Teaching Assistant Responsibilities: Supporting Learning Processes

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Goal

To prepare you to efficiently and effectively manage the different roles and responsibilities you may face as a Teaching Assistant
Session Objectives:

Identify strategies for:

- handling/minimizing **disruptive classroom and/or lab behavior**
- creating and maintaining **effective relationships with students and (faculty) supervisors**
- **connecting the learning activities** specific to labs, recitations, and office hours to broader **course objectives**
- facilitating **effective communication** with students
- answering student questions during **office hours**
- **grading** student assignments
What are disruptive classroom behaviors?

Introducing…

Tom Turpin
Professor of Entomology
“The Bug Man”

Video
Disruptive Classroom Behaviors

- Arriving late
- Eating in class
- Talking in class
- Tending to personal needs
- Making inappropriate comments
- Engaging in activities not related to class
- Sleeping
- Leaving early
- Cell phones
- Social media

What can you do to handle such behaviors?
Tips for Handling Disruptive Behavior

- Prevention is key
  - Know your students’ names
  - Decide what is disruptive to you and inform your class, orally and in writing
- Enforce rules that you establish
- Handle problems in least severe way possible first
Scenario

For the course you are TAing, there will be a written assignment that involves information gathering and synthesis.

We need a few volunteers who are aspiring actors and aren’t afraid to be dramatic.
Timeline of TA Responsibilities

Meet (Faculty) Supervisor
Get Expectations
Create / Learn about Assignment
Assignment Goes Out
Office Hours
Emails
Grading
Aftermath
What should you do to establish and maintain an effective relationship with your supervisor?

- Think (Individually) – 30 seconds
- Pair – 2 minute
- Share
Tips for Establishing & Maintaining Relationship with Faculty Supervisor

- At the beginning
  - Discuss responsibilities and expectations
  - Share your class schedule and other commitments
- Communicate regularly
- Unsure of something? – Ask
- Report and document disruptive, threatening, and disrespectful student behavior
Tips for Establishing & Maintaining Relationship with Faculty Supervisor

- Be a liaison between your students and your (faculty) supervisor
  - Toward the Faculty Supervisor
    - Share student criticisms
  - Toward the Students
    - Offer students rationales
    - Offer students constructive suggestions
- Support a positive course environment
  - Refrain from joining in criticisms
Whether creating or just coming up to speed on an assignment, you need to keep in mind...

**Program Outcomes** ↔ **Course Goals** ↔ **Learning Objectives** ↔ **Assessment (evidence of learning)** ↔ **Activities with feedback**
Stretch
Office Hours Improv

It’s the middle of the week, and the assignment is due on Friday…

What would you do?
Tips for Office Hours

- “Give a person a fish…”
- Ask them questions
- Lead them towards the answer
- There isn’t always 1 correct way to get to the answer
  - Have them explain how they got where they are
Email Samples

What would you do?
Assignment is due at 9 AM...

smith214@purdue.edu
Sent: 3:00 AM

-----------------------------------------------
Don’t get what to write about in the section marked with *’s. Can you help?
Assignment is due at 9 AM…

smith214@purdue.edu
Sent: 3:30 AM
-----------------------------------------------
Are you there? I still need help.
I worked all night on this assignment. I could not complete one part without your help. I still deserve to get an A on it for the reasons I list below.
Tips for Managing Email

- Explicitly communicate expectations about email contact to students
- Ask students to include the course # and detailed subject in the Subject line
- Respond as quickly as possible, but during “business” hours
- Save all email contacts
Grading Samples
I am studying Environmental Engineering and nanotechnology can have a positive and negative effect on the environment. Nanotechnology can be negatively effecting our environment because of toxins associated with them according to science daily. It can also positively effect the environment by cleaning up pollution. Nanotechnology can also improve manufacturing methods and make alternative energy more cost effective.

1. Environmental nanotechnology. (n.d.).
I am studying Environmental Engineering and nanotechnology can have a positive and negative effect on the environment. Nanotechnology can negatively effecting our environment because of toxins associated with them according to science daily. It can also positively effect the environment by cleaning up pollution. Nanotechnology can also improve manufacturing methods and make alternative energy more cost effective.

1. Environmental nanotechnology. (n.d.).
## Criterion Based Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Yes (2 pts)</th>
<th>Sort of (1 pt)</th>
<th>No (0 pt)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State major &amp; 2 personal career facts</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two developed ideas about nanotechnology</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No spelling and grammar problems</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-text citations in APA format</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two citations in APA format</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Feedback:**

Need more personal context and detail about how nanotechnology relates to your career. Pay attention to spell checker. Review class notes from 9/15 on how to use in-text citations. There are pieces missing from each citation. Check out the Online Writing Lab for help with APA formatting: [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)
### Learning Objective Based Rubric

**Learning Objectives**

Students will be able to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achieved (2 pts)</th>
<th>Partially Achieved (1 pt)</th>
<th>No Evidence (0 pt)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide personal context for research</td>
<td>Provides major plus two other personal career facts</td>
<td>Provide major only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe with adequate detail how research relates to personal context</td>
<td>Two full developed ideas on how nanotechnology relates to major</td>
<td>One idea fully developed or two ideas not fully developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compose a well written narrative</td>
<td>No spelling or grammar issues</td>
<td>Some spelling or grammar issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link citations to narrative in a professional manor</td>
<td>APA format used correctly for in-text citations</td>
<td>Mistakes in APA format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present citations in a professional manor</td>
<td>APA format used correctly for citations list</td>
<td>Mistakes in APA format</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Feedback:* Need more personal context and detail about how nanotechnology relates to your career. Pay attention to spell checker. Review class notes from 9/15 on how to use in-text citations. There are pieces missing from each citation. Check out the Online Writing Lab for help with APA formatting: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/*
Tips for Grading

- Develop a grading rubric
- Discuss rubrics with fellow TAs if more than one TA does the grading
- Provide timely and sufficient feedback on assignments/exams
Tips for Grading

- Maintain an accurate and up-to-date record of all student grades
- Tell students how much a question/assignment/exam is worth
- Clarify policies regarding partial credit, late submissions, and re-grades
- Know the policies regarding student privacy rights (FERPA)
How would you respond?

This is $^\&*$! I got no feedback before this and then you expect me to suddenly know what you want?
Tips for Managing Angry Students

- Assess reason
- Stay professional
- Consult supervisor
- If by email,
  - wait to respond
  - meet with the student
Awesome TA
Sent: 12/17/2014 3:00 PM

I just want to thank you for all the effort you put into helping us this semester. I learned a lot from you.
Summary

Meet (Faculty) Supervisor

Get Expectations

Create / Learn about Assignment

Assignment Goes Out

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Aftermath