

SAS TA TRAINING WORKSHOP: LEVEL 2

Sep 18, 2023

Presented by TA Program Team Members

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FACILITATOR INTRODUCTIONS

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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)
 - Divya Lala (Manager)
 - Luke Hagar (current TA Coordinator)
- Currently offering the **Foundations in University Teaching in Statistics and Actuarial Science** training certificate program
 - Supported by UW's Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE)
 - Information available on the [SAS website](#)



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	3.75 hours	Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAS TA Training: Level 2 ✓ • 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 (starting Winter 2024)	<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 Uggenti
Divya Lala



Contact for training and general TA support.

Instructional Support Coordinators

Funmilayo Adeku
Matthew Babela
Divya Lala
Jenny Tieu
Steve Van Doormaal



Contact for course-specific content.

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 [4:30 to 5:30]

- Introduction
- Communication
- Interacting with Students
 - Office hours
 - Online forums

DINNER [5:30 to 6:15]

SESSION 2 [6:15 to 7:30]

- Scenarios
- Tutorials
- Closing

COMMUNICATION

Communication is Key!

- It is crucial for you to stay in touch with your assigned instructional team (other TAs, instructor, and potential ISC).
- This communication may be done via email, Teams messages, etc.
 - If you are unclear about how communication will be handled for a particular course, just ask!
- Effective communication depends on *active listening*.
 - Stop, Look, Listen!
 - Be empathetic, respectful, and genuine.
 - Ask questions.

Guidelines for Communicating Online

- Treat others with respect
 - Use proper titles (Professor; Dr) and preferred names/pronouns (if indicated)
 - If a student has posted anonymously, do not respond using their name
- Observe the conventions of professional writing
 - Write in clear and concise sentences
 - Avoid using short forms (students may not know them)
- Respond in a timely manner
 - This will depend on the course instructor – they will likely want students to answer students
 - Provide hints, not answers (ex. telling them what concept/strategy might be useful)



INTERACTING WITH STUDENTS

How to Interact with Students

You will interact with students during office hours, online forums, and tutorials.

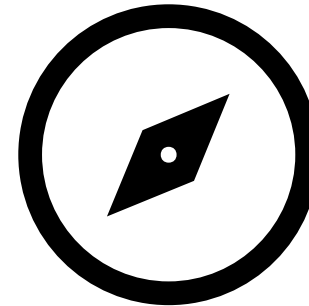
Be friendly, approachable, supportive, and helpful

Students may feel nervous to ask questions.



Guide students in learning

Help them through the problem-solving procedure. Do not just give them the answer.



Office Hours

The instructor may ask you to hold office hours in the following formats. The way you deliver help will depend on the chosen format.

In-person

Tutorial Centre M3 2101

Online meetings

Microsoft Teams, Zoom, WebEx, etc.

Online forums

Piazza, CampusWire

Office hours will be scheduled in consultation between you, the instructor, and the ISC team. Office hours will always be busiest before assignments and tests.

Show up and stay

Students plan their schedules around the office hours. Be punctual and do not leave early.

Off-duty questions

If students try to contact you outside of office hours, tell them to visit during scheduled help times.

Replacements

If you are unable to attend your office hours, it is your responsibility to find another TA in advance to replace you. Communicate replacements to the instructor or ISC.



Office Hours Tips

General Tips

- Be prepared and review class material and assignment questions.
- Do not provide full or partial answers to assignments or tests.
- Guide students through the problem so they have a deeper understanding.
 - Ask the student to explain what the question is asking and what they tried so far.
 - Provide hints, not answers.
 - Show a relevant example from the lecture or textbook. Provide a reference to lecture notes, syllabus, LEARN if possible.

Specific Tips for Online Forums

- Treat the forums as a discussion and welcome follow-up questions.
- Carefully read the question before responding. Review your response to ensure you addressed all parts of their post. Maintain a polite tone.
- Check to see if a question was already posted. Use the search function and @Tag the other post.
- Remove posts (or make posts private) with full or partial solutions or rude comments.
- Monitor the forum during the times you signed up for, and note that the instructor may change your schedule throughout the term.



