

Graduate Student Instructor Training and GRS 098T at UT Austin

October 3, 2005

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Graduate Student Instructor Training and GRS 098T at UT Austin

Executive Summary

The primary focus of this report is the examination of the GRS 098T pilot project and how it relates to other GSI professional development efforts on campus. Specifically, the report examines student, faculty, and administrative response to the project with a focus on its strengths and challenges. The relationship of the partner department 398T courses with GRS 098T and the ASPECTS program is also discussed.

GRS 098T – *Teaching and Learning* is a course offered through the graduate school for graduate students enrolled in partner department 398T courses. The project was piloted in the fall of 2004 with ten partner departments and 126 students. Students from participating departments attended GRS 098T for general pedagogical instruction the first nine weeks of the semester and then returned to their departments for discipline specific instruction the final five weeks of the semester. Dr. Robert Duke, the Marlene and Morton Meyerson Centennial Professor in Music and Distinguished Teaching Professor, proposed the idea for the course, developed it, and managed the project. Dr. Duke received administrative assistance from the Graduate School and financial and promotional support from the Provost's Office. Department 398T faculty received full course load credit for participating.

This study draws on information from a variety of sources including three student surveys, interviews with partner department administrative heads and 398T instructors, classroom observations of GRS 098T, GRS 098T course materials, ASPECTS program documents and session evaluations, and an interview with Dr. Robert Duke.

Overall, graduate students, partner 398T faculty, and department administrative heads were satisfied with the GRS 098T pilot project and viewed it as beneficial. Graduate students report improvement of their teaching skills, a better understanding of their students, and having a more positive view of teaching as a result of participating in the project. Administrators, 398T faculty, and students all thought GRS 098T fulfilled a pedagogical need by providing additional training in teaching and access to the student learning expertise of Dr. Duke.

Study respondents also identified several challenges. Students desired fewer, more meaningful assignments that focused on practical, discipline specific application. Additionally, not all students were able to implement the pedagogical lessons learned because they did not currently have a teaching assignment or, as a teaching assistant were not able to make changes to their instructional context. Integration between the GRS 098T and department 398T courses was often lacking due to minimal communication between the instructors. Administrators noted that they often had difficulty finding faculty members willing to teach their department's 398T course and some students indicated that the quality of their department's 398T course was low.

The evaluation recommendations are focused on addressing GSI training challenges and will be most useful if considered holistically. They include:

- Greater coordination between GRS 098T and partnering 398T faculty.
- Providing GRS 098T students with more opportunities to practice teaching.
- Providing training in pedagogy for faculty teaching department 398T courses.
- Developing general, university wide guidelines for department 398T courses.
- Clarify the role of ASPECTS in relation to department 398T courses.

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Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the study findings reported on pages 14-21. Strengths are listed first followed by challenges. See pages 9-11 for a complete description of the study.

1. Overall, graduate students, 398T instructors, and department administrative heads were satisfied with the GRS 098T/398T project.

Each group identified more benefits to participation than challenges and spoke highly of Dr. Duke's knowledge of pedagogy and teaching abilities. Students in particular seemed satisfied with their experience. Most of the challenges identified had more to do with the implementation of the project rather than its substance.

2. GRS 098T helped graduate students improve their teaching and assessment skills.

Graduate students not only learned specific pedagogical techniques but they were also provided with an opportunity to practice them with peers. This was especially important for those students who did not have a teaching assistant appointment and those GSIs who are unable to implement their own instructional techniques and assessment procedures. Many GSIs were able to immediately apply the pedagogical and assessment techniques they learned. GSIs also reported having greater confidence in the classroom as a result of their participation in GRS 098T.

3. GRS 098T gave graduate students exposure to multiple perspectives on teaching.

Not only did students benefit from having the pedagogical perspective of two instructors (Dr. Duke and their department 398T instructor), the GRS 098T course also include several invited faculty lectures. Additionally, because of the multidisciplinary nature of the project, students interacted with peers from other departments who had different perspectives about instruction.

4. The focus on student learning in GRS 098T gave GSIs a better understanding of their students and how they learn.

Because GRS 098T was taught from a student learning perspective, graduate students better understood how students learn and why certain pedagogical techniques are effective. This increased understanding resulted in better interaction with their students for many GSIs and helped them with various classroom management issues.

5. Participation in GRS 098T changed how graduate students viewed teaching.

Many graduate students reported that participation in GRS 098T changed how they viewed teaching. Students came to more fully appreciate the creative aspects of teaching and better understand instructor and student roles in the learning process. GSIs also reported becoming more reflective about their own teaching.

6. GRS 098T fulfills a pedagogical need.

Administrators, 398T instructors, and students identified GRS 098T as fulfilling a pedagogical need in their departments. Administrators noted that while their faculty may be good teachers and experts in their content areas, they are not necessarily qualified to teach how to teach. Instructors also mentioned that Dr. Duke was able to provide additional pedagogical content that they could not. Both groups thought that pedagogical training was necessary for GSIs and would be an advantage on the job market. Additionally, students appreciated the more general pedagogical content of GRS 098T along with the discipline-specific content of their department's 398T course.

7. ASPECTS session content was transferable to different instructional settings and attendees planned to incorporate it into their courses.

Nearly all ASPECTS attendees understood how session material could be applied to different instructional settings and felt that ASPECTS instructors did a “very good or “excellent” job at illustrating this transferability. Preparatory activities, that could encourage them, as Teaching Assistants or Assistant Instructors, to succinctly state learning goals and therefore more clearly inform students about expectations, were most often mentioned as ideas for implementation. Other attendees planned to implement assessment processes that could be used to inform their instruction.

8. ASPECTS attendees felt that the time they spent at individual sessions was worthwhile.

Overwhelmingly, attendees described ASPECTS sessions as being useful and informative, making particular note of the use of concrete examples and exercises that were components of many sessions. Respondents also perceived ASPECTS’ sessions as being supportive, particularly when discipline-specific questions were addressed. However, a number of attendees desired more discipline-specific examples and session interactivity

9. ASPECTS sessions introduced attendees to learning concepts and tools.

Through ASPECTS, attendees learned “new” concepts such as learning styles, and the importance of course preparation and planning. Students were also introduced to several assessment tools such as the Ongoing Course Assessment (OCA) system, Classroom Performance System (CPS), and grading rubrics.

10. The workload in GRS 098T may have been too great for GSIs given their other roles and responsibilities.

By far the greatest student criticism of GRS 098T had to do with the number and frequency of written assignments that they did not always find meaningful. Reading summaries were especially likely to be identified as “busy work” by students. Some 398T instructors also identified workload as an issue in their departments. Instructors reported receiving complaints from other faculty who thought student time was better spent doing research and mentioned that GSIs had limited time given their multiple roles (student, researcher, GSI).

11. The current organizational split of GRS 098T and the departmental 398T courses is not optimal for all constituency groups.

Administrators, 398T instructors, and students often identified alternative 098T/398T organization schemes as being preferable to the 9:5 week split used in Fall 2004. Faculty respondents primarily desired more time with their students and suggested a 7:7 split as being optimal for them. Students also thought that the GRS 098T portion of the semester could be shorter. Additionally, students suggested other organizational schemes such as: receiving department instruction first and then attending GRS 098T; alternating department and GRS 098T segments throughout the semester; and eliminating their departmental 398T course.

12. Not all GRS 098T students were able to implement the pedagogical and assessment techniques learned.

While GSIs were often able to understand GRS 098T content because they had an instructional context in which to conceptualize the information and had the opportunity to apply specific techniques, students who were not GSIs reported having greater difficulty with the material. Some GSIs also reported that they were unable to implement techniques or concepts learned because they did not have an instructional role or the course instructor determined processes without their input. A few students reported that techniques presented in GRS 098T were not appropriate for their discipline or instructional context.

13. *GRS 098T students desired more discipline specific content.*

Although students reported benefiting from the multidisciplinary nature of GRS 098T, they also indicated a desire for more discipline specific content in the course. Some students found the examples and techniques presented not relevant to their discipline or instructional context. Others felt that they did not receive enough training related to their discipline.

14. *There is a lack of integration between GRS 098T and the departmental 398T courses.*

Both students and instructors indicated there was a lack of integration of the GRS 098T and departmental 398T courses. Dr. Duke also acknowledged that, except for the two instructors who attended some of the GRS 098T class sessions, his interaction with the 398T instructors was minimal. This limited communication often created a disconnect between the GRS 098T and the department 398T portions of the semester and undermined any instructional benefit of combining the two courses.

15. *Administrators often have difficulty finding faculty members to teach department 398T courses.*

Nearly all of the administrators interviewed reported that it was difficult for them to find faculty willing to teach the department 398T course. Because pedagogy is not an area of academic expertise for most faculty, preparing to teach such a course is often more burdensome than a course more directly related to their content area. In some departments, the 398T course is rotated among faculty diluting individual investment in the course and the content expertise developed by teaching a course multiple times.

16. *The format, content, and quality of departmental 398T courses is inconsistent across campus.*

For the ten departments examined for this study, 398T course formats included the department not being able to offer the course (no course), the course being a conference course (one-on-one instruction), and the course being a two-hour course (298T) consisting mainly of field safety instruction. A focus on administrative processes and procedures rather than pedagogy was common. Student feedback also indicates that the quality and usefulness of the 398T course in some departments is low.

