APPENDIX C: GRADUATE EDUCATION CONTACTS

Revised 4-29-13. The most current version of the Graduate TA Resource Guide can be found at:
graduate.asu.edu/tad
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Arizona State University!

Teaching Assistants/Associates play an important role at ASU. Whether you are teaching courses or labs, tutoring, leading discussions, marking assignments or exams, or mentoring students during your office hours, your work has a tremendous impact on the lives of undergraduate students and the quality of their education.

TA work is also very rewarding. It is a rare opportunity to share your knowledge of your discipline with others, to learn from students’ questions and ideas, and to improve your presentation, assessment, and facilitation skills.

As a TA it is your responsibility to handle whatever happens in the classroom. This means you need to be aware of university and college policies for handling situations from academic integrity to sexual harassment to missed exams. It is impossible to prepare for every situation you may face. However, this guide is just that, a guide to the policies, people and tools that will help you respond. This Resource Guide for Teaching Assistants/Associates offers a wealth of information to help you have a successful TA experience. Whether this is your first semester as a TA, or you are a “veteran” TA who serves as a peer mentor, the resources in this guide can assist you in your development as a teacher. We encourage you to explore the guide and to use it as a resource.

Teaching requires courage, dedication, and hard work. It can also be one of the most interesting and fulfilling experiences of your life! Good luck and enjoy!
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- Guy Mullins, Applied Learning Technologies Institute New Media Studio
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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

You will play many roles as a Teaching Assistant/Associate (TA). These roles include that of subject expert and facilitator of learning, role model and advisor for students, assistant to a professor, representative of a department, and employee of the University. Perhaps most importantly, the TA acts as liaison, providing both a bridge and a filter between the student and the course instructor. Depending on the particular situation, these roles can be very rewarding or very trying.

The roles you will play and duties you will perform as a TA vary from one department to another. The purpose of this resource guide is to provide assistance and resources for a wide variety of TA roles and duties. All TAs share specific responsibilities regardless of how their roles may differ. The TA/RA Policy and Procedural Handbook defines these general appointment and enrollment policies. http://graduate.asu.edu/TARAhandbook/index.html.

Teaching Assistant/Associates have responsibilities to: the professional standards of the discipline, the general academic standards of the university, the department to which the TA is attached, the students, and to the TA themselves. The diverse set of roles and responsibilities held by the Teaching Assistant/Associate also carries the potential for serious value conflicts. It is not our intention to provide grounds for either assessing or resolving these conflicts, but merely to provide a realistic picture of the range of these responsibilities and implied ethical obligations.

Student
As a graduate student, you should be concerned with your responsibilities to yourself and your department. You have been accepted into the graduate program primarily as a student and should therefore ensure that:

- you get your own work done;
- this work is completed within a reasonable amount of time;
- you do the best job possible on your own assignments.

Teacher
As a teacher, your responsibilities are primarily to the students. To show that you want to help the students with their learning, you should:

- ensure that the students know who you are;
- keep up with the progress of the course;
- be familiar with the course material;
- be available to the students, especially during your stated office hours;
- use appropriate teaching methods and techniques.

Assistant
As an assistant to a faculty member, your responsibilities are primarily directed towards that individual. It is your responsibility to:

- discuss with the course instructor exactly what your duties and responsibilities will be for the course;
- be familiar with the text book and course outline;
- know the technical details of the course (e.g., the number and weight of assignments);
- keep in contact with the instructor of the course.
**Discipline**

In your capacity as an expert, you are expected to represent the department by being knowledgeable (as best you can) in the subject matter of the course. Your responsibilities are to:

- do sufficient background reading so that you may answer the students’ questions carefully and accurately;
- remember your position in the department, and do not represent yourself as THE authority;
- be intellectually honest and admit when you don’t know the answer to a student’s question but be resourceful in trying to find out.

**Advisor**

Students will come to you for advice. In your capacity as an advisor you should:

- respect the student who comes to you for help, being especially careful not to become patronizing or manipulative;
- refer students with extreme personal or academic problems to the appropriate counselors or resources [https://students.asu.edu/counseling](https://students.asu.edu/counseling);
- consider the student’s individual needs when you are giving advice regarding course selection (abilities, interests etc.);
- ensure that in your role as a mediator, you remain neutral.
NEW TEACHING ASSISTANT/ASSOCIATE CHECKLIST

☐ Complete Teaching Assistant/Associate Development (TAD) program and review Resource Guide for Teaching Assistants/Associates. For more information, visit http://graduate.asu.edu/TAD

Photo Identification

☐ Sun Card/ASU Photo I.D: For more information visit the Sun Card website at https://cfo.asu.edu/cardservices

Payroll Information

☐ Complete the New Employment Payroll Packet http://www.asu.edu/hr/forms/payrollpacket.pdf
For more information visit the Financial Services web page https://cfo.asu.edu/fs-payroll

Benefits Information

☐ Tuition Reduction ( Resident and Non-Resident): For specific guidelines consult the TA/RA Policy and Procedural handbook at: http://graduate.asu.edu or call the Tuition Payment Office 480-965-6341.

☐ Health Insurance: The premium for individual health insurance will be paid for TAs/RAs who meet the minimum eligibility requirements during the duration of their appointment and have selected this option during registration. For further information on student and family health insurance, visit www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/health/insurance.

☐ University Bookstore Discount: RAs/TAs receive a 10% discount on books and supplies at the ASU bookstores. You must present a temporary employment card, obtainable from your department.

☐ Library Privileges: RAs/TAs are entitled to an extended borrowing period of 90 days.

☐ Media Services: RAs/TAs have Faculty/Staff access to check out digital equipment and presentation media. For more information and a list of available equipment, visit: https://ucc.asu.edu/classrooms

Parking/Public Transit Information

☐ ASU Parking Permits: For more information, visit the Parking and Transit Services website at: https://cfo.asu.edu/pts

☐ Car Registration: If your vehicle is not registered in the state of Arizona, you may want to access the Arizona Motor Vehicles Department at http://www.azdot.gov/mvd/index.asp or call 602-255-0072.

☐ Free Shuttle/Bus Service: There are many transportation options for students at ASU! From the Flash Shuttles that circulate the Tempe campus to the Orbit for travel in Tempe and the DASH for travel in Downtown Phoenix to the Valley Metro Bus and Light Rail for travel across the Valley all available for FREE. For information and links visit https://cfo.asu.edu/pts-shuttles

My ASU Information

☐ Review information regarding Class Registration, Class Rosters, Your ASU Account, Personal Record Information, Class Information, Blackboard, and much more at: http://my.asu.edu
GETTING STARTED

This section helps you get started in your position as a Teaching Assistant/Associate. Some of these issues will vary from one department to another. The hiring academic unit should provide you with the name of the instructor you will be assisting, as well as information regarding the course name, description, times, etc. Contact the course instructor and make yourself known. Check that it is really the course you are supposed to TA for, and that the instructor knows your strengths and weaknesses in the subject matter of the course.

Things to Check with your Supervisor

- Who will supervise me? How? How often?
- What are the objectives of the course? Is it a prerequisite for majors? General education for non-majors?
- When are the classes? How many students will I have?
- Will I be leading discussions regularly? Occasionally? When the instructor is absent?
- Will I be tutoring and/or giving individual assistance? How much help is too much? What kind of assistance shouldn’t I give? Should I organize group help/review sessions?
- Will I conduct/supervise laboratory exercises? Do I keep track of and obtain supplies and materials? Will I design or revise experiments? Will I give demonstrations? How do I handle emergencies? Am I responsible for preparation and clean up?
- Will I be lecturing regularly? Occasionally? When the instructor is absent?
- What is Departmental procedure for handling such problems as plagiarism, cheating, and grade appeals?
- Will I be using AV equipment? What equipment? Am I responsible for getting/returning it? How do I schedule it?
- How much autonomy or latitude will I have to try new things? to present new ideas? Are there materials to help prepare for the course, i.e., texts? manuals? guides? test items?
- What about my office hours: how many hours per week? when? where? coordinated with the instructor’s?
- What should I do, and whom should I contact, if I am unable to attend a class session?
- Do I handle disputes, or does the instructor? Do I report student concerns with lectures, exams?
- Will I be evaluated? By whom: the instructor? the department? the students? Will I have access to evaluation results? Will I be allowed to include questions on student evaluation forms?
- What other responsibilities will I have?
- Should I attend lectures? Or, will the lecturer brief me on course progress?

While most departments try to match TA interests with positions available, some courses must be taught whether qualified Teaching Assistant/Associates are available or not. If the course is new to you, quickly analyze the level of competence you need to reach. You may need to do some additional study. Ask your supervisor for help with this—some suggested reading, for example. If you feel absolutely (or even partially) incompetent to handle your assigned task, consult the course instructor and the Graduate Studies coordinator immediately.

Survival Tips for the First Day

Initial observations and impressions are too important to risk an ill-prepared introduction. Don’t take the first day of classes for granted. Think about the course, why it is important, what you will say about it, how you will describe course content, and your role in presenting it to students. Students are often overwhelmed with input the first day of class. They may not recall the details and they may lose the syllabus. What matters is
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what actually happens. What kind of an impression did you make? Did you let them know why the course is interesting, why you are pleased to teach it, what they will know and be able to do by the end of the course? The effort spent preparing something special lets students know that you care about them and the course.

- Prior to your first class, visit the room. Inspect for future planning: furniture arrangement, electrical outlets, chalkboards, lights, and equipment. Have shortcomings corrected if possible.
- If you want to achieve an informal style, arrive early for the first class and get to know the students. If you prefer a more formal style, wait until the scheduled hour and arrive just before class begins.
- Write the course name and number on the board to alert any students who are in the wrong classroom to leave before you begin.
- Introduce yourself. Tell the students something about yourself to help break the ice: where you are from; your professional background; the degree you are working on.
- If the class is small, let students introduce themselves telling: where they are from; their program; their year in their university program; why they are in the course. In larger classes, ask students to introduce themselves to the student on their right/left.
- Take attendance. There may still be a student who is not registered for your course. If you’re allowed to add students at this time, wait until after class to handle the paperwork as to not waste others’ time. Know where to refer students who have registration problems.
- Ask students for information you need or want. How many have taken a previous related course? What do they intend to get out of the course? You may choose to hand out a questionnaire, or write the questions on the board and have students write the answers on paper/cards and turn in.
- Discuss policies affecting student grades: attendance; exams; homework; assignments; weight of assignments and exams; assignment numbers; assignment deadlines; group assignments.
- Define and discuss policies on class participation, make-up exams, late assignments, plagiarism, and cheating.
- Discuss texts, required readings, and library reserve readings.
- Review any prerequisites for the course. Let students know what skills or knowledge they are expected to have to be successful in your course.
- Tell why you are excited about the course or the subject. Enthusiasm can be contagious! If you are quite nervous facing the class for the first time, you can:
  - Accept that it is okay and normal to feel that way.
  - Mentally step out of your space for a moment. Look at the area in which you are about to work and look at yourself in it. See yourself doing well. Take a deep breath, step back into your space, and begin.
  - Admit to your students that you are nervous. They too are often nervous the first class.
  - Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Repeat whenever you begin to feel panicky.
  - Slow down your rate of speaking.
  - Practice positive feelings. Imagine how you might feel with all eyes on you. Attune yourself to where you feel tense and nervous and try to relax those parts of your body.
  - Shift the focus of your attention. Concentrate on what you are talking about instead of on how you are feeling, how you are saying it, and how you appear.
  - Accept that nervousness is one small step from positive excitement. Enjoy the adrenaline flow!

First Day of Classes Checklist

Make sure that you have the following:

- The course name and number
- Class Roster
- Course prerequisites and co-requisites
- Names of textbooks and other materials required for the class
- Your office address, phone number, e-mail address, and office hours
- Course objectives, outline and description
- A list of critical dates such as:
  - last day to add classes
  - last day to drop classes without penalty
  - last day to drop classes with a grade
  - dates for examinations and assignments
- A detailed description of how the course will be graded
- A list of assignments as far into the semester as you think is proper
- A detailed description of major projects or assignments required in the course
- A statement concerning how absences and tardiness will affect the final grade.

**Important Dates Reminders**

Although these dates are available through the online schedule of classes, you should remind your students (preferably on your syllabus) of important deadlines and that they should make their decisions accordingly. As instructors, you need to be available to students so that they may obtain the requisite signatures and process their requests in a timely fashion. For more information on deadline dates visit: [http://www.asu.edu/calendar/academic.html](http://www.asu.edu/calendar/academic.html).

**Important Dates to Know (and Include On Your Syllabus)**

- Drop/Add Dates
- Withdrawal Deadlines
- University Holidays
- Finals Schedule

**Auditing**

If a student wishes to audit a class or enroll for pass/fail, the student MUST obtain instructor's approval to audit prior to registering and paying fees. Students may NOT change from a graded option to audit or from audit/pass/fail to grading after starting a course. It is not a form of grade point protection and not to be used in lieu of withdrawal or the awarding of a grade which has been earned.

**Incomplete (the grade of “I”)**

When a student is doing satisfactory work but has some acute disruption at the end of the semester, you may decide to allow the student to finish the work later. The grade of “I” is treated as a contract (and some departments/Colleges have “I” forms) between the student and the instructor. Students do not re-enroll in a class to complete the “I.” “I” should be issued only after consulting the department.

