



1 Resolution 7: Urging for Graduate Teaching Assistants 2 to Have the Right to Decide their Instruction Modality 3 for Spring 2021

4 **Abstract:** In light of the global pandemic and Cornell University conducting instructions in a hybrid
5 manner, graduate Teaching Assistants should be given the absolute autonomy to decide their mode
6 of teaching instruction (online/in-person) without any form of coercion.

7 **Sponsored by:** Martik Chatterjee, Voting member for Life Sciences, VP-Operations GPSA

8 **Reviewed by:** Executive Committee, 12/04/2020

9 **Whereas,** when the University decided to have a hybrid semester in the Fall of 2020 with online and
10 in person aspect to teaching, faculty and undergraduate students were given the choice to decide
11 their mode of instruction- online, in-person, or hybrid; and

12 **Whereas,** there were no provisions made for granting absolute autonomy to graduate Teaching
13 Assistants (TAs) to decide their mode of delivering teaching instructions; and

14 **Whereas,** graduate TAs were asked to make petitions to Student Disability Services (SDS) to ask for
15 exemption from teaching in person in case of personal health concerns and

16 **Whereas,** this method of disclosure is invasive because individuals have to disclose health
17 information that they probably feel uncomfortable disclosing to the SDS and their course instructor;
18 and

19 **Whereas,** this method burdens the already overworked SDS during a pandemic; and

20 **Whereas,** graduate TAs that feel uncomfortable about their own safety and the safety of their family
21 or people they shared regular living spaces with must attempt to reach a common resolution with
22 their supervisor. If a resolution cannot be reached the student must now choose to escalate the issue
23 higher up at potential personal and academic cost; and

24 **Whereas,** this method puts the burden of resolving an uncomfortable situation on the graduate TAs,
25 whereby a faculty/lecturer decides the mode of instruction for a graduate TA against their will,
26 causing significant psychological pressure; and

27 **Whereas,** this method discriminates against individuals of the LGBTQIA+ community who are yet
28 to come out; and

29 **Whereas,** realizing how this method is problematic, multiple departments across colleges like
30 Science and Technology, Entomology, Molecular Biology and Genetics, Ecology and Evolutionary
31 Biology, Information Science, Computer Science, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, etc., decided to



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32 give grad TAs the absolute authority in determining their mode of instruction for assigned classes;
33 and

34 **Whereas**, the Graduate School did not formally ask departments to have an “opt-in” policy where
35 graduate students opt-in to the mode of instruction (online or in-person) that they feel comfortable
36 with;

37 **Be it therefore resolved**, that in Spring 2020 graduate TAs be able to independently choose their
38 mode of teaching instruction in accordance with their wishes, with the option of changing that mode
39 in the course of the semester; and

40 **Be it further resolved**, that the Graduate School adopt this as a matter of policy and communicate
41 this policy to all the departments and faculty in charge of making teaching appointments.

42 Respectfully Submitted,

43 Martik Chatterjee

44 Vice President for Operations, GPSA