

SAS TA TRAINING WORKSHOP: LEVEL 1

Sep 9, 2025

Presented by TA Program

sas-ta-program@uwaterloo.ca

FACILITATOR INTRODUCTIONS

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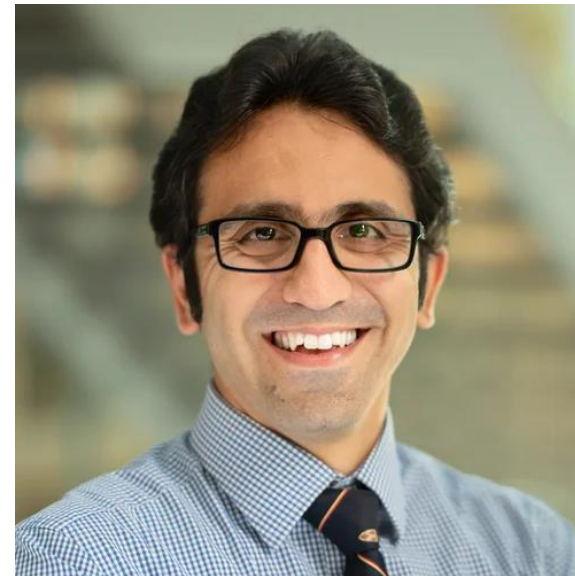
Reza Ramezan

Associate Professor (research active),
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TA Program, Committee Member

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INTRODUCTIONS

In your table groups, introduce yourself.

What program are you in?

Where were you before you started your graduate studies?

How do you feel about being a Teaching Assistant (TA)?

Brainstorm: What qualities should a great TA have?



Qualities of a Great TA

Some of our ideas:

- Knowledgeable
- Caring
- Responsible
- Diligent/punctual
- Inquisitive
- Effective communicator
- Confident

THANK YOU FOR BEING OUR TA

Students need you to support their learning.
Instructors need you to support their teaching.

YOU ARE AN IMPORTANT MEMBER OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM

Questions for Q&A with Experienced TAs

Throughout the workshop, please use the sticky notes on your tables to write down questions and/or concerns that you have about TAing.



SAS TA Program

- Teaching Assistant (TA) Program encompasses all aspects related to graduate teaching assistantships, including training, assignments, evaluations and performance management, and more.
- TA Program members include:
 - Chelsea Uggenti (Director)
 - Reza Ramezan (Committee Member)
 - Minh Chau Nguyen (current TA Coordinator)
- Currently offering the **Foundations for University Teaching in Statistics and Actuarial Science** training certificate program
 - Jointly supported by UW's Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) and the SAS Dept.



Breakdown of the Training Certificate Program

Levels	Durations (approx.)	Offerings	Essentials	Recommendations (not required)
1. Fundamentals	4 hours	Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTE 1210: Preparing to TA at Waterloo ✓ • SAS TA Training Workshop: Level 1 ✓ 	
2. Interactions	2 hours	Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAS TA Training Workshop: Level 2 ✓ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTE 1203: Building Rapport with Students
3. Facilitation	5 hours	Every term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTE 1106: Giving and Receiving Feedback • CTE 1111: Teaching STEM Tutorials • SAS Practicum: Level 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTE 1234: Teaching with Confidence • CTE 1226: Classroom Delivery Skills
4. Creation	5 hours	Every term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTE 1202: Effective Lesson Plans • SAS Practicum: Level 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTE 1260: Interactive Lessons • CTE 1190: Effective Questions Strategies

Upon completion of the program, you:

- Receive a **Certificate of Completion** issued jointly by the SAS Department and CTE,
- Receive a **Letter of Experience** outlining the details of your experiences,
- Become eligible to apply to be a TA Coordinator, and
- Become eligible to teach an undergraduate course within SAS.



Points of Contact

TA Program Members

Chelsea Ugenti
Reza Ramezan
TA Coordinator



Contact for training and general TA support.

Instructional Support Coordinators

Funmilayo Adeku
Pam Bandara
Jenny Tieu



Contact for course-specific support.

Course Instructors

Faculty members



Contact for your TA duties.

Graduate Team

Greg Rice
Associate Chair of Graduate Studies

Mary Lou Dufton
Administrative Coordinator of Graduate Studies

Heather McLaughlin
Graduate Studies Manager



Contact for graduate information.

