

**A Guide to**

# **Effective Practices for Teaching Assistants**



**a place of mind**

The Centre for Teaching and Learning  
UBC Okanagan

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Many Teaching Assistant handbooks, manuals and guides were reviewed prior to preparing this edition for the University of British Columbia, Okanagan. Various faculty were consulted on portions of this document and their input was greatly appreciated.

Some materials have been adapted from UBC's "An Instructional Resource Guide for Teaching Assistants".

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## **WELCOME TO UBC OKANAGAN!**

The aim of this manual is to assist you in experiencing success as a Teaching Assistant (TA). It is not meant to replace discipline-specific training or orientations, but was designed to provide some of the general information regarding the roles and responsibilities that you will encounter with your Teaching Assistant position.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning can offer you assistance throughout the year. The Centre offers workshops and one-on-one consultations to assist you in providing the best possible learning experiences at UBC Okanagan. Contact us at 250-807-9288 or <http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/ctl/welcome.html>

## **CONTRIBUTIONS OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

Your role as a Teaching Assistant is crucial to the effective learning environment we are developing for the students of UBC Okanagan. Each learning environment is made up of many parts and your part will not be undervalued. Your **preparation** for the position, your decision to give of your **time** and your **commitment** to the further learning of fellow students is commendable. Both students and faculty depend on your knowledge and skills to enhance the learning experiences of others. Each one of you bring all your experiences to the “learning table” and that enriches us as a larger learning community.

This guide to effective practice is but a part of the total assistance that you can expect as a TA. You will have already received an orientation; this document summarizes the pedagogy you will need and it is to be followed by an opportunity to be mentored. You will be able to participate in microteaching sessions and will receive feedback. Your department or faculty will provide you with specific skills relative to the expectations of your discipline. An archive of reference materials is available on the blog at <http://blogs.ubc.ca/members/johparry/>. Each Tuesday you are invited to a drop in session at Sci200 and a number of specific TA workshops will be provided that will expand upon the material covered in this handbook.

We hope you enjoy your position as you contribute to our academic mission here at UBC Okanagan.

## **GOALS OF THE PROGRAM**

- TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION
- TO SUPPORT FACULTY
- TO DEVELOP THE TEACHING SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS

## YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GOALS

What were your reasons to become involved in the program?

Take some time to think about your answer and to set your own personal and professional goals to achieve throughout the semester.

What do you bring to the program – skills, abilities, knowledge?

What can you share with others?

What do you need from others?

What are you hoping to gain from the teaching assistant experience?

**It is a good idea to set some goals so that you can measure your own success as you work through the semester.**

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

It will be imperative to set up an effective form of communication so that information flows smoothly between the **Teaching Assistant, Instructor** and **Students**. Often there will be others that will need to be included in that loop of communication such as a **Teaching Assistant Coordinator**. Some departments may have a specific protocol to be followed so it will be a good idea to confirm expectations. Suggested formats for communication would include regularly scheduled meetings, e-mail, voicemail or a WebCT discussion site.



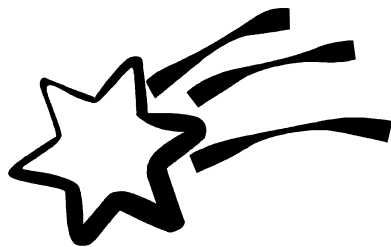
Before the term begins, meet with your professor to learn about the course. It is vital that you clarify exactly what the expectations are regarding your responsibilities. These will vary from professor to professor. You will need to know about the text book, grading procedures, whether you are required to attend the lectures (we advise that you do), the course content and precisely what your responsibilities are during discussions. Communicate often about developing your skills as a Teaching Assistant and workload expectations. Initiate conversations regarding your evaluation as a TA, rather than leaving it to the last week of term. A suggested form that you and your professor can complete is to be found on page 7.

It is also important that you do not become an **intermediary** between the instructor and the student. You can certainly listen to the students concerns, but they should ultimately be directed to the instructor to work out any problems/issues.

## PROFESSIONALISM

### Things to consider:

- a. Being prepared
  - know the material (reading, researching, keeping current)
  - have a plan for all classes with questions and resources
  - be on time and ready to go & don't go overtime!!
  - return assignments promptly
- b. Academic honesty
  - admit to mistakes or lack of knowledge
  - you don't have to be the expert, but you should know where to find the answers
- c. Leave your personal problems at home
- d. Confidentiality – maintain confidentiality of discussions and grades
- e. Professional distance
  - wait until the course is over to date students in your assigned class
  - leave the office door open when meeting with students
  - avoid commenting on student dress or appearance
- f. Gender neutral language & appropriate language



## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

As a Teaching Assistant you will encounter many roles which you will have to balance. You will be a **student** of the university, an **employee** of the university, subject **expert** and **representative** of your department, student **advisor** and **role model, assistant** to the instructor and a **facilitator** of learning.

As a student and employee of the University it is important that you maintain the standards set by the university, following all guidelines and rules set forth. Do not forget your courses of study as you take on this new venture!

