

### **What do you wish you knew at the beginning of TAing?**

- Known outline for course at beginning (Requirements)
- BioTAP helped!
- How to deal with cultural/language issues \*
- Being prepared (give timely feedback)
- A way to coordinate between sessions/tutorials/labs (Evaluating consistency)
- Knowing the instructor and having clear instructions and expectations \*

### **What went well this past term?**

- Small group work
- Inspiring students (sharing research)
- Enthusiasm of students
- Rubrics!
- Getting to know your students
- Have good rapport with other TAs and students and instructors (community)
- Responsibility with course design
- Make a joke and they laugh!
- Be called: "Dr." ☺

### **What were some challenges this past term?**

- Balance between teaching and research
  - o Coffee! Don't sleep?
  - o Work 24 hours?
  - o Keep your eye out for volunteers in your classes
  - o Being clear with expectations at beginning with supervisors (BE FIRM!)
  - o Leave some wiggle room in schedule
    - Overestimate marking time (x2)
    - Talk to teaching faculty if taking too long
- Assessing backgrounds knowledge (lots of diversity in background)
  - o Ask "why" take this class?
  - o Have students teach each other
  - o Make it relevant (give context)
  - o Identify there are ways in thinking
    - Give students chance to practice!
- Not knowing what is being taught in lectures
  - o Attend lectures!
  - o Talk to previous/current TAs, faculty
  - o Go over materials on CONNECT

- Language, culture (jokes/idioms)
  - TA shadowing helps! \*
- Students not knowing how to learn!
  - Ask how they want to learn
  - Make info ready in multiple ways
- Marking!!! Especially oral presentations
  - Practice!
- Consistency in marking (drifting)
  - Go back to 1<sup>st</sup> paper and mark again
  - Step away and come back
  - Avoid sarcasm in comments
  - Compare to other TAs
- Helping students with writing
  - Feedback
  - Writing center
  - Address individually and point our resources

### **Group 1:**

#### **What do you wish you knew at the beginning of TAing?**

- The amount of marking- time, difficulty
- The course format
- What was important – could have emphasized these points – answer keys/point distribution
- Examples of quality projects (good, creative)
- Workload
- Difficulty of failing students
- Wish more students came to talk to me outside of class → asked questions

#### **What went well this past term?**

- Student participation
- Lecturing component
- It was fun!
- Student feedback on presentations was illuminating
- Students found me approachable
- Good audience for jokes
- Getting called “Dr.”, “Professor”, or “sir”
- Getting addressed in French
- Seeing the light bulb click on?

- Seeing them “get” it
- Getting student attention (“moo”)
- Students getting very excited about their experiments – attention to detail; ownership

### **What were some challenges this past term?**

- Listening closely when grading oral presentations
- Getting to know individual motivations for taking this course – how to meet expectations
- Grading consistency
- Did students really “get it”? Where is the disconnect?
- Making them enthusiastic about marine ecology (barnacles, not whales)

### **Group 2:**

#### **What do you wish you knew at the beginning of TAing?**

- Felt well-prepared
- First BioTAP session really helped!
- TA prep sessions really helped!
  - Experienced TAs shared their experiences
- Not sure what to expect about how students will react
- Cultural differences, having English as a second language
  - Prep sessions and BioTAP really helped with this

### **What went well this past term?**

- Putting students into small groups to encourage discussion and participation
  - Feedback positive on this!
- Ability to talk to students 1 on 1 to encourage their confidence
- Group work encouraged students to form good working relationships
  - Mixing up the groups so students can try working with other people
- Peer tutors
- Ice breaker during first class

### **What were some challenges this past term?**

- Students not interested
- Nervous at first
- “Tell me the answer”
- Not knowing what has already been covered in lecture (repeated material)
  - students solving problems they have already been shown in in lecture
- First class of the week is harder than the second (when more experienced)
- Marking essays, some very good but some very poorly done

- Even with rubric it sometimes feels very subjective
- Students need more feedback on their writing
- Challenging students: late, immature, forgetful, not analyzing

### **Group 3:**

#### **What do you wish you knew at the beginning of TAing?**

- The importance of giving timely and helpful feedback
- Not to tell students that the lab was optional (de-emphasize)
- More frequent communications with other members of the teaching team

#### **What went well this past term?**

- Good interaction/rapport with students
- Being able to apply what I'd prepared and my expertise in my teaching
- Being an inspiration to my students in research and learning
- Students were eager and excited to learn in spite of poor weather during field labs
- Developed a good-working routine during the lab so that both students and instructors know what to expect and learn effectively

#### **What were some challenges this past term?**

- Student attitudes undermined their own learning
- Difficulties interpreting marking keys
- Balance between research and teaching
- Lack of sufficient interaction with peers to standardize how we marked
- Difficulties in communication with students due to language barrier

### **Group 4:**

#### **What do you wish you knew at the beginning of TAing?**

- Structure of teaching and marking
- How much work
- Would have liked BioTAP 1<sup>st</sup>
- Coordinate with other TAs marking
- How rewarding it can be

#### **What went well this past term?**

- Cool people
- Neat content
- Manual ahead of time
- Good 1<sup>st</sup> year students
- Enthusiasm
- Do science in labs

- Got to know students
- Rubric and fair marking

### **What were some challenges this past term?**

- Transition from different teaching style
- What do students know?
- Learn the material – to many muscle names!
- New class (genetics) last minute changes
- Resolving conflict with students over marks
- Large disparity between students expectations, knowledge
- Graph, reports, scientific writing

### **Group 5:**

#### **What do you wish you knew at the beginning of TAing?**

- Work without other instructional personnel
- Classroom management practices
- Better organize info/structure
- Not do course development
- How to be fair/consistent in marking
- Direction on student evaluations

### **What went well this past term?**

- Useful AV equipment
- Less direction allowed learning how to teach (in own style)
- Being open/avail, move around lecture
- Got to know students
- Good rapport w/instructors
- Good peer learning from other TAs

### **What were some challenges this past term?**

- Differences between sections
- How to prepare without much input from instructor
- Student expectations of TAs as authority figures
- Students not lazy but don't know how to learn at University

### **Group 6:**

#### **What do you wish you knew at the beginning of TAing?**

- Get to know your instructor/prof and understand your role
- Be clear on expectations
- When I will teach

**What went well this past term?**

- Looked at subset of exams/assignments before finalizing rubric/markings of all exams/assignments
- Not TAing first semester as a new graduate student
- Take initiative to fill gaps in students' learning experience
- Getting to know students

**What were some challenges this past term?**

- Are students prepared to complete course work at a level that is acceptable?
- Are instructors able to engage students?
- Not knowing what is being covered in lectures
- Understanding cultural irony, cultural differences in communication
  - o Shadow an experienced instructor