TA Training CoP: Programming for Diverse TA Populations

Session Workbook Slides

April/May 2024

Your Questions:

What questions do you have about:
- Programming for diverse groups of TAs
- Balancing faculty and TA expectations about what the training should be

Recommendations for **tailoring to TA needs without getting too niche** that no one comes? <- Seconded	
We only host 3ish workshops a year - how can we ensure we're **meeting all the needs** in our assessments?	You don't need to meet *all* the needs identified in your needs assessment survey. You will need to meet the ones that are shared among most of/large group of your TAs. You can create resources or offer training suggestions outside of your unit for some of the expressed needs that aren't shared among many TAs
Our TAs often identify a number of challenges they are facing in feedback forms but when we offer directed training sessions/workshops aligned to these challenges we don't get many TAs to attend. Any suggestions for reframing these sessions?	- Timing of the session is important. Make sure it is on a day most TAs are in (ie: other training, department events). - Have the invite to training go out from the faculty member they are TAing for - Change the title - provide session outcomes in the invite to session. - Provide commendation letters for those attending all your training - Provide food
How can we balance engagement from new TAs who haven't come to workshops before and also try to encourage people who have come to workshops to continue to come?	Try strategy listed on Slide #6
Balancing brand new TAs with TAs who have done the course before	Try strategy listed on Slide #6
How do we integrate faculty input/perspectives while keeping the activities centred on TAs and their needs?	Have a conversation about training vs professional development. Training is meant to address challenges TAs are currently facing. Invite faculty to offer ProD sessions open to everyone in your unit (faculty, staff and students) on sessions they think are important but don't directly speak to the needs expressed by your TAs.
How do we address the needs of TAs who primarily mark, who primarily lead tutorial sessions, and who (in our case) lead one-on-one meetings fairly? How do we help prepare TAs for each of these roles?	Try strategy listed on Slide #6 (have a session about the role of the TA in supporting students in alignment with activity outcomes.
How do we address different expectations/workload for different courses? (e.g. one course may require more/fewer hours than others, which results in unhappy TAs or some TAs take longer to prep or mark assessments etc.)	Managing TA workload shouldn't be the responsibility of the TA Training coordinator. Usually there is a TA coordinator in each department that manages TA assignment Re: Marking - it would be helpful for faculty and TAs for the course to have a conversation about what each question is meant to accomplish and how long the TA should take to mark each question. Some faculty members mark 2-3 papers with their TAs
How do you pick a **time for training** that works for most TAs? We sometimes struggle to get high participation.	Not easy but scheduling the training prior or after popular department events could help. Also scheduling the sessions when they would be most relevant to TAs (i.e.: scheduling the marking session right before the mid-term).
How do we **"advertise" to TAs** who are incoming and have a packed first few weeks?	It would be easier if you have the faculty members they are TAing for to send them the invitation for the training.

Identifying needs and expectations of *TAs*

What strategies have you tried to identify needs and expectations of your *TAs*?
Candid convos with faculty (outside of course/supervision contexts)
One-on-one convos with friends/colleagues who have TAed (very informal!)
Hosted **reflection/end of term celebration events t**o give our TAs a space to discuss some of their challenges and triumphs!
Tacked on a casual chat about successes and **challenges** in TAing during our social events/end-of-term celebrations. Sometimes paired with a formal survey
Feedback forms at events/trainings.
Sent out a **survey** to TAs at the end of the year to identify needs
Send out a **survey** in Sept, Nov, and Apr to TAs

What questions can you ask to identify needs and expectations of *TAs*?	
Room 1: Questions to ask **TAs**	**Room 2**: Questions to ask **Faculty**
What percentage of your time do yo spend going X,Y, Z	What specific taks do your TAs engage in in your course?
Out of these workshops what topics interest you? (Provide the list of workshops you have identified from past needs assessment surveys with TAs - avoid providing a long list of anything you have seen before))	What challenges have you observed your TAs experience
What are some challenges that you have experienced in your TAship last year	
What are some of the tasks you found challenging in your role as a TA and why did you find them challenging?	
What aspect of the training we offered you in DATE did you apply in your TAship (offer an outline of the sessions you offered as training)	

Competing needs and expectations

Examples of competing needs and expectations:	
Experience Level: UTA	**Experience Level:** GTA
Experience Level: New TA	**Experience Level:** Returning TA
TA role and responsibilities: Marking	**TA role and responsibilities:** leading tutorials
Difference in unit cultures: faculty wide training	
Faculty members indicate TAs need X training	TAs indicate they need Y training

