



Policy Chapter: Chapter 6 Faculty Affairs

Policy Number and Title: 06.021 Academic Assistants

I. Policy Statement

University of North Texas faculty work to maintain a quality learning environment for students, regardless of the class size, format, or delivery mode. The University hires academic assistants to help in this regard. Academic assistants support instructional activities and receive appropriate training and supervision by the supervising unit. Supervision and evaluation ensure academic assistants' growth, productivity, and effectiveness. This policy describes the orientation, supervision, responsibilities, and evaluation of academic assistants.

II. Application of Policy

Colleges, schools, and academic departments

III. Policy Definitions

A. Academic Assistant

"Academic Assistant," in this policy, means a students who provides instructional support or, in the case of teaching fellows, who teach their own classes, under the direct supervision of the unit administrator or another faculty member. An academic assistant can have one of the following titles: Teaching Assistant, Graduate Assistant, Grader, or Teaching Fellow.

B. Unit Administrator

"Unit administrator," in this policy, means the person responsible for the unit and the personnel actions within the unit. A department chair is an example of a unit administrator.

C. Academic Coordinator

"Academic coordinator," in this policy, means a faculty member responsible for supervising academic assistants. Unit administrators shall serve as academic coordinators, or they shall appoint academic coordinators from among the faculty. In units that employ academic assistants, the unit administrator shall appoint one or more academic assistant coordinators from faculty members.

IV. Policy Responsibilities

A. General

1. Instruction and Instructional Support

Academic assistants provide instruction or instructional support under the direction of a faculty member or the unit administrator (or unit administrator's designee). Duties may include, but are not limited to, class attendance, student conferences, conducting review sessions, and evaluation of student work.

2. Training

The University of North Texas requires appropriately trained academic assistants to support instructional activities in classes no matter the mode of instructional delivery. Such assistants need supervision and evaluation to encourage their growth, productivity, and effectiveness. Unit Administrators are responsible for ensuring academic assistants receive appropriate training and supervision in their individual roles.

3. Extent of Assistant Support

The extent of academic assistant support depends on the pedagogical methods in a course, but a minimum of one academic assistant is needed for every 60 students. Academic assistants who grade exams and other assignments must attend the lectures if requested by the instructor.

4. Qualifications and Assignments

Academic assistants must have the appropriate qualifications necessary to conduct their duties and for the particular needs of the course. Tasks (e.g., grading essay exams) requiring more sophisticated judgment should be assigned to academic assistants with more qualifications and experience.

5. Space

Unit administrators shall supply a physical space where academic assistants and students can interact during regularly-scheduled office hours. This requirement does not extend to academic assistants with only online assignments.

B. Orientation and Training

1. Orientation

Prior to the beginning of the fall and spring semesters each college, school, or department must conduct an orientation for academic assistants. Academic assistants new to the unit, especially teaching fellows and teaching assistants, including those with prior teaching experience, are required to attend an orientation session. Continuing academic assistants may be required to attend one orientation session per academic year at the discretion their unit administrator. The school/college may elect to hold this orientation at the department or unit level.

2. In-Service Training

Each academic unit administrator shall provide regular in-service training for academic assistants with scheduled meetings each long semester. Unit administrators shall provide a summary of their units' training activities to their dean on an annual basis.

C. Supervision

1. Academic Coordinators

In units that employ academic assistants, the unit administrator may appoint one or more academic coordinators from among faculty members.

2. Supervision and Consultation

Reporting to the unit administrator, academic coordinators shall be responsible for supervising the academic assistants within their unit, in consultation with any faculty working with the academic assistants.

3. Planning

Academic coordinators shall work with their faculty, unit administrator, and/or dean to formulate orientation sessions and a systematic plan for supervision and evaluation of academic assistants within the unit.

D. Evaluation

1. Guidelines

Evaluation of academic assistants is a departmental responsibility. Academic units that employ academic assistants shall develop evaluation guidelines. Unit-level evaluation guidelines are subject to the approval of the dean and shall be reviewed by the dean at least once every three years. ~~at the call of the dean.~~

2. Communication

Academic assistants shall be advised of the evaluation process during the academic unit's orientation session.

3. Timing and Components

Academic coordinators shall review data (e.g., SPOT scores, comments from supervising faculty) on the performance of academic assistants each semester. They shall also administer evaluations at least once per academic year. Components of the annual evaluation shall include, but are not limited to:

- a. a self-evaluation narrative,
- b. feedback from supervising faculty,
- c. feedback from peers, where applicable, and
- d. feedback from students, where applicable.

4. Results

Academic assistants will receive the results of their evaluation at least annually; academic coordinators will schedule a conference to discuss the results.

- a. Academic assistants who receive an evaluation that demonstrates a need for significant improvement shall be informed of the areas needing improvement.
- b. Continued service as an academic assistant is at the discretion of the unit administrator and contingent on the needs of the unit and academic assistant performance.
- c. Unit administrators may change academic assistant job assignments midsemester.

E. Academic Assistants Whose Primary Language is Not English

As per TEC, Section 51.917, unit administrators shall ensure credit-bearing courses are taught in English. This does not extend to foreign language courses designed to be taught in a language other than English.

UNT is committed to supporting academic assistants whose primary language is not English, as they establish their proficiency. Academic Assistants should see UNT Policy 06.023, Program of Assistance for Teaching Personnel Whose Primary Language is Not English, for further information.

V. References and Cross-References

[Texas Education Code § 51.917, Faculty Members; Use of English](#)

[UNT Policy 06.023, Program of Assistance for Teaching Personnel Whose Primary Language is Not English](#)

VI. Revision History

Policy Contact:	Policy Director, Office of the Provost and VP for Academic Affairs
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