Answering Questions Tips

- Be encouraging! Congratulate them when they've solved a problem well or figured out a problem that was giving them trouble (especially one that took multiple attempts).
- Don't be insulting or mocking. We don't want to discourage students from coming back or seeking help.
- Be cognizant that there are other ways to solve a problem (compared to the solutions given). Make sure you check their work carefully to see if what they have done is correct.



WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

In your table groups, discuss the provided scenarios for interacting with students.

The way you respond on an online forum vs. in-person can differ.

Scenario 1: Answering Questions

How would you respond to each question if they were asked on Piazza vs. during office hours?

Question #1: I don't understand Question 6 on the assignment.

Question #2: Am I on the right track? Is the correct answer 0.32?



Answering Questions Scenario Discussion

Question 1

- Either method: Ask student to clarify what was unclear.
- Either method: Provide a reference to lecture notes, syllabus, LEARN if possible.

Question 2

- Do not give full solutions. You can let the student know you are unable to answer that question. Instead, you can give tips of what to check or what to look out for.
- Piazza: Let the student know you cannot give the answer.
- Office hours: You can ask the student to explain their solution. You can ask guiding questions. You can discuss a similar example question.

Scenario 2: Dissatisfied Students

How would you respond to each comment if they were posted on Piazza vs. during office hours?

On Piazza

A student writes a post to complain about an instructor. They say that the instructor is unorganized, unfair, and bad at explaining concepts.

During Office Hours

After you help guide a student through a problem, they thank you and say that you teach better than the instructor and other TAs. They continue to complain about how poorly the instructor and other TAs explain topics.



Dissatisfied Students Scenario Discussion

- You are a professional. Do not gossip with students about instructors, TAs, department issues, etc.
- Piazza: Make the post private and notify the instructor.
- Office Hours: Direct the student back to discussing only course material.



Scenario 3: Helping Students

How would you respond to each question if they were asked on Piazza vs. during office hours?

On Piazza

During your time to monitor the discussion board, a student asks you a question about a topic discussed in a lecture slide. You do not know the answer.

During Office Hours

During your in-person office hour, a student asks you about a topic discussed in a lecture slide. You do not know the answer.



Helping Students Scenario Discussion

- Find the answer by looking at the class notes
- If you cannot find the answer, then ask the instructor
- Piazza: Appropriate course of action depends on how often instructor, other students, TAs interact
 - You will follow up with an answer (this is most appropriate when forum is not monitored frequently)
 - You will inform the next TA who is scheduled to monitor about the unanswered question (this is most appropriate when the forum is monitored frequently)
 - You should notify the instructor (this is most appropriate for questions that only the instructor can have input on)
- Office Hour: Let the student know you need time to find the answer and you will follow up with them.



Scenario 4: Busy Help Hour

How would you respond to each situation if they happened on Piazza vs. during office hours?

On Piazza

When you sign on to monitor the forum, you notice that there are 20 unanswered posts. You are scheduled to monitor for an hour only and you did not answer all the questions in time. You noticed this trend for the last 3 weeks.

During Office Hours

During your in-person office hour, you have a long line of 10 students waiting to talk with you. You do not believe you can speak to them all individually during your one-hour timeslot.



Busy Help Hour Scenario Discussion

Piazza

- Start answering oldest questions first
- It's okay that you cannot answer all questions and you do not need to extend your hour
- If it is a recurring trend, then you should notify the instructor so they can consider adjusting or adding monitoring times

Office Hour

- Limit time with each student so you have the chance to speak to all of them
- Consider offering group help
- You do not need to extend your hour. Let students know about other available help times (instructor office hours, Piazza, TA office hours)
- You should notify the instructor about your busy office hour.