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Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the above conclusions, are interrelated, and will be most useful if considered holistically.

- 1. Greater coordination between GRS 098T and partnering 398T faculty** – During Fall 2004, there was only minimal coordination between the instructor for GRS 098T and faculty teaching the departmental 398T courses resulting in an undermining of potential benefits of the GRS 098T/ 398T combination. It would be beneficial if GRS 098T and department 398T faculty would more closely coordinate their courses by meeting and communicating more frequently, sharing all course materials, and 398T faculty visiting at least three GRS 098T class sessions. Coordination would be most effective if done as courses are being planned. The GRS 098T instructor could work with partner departments to incorporate more discipline specific activities and examples into GRS 098T and 398T instructors could work to apply content from GRS 098T into their discipline specific instruction. Additionally, regular GRS 098T course evaluations that include gathering feedback from partner 398T faculty would also enhance collaboration.
- 2. GRS 098T students need additional opportunities to practice the instructional approaches and techniques taught** – Because not all students in the course are GSIs or have an active instructional role as a TA, it is critical that they are able to put into practice the approaches and techniques learned in GRS 098T. Balancing active learning experiences that allow students to apply knowledge with a few reflective writing assignments will better enhance student teaching skills and create a more meaningful learning experience for them.
- 3. Provide formal training in pedagogy for department faculty who teach 398T** – Most department 398T faculty do not have formal training in pedagogy and would benefit from focused training tailored to general 398T course objectives. Such training would help 398T instructors to prepare their courses and provide relevant content to students. Faculty who teach 398T courses and partner with GRS 098T should continue to receive full course load credit as an incentive for participation.
- 4. University-wide guidelines should be developed for department 398T courses** – Currently department 398T courses vary widely in content and quality across campus with differences not always discipline related. While the course title of “Supervised Teaching” suggests a pedagogical focus, 398T course content is sometimes oriented more toward administrative or discipline specific technical training. Additionally, not all departments who employ GSIs are able to offer a 398T course. Although different disciplines do have different pedagogical needs, developing a set of general course guidelines would help departments and 398T instructors create pedagogically sound courses that address their specific needs. A university wide assessment of departmental pedagogical needs should inform this effort including input from graduate students, faculty and department administrators.

- 5. Clarify the role of ASPECTS in relation to 398T courses** – 398T students are often encouraged by their instructors to attend ASPECTS sessions as a course component. The impact of this unintended arrangement is unclear particularly as it relates to the quality of department 398T courses. ASPECTS sessions, designed to provide professional development opportunities for students on a needs-driven basis, were not intended as a substitute for regular classroom instruction. However, a decrease, from 3 per semester to 1, in the number of workshops offered by DIIA staff to departmental 398T course instructors may have prompted an increase in ASPECTS enrollment.

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Introduction

Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) training at UT Austin occurs in a variety of contexts and forms. All departments are required to offer a departmental 398T course in *Supervised Teaching* with students required to pass the course before being appointed as an Assistant Instructor (AI). The Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment (DIIA) operates the Advancing Students' Professional Excellence with Certificates in Teaching Series (ASPECTS) program for graduate students interested in further pedagogical professional development. The Graduate School also offers professional development courses for graduate students although most are not focused on pedagogical instruction. One Graduate School course, GRS 098T *Teaching and Learning*, is designed to provide general instruction on pedagogy and human learning and be partnered with departmental 398T courses. Finally it is also a general expectation that faculty individually mentor graduate students.

The primary focus of this report is the examination of the GRS 098T pilot project and how it relates to other GSI professional development efforts on campus. Specifically, the report examines student, faculty, and administrative response to the pilot project with a focus on its strengths and challenges. The relationship of the partner department 398T courses with GRS 098T and the ASPECTS program is also discussed.

Background

GRS 098T

GRS 098T – *Teaching and Learning* is a course offered through the graduate school for graduate students enrolled in partner department 398T courses. The project was piloted in the fall of 2004 with ten partner departments¹ and 126 students. Dr. Robert Duke, the Marlene and Morton Meyerson Centennial Professor in Music and Distinguished Teaching Professor, proposed the idea for the course, developed the course, and managed the project. Dr. Duke received administrative assistance from the Graduate School and financial and promotional support from the Provost's Office. During Summer 2004 professor Duke solicited participation in the project from department 398T instructors who received full course load credit for participating. Partner instructors were invited to an informational meeting in August 2004 where Dr. Duke outlined his plans.

Professor Duke's motivations for developing the project included a recurring concern about the overall quality of undergraduate instruction at UT—particularly in large classes, the varying quality of pedagogical instruction in the 398T courses across campus, and the varying degrees of interest in teaching the course among department faculty. Additionally, because most 398T sections are small (25 or fewer students), few graduate students have the opportunity to practice teaching in a large classroom, which is the instructional context they were most likely to find themselves in once assigned to teach a course at UT Austin.

¹ The term “department” is used in this report to refer to all types of participating academic units including schools and sections of larger departments. The participating academic units include Asian Studies, Business, Economics, Geology, Government, Human Ecology, Math, Molecular Genetics Microbiology and Immunology, the School of Music, and the School of Social Work. Because all 398T courses have a department designation they are referred to as “department 398T courses” throughout this report.

The GRS 098T course is designed to introduce students to basic principles of human learning and provide opportunities to apply those principles in an instructional context. Course objectives include students being able to:

- Explain fundamental principles of human learning.
- Articulate meaningful instructional goals.
- Design effective learning sequences.
- Systematically analyze the effectiveness of their teaching.

Course readings, lectures, activities and assignments support these objectives. See Appendix D for the GRS 098T course syllabus. According to the project design, students from participating departments attended GRS 098T for general pedagogical instruction the first nine weeks of the semester and then returned to their departments for discipline specific instruction the final five weeks of the semester. Students received a credit/no credit mark (but not course credit) for GRS 098T and a letter grade for the department 398T course.

Department 398T courses

Although there are informal guidelines for department 398T courses (see Appendix F), interpretation of those guidelines is left largely to individual departments. While departments tend to incorporate the main purpose of 398T—providing information and guidance in teaching—into their courses, the content that is actually delivered to students varies. For instance, departments often deliver administrative information or technical information such as “field safety” that reflect a realistic departmental need but has little to do with teaching. In some departments, grading policies, ethics, and duties and performance expectations are included in the course.

Pedagogically, departments use an assortment of instructional techniques to introduce their students to teaching. One of the most commonly used methods was observation; students observed classes (of varying sizes) taught by other, experienced faculty members. Guest lecturers—often, professional development staff from DIIA, experienced instructors, internal and external to UT, or non-teaching professionals—were invited to make presentations on specific teaching topics or they were encouraged to discuss how teaching was a critical component of their work, whether or not they were in an education-oriented setting.

Practically, students are assigned a range of tasks—creating syllabi, designing lectures, developing a teaching philosophy—all designed to get them thinking about the teaching process. These activities usually include a peer feedback mechanism.

ASPECTS

A component of DIIA’s Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) Program, the Advancing Students’ Professional Excellence with Certificates in Teaching Series (ASPECTS) encourages ongoing pedagogical, personal and professional development opportunities for graduate students. During each long semester, GSIs have the opportunity to attend sessions presented by teaching, learning, assessment and technology professionals. See Appendix G for a list of series, affiliated sessions, electives and session descriptions. Most sessions are offered twice a semester at different times and days of the week to best meet student scheduling needs. Students may choose to take a session series and submit an essay for evaluation by session presenters. Students who successfully complete a session series and essay receive a certificate of achievement.

Study Description

Purpose of Study

The purpose of studying the GRS 098T pilot project is to describe the project and its relationship to other UT Austin Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) professional development initiatives, to assess student, faculty and departmental satisfaction with the project, and to identify strengths and challenges to consider in future planning.

Study Plan

This study draws on information from a variety of sources including three student surveys, interviews with partner department administrative heads and 398T instructors, classroom observations of GRS 098T, GRS 098T course materials, ASPECTS program documents, session evaluations and focus group, and an interview with Dr. Robert Duke, who developed and taught GRS 098T.

Student Surveys

Of the three student surveys, Dr. Duke conducted one as an informal evaluation of his course and DIIA staff conducted the remaining two. All three surveys were administered online using the Ongoing Course Assessment (OCA) system. The questions and numeric results of the three survey instruments are in Appendix A.

Professor Duke's survey was delivered October 26-November 5, 2004 just prior to the end of the nine week GRS 098T portion of the semester. Of the 126 students enrolled, 69 (55%) submitted surveys. Survey questions included a close-ended overall course evaluation and overall instructor evaluation items identical to those on the university-wide Course Instructor Survey as well as a series of open-ended questions designed to assess how students' approach to teaching had changed as a result of the course, questions about most liked/disliked assignments, and recommendations for change. These results are included in the analysis below with Dr. Duke's permission.

The two DIIA surveys designed for this study measure student satisfaction with GRS 098T and ask them to indicate the benefits and challenges associated with their participation in it. The mid-term survey was delivered November 8-17, 2004 after the completion of the GRS 098T course and focused on that portion of the project. The end-term survey was delivered November 29-December 8, 2004 at the end of the departmental 398T courses and focused on that portion of the project as well as the relationship between the 098T and 398T parts of the semester. The mid-term survey had a 32% response rate and the end-term survey had a 44% response rate.

