

Teaching assistants face more limited roles at UT

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The University of Texas' estimated 1,100 teaching assistants will no longer formally instruct undergraduates in the classroom after Aug. 31, according to rule changes approved by UT President Lorene Rogers and the Deans Council.

The TAs will continue to perform related classroom instructional duties, such as serving as laboratory assistants and student drill conductors.

Currently, the TAs teach about 600 undergraduate classes.

The new rules written into UT's Handbook of Operating Procedures have been estimated at costing UT between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

Under the rule changes, TAs with only a bachelor's degree will not be allowed to serve as the "instructor of record" in UT classrooms. TAs who hold a master's degree or the equivalent and who have teaching experience or have taken a teaching methodology course will be "technically eligible" for promotion to the level of assistant instructor — graduate students who have completed all of their doctoral work except their dissertations.

Currently about 250 assistant instructors are teaching UT undergraduates. Under the rule changes, several hundred TAs could be promoted to assistant instructors, Dr. Gerhard J. Fonken, executive assistant to Rogers, said.

The rule change will require some departmental deans to develop alternative formats for handling classes, Rogers said. One possibility for larger classes, she said, would be for a regular faculty member to conduct the class two days a week. On the third day the class could be divided into small discussion groups to be led by TAs.

There are several ramifications for students and regular UT faculty members, Fonken said:

- There will be an increase in the number of courses taught by regular faculty members.

- A "relatively small number" of tenure-seeking faculty members will be hired by departments primarily affected by the new rules. Those include departments in the humanities and to a lesser degree, the colleges of business, education and social and behavioral sciences.

- Existing faculty in some departments will face a "slightly heavier workload."