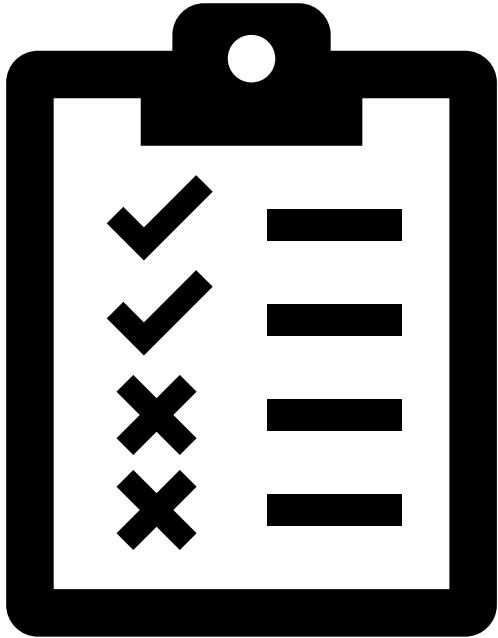
DINNER

Session resumes at 6:15 PM

SCENARIOS

What would you do?

Scenario 1: Regrade Request



During your in-person office hour in the Tutorial Centre, a student shows you their marked test. They are disappointed by the low mark they received.

The student is upset and is criticizing your marking. They start raising their voice to say they deserve more marks. How would you manage this situation?

Regrade Request

- You can explain the solutions and identify reasons why the student lost marks
- If the student wants their work regraded, direct the student to follow the Regrade Policy in the course outline or on LEARN which will vary between courses
 - Usually, the student writes to the instructor or ISC with reasons for why they deserve a regrade
 - Instructor or ISC could reach out to you to clarify your grading

Conflict Management

- Students may question your marking or challenge your authority
- Don't take the situation personally
- Check your perception
- Listen to the student
- Consider the student's perspective and your teaching goals when making your decision
- Notify someone of the conflict
- In case of emergency, contact Campus Police (extension. 22222)



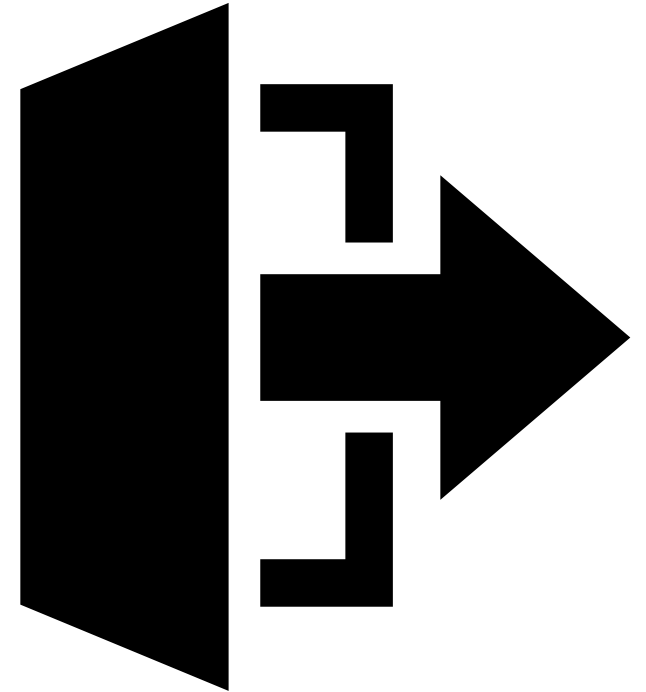
Scenario 2: Planned Absence

You plan to attend a student conference in November and will be out of the Waterloo region for a week.

During this absence, you were supposed to perform the following TA duties:

1. proctor an in-person test
2. deliver an in-person office hour in the Tutorial Centre
3. monitor Piazza (at a time that overlaps with a conference presentation)
4. mark an assignment on Crowdmark

What do you do?