**Mid-term Grades**

Instructors are asked to evaluate students at midterms for academic progress. If a student’s grade at midterm is a “D” or an “E”, a midterm report is mailed to the student. The midterm “D” and “E” grades are not recorded on the student’s permanent records. For more information regarding grades contact your hiring academic unit or student records and grades at [https://students.asu.edu/student-records-grades](https://students.asu.edu/student-records-grades)

**Medical/Compassionate Withdrawal**

If a student has a critical health problem that disrupts his/her academic work, or if a member of the student’s immediate family dies, then the department may grant that student a medical or compassionate withdrawal.
Medical/Compassionate withdrawals are at the College’s discretion and there are procedures that a student can follow in requesting these. If a student approaches you requesting a Medical/Compassionate Withdrawal, you should refer them to the Dean’s office of your College. Please do not make promises that we can’t keep.

Exceptions to the deadlines and Medical/Compassionate withdrawals are made only for extraordinary reasons. Several of the Colleges have designated individuals to field questions. If you are unsure about a College or University policy, please contact your hiring academic unit.
PROBLEMS

Problems with Students and Students with Problems

Although for the most part your teaching may go very well, inevitably you will face some problems with students that are not easily resolved. Sometimes unusual student behavior in the classroom can be overlooked, but not if it disrupts the work of the group or upsets some of the class members. Some problems you can handle yourself, while more serious ones need to be referred to the professor, academic chair or another department on campus designed to assist in the area of concern, for example Counseling or Public Safety, see Appendix A for a list of other resources.

Academic Problems

You should get in touch with students who do poorly on the first test or exam, or who miss a couple of homework assignments, to find out what the problem is. It is usually you who will have to do the seeking out, since students are embarrassed by poor grades or performance and thus feel awkward about seeing you. Many will try to pretend to themselves there is not a problem, or optimistically hope that things will go better “when they get things together.” Some first year students behave this way when after 12 years of success in school they find themselves for the first time in academic trouble and have to cope with the resulting internal and external pressures.

Your job is to advise these students to make sensible plans for their academic work. They may need suggestions on how to study and manage their time, as well as help with the course material. Encourage them to take advantage of the services available like the Student Success Centers or perhaps there is another student in the section who is interested in tutoring. If the problems seem serious, you should contact an advisor in the student’s major or the Counseling Services.

Issues of Academic Integrity

It is important to develop awareness of your personal values as you strive to meet your academic goals. Becoming a respected, honest, trustworthy person in your chosen profession begins with developing academic integrity in your approach to learning and earning credits toward graduation.

Faculty and TAs should make appropriate preparations for all encounters with students, meet classes as scheduled, evaluate students’ work fairly and impartially, and be prompt for prearranged conferences and regularly scheduled office hours. Inappropriate language in the classroom, remarks or jokes in class or during office hours and frequent deviations from the course topic have no proper place in the University. These requirements and expectations of the course should be outlined in the course syllabus.

All members of the academic community should conduct themselves in a straightforward and honorable manner. It is also important know and follow the FERPA guidelines and to respect the principle of confidentiality. Do not, for example:

- discuss students’ grades in public circles, including online in Blackboard;
- give out one student’s grades to another;
- discuss publicly or gossip about the instructors or your peers.

As a TA, you are responsible for ensuring that academic dishonesty is not rewarded. Students need to know that if they work honestly, they will not suffer because of those who do not. Challenging a student you think may have cheated or plagiarized is not pleasant. If you feel uncomfortable in this area of responsibility, helpful literature and the Student Code of Conduct Policy are available in Appendix B.
There are various types of academic dishonesty and as a TA you should become familiar with them and the procedures for pursuing charges of Academic Dishonesty.

**Cheating: What is it?**

Plagiarism is using another’s words or ideas without citing (giving credit to) the source. The source could be your teachers, fellow students (lab reports, computer programs, as well as papers), the Internet, books, published papers, newspapers, and magazines.

“Twofers” is submitting the same paper for two different classes, without permission from your professor(s).

**Cheating on Exams**

- Copying from another’s test paper
- Making a copy of a test and giving it to someone or using a test if someone gives it to you
- Using technology to take a test for someone or asking someone to take a test for you

**Inappropriate Collaboration**

- Working with others when you should be doing the work individually
- Not doing your share of work when assigned to a group project

**Zero Tolerance at ASU and Consequences of Cheating**

ASU’s policy on cheating is zero tolerance. If you are caught cheating, you could face severe short and long-term consequences, such as:

- **Grades**: you may fail the test or get a failing grade on the paper; you may fail the course.
- **“XE”**: you may receive this grade on your transcript signaling that you failed because you cheated. It is on your permanent academic record, which is seen by other schools and prospective employers.
- **Suspension/Expulsion**: you may be forced to leave the program (major) you are in and/or the university.
- **Other**: you could be denied admission into a professional program (undergraduate, graduate, medical, law, etc.). You could lose the opportunity for a job, scholarship, or invitations to join professional organizations.
- **Financial**: you may lose part/all of your financial aid, especially scholarships.

Most important of all, you may risk not being knowledgeable in your profession, and you may damage your reputation permanently. In short, cheating is not worth the cost!

**How to Avoid the Cheating Trap**

Develop strategies to avoid cheating or being tempted to cheat. Try these:

- Understand ASU’s expectations: Contact Student Judicial Affairs, 480-965-6547
- Read the ASU Student Code of Conduct and ASU’s Academic Integrity Policy at: https://provost.asu.edu/index.php?q=academicintegrity
- Ask questions. If you are not sure if something is really cheating, ask your professors, TAs and academic advisors.
- Seek tutoring. Ask your professors and others in your department for help finding academic support. Check out this resources:
  - Student Success Centers http://studentsuccess.asu.edu
  - Stay healthy. Learn how to keep stress in check at http://students.asu.edu/counseling
  - Make academic integrity a high priority.
Procedures for Pursuing Charges of Academic Dishonesty

These procedures are designed to encourage a fair and appropriate response to allegations of academic dishonesty. They may be modified in individual cases, so long as the student is provided an opportunity to respond to allegations of academic dishonesty within a reasonable time after those allegations have been made. An Advisor may accompany the student at any point in the process. The Advisor will not be permitted to participate directly or speak for the student, but may be present during meetings and hearings.

Complaint

- Anyone with a good faith basis for believing that a student has violated this policy may report the alleged violation to the responsible instructor, chair, dean, director or designee. The person who pursues the allegation is called the “Initiator” in this policy. If for any reason, an Initiator is unable or unwilling to continue in that role, another university representative may continue as Initiator.
- An individual who has received an allegation may decide not to initiate a complaint. This decision will not prevent another person from becoming the Initiator.

Response to Complaint

- An instructor who believes that a student has violated this policy in a class for which the instructor is responsible may assign any of the following sanctions:
  - a reduced grade for an assignment, or
  - a reduced grade for the course.
- If the instructor wants to recommend another sanction, including an XE grade, the instructor must forward that recommendation for review by the College/School Board and approval by the Dean, Director or designee. The student and the instructor will be provided an opportunity to provide information to the College/School Board as part of its review.
- At any time, the student and the Initiator may propose a resolution, but the Dean, Director, or designee, may choose to pursue the case on behalf of the University.
- Information regarding the allegation or resolution may be provided to appropriate university representatives.
- If the Initiator and the student are unable to agree on resolution, then the student, the Initiator, or a representative of the Dean or Director may submit the matter to the Dean, Director or designee of the College/School in which the alleged academic dishonesty occurred for review by the College/School Board.
- After a formal request for review has been filed, the student may remain in class or in the program until the appeal has been resolved. The student will not be given a refund, however, if the student is not successful in the appeal and the decision is made to remove the student from the class, program or university.
- If the matter is not submitted by the student to the Dean, Director or designee for review within 10 days following the time the student is accused of academic dishonesty, the decision or recommendation of the instructor becomes final. If the instructor has submitted a request for an XE or any other sanction to the Dean, Director or designee, and the student has not requested review within 10 days of receiving notice of this request, the Dean, Director, or designee may enter a decision on the request. Only if the decision includes suspension or expulsion from the university will the student be able to request further review.

For additional information, please refer to the Student Academic Integrity Policy, available on the web at https://provost.asu.edu/index.php?q=academicintegrity
Dealing with Grade Disputes

The professional responsibility for assigning grades is vested in the instructor of the course, and requires the careful application of professional judgment. However, make every effort to fairly hear and respond to student concerns. Here are a few tips for dealing with grade disputes.

- Only discuss a student’s grades in private. Have the student make an appointment to meet you in your office. If possible, ask to have the paper or exam so you can review it before the student arrives for the appointment. If the concern is a miscalculation of points ask the student to give you the paper, so you can re-total the points, and return it to the student at the next class session.
- Prepare for the student meeting by having your grading scheme and answer keys ready. You do not need to defend what you have done, but be prepared to explain it.
- The student may be right; you could have made a mistake, or the student may convince you the answer is appropriate. If this happens, be gracious. Apologize if it is your mistake and change the grade. If the student convinces you that the answer is correct, acknowledge you had not thought of that possibility and alter the points accordingly.
- If the student approaches you with a grade dispute for something you did not review, do not get involved. Tell the student to talk to the person who did the grading.
- If you and the student cannot resolve the dispute, meet with the course instructor. This will appease the honest student and discourage the one who might be trying to intimidate you.

Professional Problems

Problems with Professors (Your Supervisor)

- If you are having problems with your supervisor, i.e the course instructor:
  - Talk to your supervisor.
  - Discuss the problem with another professor whom you respect.
  - Talk to the head of your department if you cannot resolve the issue.
- If students are having problems with the course instructor:
  - Do not get caught between the course instructor and the students in these kinds of disputes.
  - You can listen to the students long enough to find out what the problem is, then help them to devise a manner in which they can deal with it. It is policy that they talk to the course instructor, the department head, and the faculty dean, in that order.

Annoying Situations in the Classroom

As TA the challenging situations you will face will more likely involve annoying student behavior rather than serious student problems. Learning how to handle these quickly and effectively will make the course more enjoyable for you and the other students. Here are some brief characterizations of “problem” students encountered by TAs before you, along with suggestions from experienced TAs for handling these difficulties in a positive manner.

The Loud-mouth

There is a young man in the first row who talks too much: he blurts out answers before others have a chance, asks complicated questions off the subject being discussed, or holds forth at length on a pet topic. An occasional digression is fine, but if this behavior persists for several meetings you need to take action.

Start indirectly, trying to head off trouble by saying “Let’s spread the answers around a bit,” and obviously passing over the loud-mouth, or saying, “That’s a fascinating topic; let’s discuss it after class.”
A subsequent strategy is to talk directly to the student one on one. After class breaks up ask the student to stay for a minute. Then in the empty classroom, in an office, or over coffee where you can talk privately, explain that you have a problem and ask for the student’s help. (The problem is indeed yours; after all, talking too much is not causing any pain to this student.) Tell the student that you value participation and wish more students contributed. If this student’s answers are generally good, say so. Do not criticize, but point out matter-of-factly the difficulty of involving everyone if someone dominates. If the student’s knowledge of the subject is really advanced, should that student be in another class? When the point has been made and acknowledged, change the subject. At the end repeat your determination to involve everyone in class.

The Possible Date

It is a situation that occurs in various sexual guises, but typically let’s say you are a teacher of average libido, who can’t help notice an attractive student who sits in the second row, asks good questions, and sometimes comes up after class with a comment. You find yourself drawn to this student and wonder if you should ask this person for coffee, dinner, or a show. Our advice is simple—DON’T.

You are not equals: this is a power relationship. This means that if you have misinterpreted things and the student does not really want to go out with you, you may leave the student feeling pressured and unhappy. Even if the student does like you and you become involved with each other, the unequal relationship and possible sense of ulterior motives on either side can make for a lot of grief or trouble. Even if the two of you can manage it, others in the class will be suspicious and cynical, and your relationship with them will deteriorate. So, don’t make a move until the term is over and the grades are out.

The Silent Student

“You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say may be used against you.” Students should have at least as much right to silence as those arrested for a crime. No one can or should force participation. Nevertheless, students who attend regularly but never speak up may be waiting for encouragement. Learn their names; when handing back assignments, compliment a particular solution if you can; ask them to come in during your office hour. After calling on three or four others in class, call on the silent one by name. None of these strategies may work. That is all right. Only gentleness is justified here.

The Dependent Student

It may be flattering to have a student continually asking questions after class, filling your office hours, perhaps seeking extensive personal advice. It can also be a pain in the neck. If so, you have to decide where the problem is and act.

- If the student has too weak a background because of missing prerequisites, it is not your job to supply these by personal tutoring. Recommend delaying the subject a term or a transfer to an easier version of the course if one is available.
- If the prerequisites are all there, but the student is just very weak in the subject, you do have some responsibility to help. However, it should be shared with the other tutoring services available through the Student Success Centers see Appendix A. Set firm boundaries on the amount of time you can spend and let the student know.
- Some students are “dependent types” they like to be taken care of, or are used to leaning on someone. But this does not have to be you. Encourage them to stand on their own feet: “I could help you with this, but I think you’ll learn more doing it by yourself.”
- The student may be personally attracted to you, may want to be friends, or just enjoy spending time with you, possibly without realizing this explicitly. There’s nothing wrong with this, but if you are unhappy about it, or cannot afford the time, there are many subtle ways to show that personal attention is unwelcome. Be businesslike, but tactful.
The Troubled Student

Students may come to you with personal or academic problems, because they like and trust you. Listen as you would listen to a friend who wanted to talk, and respond as you would to a friend, offering what advice you can.

