

JAN. 17-21, 2022

# TA INSTITUTE

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology

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# Accessibility-Centred Design: Creating Inclusive Learning Environments

Tiera Naber, MSc Student  
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# Welcome

## **Your facilitators:**

Tiera Naber, MSc Student, EOAS Department, Lead Grad Facilitator at CTLT

Sophie MacDonald, PhD Student, Mathematics Department

## **Yourself:**

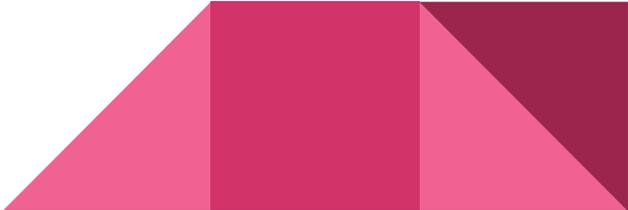
Introduce yourself to your peers in the chat (name, department).

Feel free to share your pronouns on your Zoom name.

Simply right-click your display, and click “Rename”.



# Agenda

- Land acknowledgement and expectations
  - Session goals
  - Self-reflection
  - Identifying barriers activity
  - Check-in
  - Communicating with supervising instructors activity
  - Summary and action plan
  - Post-session survey
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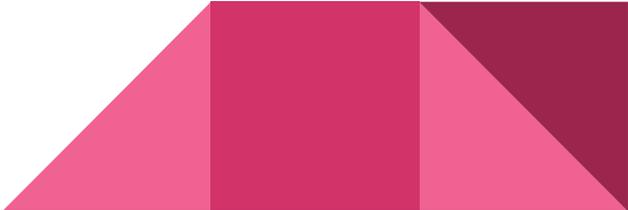
# Land Acknowledgment and Expectations

Using Padlet, we will add questions and ask you to reflect on them, then add your answers anonymously in the specified columns. The purpose of this activity is for us to build a shared understanding of what we are bringing to this section and what we want to take from it.

- What brings you here?
  - What is something specific you would like from us or from your fellow participants in this session? (content, tech, tone ...)
  - Where are you? Whose ancestral land are you on? Look it up, then reflect for a moment, and share: when you think “accessibility” and the land you are on, what comes to mind first? (see [native-land.ca](https://native-land.ca))
  - Who are you? What aspect of your identity feels most relevant to this session?
- 

# Session Goals

In this session, you will:

- Reflect on your experiences with inclusion and accessibility as a student in academia.
  - Identify inclusion and accessibility barriers to participation and discuss student needs in order to create a more accessible classroom environment.
  - Discuss communication strategies to help you support a more inclusive classroom environment.
  - Consider actionable items that support student accessibility that you will implement in your practice as a TA.
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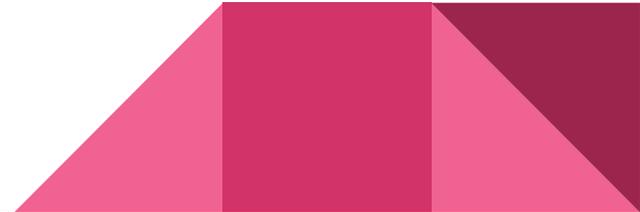
# Reflecting on your Experiences

We will do this brief activity on Jamboard.

Have you ever used Jamboard before?

On the Jamboard, respond to the following question:

What has your experience been with inclusion and accessibility in academia?



# What are your experiences with inclusion and accessibility in academia?

- People with disabilities are not well accommodated
  - Lack of accessibility to essential school resources (books, laptop, etc.)
  - Mixed feelings about and experiences with campus accessibility resources
  - Limited curriculum, where authors/academics from diverse backgrounds are not well represented or excluded
  - Feeling excluded from academic community and classroom discussions as international student
  - Pandemic making classes more accessible to a degree by offering virtual/hybrid classes
- 

# What can I do as a TA?

## Actions you can take directly

- Connect students with resources
- Design materials/activities with varied access needs in mind, if this is your job
- Solicit student feedback regularly and create an atmosphere that welcomes it
- Communicate student needs and suggestions to your supervising instructor
- Help students brainstorm workarounds for things that you can't change

## Actions for your supervising instructor to take

- Make final decisions about course content, assessments, and materials
- Lecturing or delivering content more accessibly
- Handle high-stakes decisions around student grades
- Interface with the Centre for Accessibility

# Some phrases and concepts to watch out for

- “Handholding”, “babysitting”, “catering”
- “Making excuses”
- Slippery slope/reductio ad absurdum
  - “building a wheelchair ramp to the top of Mt. Logan”
  - “if you start doing X for this person, pretty soon you’ll be doing Y for everyone”



# Identifying Barriers Activity

This will be a 3-part activity that will take us 25 minutes to complete.

