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Prepared by Sean Gillon
Environmental Studies Undergraduate Student Background

Overview of the undergraduate ENVS major

ENVS undergraduate students are required to take six lower division prerequisites: precalculus or prestatistics, statistics with lab (AMS 7/L), chemical and physical environment (ENVS 23), ecology (ENVS 24), political economy and the environment (ENVS 25), and a course in anthropology or sociology or ethics. Then students take the Environmental Studies core course (ENVS 100) in which students focus on writing, research skills, and interdisciplinary communication. They are then required to take seven upper division electives, most of which can be taken in any order. Finally they complete an “exit requirement”, which can be a senior thesis, senior internship, senior seminar, or the capstone course, which is a larger class with TAs. We have combined majors with economics, earth sciences, and biology which require additional coursework in those fields. Because ENVS is a broad major in which the courses are often not taken in the same sequence, ENVS students tend to have a range of knowledge and preparation for classes. Moreover, we have a large number of students who have transferred, primarily from community colleges, who have taken prerequisite courses elsewhere.

1. Teaching Assistantship Hiring Process and Documentation

TA Requests

Each spring the ENVS department will ask graduate students to fill out a TA request form. Each graduate student indicates their teaching availability and preferences and the ENVS Graduate Committee allocates TAships based on department resources, teaching schedules, TA knowledge and preference, and instructor input. ENVS students often have opportunity to TA in other departments as well. Look for email advertisements for available positions and let the Graduate Program Coordinator know you are looking for a TA position if you are – openings often come up in ENVS when students receive fellowships that relieve them of their teaching duties. If you request a TAship then you are expected to fulfill that position or find a replacement. The department works hard to try to meet students’ requests for TAships and in return it is important that you are responsible for fulfilling your commitments. Otherwise, it penalizes students who need TAships and causes a lot of extra work for faculty and staff in trying to find replacements. If students repeatedly back out on TAships they may be given lower priority for TAships in the future.
Accepting a TA position

You will be notified of the TA positions offered to you when a decision has been reached and will sign an agreement given to you and processed by the Division of Social Sciences. Before the quarter begins you should meet with your instructor to discuss your teaching responsibilities for the quarter and fill out the *TA Supplemental Employment Information Form*. These vary by course and department, but are meant to serve as a means to make your duties for that course clear. Filling out this form is required by the UC-ASE contract. Duties listed on this form and discussed below can include: attending lectures and facilitating sections, proctoring and grading examinations, holding office hours, grading written assignments, tracking participation and attendance and other record keeping, tabulating grades and assisting in the preparation of narrative evaluation.

Request for Leave

A TA may eligible for up to four weeks of paid childbearing leave, two weeks of medical leave, three days of military leave, or leave for jury duty or military service. You should refer these requests to the Academic Human Resources department in the Division of Social Sciences. See: [http://apo.ucsc.edu/academic_policies_and_procedures/cappm/700411.htm](http://apo.ucsc.edu/academic_policies_and_procedures/cappm/700411.htm)

2. Instructor – TA relations

Acting as a teaching assistant can be a tremendous opportunity to gain an academic mentor and build working relationships with departmental faculty. Open dialogue between TAs and instructors is essential for smooth completion of the course and can help to avoid many potential issues during a frantic quarter. As a TA, you should feel able to express any concerns about the course in respectful way. Instructors should make their expectations for the TAs in their course clear. Due to the range of potential responsibilities you might have, discussing your responsibilities and role in the course early on will help to avoid any potential conflicts or confusions. This section details topics that you may want to explore to better understand your role in the course and what the instructor is prepared to do to help you be an effective TA. The following section offers more details on approaching each of these topics.

Sections

Ask what role the instructor envisions your sections playing in the course. Do they see them as work time, spaces for open discussion or clarification of lecture material? Will you be expected to design your own complementary curriculum or focus on reading material? How will students be evaluated for their attendance and participation in sections?

Office hours

Ask if the instructor has preferences for your office hours timing based on course requirements and their own office hours. Be sure that you have an office in which to hold
these hours if you do not already – if you don’t, consider holding them at a campus coffee shop or other location. Let the instructor know your own preferences for timing and your office’s location so that these details can be listed in the syllabus.

Meetings

Find out if the instructor plans to have weekly or bi-weekly course meetings – you may want to request one if they do not. These are often very helpful for maintaining coherence between lecture and section and sharing teaching and content-related ideas among the teaching staff.

Course Materials

You should not have pay for books or course materials. It is reasonable to expect “desk copies” of books, readers and other materials, including access to the syllabus in a timely manner. You should also discuss your access to photocopiers, office space and other academic materials support, especially if you do not already have it.

Grading

Ask what grading will you expect to do and about its timing. You might also want to discuss the instructor’s grading standards and the potential for using rubrics to guide TA grading, especially when there are several TAs, which makes it necessary to take steps to ensure fair grading across sections. It is also worthwhile to detail any questions or concerns you have about evaluating particular portions of students’ work, such as writing.

Workload

In addition to filling out the TA supplemental form, you should have a conversation about section sizes and the timing of grading duties. Also, be sure to have a clear understanding of what kind of record keeping you will be doing; it is important that you are prepared for those tasks. Additional topics, outside of the immediate purview of leading discussions that are worth discussing include your role in writing quizzes or exams, as well as narrative evaluations.

Evaluations

Be aware that instructors are asked to evaluate TA performance at the end of the quarter.
3. TA Responsibilities and Expectations

This section briefly details common TA responsibilities and general tips for approaching each.

**Lecture Attendance and Course Reading**

It is expected that you, as a teaching assistant attend all lectures. Arrive on time and be prepared to listen, participate and interact with students. Active engagement is important to ensure clear communication of course material with students. Be sure to ask the instructor questions to clarify material in anticipation of student questions. How challenging this duty is depends, of course, on your knowledge of the course material, which can vary when teaching across disciplines in ENVS. *Active engagement, including careful completion of all course reading, is often enough to facilitate effective learning, even when teaching in areas that are not your focus.* Approaching a subject just a little bit ahead of students can even provide for a richer learning experience as you are moving through the material with your students.

**Discussion or Lab Sections**

The content of sections and the TA’s role in these vary considerably across ENVS classes. You might run social or natural science-based labs, facilitate working groups for class assignments, clarify lecture material, or develop your own section curriculum and design your own discussion techniques. The independence of the TA to develop their own material or approach varies across classes and instructors. Be sure to have a discussion with the course instructor about what role they would like you to play in the class and any related issues that may arise.

In all cases, you are expected to come to sections prepared to answer student questions. In most cases, you should have an outlined section. This does not mean that you need to know the answer to every question that might enter a student’s mind, but you should be prepared as best as is possible. Details on approaches to leading sections can be found below under “Leading Sections” (p. 15).

**Office Hours**

In addition to regular lecture attendance and discussion section or lab teaching, you are expected to hold at least two office hours per week. Your students should be made aware of these office hours in the class syllabus or otherwise. Encourage students to attend office hours. Office hours are a valuable opportunity for students to discuss their class related ideas, ask questions that they may not feel comfortable asking in larger groups and get more in depth discussion on course topics. Students often will not attend without encouragement for a variety of reasons, so be sure to repeatedly mention your availability (and email address) as well as the benefits of a conversation with their TA. Remember
that all students will not be available during your office hours, so be sure to let them know that emailing to schedule an appointment is encouraged.

