Math Grad TA Workshop

Thursday, September 7, 2017; 4:30PM-5:15PM
Who are we?

Carmen Bruni - Lecturer in the David R. Cheriton School of Computer Science

Jordan Hamilton - Director of the Tutorial Centre

Paul Kates - Faculty Liaison for Mathematics

Jessica Leung - Graduate and Research Coordinator

Francis Poulin - Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies

Cathy Wang - Ph.D. Student in Combinatorics and Optimization

Dan (AMAZING!) Wolczuk - Lecturer in the Dean of Mathematics
Agenda

- Math Grad TA Workshop - Part 1 - Introduction
- Math Grad TA Workshop - Part 2 - Practical skills
- Break
- Panel Discussion
The Math Undergraduate Office relies heavily on our Graduate students to serve as TAs

Winter 2017 – Math has 6645 undergraduates with 1800 new undergraduates coming this Fall

The Math Undergraduate Studies has a large set of core and service courses where TAs are assigned by the Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies (not your home department)

The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies is responsible for assigning 189 graduate TAs to 33 core and service courses. They spend nearly $750,000.
Learning Objectives

By the end of the online training and the first half of this workshop, you should be able to:

- List general responsibilities of TAs and expectations
- Recognize and report breaches in academic integrity
- Summarize proctoring expectations and duties
- Identify traits that make a strong TA
- Respond to harassment and discrimination (+ online)
- Respond to student behaviours

NOTE: this workshop will introduce you to the fundamentals of TAing in Math (Math Courses and department specific), but expectations and responsibilities will differ between instructors, courses, units, etc.
Required Training Credit and Bonus Credit

- Mandatory - Mathematics Graduate Orientation
- Mandatory - CMAHRO TA Responsibilities: Harassment and Discrimination (Online)
- Mandatory - Mathematics TA Training
- Bonus CTE credit!

You get a credit for completing this workshop with the Math Faculty AND you get a credit towards the Fundamentals of University Teaching with the Centre of Teaching Excellence.
Why TA?

You are part of a team!

Build presentation and teaching skills

Develop interdisciplinary skills (with students, instructors, other TAs, etc.)

You’ll learn more than you think

We need you! Instructors rely on you to support their teaching

Students need you! Students rely on you to support their learning.
TA Assignments and first steps

- Student’s preferences, skills, knowledge, qualifications, and previous TA performances are taken into account when students are assigned a course as TAs.
- Most students are assigned to either a faculty course (e.g., MATH###) or a course from their respective units (e.g., CO###, AM###, PM###, CM###, etc.)
- Graduate students that are starting their degrees at UW will typically be assigned duties as a Marker in their first year
  - Training provided here by the Math Undergraduate and Graduate Office
- Contact/meet with your course coordinator/instructor
TA Expectations and Responsibilities

- **Breakdown of hours**
  - One TA unit = ~5 hours/week over 16 weeks = 80 hours
  - Two TA unit = ~10 hours/week over 16 weeks = 160 hours
  - Hours may not be evenly distributed throughout the term

- **Expect to be available from the first day of class until grades have been submitted**
  - Example, last day of exams is Dec. 21 so you might have to mark on Dec. 22 or 23

- **Attend regular marking meetings (depends on course)**
- **Attend exam marking sessions and pool proctoring**
- **Time needed to learn course material is not included in these hours, unless otherwise stated by your instructor**
- **If you cannot fulfill your duties (e.g., illness, attending a conference, etc.), please contact the course coordinator/instructor**
The Mathematics Undergraduate Office (MUO) maintains a “pool” of graduate students that are selected at random each term to help with midterm and final examination proctoring.

● As part of the 80h (1 unit) of TA duty, 3.5h are pre-allocated to assisting in the proctoring of a midterm OR final examination in a course other than the one(s) to which he/she/they were assigned.

● Hence, this leaves 76.5 hours (=80h-3.5h) of other TA duties for the rest of the term.

○ Midterms= 4th to the 11th week of term.
○ Final Examinations = You will be notified at least 1 week before classes end.
○ Confirm your availability with MUO; otherwise, find a replacement.
TA duties

Some responsibilities are:

- Marking
- Proctoring
- Office hours
- Tutorials
- Record grades
- Monitor discussion boards
- Etc (be sure to ask your instructor)
What to do if students are caught cheating and the chain of command

- Please review Policy 71 - Student Discipline

- Assignment:
  - Collect the evidence
  - Inform your instructor/coordinator
What is LEARN?

- LEARN is the University of Waterloo’s learning management system. Students who take fully online and face-to-face courses access their course materials through LEARN.
- How and when do I get access to LEARN? Log in using your WatIAM credentials. It may take a few days to add your WatIAM account to the LEARN system and then to add you to the course itself.
- Difficulties Logging into LEARN
  Contact your instructor first to confirm whether the request has been sent. Otherwise, contact the LEARN Support Team (learnhelp@uwaterloo.ca) or Paul Kates (pkates@uwaterloo.ca).
Proctor Training

● Before midterm/examinations
  ○ Communicate with the instructor: often they would have their own preferences and specific instructions*.
  ○ Be there at least 30mins before the start of the exam
  ○ Count papers
  ○ Distribute papers, etc.

● During midterm/examinations
  ○ Count students
  ○ Match front page signature
  ○ Check Watcards/collect signatures*
  ○ Constantly move around
  ○ Do not allow students in after the first 30 or 60min*
  ○ Announce that there are 10min remaining

● After midterm/examinations
  ○ Collect and count papers
Proctor Training Manual

- Cheating at a Midterm/Exam
  - Never accuse students
  - Never touch students
  - Inform instructor ASAP
  - Take evidence (e.g., midterm/exam)
  - Give fresh exam
  - Record observations

← To be distributed
What Makes a Great TA? What Makes a Bad TA?
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Some of our ideas:

- Caring (realistically everything else is a subset of this)
- Responsible
- Diligent/punctual
- Inquisitive (Don’t just accept the status quo)
- Have effective communication
- Confidence
The Socratic Method

Main idea: Question what you know; don’t just preach.

Get students to think about what they did wrong and force them to communicate.

Ask probing questions. Don’t bluntly give answers.

https://vimeo.com/9628635
Socratic Method

Questions not directions

Hints not answers

Constructive and non-constructive errors

Harmful feedback
Responding to Disruptive or Emotionally Charged Students

In general:
- Be calm and courteous
  - Lose your temper = Lose your credibility
- Give students the benefit of doubt
- Focus on the behaviour, not the student
- Don’t take disruptions personally
- Talk to students one-on-one/email

Tips:
- Safety first!
- Recommend Campus Services
  - Counselling, Health Services, Student Success Office, AccessAbility Services, Campus Police (ext 22222)
- Calm students down - ask them to take a seat or you can stand and have water/tissues handy
- Ask to understand the student (e.g., why do you need this mark?)
CMAMHR TA Harassment and Discrimination Online Module*

Harassment refers to unwanted comments or conduct that negatively affects the work environment:

- Unnecessary touching
- Leering or suggestive remarks
- Reprisal for rejection of sexual advances
- Explicit pin-ups and graffiti
- Degrading jokes and comments