The breakdown of the activity is as follows:

- Part 1 Instructions: Scenario discussions (10 mins)
- Part 2 Instructions: Group summaries (8-10 mins)
- Part 3 Instructions: Open discussion (5 mins)

*Each part will come with instructions. Please ask for clarification or help at anytime if you are unsure of what to do.*



# Identifying Barriers Activity

## **Part 1 Instructions: Scenario discussions (10 mins)**

- In breakout rooms, read over the described scenario (A, B, C, or D).
- After reading it over, discuss the provided question prompts that are listed in the speaker notes (located under the slide) with your peers.
- Decide on a notetaker to record your group's discussion, and a group speaker who will summarize (< 2 minutes) your groups scenario and discussion when we return to the main room.

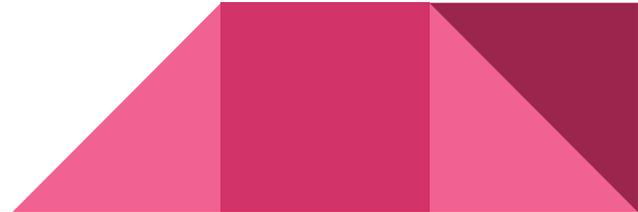
If you have a question, please use the “Ask for Help” feature in Zoom to call a facilitator to your breakout group.



# Identifying Barriers Activity

## **Part 2 Instructions: Group summaries (10 mins)**

- Summarize your groups scenario and what you discussed to your peers in 1 minutes.



# Identifying Barriers Activity

## **Part 3 Instructions: Open discussion (3 mins)**

In the Zoom chat or verbally, please feel free to:

- Ask a question to your peers or facilitators about the scenarios.
- Share any insights on other ways to consider approaching the scenarios.
- Share realizations you have come to during your group discussion.

*Remember, this is a safe and confidential space.*



# Scenario A - Breakout Room 1

Imagine that you are a TA that has been assigned to lead a first-year in-person lab session in your discipline that consists of 20 students for 2-hours each week throughout the semester. After a couple of weeks into the term, you realize that a student in your lab session has been consistently struggling with successfully completing the tasks that are assigned each week. You notice that during these sessions the student works alone and often seems anxious and flustered when asking you for help. During each lab session, the student frequently flags you for help, where their questions commonly revolve around rephrasing and explaining the assignment questions and tasks. Consequently, much of your time is away from helping the other students in the session, and as a result of this, several students often keep you after the lab to ask you questions for an extra 30 minutes.

## **Discussion notes:**

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## Scenario B - Breakout Room 2

Imagine that you are a TA that has been assigned to run weekly, 2-hour, synchronous tutorials for a first-year virtual course in your discipline that consists of 80 students. These tutorials are supplementary (optional to attend) to the weekly virtual modules and assignments which students complete asynchronously. After a couple of weeks into the term, a few of the students inform you that they are struggling to understand the course materials and complete the assigned tasks because of how the materials are presented. For example, mandatory educational videos lack closed captioning, text in these videos and on the Canvas site is often coded in green and red colours, and critical diagrams in the videos and on the Canvas site lack descriptions and helpful indicators for focus.

### **Discussion notes:**

## Scenario C - Breakout Room 3

You are TA-ing an in-person lab that is focused on practical scientific skills requiring manual dexterity and some lifting of moderately heavy objects. Students work in pairs, and one student, Student A, complains to you that their lab-mate, Student B, is “clumsy” and “doesn’t do their share of the work during the lab”. You ask Student B what they perceive the issue to be, and they are reluctant to discuss it, just saying that they are sorry and will work harder. The issues persist, and after a few weeks, Student B tells you that they are planning to drop the course because they have a physical disability that is preventing them from completing the physical tasks in the lab.

### **Discussion notes:**

## Scenario D - Breakout Room 4

You are a TA leading a weekly discussion group with 10-12 students. The content of the course involves a difficult contemporary social or political issue. You notice that, during the discussions, one of the students frequently has a facial expression that seems annoyed or angry to you. This student rarely contributes to the discussion, and their contributions are terse.

You take the student aside after class one day and ask if there is something that is making the discussions uncomfortable for them. They say no. You mention their facial expression and response style, and they seem surprised and apologetic about how they came across. They then mention that they have lived experience that is very close to the issue that makes it difficult to regulate their emotions, but that they don't see how the discussions could be handled any other way.