When you have office hours you should leave your door open to welcome students in, avoid making you or the student feel uncomfortable, and protect yourself from potential sexual harassment issues. During office hours, do your best to make students feel welcome (i.e. not like they are interrupting you). Offer them a chair and let them describe why they are there. Listen carefully to the student and ask relevant questions to help establish a comfortable conversation and to let them know you are there for friendly help – students are often intimidated the first time they visit, but if their visit goes well, they’ll likely be back. Other strategies for encouraging office hours attendance include: passing around a sign-up sheet during section for 15 minute office hours meetings, requiring an office hours visit at the beginning of the quarter or in relation to a particular assignment, offering participation points for attending office hours, writing “please see me” on an assignment for positive or constructively critical feedback, and continually reminded students of your willingness to talk with them.

**Weekly Course Meetings**

Not every course meets weekly to discuss planning and teaching issues, but, as mentioned, these meetings are often very helpful to guide you through the course as a TA. These meetings also help to facilitate dialogue between the instructors and TAs and give the TAs (if not just one), an opportunity to share lesson plans, grading strategies, teaching experiences and discuss other course work. Ask your instructor about meeting, particularly if you feel like you have unanswered questions about your role, responsibilities and the course’s content. With or without a meeting, you should not feel like you are groping around in the dark to discover your responsibilities each week. If the instructor is unable or unwilling to meet, you might consider arranging a weekly meeting with the course’s other TAs to discuss issues on your own.

**Record-keeping**

You are also responsible for record keeping in sections. Depending on the course, students may earn credit for section attendance, participation, assignments or other section-related activities. It is usually your responsibility to track attendance and participation and grades not associated with lecture. Be sure to ask the instructor what they would like recorded for section. In some cases, instructors and TAs may arrange for the TA to take on additional responsibilities of course grade and record keeping, as long as these duties do not exceed the TAs workload requirements.

Start early with a spreadsheet or other tool to keep records for section. Be sure that you have an up-to-date roster. You can download your class roster from the AIS system (my.ucsc.edu) by “searching all sections” and clicking on your section’s roster icon, as long as you are listed as a course TA. In some cases, the instructor may pass along a class roster. Speak with the other TAs to standardize this process across sections if possible.
Remember to record section participation if that is a part of the course grade. It may also be useful to track office hour attendance.

Some strategies for tracking participation and attendance include giving students a 0 (absent), 1 (present), or 2 (present and prepared/participating) in a spreadsheet for each day. You may prefer to note only presence/absence and then grade the student’s engagement more holistically at the end of the quarter. You may also want to record lateness with an “L” by the student’s point number for that day.

Calling roll and then marking participation as section proceeds or immediately after is one effective way to track student attendance and participation. You may find that a sign in sheet works better and takes less time overall, although calling role for the first few sections helps to learn student names. Some TAs like to take digital photos of all students (you can have them stand in front of a white board with their names written on it) to help learn names. For participation grading, remember that some students are shy and find it difficult to speak in large groups, even when these students are well prepared and capable of offering insightful comments. As a TA, work to give space for all to contribute, especially if some tend to dominate the discussion, and perhaps find some way to gauge “preparedness” if possible. Also be aware of students’ level of engagement as they make comments – both to monitor participation and preparedness and to better lead discussion and encourage the next round of conversation. Breaking students into small groups to discuss a topic can help to encourage participation by more students.

**Grading**

Grading written work and exams varies considerably depending on the type of assignment and detail of feedback required. This ranges from grading multiple-choice quizzes to providing detailed feedback on students’ written work in writing-intensive courses. Be sure to have a conversation with your instructor at the beginning of the course about expected workloads associated with grading. Grading written work is discussed in more depth below (p. 22). Please note that due to privacy guidelines student work can only be given to the student to whom the work belongs. Work cannot be given to friends who offer to pick up their work or left in boxes in the hall for students to pick up.

**Narrative Evaluations**

TAs often interact with students more closely and frequently than instructors and use this knowledge to assist in the preparation of narrative evaluations. This task might come in the form of providing an evaluative sentence for student section participation or attendance or students’ major written work. Speak with your instructor about their expectations for your preparation of narrative evaluations – expectations vary widely and writing evaluations can be a time consuming process. Narrative evaluations are now optional at UCSC though some instructors continue to submit them. Ask for instructor help in determining appropriate narrative evaluation language.
4. Academic Service Employees’ Union

Teaching Assistants or Academic Service Employees (ASE) are protected under a contract between the United Auto Workers’ Union (UAW Local 2865) and the University of California. The UAW represents over 12,000 ASEs across nine UC campuses – international students are welcomed and protected as members. The contract stipulates TA wages, health benefits and workload requirements among other policies. Contract, membership and other information about the TA contract is available at:


Under this contract, TAs are expected to work no more than an average of 20 hours per week throughout the 11 week quarter (including finals week). The total hours are not to exceed 220, but some weeks may exceed 20 as long as some do not and the average is 20. Note that the contract enforces workload *assigned*, rather than actual hours worked.

If you feel that you are working more hours than you are being paid for, you should speak with the course instructor. The vast majority of instructors are very willing to reorganize the course workload to accommodate the requirements of the labor agreement. If you feel that these efforts fail, you may speak with the Graduate Committee or Department Chair to discuss your concerns or file a grievance. To file a grievance you should contact your union’s campus representative – the union represents you throughout the process:

UAW Local 2865 - Santa Cruz

310 Locust St., Suite B/Mailbox 2

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Phone: (831) 423-9737

Fax: (831) 423-3606

Email: santacruz@uaw2865.org
5. Working with students with disabilities

General Information on Disabilities Resources Center Students

Students with disabilities often require special accommodations. Disabilities can range from permanent to temporary (i.e. a broken hand) and the campus Disability Resources Center (DRC) is designed to help meet these students’ needs. The DRC recommends referring students to their services; work with your instructor if this issue arises. The DRC also recommends the following paragraph be published in the course syllabus or otherwise communicated to students:

"If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please get an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and submit it to me in person outside of class (e.g., office hours) within the first two weeks of the quarter. Contact DRC at 459-2089 (voice), 459-4806 (TTY), or http://drc.ucsc.edu for more information on the requirements and/or process."

Instructors generally address DRC student issues, but in some cases may approach you to let you know that they are a “DRC student” if they are more comfortable doing so. Be sure to communicate their concerns to the instructor and work with them to clarify student needs and your role in accommodating DRC students. Providing for DRC students’ needs often means proctoring an extended exam, making other special accommodations in discussion sections or meeting with students to clarify material during office hours.

Tips for Working with Students with Disabilities

A longer version of this list, which includes tips for specific disabilities, including hearing, speech and visual disabilities, is available at: http://drc.ucsc.edu/faculty_staff/etiquette.shtml

General Tips

• If assistance is requested or accepted, listen to or ask for instructions. Do not make assumptions about what the person can or cannot do. Most disabilities do not affect a person’s intelligence.
• Relax, make eye contact and speak directly to the person and not through the individual’s companion or interpreter.

Working with students with cognitive disabilities (e.g. Learning Disabilities, ADHD, brain injury)

• If you are in a noisy or visually distracting area, consider moving to a quiet or private
location.

- If you receive no verbal or visual feedback while speaking, ask the person if they understood what you have said. Be prepared to repeat your statements if necessary.
- Do not assume you have to explain everything to a person with a cognitive disability; s/he does not necessarily have a problem with general comprehension.
- Be patient and flexible. The individual may need extra time for making decisions or responding.

Information about DRC students should be treated as confidential. The DRC website provides comprehensive information on related law, accommodations, process, and services: http://drc.ucsc.edu/faculty_staff/faculty_resources.shtml.
6. Inappropriate Student Behavior

If you encounter inappropriate student behavior in your classes or over email you should alert the instructor of the course immediately. If the behavior is cause for serious concern then the instructor or TA should contact student Judicial Affairs.

