TA Workshop

Faculty of the Environment

5 September, 2018
Organization of the Workshop

• My Perspective on TAs
• TAing and Learning
• The Tasks of a TA
• Dealing with Undergraduate Students
• Dealing with the Professor
• Ethics and the Care of Students
• If You Want to Improve your Teaching Skills
• What are your concerns?
My Perspective on TAs

- I had TAs, some inspiring ones
- I teach a large class with 6 TAs
- In my class TAs are responsible for tutorials and marking
- I leave them a lot of responsibility (different instructor styles)
Teaching and Learning

• Advantages of being a TA, helps you learn the material (Montessori approach of learning by teaching)
• Direct contact with students, you get to know them more than the instructor does
• You can be a role model for them
The Tasks of a TA

• Organize and animate tutorials: always come prepared assuming that the students will not talk
• Lab work
• Field work
• Proctoring: need a male and a female in each exam room
• Marking
• Office hours: generally one hour a week
Dealing with Undergrad Students

• In general you know more than they do
• But... upper year students may text you
• Case of planning where upper year students have learned about planning while the TA may be new to the field
• Make it clear that there are things you can teach them: essay writing, design, statistical skills... You are not expected to know everything
• Tell students what you can do for them and what you can’t
Dealing with the Instructor

- From the instructor’s perspective, you are not the priority, the students are (but you are the priority in graduate courses). Your role is to enhance the learning experience of students.
- Instructors have different styles: macro or micro managers.
- Assure that the instructor’s expectations are clear: how much latitude is he/she giving you when dealing with students.
- In the case of marking is a rubric used.
- Do not hesitate to ask questions to the instructor and to update the instructor on what is going on, the instructor does not have other sources of information on this.
- Respect deadline and requests, you are an employee.
- You need to be respected too, you should not work more than 10 hours a week; if there are problems see the Graduate Officer.
Ethics and the Care of Students

• You must complete this:

**Employees**
- Faculty
- Staff
- CUPE
- Graduate Students
- Under Graduate Students
- Visiting Faculty
- Teaching Assistants

**Mandatory Training**
"working" (paid or unpaid positions) at UW must take the following courses

- Employee Safety Orientation (requires 30-60 minutes to complete)
- Workplace Violence Awareness (requires 30-60 minutes to complete)
• Consult the University of Waterloo Guideline for TAs, it is about human rights issues
  

The next pages contain material from the University of Waterloo on Harassment and Discrimination
TA RESPONSIBILITIES
Harassment and Discrimination

Image Source: University of Waterloo
Why is this important to me?

Directing Mind

Generally speaking, employees with supervisory authority may be considered part of the “directing mind” of the organization.

A policy primer: Guide to developing human rights policies and procedures.
What if I don’t respond?

Failure to respond leaves the University in a vulnerable position if a case is taken to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal.

If you fail to respond, you may need to be prepared to explain why you did not fulfill your duty.
What will I learn?

- What harassment is.
- What harassment might look like in your work environment.
- How to respond effectively.
- Who is available to help if you are uncertain about what to do.
- Where to find more information.
Be prepared …

1. Read the “Guidelines for Teaching Assistants”

2. Self-enroll in and complete the online module.

3. Take the online quiz.

A policy primer: Guide to developing human rights policies and procedures.
You are also protected!

If you or a colleague are experiencing discriminatory or harassing behavior, it is important that you tell someone who can help resolve the problem.

You can speak to

• your supervisor,
• Human Resources, or
• Staff in the Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion Office.

For more information view these presentations or the FAQ section of our website!
Instructions for self-enrollment and accessing the module and quiz

Self-enrollment and accessing the module and quiz

- Log into Waterloo LEARN
- Click the "Self-Registration" link at the top of the screen and select "CMAHRO TA Training – Responsibilities re: Harassment and Discrimination"
- Select "Register" and "Submit".
- Under the "Content" heading, select "TA Orientation - Harassment and Discrimination".
- Complete the online module. This should take less than an hour to complete.
- After completing the module, select "Submit". A drop down menu will appear and select "Quizzes".
- Under the "Current Quizzes" heading, select "TA Harassment & Discrimination Quiz" to start the quiz.

Notes
- Results for passing the quiz on LEARN may take 48h to update.
- System requirements
  - LEARN works best on the following browsers: Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Safari, and Firefox.
  - JavaScript, Cookies, and Flash must be enabled on your browsers for proper viewing.
  - Example for troubleshooting Chrome
    - If you can only hear the training module but your screen is blank, then open a new tab and type "chrome://settings/content" into the address bar. Select "Flash". Make sure "Allow sites to run Flash" is on and 'Ask First' is off.
• Free Speech Requirements
  • Not yet adopted by the Provincial Government, but expected to be law in December
  • Based on the case of a TA at WLU: TA Lindsey Shepherd criticized for showing a film on Jordan Peterson who is opposed to the use of gender neutral pronouns
  • You must allow people to express contrarian views
  • But these views should be well articulated and not racist, sexist or otherwise offensive
• Ethics towards Undergraduate Students
  • You are an employee of the University of Waterloo and your behavior must conform to what is expected from these employees
  • You are in a powerful position relative to undergraduate students, so as long as you are in this position, no personal relation with them
• Crisis Situations:
  • You are responsible for the security of undergraduate students
  • If someone is in a health crisis, call 911 and ask for the ambulance
  • If someone is in a state of mental health crisis, call 32655 and take the student to Counseling Services on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} floor of Needles Hall
If You Want to Improve Your Teaching Skills

• You can approach the Centre for Teaching Excellence
Read this!

Teaching at the University of Waterloo | A Manual for Teaching Assistants

Sign-up for workshops

Center for Teaching Excellence

https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/events?date=Current&type=All&a udience=106
Other Resources

• CTE
  • Teaching skills and certificates
  • https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/support-graduate-students

• Academic integrity
  • https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/node/3
What Are Your Concerns?

• Form groups of two to identify your concerns, what worries you about being a TA
• Present your concerns so we can discuss them