The OCA system calculated response frequencies for each closed-ended questions. Because it is designed for formative instructional assessment rather than research, more complex analysis of the quantitative data is not possible. Open-ended responses were topically coded and analyzed for themes and patterns by DIIA staff using Atlas.ti software.

Sample characteristics of the two surveys were similar with students from nearly every participating department represented except Government (see Table 1). About half of all respondents were between 25-29 (see Table 2). Forty percent of respondents were international students and a similar percentage reported English as their second language (see Appendix A). The sex distribution of the samples varied as shown in Table 3, but the reason for this is unclear.

Table 1 – Survey sample department distribution

398T Department	Mid-Term	End-Term
Business	16%	13%
Cell & Molecular Biology	6%	4%
Economics	8%	10%
Geological Sciences	11%	10%
Government	0%	2%
Mathematics	39%	31%
Nutrition	6%	8%
Social Work	8%	14%
Other	6%	8%
Total	100%	100%

Table 2 – Survey sample age distribution

Age	Mid-Term	End-Term
20-24	26%	32%
25-29	52%	45%
30-34	16%	17%
35-39	3%	6%
40 or over	3%	0%
Total	100%	100%

Table 3 – Survey sample sex distribution

Sex	Mid-Term	End-Term
Female	35%	55%
Male	65%	45%
Total	100%	100%

Partner Department 398T Faculty and Administrator Interviews

Interviews with partner department 398T instructors and their administrative heads² were conducted during January and February of 2005. The interviews focused on respondent satisfaction with the project, the benefits and challenges of participation, and perspectives on GSI training (see Appendix B). From the ten partner departments, nine administrative heads and seven 398T instructors were interviewed³. At least one administrative head or one instructor from each department participated. Interviews lasted from 40 to 70 minutes and were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis. Transcriptions were topically coded and analyzed for themes and patterns by DIIA staff using Atlas.ti software.

² In most cases the administrative head was a department chairperson or section leader. For schools, a relevant director was interviewed.

³ One department chair was also an instructor and is counted in both groups. A graduate advisor also participated in one of the administrator interviews.

Interview with Dr. Robert Duke

An hour interview was conducted with Dr. Robert Duke on May 3, 2005 to discuss the Fall 2004 GRS 098T pilot project and future plans. Interview questions focused on the development of the pilot project, project goals, successes and challenges, and how these challenges would be addressed in the future. See Appendix C for a copy of the interview protocol.

Observation and Document Analysis

DIIA staff attended nearly all 098T class sessions to inform their understanding of the project. Course materials from GRS 098T were also collected, as were syllabi from partner 398T faculty who were interviewed. Although these observations and documents primarily provide background for the study, they did inform some conclusions.

ASPECTS Data

At the end of each ASPECTS session, attendees are asked to complete an evaluation form. The purpose of this evaluation is to provide feedback to the instructors and to GSI Program staff. Data was collected from 691 session attendees. To review the evaluation form and attendee responses, see Appendix G.

Findings

Administrators

Overall, departmental administrators were satisfied with the GRS 098T pilot project citing numerous advantages to participating.

1. *Administrators viewed the added pedagogical content and expertise as beneficial.*

- Five cited the benefits of combining a general course in pedagogy with a discipline specific course and the advantages of having access to an instructor with pedagogical expertise. As two department chairs stated:
 - “I thought this partnership was kind of the best of both worlds in which you know you have kind of the high level overview...in terms of pedagogy, what we are trying to accomplish, and then you have the chance to apply it in a more specific content area.”
 - “I mean we have really good teachers in this department—I think we are noted for our good teachers and you know somebody good is going to teach 398T, but I’m not sure that qualifies people to teach how-to-teach either, so people are kind of at a loss when they have a specialized subject matter area that is unrelated to teaching. I’d have to prepare a lot—I mean, what do you do in a 398T? You know, it is not something we are prepared to do.”

2. *Most administrators were positive about the large, multidisciplinary course.*

- By teaching in such a context Dr. Duke was able to model the pedagogical methods he was teaching and demonstrate that these techniques transcend disciplinary content. As one department chair noted:
 - “I was kind of amazed. We were kind of skeptical that he [Duke] was going to put everybody in one class. From the student’s point of view that turned out to be one of the real strengths, [that it] was so interdisciplinary.”

3. *Several administrators thought the project made finding faculty to teach 398T easier.*

- Three administrators reported having a difficult time in the past finding faculty willing to teach 398T.
- The pilot project acted as an incentive to teach 398T because it allowed faculty to receive a full course load for teaching a 5-week course.
- Two administrators felt that reducing the workload for faculty without reducing their course load was an inefficient use of departmental resources.

4. *Administrators expressed generally positive sentiments about the ASPECTS program although some had reservations.*

- Administrative heads were generally receptive to the ASPECTS program.
 - “...the students are having to write teaching statements for jobs that say what they have done to improve their teaching skills in the last few years. So I think it [ASPECTS] is great.”
 - “I think it is a good thing, then. And the question becomes for the departments then...well are we going to try in some way to require this?”

- Administrators raised concerns about GSI's not having enough time to participate in ASPECTS.
- Administrators also were concerned that graduate students in some disciplines have only limited opportunities to be GSI's.
 - “Most of our students don’t TA most of the time. So, we have a requirement of two semesters of teaching in what may be six years and that is it. So most of the time, they’re not involved in teaching and so I don’t think you are going to find that many students who want to go to [ASPECTS].”

398T Faculty

Overall, 398T faculty who participated in the GRS 098T pilot project found it to be a positive experience and viewed it as beneficial for students. However, collaboration between Dr. Duke and 398T faculty was minimal and likely mitigated some potential benefits of the project. The 398T faculty also made suggestions for improvements.

1. *Faculty partners viewed the added pedagogical expertise offered by the project as a major benefit.*
 - Six of the seven 398T faculty interviewed cited the pedagogical content that GRS 098T added to their 398T course as a significant benefit of the partnership.
 - “I think that the advantage is that they [students] can get more of the theory so that they can get more of the big picture.”
 - Several of the 398T faculty members mentioned Dr. Duke’s superior teaching abilities as a benefit.
 - Several faculty partners also mentioned their own lack of pedagogical expertise when discussing advantages of the partnership.
2. *Faculty collaboration was minimal.*
 - Four faculty members mentioned the minimal collaboration between themselves and Dr. Duke. For example:
 - “We had a meeting—it was a luncheon meeting over in the faculty club—and he kind of talked generally about what he was going to do and he gave us a copy of his book. He may have given us a syllabus and I may just be forgetting...I just don’t remember.”
 - “I never met him personally. We have a lot of emails back and forth.”
 - Two 398T instructors, however, observed some or most of the GRS 098T class sessions. One found it essential to teaching the departmental course and stated:
 - “I was just mostly interested in making sure that our students got the best product that they could. I didn’t feel that I could give my part of the product to them without knowing exactly what he was delivering...so often I was able to say, ‘Do you remember when Professor Duke did this?’ So, in a way, that was one of the more valuable elements of his class.”
3. *Department faculty desired more time with their students*
 - Several 398T instructors suggesting shortening the time students spent in GRS 098T because they felt rushed or were forced to cut disciplinary content they felt was important.
 - Six of the 398T faculty cited student contact as one of the things they liked most about teaching the course.

- Many faculty members regretted not having the opportunity to know their students better.
4. *398T instructors were very positive about the ASPECTS program.*
- Several of the instructors had their students attend ASPECTS sessions as part of their 398T course requirements.
 - “...they could do two things out of menu A or two things out of menu B and one of them was getting an ASPECTS certificate.”
 - “I don’t profess to have all of the answers here about being an effective teacher, so how about we do this, each one of you should take an ASPECTS course [session] and...present that material...”
 - Instructors, like administrators, also expressed concerns about GSI time constraints.
 - “Conceptually I think it [ASPECTS] is a terrific idea. I am concerned about scheduling...They are taking course[s], they have teaching assistant assignments—and sometimes they [faculty] want them in the classroom when they are lecturing—it really narrows down the possibility.”

GRS 098T Students

1. *Overall, graduate students were satisfied with GRS 098T*
- 60% of students responded that the GRS 098T course was “very good” or “excellent.”
 - 88% of students responded that Dr. Duke was “very good” or “excellent.”
 - 80% of students “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the course was well organized.
 - 74% of students “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the course will be of value to them.
 - 47% of students would recommend the course to someone they liked.
2. *Most GRS 098T students had little or no teaching experience.*
- Half of all respondents were in their first semester as a TA (see Table 4)

Table 4 – Amount of college teaching experience of GRS 098T students

Amount of College Teaching Experience	Mid-Term Survey	End-Term Survey
One semester	50%	53%
One year	17%	10%
1.5-2 years	11%	21%
2.5-3 years	14%	4%
3.5-4 years	8%	10%
More than 4 years	0%	2%
Total	100%	100%

- About 20% of respondents did not have a TA or Assistant Instructor (AI) position (see Table 5).
- Half of respondents who were Teaching Assistants were responsible for a lab or discussion section (see Table 5).