For employment concerns you can confer with your Teaching Assistant Coordinator or your Union representative. At UBC Okanagan your union is BCGEU – CUPE local 2278. Policies that are pertinent to your position can be found at [http://www.hr.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/bcgeu\\_okanagan.pdf](http://www.hr.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/bcgeu_okanagan.pdf)

You chose a specific discipline a few years ago and now you represent that field of study. Students will be looking to you as an academic expert, relying on your experiences with the course of study. You also represent your department when you are carrying out your teaching assistant duties. Each department may have a different approach to teaching and learning styles, assessment and evaluation guidelines and course requirements. It will be important for you to discuss this with your teaching assistant coordinator or instructor.

Your main role, as the title indicates, is an assistant to the instructor. The instructor will be making content and assessment decisions, but expecting that you will assist in the implementation and success of the course of study. This will require you knowing more than just the course content. You will be expected to carry out many different duties which you should discuss with the instructor and formalize in writing for both of you to refer to if issues arise during the semester. Some departments will have a checklist to follow, but we include one in this section of the manual for those partnerships needing one. (See page 7.)

In carrying out your role you will have constant student contact. You share the responsibility for the students with the instructor. The university expects that you will be a good **role model** for your students while you perform your teaching assistant duties. You will need to be **fair, honest, and respectful** in all your dealings with students.

As a facilitator of learning you will be responsible for leading tutorial or lab sessions, ensuring that your actions promote effective learning. Students will have many questions for you and will be looking for guidance both within and outside of class hours. The Centre for Teaching and Learning at UBC Okanagan can assist you throughout the semester in learning about new techniques and technology to enhance the learning environment. Further sections in this manual also offer suggestions.

A CHECKLIST FOR INSTRUCTORS/TEACHING ASSISTANTS

This list serves only as a starting point for discussion. We also include a column for estimated hours so that both parties are reminded of the expectation at UBC Okanagan of 12 hours per week. Ta's should recognize although theirs is a union job, (TA's are part of the BCGEU Collective Agreement) it is considered, by many supervisors, to be a training ground for a professional academic career. As such you will be expected to 'get the job done' with little regard to hours. You will have to strike a comfortable balance between the acting as a professional and the contract under which you have been hired.

		(check it) or N/A	Hours per week
Course Information:	Course #/Name		
	Goals/objectives		
	Textbook		
	Student roster		
	WebCT Vista access		
TA Contract	Beware work load. Any other UBCO positions?		
Training	Dropbox,		
	Vista		
	Gradebook		
	OMR		
	Placing items on reserve in library		
	Assignment expectations and grading criteria(also below)		
Class Attendance Expectations:	Required to attend lectures?		
	Duties during lectures?		
	teaching		
	handing out materials		
	monitoring group work		
	answering questions		
	setting up demonstrations		
	collecting assignments		
	taking notes		
TA/Instructor Meetings	How often?		
	Meeting after first assignment and midterms to discuss students' performance and possible changes to improve students' learning process?		
	Professor and TA exchanged contact information		
	Emergency procedures		



		(check it) or N/A	Hours per week
Office Hours	For TA		
	Instructor		
	Share with students the TA's duties for this course		
	How students will get in touch with TA? (Suggestion: WebCT messages that will be checked by the TA every Monday/Wednesday morning)		
Preparation for lectures	Handouts		
	Lab demonstrations		
	Lecture Materials:		
	AV booking?		
	Obtaining?		
	Returning?		
	Photocopying		
	Where?		
Exams	Handouts		
	Preparation		
	Delivery/Invigilation		
	Organizing review sessions?		
Marking	Rubric/template/grading criteria		
	Protocol for complaints		
	Record-keeping duties		
	Posting marks		
	Evaluation responsibilities?		
Evaluation of Teaching Assistant Performance	TA Assessment form at the end of the term		
	Letter of recommendation clarifying the duties performed by the TA of the course.		
Attending training/development sessions			

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

In your role as a teaching assistant, you will have an opportunity to positively affect the learning environment of many students. In your interactions, you will grow personally and professionally, developing many employable skills. Your activities will allow you to experience the realities of university teaching which may assist you in finalizing your career choices. You will develop many relationships with students and faculty members that can be very rewarding.

On the down side, there will inevitably be challenging times in this “reality experience”. Real people have real problems and you will be part of the solution. Many times you will be able to refer students to others who specialize in their area of need (Student Services or others – See Appendix A for a resource contact list). Other times you will be able to handle the situation yourself through either proactive planning or dispute resolution. A further section of this manual will provide information on how best to deal with issues that arise with students. (See Page 17.)

