, it does not ensure that the GTAs are not grading their spouse's or close friend's homework.
3. It misses a chance to teach students what conflict of interest is and why it is important to address.

The new proposal:

1. Instead of a blanket rule, we would ask each GTA to sign a conflict of interest form that asserts that they do not have COI with any students in the classes they are TA'ing. If they do, they declare the people they have conflicts with and the instructor would make alternative arrangements.
2. This would be done after the first round of registrations and before any grading responsibilities begin (and updated with late ADDs).
3. The GTAs will be trained on COI issue in GTA training class which will be required for all students.