If you feel more experienced guidance is called for—this will certainly be so if the problems are serious, with possibly deep-lying causes—then be wary of offering too much advice of your own. It is better to refer the student to one of the University’s counseling resources. Never promise a student complete confidentiality. It is important that the student know that you may be able to avoid using names but that you will have to talk to someone for your own health and safety, as well as the student’s. In general, for serious cases, try to have the student make the appropriate appointment by phone while still in your office.

A list of campus resources is included in Appendix A. If you are not sure what the best thing to do is, call and ask for advice. If a life may be at stake, it does not matter how unlikely you think it is, act fast. If nothing else, contact the dean’s office and voice your concerns.
OFFICE HOURS AND ADVISING STUDENTS

Office Hours

Office hours should be noted on your syllabus, on your office door, and announced in your classes. Office hours are an important extension of the classroom. (Not all departments have space for graduate offices. If this is the case in your department, find out the usual procedure for making yourself available to your students.) Office hours provide an opportunity and place where the University environment can be personalized. Students are not necessarily required to come in during those times. Make sure that the office hours you set are appropriate to the students’ needs. For example, try to schedule your office hours before classes meet if possible. You will also need to be sure that your office hours don’t conflict with office hours held by your office-mates.

For a first visit/introduction to your office some TAs find it useful to invite students to their office - two at a time. This ensures that they know where you are located and eases the stress of a first meeting. It may be easiest to do this when you hand back the first assignment.

As an integral part of teaching, your office hours should be included in the workload allocation you arrive at with your supervisor. The number of office hours you hold must be discussed jointly. No matter how many you schedule, however, you will no doubt also find it necessary to be available at other times. Announce with your scheduled hours that you will meet students at other times by appointment. It is extremely important that you make it clear that you are also a student and require notice to schedule appointments around your own work. Some TAs choose to hand out their home numbers. You may decide to do this, but be prepared to be called at all hours unless you make the “appropriate” hours VERY clear. Tell them your response time for returning calls and emails.

Finally, be reliable. If you can’t make an appointment or will not be present during your posted office hours, leave a message and an alternative time.

Giving Personal Assistance

Students will come to your office for a variety of reasons. You may find yourself helping a student with the material for your course, with the logistics of a course that contains unfamiliar material, or with a personal problem. Be aware of ways to facilitate a helpful tutorial or counseling session.

Try to be as approachable as possible. The best thing to do when a student comes in during your office hours is to make him or her feel welcome. It is very easy to make students feel that they are intruding; it takes only a little bit of care to create a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere in which communication is natural and easy.

- Rely on the student to tell you what he or she has come to see you about. You may suspect some hidden problem, but you should not press the student to disclose it. You can help students if they actively request your help, but your responsibility need not extend further than your expectations.
- Listen to your students when they come to your office. Give them your undivided attention. This is all part of making students feel welcome and encouraging communication. The best way to show that you are listening is to ask questions, it also shows students that you find their concerns important. Students often fear that they are wasting your time; by listening attentively and responding thoroughly, you can help allay their anxiety.
- Realize that you won’t always be able to provide the answers or information that is needed. There is nothing wrong with saying, “I don’t know, but I can find out for you.”
In a situation where the student is asking for more personal counseling, remember there are trained professional for this purpose. If you feel that the student needs more specific advice, you may be able to suggest someone who can provide it. Appendix A provides a referral list for you. When in doubt, always consult the faculty member you are working with, especially if you feel that a student may be having serious emotional or other difficulties.

**Letters of Recommendation**

Students may ask you to recommend them for a job, acceptance to another institution, or graduate school. If you do not feel you know the student well enough, simply explain why not. If you are willing to write the letter, do so promptly, while you still have the student and his or her performance sharply in mind. A carefully written and thoughtful letter takes time and you are a busy person, but remember that others have done and will do the same for you.

Ask if there is a specific form to be used or whether a letter is needed. Have the student note the nature of the job or situation for which he or she is applying and any particular abilities that you might mention. Then be as specific as possible. Focus on the student’s best points, but don’t exaggerate; be honest. Be sure to define the context within which you knew the person, e.g. in class, as an advisor formally or informally, and state over what period of time. If you later see the student for whom you wrote the recommendation, ask about the results. This not only lets the student know you are interested but gives you feedback on your own letter-writing efforts.

Keep your old grade books for some time. Students may call upon you long after a class is finished. Some instructors make a habit of noting both good and not-so-good points about students in the margins of their grade books. This serves as a mental refresher if it has been some time since you last dealt with the student.

Keep in mind that you are legally responsible for statements you make in your recommendation, to the extent, at least, that you are liable for any deleterious remarks you make. If you have reason to be concerned about something you want to express, preface what you have to say with something like “To the best of my knowledge…”
CREATING A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

It is a violation of ASU policy to discriminate against any employee or student on the basis of that individual’s race, color, religion, national origin, citizenship, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, Vietnam-era veteran status, special disabled veteran status, other protected veteran status, newly separated veteran status, or any other unlawful discriminatory grounds. A safe learning and working environment encompasses protection from physical danger on campus, freedom from threat, intimidation, harassment, and hostile behavior. Significant indicators of a positive climate are that individuals feel valued and respected and believe they are treated fairly. You will all be spending many hours together during the semester. Make the classroom a place where everyone wants to be. Students who feel comfortable in the classroom will have better attendance, participate more, and take their education more seriously. There are several things you can do to help create a positive environment:

**Exhibit Enthusiasm for the Course**

Most likely, you will be in the academic area you have chosen for yourself. Remember what drew you to this field and made you want to spend a lifetime in it. What first interested you in the subject; what continues to interest you; how it has been/continues to be important in your life; why did you want to teach this course?

**Learn Names**

- jot down distinguishing features as you take attendance
- hand out table tents and name cards each day until you can get them all right
- collect a class/discussion group picture - then quiz yourself
- hand out assignments personally
- ask students to visit you in your office
- when students tell you their name, repeat it back in a sentence
- ask students to sit in the same chair for the first few weeks and create a seating chart

**Give students the opportunity to meet each other**

- have students get in to small groups and introduce themselves
- have students group themselves by residence halls, majors, favorite color, etc…
- pair up students and have them interview each other outside of class. The next session, they can introduce one another to the class. Additionally, you may want them to write up their introduction and turn it in as an assignment to assess writing skills.
- conduct a “people search.” Hand out a piece of paper with 5-10 statements and a space for a signature near each statement. The statements should be a mix of personal and academic, i.e.: “Someone who has already purchased the textbook,” “Someone with a birthday the same month as yours.” Set a time limit (10-15 minutes) for students to gather as many signatures as possible (each person can sign each paper only once, even if they qualify for more than one statement). Use the information to create a class profile.

**Building Trust with Your Students**

The importance of trust in the student-teacher relationship cannot be overemphasized. Two components of trustworthiness are teacher credibility and teacher authenticity.

Do not deny your credibility. It is important to acknowledge your students’ ideas, experiences and abilities; however, be careful not to undermine your own credibility. Be confident that you have earned your position as a TA. Make sure your words and action are congruent. Avoid saying one thing and doing another or espousing principles that you do not believe in or put into practice.
Be ready to admit your errors. Such admissions will help reduce the tension students feel about their own need to be seen as perfect by their peers and teachers.

Reveal aspects of yourself unrelated to teaching. When you reveal aspects of yourself that do not relate to your teaching role, it makes you appear more human to your students.

Show that you take your students seriously. Listen carefully to any concerns, anxieties or problems voiced by students. Arrange opportunities and provide encouragement for students to speak out about what is on their minds. Never let an issue go unresolved.

Do not play favorites. Playing favorites quickly destroys teacher credibility. Avoid showing preference through verbal and non-verbal cues. Realize the power of your own role modeling. Acknowledge the symbolic significance of your actions, and ensure that these actions are perceived as authentic by students.

**For Returning Adult Students**

Most returning adult students have sacrificed a lot to be in school, and are often very conscious of risking failure. This fear of failure or embarrassment may mean that these students will be reluctant to speak in class, or that they will undergo a great deal of stress over their academic performance. They might have difficulty with being corrected, especially if their TA is considerably younger than them. Bear this in mind when making comments (written or oral) and try to be tactful.

Years of absence from school can lead some mature students to have inefficient study habits or unrealistic expectations of their capacities. You might want to offer special assistance in these areas, or recommend remedial workshops and courses.

The wealth of life experiences brought to the classroom by an older student may mean that they will favor “real world experience” over theory. Where a younger student may need to be reminded to take practice into account, older students may need to be steered in the other direction.

Mature students can easily feel marginalized from the rest of the student body. TAs should be extra careful not to encourage this through classroom dynamics.

Many mature students have work or family-related demands and stresses that need to be taken into account.

**For International Students**

Language often acts as a barrier for students from other cultures or languages, either because they are conscious of their accents or dialects, or because they are sometimes unable to find the right words when under pressure. Take the time to listen carefully to what all of your students are trying to say. Rephrasing a question or response may prove helpful, but try not to pressure your students when they are speaking.

Some international students may be from a culture in which education is more authoritarian, or where public dissent and debate are not encouraged. Creating an open and supportive environment in your classes will go a long way towards dealing with this problem. Encourage international and English as a Second Language (ESL) students to speak in class, but do not push too hard.

Sometimes the words we use, the speed at which we speak, or the culturally-based examples we use (e.g. examples drawn from television shows) will prevent international students from understanding what we are saying. A puzzled or bored look may be a sign that there is a problem with comprehension. New terminology should always be written on the board and defined, and difficult concepts should be explained as graphically and concretely as possible. Colloquialisms and irony may be ineffective when communicating ideas that we
want the students to understand exactly. Address your explanations and clarifications to all students in the class, not just international students.

Many international and ESL students will benefit from opportunities to submit drafts of essays for preliminary comments and advice. Students may be embarrassed to admit to difficulties of comprehension, so you might need to approach them outside class in a sensitive and personable way to ensure that they understand the material.

Like mature students, international or ESL students can easily feel discriminated against. If you suspect racism, or are aware that one of your students is or has been racially harassed, contact the Office of Equity and Inclusion, (480)965–5057, regarding questions or complaints of discrimination or sexual harassment.

**For Students with Special Needs**

Remember, think of the person before the disability. Students requiring accommodation are differently abled but they are intelligent, capable people first and foremost.

Students with vision impairment, motor coordination difficulties, or hearing impairments may require note-takers, copies of overheads and class notes, and special testing situations. If this is the case your supervisor should be notified and the Disability Resource Center should be contacted for advice. Students who require note-takers may solicit your help early in the term to find a volunteer. These volunteers will be trained and paid by the Disability Resource Center.

Students with learning disabilities may vary widely in the type of special accommodation required. Specialized testing and recommendations are available through the Disability Resource Center.

Students using wheelchairs may need few special arrangements, though you may want to leave a little extra time for them to arrive. Lab stations may require some modification in order to accommodate wheelchairs.

In the case of emergencies, the TA should ensure the safety of their students. Some students with disabilities may require special assistance evacuating a building in case of fire or a fire drill. Consult your hiring academic unit or the office of Environmental Health and Safety (http://www.asu.edu/uagc/EHS/) if you do not have evacuation information for your classroom. If you require more information on assisting a student with special needs, or if one of your students needs more information or support, visit the Disability Resource Center at http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc/.

**For Women**

Anyone can inadvertently fall into behavior in the classroom which is not gender inclusive. While women may be more sensitive to the concerns of female students, this is not always the case. Deeply rooted patterns of behavior towards women in our society can lead any of us to marginalize the classroom contributions of women students. Subtleties such as using a distinct tone of voice or different mannerisms with female students can have the effect of discouraging women students from achieving their full academic potential. For instance, studies have shown that:

- Women students are more frequently interrupted when speaking, and instructors make more eye contact with male students. The implication for a woman is that her contributions are less important then those of the male students. Extra care should be taken that no student is persistently interrupted, and that all students are paid equal attention in discussions and lectures.

- Female students and instructors are more often judged according to appearance rather than accomplishments; and women’s successes, rather than being attributed to intelligence, are more often seen as the result of diligence or luck. This degrades the academic struggles of women, and inhibits
them from striving to do their best. Judge students on their academic merits, and accord similar praise to all academic successes.

- Certain academic projects or issues (or even disciplines) are seen as being particularly appropriate or inappropriate for women. This tends to “ghettoize” women in certain occupations, and can work to inhibit them from attempting to enter non-traditional fields of study or research projects. Your job is to facilitate and enrich students’ education, and not to constrain or destroy it.

- Language patterns, such as the regular use of male referencing, or of the generic “he” or “mankind” persist throughout the academic community. This serves to exclude the historical contributions of women, and often makes the women in the classroom feel invisible or unimportant. Rather than saying something like “Man is descended from the apes”, we can easily say “Humans descended from the apes.” OR instead of male-only examples or assumptions of maleness such as “When the doctor found the broken bone, he began to…”, we can either alternate our examples from she to he, or use more generic terminology (e.g. “..they will”).

- Women students are more often the targets of sexist jokes or other forms of sexual harassment in and outside of the classroom. As a general rule, if you think a joke may offend someone, then don’t tell it or tolerate others telling it.

For Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Students

While a person is not wholly defined by sexual orientation, it is a major component of one’s life.