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE TEACHING ASSISTANT**

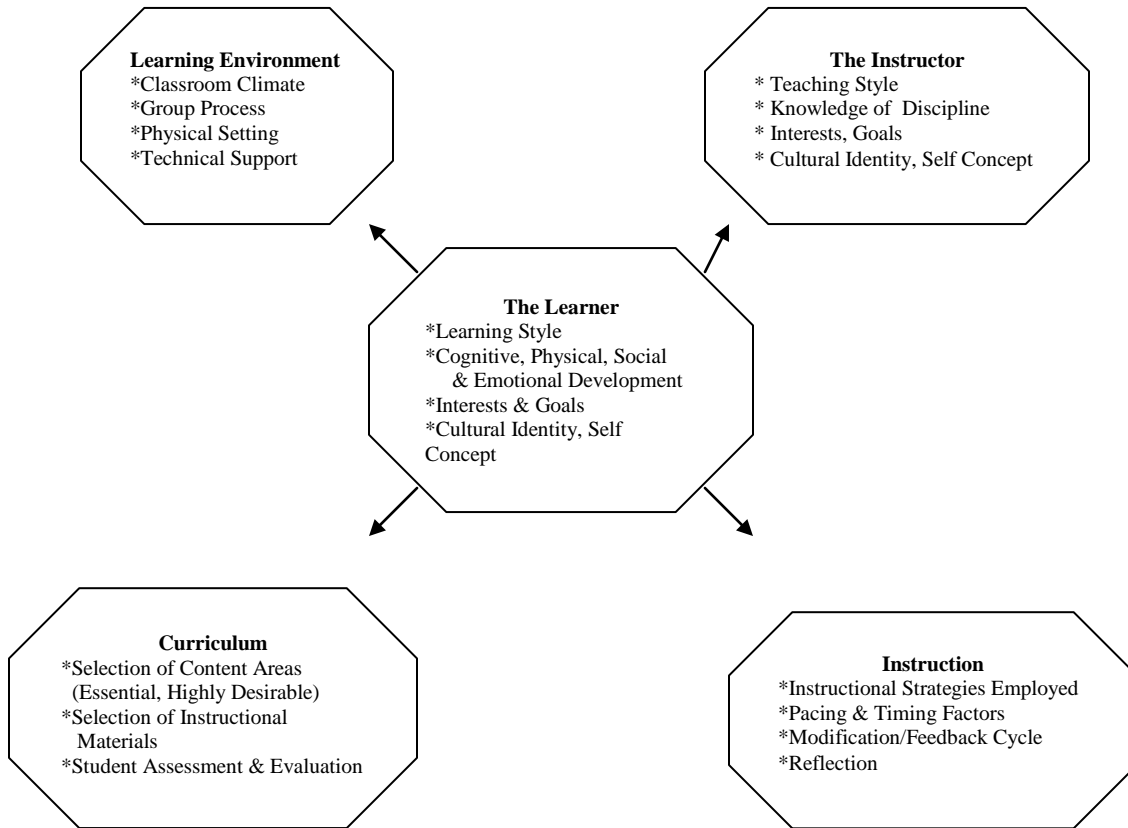
An effective teaching assistant will allow students to explore their intellectual capabilities in a supportive environment. Prior to achieving super-human status, there are a few aspects of teaching that will help you create an effective learning environment. The following aspects of great teaching were adapted from Harry Murray, University of Western Ontario.

Aspects of Great Teaching:

1. **Clarity: method used to explain or clarify concepts & principles**
  - Gives several examples of each concept
  - Uses concrete everyday examples to explain concepts and principles
  - Defines new or unfamiliar terms
  - Repeats difficult ideas several times
  - Stresses most important points by pausing, speaking slowly, raising voice
  - Uses graphs or diagrams to facilitate explanation
  - Points out practical applications of concepts
  - Answers students’ questions thoroughly
  - Suggests ways of memorizing complicated ideas
  - Writes key terms on whiteboard or overhead screen
  
2. **Enthusiasm: use of non-verbal behavior to solicit student attention and interest.**
  - Speaks in a dramatic or expressive way, smiles
  - Walks amongst students
  - Maintains eye contact with students
  - Avoids reading lecture verbatim from prepared notes or text

3. Interaction: techniques used to foster class participation
  - Encourages student questions and comments
  - Avoids direct criticism of students when they make errors
  - Praises students for good ideas
  - Asks questions of individual students & whole class
  - Incorporates students' ideas into presentation
  - Presents challenging, thought-provoking ideas
  - Uses a variety of media and activities
4. Organization: ways of organizing or structuring subject matter
  - Uses headings and subheadings to organize presentation
  - Puts outline on whiteboard/overhead/powerpoint
  - Clearly indicates transition from one topic to the next
  - Gives preliminary overview at beginning
  - Explains how each topic fits into the course as a whole
  - Begins class with a review of topics covered last time
  - Periodically summarizes points previously made
5. Pacing: rate of information presentation, efficient use of time
  - Asks and confirms if students understand, before proceeding to next topic
6. Disclosure: explicitness concerning course requirements and grading criteria
  - States objectives of the course and objectives of each meeting
  - Advises students as to how to prepare for tests or exams
  - Provides sample exam questions
  - Tells students exactly what is expected of them on tests, essays or assignments
  - Reminds students of test dates or assignment deadlines
7. Rapport: quality of interpersonal relations
  - Addresses individual students by name (to the extent possible in larger classes)
  - Announces availability for consultation outside of class
  - Offers to help students with problems
  - Shows acceptance of other points of view
  - Talks with students before & after class

### The Learning Network



## CREATION OF A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

**THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IS COMPOSED OF 3 PARTS:**



1. **STUDENTS**-each one of them brings:
  - knowledge, skills, attitude/values/goals, cultural background, special needs, learning style, personality
  
2. **INSTRUCTOR /TEACHING ASSISTANT**
  - knowledge, skills, attitude/values/goals, cultural background, special needs, teaching style, personality
  
3. **PHYSICAL SETTING**
  - room arrangement & location (accessibility), safety issues, temperature, air supply, lighting, appropriate resources

**THIS COMBINATION MUST WORK TOGETHER TO PROMOTE LEARNING RATHER THAN IMPEDE IT!**

## THE STUDENTS

The learning environment is composed of many parts, but the most important part is the students. Both the instructor and you, as a teaching assistant, are there to provide the students with the best possible learning environment so that they may achieve to their highest potential. Each student brings knowledge, skills, values and experiences with them. It can be a challenge to meet the needs of the whole class with so many 'individuals' within it. That mix is what makes teaching exciting!