SAS Instructional Support Coordinators (ISCs)

ISCs support instructors and teaching assistants.

You may be a TA in a course that has ISC support. If not, you can still contact an ISC for guidance.

Talk to an ISC when you:

- Want training for a platform
- Have questions about your workload or tasks
- Want advice and support to resolve challenges

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Agenda

SESSION 1 [5:30 to 6:30]

Introductions
Expectations
Proctoring

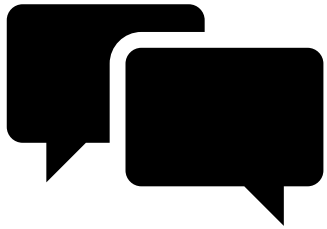
DINNER [6:30 to 7:00]

SESSION 2 [7:00 to 8:30]

Marking
Q&A with Experienced TAs
Closing

WHAT TO EXPECT

What we value in our TAs



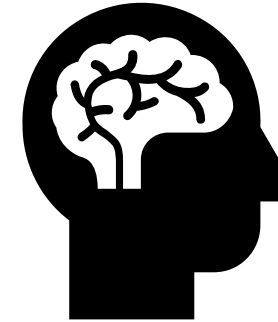
Responsive and communicative

Check your email and Teams message daily. Stay in communication with instructors.



Reliable and timely

Show up for all duties on time and complete all tasks before the deadline.



Prepared and knowledgeable

Keep up to date with course material.

TA Agreement

- You will receive a formal TA agreement for every course you TA, typically within the first two weeks of classes.
- It will outline:
 - Tasks
 - General expectations
 - Relevant dates and deadlines
 - Important policies
- You are required to review the agreement and sign it.
- Note: This is a **contract**!



Availabilities and Workload

- Be available from the first day of class until final grades have been submitted.
 - Last day of exams for Fall 2025 is December 19 and you may need to mark exams
- One TA unit = 1 course = 80 hours
- Two TA units = 2 courses = 160 hours
- Workload varies week-by-week but expect to spend about 5 hours per week per TA unit.
- 3.5 hours are reserved for pool proctor duties, so the maximum number of hours available to each course is 76.5 hours.
- Time needed to learn course material is not included in these hours.
- Contact the instructor if there are temporary disruptions to your TA duties (ex. illness, conference).



Pool Proctoring

- Run by the Mathematics Undergraduate Office (MUO).
- Every TA is entered into this pool and can be randomly selected to proctor courses within the Faculty of Mathematics which they are not involved in (ex. courses in AMATH, PMATH, CS, etc.).
- 3.5 hours of your 80-hour contract are pre-allocated to pool proctoring.
- If you are contacted by MUO for pool proctoring, you **must** attend or find a replacement.



Duties

Duties are specified by instructor and can change over the course of the term

- Proctoring
- Marking
- Office hours
- Online discussion board monitoring
- Tutorials
- Solution set writing
- Any additional jobs specified by the instructor

Platforms

**WATERLOO
LEARN**

LEARN

Go here to view course material

Learning management system with:

- Course content (course outline, announcements, assignments, notes, etc.)
- Student list
- Gradebook

 **crowdmark**

Crowdmark

Go here to grade work

Online marking system for assignments, quizzes, tests, and exams.

piazza

Piazza

Go here to answer forum questions

Online question-and-answer discussion forum where students post questions.

Your instructor may use other platforms. You can contact an ISC for in-depth training.

TA Evaluation and Performance

- TAs are expected to be present throughout the academic term to fulfill their TA duties.
- If you have any concerns carrying out your TA assignment(s) then talk to: the Instructor, ISC, Associate Chair Grad Studies, GSA.
- Procedures exist to address unsatisfactory performance and TA grievances.
- New TA evaluation tools and procedures are being developed.

For any questions or concerns related to TA duties or performance, you are welcome to speak to any TA Program Member or ISC for guidance.

PROCTORING

Proctoring Process

- The instructor or ISC will email you proctoring instructions.
- Meet the instructor or ISC at the specified location and time.
- Distribute tests according to the seating plan.
- Proctor. **Circulate**, complete attendance, look for academic offences, and help students.
- Do not be on your cellphone when proctoring!

Proctoring Scenario: What would you do?

You are proctoring a test in a room with three other TAs. The instructor is in a different classroom.

