



Policy on Teaching by Graduate Students

Teaching requirement

As an integral part of Ph.D. level training in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology, all MCB graduate students are required to complete the equivalent of two semesters as a Graduate Student Instructor (GSI; a.k.a. teaching assistant) in MCB courses. MCB graduate students are not required to teach during their first year. Each semester of service should correspond, in terms of the effort required, to the equivalent of a 50% GSI position (see "Workload" below). The Department feels that such teaching experience is critical for solidifying the student's basic understanding of the primary foundations of the disciplinary fields in MCB. This Departmental teaching requirement is normally fulfilled during one semester of the second year and one semester of the third year. To provide pedagogy support and document completion of the teaching requirement, students enroll in MCB 375 during their first semester of teaching, and MCB 380 during their second semester of teaching, and they must receive a passing grade in each (see "Evaluation" below). The Department provides the opportunity for teaching a third semester for those MCB students interested in increasing their teaching experience. Approval of the full membership of the student's Thesis Guidance Committee is required. In return, the GSI will, if necessary, receive an extension to May of the sixth year for completion of the experiments toward the Ph.D. degree.

Appointment and selection procedures

The bulk of the teaching assignments are made in May of the prior academic year. Priority for teaching assignments in MCB courses is given to MCB students in their second or third year who have not completed their teaching requirement. In the late spring, the MCB Graduate Affairs Office (GAO) sends a notice to those MCB students who are eligible for teaching service.; eligible students are those who have met all MCB and Graduate Division eligibility requirements. Students apply online and can list any relevant experience, areas of interest and expertise, and preferences for teaching in specific courses to be offered the following year. After this information is collected, it is given to the Divisional GSI Advisor (see Graduate Advisors List). All eligible MCB students will be tentatively placed based on projected needs for GSIs in the various courses to be taught by the MCB Department. Second-year students shall not be required to teach in the semester in which they will be taking their oral qualifying examination. All instructors and GSIs will be notified by the GAO of their tentative assignments for the next academic year soon after the end of the spring semester. All GSIs will be supplied with a copy of this policy MCB Policy on Teaching by Graduate Students by the GAO, along with their appointment letter, and Graduate Division and Union information. Prior to the beginning of the Fall and Spring semesters, when pre-enrollment figures are available, the Divisional GSI Advisor, in consultation with the GAO, will make any necessary adjustments in GSI assignments in order to ensure maximum uniformity in the undergraduate/GSI ratio in each Departmental course. If any vacant GSI positions remain, the Divisional GSI Advisor, with the assistance of the GAO, will recruit qualified graduate students from other departments or Graduate Groups. To assist with this recruitment process, any vacant GSI positions may be listed at the Campus Career Planning and Placement Center. It is the

responsibility of the Divisional GSI Advisor to specify in these listings the minimum qualifications for any vacant GSI position.

Foreign students must demonstrate their proficiency in spoken English before being assigned to a GSI position. Information on how to fulfill this requirement for a satisfactory demonstration of English proficiency is available on the Graduate Division website at <http://gsi.berkeley.edu/lpp/index.html>. First-year international students should have a passing score before the end of their first year.

Summer Session GSI Positions

No MCB grad student may hold a GSI position in the summer without permission of their thesis mentor. Teaching in the summer does not count as one of the two required GSI assignments for MCB students. If approved to teach a third time in a summer session, the summer GSI salary will not be deducted from the student's annual funding and thus the amount paid as a GSI will be in addition to the student's minimum funding guarantee. Summer Session Instructors select the GSIs for their course(s). Hires are handled by the Assistant Director of Curriculum Management and the Summer Sessions Office.

Workload

According to the guidelines set forth by the Graduate Division, the amount of time necessary to fulfill the duties of a 50% GSI position should not exceed an average of 20 hours per week for the duration of the semester. The optimum ratio of students-to-50% GSI position in lecture courses has been set at 60 by the College of Letters and Science. The scope of work for lecture and laboratory courses is summarized below.

Lecture courses

The optimum ratio of students-to-50% GSI position in lecture courses has been set at 50 by the College of Letters and Science. However, due to limitations of both GSI funds and the number of available graduate students, the ratio of undergraduates per GSI in MCB courses recently has been more like 75 (two sections of ~37 students each). To ameliorate this situation, the number of Reader positions available to assist GSIs with the grading of examinations, problem sets, etc. has been significantly increased and the format of courses has been significantly altered. Nonetheless, each 50% GSI is expected to: attend all lectures; lead two weekly discussion sections (maximum of 40 students); hold office hours; and, assist the instructor as necessary with audio-visual aids, grading, writing letters of recommendation, proctoring exams with faculty, and the preparation and distribution of handouts and exams. Graduate students are not permitted to deliver regularly scheduled lectures in MCB courses, except when the responsible faculty instructor is unavailable due to a medical emergency or another unforeseen circumstance.

Laboratory courses

The MCB Department strives to maintain a ratio of between 12 and 16 students per 50% GSI in laboratory courses. In laboratory courses that meet two afternoons per week, GSIs serve throughout the semester, i.e. for 15 weeks. In laboratory courses that meet three afternoons per week, GSIs serve for a total of 10 weeks during the semester. GSIs should attend lab lectures, supervise undergraduates, and follow specific guidelines of instructor for each lab course. Perform technical demos of specific procedures, grade lab reports, write letters of recommendation, hold office hours of at least 1 hr./wk., and proctor exams with faculty.