## TYPES OF LEARNING

There is more than one type of learning. A committee of colleges, led by Benjamin Bloom, identified three domains of educational activities:

- Cognitive: mental skills (Knowledge)
- Affective: growth in feelings or emotional areas (Attitude)
- Psychomotor: manual or physical skills (Skills)

## APPROACHES TO LEARNING

Marton and Saljo (1976) identified 2 different approaches to learning which came to be called the **deep approach** and the **surface approach**.

When students adopt a **deep** approach to learning their motive is to gain understanding; they adopt strategies such as reading widely and discussing the concept or topic with others; they seek to make sense of new knowledge in terms of what they already know about this topic and related topics.

Students adopting the **surface** approach are primarily interested in meeting the demands which the system places upon them. Their usual strategy is to reproduce enough of the information they have been given to satisfy the assessment requirements of the unit. They often resort to rote learning and are satisfied if they can retrieve what they have memorized even if they don't fully understand it.

## LEARNING-CENTERED TEACHING

Learning-centered teaching means developing student responsibility for their own learning and meaning. Instructional design and the learning environment should accommodate different learning styles and how students learn. Responsibility is placed on students to learn rather than on instructors to teach. The object is to facilitate student learning rather than to act as "gatekeepers" of knowledge, doling it out in small doses. Break down the content, the strategies, the evaluation and link all to student learning.

For example, a Learning-Centered Syllabus expresses course goals in terms of student interests, explains learning objectives in terms of observable behaviors, presents content in graphically organized form showing major elements of the course and the relationships between and among the various parts, and provides explicit guidelines/models for purposeful projects and assignments.

## LEARNING STYLES

Another area you should be aware of is learning style. Students learn in a variety of ways, so as facilitators of that learning you need to be aware of teaching styles or instructional strategies that will enable the maximum number of students to achieve. The following information is adapted from David Kolb's work on learning styles.

1. **Type One Learners – Reflectors**

Sensors/feelers and watchers take in information concretely, and they process what they take in reflectively. They start with what they see, then they generalize. (Imaginative People)

2. **Type Two Learners – Theorists**

Thinkers and watchers take in (perceive) experience abstractly, and they process what they take in reflectively. They start with an idea, then they reflect about it, playing with it, watching it take different shapes. (Theoretical/Analytical People)

3. **Type Three Learners – Pragmatists**

Thinkers and doers take in experience abstractly, and then process what they take in actively. They start with an idea, then they try it out, experimenting and testing it to see if it works. (Practical/Common Sense People)

4. **Type Four Learners – Activists**

Sensors/feelers and doers take in experience concretely, and process what they take in actively. They start with what they see, hear, touch, feel. Then they plunge in and try it out in action. (Dynamic/Intuitive People)

## HELPING STUDENTS BECOME SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS

As a facilitator of learning, you can control some of the factors that will enhance students' ability to achieve. Demonstrating leadership in the classroom, providing motivation for learners and operating effective groups will increase the chances of success for students. Your behaviors can contribute positively to the learning process of students (listening, monitoring student progress, knowing names to make it personal, scheduling breaks, being available, changing the pace, being friendly, relaxed and at ease.)

## **LEADERSHIP IN THE CLASSROOM**

- Effective leadership assists the group in completing its tasks and maintaining effective working relationships among its members.
- Generally, groups function most effectively when leadership tasks are shared among group members.
- Leadership consists of the following:
  - flexible behavior
  - the ability to diagnose and prescribe what behaviors are needed at a particular time in order for the group to function most efficiently.

## **MOTIVATING STUDENTS**

### **1. COMMUNICATE THAT THEY ARE IMPORTANT BY:**

- inquiring about them – interests, experiences, goals and based on that information, relate the content and level to as many students as possible
- talking less than they do
- listening, being supportive and positive
- encouraging interaction amongst students so they get to know each other
- allowing them input into decisions, assessment, choices
- allowing them to get to know some things about you (keeping a professional distance)
- giving positive feedback (verbal and non-verbal)
- asking for their feedback

### **2. USE HUMOUR (be careful)**

### **3. USE VARIETY in presentation strategies to catch more learning styles.**

### **4. ADMIT MISTAKES/LACK OF KNOWLEDGE –don't try to be the authority, just know where to find one!!**

### **5. USE AN AGENDA – clear objectives will assist their commitment to the task**

### **6. IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK – keep up with marking and returning materials**

(Adapted from <http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/motivate.html>)



## **GROUP PROCESS**

### **Effective Group Process Requires:**

- \* Communication (sending and receiving)
  - clearly communicating ideas and feelings
  - complete and specific questions and responses
  - congruent verbal and non-verbal messages
  - maintaining eye contact
  - listening until colleague is finished
  
- \* Building and maintaining trust
  - acceptance and support of each other
  - communicating respect
  - credibility and authenticity
  
- \* Managing conflict
  - use a problem-solving approach – don't ignore.
  - be critical of ideas, not persons
  - recognize legitimacy of different views

Using groups is an effective way to get all students involved in their own learning. Group processes must be taught so that all members of the group are clear about expectations, responsibilities and assessment.

