

SUPPLEMENT TO THE REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON
TEACHING ASSISTANTS

The Educational Policy Committee and the Committee on Graduate Studies

May 7, 1997

Introduction

At the April Faculty Meeting the EPC and COGS presented The Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Teaching Assistants as an item for discussion. The EPC also raised a number of questions about the report's recommendations. (The report and EPC's queries are still obtainable on the Web.) In light of the ensuing faculty discussion, and after further consultation with the EPC and COGS, the following amendments and additions to the original report were developed. Along with each amendment and its rationale is a proposal which we ask the faculty to vote for at the May Meeting. We also request that the faculty vote to endorse the revised report as a whole.

Amendment and Proposal A

Teaching Interns may not teach Freshman seminars. This proposal calls for a revision in the original report in Section (c) Eligible Courses of Part 3: The Training and Use of Advanced Graduate Students as Instructors of Record. Section (c) now reads: "The individual departments/programs should determine in which courses-- introductory and/or advanced-- they allow their teaching interns to serve as instructors." We propose adding: "The single exception is Freshman Seminars, which may not be taught by teaching interns."

Rationale: Freshman seminars are at the heart of the 'freshman experience' and should be led only by experienced instructors.

Amendment and Proposal B

Departments/Programs must arrange for appropriate EPC/COGS approved workshops for the training of their Teaching Interns unless they can provide an alternative EPC/COGS approved means for training which is at least as effective. Workshops or training alternatives may be co-organized by departments/programs to prepare Teaching Interns in a cross-discipline training program.

In the original report arranging for workshops was merely "highly recommended". It also said that "individual departments/programs" should arrange for workshops rather than explicitly allowing for co-organized cross-disciplinary workshops. Finally, the original report is slightly altered to maintain a sharp distinction between the training of Teaching Interns and other Teaching Assistants.

Under our proposal Section (e) of Part 3: The Training and Use of Advanced Graduate Students as Instructors of Record is revised to read: "There is a strong presumption that

departments/programs will arrange for EPC/COGS approved workshops on issues relevant to teaching within their discipline (leading discussion, preparing syllabi, evaluating coursework etc.) This presumption may be defeated where departments/programs provide alternative means for training which are demonstrably at least as effective. Workshops may be co-organized by more than one discipline and so be cross-disciplinary in nature. Whether single- or cross-disciplinary, they should be scheduled to ensure that Teaching Interns are exposed to ideas about discussion-leading, evaluating coursework, etc. before beginning their teaching internships. Workshops may also train Teaching Assistants other than Teaching Interns, thus serving a dual purpose: first, as an educational experience for Teaching Assistants of several kinds; and, second, as practical preparation for those graduate students who will eventually become Teaching Interns."

Rationale: The amendment makes it clear both that supplying appropriate workshops or effective alternatives for training Teaching Interns is a requirement of departments/programs, and that departments/programs may pool their resources to develop common workshops or effective alternatives where this is mutually beneficial and pedagogically sound.

Add to the Original Report a New Section with Proposals C and D

The following section on implementing the TA report's recommendations should be added to the report:

Proposal C, The Teaching Intern Working Group Proposal

A working group will be formed to advise EPC and COGS on the evaluation of Teaching Internship plans. This committee will be comprised largely of experts in different facets of pedagogy as well as student representatives. Thus it will be composed of one faculty member experienced in teaching writing, one faculty member experienced in teaching oral communication, one faculty member experienced in teaching quantitative material, one faculty member with significant prior involvement in the Teaching Enhancement project (possibly but not necessarily a Teaching Chair with a background in pedagogy), two graduate students (one from the natural sciences and one from the humanities/ social sciences), and one undergraduate-- a total of 7 members. Its function will be to establish guidelines for assessing plans for training and evaluating Teaching Interns, and then use those guidelines to appraise the Teaching Internship plans put forward by specific departments/programs. Presumably the guidelines will include, for example, a statement about the number and types of workshops needed for preparing Teaching Interns to teach writing, plus appropriate measures for evaluating Teaching Interns' efforts in this direction. Working Group membership will be diverse enough to ensure that the peculiarities of different disciplines would be taken into account. Members will be appointed jointly by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the Dean of Graduate Studies after consultation with EPC and COGS. The Working Group will be a strictly advisory body, with EPC and COGS retaining ultimate authority to assess the merits of Teaching Internship plans. Provided both EPC and COGS agree, moreover, the Working

