

Promoting TA Training Programs¹

Below, you will find a number of strategies to engage new and returning TAs in TA training, which involve promoting the program. Keep in mind that TA training is most successful when TAs and graduate students see the training as addressing their needs, treats their time with respect, and provides practical suggestions and advice.

General Suggestions

- Session Timing/Scheduling - TAs will often have demanding schedules, in which their TA duties, coursework, research, etc. may make specific demands on their time. Scheduling sessions when TAs “tend” to be free will help ensure that they are available for your session. Even better is to schedule the sessions based on a poll of TA availability (doodle.com is a useful and free way to schedule meetings with many people). Different times of year may be more or less busy for TAs, and certain topics may feel more relevant at certain times of year (eg. marking and evaluation just before mid terms, etc).
- Faculty Involvement - In many departments, having faculty members involved as co-facilitators is helpful to embed the training in an experienced disciplinary perspective. But faculty members can also be involved in less demanding ways. Ensure that faculty members who have TAs are aware of TA training, so they can tell their own TAs about it. Some departments will also have all invitations to TA training sent out by the department head, or graduate supervisor. Sharing a short report of upcoming TA training in department meetings is a useful way to get the word out to faculty who can inform their TAs.
- TA Involvement - Equally important is having experienced TAs involved – as coordinators, facilitators, or through such means as needs assessments done with TAs. Peer support provides different advantages than faculty, and can promote a bit more ease and frankness in discussing challenges.

New TAs

- Required Training - Many departments require that new TAs participate in TA training. When this is done, be sure to *let TAs know* that training time is included as work completed in their TA hours, which means they are paid to be there. Training can be required for the whole program (with optional sessions also being provided).
- Recognition - Some departments offer a letter of recognition, or of program completion if TAs attend all or most of the TA training sessions offered. These modes of recognition can be included as evidence of teaching development in a teaching portfolio, included in the C.V., etc.

¹These recommendations have been generated by TA Training Coordinators from different faculties and departments on campus.

- Hospitality - Making the training inviting for TAs often involves providing food (especially if training is done over lunch, or during the middle or end of day). A bit of refreshment provides a good energy boost, and lets your TAs know that you are considering their well being.
- Needs Assessment/Reporting Back - Doing a needs assessment with your TAs (as well as with faculty who work with TAs) is an important practice. Aside from the direct benefits to the content of your TA training, a needs assessment with your TAs lets them know that the program is linked to their needs and experiences. Providing a brief “report back” at the beginning of your first TA training session, or making reference to it in e-mail promotion of the event can also help.
- Link Training to Professional Goals - TA training is important for immediate TA duties, but well designed TA training can also have longer term implications for TAs who may be looking at teaching-related careers, as instructors, research faculty, or outside the university context. Connect TA training to teaching training in promotional materials.

Returning TAs

- Leading discussions in TA Training - Assigning specific roles to senior/returning TAs can help with their engagement in TA Training. They can be invited to offer scenarios of their challenging experiences as TAs and to lead conversations about those challenges with new TAs during the TA Training sessions.
- Mentoring - You can offer returning TAs a (formal or informal) mentoring role. This could include office hours to provide feedback to new TAs, leading weekly/monthly community of practice meetings for new TAs, or doing peer reviews in labs and classrooms where they observe new TAs and then meet with them to offer formative feedback. If your senior/returning TAs are volunteering as mentors, you may want to consider offering them a letter of recognition.
- Workshop (co-)facilitation - Give Senior TAs a more involved role in the planning and facilitation of the TA Training workshops. CTLT offers facilitation workshops at the beginning of every term that can prepare your TAs for this role. You can also request to have your senior/returning TAs co-facilitate your TA Training sessions with experienced facilitators from other units as a way to help them gain more experience in facilitation.