Optimum group size is 3 or 4.

Typical duties – task manager, time manager, recorder and reporter.

### **Ways of forming groups:**

- random assignment using student numbers
- numbering off in class
- using playing cards – all hearts or all 4's
- receiving an assignment card created by the Teaching Assistant/Instructor
- having to find group members through a game designed by the Teaching Assistant/Instructor

## **SPECIAL SITUATIONS**

You may be faced with some situations that require special attention. These occasions may include student behavioral problems, discrimination issues, providing modifications for a student with a disability, dealing with grading disputes or academic dishonesty.

There are a few strategies to use to prevent most problem situations:

1. Make sure expectations are clear and in writing at the outset.
2. Create a classroom climate of respect and responsibility.
3. Ask students for anonymous feedback on a regular basis (What is working? What is not working?).

Creating an environment where everyone can feel comfortable and strive for academic excellence is taken very seriously. All students must be treated with respect. The first step is to recognize that there is, or could be, a problem and the second step is to find a way to deal with it.

## **STUDENT BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS**

Remember that whatever the behavior, each student should be treated with respect and patience, not ridicule or harshness.

1. Monopolizing student – If a student is constantly taking up most of the discussion time, you can use their comments to move the discussion back to the rest of the class - “You’ve raised an interesting point, maybe others would like to comment on that.” or decide to let the student speak after class - “That idea deserves a lot more time, perhaps we can discuss that after class.”
2. Distracting student – The student often asks questions or makes comments that have nothing to do with the material being discussed. You can try to redirect the conversation - “That is interesting, but not directly related to our current topic, so we will save that for later.”
3. Angry student – Try to diffuse the situation by: listening respectfully, acknowledging that they may be correct and stating your position calmly. If the situation applies to others, involve them. If you are at fault, admit your mistake and indicate your eagerness to resolve it as quickly as possible.
4. Disruptive behavior – Actions, verbal or physical, by one or more students make it difficult for others to participate in discussion and for you to keep the class focused. In order to prevent this, make it clear from the first class what types of behavior are and are not acceptable and the consequences if expectations are not followed. Set the boundaries. Be firm. Remain calm.

In summary, when dealing with difficult students always remain calm. Decide if you should deal with them in class or at another time. Don’t use empty threats. Consult the instructor for advice.

## INEQUALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Inequality can occur in your classroom on the basis of characteristics which differentiate one student from another. Many traits that make us unique, such as (dis)ability, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or cultural beliefs, are invisible. Inequality and discrimination can come from you or from students and can be directed towards specific individuals in your class or members of a group with a certain characteristic. In British Columbia and at UBC Okanagan, there are categories that are protected from discrimination. Everyone at UBC Okanagan is protected on any of the following grounds: age, ancestry, colour, family status, marital status, physical or mental disability, place of origin, political belief, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or unrelated criminal conviction. To help build a more inclusive and welcoming classroom environment, be attentive to when you ask people to speak to topics or issues. Encourage people to speak about their own experiences and not as representatives of their racial, ethnic, cultural, or another identified group.

For additional information, contact Human Rights & Equity Services at UBC Okanagan.  
<http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/equity/welcome.html>

1. Sexism – allowing disparaging comments about one’s gender, spending more time with one gender, letting one gender monopolize the class time.  
In order to correct this you should reflect and recognize the issue, seek training or feedback, introduce non-discriminatory materials for study, and update course information if required.
2. Racism – when there is differentiated feedback and attention based on race and/or ethnicity or disparaging comments or jokes about groups are allowed or the white, western, male perspective is favored or you demonstrate impatience with students whose first language is not English.
3. Homophobia and transphobia – when there is differentiated feedback and attention based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, which can include harassing, prejudicial treatment of, or negative attitudes about lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transidentified, two-spirit, and/or intersex (LGBTTI) persons. Behaviours can include making derogatory comments, innuendos, insults, or jokes about sexual orientation or sexual practice or forcing people to “come out” or to “stay in the closet”
4. Ableism – Practices and beliefs that assign inferior values to people with physical, emotional, developmental, or psychiatric disabilities. Providing differentiated feedback and attention based on actual or perceived disAbility, refusing to allow an accommodation request made by a student with a disability, or asking for further proof from a student with a disability who is registered with the Disability Resource Centre can create an unequal learning environment.

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with learning disabilities, vision impairment, motor coordination difficulties or a hearing impairment may require scribes, copies of overheads and class notes, and special testing arrangements. UBC Okanagan has a Disabilities Resource Centre that coordinates arrangements with students who have identified their disabilities and applied for special status. You can contact them if you have any questions about the services that they can offer.

