



TA/HTA training – sharing best practices

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August, 2020

Agenda

	<u>Participants</u>	<u>Time</u>
1 General guidance and new challenges	All	30 min
2 TA specific best practices	All	15 min
3 Head TA specific best practices	HTA (and TA)	30 min
4 Questions and discussion	All	15 min

The training combines my experience with Duke recommendations

I have experience with

Duke TA/HTA

- TA: Econ 205, 208
- Head TA: Econ 208

Duke Teaching

- Discussion sections
- Grading/regrades
- Review section
- Office hours
- Lecturing
- Running a course online

Not Duke

- High school program trainings
- Business workshops, trainings

I don't know enough about

Running a course full online

Certificate in College Teaching

Gradescope

Master/PhD TAing

Unusual things

The goal is to try share best practices to make your and your students' life better

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General: teaching is important

Duke Graduate School Guidelines:

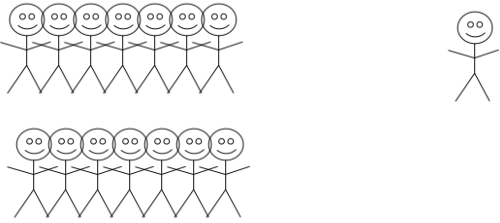
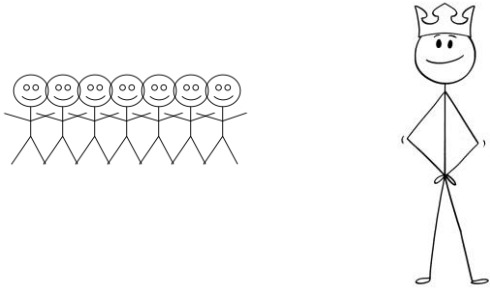
- **“A critical obligation of TA or IOR training is that the graduate student diligently performs all of the duties that are involved in the role.** By accepting the assignment, the student commits to adequate preparation for teaching, punctual attendance of all scheduled class meetings and office-hours, timely and conscientious evaluation of student work, and prompt communication to students, faculty, or university administrators of any concerns, as appropriate to their nature. Teaching assistants or IORs must make arrangements for alternative teaching coverage or rescheduling if they are unable to attend a scheduled meeting or perform a duty.
- **Any TA or IOR who fails to fulfill the assigned duties for the teaching role may be relieved of duties, and teaching stipend support may be removed.** Moreover, as teaching is a core part of the academic requirements of many graduate programs, failing to meet the obligations of the role may have serious implications for a student’s academic status.
- **All graduate students involved in teaching must bear in mind that they must uphold the Duke Community Standard at all times.** They should be mindful that using a position of authority for illicit gain, including sexual favors, is expressly prohibited. They must conduct themselves honorably and avoid potential conflicts of interest. For example, graduate student TAs must review their class roster(s) and disclose to the course instructor of record any reasonably perceived conflicts of interest involving students in the class, including any romantic or business relationships. Similarly, graduate student IORs must similarly disclose to the appropriate Director of Graduate Studies.”



General: overview of an undergraduate course

Instructor

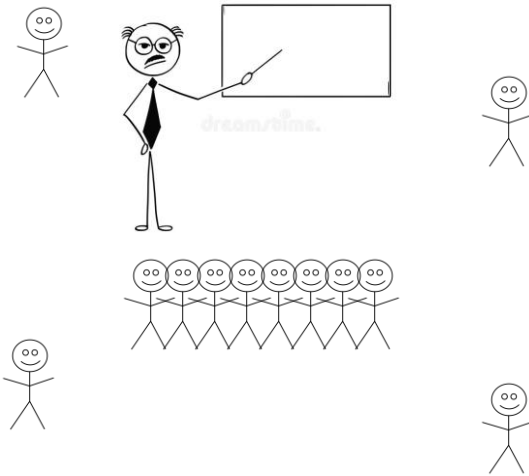
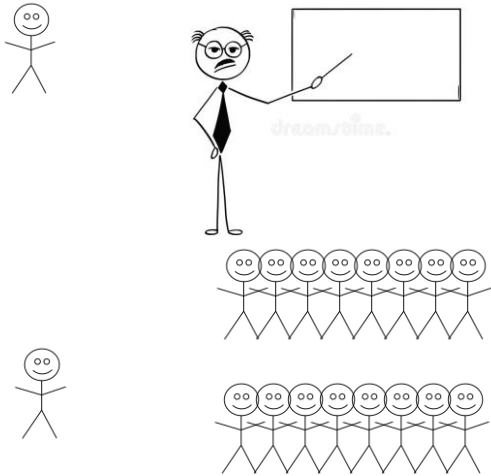
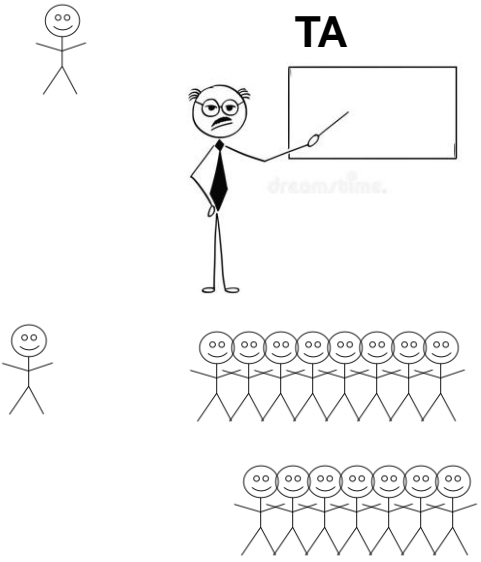
Head TA