You notice that a student has glanced over at their neighbour's test paper a few times and you suspect that they are copying from their test. How should you handle the situation?



Proctoring Scenario Discussion

Warning: When proctoring, you may be in a room without the instructor. Be sure to discuss with the instructor how you can contact them during the test (where the instructor will be, will they be accessible by Teams or phone, etc.)

Stay alert and circulate the room.

Academic integrity is important. Get a second witness when possible and do not reprimand the situation. It is your duty to report the situation to the instructor. If you cannot get in contact with the instructor, then you could ask the student to move to a different seat and give them a blank test.



PROCTORING ACTIVITY

In your table groups, discuss how would you handle the provided proctoring scenarios.

Proctoring Activity Scenarios

Scenario 1: A student has a question.

Scenario 2: A student needs to go to the bathroom.

Scenario 3: A student is in distress (e.g., crying, panicking)

Scenario 4: A fire alarm in the building starts to ring.

Proctoring Activity Scenarios

When you are unsure what to do, follow the direction of the instructor.

Student has a question

Be careful not to give out too much information. You can clarify the wording of a question but should not discuss course material. If you are unsure how to answer, ask the instructor.

Student is in distress

Notify the instructor. You can ask the student if they would like to have a moment outside the test room to collect themselves. You can escort them to a water fountain for a drink.

Student needs to go to washroom

Let the student know a TA will walk with them to the washroom and will wait outside. Some students will have a preference to be escorted to the washroom by a TA of their same gender identity. Ask the student if they would prefer you or a different TA to go with them.

Fire alarm rings

Ensure students leave in an orderly and calm fashion without their tests.

Responding to Disruptive or Emotionally Charged Students

In general:

- Be calm and courteous
 - Lose your temper = Lose your credibility
- Give students the benefit of the doubt
- Focus on the behaviour, not the student
- Don't take disruptions personally

Tips:

- Safety first!
- Recommend Campus Services
 - Counselling, Health Services, Student Success Office, AccessAbility Services, Campus Police (ext. 22222)
- Calm students down – ask if they would like to take a moment to collect themselves (get a drink of water)

Academic Offences while Proctoring

- As the TA, you must keep tests and solutions **confidential**.
- Examples of student academic offences include use of unauthorized aids, impersonation, and copying from another student.
- Never accuse or touch the student. Get a second witness (TA or instructor).
- If the instructor is present, notify them and let them handle the situation.
- If the instructor is not present and cannot be contacted, then:
 - If you suspect a student is copying from another student, move them to a different seat which could be more easily monitored. Take away their test and give them a blank test, instructing them to work on the questions they have yet to answer.
- Note that it is not your responsibility to discipline or penalize the student for their academic offence. Leave that to the instructor or the ISC. Your sole responsibility is to identify, record and report the offence.

DINNER

Session resumes at 7:00 PM

MARKING

Marking Process

- The instructor or ISC will email you the marking scheme and/or marking instructions.
- Mark. Be accurate, consistent, and timely. Provide constructive comments.
- Report common mistakes or issues to the instructor.
- Marking is usually done online through Crowdmark, but you may be required to mark on another platform or by physical pen-and-paper.

Note: Final exam marking typically has a short turnaround time – be prepared!

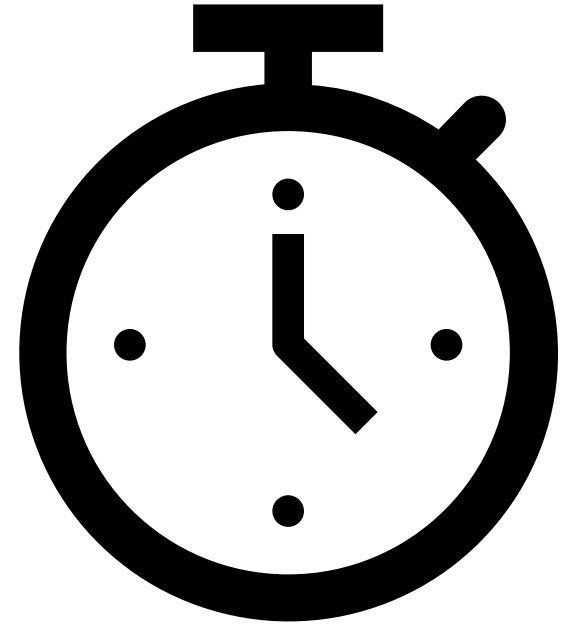
Marking Tip: Understand marking instructions

- **Carefully read marking instructions.**
- Look through a few submissions to anticipate types of mark deductions.
- If needed, clarify marking scheme with the instructor (e.g. alternative solutions) or report any errors.
- If you are marking the same question as other TAs, maintain communication so that grading is consistent (e.g. create a Teams group chat, view their graded evaluations and comments).