The Student Judicial Affairs Office is responsible for the overall coordination of the student conduct process and policies on campus. The director works closely with the colleges, residential life staff, campus police, the Title IX/Sexual Harassment Officer and other important resources on campus. Students who violate certain campus policies may be referred to Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. Typically, the director handles cases involving sexual assault, sexual harassment, physical assault, drug possession or distribution, hazing, stalking, student organization violations, or cases that may also result in criminal charges.

Contact information

Student Judicial Affairs Office
245 Hahn Student Services Building
831-459-1738
SJA@ucsc.edu
Doug Zuidema, 459-4447, dzuidema@ucsc.edu.
On Working with Emotionally Distressed Students:

Students can often feel overwhelmed by their academic responsibilities, life goals, career development initiatives, living situation transitions, changing social relationships and other stressors. Many students will seek out campus counseling services on their own, but others will not.

Recognizing Distressed Students

The campus Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) lists symptoms to help recognize stressed students that might benefit from counseling services:

- Nervousness
- Agitation
- Increased irritability, undue aggressive or abrasive behavior
- Excessive procrastination, poorly prepared work
- Infrequent class attendance, little or no work completed
- Depression, lack of energy
- Marked change in personal hygiene
- Withdrawal, fearfulness
- Dependency (e.g. student hangs around you or makes excessive appointments)
- Indecisiveness, confusion
- Bizarre, alarming, or dangerous behaviors

Guidelines for Interaction

You should discuss students of concern with the instructor, but in the case that a distressed student comes to you first, CPS recommends the following for guiding your interaction:

Openly acknowledging to the students that you are aware of their distress, that you are sincerely concerned about their welfare, and that you are willing to help them explore their alternatives can have a profound effect. CPS encourages you whenever possible to speak directly to a student when you sense that he/she is in academic and/or personal distress.

1. Request to see the student in private.
2. Briefly acknowledge your observations and perceptions of their situation and express your concerns directly and honestly.

3. Listen carefully to what the student is troubled about and try to see the issue from his/her point of view without necessarily agreeing or disagreeing.

4. Strange and inappropriate behavior should not be ignored. The student can be informed that such behavior is distracting and inappropriate.

5. Your receptivity to an alienated student will allow him/her to respond more effectively to your concerns.

6. Involve yourself only as far as you are willing to go. At times, in an attempt to reach or help a troubled student, you may become more involved than time or skill permits. Extending oneself to others always involves some risk but it can be a gratifying experience when kept within realistic limits.

**Consultation**

If you are unsure how to respond to a specific student, CPS recommends that you consult with one of their professional staff. They will suggest ways for you to approach the situation and can also assist with referring a student to CPS.

More information, including suggestions on how to respond to particular cases (i.e. depressed, verbally abusive or otherwise confrontational students) is available at CPS’s website: [http://www2.ucsc.edu/counsel/responding.html](http://www2.ucsc.edu/counsel/responding.html)

**Contacts**

*Counseling and Psychological Services*
Student Health Center, Room 105  
(831) 459-2628  
(For psychological crisis or suicidal concern – available Monday - Friday, 8 AM to 5 PM)

*Student Health Psychiatry Services*
(831) 459-2214

*Student Health Center*
(831) 459-2211

Santa Cruz County Mental Health
(831) 462-7644

(For hospitalization screening and psychiatric emergencies after 5 PM and Weekends)

24-Hour Assistance Suicide Prevention Service of Santa Cruz County  
(831) 458-5300 or (831) 688-1818

University Police  
911  
(For emergency response and/or transportation)
8. Ethics and Social Responsibilities

*TA and Student Diversity*

[Adapted from UCSC’s Division of Graduate Studies TA Handbook (2003); Ricky Sherover-Marcuse’s “Unlearning Racism” Workshop]. For more resources on “teaching to a diverse audience see -  [http://www.guidetoonlineschools.com/articles/tips-and-tools/new-teachers#d](http://www.guidetoonlineschools.com/articles/tips-and-tools/new-teachers#d)

**Recommendations for encouraging equal participation in learning:**

The following recommendations are based on students’ reports of faculty behaviors that may communicate uneasiness and differential expectations. The goal is to encourage learning and classroom participation by making students feel confident, engaged and able to develop relationships with faculty and TAs that can be helpful in mentoring and learning about particular career paths.

1) During the first few weeks of class, become aware of how you and students of color and white students interact with one another. Acknowledge relevant questions, comments, or opinions of students of color and be sure other students do the same.

2) Encourage students of color who are reluctant to participate.

3) Try to solicit and listen to the opinions expressed by a student of color as those of an individual rather than those of a group spokesperson.

4) Make sure that students of color are not unnecessarily being interrupted or discredited by you or other students in the class.

5) Make good eye contact with all students.

6) Make sure that students of color are assuming responsibility in group activities and are allowed to take on leadership roles.

7) Be careful not to call a student of color using the name of another student of color in the class or group. Students of color are likely to interpret this action as regarding them as part of a group rather than as an individual.

8) Notice whether the language style of a student of color’s comment, question or response affects your own perception of its importance.

9) Meet with students of color to discuss academic and career goals. Offer to write reference letters when appropriate.

10) Include students of color in the informal interactions that can be important in communicating support and acceptance.
11) Become aware of contributions by people of color in your area of study and use examples when appropriate. The implications of certain theoretical perspectives for people of color may also be pertinent in certain disciplines.

12) Provide students of color with informal as well as formal feedback or constructive criticism on the quality of their work. Watch for comments that may imply they are not as competent as white students or that attribute their success to chance and their failure to lack of ability.

**Respecting Diverse Sexual Orientations**

As a TA you can reduce homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism in the classes you teach. If the subject arises, it is important to be prepared to deal with the topic in an informed and unprejudiced manner. Below are some guidelines that will help you overcome bias in the classroom.

**Homophobia**: the fear and hatred of lesbians and gay men, and the discrimination against them.

**Biphobia**: the fear and hatred of bisexuals, and the discrimination against them.

**Heterosexism**: a belief in the superiority of heterosexuality, and its elevation over all other sexual identities and communities.

**Don’t assume that everyone in the classroom is heterosexual.** Remember, at least 10% of the population is lesbian and gay. Appearances are deceiving.

Don’t believe the myth that all lesbians are masculine and all gay men effeminate. Also, the homosexual community is very diverse with members who are females and males, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and Whites.

**Monitor your own use of critical or stereotypical terms to discuss lesbians or gays or homosexuality.** As a TA, you will quickly learn that students pick up the attitudes and values of those whom they think have authoritative knowledge about a subject. It is important that in your role as educator you do not pass on stereotypical attitudes about any group of people.

**Don’t allow biased or stereotypical comments to go unchallenged in the classroom.**

If you encounter a biased remark you might: ask other students in the section to respond to the comment; express your own discomfort and explain your position; encourage discussion around why they can be harmful. Avoid embarrassing or angrily confronting students who make biased comments; motivate them to rethink their statements. Students who persist in making offensive and prejudiced remarks may need special attention, which can be given in office hours.

**Encourage the discussion of stereotypes and lesbian and gay topics in your section.**

Part of the mission of the university is to explore diversity and to present new and
different ideas to students. Topics pertaining to homosexuality should be raised if relevant, even if they are not in the syllabus. Discussion of lesbian and gay topics can add diversity and depth to discussions. Students should be encouraged to note when textbooks contain both biased and erroneous information. This contributes to the development of critical thinking skills. Point out these stereotypes to your fellow TAs and the supervising professor. Don’t rely on lesbian and gay students to initiate discussion on the topic of homosexuality.