<http://www.ubc.ca/okanagan/students/disres/welcome.html>

## **RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES**

UBC has a policy on Religious Holidays

<http://www.students.ubc.ca/coursesreg/exams/exam-policies-accommodations/religious-accomodation/>

The list of UBC recognized religious holidays was created as an aid for the scheduling of examinations and other course work, to minimize conflict with students' religious beliefs and holidays. The holidays were selected based upon the guidelines that they require that the student (a) fast, (b) abstain from work or study, or (c) participate in all-day or fixed-time activities. They are listed on the above link.

As with any type of belief, there are followers of each of these religions who are more strict and active in their involvement than others. Therefore, if an examination is planned for one of these days, it may be a problem.

## **GRADING DISPUTES & ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Only discuss grades in private. Review the paper prior to meeting with the student, present your marking scheme and answer keys. Listen to the student's concerns. Meet with the instructor if no solution is found. You can avoid these disputes by ensuring your marking is consistent, fair and transparent.

Make it clear that plagiarism is a serious offence. Remind students of the policies in place and where they are written (calendar, syllabus, etc.). Indicate that you will not tolerate plagiarism.



## **PRESENTATION SKILLS**

Before any presentation, know your P.A.L.

Purpose – objectives, task

Audience – knowledge base, group dynamics

Logistics – time, room arrangement, A/V needs

**\*Channel your adrenaline (nervousness) into enthusiasm!\***

Communicating real interest and enthusiasm for your subject counts as much, if not more, than the technical skill of presenting it to others!

### **Presentation of self:**

Consider:

- dress
- demonstrating active listening
- avoid pacing, but move through the audience if space and audio permit
- your mind set (alert & clear direction from instructor)

### **Common beliefs about learning:**

- Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand.
- Say what you are going to do (stating objectives); do it (the activity of the lesson that reaches the objective); say what you have done (review the objective that they accomplished); give them something to do (practice the objective).
- Begin with an end in mind.

### **Questions to consider when planning the class or presentation:**

- What are the students to learn and why?
- What do the students already know?
- What is the most appropriate delivery technique to convey the information?
- What is the most logical sequence to pursue?
- How will you know if the desired learning has taken place?

### **Presentation style**

- Prepare!!
- Capture/motivate/gain the students attention(through use of a story, quotation, question)
- Speak clearly & pronounce correctly
- Add emphasis & use familiar words
- Look at the students
- Be sincere
- Use brief notes
- Pause occasionally and breathe

- Stand confidently

### **Presentation aids:**

- overhead projector
- white board/chalk board
- charts/slides/video/audio/powerpoint
- objects/ displays or demonstrations
- handouts

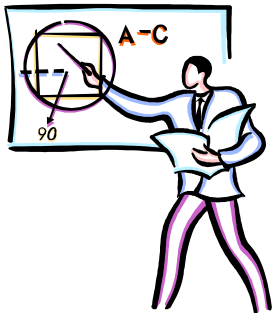
### **MISCELLANEOUS TIPS**

- Make sure your writing is legible and large enough
- Overheads should not be cluttered.
- Present information in small chunks, take breaks
- Face the audience when talking about a slide or board notes
- Think about your position – where you will stand to be visible and audible
- Plan your transitions
- Time your presentation/be aware of time management
- A visual aid/story is a good way to begin if you are not being introduced
- Liberally use metaphors, analogies, vivid images and anecdotes

### **INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

Your choice of strategies will depend on:

- your learning style
- your comfort level with curriculum
- your intended audience and their learning styles
- the physical setting
- your intended outcome
- resources available



## **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

“Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write reflectively about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.” (Chickering & Gamson, 1987)

### **Engagement can take many forms:**

Faculty with Student	Student with Student
Student with Community	Student with Content
Student with Process	Student with Mentor

Student engagement begins with the first class. We can't engage the students who are not present. Our teaching and learning approaches should move them beyond just being present and passive to becoming involved and active learners. Let them know that they are a part of this learning activity and have a shared responsibility with you for their own learning. Share expectations even though they may seem obvious.

- Encourage study groups or a type of learning community within your class.  
This may instill a sense of belonging or community/identity.
- Vary your assignments so that students are called upon to think in different ways.
- Encourage students to value different learning styles.
- An engaged student is inquisitive, prepared, critical and constructivist.

## **POPULAR INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

- APPLICATION CARDS- ask students to think of and record at least one real-life application of an important concept learned.
- ONE MINUTE PAPER – students will write down and hand in what was the most significant learning today or questions about today's topic.
- THINK-PAIR-SHARE – students are requested to think about a problem/question on their own for a few minutes and then to share those thoughts/solutions with a partner and eventually the pair will share their solutions with the rest of the class.

### **Learning activities without talking:**

- Read someone else's notes
- Read an article
- Write a question on the lecture topic
- Set a problem
- Write down an example
- Think about it
- List pros and cons
- Observe a demonstration



- Watch a video

## **INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS**

After deciding on appropriate instructional strategies, an instructor must make a decision regarding instructional methods. As is the case with strategies, the distinction between methods are not always clear cut although they are categorized for the purposes of this document. The following diagram illustrates how various methods relate to the five strategies presented. It should be noted that the methods appearing in the diagram are examples only, and are not intended to be inclusive of all instructional methods.