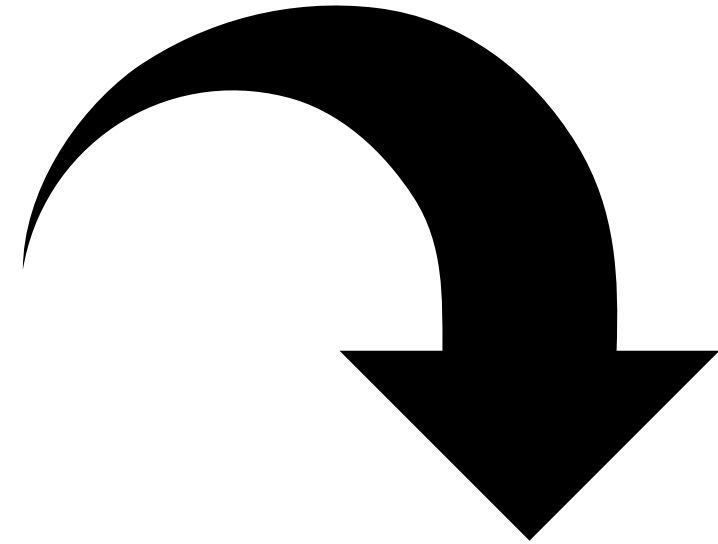
Marking Tip: Time management

- Do not leave marking to the last minute.
 - Leave enough time to be able to ask the instructor any clarifying questions.
 - Rushing can result in poor marking.
- Grade only one question or topic at a time so you can stay focused.
- Finish grading all responses to one question in one sitting so you don't have to worry about remembering the details of the marking scheme.
- Take breaks when marking!



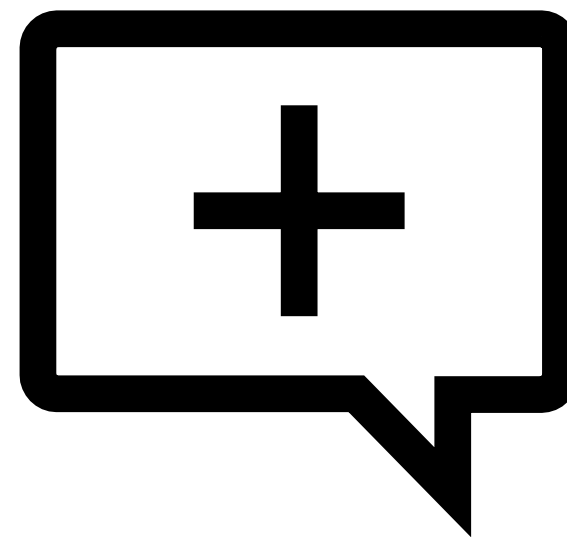
Marking Tip: Carry forward errors

- If a student makes an error in one part that is used for a following part, do not deduct extra marks in those following parts.
 - This can also occur within a single question part (ex. constructing a CI with an incorrect estimate).
- As long as the answer follows the correct process and is correct based on the values from the prior parts, then full marks should be provided.



Marking Tip: Descriptive feedback and comments

- The most important part of marking is to try and help the students improve. Leave comments that help students correct the mistake.
- Comments should clearly:
 - state where the student made the error,
 - state what that error was,
 - and assign an appropriate mark deduction.



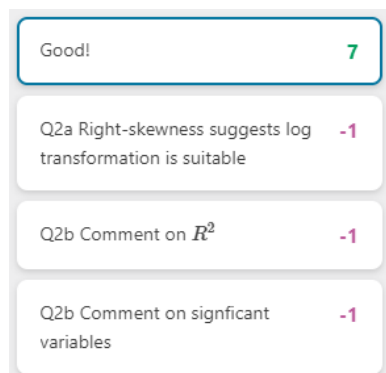
Marking Features on Crowdmark

Comment library

Reuse comments from your comment library to maintain marking consistency.