**Encourage students to do research on lesbian/gay topics.** Prior to the past two decades very little research had been done on lesbian and gay topics, so there are opportunities for both you and your students to do ground-breaking work.

Ultimately, both heterosexuals and homosexuals benefit when you include lesbians and gays in the educational process. And what is more, you will be conducting your discussion sections according to UC policy, which states: “It is the intent and direction of the Board of Regents that the University’s policy against legally impermissible, arbitrary, or unreasonable discriminatory practices shall be understood and applied so as to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.”

**Plagiarism**

**Academic Integrity**

The official rules and policy on academic integrity for undergraduate students at UCSC can be found here: http://undergraduate.ucsc.edu/acd_integrity/index.html

No one person can research and communicate all knowledge and this makes scholarship a collective enterprise. Academic or other intellectual communities depend upon participants’ honoring each others’ contributions and intellectual labor. Plagiarism works to destroy this collective enterprise and erases contributing labor. It is important that you communicate to students the reasons why plagiarism is an awful thing to engage in – students who understand this rationale will be far less likely to do it. [Based on Sarah Rabkin’s Writing Tip Sheet #12 (2005)]

**What is plagiarism?**

[From www.plagiarism.org]

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means

1. To steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
2. To use (another's production) without crediting the source
3. To commit literary theft
4. To present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.
According to U.S. law, words and ideas really can be stolen. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

All of the following are considered plagiarism:

- Turning in someone else's work as your own
- Copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- Failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- Changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- Copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism.

UCSC rules and regulations regarding plagiarism

If you catch a student plagiarizing, report it to the course instructor. You should not deal with any part of the disciplining process and you can avoid being identified as the reporting party – this is the instructor’s responsibility.

While you might be tempted to grant the student leniency, it will often not help them in the long run. When a student violates academic integrity for the first time, they are usually given a warning by UCSC. Not until the second violation are there serious repercussions. Catching and reporting a student once will often prevent future and more serious violations, in addition to encouraging the student to learn and work on their own and respect their intellectual community.

The official rules and policy on academic integrity for undergraduate students at UCSC can be found here: [http://ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/undergraduate_students/](http://ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/undergraduate_students/)

Sexual Harassment

[From [http://www2.ucsc.edu/title9-sh/sopolicy/harass.htm](http://www2.ucsc.edu/title9-sh/sopolicy/harass.htm) and see [http://www2.ucsc.edu/title9-sh/graduate.htm](http://www2.ucsc.edu/title9-sh/graduate.htm)]

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects a person's employment or education, unreasonably interferes with a person's work or educational performance, or creates an intimidating,
hostile or offensive working or learning environment. In the interest of preventing sexual harassment, UCSC will respond to reports of any such conduct.

Sexual harassment may include incidents between any members of the University community, including faculty and other academic appointees, staff, coaches, house staff, students, and non-student or non-employee participants in University programs, such as vendors, contractors, visitors, and patients. Sexual harassment may occur in hierarchical relationships or between peers, or between persons of the same sex or opposite sex.

**Tips for TAs to prevent sexual harassment**

- Remember that behavior that may be appropriate in a social environment could be entirely inappropriate in the classroom - context is everything.
- Think carefully before having an intimate relationship with any UCSC student. UCSC prohibits a TA from dating a student that he/she is teaching under UCSC conflict of interest policy; moreover, your department may view your behavior as professional misconduct.
- Be thoughtful about choosing the time and location to discuss course material with a student in your section and consider leaving the door open during office hours or meetings with students.
- Avoid sharing details of your personal life with students. Think first before discussing sexual or intimate subjects that are unrelated to course material.
- Document and discuss with the course professor any student conduct that is troubling. If you feel threatened by a student, notify your supervisor immediately. Put your safety first.
- Ignoring disruptive behavior could make it worse. Speak directly to the student immediately after class or during office hours.
- Do not distribute contact information of students in your section unless you have permission to do so and be careful about handing out your own contact information.
- Be aware of whom you call on in class and how you respond to their comments. Try to call on both male and female students with equal frequency. Be aware of whose comments you validate.
- Report sexual harassment if you see it – it cannot be stopped otherwise.

**Reporting Sexual Harassment**

If you find yourself feeling confused, threatened, unsure, frightened, coerced, outraged, or worried about these issues let someone know who can give advice or do something about the matter. Aside from speaking with departmental faculty and representatives, UCSC now employs full-time a Title IX Coordinator/Sexual Harassment Officer whose job is to be available as a resource on sex discrimination and sexual harassment issues, to investigate and resolve reports or complaints, and to educate the campus community in these areas.
Contact

Rita E. Walker
Title IX Coordinator/Sexual Harassment Officer, 119 Kerr Hall, 831-459-2462
rew@ucsc.edu

Gender Equity in the Classroom

[From http://www2.ucsc.edu/title9-sh/graduate/survey.htm]

Research from Barnard, UC Berkeley, Dartmouth, Harvard, Oberlin, Wisconsin, and Yale indicate that both male and female lecturers may behave in ways that demean students or exclude them from participation in the full academic experience. Use the following questions and suggestions to assess and adjust your own behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes.

1. Do you reflect and transmit unexamined cultural assumptions about people based on their sex? For example, one might believe that women are less intellectually committed and their work less competent and important than men's.

2. Does your teaching style involve either comments or actions that single out or ignore someone because of their sex?

3. Have you carefully examined your own personal beliefs about the roles of men and women in society?

4. Videotape or audiotape a sample of your classes; then assess your behaviors, choice of words, and teaching styles.

5. When making sex based statements about women or men be sure they are accurately based on reliable information. Universal generalizations about any group are damaging. For example, statements like, "Women don't think geographically," or, "Men are not well organized," are just not accurate.

6. Do you use humor that demeans or belittles any person because of their sex?

7. Avoid using generic masculine terms.

8. When using illustrative examples, try to avoid stereotypes such as making all authority figures men and all subordinates women.

9. Do people of one sex receive more of your time than the other? Do you treat the problems of one sex more seriously than the other? Are you systematically more attentive to the questions, answers, or projects of one sex over the other? Do you direct your questions only to one sex group in class?
10. Add one or two questions about sex equity/sexual harassment issues to the class evaluations.

**Unethical Romantic Behavior**

Under no circumstances should a faculty member or TA become romantically or sexually involved with a student while that student is enrolled in his or her classes. If a faculty member or TA becomes involved with a student who is not in his/her classes, at the very least the faculty or TA must take all necessary steps to protect the student's professional future from any possible prejudicial consequences. Work with the instructor, Department Chair and Graduate Committee to resolve issues involved with romantic relationships and professional conduct.

**Student Privacy and Confidentiality**

If you have access to student records you are bound by the Family Educational Rights and privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) to maintain their confidentiality. In practice, this means keeping student grades confidential. Keep your spreadsheets out of student view and your grading files safe. Also, do not post or leave student assignments (on bulletin boards) outside of your office.
9. Leading Sections

[Adapted from UCSC’s Division of Graduate Studies TA Handbook (2003)]

The First Day

First impressions are important, but are not everything in teaching sections - do your best to remain calm. Over the quarter you will get to know your students and your teaching will improve alongside your confidence. The best thing to do is be prepared.