Table 5 – Type of teaching assignments of GRS 098T students

Type of Teaching Assignment	Mid-Term Survey	End-Term Survey
Teaching Assistant	38%	27%
Teaching Assistant responsible for a lab section	13%	15%
Teaching Assistant responsible for a discussion section	26%	27%
Assistant Instructor	0%	8%
Not currently a TA or AI	18%	23%
Other	5%	0%
Total	100%	100%

3. *Students reported that GRS 098T changed the way they thought and felt about teaching.*
 - Students better understood how to create a student-centered teaching environment focused on student learning rather than a predefined amount of content.
 - Students gained an understanding of how to teach creatively in order to maintain student interest.
 - “I had originally conceptualized teaching as something that was boring and repetitive. I could not imagine how professors teach the same information over and over, every semester without becoming completely bored with it. Additionally, my thought on students was that it was their responsibility to learn... particularly with students that seem uninterested and aren't working. Through the course, I've changed my mind about both of these things. I now can easily see how a career teaching students could be exciting and ever-changing, even though the subject-matter doesn't change.”

4. *Students learned a variety of teaching skills in GRS 098T and were able to apply them.*
 - Specific skills learned and applied included:
 - Using teaching techniques other than lecture to present content.
 - Using alternative student assessment techniques.
 - Asking students questions instead of waiting for them to ask on their own.
 - Creating lesson plans.
 - Structuring lessons by topic and subtopic.
 - Providing concrete examples to illustrate a point.
 - Reviewing main ideas at the end of class.
 - Presenting material more slowly.
 - Applying general pedagogical concepts to their teaching context.

5. *GRS 098T students became more optimistic about their ability to apply concepts as the semester progressed.*
- Table 6 illustrates the change in attitude between the mid-term survey and the end-term survey conducted after their 398T experience.

Table 6 – Perceived ability to apply course concepts over time

	Mid-Term Survey	End-Term Survey
Able to apply concepts now To a “moderate,” “considerable” or “very great” extent	58%	73%
Able to apply concepts in the future To a “moderate,” “considerable” or “very great” extent	87%	88%

6. *GRS 098T students gained confidence in their ability to teach.*
- Students felt more confident in their own teaching skills.
 - Students felt better able to handle difficult students.
 - Students felt more confident about using quizzes and other low-stakes student assessments.
7. *Students felt that the opportunity to practice teaching was the most valuable part of GRS 098T.*
- The most frequently cited useful assignment was the small group lectures where students practiced teaching in front of a group of classmates from different disciplines.
 - Several student comments exemplify this finding:
 - “That [small group lecture] assignment gave me a chance to practice some things, to think about my topic in different ways, and perhaps most importantly, to be reminded of what a neophyte to the field would and wouldn't know.”
 - “It is very hard to prepare a lecture on an isolated topic, which can be simultaneously brief, succinct, and accessible to laymen. So these model lectures gave useful practice on such ideas. Plus, for the conscious few, they helped reinforce ideas of adhering to time schedules, and responding to audience questions coherently.”
 - Students also valued the guest lectures as models for conveying complex materials in a short time frame to a diverse audience.
8. *Not all students had the freedom or opportunity to implement instructional techniques learned.*
- As teaching assistants, students did not always have the freedom to make instructional changes or change their approach to grading.
 - Many students in the class were not currently teaching in any capacity.
 - “It would probably be difficult to coordinate but the class would have been even more applicable for me if I were actually teaching a class. It seemed that many of us were not TA's. Certainly the material is still relevant and useful for future teaching experiences but it would have been nice to have a class to practice on.”

9. *GRS 098T students experienced other barriers to applying what they learned including:*

- Difficulty in applying general concepts to their discipline.
- Lacking the practical teaching experience to apply the concepts in a real classroom.
- Some techniques were difficult to maintain over time.
- University or departmental curriculum requirements prevented implementation.

10. *Many students felt the workload for GRS 098T was excessive or high.*

- 15.4% rated the workload for the course as “Excessive.” Another 51.3% of students rated the course workload as “High.”
- Although 85% of students reported that they read “all or almost all” of the reading and 95% reported completing “all or almost all” of the assignments, students did not feel that the written reading summaries were useful or worth the time. Many identified these assignments as the least useful part of the course.
 - “I guess writing the summaries of the chapters of the book helped me solidify my thinking on those subjects, but that was pretty time consuming and the chapters are quite repetitive.”
 - “Don't require students to complete essays for every reading assignment. Flexibility in assignments really helps grad students who have so much stuff going on. Sometimes I had so much stuff going on in the week, there was no time for the response (even though I always read).”
 - “Not as many summary assignments, since it can take quite some time for some people (including me), time that we can use to prepare our lectures and actually practice things we learn from class.”
- While most students enjoyed the model lectures, many did not feel that writing summaries of them was useful.
- The most frequent student complaint was about the course workload or having too many assignments.

11. *Students appreciated the multidisciplinary nature of GRS 098T.*

- Most students found the interaction with students from other disciplines to be one of the benefits of participating in GRS 098T.
 - “The interdisciplinary nature of the course was actually quite helpful in highlighting aspects of teaching that were universal vs. those that might be particular to my discipline (the model teacher’s lectures were particularly helpful in this way). The opportunity to work with students from other departments gave me a chance to see how people new to my discipline might see it.”
 - “Dr. Duke’s class allowed TAs from different disciplines to interact. An Economics TA spoke to me about the importance of knowing calculus for the class she teaches. Many of my calculus students are Economics majors and now I have a better idea about how they will use calculus.”

12. *Most students liked the complementary nature of GRS 098T and departmental 398T courses.*

- Most viewed the complementary nature of the two courses as an advantage. They liked receiving general pedagogical instruction in GRS 098T and discipline/department specific information in their department’s 398T course.

- “Without our dept’s 398T [course] I wouldn’t have had a clear idea about preparing for *my* class on a solid foundation. Now I can begin to think about applying Dr. Duke’s ideas in the class.”
- “I thought the combination did benefit me because the 098T course focused on things specific to mathematics and opportunities to math graduate students.”
- Students reported that department 398T courses focused on:
 - Discipline-specific information such as how to teach a particular concept, run a lab, or conduct field work.
 - Ethical issues.
 - How to write exams, syllabi, and other course documents.
 - How to make presentations at professional meetings.
 - Departmental processes and procedures.

13. *Some students reported a lack of continuity between GRS 098T and their department’s 398T course.*

- For some students there was little connection between the content in GRS 098T and their departmental 398T course.
 - “I think better transition from the GRS [098T] to the departmental [398T] courses would improve both courses considerably. The departmental pedagogy professor seemed to have little idea of what had happened with Dr. Duke’s class.... There was little coordination between the two professors in moving students from the generalist approach Dr. Duke gave to the discipline-specific approach back in the department.”
 - “The departmental professor and Dr. Duke should be more in sync so that they know what each other is covering and so that there is more continuity.”
- A few students reported not having a department 398T course.
- Some students found their department’s 398T course to be of little use.
 - “Honestly, my department’s 398T seemed a bit unstructured and aimless compared to Dr. Duke’s course. I’m not sure if [the 398T professor] had an ultimate goal in mind.”
 - “My department’s 398T [course] was horrible. We sat in class for several hours while the prof. made inane comments about teaching. Given that we only met four times, our sessions should have been packed with information such as procedures for dealing with cheating, what is sexual harassment, the possible TA positions open to us, and specific ideas for making the similar concepts we all teach fun and accessible. We did very little of this.”
 - We didn’t do anything in 398T. There were several things we could have talked about that were specific to the department and teaching this particular topic, but we didn’t.”

14. *Many students felt the GRS 098T course could have been shorter.*

- When asked for suggestions for improving the GRS 098T/department 398T combination, many students felt the GRS 098T portion of the semester could have been shorter and still covered the content effectively.
 - “Reduce the GRS 098T portion by a week or two. By the end it felt like things were getting repetitive.”

- “Get rid of my departmental 398T, shorten Duke’s class to 1.5 months and incorporate a 1.5 month-long practical period.”
- Students also suggested alternative ways to organize the course combination including:
 - Having the departmental 398T course first to learn department policies and procedures early on.
 - Alternating GRS 098T and the department 398T to allow for immediate application of the more theoretical GRS 098T content.
 - Eliminating the departmental 398T portion.

15. *Many students thought GRS 098T should be a university requirement for all GSIs.*

- Many students thought all TAs and AIs should be required to take GRS 098T or a similar type course their first semester as a graduate student or prior to being appointed as a GSI.
 - “It would be great if such a pedagogy course was required for graduate students before they accepted teaching positions.”
 - “Simply make Dr. Duke’s class the only 398T class. There’ll be no more conflicts...or am I being too idealistic?”
 - “Make everyone required to take Dr. Duke’s 398T class for an entire semester.”

ASPECTS Attendees

From September 1, 2004 until April 19, 2005 there were 139 offerings of the 29 ASPECTS-affiliated sessions. Out of 263 unique ASPECTS registrants, 78 percent attended at least one session. These 204 unique attendees attended on average 3.46 sessions for a total of 706 session seats. Each session⁴ had an average of 5.06 attendees. As of September 1, 2005, twenty-one ASPECTS certificates have been awarded.