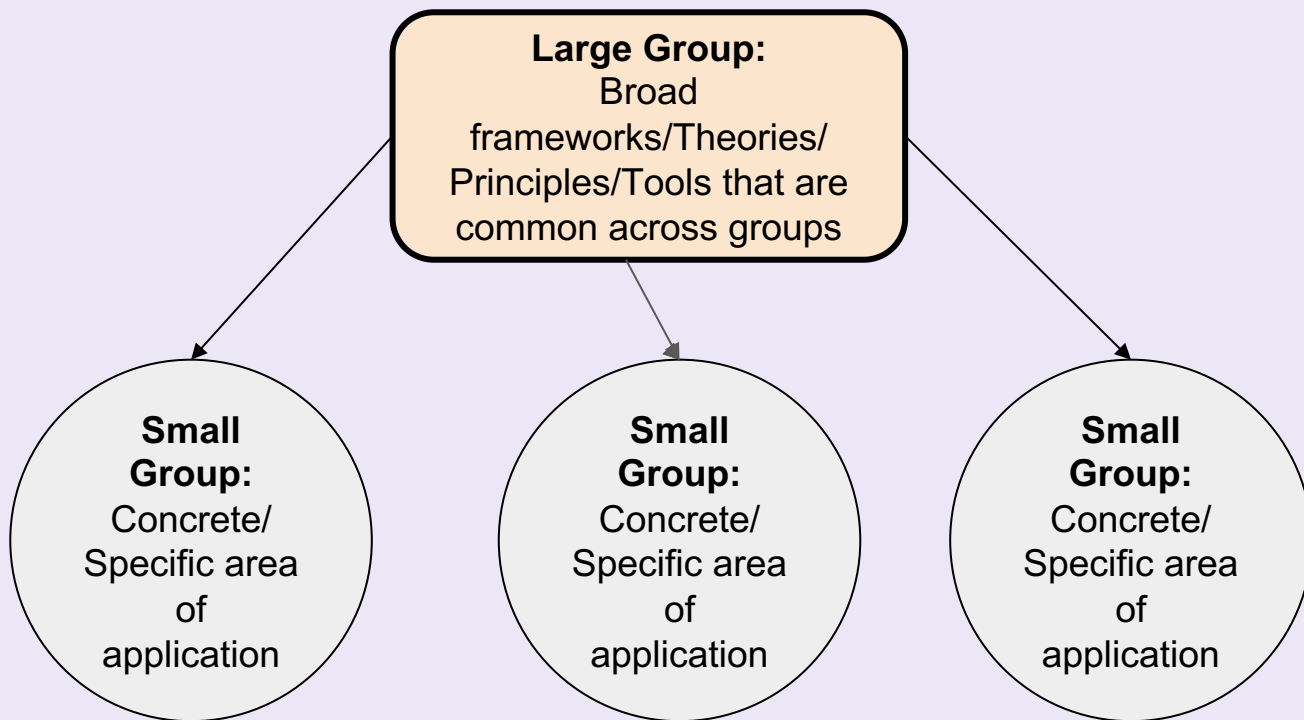| **What strategies have you tried to address competing needs and expectations:** (i.e: new UTA needs for basic training VS Returning TAs needs; Faculty expectation for TA Training vs TA expectation) |
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| Example: Offer separate sessions for new and returning TAs |
| Have a set of mandatory sessions ad some elective sessions |
| Engage returning TAs as mentors or facilitators in TA Training sessions |
| Engage returning TAs in training by assigning them to small groups of new TAs and having them bring a cheaallenge they have experience - as a group they can generate strategies |
| Group TAs who will TA for specific areas/courses to share strategies |
| When there is competing expectations - If someone/a group indicates a need for a particular topic as training always ask for a list of areas the topic shows up in the TA's ptractice. If TAs indicate a need for traijning ask them when in their TAship did they experience the need for that training |
| For difference in unit culture,as well as the varied TA roles you could use the strategy on slide #6 |
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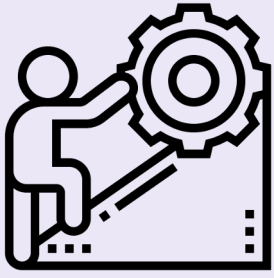
Training Challenges