To be as prepared as is possible, speak with the faculty supervisor so that their expectations of you and the role of the section are clear. Given that knowledge, think through your teaching objectives, methods and means for student evaluation. Give thought to how you might achieve the kind of classroom environment you want to create. Also, visit your classroom ahead of time to make sure it is suitable, arranged properly and so that you know where it is. Also make sure you are aware of its audio/visual resources and capabilities. Plan your first day carefully – and practice what you will say if it helps you to feel less nervous.

Some areas you may want to address during the first section meeting:

**Introduce yourself with background information.** Explain why you are interested in the subject, what your research focuses on and how you think you can best help students learn. Be sure to tell students how you would like to be addressed.

**Let students know how they can reach you.** Give them your email address and office hours time and location. Encourage them to contact you and visit you during office hours, but also establish ground rules or terms of use, particularly for email. Let them know how often you can be expected to check and respond to email and how you’d like email communication to proceed. For example, some TAs let students know that they do not respond to email over the weekend or outside of normal working hours.

**Introduce the topic and class.** Re-introduce the course’s subject matter and contextualize it for your students. Let them know what concepts and skills they can hope to learn in the course and how that might fit in with their previous or future coursework as well as their professional lives.

**Give students a course and section overview.** After having spoken with the instructor about your role in the course as a whole, you should communicate this with your students. Let them know what they can expect to be doing in section and, if appropriate, ask them what they would like to get out of discussions and how they think that might best happen.

**Set the Tone for the Quarter.** Maintaining a respectful and active learning environment is one of your most important jobs as a TA. Good discussions depend on students feeling comfortable to share, discuss and openly think through new ideas. Let them know that
you encourage questions and do your best to make them feel welcomed and comfortable and let them know that you are approachable. Describe your interest in the subject and do your best to make the course material relevant to your students.

The Center for Teaching Excellence recommends giving a substantive assignment the first section to let students know that you expect them to be actively engaged and that you will get down to business right away. This might include a short reading or writing exercise or asking them to bring a relevant news article to the next class meeting.

Set ground rules for participation and evaluation. Be clear about your expectations for student behavior and evaluation. Keep lines of communication with students open and be clear about your rules for protecting that learning environment. Also, clearly explain your policies for absences, late arrivals, late assignments and illness. Setting out these policies clearly and firmly in the beginning will help you to avoid issues during the quarter. Ask your instructor if they have specific guidelines for addressing these issues.

Get to Know Your Students. Learning and using your students’ names is extremely important. Do your best to do this as quickly as possible. When calling roll on the first day, be sure to ask for correct pronunciations or preferred nicknames. Think about using nametags in front of students to help you learn names or asking students to repeat their names before they speak during or at the beginning of the first few sections.

Playing a name-game or using some kind of icebreaker is often helpful for encouraging discussion by ensuring that students begin to get to know each other. Some examples of icebreakers [From the Center for Teaching Excellence’s TA Starter Package by Ruth Harris-Barnett]:

- **Pair Interviews**: Ask students to pair off, learn about each other and then introduce their classmate to the section. You can have them focus on class related interview topics if you wish.

- **Small group discussions**: Ask students to form small groups, introduce each other in those groups and work for 5 minutes on brainstorming answers to course related questions. Examples might include: What is an ecosystem? What are your expectations for the course or section?

- **Whole class activities**: These get the entire class involved and can help build a sense that students are participating in a learning community. Some ideas:
  - **Silly introductions**: Ask the students to produce a random piece of information about themselves and/or pull a strange object from their backpack or pocket. You may want to set the tone by going first.
  - **Class survey**: You can ask students to respond to questions by raising their hands. Perhaps, start with demographic questions and move on to hobbies and interests and end by relating student experience to course concepts.

Discussion Strategies and Encouraging Participation

The strategies listed below are meant to help maintain student engagement with the
course, improve the quality of discussions, help you to gauge students’ understandings of course material and help you decide where you might focus your efforts during future discussions.

**Skillful Questioning**

Guiding discussion questions often depends on your ability to ask questions that will stimulate useful conversation. Good questions and discussions can help you to assess students’ understanding of course material and encourage greater overall comprehension through conversation. This is a difficult skill to learn and master – this list is meant to give you some pointers.

**Begin by discussing basic questions.** Initial questions should be simple, designed to test students’ understanding of the lecture or the readings. Probing for specific areas of understanding or misunderstanding is a necessary first step in most discussion sections. After you are comfortable with student comprehension of foundational concepts, move on to ask more difficult questions about the course material or discuss relationships among different topics, applications or expansion of the material. *As the conversation evolves think about whether you are more interested in eliciting certain answers or in stimulating general intellectual inquiry.*

**Be supportive of students.** If an answer is completely incorrect, encourage the same student to rephrase or to attempt it again. Try to provide an atmosphere in which students feel comfortable offering tentative or partial answers, and encourage them in their attempts to elaborate or qualify. Other students may be thinking similar thoughts and one of your goals should be to encourage exploration.

**Encourage your students to ask questions of one another.** If one student needs assistance in completing an answer, look to another student to provide it, rather than providing it yourself. Do not be afraid to jump in and redirect the conversation if students are beginning to lead each other astray.

**Make discussion questions meaningful to students.** Use examples and connect course concepts to other ideas students’ might be more familiar with. Phrase questions at a level appropriate for the class – work to avoid jargon you might be familiar with and give students an opportunity to discuss things they feel like they are knowledgeable about. This will build confidence, improve learning and lay the foundations for more complex discussions as the quarter progresses.

**Wait long enough to give students a chance to think.** Try counting to 10 after asking a provocative question to which you are just dying to respond yourself. Students don’t like a silent classroom either. Once they have confidence that you will give them time to think their responses through, they will participate more freely.

**Avoid Defensive Statements and Questioning**

Students will be unlikely to respond to questions or responses that put them on the
defense or at an initial disadvantage in the conversation. Examples of defensive questioning:

- You all should know…, since I have explained this several times already.
- Obviously, when you use this formula you’ll get...?
- The real answer is … or Rephrase your answer the way you think I would say it.
- Does everybody understand the explanation I just gave? It should be clear by now.

**Large-group discussion strategies**

*Provide study questions or assign short summary papers.* Study questions can be designed around lecture or reading material and can form the basis of the next class discussion. Letting students know about discussion questions and topics in advance will help students learn the most important ideas and give students who don’t often participate in group discussions more time to formulate thoughts and think through ideas.

Short summaries of that week’s reading or lecture material will help ensure that students have completed reading or engaged lecture material before discussion section. This same could be accomplished by requiring question responses to be turned in during next week’s section.

*Begin discussion using current events or asking a question about a class-related experience.* Relate any common experience to the reading, asking comparison/contrast questions or presenting an alternative view. This can also done effectively by integrating news media about current events into discussion section, which can be an excellent way to open each class period. You may require students to present a course-related news analysis at least once in the quarter or do this on a voluntary basis.

*Have students nominate topics for discussion* at the beginning of a section. These can include problems, interesting points, or basic ideas in the text. List the nominations and let students decide which to pursue or prioritize based on the overall course objectives and requirements.

*Brainstorming and Clustering.* For brainstorming, use the blackboard to record ideas that students’ express as relating to a particular course topic. After a sufficient list is created, as the students questions that help to collectively synthesize and organize ideas into a coherent set of related issues, positions or questions. Clustering is similar but focuses on making immediate connections between concepts. Write the central concept to be discussed on the board and draw lines between it and related topics as they emerge. This helps lead to creative thought and new ideas (potentially directed at a class assignment), clarifies conceptual connections, and stimulates discussion.