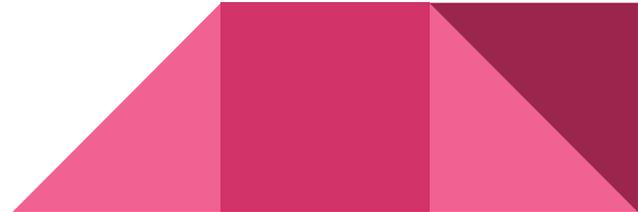
### **Discussion notes:**

# Activity Summary

- As the TA you are the main point of contact between the students and the instructor. You interact and observe the students far more than the instructor.
  - You don't need to know everything about a student to support them.
  - Every situation you encounter will be new.
  - There is no single “correct” way to handle a situation.
  - Do what you can with the knowledge and resources you have.
    - Know your role and responsibilities as a TA.
    - Signal that you are a “safe” person.
    - Ask student “How can I support you?”
    - Share resources with the student (i.e., Centre for Accessibility).
    - Notify the course instructor and ask them for support.
- 

# Check-in and Reflection

This is a brief 5-minute check-in to reflect on your own and share anonymously regarding what you have seen us as facilitators do so far to make this session accessible and inclusive, and what we could be doing better.



# Summary of reflection

## Like:

- Anonymity of activities
- Live transcription
- Providing options for communication (chat, speak, reactions)
  - Read responses of participants out loud if they were not comfortable doing so
- Slower pacing to leave time for personal reflection

## Change:

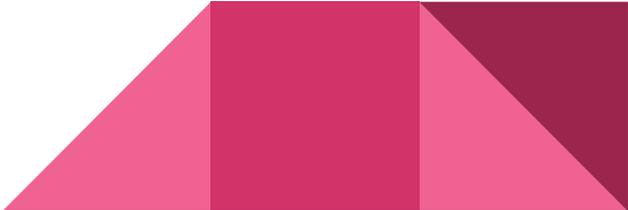
- Share specific tools that aid with accessibility in the classroom
  - Longer session - give more time to process activities and discussion
  - Provide more scenarios to think about and discuss
  - Tell participants to share pronouns in their Zoom name
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# Communicating with Supervising Instructors

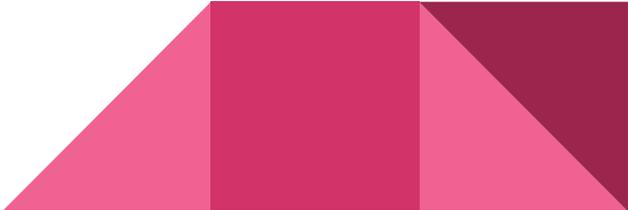
We are going to place you into breakout rooms again.

As a group, please select a scenario that was already discussed, and collaboratively write a **short** email, from the perspective of the TA, to the supervising instructor. The email should indicate what you feel the issue is, any suggestions you have, and any questions that you would like to discuss with the instructor.

Please write your emails on the slide with your group's number in the slide deck that we have linked in the chat.



# Summary of Activity

- Don't identify the student by their name in the email
  - Explain what is happening and how their learning/participation is being impacted
  - Let them know what you have done so far (i.e., recommended X resource to student)
  - Recommend possible solutions/resources that you think may be helpful
  - Share possible solutions that have been discussed between you and the student
- 

# Summary and Action Plan

Today you learnt about:

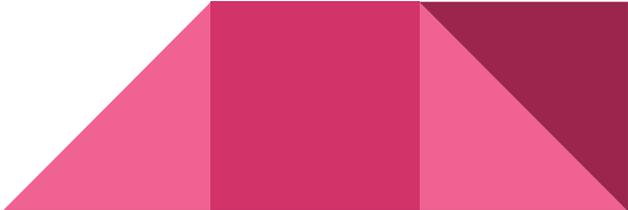
- Considerations and actionable strategies to help support inclusion and accessibility in the physical and virtual classroom.
- Communication strategies with supervising instructors.

We have made a take home sheet for you to create your own actionable steps on how you plan to incorporate accessibility in your own TA practice.

Link:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ARk5NtdmEePxaXN7Aoe\\_Bsrc1ni06Jp9MFqnhFk/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ARk5NtdmEePxaXN7Aoe_Bsrc1ni06Jp9MFqnhFk/edit?usp=sharing)

# Further Resources

- UBC Centre for Accessibility:  
<https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility>
  - TA Union (CUPE 2278): <https://cupe2278.ca/ubc-tas-and-markers/>
  - UBC Health and Wellness Centre:  
<https://students.ubc.ca/health/wellness-centre>
  - Early Alert: <https://wellbeing.ubc.ca/early-alert>
  - Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO):  
<https://svpro.ubc.ca/>
- 

# Thank you!

Please fill out the post-session survey. This is mandatory in order for you to receive the Letter of Completion of a theme.

Survey: [https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0Aloxtt8nrdWI06](https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0Aloxtt8nrdWI06)

Check out more TA Institute sessions here:

<https://institute.ctlt.ubc.ca/ta-institute/january-2022-ta-institute/>

Enjoy the rest of your week! :)