Creating a comfortable environment for gay, lesbian and bisexual students may reduce some emotional barriers to learning. There are some things that you can do as a TA to contribute to the development of a welcoming learning environment for these students:

- Confront homophobic jokes. Target these jokes both inside and outside the classroom.
- Remember that you often do not know what the sexual orientations of your students and co-workers may be, never presume someone’s sexual orientation.
- Do not make assumptions- gay, lesbian and bisexual students often do not fit stereotypes. Gay, lesbian and bisexual students may be in wheelchairs, or they may be foreign students (to name some examples).
- These students may be facing extra pressures. For example, the fear of “coming out” often carries with it concerns about the associated loss of economic and emotional support. As with mature students, on occasion these stresses may need to be taken into account.
- Language often acts as a barrier.
- Use gender inclusive language such as partner or spouse.
- Where applicable use positive examples of different lifestyle choices (eg. inspirations of gay poets in literature). Silence of this kind of material can indicate censoring.
- Homophobia often controls the disciplines and professions that people go into (eg. nursing, rehab, engineering, etc.). Encourage students equally to pursue their interests beyond the limits of traditional fields.
- Finally, if a student comes out to you, treat it as a privilege and in total confidence. There are a number of resources to which students may be directed on campus. The Office of Academic Excellence and Inclusion is a unit within the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost of the University at ASU [http://diversity.asu.edu/institutional-inclusion](http://diversity.asu.edu/institutional-inclusion) Staff provide leadership and resources that facilitate the University’s responsiveness to diversity and equity in its policies, practices, and structures.
For Ethnic Groups

- Confront racial slurs and associated jokes both inside and outside the classroom.
- Remember that different racial and religious groups often celebrate different holidays. Some students will miss classes which conflict with their religious or cultural celebrations. An extensive list of religious holidays is available at http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/studentlife/religiousadvisors/religious_holidays.htm
- Students may not fit into traditional stereotypes. Never make assumptions about a student’s background or ability.
- Encourage students to voice different views or perspectives freely and furthermore, give these views consideration and support where possible.
- Do not use or tolerate the use of language which discriminates against any minority.
LEADING DISCUSSIONS

Class Discussion

This section will look at strategies for consideration, setting ground rules for discussion participation, and ideas on starting, guiding, and evaluating the discussion.

Why use discussion?

Class/group discussion can serve many functions. These discussions may help them to learn to formulate theories or concepts in their own words, and to suggest applications of these theories or concepts. They help to clarify students’ thought processes as they verbally and interactively work through information/ideas. Discussion may be used to help students discover or define problems in a reading or lecture. Or they may function simply to make students aware of alternative points of view, and to develop critical and dialectical skills within an environment of respect and tolerance. Often, discussion periods are the only time students get the chance to voice their ideas, and therefore actively engage in a critical part of the learning process. Initiating and sustaining a lively, productive discussion are among the most challenging of activities for a teacher.

General Strategies

 Keep in mind the purpose of discussion.
 Plan how each discussion will be conducted and time allotted.
 Explain to students your expectations for class participation on the first day and at the beginning of the first few discussion sessions until all are familiar with the procedures.

Setting the Context

 Set the ground rules. Must students raise their hands? Will they be acknowledged by the instructor or another student? Will students be called upon if their hands aren’t raised? Are students allowed to “pass” if they wish not to participate? Will there be a penalty for this? Will there be a maximum time allotted for each speaker? Who/how will keep time?
 Teach students how to appropriately participate in a group discussion. Explain that often there is no one “right” answer.
 Students need to be respectful of one another and listen to opposing views. They are to be critical of ideas, NOT people.
 They should listen even if they don’t agree.
 They should try to understand all sides of the issue.
 They should be willing to change their minds when the presented evidence clearly indicates a reason to do so.
 They should avoid interrupting the flow of discussion or changing topics. If they are worried about forgetting their thoughts, suggest they write them down while waiting their turn.
 They should avoid long stories, anecdotes, or examples.
 They should give encouragement and approval to others through verbal and physical cues.
 They should seek out differences of opinion as they enhance the discussion.

How to prepare?

Be sure to let students know ahead of time how they can best prepare for the discussion period. They need to know what reading should be done and/or what activities should be completed before they come to class. Further, they can:

 outline the readings
- summarize the main ideas
- re-write smaller passages in their own words
- list any questions they may have
- relate a part of the reading to a person, experience and/or another text they have read

**Starting a Discussion**

- Pose an opening question and give students a few minutes to write down their thoughts/answers before allowing anyone to speak. This allows students a moment to process without feeling “slow.”
- Ask students to share an important incident from their own lives that relates to the topic. Explore commonalities and differences between experiences.
- Generate a list of key points and write on board.
- Ask students to pose the “dumbest” question they can think of. This relaxes students who may be afraid of speaking up in public and encourages creative thinking. Have the class sift through the questions and see if they can reword it into a “smart” question.
- Ask a controversial question and have students group themselves by the pro or con position they wish to take. Have each group generate two or three brief arguments to support their position. Write each group’s statements on the board and then open up for general discussion.
- Have students complete a brief questionnaire. Use the responses such as “Sally, I see you answered negative to question #1. Why?” Then, “David, I see you answered in the positive to question #1. Why?” Or form groups based on the answers and have them present “reasons.”

**Guiding the Discussion**

- Write down key points as students are speaking and use them to continue discussion, pull discussion back into focus, or as a way of summarizing the session.
- Keep the discussion focused. Ways to bring the discussion back are: “We seem to have lost sight of the original point. Let’s pick up the notion again that…” “James, you have a good point, but does it directly apply to the issue of…” “This is all very interesting, but we also need to talk about…before we end today.”
- Clarify students’ confusions. Clear up misunderstandings before allowing the discussion to disintegrate.
- Encourage passionate debate but prevent it from deteriorating into a heated argument or becoming personal attacks. Defuse with a calm remark such as:
  - Let’s slow down a moment.
  - Hold on. It’s not helpful when five people jump all over what their classmate says. Let’s give Mary a break.
  - It seems like we need to identify those areas we can agree upon and those areas where we disagree. Let’s start with those things we agree with.
  - This isn’t getting us anywhere. Those who wish to continue on this point can do so outside of class. Let’s move on to a new topic.
  - I hear a lot of statements but very little evidence. Bring some proof to support your position to the next class, and we can continue the discussion on an academic level.
- Signs that a discussion is NOT going well include:
  - Excessive hair splitting or nit-picking
  - Repetition of points
  - Private/side conversations
  - Members taking sides and refusing to compromise
  - Ideas being attacked before they are completely expressed
  - Apathetic participation
- Introducing a new question or activity can jump start the discussion. In some cases, you may want ask students why they feel the discussion is faltering.
- Bring closure to the discussion with a summary which shows students how they have progressed through the topic. Emphasize a few key elements and provide an overview for the next class.
- Assign students the responsibility of summarizing the key elements of the discussion.
- Have students turn in a card/paper with one thing they learned and one question they still have. Use the statements as a review and questions as a beginning point for the next discussion.

**Evaluating the Discussion**

- Did everyone contribute?
- Did you dominate the discussion?
- Did one or a few student(s) dominate the discussion?
- What was the quality of comments?
- What questions worked well? Which didn’t?
- How satisfied did the students seem with the discussion?
- How did the discussion enhance the student’s understanding of the topic?

**Difficulties in Moderating Discussions**

If you habitually can’t get discussions started, you first need to pay attention to the topics you’re picking; they may not be broad enough. Or, you may not be using good questioning skills—putting people on the spot or embarrassing them.

If one or two students consistently monopolize the floor, there are many causes at work, but the end result is a great deal of tension. You don’t want to reject the one student, but then you don’t want to alienate the rest of the class. You may want to take one of two approaches. Either you can use their comments to throw the discussion back to the class (“You’ve raised an important point. Maybe others would like to comment.”), or you can acknowledge the comments and offers another outlet (“Those ideas deserve a lot more time. Maybe we can discuss them after class.”)

If there is a lull in the discussion, relax. This doesn’t mean you’ve failed. Every conversation needs a chance to catch its breath. It may mean that your topic is exhausted or it may be a pause for people to digest what they’ve heard. If the lull comes too frequently, though, you may need to give more attention to the types of topics you’re picking. You may also be inadvertently shutting down discussion by dominating rather than facilitating.

If students are talking only to you instead of to each other, you are probably focusing too intently on the speaker. You can help students talk to each other by leading with your eyes, looking occasionally at others in the room. This will lead the speaker to do likewise. Remember that some students are often more hesitant to speak in class (particularly if they feel they are in a minority). If you notice that a particular group of students are dominating the discussion, or that others are habitually silent, make a point of drawing those students into the discussion gently when you see that they have something to contribute but are unwilling to do so. (“Alex, you seem to disagree with that opinion. How would you approach that subject?”). In such cases, be careful not to put students on the spot, and when a response is made, try to be especially appreciative. You may want to make a point of speaking to these students before or after class to indicate your interest in hearing their views in class more often.

If you run out of material before the end of class, ask your students if there are other topics they might be interested in discussing. If not, let them go early. Don’t keep them the whole hour just for form’s sake.
If a fight breaks out over an issue, then you’ve got a hot topic on your hands! Facilitate! Your major task here is to keep the argument focused on the issues. Don’t let it turn personal, under any circumstances.

**Discussion Questions**

Sometimes the course instructor will give specific questions to be covered in the class session. If you aren’t given clear and specific questions by your supervisor, you will want to prepare some on your own. That way, if the discussion is sluggish, you will have some material with which to spark a discussion. In addition, this will allow you to anticipate questions that may arise, and to formulate strategies for dealing with those questions.

By learning to handle questions effectively in the classroom, TAs can accomplish a number of interrelated goals. First, by engaging students in dialogue, the usual “one-way” flow of information from TA to students is transformed into a more interactive process. Second, encouraging students to ask questions helps them become more active participants in their own learning. Finally, skillful questioning by the TA can encourage students to engage in higher level cognitive processes (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), thus helping to develop students’ critical thinking capacities.

**When developing discussion group questions, you may want to keep the following in mind:**

- A good way to ensure that your students will be prepared for a discussion group is to give them a few pages of assigned readings, and have them look for the essential points, the weakest argument, etc. Another idea is to have the students spend a couple of minutes writing about something they found interesting about a lecture or a reading, and then discuss what they wrote. Or you can break up into smaller groups to discuss certain questions, and then come back together as a group to discuss the answers arrived at.

- When a question is related to a text that the students were expected to read, it is best to make specific references to the text. This will help to develop the students’ critical reading skills, by showing them what kinds of questions to ask themselves when reading the course material. It will also provide students with a model of how to give textual evidence to support an interpretation of a text.

- In order to develop useful questions, always try to avoid ambiguity, and don’t use closed questions that require yes or no answers. Make the questions interesting and relevant by using real life examples that the students can relate to. Also, it is very important that the students be encouraged to develop their own examples when they are dealing with your questions.

- The kinds of questions that are most helpful for stirring discussion are ones that require students to make an evaluation (requiring clear and consistent application of standards), or an inference (involving deductive application of principles or an inductive formulation of principles from a series of premises). Sometimes it is also useful to formulate questions that consider the cause and/or effect of events or ideas, or questions that require a comparison of situations, theories, applications, etc. Another particularly useful (though controversial) kind of question for generating a discussion is one which elicits suggestions of solutions to practical, everyday problems.

- Generally, your questions should be aimed at the whole group. Questions that are directed at a particular person should be used only after allowing a long pause for a reply. Though questioning students directly can be useful for speeding things up and for cutting off overly talkative students, this style of questioning can sometimes mean that the other students will “get off the hook” by not being expected to provide a reply. In addition, direct questions can often put a student in the awkward position of looking foolish if they suddenly go blank or hadn’t previously considered the question.

- Questions can also be crafted in such a way that they will necessarily elicit a response from at least someone in the group. For instance, a negative question (eg. “Shouldn’t we do so-and-so in that situation?”) can be very useful if the suggested action doesn’t logically follow. Outrageous questions that rely on silly suppositions will be difficult for anyone to accept, and therefore are also very useful.
for stirring up an unusually dead crowd. However, when using these tactics, always be prepared to admit to defeat or silliness, or your students will otherwise begin to suspect your other, more serious questions.

To improve your use of questioning:

- After asking a question, wait for at least three to five seconds for a response. Do not answer the question yourself. Then repeat it, rephrase it, modify it, call on another student to answer it, or replace it with another question. Students need time to think about the question and prepare their responses. The research indicates that with a wait-time of three to five seconds, students respond more, use complex cognitive processes, and begin to ask more questions. One word of caution is in order here, though. Sometimes when discussion leaders reword questions because they believe that the initial question is unclear, the result is greater student confusion. Students may not know which question to try to answer. In short, ask a question, wait, and thereby express your expectation to receive a response and your willingness to listen to it. Be patient.

- Ask only one question at a time. Do not ask a string of questions one after the other in the same utterance. For example, ask, “Compare the skeleton of an ape with that of a human.” Do not ask, “How are apes and humans alike? Are they alike in bone structure and/or family structure and/or places where they live?” A series of questions tends to confuse students. They are not able to determine just what the questioner is requesting from them.