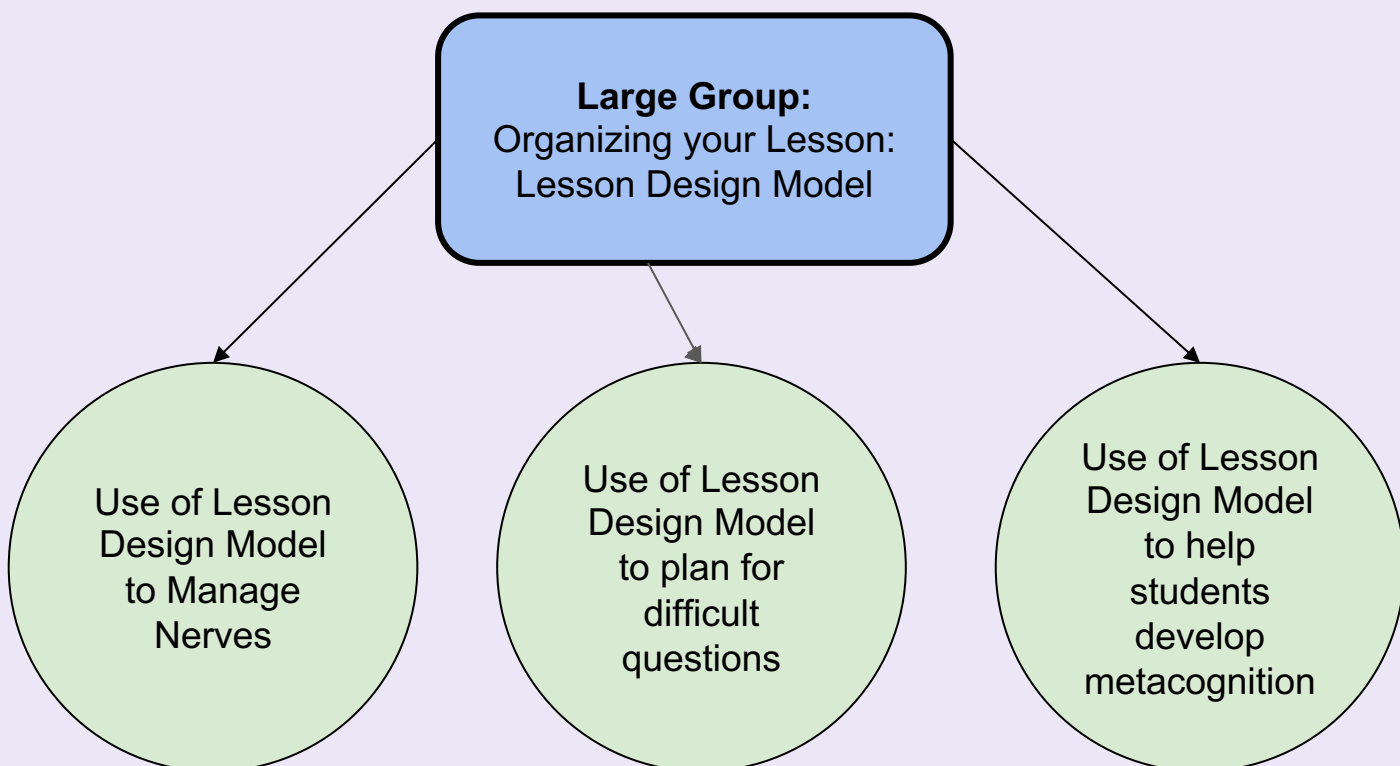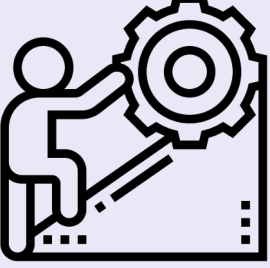| Group/ Room	Training Programming Challenges	• How can we address these challenges in our programming? • What have you done that has been successful in addressing these challenges?
1	You only have a few (i.e 3-4) new TAs each year (plus many returning TAs)- their training needs are very different	Leaning into good adult learning techniques - discussion based, scenarios, role plays
1	Returning TAs don't attend training. 1. Why do you think that is? 2. How can we address this? 3. What are some ways to engage returning TAs in the training?	Having the experienced TAs facilitate the sessions. Modified the sessions each year (this year added and AI session)
1	Small group of TAs (UTA, GTA, new and returning) in your unit and you need to train them all in the same space (due to lack of resources; availability)	Different training session for UTAs, focused on different topics. Different activities within the same workshop?
2	Diversity in terms of how much TAs care about their role as a TA	Needs assessment could ask what assessments are effective (e.g., food, content), Marketing of event to highlight skills gained, Certificate/reward program
2	Faculty members/TA training committee wants sessions in TA Training that would fall under professional development (rather than training)	Consider the variety of paths that students will take with the degree-- Try to integrate some discussion about professional development into training workshops? E.g., facilitation is useful for a TA, but also for XYZ. Try to emphasize how it relates to their professional/practice.
2	TAs engage in the same task - Marking- but different kinds of marking (i.e essayes, oral, short answer quiz)	"Example Assignment" that is multivalent/focuses on themes and possibilities for assessment + general statements about what the instructor judges important in student's work -> rubric creation exercise
3	TAs engage in very different tasks (i.e: Leading discussion, Marking, Lecturing, etc)	Train TAs in all aspects (general overview) on the core training day Additional workshops throughout the year that are more specific
3	Major disciplinary/department cultural differences between units supported by TA Training program	Have noticed discrepancies in participation across departments and funding
3	Communicating and supporting **TAs** that are hired **from other departments/units**	Require TAs from other units to still attend orientation so they learn departmental expectations Reserve spots in high demand workshops/trainings for in-dept TAs first.
3	The expectation of faculty members of the TA Training program doesn't align with the training needs indicated by your TAs	Faculty request broad training that cannot all be covered Communicating expectations clearly Offering to collaborate with faculty members on workshop or session that would address their concern

Strategy: Break out Groups

Large Group:
Broad frameworks/Theories/Principles/Tools that are common across groups

Small Group:
Concrete/Specific area of application

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Concrete/Specific area of application

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Concrete/Specific area of application
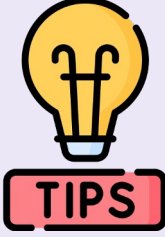
Example

Session Topic: Lecturing

Large Group:
Organizing your Lesson: Lesson Design Model

Use of Lesson Design Model to Manage Nerves

Use of Lesson Design Model to plan for difficult questions

Use of Lesson Design Model to help students develop metacognition

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