1. *Most respondents (90%) felt very good or excellent about ASPECTS session instructors’ effectiveness in helping them to see how session material could be applied to different instructional areas/settings.*

Table 7 – Session helped me see how this material could be applied to different instructional areas/settings

Response	Percent
Poor	1%
Fair	2%
Average	8%
Very Good	34%
Excellent	56%
Total	100%

2. *Many students described ASPECTS sessions as a good use of time, and were pleased that the concepts introduced at the sessions were often practical and easily implemented.*
 - When asked for three adjectives to describe ASPECTS sessions, most students responded that sessions were useful, informative and supportive.

⁴ Includes Teaching with Technology sessions (i.e., eGradebook, Blackboard, etc.) which are also attended by faculty,

- “Useful: because it helps you to know basic techniques to apply in your TA work.”
 - “Informative on multiple levels.”
 - “Encouraging: supportive atmosphere...”
3. *The most important idea that ASPECTS students learned was the need to consider and prepare for different learning styles.*
- For many students, this was the first time they were introduced to the concept of learning styles and how they impact student receptivity to content.
 - Students appreciated being introduced to traditional assessment tools—rubrics and surveys—and to instructional technology tools like Blackboard and PowerPoint.
 - For others, the simple benefit of preparation was the most important idea they obtained from their ASPECTS’ sessions.
 - “Adequate preparation is the key to stop my nervousness for public speaking.”
 - “The importance of planning a discussion and how to go about this process.”
 - “Prepared speakers will generate a relaxed, attentive audience.”
4. *The majority of respondents identified preparation as the process or technique they would try as a result of ASPECTS:*
- Specific processes that students planned to incorporate were: preparing questions or scenarios for discussion, clearly stating course objectives, developing rubrics or matrices, structuring lecture notes, self-coaching and practicing before lectures, researching previous syllabi, and establishing comfort and tone.
 - Many respondents cited their intent to use various assessment tools and techniques to gauge their teaching effectiveness. Examples included:
 - “Using the “card system” she described to elicit class feedback!”
 - “Designing a way for weekly feedback between student and instructor.”
 - “OCA.”
 - “Consciously observe for physical cues as a form of feedback.”
5. *Changes that attendees suggested for ASPECTS focused on three areas—more time, more interaction, and more examples.*
- A recurring suggestion was for more time to practice the concepts introduced through ASPECTS.
 - “Maybe a little longer so practical application could have been discussed longer.”
 - Some participants wanted more interactive ASPECTS sessions.
 - “I fully expected less lecture and more practice to develop my own skills.”
 - Others suggested that more discipline specific examples be offered.
 - “More discussion of examples/applications to different subject areas.”

Conclusions

Conclusions based on the above findings may found on pages 4-6.

Graduate Student Instructor Training and GRS 098T at UT Austin

Appendices

Appendix A:

GRS 098T Student Surveys

Duke Survey:

#	Survey Question	Very Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent	Total	Avg
1	Overall, this course was	3 (4.4%)	3 (4.4%)	21 (30.9%)	22 (32.4%)	19 (27.9%)	68	3.8
2	Overall, this instructor was	1 (1.5%)	1 (1.5%)	6 (8.8%)	21 (30.9%)	39 (57.4%)	68	4.4

#	Survey Question	Definitely	Probably	Probably Not	No Way	Total	Avg
3	I would recommend this course to someone I liked.	32 (47.1%)	22 (32.4%)	10 (14.7%)	4 (5.9%)	68	N/A

#	Survey Question
4	In what ways has your thinking changed as a result of our course?
5	In what ways has your teaching changed as a result of our course?
6	What is the most important idea or principle that you learned from our course?
7	What was the least valuable assignment of the 8 weeks?
8	What was the most valuable assignment of the 8 weeks?
9	This is the first time this course has been offered. When the course is given next fall, what changes would you recommend?
10	Please write any additional comments you'd like to express about the course or my teaching.

Survey Question #11: (Optional Identifier) Please indicate your home department.

Option	Response Count
Mathematics	17 (29.3%)
Geological Sciences	12 (20.7%)
Economics	5 (8.6%)
Business	6 (10.3%)
Cell and Molecular Biology	9 (15.5%)
Nutrition	2 (3.4%)
Government	2 (3.4%)
Social Work	4 (6.9%)
Other	1 (1.7%)
Total	58

Mid-Term Survey:

The Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment (DIIA) is conducting an evaluation of GRS 098T as part of its ongoing efforts to improve Graduate Student Instructor training at UT Austin. As a student enrolled in the course, we value your feedback and would greatly appreciate you taking a few minutes to complete the survey below. Your responses will remain completely anonymous. Individual responses will be combined and evaluated collectively with information from other sources.

Please answer the following questions based on your experience in GRS 098T:

#	Survey Question	Not at all	To a limited extent	To a moderate extent	To a considerable extent	To a very great extent	Total
1	To what extent have you been able to apply what you have learned in the course to your current teaching situation?	7 (18.4%)	9 (23.7%)	9 (23.7%)	8 (21.1%)	5 (13.2%)	38
2	To what extent do you think you will be able to apply what you have learned in the course to future teaching situations?	1 (2.6%)	4 (10.3%)	8 (20.5%)	14 (35.9%)	12 (30.8%)	39
3	Describe the barriers you face in being able to apply or use what you have learned in the course.						

#	Survey Question	None or almost none	Around 25%	Around 50%	Around 75%	All or almost all	Total
4	Approximately what percentage of the reading did you complete?	1 (2.6%)	1 (2.6%)	1 (2.6%)	7 (17.9%)	29 (74.4%)	39
5	Approximately what percentage of the assignments did you complete?	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.6%)	1 (2.6%)	37 (94.9%)	39
		Never	1-2 times	3-4 times	5-6 times	7 times or more	
6	How many times were you absent from class	12 (30.8%)	22 (56.4%)	5 (12.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	39
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
7	The course was well organized.	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.1%)	6 (15.4%)	20 (51.3%)	11 (28.2%)	39
8	At this point in time, I feel that this course will be (or has already been) of value to me.	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.1%)	8 (20.5%)	13 (33.3%)	16 (41.0%)	39
		Very Un-satisfactory	Un-satisfactory	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent	
9	Overall, this course was:	0 (0.0%)	3 (7.7%)	11 (28.2%)	12 (30.8%)	13 (33.3%)	39
		Excessive	High	Average	Light	Insufficient	
10	In my opinion, the workload in this course was:	6 (15.4%)	20 (51.3%)	10 (25.6%)	2 (5.1%)	1 (2.6%)	39

Please tell us about yourself and your experiences:

#	Survey Question	Teaching Assistant	Teaching Assistant responsible for a lab section	Teaching Assistant responsible for a discussion section	Assistant Instructor	Not currently a TA or AI	Other	Total
11	Which of the following best describes your current teaching role at UT Austin:	15 (38.5%)	5 (12.8%)	10 (25.6%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (17.9%)	2 (5.1%)	39
		One semester	One year	1 1/2 - 2 years	2 1/2 - 3 years	3 1/2 - 4 years	More than 4 years	
12	Including the current semester, how much college teaching and TA/AI experience do you have?	17 (45.9%)	7 (18.9%)	5 (13.5%)	5 (13.5%)	3 (8.1%)	0 (0.0%)	37

13: In what department will you be taking 398T?

Option	Response Count
Business	6 (16.7%)
Cell & Molecular Biology	2 (5.6%)
Economics	3 (8.3%)
Geological Sciences	4 (11.1%)
Government	0 (0.0%)
Mathematics	14 (38.9%)
Nutrition	2 (5.6%)
Social Work	3 (8.3%)
Other	2 (5.6%)
Total	36

14: What type of professional role do you anticipate having after earning your degree?

Option	Response Count
Academic at a private institution	3 (7.7%)
Academic at a small public institution	0 (0.0%)
Academic at a large public institution	13 (33.3%)
Researcher at a university or institute	11 (28.2%)
Researcher in private industry	2 (5.1%)
Applied professional in a public agency	0 (0.0%)
Applied professional in private industry	2 (5.1%)
Self-employed as a consultant/freelancer	0 (0.0%)
Undecided	6 (15.4%)
Other	2 (5.1%)
Total	39

#	Survey Question	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 or over	Total
15	What is your age?	10 (26.3%)	20 (52.6%)	6 (15.8%)	1 (2.6%)	1 (2.6%)	38

#	Survey Question	Female	Male	Total
16	What is your sex?	13 (35.1%)	24 (64.9%)	37
		Yes	No	
17	Are you an international student?	16 (41.0%)	23 (59.0%)	39
18	Is English your primary language?	24 (61.5%)	15 (38.5%)	39

End-Term Survey

The Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment (DIIA) is conducting an evaluation of GRS 098T and partner departmental 398T courses as part of its ongoing efforts to improve Graduate Student Instructor training at UT Austin. As a student enrolled in these courses, we value your feedback and would greatly appreciate you taking a few minutes to complete the survey below. Your individual responses will remain anonymous and evaluated collectively with information from other sources.

