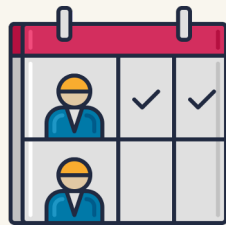




# TA Training CoP: TA Attendance



Session Workbook Slides

Oct 2023



## TA Lack of Attendance reasons?

### Reasons **New TAs** do not attend TA Training?

**Example:** Pressure to not spend time away from their research (pressure from supervisors)

Don't know what they don't know (don't know gaps) - lack of incentive

schedule conflicts with their own program

Undergraduate TAs don't know value

Undergraduate TAs shy - power dynamic

Undergraduate TAs - scheduling conflict

Assume instructor working with will give them the training

### Reasons **Returning TAs** do not attend TA Training?

**Examples:** Repeated sessions (sessions offered are exactly the same as what they attended in previous years)

Might already know the information

Scheduling conflicts

Discouraged from attending these sessions

Lack of incentive

Don't recognize value of training

**Your RSVP**

Attending

Maybe Attending

Not Attending

# Why would TAs attend?

Reasons **New TAs** Would attend online?  
How might this be different than F2F?

Groups/Pairs:

Easier to schedule online meetings in the summer than F2F (especially if TAs haven't moved to Vancouver yet)

Being compensated for their participation in the training

Clear learning outcomes

Reasons **Returning TAs** Would attend online?  
How might this be different than F2F?

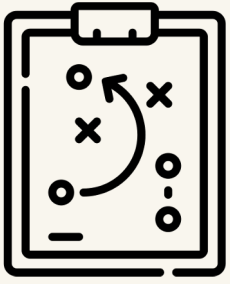
Groups/Pairs:

Learning objective specifically address returning/more experienced TAs

Opportunity to mentor new TAs - incentive to gain new experience

Value and recognize their roles as mentors or facilitators during the training (i.e: certificate, etc)

Compensation for their time during the training

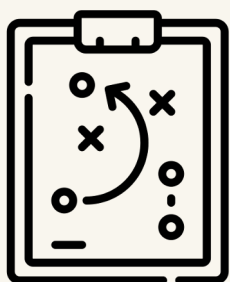


Here are some Strategies Coordinators Identified in the past for **boosting TA Attendance**

- **Pre-survey** (Align LOs with TA needs)
- **Timing** (When to offer what workshop)
- **Scheduling** (TA availabilities)
- **Make Training Mandatory**
- **Name of the TA Training Program:** Should it be TA Training?
- **Motivation for learning**
- **Peer Motivation** (Connect TAs)
- **Food**
- **A "venting session":**
- **Feedback** (From TAs)
- **Letter of recognition**
- **Sense of Community** (of TAs)
- **Drawing on Returning TA's expertise in Training**

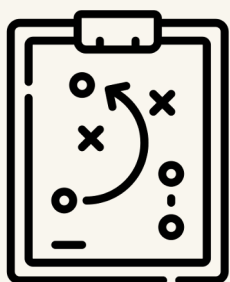
### **Anything to Add?**

- Be strategic about who sends the invite to the sessions



# Strategies to boost attendance

| GROUP 1   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Strategy to boost attendance  | Why/how would these help (new and/or returning TAs) - online or f2f?      | What suggestions would you have to <b>make this an impactful motivator?</b> (i.e: Best way to do this; best time to do this, how to do this, etc)   |
| <p><b>Pre-survey:</b> Identify the needs of TAs</p>   | <p>Collect their topics of interest to discuss; online</p>                | <p>Combine TA needs and concerns with department needs; timing for the survey, might work better for returning TAs.</p> <p>Note: Timing can be a challenge. Too early the new TAs may not be able to identify needs. And if later, it would be hard to implement feedback → Maybe ask about needs and concerns; Maybe do survey right before term; S=Do needs assessment at the end of the year to implement the next year. Sometimes needs of the TAs may not align with the department → frame sessions in a more specific way to the needs of the TA</p> |
| <p><b>Timing &amp; Scheduling</b> (When to offer what workshop &amp; TA availabilities)</p>   |   | <p>Distribute the sessions based on their nature (for example, orientation in the beginning, grading training in Oct., wellbeing in Nov.)</p>   |
| <p><b>Make Training Mandatory</b> (For new TAs OR for all TAs)</p>  | <p>Increase incentive</p>   | <p>If mandatory, then you might want to pay the TAs</p>   |
| <p><b>Name of the TA Training Program</b> - what to call it?</p>  | <p>Improve participation by clarifying the objectives of the training</p> | <p>Get the approval from your department first. Make name specific (grading training, etc.)</p>   |
| <p><b>Building a Community of TAs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A newsletter (interviewing a TA - TA featured) - TA Tip of the week/Question of the week</li> <li>• Game nights for TAs</li> <li>• Slack channel</li> <li>• etc</li> </ul> | <p>Network and experience sharing</p>                                     | <p>If game night/social, think if you can get some budget from the department/your funding application.</p> <p>When doing slack or other channels, make sure we need to protect people (TAs, students, instructors..) privacy</p>   |



