

EDC Grant Midterm Report 2013

Date: January 13, 2014

Title of Project: Preparing Teaching Assistants (TAs): A National Survey of Canadian Post-secondary Institutions' TA Orientations

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Overview of the project: Teaching Assistant and Graduate Student Advancement's (TAGSA) purpose is to raise the profile of teaching assistant (TA) and graduate student development in Canada and provide leadership in highlighting initiatives to develop teaching skills and other professional skills in graduate students. TAGSA is a special interest group of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE). One of the ways that the executive committee of TAGSA strives to achieve this is to produce yearly reports about issues important to members. In 2011, TAGSA published, *TA Professional Development in Canada* that gave a snapshot of initiatives in program development and research being undertaken at higher education institutions across Canada. In 2012, TAGSA published, *TAGSA Key People Directory*, which is updated annually.

Building off of these two successful publications, the executive committee has decided that the next publication address TA orientations. TA orientations are typically the first introduction graduate students have to the culture of teaching and learning at their graduate institution. The way that TA orientations are organized across the country differs immensely. A comprehensive survey and analysis of how TAs are introduced to teaching and provided further professional development at Canadian institutions will allow for sharing of best practices and resources, development of some national standards, research initiatives cross-institutionally that measure impact of standards and programs, and further initiatives. Additionally, the results could be a useful tool within the institution to measure the efficacy of orientations and impact on other professional development programs offered by departments, faculties, and/or learning and teaching centres. There is potential for follow-up research that could be conducted by TAGSA to measure the effectiveness of orientations in preparing TAs for their teaching roles.

The outcome will be a comprehensive analysis and report about TA orientations from all Canadian post-secondary institutions. The report will be readily available to all EDC and TAGSA members, and on the TAGSA website. The report will assist educational developers, faculty, and departments as they strive to provide the best teaching preparation possible for TAs before taking up their TA role on Canadian campuses.

Progress toward stated goals of the project at the midterm point: It was stated that between November, 2013 to April, 2014, we would compile the data, write the report, and prepare an article for submission to selected journal. We are at this stage and adhering to our original timeline. The survey has been completed, has attained ethical approval, and sent out to participants. Once the surveys are complete, data compilation will begin.

Barriers/challenges encountered and plans for problem-solving: Ethics approval over the holiday season proved to take longer but completely understandable.

Conference Presentations and/or publications based on the project, to date or planned: A proposal has been submitted to the annual STLHE conference in order to share the results of the project. Once the report is written, we will proceed to prepare an article for publication.