Please answer the following questions based on your experience in your department's 398T course:

#	Survey Question	Not at all	To a limited extent	To a moderate extent	To a considerable extent	To a very great extent	Total
1	To what extent have you been able to apply what you have learned in the course to your current teaching situation?	5 (9.6%)	9 (17.3%)	18 (34.6%)	14 (26.9%)	6 (11.5%)	52
2	To what extent do you think you will be able to apply what you have learned in the course to future teaching situations?	0 (0.0%)	6 (11.3%)	9 (17.0%)	20 (37.7%)	18 (34.0%)	53
		None or almost none	Around 25%	Around 50%	Around 75%	All or almost all	
3	Approximately what percentage of the reading did you complete?	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.9%)	3 (5.7%)	4 (7.5%)	45 (84.9%)	53
4	Approximately what percentage of the assignments did you complete?	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.9%)	52 (98.1%)	53

#	Survey Question	Never	1-2 times	3-4 times	5-6 times	7 times or more	Total
5	How many times were you absent from class	20 (37.7%)	26 (49.1%)	7 (13.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	53

Consider both your department's 398T course and Dr. Duke's GRS 098T course when answering the following questions:

#	Survey Question	None or almost none	Around 25%	Around 50%	Around 75%	All or almost all	Total
6	Approximately how much did the material presented in your department's 398T course overlap with Dr. Duke's GRS 098T course?	26 (49.1%)	18 (34.0%)	7 (13.2%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.9%)	53
7	Describe how your department's 398T course differs from Dr. Duke's GRS 098T course.						
8	What do you see as the advantage(s) of combining your department's 398T course with Dr. Duke's GRS 098T course?						
9	What do you see as the disadvantage(s) of combining your department's 398T course with Dr. Duke's GRS 098T course?						
10	How has combining your department's 398T course with Dr. Duke's GRS 098T course benefited you?						
11	What suggestions do you have for improving the departmental 398T and Dr. Duke's GRS 098T course combination?						
12	What suggestions do you have for improving how graduate students are trained to teach at UT Austin?						

Please tell us about yourself and your experiences:

#	Survey Question	Yes	No	Unsure	Total
13	Have you attended an ASPECTS workshop sponsored by the Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment?	8 (15.4%)	41 (78.8%)	3 (5.8%)	52

#	Survey Question	Teaching Assistant	Teaching Assistant responsible for a lab section	Teaching Assistant responsible for a discussion section	Assistant Instructor	Not currently a TA or AI	Other	Total
14	Which of the following best describes your current teaching role at UT Austin:	14 (26.9%)	8 (15.4%)	14 (26.9%)	4 (7.7%)	12 (23.1%)	0 (0.0%)	52

#	Survey Question	One semester	One year	1 1/2 - 2 years	2 1/2 - 3 years	3 1/2 - 4 years	More than 4 years	Total
15	Including the current semester, how much college teaching and TA/AI experience do you have?	27 (52.9%)	5 (9.8%)	11 (21.6%)	2 (3.9%)	5 (9.8%)	1 (2.0%)	51

Survey Question #16: In what department are you taking 398T?

Option	Response Count
Business	8 (15.4%)
Cell & Molecular Biology	2 (3.8%)
Economics	5 (9.6%)
Geological Sciences	5 (9.6%)
Government	1 (1.9%)
Mathematics	16 (30.8%)
Nutrition	4 (7.7%)
Social Work	7 (13.5%)
Other	4 (7.7%)
Total	52

#	Survey Question	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 or over	Total
17	What is your age?	17 (32.1%)	24 (45.3%)	9 (17.0%)	3 (5.7%)	0 (0.0%)	53

#	Survey Question	Female	Male	Total
18	What is your sex?	28 (54.9%)	23 (45.1%)	51
		Yes	No	
19	Are you an international student?	21 (40.4%)	31 (59.6%)	52
20	Is English your primary language?	35 (67.3%)	17 (32.7%)	52

Appendix B:

Department Head and 398T Faculty Interview Protocols

Department Head Interview Protocol:

1. Describe your department's approach to Graduate Student Instructor training.
2. Describe your department's 398T course.
 - What do you see as the primary purpose of the course?
3. Describe your department's partnership with the GRS 098T pilot program.
 - Why did your department decide to partner with the GRS 098T program?
 - What advantages/disadvantages are related to partnering with the GRS 098T program for your department?
 - Have any administrative challenges arisen as a result of your participation?
 - What are the benefits to participating?
4. What do you see as the University's role in Graduate Student Instructor training?
 - What is the department's role?
5. Are you familiar with the ASPECTS program, an initiative of the Office of Graduate Studies, Office of the Provost and, Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment?
 - How do you think the ASPECTS program fits with your department's approach to Graduate Student Instructor training

398T Faculty Interview Protocol:

1. Describe your department's approach to Graduate Student Instructor training.
2. Describe your 398T course.
 - What do you see as the primary purpose of the course?
 - What are the goals of your course?
 - What skills or knowledge do you expect students to learn?
3. Why did you decide to teach the course?
 - How often do you teach the course?
 - What do you like/dislike about teaching the course?
4. Describe your partnership with the GRS 098T pilot program.
 - Did your approach to teaching 398T change as a result of your partnership? How?
 - What advantages/disadvantages are related to partnering with 098T for you as an instructor?
 - Have any challenges arisen as a result of your participation? Explain.
 - What are the benefits to participating?
5. What do you see as the University's role in Graduate Student Instructor training?
6. Are you familiar with the ASPECTS program, an initiative of the Office of Graduate Studies, Office of the Provost and, Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment?
 - How do you think the ASPECTS program fits with your 398T course?

Appendix C:

Robert Duke Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your motivations for developing GRS 098T.
2. What support have you received in developing the course?
 - What support have you received from the Provost's office?
 - What support have you received from the Graduate school?
 - Who else was involved in the planning?
 - What support would you like to have received? From whom...which dept?
3. What were the primary objectives of the course?
 - Were the objectives met?
 - What worked best? Why?
 - What changes do you plan to make? Why?
4. Did student performance in the course meet your expectations?
 - Did the course work better for some types of students than others? Explain.
 - What was the biggest student-related challenge in 098T?
5. Describe your partnership with the departments and the 398T instructors.
 - How often did you meet with them?
 - How have you shared information?
 - What are some of the challenges of working with the departments or instructors?
6. How do you see the ASPECTS program fitting in with 098T/398T?
 - How best could the ASPECTS program and 098T/398T collaborate?
7. What are your future plans for 098T?
 - Do you think GRS 098T/398T (or a similar model) would work as a university-wide requirement?
 - What are the challenges of implementing such a requirement?
 - What would be the most effective way of addressing those challenges?

Appendix D:

GRS 098T Course Syllabus

GRS 098T
TEACHING & LEARNING
Fall 2004
(65233)
GSB 2.124
2 September through 28 October

Robert A. Duke
Office: MRH 2.208
Hours: WTh 4-5 and by appointment
Graduate Assistant: Amy Simmons

This course is designed to introduce you to the fundamental principles of human learning and to provide opportunities for you to practice applying those principles in your own teaching. The decision to include teaching as part of your educational career (regardless whether the decision was yours or someone else's) requires that you refine your ability to convey important ideas about the subject matter of your discipline. The ultimate goal of the course is that you deepen your understanding of the fundamental principles of your subject and formulate a realistic perspective of your own strengths and weaknesses as professionals.

Course Objectives: By the end of the course, you will be able to do each of the following in a limited context:

1. Explain fundamental principles of human learning and their application in the development of intellectual and motor skills.
2. Articulate meaningful instructional goals for professionals, pre-professionals, and other students of your discipline.
3. Design effective learning sequences that focus on the development of (a) intellectual flexibility and depth and (b) excellent fundamental skills.
4. Create successful learning experiences that effectively change student behavior.
5. Speak and write clearly and cogently in giving succinct instructions and direct positive and negative feedback.
6. Systematically analyze the effectiveness of your teaching on the basis of student accomplishment.
7. Contribute to the improvement of your own teaching and the teaching of your peers by providing thoughtful, informative analyses of instructional effectiveness.

Text and Materials: Duke, R. A. (2004). *Intelligent college teaching: Essays on the core principles of effective instruction*. Austin: Learning and Behavior Resources.

Assignments:

1. For each of the essays, write a concise paragraph that explains, in your own words, the essay's fundamental thesis and describes positive applications of the ideas presented in relation to your own experiences as a teacher and learner. In addition, write at least one question that was generated by the reading. (No longer than 250 words, submitted by e-mail, addressed to both Amy and me.)
2. Review the sample music curriculum at the end of the What to Teach essay. Note that each objective represents a specific, observable behavior, but does not specify a level of task difficulty or context. Decide upon the teaching situation that you will use as the focus of your work this semester. Compile a list of long-term objectives (N ? 25)—similar in format to the objectives in the curriculum example—that you consider appropriate and most important for students' long-term success in your discipline. Provide a brief narrative rationale for the set of objectives you select.

3. Give three 20-minute "lectures" to groups of two or three classmates who are not in your area of specialization. In each lesson, you should explain one interesting idea that is central to your discipline. Your students should leave each lecture having demonstrated their understanding of the idea you've taught. You will tape-record the first and third of these lectures on either audio- or (preferably) videotape. For each lesson submit narrative assessments of the quality of your teaching and the students' understanding. Your reports should include: the assessment criteria for the end of the lesson; the sequence of instruction (what the students do, not what you do), including a description of student response opportunities; a review of your observations of the students' responses; (a description of your observations from the tapes for lessons 1 and 3); and a brief narrative summarizing what you learned from the experience.