*Play “devil’s advocate”* to prompt students to get involved in or animated about class discussion. Even if you agree with students’ arguments about a certain topic, challenge
them with the most cogent argument against their position. This often makes for good
debate in class, but be sure to respect diverse positions.

**Pose an either/or question and debate.** Divide the class into sides, including an
undecided portion. Have a debate, with the undecided free to contribute at any time and
everyone able to move to a different side of the argument as they choose. This exercise
can help students clarify their position on an issue and its implications as well as
appreciate varying levels of argument and the ambiguities involved in making categories.
It may also be useful to assign students to specific sides of a debate and then switch the
sides in the middle. This ensures that all students can make both arguments.

**Free Writing.** This can be done in many ways. For example, pose a comparison-and-
contrast question about two or more concepts from class readings. Then ask the students
to free-write to elaborate on various possibilities of connection and disparity between
course ideas. Then, synthesize the lists on the board and use them to analyze the concepts
or theories, or to introduce and evaluate the readings in discussion.

**Group Work**

**Assign groups of students the responsibility** for planning and leading some discussions.
This works best when students are responsible for a limited topic, problem, or research
area. You might provide discussion section time to students for discussing their group’s
strategy for leading a later section.

**Small-group/Large-group Work.** Dividing students up into smaller groups for discussion
builds a learning community and helps to encourage participation from students when
they are less likely to engage with a larger group discussion. You might have students
deal with the same or separate problems or discussion topics. You also may want to ask
one student in each group to take responsibility for keeping time and another to record
the content of the discussion. Float from group to group to help guide them and answer
questions as they emerge. When all students have contributed and the groups have
reached some conclusion, reassemble the entire section and have each group describe
their conclusions to the class – in turn or as conversation allows.

**Think-and-listen groups** are an excellent strategy to use when students are to be thinking
through paper topics or reviewing for an exam. Ask students to assemble into groups of
four or five and allow time for each participant to speak (~5 min. each) on a particular
exam-related topic or their paper or assignment topic. They should describe “all they
know about X”. After all have spoken once the group should give each person individual
feedback.

**Question cards** can be the basis for a two/three person activity. Before section, write
cards to distribute to each group. Cards might include course-related descriptive or
analytical questions, quotations from lecture or course readings, charts or illustrations. In
section, assemble groups and pass out the cards while asking each group to work on the
question for fifteen minutes. Encourage students to use whatever resources they have
with them. Then ask students to “teach” the larger group and let them respond to
questions from the rest of the class while you guide the discussion to help the students and make sure the conversation stays on track. Questions might be provided in advance to encourage “close readings” of material.

**General Tips**

*Compiled with graduate student input*

- **Don’t be afraid to confront students outside of section** about their behavior in section if you don’t feel comfortable singling them out during class. Often, just a few students can control the dynamic in the section. If you feel this is hindering others’ ability to learn, it is your responsibility to say something to those students.

- **Distribute the discussion**, sometimes away from talkative students or wise-crackers. You can do this by thanking students for their input and asking if anyone else has a thought or by suggesting that you’d like to hear from other perspectives if they continually raise their hand. To deal with the “class clown”, take what they say at face value. Act as if their joke was not one – you may find that the humor quickly dissipates. Again, speak with students outside of section if necessary.

- **Talk with other TAs** when questions emerge or ask to attend one of their sections to learn from their techniques. We have a lot of embodied TA knowledge in the department – use it, don’t reinvent the wheel.

- **Keep a teaching file or notebook** with lesson plans, handouts, lists of materials, and anything you create to use the next time you teach that class, to pass on to someone else teaching it, or to use in another context. Along these lines, it may be helpful to ask instructors for copies of materials used in previous years.

- **Sometimes you will not be able to be the best teacher you can be** because of time constraints and other course related issues. You may be able to see what needs to be done to improve the course, but not be able to devote adequate time to achieving those ends. As a graduate student, you have many demands placed on your time – remember that you are responsible for 220 hours of work per quarter and no more. Do not feel that you need to exploit yourself to make the course better, but do communicate the limitations of the course’s design (from a TA’s perspective) to the instructor in a respectful way – this will help avoid future issues.

- **To encourage a comfortable and congenial learning environment**, ask students to bring in snacks to share or arrive early for coffee and snacks – this may also encourage on-time arrivals and section beginning.

- **Interfacing between students and an instructor** that has not made expectations of students clear can be extremely challenging. Clearly communicate to students what you know and let then let them know you’ll get back to them about their questions as soon as you speak with the instructor. Let the instructor know that students have questions. If the instructor does not address these questions in a timely manner, simply direct those students to speak with the instructor.

- **Do not make promises** about what will and won’t be on a test (unless you have actually seen it or are making it). The same goes for the criteria by which an
assignment will be graded. If you misspeak, be sure to correct your mistake promptly. Let the student know that you made a mistake and that it is the instructor’s prerogative to decide how students are evaluated in their course.
10. Tips For Managing Emotionally-Laden Classroom Discussions

Sometimes troubling events from outside the classroom have a way of intruding on classroom and one-on-one discussions with students. After all, students often look to faculty for guidance in understanding the world around them, and course topics often focus or touch on troubling world events. What follows are some general guidelines that may prove helpful in managing emotionally-laden classroom and one-on-one discussions.

**Listen Actively**

The goal of active listening is to understand and be able to reflect back the unique experiences of your students. This is critical to any helping relationship because:

- It gives you more information and insight into students and their concerns.
- It gives distressed students a chance to talk and as a result calm down. In addition, the students may be able to clarify their concerns for themselves.
- It gives students a feeling of genuine caring and concern.

Components of active listening include undivided attention, restating and clarifying students' comments, labeling and validating feelings, open ended questioning, and expression of genuine concern.

**Promote Resilience**

Resilience is "the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially highly stressful or traumatic events" (Butler, Hobfoll, & Keane, 2003, p. 1). Steps in promoting resilience include:

- Assure the students that their reactions to distressing events, although unpleasant, are normal (i.e., it is normal to experience sleep problems, changes in appetite, sadness, low energy, irritability, anger, fear, inability to focus, difficulty making decisions, bouts of crying, and nightmares for a short time after a traumatic event). It is of concern, however, if symptoms last for several weeks or have a significant impact on day-to-day functioning.
- Listen for and correct misconceptions, misinterpretations, and misinformation.
- Help re-establish a sense of control-reinforce the ways that students can keep safe and the proactive things they can do to effect positive changes.
- Learn more about resilience by reading this "Road to Resilience" brochure from the American Psychological Association.

**Don't Beat a Dead Horse**

While some group discussion can be very helpful, people sometimes also need a break from thinking and talking about a traumatic event, and can feel distressed when it seems like the event is inescapable. Go with the flow of your class.
Take Care of Yourself

Hearing about someone else's struggles can be difficult and can leave you feeling emotionally drained. Remember to find your own discussion outlets for dealing with your own emotions.


Note: This information was compiled by Sheila Singh, one of the counselors at the Hobart and William Smith College Counseling Center, as part of a presentation requested by Hobart and William Smith College faculty.
11. Teaching Quantitative Material / Supervising a lab section

[Compiled with graduate student input – thanks to Blair McLaughlin and Devon Sampson]

ENVS undergraduates have a range of experience in using quantitative analytical techniques and with science labs. This makes assuming particular background knowledge and determining the level at which to teach difficult. Strategies for effectively running these sections are listed here:

Use students’ knowledge to help you teach. Often, some students will have a firm grasp of the concepts far before others. Some may have entered the class with that knowledge. To utilize these students’ experience and deal with low TA/student ratios, find out who has some experience in the subject matter and ask them to answer other students’ questions while you are busy working with others. It may be most effective to divide into groups that have a range of experience with the topic and encourage cooperation and group learning. Be sure you do not make students feel inadequate by drawing attention to their relative inexperience.

