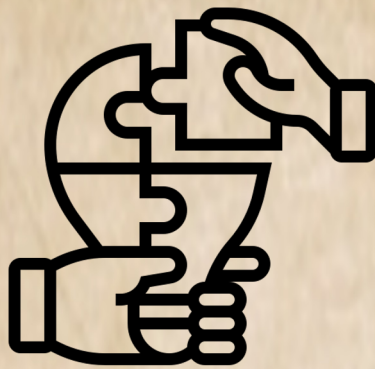


Establishing a positive TA Experience working with faculty

TA Institute



January 2022



Positive/Effective Strategies in TA/Faculty Relationship

Concrete approaches and actions that contributed to a positive Faculty-TA relationship
The professor asked me how my schedule (e.g. classes, exams, firm meetings) look like so he can help me with scheduling grading the assignments
Having a good communication and setting goals, tasks
In a statistics class, the faculty was flexible so every TA could accommodate their own hours and approach the teaching experience in their own way. Thus, depending on what worked for the student, we chose the TA.
Good communication
Clear job description, what TA's tasks and what professor's responsibilities
Being clear about the division of tasks - what was my responsibility vs. the responsibility of the instructor
To make sure you know what the expectations are as a TA
Clear expectations regarding grading and what is to be taught at tutorials (being given the material ahead of time)
Create a good plan for both side
providing a friendly and comfortable atmosphere with a TA
Clear communication about expectations
Organizing what is each person's role in the teaching team.
Organized a zoom call with all the TAs, very clear about expectations. Created google doc so TAs could evenly split work through the term. Sent good follow-up emails, very quick to reply to emails. Supported and engaged in TA Slack.
see them as a colleague
Set a clear rules before the semester start
To have a relationship based on respect and mutual understanding
Being transparent with the instructor so they know if there is a reason you can't do a task in time - so that they can plan for it



Addressing Your Challenges

Instructions

Round 1: Explain a challenge you (or someone else) have experienced or anticipate experiencing in working with a TA. *Please be as specific as you can.*

Round 2: go to the next slide. Read other challenges posted. Post a strategy to address the challenge in column 2 and prevent the challenge in column 3.

ROOM 1

Challenge	Strategies to address	Strategies to prevent
My professor one time relied on my to develop lesson plans and look for instruction materials myself. She barely provided any guidance and left me to figure out what to do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Look for materials that have been used previously in the course ● Speak to other TAs on the course and see if they feel the same way, or have materials to share ● Speak to the instructor asking for more guidance, and if there is no resolution, bring to TA Union 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Upfront expectations about teaching and responsibilities ● Perhaps asking for more pay if you are asked to prepare lesson plans and materials
I was TAing a course last term and one of the students handed in her assignment a week past the deadline. I told the student that I was unable to accept their assignment. Later I found out that the student had approached the instructor and that the instructor had accepted their assignment. That really put me in a very uncomfortable place in relation to the students for the rest of the term.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have a discussion with the professor and decide a solution to the problem. ● Have a meeting with the professor and the student to explain that there was a miscommunication and the steps taken to fix it. 	<p>Set up ground rules about deadline and extensions before the semester begins</p> <p>If the professor wants to give a dispensation, they should let the TA knows in advance.</p>



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ROOM 2

Challenge	Strategies to address	Strategies to prevent
Changing in the hourly rate of TA after signing the job agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contact union rep ● Communicate with instructor 	
There is no preparation for my role as a TA. I was just told I had to teach students. No one told me <i>how</i> to teach!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meeting with Prof and know your rights and ask them to give you guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Before the start of the course, have a discussion with professor about the guidance e.g. ask them to give you at least 24 hr notice about the topic to teach

ROOM 3

Challenge	Strategies to address	Strategies to prevent
Not having a great relationship with the instructor - TA asked for sick leave coverage but instructor insisted exams need to be marked ASAP; time management with TA work and their own student work; overwhelmed with a lot of duties from the instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Try to communicate ● Talk about your problem ● If the professor is not responsive, reach out to the department 	Ask for their expectation before starting the course, or signing the job agreement
Instructor overworks TAs and verbally abuses them when they are not able to finish everything.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Report the instructor to the department 	



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ROOM 4

Challenge	Strategies to address	Strategies to prevent
You get asked to do more hours than what you reasonably can do	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speak up and have communication with instructor; bring to the Union and discuss	-discuss beforehand expectations, speak about all duties and work before the term starts and how that work will be divided up
Instructor didn't answer class related questions over the weekend. TA would receive email complaints that Canvas didn't work. Instructor was the only one with access to fix the issue, and the students were frustrated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sending email and cc all students and let them know about the situation•	Ask the professor to give you access to some part of Canvas like announcement



Developing a **Communication Agreement**

1. **Logistics** and resources

What does your TA need to get set up?

- Example: Give access to canvas site**
- Access to course notes
- Clear schedule for meetings
- Arrange a space/time for office hours
- Time for discussion about the substance of the course
- Preparation for media or props to be used in teaching
- Clear syllabus to arrange lab sessions
- Discuss evaluation criteria and references
- Clear description of roles according to the syllabus
- Availability of faculty instructor for doubts that arise while you TA. Office hours, slack...

2. Prevent and address issues related **roles & responsibilities** (beginning and during term)

What will your TA be doing and how?

- Example: Co-develop hours allocated to each task**
- Ask for your roles based on the course syllabus in advance
- Ask about strategies to deal with complaints from students
- Ask what issues/Qs you as a TA should solve and what should be directed to Prof
- Ask for having access to most part of the Canvas so you can solve some problems using announcements
- 24 hours notice for doing any unpredictable tasks for TA
- Having a clear evaluation Rubric

3. Clarification of **needs and expectations between Faculty/TA** (i.e.: around communication and support) (beginning and during term)

How much does your TA need, and how much do you need from your TA (how specific, extensive, etc.)?

- Example: Set-up bi-weekly Check-in meeting**
- Set up Slack or WhatsApp (or other channel) to easily communicate with other TAs and instructor - a comfortable way to communicate
- Set up regular meetings throughout term for everyone - if instructor too busy then reschedule, re-do but make sure there is a plan
- Set up different organizational tools to structure tasks and times the TAs are doing them (ie. google doc task list).
- Maintain good communication



Developing a **Communication Agreement**

4. Clarification of **needs and expectations between TA/Student**




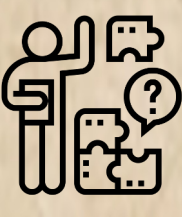

When and in what manner/context will the TA interact with the students?

- Example: Who is first/only respondent to student complaints/requests**
- What is the established communication between student and TA: email, canvas, in-person, etc.
- Personal assignment concerns can be addressed directly while those that may interest other students should be addressed in a board
- Expectations about response time, weekend answers, deadline to ask questions about assignments ahead of time
- How to approach review of markings and what is expected about the tone of communications
- What to do with late submissions of assignments so the TA does not have to contact the instructor every time

Other things you should discuss/agree on:

- Policy on extension of deadlines
- Policy on lateness and absence
- Approach to politically incorrect remarks regarding race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and other types of identities
- How to approach the review of marking and the tone of communicating about expectations with marking
- Track your working hours and avoid going beyond the limit of acceptable hours. How to divide the workload among TAs?

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