4. For three of the six model lectures that are given in class, write a brief description of your observations. Begin with a concise explanation of the idea presented by the teacher. Rather than simply saying what the talk was about, try to state succinctly what you learned, as if you were explaining the idea to another person. Taking note of the principles discussed in our class sessions and in the readings, describe the application of those principles in each lecture. Your task is not to evaluate the quality of the lecture, but to simply describe what you observe. Each report (approximately 250 words) should be submitted to Amy and me by e-mail, not as an attachment but in the body of the message, by 5 PM on the Fridays following the lectures that you choose to write about.

5. Select a specific learning objective in your present teaching situation that is particularly challenging for undergraduate students. Write a detailed sequence of instructional activities that begins at a level of approximation that you are reasonably certain your students can achieve prior to instruction, and concludes with their demonstration of the learning objective in context. Include only observable student behavior in the task sequence; do not write what you, as the teacher, will do.

6. Participate in class discussions/demonstrations. Contribute creative thoughts and penetrating questions. Miss no more than one scheduled class for any reason.

NOTES: Any assignment(s) may be changed with my prior approval. Do not engage in busywork if you know the material. All assignments must be completed and submitted on the printed due dates in order to receive credit. No grade of incomplete (X) will be given for any reason.

Grade Criteria:

CR Course requirements completed with competence and accuracy

NC One or more course requirements not adequately completed

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Statement: The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities.

Appendix E

398T Description

General Description

(This description of 398T was located at: <http://www.utexas.edu/academic/cte/398Tbrochure.html>)

The primary source of instruction in teaching for graduate students appointed as Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs, also known as TAs and AIs) is the departmental 398T course, a 3-hour graduate course with various specific titles depending on the individual department. The purpose of the 398T course is to provide information and guidance in teaching to those graduate students who are responsible for conducting some portion of the instruction of undergraduate courses. The course is required by the University for any graduate student who will be the instructor of record and have sole responsibility for an undergraduate class. These are generally individuals with master's degrees and some previous experience as GSIs. Some departments extend that requirement to include all graduate students assigned as GSIs who are assisting in teaching a course, prior to or coincident with their first semester in teaching.

The courses are taught by a member of the departmental faculty. Assignment to teach 398T usually rotates through the senior faculty in a department; however, past studies of the course have shown that the most effective versions were those taught by individuals who had taught the course for at least three years. Since most college faculty have not had such a course themselves, they take a few years to get the course content under control. Faculty who have taught the course report learning more about teaching than they ever knew previously.

Format

The format of these courses varies from department to department. The most common format is a weekly 3-hour class meeting of approximately 10-12 students depending on the size of the department. Some of the smaller departments have combined forces to offer a single, combined section for their graduate students. Some larger departments have more than one section, each one associated with a particular undergraduate course (e.g., all first semester Chemistry laboratory assistants).

Content

Course content can take several directions. Some courses focus on preparing the graduate students to teach a particular course within the department. Others take a more general approach to preparing students to be teaching assistants regardless of their specific assignment. Still others have as an objective to prepare the students to take on faculty positions after graduation. The topics that are included in a given course will depend on which of these missions the department has chosen for it. The University is currently encouraging departments to look at the last of these three possibilities as the most desirable focus for 398T. However, it is up to the departments to tailor the content to the needs of the discipline.

Appendix F

ASPECTS: Certificate-associated Sessions and Descriptions

Assessment Certificate

Goal: The Assessment certificate will enable the Graduate Student Instructor to appropriately use multiple assessment modes and approaches aligned with learning objectives to assess student learning before, during and after instruction.

Sessions Offered:

- Assessing Classroom Instruction - In this workshop we will discuss the reasons for assessing classroom instruction, the assessment process, integrating assessment into regular instruction, some commonly used assessment methods, and using assessment results. Specifically, workshop participants will be shown ways to integrate assessment into their instruction using on-line surveys, feedback devices and classroom observation and how to use assessment results to improve instruction. Participants will also have the opportunity to develop an assessment plan for a course.
- Using Rubrics to Grade Student Performance - When grading “subjective” assignments such as essays, projects and portfolios, students often complain that the grading standards are vague, inconsistent or unfair. In this workshop we will explore ways to make the grading process more objective using a systematic scoring guideline called a rubric. We will discuss rubrics and their essential components, various types of rubrics, how to select pre-made rubrics, and how to create a rubric. You will also have some hands-on activities to develop your own sample rubric.
- Evaluating Student Learning in Large Classes: Designing the Multiple-Choice Exam - Large class sizes often necessitate using multiple-choice exams to assess student learning. However, instructors can find it challenging to write good items that ask students to do more than memorize facts and details. In this workshop we will explore how to create effective classroom multiple-choice exams that are based on sound learning objectives and how you can use information from your exams to improve your teaching.

Leading Discussions Certificate

Goal: The Leading Discussions certificate will enable the Graduate Student Instructor to design, implement, and evaluate effective discussion.

Sessions Offered:

- Designing Effective Discussions - In your role as a GSI, leading discussions will frequently be your responsibility. Leading effective discussions requires considerable advance planning – identifying content objectives, developing questions designed to promote critical thinking, and classroom management techniques that encourage high quality student contributions. In this session we will help you develop successful planning techniques and will also discuss ways to overcome barriers to discussion and to find alternative discussion activities that promote learning.
- Promoting Active Learning - Instructors concerned about their students' poor content retention, weak conceptual understanding and inability to transfer knowledge to authentic situations can increase their students' active participation in class through discussions. When a student actively engages with instructional material they process information at a deeper level and engage in higher level thinking skills - which generally translates into better grades and greater motivation for learning. This session examines three techniques

for promoting classroom discussion. Participants will experience for themselves these three types of discussion approaches and have the opportunity to debate the instructional situations in which each would be most effective.

- Assessing Classroom Discussion - While discussion is an excellent way to promote active learning in the classroom, it is sometimes difficult to know whether or not students are learning essential information in this less structured format. One way to determine what understanding students take away from classroom discussion is to conduct systematic assessment. In this session participants will learn about the reasons for assessing classroom discussion and two easy -to -use assessment methods. Specific attention will be given to using simple feedback devices to assess classroom discussion. Participants will also create their own classroom discussion feedback device for use in their course(s).

Lecturing Certificate

Goal: The Lecturing certificate will enable the Graduate Student Instructor to design lectures that are based on key communication skills and learning theory, consider the needs of the students, and increase student understanding through the use of appropriate active learning techniques.

Sessions Offered:

- Effective Public Speaking Techniques - Sharing knowledge in an academic community relies both on the written and the spoken word. The great difference is that the lecture or other forms of public speaking are done before an audience, often a large audience. Effective speaking in public is a skill that can be learned, just as effective writing is learned. In this session, we will learn how to plan what we will say, make our message clear to our listeners, and do all this without being a bundle of nerves!
- Designing Effective Lectures for Learning - Many instructors forget that the purpose of giving a lecture is NOT simply to deliver information, but more importantly to help students learn and understand that information. The purpose of this session is to explore the ways in which students learn from lectures and how you as the lecturer can help that process occur. We will analyze lectures from the student perspective and generate strategies that you can use to turn any lecture from a passive to an active learning experience.
- Interactive Techniques for Large Classes - The responsibility of teaching classes of 100 students or more can present a challenge to the most enthusiastic university instructor. Grabbing and keeping the attention of students in large classes, so they will understand what is taught, will require more than delivering a lecture or being the sage on the stage. This session will explore techniques and tools useful for instructors to engage students in the learning process in large classes. We will analyze the dynamics of group learning and generate strategies and techniques that instructors can use to promote community, participation and learning among students in large classes.

Teaching Research Skills Certificate

Goal: The Teaching Research Skills certificate will enable the Graduate Student Instructor to apply best practices to library research assignments, teach students how to find, evaluate and synthesize information effectively and ethically, and structure courses to prevent plagiarism.

Sessions Offered:

- Improve Your Research Assignments - Library research is an essential component of academic work across disciplines. In this session, participants will learn how to integrate library research into assignment design to meet their course objectives. We will discuss

both common pitfalls and best practices. Participants will leave the session with a number of examples of effective research assignments.

- Web Savvy Students - According to the 2002 Pew Internet and American Life Project, 73% of college students say they use the Internet more than the library. This workshop will provide participants with the background and tools necessary to teach their students how to effectively use web resources for college-level research.
- Preventing and Detecting Plagiarism - In a 2001 survey, 41% of students admitted to “cut and paste” plagiarism. In this session, participants will learn how to structure their courses to prevent plagiarism and how to detect plagiarism through targeted searching.

Teaching with Technology Certificate

Goal: The Teaching with Technology certificate will enable the Graduate Student Instructor to design a course that incorporates technology to manage course materials, facilitate discussion, and promote active learning.