### **MODELS OF TEACHING**

#### **Interactive Instruction**

Debates  
Role playing  
Panels  
Brainstorming  
Peer Practice  
Discussion  
Laboratory Groups  
Co-operative Learning Groups  
Problem Solving  
Circle of Knowledge  
Tutorial Groups  
Interviewing

#### **Independent Study**

Essays  
Computer Assisted Instruction  
Reports  
Learning Activity Packages  
Correspondence Lessons  
Learning Contracts  
Homework  
Research Projects  
Assigned Questions  
Learning Centres

#### **Direct Instruction**

Structured Overview  
Explicit Teaching  
Mastery Lecture  
Drill and Practice  
Compare and Contrast  
Didactic Questions  
Demonstrations  
Guides for Reading,  
Learning, Viewing

#### **Indirect Instruction**

Problem Solving  
Inquiry  
Reading for Meaning  
Reflective Discussion  
Concept Formation  
Concept Mapping  
Concept Attainment  
Cloze Procedure

#### **Experiential Learning**

Field Trips  
Conducting Experiments  
Simulations  
Games  
Focused Imaging  
Field Observations  
Role Playing  
Synectics  
Model Building  
Surveys

To learn about these strategies, see the resources listed Appendix A or contact John Parry at the Centre for Teaching and Learning ([john.parry@ubc.ca](mailto:john.parry@ubc.ca)).

## QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

Teaching assistants can accomplish a number of inter-related goals through the use of effective questions. The **flow** of information will be more interactive, the students will become more **participatory** in their own learning and higher **cognitive** skills can be developed with proper questioning.

### In Presentation Mode:

1. Set the ground rules for questions – let the audience know if you prefer for them to wait until you are finished presenting the material or if you are open to questions as you present.
2. Check for understanding often.
3. Encourage students to answer each others questions.

### In Discussion Mode:

- \* Prepare your questions so that they are meaningful, flow in a logical order and are clear.
- \* Create questions at the proper level for student comprehension.
- \* Use appropriate wait time – allow students some “think time”.
- \* Avoid answering the questions yourself.
- \* Avoid asking multiple questions- the students will not know which to answer.
- \* Be equitable in directing questions or gathering answers.
- \* Avoid leading questions that are really statements (Don't you think that...?).



### Types of questions:

1. Closed questions: Yes or No answers  
- How many times...? Have you ...?
2. Open questions: Encourage narrative, reflection  
- Tell me... What might...? How will...?
3. Hypothetical questions: Suggest possibilities  
- What do you think will happen if..?
4. Reflective questions: Encourage further thinking

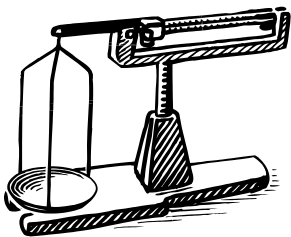
## Questions That Assist Lab Success

When students are working on a lab, either alone or in groups, it will be important for you to circulate and monitor the student's progress. Here are some typical questions that can be asked to assess progress:

- Is there anything I can do to help?
- What have you done so far?
- What happened when...?
- If you go back to the worksheet, what does it say in section 3?
- Do you think that will work?
- You seem to be getting on well?
- Where have you gotten to?
- This looks good, what are you going to do next?
- Are you stuck?
- Do you understand what we are doing today?
- Why do you think that happened?
- Have you finished? What are you going to do next?
- Have you thought about how you are going to record this?
- What have you gotten out of today? Has it been worthwhile?
- Other people have said..... do you agree?
- How do you think this fits in with the rest of the course?

## FACILITATING A LAB

- Be prepared.
  - Locate equipment.
  - Know emergency procedures.
  - Go through the lab yourself.
- Decide how to introduce the lab most effectively – demonstration, student volunteer assistance?
- Supervise/facilitate/mingle/monitor for problems.
- You may have to review part of the lecture to show a connection to the activity.
- Distribute time fairly amongst groups/individuals.
- Give instruction on what to do when the students are finished.
- Keep moving – students are more apt to ask questions if you are coming by.
- Time management – make sure the students have time to clean up and move to their next class (another class may need the lab right away).



## **LEADING SEMINARS/TUTORIALS**

### **IN THE BEGINNING:**

- Set the ground rules for class discussion and group discussion.
- Prepare the students ahead of time – reading to be done?
- Arrange the room-clusters?

### **DISCUSSION HELPS STUDENTS. . . .**

- formulate theories or concepts in their own words and suggest applications.
- discover or define problems in a reading or lecture
- become aware of other points of view
- develop critical thinking skills\dialectical thinking

### **FACILITATING DISCUSSION:**

- Begin the discussion with a prepared first question that will stimulate thought/reaction.
- Guide the discussion – probe/challenge/rephrase/keep on track (guide its course without appearing to do so).
- Summarize occasionally.
- Don't make evaluative comments.
- Prepare an impressive ending or summary.