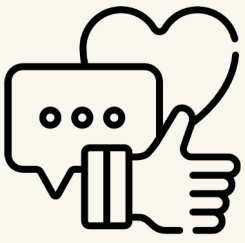
## Strategies to boost attendance

| GROUP 2  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Strategy to boost attendance   | Why would these help (new and/or returning TAs)-online or f2f?  | What suggestions would you have to <b>make this an impactful motivator?</b> (i.e: Best way to do this;best time to do this, how to do this, etc)                            |
| <b>Motivation for learning</b> (relevant to specific TA needs)<br><b>&amp; Peer Motivation</b> (opportunity to connect with other TAs) | Ensuring relevance<br>Assess needs  | Pre-survey & announce agenda  |
| <b>Food</b>  | Keep the energy up and free food is delicious<br>*Coffee  | Consider timing<br>Announce/vote  |
| <b>Feedback</b> - distribute feedback survey after the workshop(s)<br><b>OR</b><br><b>Focus group</b> or <b>A "venting session"</b>    | Ensuring relevance and meeting TA needs   | Don't call it venting? (Pitch as productive - answers to questions/issues that are coming up) Maybe "war stories"   |
| <b>(Letter of) Recognition</b>   | Motivates people to know that they can put a line on CV   | Does it need to be a letter, or just a reminder that people can put it on their CV (especially those who were engaged in more TA training opportunities, e.g., as mentors)? |
| <b>Drawing on Returning TA's expertise in Training</b>   | Ensuring relevance<br>Promotes networking opportunities for TAs   | Mentorship program or community of practice meetings hosted by TAs (give them gift cards)   |
| Be strategic about <b>who sends the invite</b> to the sessions   | TAs recognize the name of the person who sends the invitation - if it's someone they know, there might be better buy-in | Also consider number and timing of invitations and reminders  |



## Strategies to improve participation

| Barriers to active participation/engagement during the session? |   | Addressing barriers to encourage active participation  |
|---|---|--|
| New TA barriers   | Shy, don't feel like they have expertise to contribute yet  | Create small groups for discussion activities<br>Icebreaker activity to help new TAs get to know others and feel comfortable speaking up                                 |
|   | Lacking assumed knowledge   | Invite new TAs to think about teaching in a broad sense. Even if they're new to teaching, they can reflect on their positive experiences as a learner in other contexts. |
|   | Worried about asking the wrong question   | Anonymous online questions can be submitted and then reviewed later<br>Reminder that TAs are encouraged to ask lots of questions during training                         |
|   |   |  |
| Returning TA barriers   | Burnt out   | Create small groups for discussion activities<br>Icebreaker activity to help new TAs get to know others and feel comfortable speaking up                                 |
|   | In large groups, returning TAs might leave their thoughts to be voiced by others (some kind of bystander effect?) | Invite new TAs to think about teaching in a broad sense. Even if they're new to teaching, they can reflect on their positive experiences as a learner in other contexts. |
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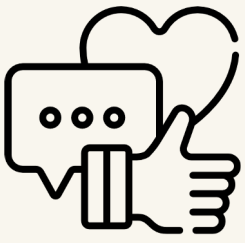


# Meaningful feedback

## Returning Coordinators' perspective

|   |   |
|---|---|
| What have you been doing to get meaningful feedback?              | Providing additional ways for TAs to provide feedback - example: focus groups   |
|   | Changing how the questions are asked (less open ended)  |
|   | Consider/test questions with a few sample volunteers to ensure that the questions make sense, and people understand what you are actually asking for (remove ambiguities, etc). |
|   | Clarifying *who* benefits from this feedback. TAs are more likely to contribute if they see that these changes will help future TAs, or even themselves, in the next year.      |
|   |   |
|   | After a session (what do you still want to learn?), at the end of the term (what do you wish you had) and start of term (what are you most worried for or would like to learn)  |
|   | At the beginning of the year to get information on their needs - to inform programming  |
| <u>When</u> can you ask for feedback in a way that is meaningful? |   |
|   | Anonymizing responses so people can comment candidly without worrying about things being traced back to them.   |
|   | Gift card draws   |
|   | ^ Nice! :)  |
| <u>What</u> can encourage people to offer feedback?               | Providing additional ways for TAs to provide feedback - example: focus groups   |
|   | Changing how the questions are asked (less open ended)  |
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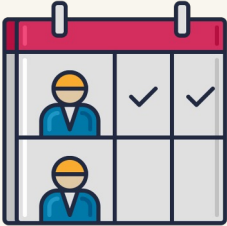
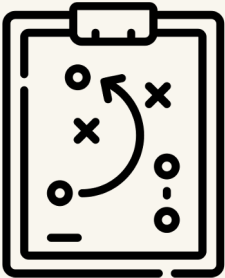
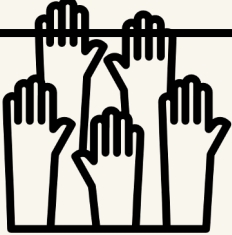
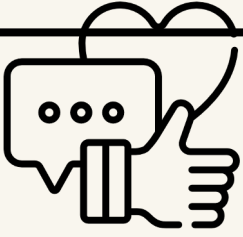


# Meaningful feedback

## New Coordinators' perspective

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>What questions do you have about collecting meaningful feedback?</p>  | <p>When is the best time to collect feedback from TAs?</p> <p>→ collect feedback right after the session to see the immediate impact of the session but also collect feedback at the end of the term to see how much of the session content the TAs actually used in their TAship</p>   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
|  |   |
| <p>What challenges do you anticipate in getting meaningful feedback?</p> | <p>For our first session, I noticed that TA feedback on our survey was very positive (from Likert scale questions), but they did not make many suggestions in the open-text questions. This is a bit of a challenge for knowing what to change next time, because I'm sure we're not actually perfect (yet). But I noticed that TAs felt more comfortable making critical suggestions when they spoke with senior TA mentors, who informally reported back to me. I wish they would mention these things on the survey...</p> <p>→ We have limited the number of questions we ask in feedback form and we ask open ended questions first; We do a focus group</p> |
|  | <p>We partner with other groups in our department and sometimes the feedback we receive may be regarding their presentation. In the interest of politics how do we pass those on?</p> <p>→ If there is feedback about facilitators, it is helpful for them to know so they can try to address it in future sessions. You can always let all facilitators know in advance that you will be forwarding TA feedback to them after the session</p>  |
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