Sessions Offered:

- An Introduction to Blackboard - Blackboard 5 enables educators to enhance in-class instruction by providing 24/7 access to course materials along with a variety of tools that can assist instructors with the management of their courses. Blackboard also enables instructor to engage students online through the use of discussion boards and chat rooms. In this introductory course, you will learn how to build a Blackboard course site by uploading course documents, creating discussion forums, posting assignments, creating quizzes and managing your gradebook.
- Building an Online Community - One distinction between online communities and the traditional classroom is that students in online courses need to participate in order to form a learning community. In this workshop, you will partake in demonstrations of online teaching strategies aimed at increasing participation along with building and maintaining online learning communities. With the use of hands-on activities and simulations, you will learn how to effectively use Blackboard’s online discussion boards and virtual classroom to increase collaboration, produce active learning, and foster student reflection.
- Teaching with PowerPoint - PowerPoint has become the standard presentation software used at UT. Unfortunately, students view PowerPoint presentations as boring and accuse some teachers of becoming note dependent while using it. This session will demonstrate the effective use of PowerPoint and will provide techniques for instructors to increase student participation, gain attention of students, and branch PowerPoint presentations to enable student interaction. Providing images, slides, or graphics in your classroom can help students link the content of the lesson with the “big picture” of the course and their prior knowledge about the topic. Visual materials can also serve as memory cues for later recall and may also pique the interest of students in exploring content further.

Understanding Your Students Certificate

Goal: The Understanding Your Students certificate will enable the Graduate Student Instructor to design instruction that takes into account student differences in order to promote individual motivation for learning, accommodate different learning styles, and broaden use of more effective learning strategies.

Sessions Offered:

- Motivating Students to Learn - One of the most common complaints that instructors have is “My students just aren’t motivated.” There are many reasons why we have these perceptions – some accurate and some not. But, because motivation is a major

contributor to learning, anyone interested in teaching wants to know what we can do to enhance student motivation. The presenter will attempt to answer the question, what is motivation and how does it impact students' learning? We will examine three of the major theories of motivation and consider examples of how these translate into teaching and learning. Finally, students will be asked to apply one of these theories to their own teaching context.

- Learning Styles and Implications for Instruction - As most teachers probably have guessed, people don't all learn in the same way. This can cause frustration for both the teacher and the learner. This session focuses on identifying different learning styles and understanding how these styles influence teaching and learning. The participants will complete the Kolb Learning Styles Inventory and discuss how their own learning style might influence their teaching. The emphasis of the workshop is on discussing different instructional activities that will be beneficial to students with each of the four learning styles described by the Kolb. Participants will work together to design a class session for a general topic based on Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. Then we will discuss how to relate this to topics in their own discipline.
- Helping Your Students Become More Effective Learners - It's alarming how many undergraduates still think that by reading – or even just staring at - a textbook they are “learning” anything at all. In college, particularly, it's not enough to simply remember instructional material but to be able to apply, analyze and understand it at a deeper level. That's when establishing a toolbox of learning strategies is absolutely crucial to getting good grades. This session introduces the guidelines for helping students embrace effective learning strategies and talks about how such tools can help promote better long term memory storage and retrieval. We examine three specific study/learning strategy techniques and, with the help of illustrative graphics, demonstrate how students in any discipline can apply them both within and outside the classroom.

Elective Sessions and Descriptions

- Classroom Performance System (CPS) - This workshop will highlight the features and benefits of using an electronic response system in the classroom, designed to promote classroom attendance and participation, engage students' attention, and make the instructor more aware of the comprehension level of the class. You can tally responses instantly from students' remote control devices for on-the-spot feedback, or later for other purposes, and choose various ways in which to display the information in the classroom. The workshop will use the Classroom Performance System, CPS, which is installed for training and experimentation in the CIT lab and is available in a number of UT Austin classrooms.
- Introduction to eGradebook:- Customized for UT Austin, eGradebook allows instructors and designated proxies or designees to view and maintain class assignment grades online. Students may also view their own class assignment grades within eGradebook using their UTEID. Some advantages of using eGradebook are its integration of other campus services, including UTDirect, Online Grade Submission, and the Measurement and Evaluation Center's scanning services.
- Introduction to the Technology Classroom Media Consoles - This workshop provides practical information on preparing for and presenting lecture materials using the technology classroom media console. The session will show you how to use the console technologies, increase student attention, display authentic learning resources, and incorporate multimedia into your lectures.

- Ongoing Course Assessment - Ongoing Course Assessment is a tool created within UT Austin, for instructors to use to get anonymous feedback from students about the class. Instructors can design their own questionnaires or choose questionnaires that are already created and ready to use. Surveys can be sent out at any time during the semester, and responses can be downloaded to Excel or Word.
- Planning the Course Syllabus - The syllabus is a very important document in University classes. This is the first thing the students see from you. The “look and feel” of the syllabus will influence what their first impression is of you and the course. It is through this document that you communicate your expectations for student work, your understanding of the course content and its organization, your teaching philosophy, how you plan to relate to your students, whether or not you are organized, and numerous other things about you and the course you will be teaching. Participants will work together to critique sample syllabi and share what they think a good syllabus should contain. They will then, using a template, create the beginnings of a syllabus for their own course.
- Students Behaving Badly - Learning to manage a class can be a daunting task for a GSI, especially as class sizes continue to increase. When students feel like they are "just another number" standards of decorum can erode very quickly. In this session, GSIs will learn some of the basic techniques for fostering civility and respect in the college classroom. GSIs will learn to develop their own definition of civility, analyze different scenarios, and develop concrete strategies for encouraging respect.
- Teaching in the Diverse Classroom - This session will address the reasons necessary for GSIs to work with students to create and sustain an environment in which everyone feels safe, supported, and encouraged to express her or his views and concerns. In these classrooms, the content is explicitly viewed from the multiple perspectives and varied experiences of a range of groups. Specific focus will be given to the success of students in gateway courses. This success has far-reaching effects on choice of major, persistence and success in college, income after college, and capacity to contribute to the economy and society. Providing GSIs with concrete strategies will increase their ability to take action to improve opportunities for success for all students in their courses.
- Teaching with Video - This hands-on digital video workshop will cover three topics: teaching and learning with video, creating your own videos, and locating video resources and copyright issues. You can learn how to digitize video, shoot video, and edit short movies, and learn how to implement video in your teaching.
- Transforming Stress into Resilience - Research, teaching, professional development, and job hunting are some of the stressors, which make graduate school such a physically and psychologically demanding time. This session will focus on methods for building resilience and strength in the face of these challenges. A resilient individual possesses the psychological and biological strengths necessary to master change and difficult situations successfully and bounce back when the going gets tough. Opportunity-driven rather than danger-driver, resilient individuals respond to stress in ways that help them not only recover, but also grow and thrive. Come learn how to transform the stress of graduate school into resilience!

Appendix G

ASPECTS Session Evaluation Data

Demographic Data	
Assistant Instructor	102 (15%)
Teaching Assistant	306 (45%)
Other	123 (18%) [66“Other” self-reported as Graduate Research Assistants]
No Position	148 (22%)
Total Responses	679 (12 additional responses were not categorized)

PART ONE

For questions 1-9, please rate the quality of the session presenter on how well s/he demonstrated the skill listed:

1. Knowledge of the subject:

Poor	Fair	Average	Very Good	Excellent	Total	Avg.
0 (0%)	0 (0%)	19 (3%)	168 (24%)	504 (73%)	691	4.70

2. Identified the session objectives:

Poor	Fair	Average	Very Good	Excellent	Total	Avg.
1 (<1%)	3 (<1%)	35 (5%)	187 (27%)	462 (67%)	688	4.61

3. Met all of the session objectives:

Poor	Fair	Average	Very Good	Excellent	Total	Avg.
2 (<1%)	4 (1%)	38 (6%)	242 (35%)	402 (58%)	688	4.51

4. Was well organized:

Poor	Fair	Average	Very Good	Excellent	Total	Avg.
2 (<1%)	6 (1%)	39 (6%)	194 (28%)	447 (65%)	688	4.57

5. Engaged participants with interactive exercises:

Poor	Fair	Average	Very Good	Excellent	Total	Avg.
3 (<1%)	13 (2%)	59 (9%)	171 (25%)	440 (64%)	686	4.50

6. Maintained my interest:

Poor	Fair	Average	Very Good	Excellent	Total	Avg.
5 (1%)	7 (1%)	63 (09%)	202 (29%)	414 (60%)	691	4.47

7. Encouraged us to ask questions:

Poor	Fair	Average	Very Good	Excellent	Total	Avg.
1 (<1%)	8 (1%)	57 (8%)	181 (26%)	442 (64%)	689	4.53

8. Helped me see how this material could be applied to different instructional areas/settings:

Poor	Fair	Average	Very Good	Excellent	Total	Avg.
5 (1%)	12 (2%)	54 (8%)	232 (34%)	383 (56%)	691	4.70

9. Allowed sufficient time for reflection at the end of the session:

Poor	Fair	Average	Very Good	Excellent	Total	Avg.
4 (1%)	26 (4%)	98 (14%)	227 (33%)	327 (48%)	683	4.24

PART TWO:

1. If you had to describe this session to another graduate student, what three adjectives would you use and why?
2. What is the most important idea you have learned from this session?
3. As a result of this session, one specific thing you will definitely try is:
4. Please outline one change that would have made this session better for you:
5. Have you attended other sessions in this or other ASPECTS series?

No	160 (24%)
Yes	511 (76%)
Total	671 (100%)

6. Do you plan to attend other sessions in this or other ASPECTS series?

No	31 (5%)
Yes	630 (95%)
Total	661 (100%)

7. Do you intend to apply for an ASPECTS certificate (by completing all three sessions in a series, plus two electives, and writing the essay)?

No	95 (15%)
Yes	539 (85%)
Total	634 (100%)