Remuneration

All MCB students are guaranteed support throughout the normal period of graduate training at the set MCB program level, as specified in detail in the "MCB Graduate Student Support" policy statement. As discussed above (see "Teaching Requirement"), service as a GSI in two courses is an essential element of the graduate training program in MCB and is required for the Ph.D., regardless of the source of funding for the student. While teaching, MCB students who are appointed as GSIs may receive additional financial support or salary pay above the set MCB program level, as salaries are specified by the United Auto Workers contract for Graduate Student Instructors. Non-MCB students who are appointed as a GSI in MCB courses will be remunerated for the services they render and receive fee remission offsets as established by the UAW (see also Summer Session.)

Training and supervision

All MCB GSIs work under the direction of a regular faculty member. Hence, course-specific training and supervision are provided by the instructors of record in the courses to which GSIs are assigned. This training typically takes place in the form of weekly (or more frequent) "GSI Meetings". The MCB-sponsored Bio1A course has, in addition to the regular faculty instructors, an Academic Coordinator who trains and supervises GSIs in this course.

During orientation week in August, all entering graduate students in MCB receive laboratory safety training from the Office of Environmental Health and Safety, which is relevant to their service as GSIs in laboratory courses as well as to their own dissertation research. There is also a required training by the Department during Orientation week (prior to the start of classes).

MCB students are also required to attend the campus-wide GSI training conference offered by the GSI Teaching & Resource Center on the Friday prior to the start of the semester in which they have their first teaching assignment. GSIs must also take the online GSI Professional Standards and Ethics online course. In addition, throughout the academic year, the Graduate Division Office of GSI Training offers a number of informal workshops that all GSIs on campus are welcome to attend. Notices are sent via email or can be found on the Graduate Division website listed above.

Evaluation process

MCB students who serve as GSIs in MCB courses will be evaluated both by the faculty instructor(s) and the undergraduates enrolled in the course for which the GSI serves.

All MCB students serving as GSIs enroll MCB 375 the first time they teach, and then in the appropriate section of the course MCB 380 (there is one section for each Division) the second time they teach in order to document the fulfillment of their two semesters of teaching service. MCB 375 and MCB 380 are graded S/U, and the grade will be assigned on the basis of a written evaluation of each GSI that is provided at the end of the semester by the course instructors. Samples of the evaluation forms used can be requested in the GAO.

Student evaluations of GSI performance also will be collected by each Division from students enrolled in the course both at mid-semester and at the end of the semester. Mid-semester teaching evaluations are not kept on file; they are sent directly to the GSIs so that they can make use of this feedback before the course is over. Final teaching evaluations are forwarded by the Division to the Graduate Affairs Office, where they are kept on file and made available for individual GSIs to review. Non-MCB students who

serve as GSIs in MCB courses will also be evaluated both by the faculty instructor(s) and by the undergraduates enrolled in the same course.

Each year in March, the Divisions will nominate a specified number of GSIs for the University's Outstanding GSI Award. These nominations are normally based primarily on the outcome of the student evaluations as well as instructor evaluations. The MCB Department bestowing of Outstanding GSI Awards is conducted in a prominent forum (e.g., at Divisional Asilomar retreats) to emphasize their importance. The University also holds a reception for all Outstanding Graduate Student Instructors every April.

Teaching for Students with an NSF

Starting Fall 2024, students are no longer allowed to hold a 50% GSI appointment while on tenure with their NSF Fellowship. Students on tenure must be appointed as a 50% GSR Fellow and the appointment cannot be modified to accommodate a 50% GSI position. This change was made by the Graduate Division when the GSR Fellow title was recognized in the Graduate Student Researchers UAW contract.

Students awarded an NSF Fellowship after they started the MCB Ph.D. program have the following options regarding the start of their NSF and their second semester of teaching (their NSF can be delayed until after their first semester of teaching is finished, while they are still on departmental support):

Option 1: The student is on tenure during the 3rd year and fulfills the second GSI requirement through a combination of a GSI appointment in the summer, and a Reader appointment during the academic year. Teaching in the summer does not require the same time commitment as in the academic year, therefore, the time difference can be made up with Reader hours. Serving as a Reader provides excellent training in equitable assessments/grading, which is an important part of teaching. Since students can be employed up to 100% without approval during the summer period, the benefit to this option is that the summer GSI salary is additional income on top of the student's financial guarantee. Students will be expected to teach the summer after the 3rd year. Exceptions can be requested to the GAO with approval from the student's mentor.

Option 2: The student starts their on tenure status in the 4th year, after the 3rd year GSI requirement is completed, so that they can teach with the rest of their cohort. Note that in this option, the student may graduate before the 3 years of fellowship support has ended.

Students awarded an NSF Fellowship prior to their start in the MCB Ph.D. program must use their 3 years of fellowship support by the end of their 5th year, so they must select Option 1 to complete their second GSI requirement.

Grievance procedures

Grievances concerning assignments to specific courses should be referred to the appropriate Divisional GSI Advisor. Grievances concerning workload, working conditions, or relations with students, co-instructors (faculty or graduate students or staff) should be resolved between the student and the instructor, if at all possible. If necessary, unresolved grievances of this nature should be referred to the Divisional GSI Advisor. If a satisfactory solution cannot be achieved by the Divisional GSI Advisor, the Division Head will appoint an ad hoc committee to resolve the issue. The final board of appeal in the MCB Department for resolution of GSI grievances lies with the MCB Graduate Affairs Committee. However, MCB students should feel free to utilize other avenues and procedures established by the University for resolving student grievances.