- When student questions are desired, request them explicitly, wait, and then acknowledge student contributions. For example, you may wish to solicit questions about the plays of Shakespeare which the class has been studying. You might say, “Are there any questions or clarifications of points we have raised?” or “Please ask questions about the main characters or the minor characters, whichever you wish at this point,” or “In the light of Sally’s allusion to Lady MacBeth, I invite you to ask her some questions for embellishment or clarification.” Indicate to students that questions are not a sign of stupidity but rather the manifestation of concern and thought about the topic. Be very careful not to convey subtly or even jokingly the message that a student is stupid for asking for clarification or restatement of an idea already raised in class or in the text.

- Distribute questions one or two sessions before and assign a group to prepare answers to each question.

- Use a variety of probing and explaining questions. Ask questions that require different approaches to the topic, such as causal, functional, or chronological explanations. Avoid beginning your question with the words “why” and “explain”, and instead phrase your questions with words which give stronger clues about the type of explanation sought. Thus, for a chronological explanation, instead of asking, “Why did we have a depression in the 1930’s?” try “What series of events led up to the stock market crash of 1929 and the high unemployment in the 1930’s?”

Sample Question Starters

A good way of developing questions is to consider the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. More commonly referred to as Bloom’s Taxonomy, based on the work of educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom, these objectives are based on skills that educators set for students. These learning objectives are divided into three “domains”: Affective, Psychomotor, and Cognitive. While the goal is to address all three domains, most educators focus on the Cognitive domain. By ordering your questions to start with the base level of Bloom’s Taxonomy (Knowledge) and work up through the higher levels of the Cognitive domain, you can instruct and encourage students to think more complexly about the presented information. Following is a brief description of each level of the Cognitive domain, example “question starters” for each, and additional key words to consider in developing your own questions.
Knowledge: Memory recall of facts, examples, data, terminology, basic concepts, trends, sequences, theories, etc… (basically “flash card” information)

- What is/was…
- Who is/was…
- How did/does…
- Why did/does…
- Give x number of examples for…
- List…
- Define…
- How would you describe

Key Words: identify, know, label, match, memorize, name, order, outline, recall, recognize, repeat, reproduce, select, state

Comprehension: Demonstrate an understanding of “knowledge” by organizing, categorizing, comparing, contrasting, interpreting, describing, translating, stating in “own words,” etc…

- Compare…
- Contrast…
- Describe…
- Explain why…
- Explain how…

Key Words: classify, comprehend, convert, defend, discuss, distinguish, estimate, extend, generalize, give examples, infer, interpret, paraphrase, predict, rewrite, summarize

Application: Using acquired knowledge in new situations to solve unfamiliar situations with familiar knowledge, i.e. use classroom knowledge to solve problems in the work place.

- What examples support…
- Predict the result of…
- Demonstrate…
- Solve…
- Illustrate…
- Write…

Key Words: apply, change, choose, compute, construct, discover, dramatize, employ, interpret, manipulate, modify, operate, practice, prepare, produce, relate, schedule, show, use

Analysis: Identify motives and causes, make inferences and support generalizations with evidence; analyze elements, relationships, organizational principles; differentiate between facts and inferences, etc…

- How would you classify…
- How would you support the claim…
- How would you refute the claim…
- How is x related to y?
- How would you categorize…
- What motive is there?
- Identify the relationship between…
- What conclusions can you draw?
- Justify…

Key Words: analyze, appraise, break down, calculate, compare, contrast, diagram, deconstruct, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, illustrate, infer, outline, question, select, separate, test

Synthesis: Propose alternate solutions, plans, or set of operations; derive abstract relations; build a structure or pattern from diverse elements with a focus on creating a new structure/solution, etc…
Predict the outcome of...
How would you change/improve...
What would happen if...
What was/were the reason(s) for...

**Key Words:** arrange, assemble, categorize, combine, compile, compose, create, devise, design, develop, explain, formulate, generate, manage, modify, organize, plan, prepare, rearrange, reconstruct, relate, reorganize, revise, rewrite, summarize

**Evaluation:** Using a pre-determined set of criteria to judge information, the validity of ideas, and/or quality of work, to be able to state and defend opinions. (The why/why not follow up question is necessary in evaluation questions.)

- Do you agree with...? Why/not?
- Which solution is better?
- What is your opinion of...
- Would you recommend...
- How could you determine...
- What choice would you have made?
- How would you explain...
- What data was used in the determination?

**Key Words:** appraise, argue, assess, compare, conclude, contrast, criticize, critique, defend, describe, discriminate, estimate, evaluate, interpret, justify, rate, relate, summarize, support

**Rewarding Student Participation and Providing Feedback**

In responding to students there are some guidelines which can positively reinforce good student responses and facilitate further discussion.

- Praise the student in a strong, positive way for a correct or positive response. Use such terms as “excellent answer,” “absolutely correct,” “bull’s eye,” etc. These terms are quite different from the common mild phrases often used such as “O.K.,” “Hmm Hmm,” and “All right.” Especially when the response is long, try to find at least some part that deserves praise and then comment on it.
- Make comments pertinent to the specific student response. For example, suppose that a student has offered an excellent response to the question, “What function did the invasion of the Falklands serve for Argentina?” You might say, “That was excellent. You included national political reasons as well as mentioning the Argentine drive to become the South American leader...” This response gives an excellent rating to the student in an explicit and strong form. It also demonstrates that you have listened carefully to the student’s ideas.
- Build on the student’s response. If you continue to discuss a point after a student response, try to incorporate the key elements of the response into the discussion. By using the student's response, you show that the points made were valuable. By referring to the student explicitly by name (eg. “As Pat pointed out, the Falklands’ national political status...”) you give credit where credit is due.
- Avoid the “Yes, but...” reaction. This response is often used when a response is wrong or at least partly wrong. The overall impact of these phrases is negative and deceptive even though the intent is probably positive. The “Yes, but...” tactic says that the response is correct or appropriate with one breath and then takes away the praise with the next.

**Some straight-forward alternatives can be recommended:**

- Wait a count of five with the expectation that another student will volunteer a correct or better response.
- Ask “How did you arrive at that response? (Be careful, though, not to ask this question only when you receive inadequate responses; ask it also at times when you receive a perfectly good response).
- Say “You’re right regarding X and that’s great; wrong regarding Y. Now we need to correct Y so we can get everything correct.”
- Say, “Thanks. Is there someone who wants to respond to the question or comment on the response we’ve already heard?”

These alternatives are obviously not adequate to fit all cases. Indeed, it is generally difficult to field wrong or partially wrong responses because students are sensitive to criticism. However, with these alternatives as examples, you will probably be able to generate others as needed.

**Alternative Discussion Methods**

In addition to group discussion, any of the following methods may be used, depending on the purpose:

**Buzz Groups**

Description- Allows for total participation by group members through small subgroups of participants, followed with discussion by the entire group.

- **When Used**- When participation from every group member is desired. In conjunction with other group methods.
- **Procedure**- Prepare one to two questions on the topic to give each group. Divide the members into small subgroups of 2 to 4 individuals. A leader is chosen in each subgroup to record and report pertinent ideas to the whole group.
- **Limitations**- Thought must be given to the purpose and organization of the groups (e.g. a variety of ability levels). Success is also dependent upon the kinds of questions selected or the suitability of those questions.

**Panels**

Description- A discussion in conversational form among a selected group of persons with a leader, in front of an audience that joins in later.

- **When Used**- As a technique to stimulate interest and thinking, to provoke better discussion.
- **Procedure**- The leader plans with the four to six panel members, each of whom are given a specific topic to study. The panel discusses informally without set speeches. Leader opens the discussion to the group and summarizes.
- **Limitations**- Can get off track. The personality of the speakers can overshadow the content of the discussion. A vocal speaker can monopolize the program of the leader is unaffected.

**Symposium**

Description- A discussion in which a topic is broken into various parts: each part is presented by an expert or well informed person in a brief, concise speech.

- **When Used**- When specific information is desired.
- **Procedure**- Facilitator meets with three or four group members and plans an outline. Participants are introduced and give reports. The group questions the speakers. Facilitator summarizes.
- **Limitations**- Can get off track. Personality of the speakers can overshadow the content. A vocal speaker can monopolize the conversation. Speaking times must be set and adhered to.
Debates
Description- A pro and con discussion of a controversial issue. Objective is to convince the audience rather than display skill in attacking the opponent.

- **When Used**- When discussing a controversial issue on which there are fairly definite opinions on both sides to bring these differences out in the open in a friendly manner.
- **Procedure**- Divide the group into sides of pro and con. Each speaker should be limited to a predetermined time followed by rebuttal if desired.
- **Limitations**- Members may have difficulty defending a view they do not hold themselves. Emphasis on taking sides can be divisive and may inhibit learning for some students.

Experience Discussion
Description- A small or large group discussion following a report on the main point of a book, article, or life experience.

- **When Used**- To present a new point of view or an issue to stimulate thought and discussion.
- **Procedure**- Plan with others participating on how the review is to be presented. Then have an open discussion on pertinent issues and points of view as experienced.
- **Limitations**- Students may need assistance in preparing a presentation that will lead effectively to a class discussion.

Brainstorming
Description- Technique in creative thinking in which group members think about a problem or topic and throw out all the ideas they can come up with.

- **When Used**- To get new ideas and release individual’s potential to think of ideas.
- **Procedure**- Facilitator and members of planning group select suitable problems or questions on the topic selected by the entire group. The leader explains to the group the meaning of brainstorming and the following rules: critical judgments ruled out; criticism applied later; quantity of ideas wanted; more ideas, the better chance of good ones; free wheeling welcomed; wilder the idea, the better since it's easier to tame them down than to pump them up; hitching is legitimate—if you can improve on someone's idea so much the better. Recorder lists the ideas. Follow up: type list for next meeting to give to members for a more structured discussion.
- **Limitations**- Practical with not more than 20 people. Becomes disorganized without careful planning of material to be covered and skillful direction from discussion leader.

Case Studies
Description- An actual account of a particular incident and/or problem is presented to the class. How the matter was resolved is included.

- **When Used**- When a specific example is the best means of illustrating a topic. This method is often used to supplement traditional lecture approaches to a topic. Can be used to synthesize ideas and apply theory to practical problems.
- **Procedure**- Facilitator documents a case study, altering actual names and places if required. The case study is presented to the class and is generally followed by discussion.
- **Limitations**- Case studies require additional work by the facilitator to ensure they are straightforward and good examples of what is being represented.
The Jigsaw
Description- Allows for total participation by group members as experts and learners. It is often followed by a problem solving situation where all the knowledge must be utilized in order to succeed.

- **When Used**- When participation by every group member is desired and the subject, topic or skill is easily broken down into manageable chunks.

- **Procedure**- Students work in small groups (expert groups) to master material. The facilitator rotates among groups to answer questions and make sure the material is being mastered and understood. Students return to home groups which consist of one member from each expert group. They teach each other their areas of responsibility and then use the new knowledge to solve a problem, write a group essay or exam, etc.

- **Limitations**- Thought must be given to the purpose and organization of groups (e.g. a variety of abilities). Success is dependent of the kind of material chosen and the final problem to be solved.

PRESENTING INFORMATION

In your role as a Teaching Assistant/Associate you may need to present information to a group of students as the foundation for further discussion in seminars or tutorial groups. Or, the students may be expected to make presentations to their peers, to demonstrate and share what they have learned. The following guidelines can be used in planning an effective presentation. If you are asked to take over a lecture, these same guidelines should help you out.

The best presentations use methods that suit the personal style of the presenter, the learning needs of the students, and the material to be presented.

**Preparation**

The requirements for content and organization of material are much the same as for an essay or written report. You must:

- do the necessary reading and gather the necessary support material
- arrive at a thesis or main idea and organize your supporting proofs or details
- prepare an effective introduction and conclusion, and lead the audience through your argument with clear transitions and connectives between the ideas. A good outline can help planning and organizing the content effectively.

Remember to have your supporting material prepared (page references or statistics clearly marked or listed on a handout or overhead). Make sure all of these illustrations are clearly related to your arguments or main points.

**Presentation Style, Delivery of Content**

Unlike an essay which can be read and reread, an oral presentation is transitory, once spoken, it’s gone. You must make every word count.

**Capture:** Your first words must CAPTURE the audience’s attention, engage, perhaps surprise them. Some good capture techniques are:

- a startling statement or unexpected fact;
- a quotation;
- a question for the class to ponder and answer internally or orally;
- a short story -- either funny, exciting, or tragic.

Make sure whatever method you choose is clearly related to your topic.

**Purpose/Preview**

- Tell the class briefly what you are planning to do, and give them a preview of your main points- this will focus their attention and help them to follow the presentation. They must feel confident that you will not waste their time, that you are well-organized, and know your subject. This will motivate them to listen to you.
- If the audience is unfamiliar with the topic and needs some background knowledge, give it to them now. This could be definitions of terms or factual information. If the ideas are difficult or complicated, use a handout, overhead, or blackboard diagram.

**Style**

**It’s good to...**

- speak clearly
pronounce correctly
add emphasis
use familiar, concrete, short, active words
look at the audience
be sincere
use brief notes as aids on cards
pause occasionally
use appropriate gestures
stand confidently
breathe!

Try not to...
memorize
read
lean on the desk or blackboard
hurry
dawdle
mumble or drone
grunt, groan, sway, weave, bob, fidget, “um...ah...eh”

Conclusion
Briefly summarize your main points and relate them to your thesis or opening. Prepare questions for the class to encourage discussion. Do not say “Any questions?” and sit down. Do not end with “Well, I guess that’s it” and sit down. Tie all your points together neatly and make them see why what you said was important, answer their questions competently, smile- then sit down!