### **TO DIAGNOSE A STUDENT'S AREA OF DIFFICULTY:**

- Review course materials with the student to assess what the student has learned and where the trouble starts.
- Ask additional questions to encourage the student to reveal what they know (sometimes they just need to think out loud).
- Use examples in addition to what has already been explained.
- Demonstrate application and ask the student to practice applying the principles.
- Aid in recall strategies – give them some ideas of how to remember the facts.

## **ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION**

**Assessment** = The collection of information about student learning for the purpose of making judgments about progress.

**Evaluation** = Comparing assessment information across or against some standard to make a judgment or a decision.  
Evaluation starts with assessing something.

**ASSESSMENT PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN INFLUENCING HOW STUDENTS LEARN**  
**ASSESSMENT NEEDS TO BE TIED TO OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES**

### **PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT:**

- To assist students in learning
- To diagnose strengths and weaknesses
- To inform students what standard they have achieved
- To provide feedback to the instructor

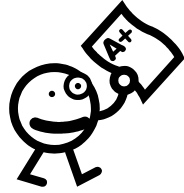
### **Tips for marking:**

- Discuss a reasonable turnaround time for marking with the instructor.
- Set aside a time for marking when you can get a good portion completed in one sitting.
- Read through the marking criteria and keep it handy.
- Read a few assignments without marking anything.
- Go through all the assignments and give a provisional mark.
- If you find some assignments that are difficult to mark, set them aside for later.
- Sort the assignments according to grade, review for consistency and amend marks as necessary.
- Discuss low marks or potential failures with the instructor prior to giving the marks back to the students.
- Be accountable for the grade, have a rationale/criteria that the mark is based on.

### **Feedback . . .**

- should encourage learning
- should provide guidelines on how work can be improved
- should be constructive and specific
- should offer two or three points as goals for the next assignment

You should keep a copy of your comments. You may wish to develop your own feedback form to save time.



## GENERAL ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

- Excellent record-keeping is essential
- Students need to be aware of expectations on assignments (in written form)
- Grading criteria needs to be obvious/transparent/explicit
- Rubrics offer a format for ease of grading and informing
- Advertise the late policy (if there is one)
- Return assignments promptly
- Be fair & consistent

**Assessment criteria:** (elements on which you assess student performance)

- knowledge of the subject
- structure
- clarity
- use of examples, being able to apply learning
- spelling and grammar
- original thought
- relevance

**Options for Assessing Group Process:**

- Each student is responsible for handing in one portion
- Self – evaluation (they must justify their mark)
- Peer – evaluation
- Monitoring and assessing each group via a checklist
- Group decision on mark split percentages (all agree that members receive a certain percentage based on real contributions – for example: In a group of 3, they must decide how the 10 marks are divided amongst them.)

## EVALUATION OF YOUR PERFORMANCE

How and why to measure your own performance:

How?

- other teaching assistants
- the instructor of the course
- your students
- DVD a class and reflect on that information
- written anonymous feedback on index cards from the students  
(give the students unfinished statements/direct questions/open questions)
- keep a reflective diary
- self-assessment
- observing other teaching assistants
- keep a suggestion box in the classroom
- assessing student response in class – doodling, sleeping, talking, attendance

Why?

- to diagnose & correct problems in order to improve student learning
- to continually develop your skills as a facilitator of learning
- to gather data for promotion/CV



## APPENDIX - RESOURCES

### Resources at UBC Okanagan

Centre for Teaching and Learning, UBC Okanagan:

<http://web.ubc.ca/okanagan/ctl/welcome.html>

Aboriginal Programs and Services

<http://okanagan.students.ubc.ca/current/aboriginal.cfm>

Awards, Fees & Finances

<http://okanagan.students.ubc.ca/finance/>

Disability Resource Centre

<http://okanagan.students.ubc.ca/current/disres.cfm>

Health & Wellness

<http://okanagan.students.ubc.ca/health/>

Health & Wellness - Counselling

<http://okanagan.students.ubc.ca/health/counselling.cfm>

Human Resources at UBC Okanagan:

[http://www.hr.ubc.ca/collective\\_agreements/2278TAgreement.html](http://www.hr.ubc.ca/collective_agreements/2278TAgreement.html)

Human Rights and Equity Services

<http://web.ubc.ca/okanagan/hes/links.html>

International Programs and Services

<http://okanagan.students.ubc.ca/international/>

Learning Support

<http://okanagan.students.ubc.ca/current/learning.cfm>

Policies and Regulations – University Calendar

<http://okanagan.students.ubc.ca/calendar/index.cfm?tree=3,0,0,0>

Student Services

<http://okanagan.students.ubc.ca/>



## Resources to Enhance Practice

The Journal of Graduate Teaching Assistant Development  
<http://www.tag.ubc.ca:888/facdev/services/papers/001.html>

David A. Kolb & Experiential Learning  
<http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-explrn.htm>

Learning Styles  
<http://www.ldpride.net/learningstyles.MI.htm>  
[http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/Learning\\_Styles.html](http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/Learning_Styles.html)

Cooperative learning  
<http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/intech/cooperativelearning.htm>  
<http://www.co-operation.org/pages/cl.html>

Team Based Learning  
<http://www.ou.edu/idp/teamlearning/video.htm>

Models of Teaching  
**Joyce, B., Weil, M., & Showers, B. (1992). Models of teaching, 4th ed.**