Click and drag comments from your comment library to speed up marking.

Crowdmark supports LaTeX so mathematical notation can be used in comments.

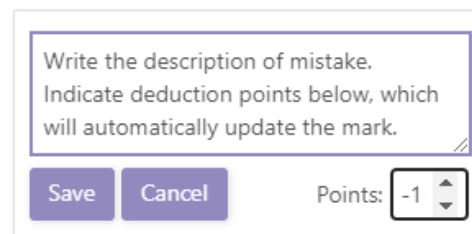


Automatic grade calculation

Do not manually enter a grade. Use point deductions in comments so the grade for the question is automatically calculated.

If a student should receive full marks for the question, add a comment that says "Good!" and assigns the full marks.

***Warning:** Do not combine mark deduction comments with mark addition comments for the same question.



Tags

Tags are only viewable by the grading team (not visible to students). Use tags to identify and categorize submissions, such as "possible cheating" or "review grading".



MARKING ACTIVITY

How would you mark the following?

Read the question, solution and/or marking scheme. Then complete the corresponding activity.

Reflection

Think back to your personal experiences:

- What is the most useful feedback on an assignment you've received?
- What made it useful?



Academic Offences while Marking

- As the TA, you must keep solutions **confidential**.
- Examples of student academic offences include plagiarism or excessive collaboration.
- If you suspect an academic offence, collect the evidence and inform the instructor or ISC.
- Note that it is not your responsibility to discipline or penalize the student for their academic offence. Leave that to the instructor or the ISC. Your sole responsibility is to identify, record and report the offence.

Marking Scenario: What would you do?

An instructor asked you to create the solutions and marking scheme for an assignment. Though you do not have previous experience in this task, you tried your best to create them on your own.

Then, you graded all 80 assignments using your marking scheme. After the instructor reviewed your grading, they tell you that your marking scheme was improper. As a result, you must revise your marking scheme and grade all 80 assignments again.

How could this situation have been avoided?

Marking Scenario Discussion

Warning: If you do an unsatisfactory job, then you can be asked to redo your work.

If you are ever unsure how to perform a task, reach out to the instructor or ISC for guidance.

Start tasks early so there is enough time to complete the job satisfactorily. Mark a few assignments first and then ask the instructor for feedback.



Creating Marking Schemes

Instructors usually provide solutions and marking schemes but may decide it is your duty to create them.

- Break the solution into essential steps
- Allocate marks for each step (don't get into half marks)
- Consider alternate solutions
- Apply your marking scheme to a few submissions and assess whether your marking scheme is fair
- When you are new to this task, you should ask the instructor to review your solutions and marking schemes before grading all assignments

Q&A WITH EXPERIENCED TAS

Laura, Madison, and Tianxing

Main Takeaways

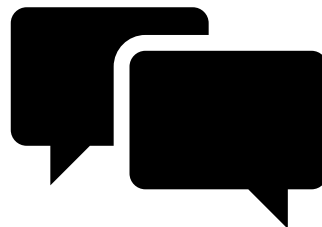


Your job is important!

Students and instructors value your knowledge, help, and support.

Stay connected!

Keep in constant communication with your instructor and ISC.



Ask for help!

Whenever you have concerns about your course-specific TA role, talk to the instructor (and ISC).

Next Steps

- Complete *CTE 1210: Preparing to TA at Waterloo* by September 14, 2025.
- Now, you should know what course(s) you are assigned.
 - Expect to be contacted by the course instructor (or applicable ISC).
 - Expect to have access to the LEARN site this week. Become familiar with the course outline, noting important dates on your calendar.
- By the end of Week 2, expect to have a meeting with the instructor (and ISC, if applicable) to discuss your TA duties and expectations.
 - Be ready to ask questions and clarify expectations.



Upcoming TA Training (Certificate Program)

Mandatory

- SAS TA Training Workshop: Level 2
 - Thursday Sept 11th, 2025 from 5:30-8:30pm in M3 3127

Optional

- CTE 1203: Building Rapport with Students
 - Monday, Oct 20th, 2025 from 10:00-11:30am online
- Levels 3 and 4



THANK YOU

Students, instructors, and ISCs look forward to working with you!