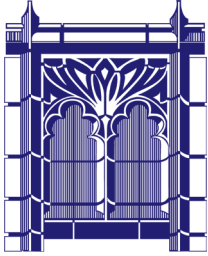


# Teaching Options for Graduate Students and Post-Docs



## THE GRADUATE SCHOOL **mentor memo** AUTUMN QUARTER 2009

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This Mentor Memo, part of a series, responds to graduate students' requests for advice about navigating graduate studies successfully.

The series also addresses topics in career preparation and professional development. For more information and to suggest topics, contact Graduate School Dean Jerry Baldasty at [baldasty@u.washington.edu](mailto:baldasty@u.washington.edu).

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Graduate students and post-docs have a variety of options for gaining a broad range of teaching experience. Here are some steps to make it happen.

### Begin with what is closest

Inform people around you that you are interested in teaching. Talk with your advisor, department secretary, and others in your department. They may be aware of options, in addition to teaching assistant (TA) and research assistant (RA) opportunities, including:

- guest lecturing in classes
- teaching in department outreach programs
- tutoring
- applying for teaching fellowships
- securing funding to teach your own course

### Expand your search within the university

Opportunities to teach outside your department do exist. Start with defining your areas of expertise. What disciplines does your knowledge encompass? What could you teach in those disciplines? Once you have considered where your academic knowledge and skills lie, talk with the departments you have identified. Possibilities in these departments might include:

- offering your services as a guest speaker
- putting yourself on departmental lists for teaching and tutoring opportunities

In addition to these possibilities, the university offers opportunities to teach outside departments; for example:

- creating and teaching a class or workshop through UW Experimental College
- working in writing centers, labs, study centers, and other student support services on campus

### Explore options in the community

After investigating the teaching options within the university, consider what the local community might have to offer. Opportunities may include:

- classes at local colleges and universities that you could teach, possibly as an adjunct instructor

there's more... ►

- volunteering for programs offered at high schools, libraries, or community centers (e.g., Homework Help Programs, Citizenship Exam Classes)
- talking with people who share interests similar to yours to learn about community organizations where you might share your expertise through teaching

### **Develop the skills to teach**

Even if you rarely have formal opportunities to teach, you can develop your understanding of teaching by:

- shadowing a senior faculty member or experienced TA
- interviewing faculty members or TAs
- taking department and graduate-level courses on teaching
- attending seminars and workshops in the university or local community
- observing classes taught at UW or at other local colleges

### **Make the most of every teaching opportunity**

Remember to make each opportunity count for you. Be well-prepared for the openings that you secure, and invite a colleague or participants and students to provide you with some form of feedback. Candid, written feedback on your teaching can serve as documentation for the experience and provide you with a basis for self-assessment and ongoing improvement of your teaching skills.

In this way, you can continue to grow as an instructor and secure evidence to show others that you are doing quality work. You can consult with the UW Center for Instructional Development and Research (CIDR) on simple, efficient strategies for gathering and interpreting feedback that will help you further develop your teaching.