Presentation Aids
Audio-visual aids can be a great advantage for any oral presentation as long as you remember their one main purpose: to help make a point. They should not be used randomly, but should be chosen carefully to reinforce or illustrate your message in the best possible way. Choose the medium that best suits your purpose,

- overhead transparency
- PowerPoint presentation

Handouts can be very useful for the class. An outline with your main points can show your organizational plan and help your listeners to make notes. Either prepare handouts in advance or require the students to print their own from the classroom management system, from Blackboard for example.

Aiding Students’ Comprehension
- Place the concept in the larger context of the course. A brief summary will help the class see the relevance of the new concept and its relationship to the course’s main themes.
- Give students a road map by providing an outline of the class.
- Avoid telling students everything you know. Be selective: deliver the most essential information in manageable chunks.
- Set an appropriate pace. Talk more slowly when students are taking notes, or when you are presenting new or complex material.
- Do not make assumptions about what students know.
- Acknowledge the difficulty of concepts students are likely to find hard to understand. Cue students to the most difficult ideas by saying, “Almost everyone has difficulty with this one, so listen closely.” This will get students’ attention.
- Create a sense of order for the listener. Your voice must convey the structure of your lectures. Use verbal cues to:
  - forecast what you will be discussing,
  - indicate when you are in the development of your ideas,
  - restate main ideas.
- Begin with general statements followed by specific examples.
- Move from the simple to complex, the familiar to unfamiliar.

**Presenting Key Points and Examples**
- Limit the number of points you make in a single lecture.
- In introductory courses, try to avoid the intricacies of the discipline, try to focus on fundamentals, and to use generalizations -- do not give too many exceptions to the rule.
- Demonstrate a complex concept rather than simply describe it.
- Use memorable examples.
- Liberally use metaphors, analogies, anecdotes, and vivid images.
- Call attention to the most important points.

**Using Repetition to your Advantage**
- Stress important material through repetition.
- Use different words to make the same point.
- Use redundancy to let students catch up with the material.

LABORATORY TEACHING

The most important thing you can do to ensure that your labs run smoothly is to be well prepared. Prior to the start of the term, your preparation should include being acquainted with the storeroom of the lab so that time won’t be lost during a lab looking for necessary equipment or materials, becoming familiar with procedures for getting emergency assistance, and, if applicable, knowing the location of the first aid kit, eye-wash station, fire blankets, extinguishers, spill kit materials, safety data sheets, etc.

Preparing Lab Sections

- Know exactly what the students are supposed to learn and why they have to learn these things. This may come in handy when the students start to wonder why they are doing what they are doing.
- If appropriate, perform the entire lab exercise in advance. By going through the lab yourself, you will be familiar with some of the stumbling blocks that your students may confront, and you will know the subtler points of the process you are demonstrating.
- Read and study the theory on which the lab activities are based. Your understanding of the theoretical aspect of the lab will be useful to you in handling student questions.
- Decide how to introduce the lab most effectively. Before students get underway with the day’s lab, will they need you to demonstrate the procedures they will be following? Is a handout with written instructions in order? Do you want two students in the class to demonstrate the experiment to the rest of the class? Will a 15 minute lecture about the theory and intent of the lab suffice? Your initial introduction to the lab or the day’s first activity can set the tone and motivation for the rest of the lab.
- Prepare handouts if they are not already available.
- Consider how to handle unprepared students.

Safety

Safety takes on special importance when you are directly responsible for the health and well-being of 25 or 30 laboratory students. Window-shattering explosions are rare, but it is not uncommon for students to break beakers of acid, cut themselves while inserting glass tubes into rubber stoppers, or ignite a stack of lab notes with a Bunsen burner.

If your department’s orientation does not cover safety procedures, the professor in charge of the course will probably take responsibility for describing to students the proper technique of handling materials, organizing a work area, and using equipment. These are all precautionary measures you now probably perform almost unconsciously. However, your students do not have your experience and will therefore appreciate your concern and advice.

During your pre-laboratory presentation, emphasize any safety items or procedures that are specific to the laboratory of the day; e.g., if ethanol and Bunsen burners are being used at the same time, emphasize that ethanol is extremely flammable.

The following tips will help ensure laboratory and classroom safety:

- Know where the emergency exits and best evacuation routes are.
- Know where the closest first aid kit is and be prepared with simple first aid procedures.
- Don’t forget to wear rubber gloves when working with flesh injuries.
- Know where the nearest telephone is and in an emergency who to contact. In case of an EMERGENCY, call 9-1-1. For non-emergencies, call (480) 965-3456.
- Report malfunctioning equipment even if it is only a leaking tap. Report problems to the administrative staff.
- Observe no smoking rules and regulations.
In the laboratory be sure that both you and the students do the following:

- Wear safety glasses if required. As a general rule any labs using chemicals require safety glasses.
- Do not consume food and drink.
- Do not have bare or stocking feet, even if it is tempting to take off shoes when standing for long periods.
- Do not engage in any horseplay and pranks; they are potentially dangerous.
- Confine long hair and clothing when working with lab equipment and chemicals.
- Know the location of fire extinguishers, safety showers, and eyewash stations, and know how to use them. Point them out to the students and explain how to use them.
- Wash your hands before leaving the lab.
- Develop a healthy respect for machinery, animals, and chemicals. Be alert for unsafe practices and techniques.

In the event of a fire, pull the fire alarm and call 911.

In the event of a fire alarm:

- Direct your students to leave the building by the shortest, safest route.
- Give assistance to handicapped persons.
- Close the door after everyone has left, but do not lock it.
- Do not return to the building until authorized to do so.

Student Preparation

Students who arrive at the lab with only a hazy recollection of the previous lecture may mindlessly go through lab procedures step-by-step, without any genuine understanding of the principles underlying the procedures. These students will derive as much knowledge from completing the lab activities as they would from spending a term in the coffee shop! Explain the benefits of preparation to the students, suggest some practical approaches to preparation, and try to provide some incentives for preparation. Reviewing lecture notes and/or the lab manual may be all that is necessary for most students. You might ask students to submit a statement of purposes and procedures or an explanation of why and how the exercise is relevant to the course - students are more likely to do this on a regular basis if it accounts for part of their lab grade.

Supervising the Lab

A review of the purposes and procedures of the exercise at the beginning of the lab emphasizes the importance of preparation. You might deliver a brief but inspiring introduction on how the exercise relates to current developments in the discipline, or encourage the students to discuss the relevance of the activity to course objectives. Ask for questions, clarify any ambiguities in the lab manual, and demonstrate special procedures now rather than interrupting the experiment later.

If both you and your students are well prepared, you will be free to perform your most important role, that of giving guidance and advice. Circulate among the students, and try to talk with each student at least once during the exercise. Technical and procedural matters can be handled quickly with a few words of advice or a very brief demonstration. Your primary role; however, is to help students master the steps of scientific inquiry -- recognizing and stating a problem, formulating hypotheses, collecting data, testing hypotheses, and drawing conclusions.

Helping students master each step is not an easy task. You can tell students to “hold the stopper between your index and middle fingers while you’re pouring,” but telling them to “think better” or “remember what the professor said about that yesterday” will not be very effective. There are a variety of ways to help students solve problems for themselves, including some of the techniques in the earlier section on seminars and tutorials.
The use of questioning is especially important. Encourage students to ask questions of each other as they go through the lab exercises. You will need to make decisions over and over again about when to ask questions, who to ask, what to ask. Most importantly, you will need to make decisions about answering questions. Don’t be too quick to give outright answers or advice. For example, if lab partners ask, “Why can’t we get this to come out right?” try asking them a series of questions which leads them to discover the reasons for themselves rather than simply explaining why the experiment failed. Of course sometimes the reason will be relatively simple, but just as often the reason will be more substantial --a matter of timing, sequence, proportion, or interpretation. Perhaps the student has properly completed all the steps in the exercise but has overlooked an important step in analyzing the results or is unable to devise a solution.

It is very tempting to help students by saying, “Aha, I see where you went wrong,” but unless you resist the temptation, they are likely to falter at the same stage in the next assignment. Students may become frustrated if they can’t get a straight answer out of you, but they will also learn more.
TIPS FOR ASSESSING STUDENTS’ PERFORMANCE

Grades are extremely important for most students; hence, grading and discussing those grades with students may take up a great deal of your time as a TA. For the most part, assessment tasks (tests, exams, papers, etc.) are set by the instructor. However, grading is often done by TAs. Some TAs may also wish to devise their own quizzes for use in labs or tutorials. Depending on the department, you may be instructing your own class. A highly popular and extremely effective method of grading is the use of a grading rubric. The various types of rubrics will be discussed at the beginning of this section, and specifics mentioned within each assessment category.

Rubrics

A grading rubric is a set of criteria, usually based on learning objectives, used to assess students’ performance. Rubrics are an effective way of making subjective grading more objective through standardized evaluation. Generally, rubrics employ three components: criteria (the learning objective being assessed), levels (the rating scale to determine levels of competency), and descriptors (definitions of each level). Advantages of using rubrics include facilitating student self-reflection, evaluation, and peer conferencing/review. They also help avoid or resolve grade disputes by having clear definitions of grading criteria which foster fair and accurate assessment.

Objective Tests

Objective tests are those which generally have answers that are seen to be either right or wrong, and can include multiple-choice, short answer, true/false, or fill-in-the-blank items; mathematical or logical proofs and problems; or tests which require the student to draw or fill in diagrams, tables or charts. If not already prepared, the first thing you will want to do is to prepare an answer key with the appropriate answers. By having this key beside you, you can simply compare the student’s answer with the preferred answer, and give the appropriate grade. In addition, having such a key will ensure fairness, because any other TA who might be marking a portion of these tests will do so in a way that is consistent with you.

Deciding what answers are appropriate is often the job of the supervisor who designed the test, though you will likely want to sit down with them to discuss how at least some of the answers were arrived at (if it is not obvious). One good reason to do this is that there could conceivably be other answers that are partially or wholly correct. By sitting down with your supervisor, you can work together to discover and agree on appropriate responses to the more ambiguous questions. As well as making your job easier, this will assist your supervisor to design clearer tests in the future.

You may also want to discuss the following questions with your supervisor prior to marking:

- What is the point-value of each question, and what letter grades correspond to what numeric scores? Often your supervisor or another TA will also be grading assignments or tests, so it is important that you all evaluate the students in a fair and consistent way.
- Does your supervisor want you to mark the tests on a “curve” or do they want you to assign a grade according to the raw percentage? (This could mean the difference between the top score getting an “A”, or perhaps a “C”). Explain the method to your students.
- How much weight are you to give to the process students used to arrive at their answer? Often a student may make a small error that will carry through a whole problem, even though the rest of the work is essentially correct (given the initial error).

It is a good idea to post the answer key outside your office door. This will let your students know where your office is, and perhaps give them some incentive to come in and talk with you. In addition to merely posting the
answers, you or your supervisor may prefer that one of you distribute the assignments or tests in class, or have the students come by your office to pick them up. Remember to follow FERPA guidelines when posting and returning student materials.

**Essay Tests**

These tests usually ask students to respond to specific questions in a way that is understandable and readable. Because the questions are focused, there are usually some basic points that the student is expected to include in their essay. Therefore, before marking these tests, the first thing you should do is to sit down with your supervisor to discuss what these essential points are, so you can prepare model answers in advance. If there are other TAs marking these same tests, they should also be in on these discussions, so that the marking will be as consistent as possible. In this discussion you should also determine if there is more than one acceptable answer to a particular question, and decide on appropriate ways of dealing with these ambiguous or unclear questions ahead of time.

Another thing that should be clearly worked out at this meeting is how the grades are to be distributed on the test. You will need to decide how much each answer is worth and how important incorrect spelling and grammar will be (in terms of the overall grade). It may also be useful to make lists of common improper answers, along with the penalties for each.

**Evaluating Discussion Group Performance**

This section presupposes that you are expected to grade the students in your discussion group, and that you are wondering how to go about this fairly. Generally, the preferred method of grading students is on the basis of three general factors: quantity, quality and progress.

Quantity refers to how much a student speaks. It is unreasonable and unfair to expect that no student of yours will be too shy to speak in the group, so a large part of your job as a facilitator is to help your students “break out of their shell.” If you clearly explain your expectation that everyone will make sincere efforts to speak, and do all you can to help your silent students, then it will be more than fair to mark the students on this basis. In the long run, they’ll be thankful, since a great deal of what is required to “make it” in the academic world has to do with one’s ability to communicate what she or he thinks. Though it may not be necessary to make a note every time a particular student speaks, keeping this requirement in mind will help you to decide who needs more help during the course. In addition, it will provide you with a way of considering the contributions of your students when you sit down to give out the grades at the end of the course.

With that said, it must be pointed out that many discussion group facilitators may be faced with students who speak either too much, or never to the point. This is where the second requirement of quality comes in. By considering the quality of what a speaker says, you will have some means of assessing the difference between a student who talks a lot and says nothing and a student who only occasionally talks yet always “hits the mark.” Again, you should clearly explain to your students at the beginning of the class that not every contribution will be positively evaluated, so they can learn to use judgment before speaking out.