Get outside. In ecology classes, as simple as it seems, many students love to get outside or have outside materials brought into the class (examples of insects, flowers etc. in boxes or jars to pass around). Short field trips around campus often help to illustrate otherwise abstract concepts. While this does take some extra planning, it may be a good investment of time and serve as a basis for discussion in future sections.

Use candy for counting. Try using Skittles or M and M’s for “mark and recapture” or probability exercises.

Use relevant examples for quantitative problem solving. An example: “How much oil is in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?” Set up a problem or question, possibly drawn from a question that was asked in class, and use primary documents/sources to walk through different perspectives on solving it. Use group or individual work tome to let them look at different estimates and incorporate different assumptions and scenarios.

Then, move to a large group discussion to explore the variations in findings.

For labs, try using these three steps as recommended by the Graduate Division’s teaching handbook:

1) Plan what you’re going to do.

Know exactly what will be accomplished in the lab, understand the relevance of the lab to ongoing research and explain it, and think through the most effective way to structure the lab section. Think about the role of theory, effective explanations of procedures, using students to demonstrate techniques to the class, etc.

2) Implement what you’ve planned.

Clearly explain the purpose of each lab to your students and help your students focus on the lab before they start by asking questions, giving a brief overview or restating lab learning objectives and relevance. Provide hints and demonstrations, if necessary, for
difficult procedures and let students know how much time they should expect each portion to take. Describe how lab reports should be written and how they will be evaluated. Point out interesting connections to course material during the lab as you circulate to answer questions.

3) Evaluate what you’ve done.

Aside from evaluating lab reports, giving quizzes and asking for written feedback, you can hold discussions after the lab to gauge student understanding by skillfully asking and answering questions.
12. Guiding and Responding to Students’ Written Work


General Tips

• **Be clear about the purpose of the assignment:** is it meant to encourage learning, demonstrate a skill, or explore what the student knows?

• **Speak with other TAs about developing a coherent rubric:** It is important to be fair in grading across sections in the case that a class has several. It is also helpful to speak with other TAs to help clarify what you are looking for in a paper and what your standards for deductions and quality are.

• **Set a time limit for each paper:** You may not always be able to spend as much time on a paper as you would like. Recognize your limitations and do your best. If this becomes a problem, speak with the instructor. You may find this time by reading five or six papers quickly to assess the range of quality and then timing yourself by reading a paper again twice: once quickly and once more carefully while you respond.

• **Avoid using red ink:** It sends a potentially overly strong and negative message and may prevent students from digesting the comments you write in it.

• **Make your comments spare and legible:** Do not debate with students in the margins – note your disagreements, but do not make arguments.

• **Direct constructively critical feedback at the paper, not the student:** There is a big difference between “This paper could be better organized” and “You do not write in a clear and coherent fashion”.

Guiding Questions to Responding to Papers

1. **What has the student accomplished?**

   Acknowledge the work the writer has done. Describe what you understand the author to have done in terms of content, purpose and main ideas.

2. **What does the paper propose to do?**

   Restate for the student the paper’s proposed purpose. What is their argument or topic focused on accomplishing?

3. **What works in the paper?**

   Let the student know what is worth building on and shows promise and what of the purpose has been accomplished.

4. **What doesn’t work or distracts or diminishes the paper’s strengths?**

   Identify only the most important problems – if too many issues are raised the student will not have a clear direction for improvement and may get frustrated or overwhelmed and give up the writing process.
5. **What 2 – 3 things do you recommend the student work on in their next paper?**

Do your best to keep it to the most pressing issues and make your comments relevant to students’ interests.

**Focusing Feedback on Student Papers**

When deciding on what to recommend the student do to improve their paper, consider using this “hierarchy of concerns” to guide you. The most important and biggest issues should receive the most of your attention (i.e. not spelling) and the student might find this guide useful for thinking through their own papers. You may want to present before students write their papers or review each other’s.

**CONTENT**: does the paper satisfy the content requirements for the assignment? Is it sufficiently detailed and accurate?

**PURPOSE / THEME / FOCUS**: Does the paper have a clear goal or focus?

**CONTROLLING IDEA**: Does the author focus in on a certain argument or develop a main idea more specific than the theme? You might think of this as the paper’s thesis.

**COHERENCE (overall and within paragraphs)**: Are transitions between ideas and within paragraphs smooth? Is there an appropriate introduction and conclusion? The paper must have a clear focus and controlling idea for its coherence to be possible.

**LANGUAGE USAGE**: Grammar, sentence structure, etc.

**CONVENTIONS**: Citations, formatting, spelling, punctuation, etc.
13. Evaluating Your Teaching

End of the quarter evaluations of your teaching are mandatory. The ENVS department will provide you with a packet of evaluations and instructions for administering them at the end of the quarter. These will be available for you to read. See the Graduate Program Coordinator or ENVS Academic Assistant to access these. Use student feedback to improve your teaching, but do not take every comment to heart. Many will be useful, but others might be negative and upsetting. Focus on what you can improve.

Classroom Assessment Techniques for TAs

[From UCSC’s Center for Teaching Excellence and Richlin (1998) in Marinkovich, et al. (1998; listed in resources below]

Classroom Assessment Techniques, or CATs, are classroom activities designed to help teachers find out if their students are learning. Most are quick, using only a few minutes of class time, and can thus be used repeatedly throughout the term. Encouraging TAs to use and reflect on CATs can help them focus teaching behaviors on student learning. The following three CATs are especially recommended for use by TAs to analyze learning in their sections.

**Minute paper**

This is the most popular CAT, and the easiest to use. The instructor leaves 3-5 minutes at the end of class, and asks students to respond briefly in writing to the following two questions:

- What was the most important thing you learned in class today?
- What important question remains unanswered?

These questions can be revised if a more specific response is desired, but they should be kept fairly open-ended. Responses should be anonymous.

Alternatively, a TA can use this technique at the beginning of class to ask students what they got out of the previous lecture, and use the results to focus section activities on those topics most in need of reinforcement. (Papers would be scanned quickly after being collected, perhaps while students are taking a quiz, or performing some other independent task.)

**Categorizing grid**

This technique takes a little longer to prepare, but the results can be analyzed fairly quickly. It is good for assessing analysis skills, and whether students understand the structure of what they’re learning.

Students are given a blank grid with categories labeled, as well as a scrambled list of items (terms, equations, images, etc.) to place in the grid. They are given only a few minutes to complete the grid.

Related grid-based CATs that also work well:
--The **Defining Features Matrix**, where students are given a list of features and 2 or three items, and asked to indicate with a + or – whether each item has the defining feature.

--The **Pro and Con** grid may be more applicable to the social sciences. Students are given a short issue or case and asked to quickly list pros and cons of a particular solution or situation. Scanning the answers can give the instructor a sense of students’ ability to analyze and make judgments based on course concepts.

**Background knowledge probe**

This technique is best used at the beginning of the term, or at the beginning of a new unit. It helps the instructor understand students’ prior learning and adjust subsequent instruction accordingly.

Students are given a questionnaire (which may be fairly quick, or more extensive) to determine what prior knowledge they have on the topic. The questionnaire can contain multiple-choice or open-ended items, depending on the depth/type of knowledge being assessed.

