NGP Teaching Guidelines

Teaching Assignment Process

NGP Mission: Teaching

The University of Vermont’s Neuroscience Graduate Program aims not only to provide rigorous training in neuroscience research, but to develop effective stewards of neuroscience. A major component of the NGP stewardship mission is the two-year teaching requirement. First and second year students are typically funded on Graduate Teaching Assistantships, which require students to complete twenty hours of work for each year of funding. Students fulfill this requirement by teaching one course in their second year and one course in their third year of study. (Students do not teach in the first year, because they are taking courses to learn the neuroscience material they will be teaching). Students who are funded on GTAs beyond their second year are required to teach one course for every year of GTA funding. **Regardless of a student’s funding source, all NGP students are required to teach during their second and third years in the program.** The Neuroscience Graduate Program is committed to creating effective teachers and communicators of neuroscience, and the two-year teaching requirement is essential to this mission.

NGP Objectives: Teaching

- To create effective teachers and communicators of neuroscience.
- To foster independence in thinking, laboratory work, teaching, and communicating.
- Develop skills in scientific thinking, teaching, communication, and writing.
- To provide teaching assistants to the College of Medicine, College of Arts & Sciences, and Graduate College courses in exchange for Graduate Teaching Assistantship funds.

NGP Procedure: Teaching Assignments

Students must serve as a teaching assistant in one of the following neuroscience-related courses in the second year: ANNB 225, ANNB 301, or GRMD 357. Students in the third year teach in ANNB 225, ANNB 301, GRMD 357, or NSCI 110, or in other related courses including ANNB 201, BIOL 261 or 262, GRMD 354 and PSYC 221 or 222 (or any approved by the steering committee and home department).

There are three separate components to assigning teaching responsibilities to NGP students: 1) consolidation of knowledge of the human nervous system gained by teaching, 2) requirement of support of neuroscience courses by the NGP students, and 3) requests from students for specific teaching opportunities.

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To meet requirement 1, all students teach in a human focused neuroscience course in their second year (1st teaching assignment) to ensure they have mastered the content that underlies the program’s mission to train stewards of the discipline. These courses are ANNB 225, ANNB 302 or GRMD 357.

To meet requirement 2, assignments are made to cover the following 9 neuroscience slots prior to entertaining special requests from students:

NSCI 110 - two TAs (3rd year or greater students only)
ANNB 225 - two TAs
ANNB 302 - two TAs
GRMD 357 - 3 TAs

To meet requirement 3, students may teach in a course of their choice after their second year human neuroscience requirement is met and if all 9 required slots are filled. Most often, students want to teach in some component of Gross Anatomy – either ANNB 201 or one of the blocks of GRMD 354, usually head and neck. Students have also taught in biology and psychology courses and in the histology lab for GRMD 354.

Process
1. Some time in late spring, the # of potential TAs is ascertained. This would include all 2nd and 3rd year students and any 4th year or beyond students who have been supported by GTA funds beyond the second year.
2. An email is sent to the 1st year students asking them to declare which of the three courses they would like to teach (ANNB 225, ANNB 302 or GRMD 357). The email includes a note about the timing of the courses and the names of the course directors. Hopefully, the choices work out and everyone gets the course they wanted. If not, a decision is made based on best fit.
3. After the 2nd year students have made their choices and been assigned, an email is sent to all of the other students who will be teaching in the next year. That email lets them know which of the required slots remain to be filled (the 2 NSCI 110 slots and whatever is left for ANNB 225, ANNB 3902 and GRMD 357) and asks them to select one of those or request another course in which they might be interested. The email includes a note about the timing of the courses and the names of the course directors. Again, one hopes that the required slots will fill by request, but if not, assignments are made into them – usually with 3rd year students giving those who are more senior more choice in their extra teaching assignment.
4. When all assignments have been made an email is sent to the NGP Director and Coordinator indicating the assignments. In addition, an email is sent to each Course Director letting them know who their TAs will be for the upcoming year. That email is copied to the students TAing in the course and to the students’ advisors, if they already have joined a lab.
5. About 6-8 weeks before the assignment begins, a reminder note is sent to the student, copied to the course director and student’s advisor (all students should have identified their thesis lab by then), reminding them of the assignment.