Deciding what makes one student’s contribution qualitatively better than another does can sometimes be a tricky matter. Generally, the points you’ll want to look for are similar to those you would look for in a good essay, namely: a clear understanding of the course content (e.g. the facts, theories and concepts used); an accurate use of logic (e.g. not contradicting themselves, or using trivial or fallacious arguments); an effective ability to communicate (e.g. asking and answering questions effectively, and being clear and concise). Moral insight (e.g. the ability to identify the values inherent in course material and to formulate justifications according to some value system) is also an important element in any good discussion. In addition, there are
skills to look for that are specific to group situations, such as well developed interaction skills (e.g. degree of enthusiasm) and the student’s overall contribution to the class (e.g. the relevance and constructiveness of their contributions).

Another factor on which a student’s discussion group grade can be based is the particular student’s progress or improvement. It is unfair to expect every student to enter a discussion group feeling equally comfortable about talking, or equally capable of contributing in a meaningful way. Therefore it would be unfair to hold the earliest performance (or lack of it) against a student for the duration of the course. Instead, a student should see improvements in their grade that reflect improvements in their contributions (based on the factors already discussed). Moreover, as a course proceeds, the material will likely become progressively more difficult because it relies on earlier lessons being understood and applied. So in factoring in the progress component of a student’s grade, you will likely want to consider weighing useful contributions that occur later in the course more heavily than those occurring earlier.

One final alternative for marking a student’s participation is to use learning journals. This not only allows the student to release any concerns or feelings about the course or issue, but also lets you see that the student has taken time to reflect upon the material discussed in the session. Often we neglect to consider the importance of silent thinking within the discussion group. Some students generate questions, theories, and elaborations in their heads, but may be reluctant to express these in front of the group. Journals provide a way of evaluating these reflections.

As you have probably figured out by now, it is rather difficult not to be somewhat subjective when evaluating a student’s discussion group performance. The progress component is intended as a safeguard against your students doing poorly, but it will only work if you are always very clear with them about their progress in the course. Providing accurate and up-to-date assessments of the student’s performance may have the added effect of motivating students to do even better.

**Making a Personal Connection in Your Evaluations**

Some Teaching Assistant/Associate jobs will consist entirely (or almost entirely) of grading papers, exams, labs, etc. This experience can be an alienating one, both for you and for the students. You may have started this job with the hope that you could have a clear and lasting impact on your students’ education, but you now discover that you will rarely get a chance to interact with them. The following suggestions will allow you to still maintain some human contact with your students, even if you rarely (or never) see them.

Giving out grades (even extremely bad ones) need not be the meanest thing you ever do. Softening a criticism so that it isn’t taken as a personal attack is always a good idea. For instance, instead of saying “Only an idiot would say...” or “How could you possibly think that”, etc., you could write “So-and-so disagrees with your statement that... What do you think about that?” This response, rather than stirring an immediate reaction of anger or despair in the student, will allow them to delve further into a question, and to come to understand for themselves where they went wrong. Even when grading objective tests and assignments, something as minor as not using red ink can go a long way towards improving your students’ confidence (some students have said that red ink looks too much like blood). Invite (in writing) students to come to see you for help when you must give them bad grades.

Always be sure to add positive and encouraging points where you think that the student has done well. For example, you could say “Good point. You should mention this the next time this issue comes up in class” or “Very interesting...I hadn’t considered that before,” etc. Rather than only telling your students where they’ve gone wrong, this will go a lot further toward helping them to develop the academic motivation and confidence they need to do even better in the future. Even adding some encouraging comments at the end of an objective test will go a lot further than handing back a paper full of check marks and numbers.
If you do know something about a particular student (e.g. because you’ve heard them speak in class, or talked to them during office hours, or you’ve graded their previous work), you might want to add specific or personal remarks on their tests or papers, depending on what sort of support or encouragement you think that particular student needs, or on the specific interests she or he has. You may even want to provide extra-challenging remarks for the more gifted students. This will help you to feel a closer connection with your work, and will help your students to know that someone out there cares about what they are doing.

**Dealing with Grade Disputes**

The professional responsibility for assigning grades is vested in the instructor of the course, and requires the careful application of professional judgment. However, make every effort to fairly hear and respond to student concerns. Here are a few tips for dealing with grade disputes:

- Only discuss a student’s grades in private. Have the student make an appointment to meet you in your office. If possible, ask to have their paper or exam so you can review it before the student arrives for the appointment. If the concern is a miscalculation of points, you may ask the student to give you the paper, so you can re-total the points, and return it to the student at the next class session.
- Prepare for the student meeting by having your grading scheme and answer keys ready. You do not need to defend what you have done, but be prepared to explain it.
- The student may be right; you could have made a mistake, or the student may convince you the answer is appropriate. If this happens, be gracious. Apologize if it is your mistake and change the grade. If the student convinces you that the answer is correct, acknowledge you had not thought of that possibility and alter the points accordingly.
- If the student approaches you with a grade dispute for something you did not grade, do not get involved. Tell the student to talk to the person who did the grading.
- If you and the student can not resolve the dispute, meet with the course instructor. This will appease the honest student and discourage the one who might be trying to intimidate you.

**Tips to Help You Get Through Your Grading**

- Use a grading or rubric scheme: Have a clear guideline of grading criteria. This allows you to be more consistent in your grading.
- If there is more than one grader: Meet with the other graders to determine evaluation criteria. It may be useful to have each TA pick a question and grade all the students’ responses to that question.
- Read the paper before you begin to grade: This gives you a general impression of the student’s work.
- Choose the appropriate level of feedback for the task: As comments should be future oriented, it may not be necessary to provide extensive feedback on a final assignment.
- Use short comments throughout the paper: Elaborate the reason for your grade in remarks at the end of the paper. Don’t forget to highlight the positive aspects of the assignment.
- Don’t rewrite your students’ papers: Focus on particularly effective or problematic passages.
- Use grading symbols: This decreases the amount of writing you have to do on each paper.
- Keep an eye on the clock: Keep to your allotted time per paper.
- Take breaks! You will be more efficient if you give your mind a rest and reward yourself at regular intervals.
TIPS FOR ASSESSING YOUR OWN PERFORMANCE

The most immediate measure of your teaching abilities is your students’ response in class - if they start doodling frantically, yawning, or talking among themselves, if their numbers dwindle noticeably as the term progresses, if you are distracted from your grand orations by the sound of snoring, you may be justified in suspecting that your presence is not as compelling and charismatic as you have believed. On the other hand, sleeping, snoring, absenteeism, and scuffling seem to be a way of life among many undergraduates, and are not necessarily any reflection on your abilities as a teacher. If you do feel that you are doing something very wrong, one way to find out for certain is to invite a neutral observer to one of your classes. Another TA, the professor in charge of the course, or a representative from the department could be asked to do this for you. Alternatively, you might have your session videotaped, so that you can observe your own behavior. Finally, you can collect some additional information through student evaluation of teaching.

Another TA

A fellow Teaching Assistant/Associate is the least threatening and least obtrusive observer. Your students are unlikely to notice a colleague and will behave more naturally. The TA may afterwards be able to point out to you any basic flaws in your teaching such as speaking too softly, asking the wrong kinds of questions, or using the wrong kinds of material.

The Professor in Charge of the Course

The course instructor or coordinator may want to sit in on one of your classes at some point during the term to see how you are doing. Your supervisor will try to remain as inconspicuous as a professor is able by sitting quietly at the back of the classroom, and will not interfere with the conduct of the class, unless invited to do so.

It is a good idea to inform your students a week in advance of the professor’s visit, and make it clear that they are not “on trial”; if anybody is, you are. After the class, the professor will discuss with you an estimation of your “performance,” and perhaps make some suggestions that would improve your teaching.

Collecting Feedback on Teaching and Learning

At the end of the term, a course evaluation questionnaire will be administered in most classes. This usually asks students to evaluate the instructor in terms of teaching effectiveness, availability outside of the classroom, marking of papers and examinations, etc. Often these evaluations only cover the professor’s performance and neglect to evaluate the TA.

If you wish, you could conduct your own evaluation halfway or a third of the way through the term. This is an especially effective way to obtain feedback from students so that you can identify what is working in the classroom and what needs to be improved. Be sure to share the results of the evaluations with the students, and to tell them what changes you plan to make in response to their feedback. Visit the Office of University Evaluation website for more resources on evaluations [http://www.asu.edu/oue/](http://www.asu.edu/oue/)

Students at ASU come from a variety of ethnic, religious, linguistic, and economic backgrounds. ASU’s focuses on a commitment to intellectual and cultural diversity. We focus on outcome-determined excellence by admitting students with differing interests and indicators of intelligence and creativity. We will measure the success of the university by the success of each individual student. In looking beyond the academic profile of incoming students, we are seeking greater diversity in our student body, a diversity that brings with it the potential for excellence and perspective. In this commitment to the student as an individual, ASU is focusing
on teaching quality, incorporating new research findings into learning processes, and developing new creative teaching and learning environments.

In order to do your job well, you must be sensitive to the varied backgrounds and needs of these students. Here are a few suggestions on how to create a welcoming and safe learning environment.

**Informal Written Feedback From Students About Instruction**

**Index Cards:** Several times during the term pass out index cards to students and ask them to respond to two questions, one on the front of the card, the other on the back. You can pose general questions, such as:

- How are you finding the course?
- What’s good about the course? What’s not so good? Any suggestions for improving the course? Or you may prefer to ask more specific questions about aspects of the course, particularly those aspects of the course which are new to you and/or the students:
- Are the problem sets too difficult?
- Is the pace of the class causing difficulties? Are the readings facilitating your learning?

You can also provide prompts, and ask students to complete the sentences.

- I would like you to do more...
- I would like you to do less...

It is important that you respond quickly and candidly to your students’ comments. At the next class meeting after this activity, begin by thanking students for their comments. Present a brief summary of their comments, and then respond to any concerns that have been raised. Clarify any confusion about your goals and their expectations. Then indicate which suggestions you will act upon this term, which must wait until the course is next offered, and which you will not act upon.

**Suggestion Box:** Bring a manila envelope to class or tape one to your office door and ask students to place unsigned comments, questions, or complaints in it. You could ask them to comment on material they don't understand or on the presentation. Clear up any ambiguities or confusion at the next class meeting.

**Midsemester Feedback**

After the first exam, you can pose three questions to your students:

- What can the Instructor do to improve your learning?
- What can your classmates do to facilitate your learning?
- What can you do to facilitate your learning?

Ask students to answer these questions, but not sign their name. In the next class, go over the summarized suggestions by each question. This approach not only provides you with feedback, but asks the students to take ownership of their own learning.

**Informal Written Feedback About Learning**

One classroom assessment technique is the one-minute paper. This simple approach to the improvement of in-class teaching works by instructors setting aside the last minute of their classes and having their students write on a scrap piece of paper:

- What was the most significant thing you learned in class today?
- What question is uppermost in your mind at the end of today’s class?
Collect the responses immediately and read them before the class meets again. These papers can help you evaluate how well you have conveyed the material—when you go through the papers you’ll know what the students understood and what they didn’t. This information can help you structure the topics for the next class meeting.
APPENDIX A: ACADEMIC SUCCESS RESOURCES

Welcome to ASU

- Graduate Student Welcome
- Orientation
- Living on campus: https://housing.asu.edu
- Student Unions: Tempe campus, Polytechnic campus
- Fitness Centers: https://fitness.asu.edu
- ASU Libraries

Choose a major

- Explore majors by interest, keywords, or college
- Description of majors
- Degree requirements
- Graduate Education
- Catalogs
- Barrett Honors College
- Colleges/Schools

Take a class

- Academic Calendar
- Schedule of Classes
- Online Classes
- Undergraduate Admissions
- Graduate Admissions
- Mandatory measles immunization
- Study Abroad/Exchange

Pay for college

- Calculate your estimated cost of attending ASU
- Tuition and Fees
- Financial Aid
- Residency for Tuition Purposes
- Student Employment
Campus Services

- Sun Card (ID Card)
- Parking Services/Decals
- Meal Plans/Campus Dining
- Campus Dining
- Bookstores
- E-mail
- Student Engagement

Find help

- Academic Advisors
- GPA Calculators
- Student Success Centers
- Disability Resource Center
- Adult Re-entry Students
- Child/Family Services
- International Student Office
- Ombudsperson Committee
- Veterans Services
- Safety Tips

Computing/Online Services

- myASU portal (email, online classes and more)
- Current Outages
- ASUonline
- Getting Your Computer on the ASU Network (DHCP)
- Securing Your Computer
- Computing Sites: Tempe campus, Polytechnic campus, West campus

Get Involved

- Student Clubs
- Events
- Student Government
- Sun Devil Athletics
- Memorial Union
- Volunteer Programs
- Intramural Sports and Outdoor Recreation
- State Press (student daily news)
- Fraternities and Sororities
- Study Abroad/Exchange
- Sun Devil Involvement Center
Health and Wellness

- Campus Health Service
- Campus Safety and Compliance Hotline
- Counseling Services
- Public Safety
- Student Legal Assistance
- Living Well at ASU

Find a place to live

- Living on campus: https://housing.asu.edu

Prepare for graduation and your career

- Career Services
- Apply for Graduation
- Commencement
- Alumni Association
- Request Transcripts
APPENDIX B: STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

The Student Code of Conduct

Know Your Rights and Responsibilities

(Arizona State University Student Affairs Manual - STA 104-01)

(Arizona Board of Regents Policy Manual - 5-308, 5-401, 5-402, 5-403, 5-404)

JURISDICTION AND AUTHORITY UNDER ARIZONA LAW, THE ARIZONA BOARD OF REGENTS IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONTROL AND SUPERVISION OF THE STATE UNIVERSITIES AND THEIR PROPERTIES AND ACTIVITIES. THE BOARD IS AUTHORIZED TO ENACT ORDINANCES FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF THE UNIVERSITIES AND THE MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ORDER UPON ALL PROPERTY UNDER ITS JURISDICTION. THE BOARD HAS PROMULGATED THIS STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT IN ORDER TO MEET ITS RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER ARIZONA LAW.