The instructor analyzes the questionnaires to determine whether there are particular areas of weakness or strength in students’ prior knowledge, misconceptions that must be addressed, or a wide variation in students’ levels of preparation. It is important for the instructor **not** to use this activity to label students, nor become frustrated by a general lack of preparation, but to focus on what instruction may be most effective for the particular students in the class.

**Reflection and action**

After reading and analyzing the CAT responses, the TA should reflect and take notes on the following:

- What did the CAT reveal about student learning? (strengths and weaknesses)
- How can I adjust my teaching in section to improve student learning?

**Mid-Quarter Evaluations**

In addition to end of the quarter evaluations, mid-quarter evaluations are an excellent way to gauge student learning and your teaching effectiveness and methods in time to improve your approach before the quarter ends. You can do these yourself, in the form of a CAT (described above). For more ideas and some sample evaluation forms see: [http://ctl.ucsc.edu/resources/self-assess/index.html](http://ctl.ucsc.edu/resources/self-assess/index.html)
### 14. Teaching resources

[Compiled from UCSC Center for Teaching & Learning Resources]

In addition to conversation with instructors and peers and departmental TA training, UCSC offers several resources for teachers. Two centers are highlighted here and more are listed below under “Campus-wide Resources”. In addition, a list and books and videos relevant to TA training are listed below.

**The Center for Teaching & Learning** (http://ctl.ucsc.edu/index.html)

Services specifically for TAs include workshops, mid-quarter teaching evaluations, individual consultations and various online resources. These are available at: http://ctl.ucsc.edu/resources/TAs/

**Learning Support Services** – Learning support services provides at UCSC offers peer groups and tutoring. Learning Support Services also functions as a referral service and directs students to appropriate learning assistance at UCSC, including study strategies workshops, department sponsored tutoring, and organized study groups.

http://www2.ucsc.edu/lss/tutorial_services.shtml

**Books**

LB 2335.4 .P74 1991

LB2822.75 .A54 1993

LB2331 .B34 2004


PE 1404 .B35 1996

LB 2335.4 .P74 1991

LB 1061 .H672 1999


   Includes guidance on preparing to teach, conducting various types of sections (discussion, lab, problem-solving), covers general issues such as office hours, grading, and various problem scenarios; also includes section on balancing responsibilities as graduate student.
LB 2331 .D37 1993

Highly recommended resource for any college teacher. Provides tips on all aspects of teaching, from course development through discussion, lecturing, etc., to assessment and grading. Organized as focused bullet points with short discussion. References research.


An excellent guide for TAs, or for any beginning teacher, that manages to be both practical and in-depth. Unlike many TA guides, this book focuses primarily on teaching and learning. Includes good sections on using writing as a learning tool, lecturing, student motivation, and assessment.


LB 1773 .M35 1999

McGlynn, Angela P. *Successful Beginnings for College Teaching*, (Atwood 2001)
LB 2331 .P768 2001


*TA Handbook*, (University of California, Santa Cruz, 2003).
Available at [http://ic.ucsc.edu/CTE/TAs.html](http://ic.ucsc.edu/CTE/TAs.html)

### Videos

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<td>Art of Discussion Leading: A Class With Chris Christensen</td>
<td>VT5400</td>
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<td>Demonstration of discussion-leading by an experienced faculty member, with comments by participants.</td>
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<td>Critical Incidents III: Legends of the Fall Term</td>
<td>VT3871</td>
<td>45 min</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contains 10 separate cases, 3-5 min. each. Most relevant for TAs: #2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9. Others appropriate for more advanced teaching development.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race in the Classroom: The Multiplicity of Experience</td>
<td>VT5404</td>
<td>19 min</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contains 5 separate cases, 1-5 minutes each. Especially appropriate for discussion-based courses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing Learning Expectations: What Students Want from College Teachers</td>
<td>VT6430</td>
<td>45 min</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching in America: A Guide for International Faculty</td>
<td>VT5405</td>
<td>38 min</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching in the Diverse Classroom</td>
<td>VT6373</td>
<td>37 min</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking Together: Collaborative Learning in Science</td>
<td>VT5403</td>
<td>18 min</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in the Classroom</td>
<td>VT5436</td>
<td>27 min</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Resources for departments and faculty
[not in UCSC library]

Excellent guide for building departmental training programs for TAs. Addresses all aspects of TA training, including orientations, pedagogy courses, micro-teaching, supervision, ethical issues, and gender and diversity issues.

LB 2335.4 .P765 1998

LB 2335.4 .N98 1996

An excellent handbook for faculty or departments. Includes chapters on establishing good supervisory relationships, preparing TAs to teach, preparing RAs for their research responsibilities, working with international TAs, assessing performance of TAs and RAs. (see p. 53 for a good framework for working with students in office hours.)

**Campus-wide Resources**

**Center for Teaching & Learning**
http://ctl.ucsc.edu/
459-5091

Resources for faculty and TA's on developing courses and syllabi, engaging students in classroom discussions, preventing plagiarism, evaluating teaching and learning, and other classroom issues.

**Library**
http://library.ucsc.edu/home.html
459-4000

In addition to books, the library provides films, slides, and maps; course reserves, electronic reserves; library instruction for classes; research assistance for students or faculty.

**Media Services**
http://media.ucsc.edu
459-2117

To reserve media equipment for your classroom, or get help in using installed equipment. Web site also has a classroom features database.

**Instructional Computing**
http://ic.ucsc.edu
See web site for phone numbers.
Course web pages, student computing labs, WebCT course management system, instructional technology training and support.

**Copy Center**
http://copy.ucsc.edu
459-4104

Photocopying for course packets, exams, etc.; copyright clearance; general photocopying; fax service.

**UC Copyright Education**
http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/copyright/ Information on copyright, UC and campus policies, and using copyrighted works.
Teaching Toolbox
http://teaching.ucsc.edu/tips/
A web site maintained by the Center for Teaching & Learning, linking to a variety of teaching resources, including teaching tips.

Disability Resource Center
http://www2.ucsc.edu/drc/
459-2089
Assists in arranging accommodations for students with special needs. Their web site has information for instructors about working with disabled students.

EOP Learning Center
http://www2.ucsc.edu/eop/
459-4333
Learning support services for Educational Opportunity Program students, as well as some services available to all students. Services include tutoring, academic success workshops.

ACE (Academic Excellence Program)
http://ace.ucsc.edu
459-5283
Study groups and other resources to help students excel in entry-level science/math courses. ACE’s goal is to increase the diversity of those students earning bachelor's degrees in engineering, math and science.

STARS (Services for Transfer & Re-Entry Students)
http://stars.ucsc.edu
459-2552
Academic and personal support for transfer and re-entry students.

Title IX / Sexual Harrassment Office
http://www2.ucsc.edu/title9-sh/
459-2462
Assistance in investigating and resolving complaints of sexual harrassment; education and resources on sexual assault and sexual harrassment.

Counseling Services
http://www2.ucsc.edu/counsel/index.html
459-2628
Services for graduate and undergraduate students. Website includes info for instructors on dealing with emotionally distressed students.

Ombudsman
http://www2.ucsc.edu/ombudsman/
459-2073
Assists students, staff, and faculty in achieving informal resolution of complaints and conflicts which stem from UCSC policies, procedures, practices, and intra-campus relationships.

Graduate Student Association
http://www2.ucsc.edu/gsa/
459-2722
Represents the interests of UCSC graduate students in a variety of issues; offers travel grants; operates the Grad Student Commons.

Division of Graduate Studies
http://www.graddiv.ucsc.edu/
459-2510
Coordinates graduate study at UCSC. Web site has information on all aspects of graduate study, including financial, degree requirements, and policies.