

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Dean's Charges to the Committee on Graduate Studies
2019 - 2020

Introduction

Each year the Dean of the College provides a set of charges to the Committee on Graduate Studies. These charges represent areas of pressing concern to the future of graduate education in the College. This year's charges are an extension of the work of the last two years, which focused upon the mentoring of graduate students. This year, the committee is asked to focus specifically on ways that we can improve support for and mentoring of Graduate Teaching Assistants.

Background

In August 2018, a new Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the University of Kansas and GTAC (Graduate Teaching Assistants Coalition of KU) went into effect. This new MOA updated the expectations of GTAs and KU as parties to an "agreement to promote a harmonious and cooperative relationship between employer and employees..." This year's charges take the MOA as a starting point, but go a step further to consider how the College and individual departments can ensure that the GTA experience is an integral part of the student's learning and development as a teacher, scholar, and professional.

Charges

1. Recommend actions to be taken by the College and/or academic program to improve the learning outcomes of GTAs. Please consider the following areas:
 - a) Mentoring – Have any departments in the College designed programs to support the one-on-one mentoring of GTAs? What are they and how do they aim to support the development of the skills students need for effective teaching? Do they help graduate teaching assistants learn to balance teaching load with academic work? Based on your findings, what approach(es) would you recommend, either at the College or departmental level, to improve the mentoring of GTAs?
 - b) Evaluation – The MOA requires that all graduate teaching assistants be evaluated in some manner each semester and receive a formal, written evaluation at least once during their employment as a GTA. What are some of the approaches that departments use to meet these requirements? Which approaches to these evaluations best contribute to the student's learning? How might these evaluations be integrated with other assessments of the student's progress (e.g., annual evaluations of academic progress) to support the student's professional and academic development?
2. Identify the top two priority action item in each of the above areas. Committees will often make a broad range of recommendations, not all of which can be implemented in the short term. This prioritization will help us direct limited resources to those areas you consider the highest priority.

Support for the Committee's Work

The committee will be supported in their work by staff in COGA, including graduate advisors embedded in College departments. These staff can be especially helpful in gathering information on department-level practices as well as promising practices found at other institutions. The research and findings of a previous CGS committee (2012-2013) that looked at GTA learner outcomes in broader terms will also be provided. This included a survey of DGSs and GTAs. Finally, COGA will provide the committee with information on mentoring initiatives and resources that are being developed in response to committee recommendations from 2018-2019.