TA

TA

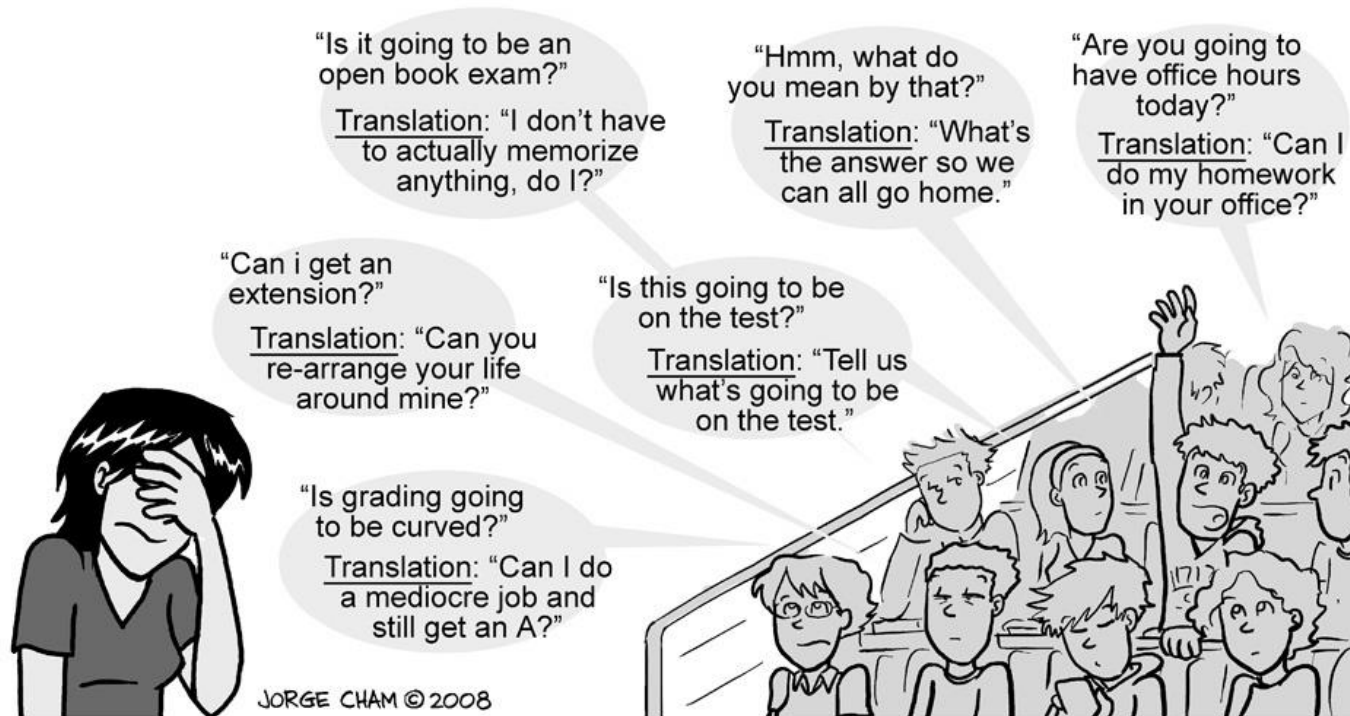
TA



General: treat undergrads the best you can even if they cause you some trouble

Undergradese

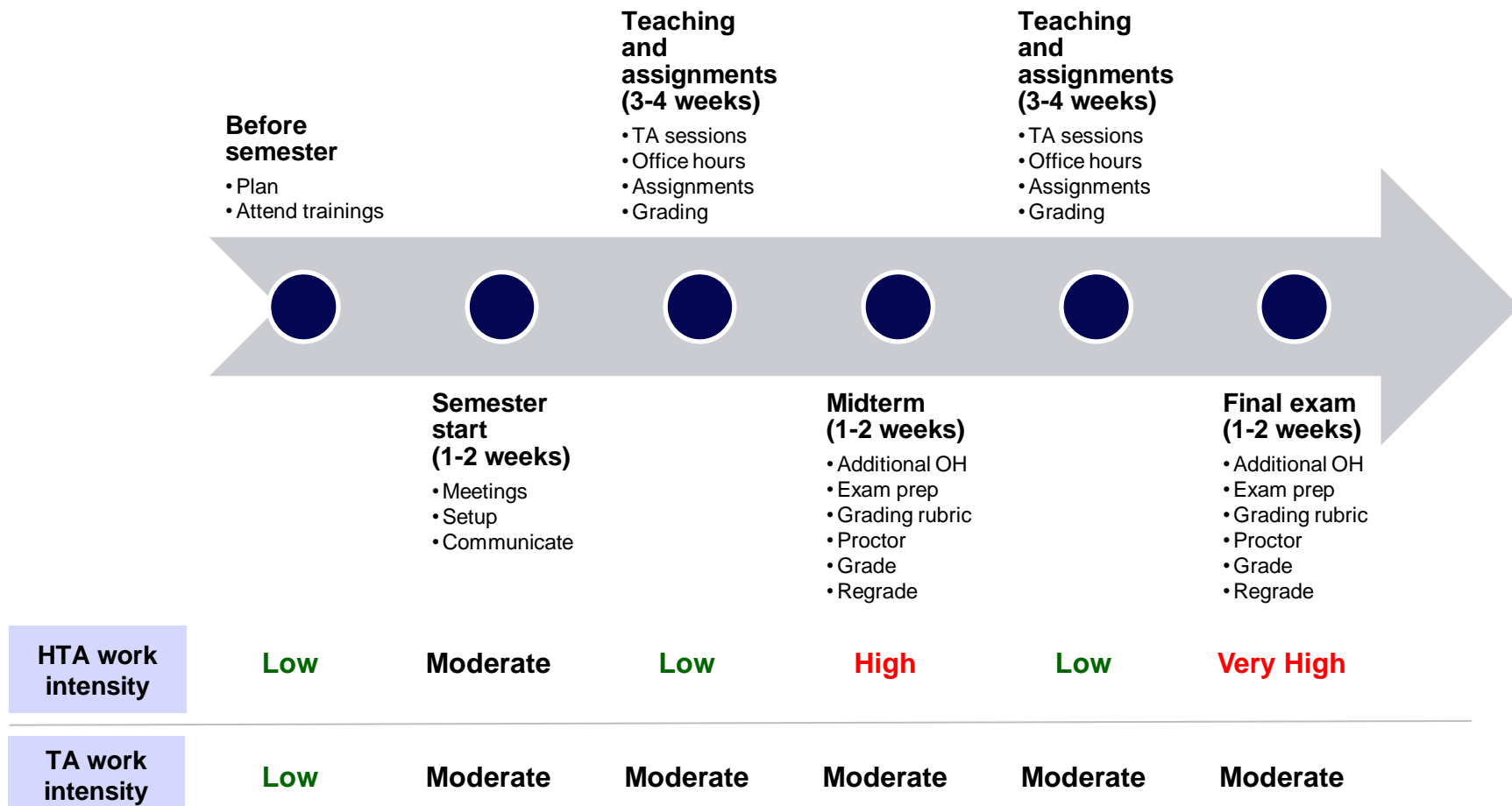
What undergrads ask vs. what they're REALLY asking



WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

General: plan for work intensity to vary over the semester

Based on Econ 208, courses can differ widely too



General: this semester is going to be different

What do we know?

- **Courses are going to be hybrid:** not sure if we have to teach in-person
- Mine currently looks online only
- Office access? Everyone is going to be tested who visits the campus
- Final TA allocation is not finalized

Communicate and look for updates

- **Talk to instructor and raise concerns**
- Feel free to bother EcoTeach: they are busy, but here to help

Prepare for online teaching

- **Digital equipment** to get: webcam, microphone, tablet to draw, recording?
- Think about timing, your internet connection and good spots in the house
- **We will talk about the rest in detail today**

Be patient and kind, help students

- This is a hard time and a new experience for both students and instructors
- Try be helpful and patient with students under the circumstances

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TA: responsibilities and best practices

Responsibilities

General

- Perform all duties in a **timely and professional** manner
- Interact with students in an **appropriate and respectful manner**
- Uphold the Duke Community Standard

Teaching

- Usually **TA session**/discussion session
- **Office hours**

Assignments and exams (optional)