Disruption to TA Duties

Temporary Disruption

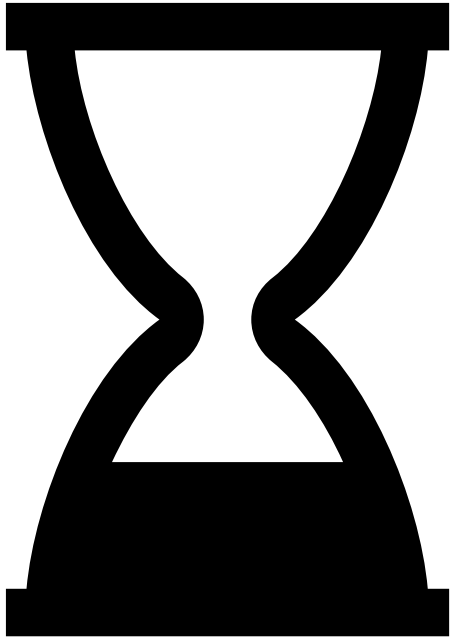
- Temporary sickness, emergency, conference
- You may be required to find a replacement TA
- Contact the instructor and ISC assigned to the course (if applicable)

Leaving TA Position

- Able to graduate sooner, starting another job, withdrawing from the program
- Contact the Graduate Team (Greg Rice and Mary Lou), instructor, and ISC.



Scenario 3: Time Management



Sometimes, your TA workload deadlines will overlap with your own graduate student deadlines and this can be stressful.

How would you handle the demanding TA workloads and successfully navigate through these busy times of the term?

Time Management Suggestions

- In addition to your personal calendar and academic calendar, create a calendar which lists all of your TA course deadlines and duties so that you can plan and manage your time effectively
 - Assessment deadlines
 - Marking deadlines
 - Proctor duties
 - Office hour duties
 - Tutorials
 - Meetings or other tasks

Time Management Suggestions

- Communicate with your instructor or ISC in case they can adjust TA duties.
- Consider trading duties with another TA if mutually beneficial for both parties.
 - Example: Take over another TA's assignment marking right now in exchange for reduced test marking later.
- If you feel a particular duty is taking too long to complete, contact the instructor or ISC who can give suggestions to improve your time efficiency.



TUTORIALS

Brief Introduction

Tutorials

We encourage you to deliver at least one tutorial this year.

Improve presentation skills



Practice teaching skills



TA Program support available
(Level 3)



Tutorials may not run every week and may have different formats.

Quiz

You will proctor as students write a quiz.

Problem-Solving Tutorials

You will prepare review problems and present full solutions.

Q&A Tutorials

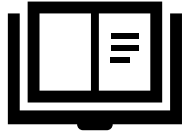
You will answer students' questions, similar to a group-style office hour.

Preparing for Problem-Solving Tutorials

- Instructor will provide guidelines for the tutorial, which may include topics, questions, and/or solutions.
- Prepare your problems and detailed solutions ahead of time. You may create slides that contain the questions and then work through solutions on the board, document camera, tablet/iPad during tutorial.
- Practice working through solutions so are you comfortable delivering all content in 50 minutes. Note how long to spend on each section and include time for student questions.
- Go to the room before the tutorial to get familiar with podium equipment. Practice projecting your voice so students at the back of the room can hear you.



Preparing for Q&A Tutorials



Review current course material and assignment questions to anticipate the types of questions students may ask



Choose method of tutorial delivery

Presentation style

Students ask questions and you lead a discussion or present solutions at the front of the classroom.



Work period

Students work independently or in small groups. You circulate to provide one-on-one help.



Tutorial Tips

- Discuss your tutorial plans with the instructor and submit your tutorial materials for feedback.
- Participate in Level 3 of the **Foundations in University Teaching in Statistics and Actuarial Science** training certificate program.
 - We offer training, support and provide feedback!
- Show up to the tutorial room in advance to set up.
- Introduce yourself and let students know the structure of the tutorial.
- Keep track of the time and make adjustments so that all necessary content is delivered.
- Explain all your steps. Speak slowly, clearly, and loudly.
- Show students that you care about their learning and allow opportunities for student questions.



Upcoming TA Training (Certificate Program)

Optional

- CTE 1203: Building Rapport with Students
 - Tuesday Sept 19th, 2023 from 1:00-2:30pm online (via Zoom)
- Level 3
 - Focuses on tutorials!
- Level 4



THANK YOU

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