Group could disband after the first round of Teaching Internship plan approvals, leaving EPC and COGS free to use its established guidelines for appraising any Teaching Internship plans proposed in the future. EPC and COGS will use these same guidelines to appraise the relevant aspects of the training and evaluation plans of Teaching Assistants other than Teaching Interns, such as graders or discussion leaders.

Rationale: Forming a Teaching Intern Working Group would bring a number of faculty experts together to define the overall needs of topnotch Teaching Internship preparation. With its expertise and representation, it would provide EPC and COGS a more thorough and balanced set of guidelines for appraising Teaching Internship Plans, a set of guidelines, that is, which can speak to the legitimate educational concerns of both graduate and undergraduate students while simultaneously giving faculty justified confidence in the Teaching Internship program.

Proposal D, The Implementation Schedule Proposal

The Recommendations of the Amended Teaching Assistant Report should follow this implementation schedule:

1. Fall, 1997: The appointed Teaching Intern Working Group recommends, and EPC and COGS approves, guidelines for appraising Teaching Internship plans for training and evaluation. The Working Group will be appointed by September 15 and make its recommendations for guidelines to EPC and COGS by November 1. EPC and COGS will announce their jointly approved guidelines at the December Faculty Meeting.
2. Spring, 1998: By February 1 departments/Programs will submit Teaching Internship Plans to the Teaching Intern Working Group, who will evaluate them according to its previously established guidelines. By March 1 the Working Group will forward its recommendations for or against approval to EPC and COGS, who will together decide whether a given plan is acceptable and notify departments/programs of their decisions by March 15. Departments/programs may appeal those decisions until April 1.
3. Fall, 1998: The Teaching Intern Plans are implemented.

Rationale: The year-long preparation for implementation ensures that all the committees and departments/programs involved will have ample time to develop thoughtful guidelines and discipline-specific training and evaluation plans.

Addition and Proposal E

The following is substituted for (3) of in the last Part of the original report entitled Final Recommendations:

(3) Logically, ABD adjuncts having little or no teaching experience should receive the same mentoring and supervision while teaching William and Mary undergraduates as do our Teaching Interns. Although we may not be responsible for the adjuncts' career

preparation, our responsibility to William and Mary students is the same whether they are taught by such adjuncts or Teaching Interns. This is so whether ABD adjuncts are hired from other universities or colleges or from William and Mary departments or programs. In the event that adjuncts lack the necessary teaching experience, departments and programs hiring those adjuncts should make sure that they receive appropriate training during their first year here. Where appropriate, such adjunct training may be co-sponsored with departments having Teaching Internship programs.

Rationale: With the above revisions (a) it is noted that William and Mary departments or programs sometimes hire graduate students from other William and Mary departments or programs as adjuncts; and (b) it is made clear that the hiring department, not the graduate department or program in which the adjunct is enrolled, is responsible for her or his mentoring and supervision. When acceptable to all the departments/programs involved, the hiring department may have their adjuncts train in a pre-existing Teaching Intern program or make other mutually beneficial arrangements for properly training these adjuncts with departments having Teaching Interns.

Addition and Proposal F

The following fourth recommendation should be added to the last Part of the original report entitled Final Recommendations:

(4) Faculty who do not hold a terminal degree in their field may not teach Freshman Seminars without the approval of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Rationale: Given that Teaching Interns are forbidden to teach Freshmen Seminars, it seems logical to forbid adjuncts or permanent faculty from doing so if they lack a terminal degree. Where instructors in the latter categories have extensive teaching experience and other relevant qualifications, exceptions can be made by the Dean of Arts and Sciences.