- Proctoring
- Grading assignments and exams
- Going to lectures

Good practices

General good practices:

- Being proactive, communicate often
- Patience with undergrads
- Try make other people's life easier: instructor, head TA, students
- Limit outside class student interactions
- Seek out resources to be a better teacher

First class good practices

- Go through syllabus and general class info
- State communications rules
- State what students can expect from you

FERPA, Harassment, Diversity and Inclusion

- Cannot share sensitive personal information
- Exercise appropriate cultural awareness

TA: how to run discussion sections and office hours effectively offline and through Zoom

Goals can vary with the instructor

- **Attendance usually not mandatory**, students can shop around for sessions
- Office hour style: answer question, but they are usually short of questions

Prepare for sessions and OH

- **Be on top of the material**: hard for PhD students teaching introductory courses
- Be aware **undergrads are not PhD students**

Lecture summary is a good start

- Might not attend + students forget + **paraphrasing** helps + **repetition** helps
- Go through **key concepts**, try give **intuition**

Solving exercises is a good idea

- But think where you can **add the most value**
- **Monitor** student understanding, stop for comments, ask questions

Online specifics

- **Prepare materials ahead of time**. Prepare for recording sessions. Schedule in Sakai
- Use **tablet** if you want to “**write on board**”

Sharing materials

- **Discuss with the instructor** what you can share
- Consistency and **equal access** is important

Office hours

- **Set clear rules**: can they show up to solve homework and bother you when stuck
- Try be helpful but you are a **teaching assistant not a tutor**

Questions and short break



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Head TA: general and teaching

General good practices

- **Being proactive**, communicate early and often
- **Patience** with undergrads
- Try **make other people's life easier**: instructor, TAs, students
- Make sure everyone have **access to the same information**

FERPA, Harassment, Diversity and Inclusion

- Head TAs have **access to sensitive personal information and cannot share it**
- Exercise **appropriate cultural awareness** and remind your TAs to do the same.

Organizing TA sections and office hours

- You might or **might not teach** depending on the course
- Section **times** and locations are **set already**
- **Meeting** with the instructor and TAs **to set roles and expectations**
- **Distribute work**: schedule, how to handle cancelations

Office hours

- Try be **accommodating with schedule** (days, times). Book rooms early.
- They come mostly before assignments and exams
- I give back exams on lectures and then office hours, regrade requests

TA sections

- You **might need to coordinate what TAs teach** (with Instructor/TAs)
- Otherwise, see training for TAs

Head TA: normal times with offline classes

Exams

- **Get the dates of midterms and final exam from Instructor ASAP**
- Proctoring? Extra office hours? Review Sessions? Extended time?
- **Coordinate** with EcoTeach (Addie?) and **graders early**
- You might need to help write the exam/solutions

Assignments

- **Find out how:** announced, turned in, graded, returned, and tracked
- Plan how to handle **late assignments**
- **Grading:** who does it? What do students see? Regrade requests?

Exam Grading

- **Have a very good grading rubric.** Consistency is key.
- **Manage graders well:** sit down with the graders: divide, explain, few examples, check, make sure they ask questions
- **Pickup:** you might need to give exams back to students

Exam regrade requests

- Probably the **most painful HTA task:** to fight with students for points
- **Explicit policy and deadline:** written?, office hours?
- Rubric, consistency but also subjectivity. **They will try hard...**

Head TA: running exams and grading online

Dummy way: try replicate offline Gabor 2020 Spring

Assignments

- Not graded, felt too much hassle

Exam

- Pdf, students had 24 hours to take it
- Upload pictures to Sakai

Exam grading

- Download, Box share with graders
- PDF comment box, coordination issues
- Adjustment: regrade all

Grades

- Manual

Pro way: Gradescope, Gabor 2021 plan

Assignments

- ?

Exam

- Pdf, 3 hours timed
- Upload to Gradescope

Exam grading

- All online in Gradescope
- Cuts up to questions, multiple graders
- Grading rules, easy to change if issues

Grades

- Automatic

Take the Gradescope training

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Questions and discussion



Resources: please use them, at least the Gradescope training

Previous TAs and Head TAs

Ecoteach

Duke Graduate School TA guidelines

- <https://gradschool.duke.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Duke-Graduate-TA-and-IOR-guidelines.pdf>

Gradescope training: every week and also recorded

- <https://learninginnovation.duke.edu/faculty-opportunities/learning-technologies/gradescope/#gradescope-start>

Pratt TA training:

- <https://pratt.duke.edu/grad/students/ta-training>

Stanford Economics TA guidelines

- https://economics.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj9386/f/ta_handbook_19_-_20.docx

How to become a better teacher

- Certificate in College Teaching