The Presidents are authorized to enforce the Student Code of Conduct.

Violators may be accountable to both civil and criminal authorities and to the university for acts of misconduct that constitute violations of the Student Code of Conduct. At the discretion of university officials, disciplinary action at the university may proceed during the pendency of other proceedings. Sanctions may be imposed for acts of misconduct that occur on university property or at any university sponsored activity. As further prescribed in these rules, off-campus conduct may also be subject to discipline. With respect to student organizations, and their members, university jurisdiction extends to premises used or controlled by the organizations.

PHILOSOPHY THE AIM OF EDUCATION IS THE INTELLECTUAL, PERSONAL, SOCIAL, AND ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL. THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IS IDEALLY CONDUCTED IN AN ENVIRONMENT THAT ENCOURAGES REASONED DISCOURSE, INTELLECTUAL HONESTY, OPENNESS TO CONSTRUCTIVE CHANGE AND RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS OF ALL INDIVIDUALS. SELF-DISCIPLINE AND A RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS IN THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY ARE NECESSARY FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF SUCH GOALS. THE STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT IS DESIGNED TO PROMOTE THIS ENVIRONMENT AT EACH OF THE STATE UNIVERSITIES.

The Student Code of Conduct sets forth the standards of conduct expected of students who choose to join the university community.

Students who violate these standards will be subject to disciplinary sanctions in order to promote their own personal development, to protect the university community, and to maintain order and stability on campus.

SCOPE THE ADOPTION OF THE STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT DOES NOT PROHIBIT ANY UNIVERSITY OR THE BOARD OF REGENTS FROM ADOPTING OR MAINTAINING ADDITIONAL RULES TO GOVERN THE CONDUCT OF STUDENTS. ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT BROUGHT UNDER THE STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT MAY BE COMBINED WITH ALLEGATIONS ARISING UNDER OTHER UNIVERSITY OR BOARD RULES.

The Student Code of Conduct applies to individual students and to student organizations.

Students and student organizations are also subject to the following rules:
• Rules adopted by each university to govern the control of vehicles and other modes of transportation on university property;
• Rules relating to student classroom conduct, academic dishonesty, academic eligibility, performance and evaluation;
• Rules governing student housing;
• Rules governing the maintenance of public order;
• Rules governing the conduct of student athletes;
• Rules governing the use of university communication and computing resources; and Such other rules as may be adopted by the Board or universities in furtherance of university and educational goals.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS MAY BE CHARGED WITH VIOLATIONS OF THE STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT.

Student organizations, as well as their members, may be held collectively and/or individually responsible for violations if the misconduct occurs: (a) on university property; (b) on premises used or controlled by the organizations; or (c) at university-sponsored activities.

The officers or leaders of a student organization may be held collectively and/or individually responsible when such violations are committed by persons associated with the organization who have received consent or encouragement from the organization’s officers or leaders or if those officers or leaders knew that such violations were being or would be committed.

The officers or leaders of a student organization may be directed to take action designed to prevent or end such violations by the organization or by any persons associated with the organization. Failure to comply with a directive may be considered a violation of the Student Code of Conduct, both by the officers or leaders of the organization and by the organization.

DEFINITIONS DEFINITIONS PROVIDED ELSEWHERE IN THIS CHAPTER ARE APPLICABLE TO THIS STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT. TERMS NOT EXPRESSLY DEFINED IN THE STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT WILL BE INTERPRETED IN ACCORDANCE WITH STATE AND FEDERAL LAW. IN THE STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT, UNLESS THE CONTEXT OTHERWISE PROVIDES OR REQUIRES:

• “Board” means the Arizona Board of Regents.
• “Controlled substance” means a drug or substance whose use, possession, or distribution is controlled under state or federal law.
• “Dean of Students” means the administrative officer bearing this or similar title and includes his/her designee.
• “Distribution” means sale, exchange, transfer, delivery, or gift.
• “Endanger” means to bring into danger or peril.
• “Fabrication” means falsification or invention of any information or citation.
• “Gambling” means any illegal betting, including but not limited to: wagering on or selling pools on any athletic or other event; possessing on one’s person or premises (e.g., room, residence unit, car), or in a computer account or electronic format, any card, book or other device for registering bets; knowingly using or permitting the use of one’s premises or one’s telephone or other electronic communications device for illegal gambling; knowingly receiving or delivering a letter, package or parcel or electronic or telephonic communication related to illegal gambling; offering, soliciting or accepting a bribe to influence the outcome of an athletic event; and involvement in bookmaking or wagering pools with respect to sporting events.
• “Hazing” means any activity undertaken or situation created, by any individual, group of individuals or organization, in which individuals are voluntarily or involuntarily subjected to activities that have the
potential to harass, intimidate, impart pain, humiliate, invite ridicule or cause undue mental or physical fatigue or distress, or to cause mutilation, laceration, or bodily injury. Hazing includes, but is not limited to, paddling in any form, physical or psychological shocks, late work sessions that interfere with scholastic activities, advocating or promoting alcohol or substance abuse, tests of endurance, submission of members or prospective members to potentially dangerous or hazardous circumstances or activities which have a foreseeable potential for resulting in personal injury, or any activity which by its nature may have a potential to cause mental distress, panic, human degradation, or embarrassment.

- “Illegal drug” means any drug whose use, possession or distribution is prohibited or restricted by state or federal law.
- “Plagiarism” means representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own.
- “President” means the president of the university or his/her designee.
- “Stalking” means engaging in a course of conduct that is directed toward another person if that conduct would cause a reasonable person to fear for the person’s safety or the safety of that person’s immediate family member or close acquaintance, and that person in fact fears for their safety or the safety of that person’s immediate family member or close acquaintance.
- “Student” means any person who is currently registered or enrolled in one or more classes at the university or in any university-sponsored program or who was enrolled the previous term or who is or was registered for a future term, including a faculty member or other employee so registered or enrolled.
- “Student Organization” means an organization composed primarily of students that has been registered or has received recognition according to university policies and procedures or is affiliated with a university department.
- “University” means either the University of Arizona, Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, or any other university campus or division governed by the Arizona Board of Regents.
- “University community” means all university students, employees, and guests.
- “University property” means all resources, including but not limited to real and personal property, money, and intellectual property owned, operated, controlled or in the possession of the university or the Arizona Board of Regents.
- “University-sponsored activity” means any activity on or off campus initiated, approved, or supervised by the university.

Prohibited Conduct

- All forms of student academic dishonesty, including but not limited to, cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and plagiarism.
- Endangering, threatening, or causing physical harm to any member of the university community or to oneself or causing reasonable apprehension of such harm.
- Violating the terms of any disciplinary sanction imposed for an earlier violation of the Student Code of Conduct or other Board or university rules.
- Violation of, or attempt to violate, other published rules that may be adopted by the Board or by the university.
- Furnishing false information, including false identification, or failure to provide information to the university or to any university employee or agent, including campus law enforcement or security officers or other agents, acting in good faith.
- Initiating, causing or contributing to any false report, warning or threat of fire, explosion or other emergency.
- Failure to comply with the directions of university officials or agents, including law enforcement or security officers, acting in good faith and in the performance of their duties.
- Forgery, falsification, unauthorized alteration, or misuse of campus documents, records, or identification, including, but not limited to, electronic software and records.
- Unauthorized presence in or unauthorized use of university property, resources, or facilities.
- Unauthorized access to, disclosure of, or use of any university document, record, or identification including but not limited to, electronic software, data, and records.
- Interfering with university or university-sponsored activities, including but not limited to class room related activities, studying, teaching, research, intellectual or creative endeavor, administration, service or the provision of communication, computing or emergency services.
- Misrepresenting oneself or an organization as an agent of a university.
- Possession of property the student knows or has reason to believe may be stolen or misappropriated.
- Misuse, theft, misappropriation, destruction, damage, or unauthorized use, access, or reproduction of property, data, records, equipment or services belonging to the university or belonging to another person or entity.
- Violation of Board or university rules governing alcohol, including consumption, distribution, unauthorized sale or possession of alcoholic beverages.
- Unauthorized use, sale, possession or distribution of any controlled substance or illegal drug or possession of drug paraphernalia that would violate the law.
- Off-campus conduct involving sale or distribution of illegal drugs or controlled substances, or violence that may present a danger to the safety of the university community.
- Off-campus conduct related to gambling associated with any university event or activity.
- Gambling as prohibited by law or applicable policy.
- Engaging in, supporting, promoting, or sponsoring hazing or violating university rules governing hazing.
- Engaging in harassment or repeated unwanted contact, including, but not limited to, stalking.
- Engaging in discriminatory activities, whether unlawful or whether prohibited by university policy, on the basis of age, ethnicity, gender, disability, color, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status.
- Interfering with any university disciplinary process, including but not limited to tampering with physical evidence or inducing a witness to provide false information or to withhold information.
- Engaging in any sexual offense, including but not limited to, sexual assault, public sexual indecency or indecent exposure.
- Use, possession, display or storage of any weapon, dangerous instrument, explosive device, fire works, or dangerous chemical unless specifically authorized by university officials.
- Commission of any offense prohibited by state or federal law.
- Any attempt to commit or conceal an act of misconduct prohibited by these rules is subject to sanctions to the same extent as completed acts.

Sanctions

The Dean of Students may impose one or more of the following sanctions for any violation of the Student Code of Conduct:

- Expulsion: Permanent separation of the student from the university. An indication of expulsion may appear on the student’s transcript. The expelled student will not participate in any university-sponsored activity and will be barred from university property.
- Suspension: Temporary separation of the student from the university for a specified period of time or until specific conditions, if imposed, have been met. An indication of suspension may appear on the student’s transcript. Except where prior approval has been granted by the Dean of Students, a suspended student will not participate in any university-sponsored activity and will be barred from the university campus.
- Probation: Removal of the student from good disciplinary standing. Additional restrictions or conditions may also be imposed. Probation will last for a stated period of time and until specific conditions, if imposed, have been met. Any violation of these rules, the conditions of probation or
other university rules committed during the probationary period will subject the student to further discipline, including suspension or expulsion.

- **Warning:** A written statement advising the student that a violation of the Student Code of Conduct has been committed and that further misconduct may result in more severe disciplinary action.
- **Administrative hold:** A status documented in the registrar’s official file which precludes the student from registering, from receiving transcripts, or from graduating until clearance has been received from the Dean of Students in accordance with university rules.
- **Restricted access to university property:** A student’s access to the university property, including but not limited to research, communication and computing resources, may be restricted for a specified period of time or until certain conditions are met.
- **Organizational sanctions:** Sanctions for organizational misconduct may include revocation of the use of university property or privileges for a definite period of time, revocation or denial of recognition or registration, or suspension of social or intramural activities or events, as well as other appropriate sanctions permitted under the Student Code of Conduct or other rules of the university.
- **Program/Support:** A student may be required to complete an educational program.
- **Interim action:** Suspension of a student for an interim period prior to resolution of the disciplinary proceeding.
- **Classroom conduct:** Each university may adopt procedures regarding student conduct that takes place while participating in academic activities. These procedures may outline sanctions including, but not limited to, lower-level warnings, administrative drop from a particular class, or other sanctions as appropriate.
- **Other sanctions permissible under existing university rules.**

A student who has been suspended or expelled from one university will be ineligible for re-enrollment or re-admission to any university except as follows: A student who has been suspended at one university will not generally be eligible for admission or re-enrollment at another university until the student has met the conditions for reinstatement at the university which imposed the suspension. The conditions for reinstatement may be waived in whole or in part at the discretion of the Vice-President for Student Affairs at the admitting university.

Each university may adopt rules and procedures to consider a request for readmission from a student who has been previously expelled, which shall include criteria to be used in evaluating a request for readmission, and shall provide that a decision to readmit must be approved by the Vice-President for Student Affairs at the admitting university.

**Determining What Sanction to Impose**

Mitigating and aggravating factors may be considered. Factors to be considered in mitigation or aggravation may include the individual’s prior disciplinary record, the nature of the offense, the severity of any damage, injury or harm resulting from the violation, the payment of restitution to the university or to any victims, or any other factors deemed appropriate under the circumstances, including but not limited to the individual’s participation in an approved counseling program.

Repeated violations of the Student Code of Conduct may result in the imposition of progressively more severe sanctions, although any sanction may be imposed as appropriate under the circumstances.

**Enforcement**

Student sanctions shall be enforced through use of the student disciplinary procedures adopted by the Board (ABOR Policy 5-401 et seq.).
Sanctions for organizational misconduct shall be enforced through the use of the Student Disciplinary Procedures adopted by the Board (ABOR Policy 5-401 et seq.) or through other procedures established by each university.

**Miscellaneous Provisions**

The description of prohibited conduct shall be interpreted as broadly as consistent with applicable law.

The Presidents are authorized by the Board to take other actions or to adopt other rules to protect university property and the safety and well-being of members of the university community and the public. The prior Student Code of Conduct no longer governs conduct by students, except that any pending action or proceeding shall not be affected by this Code and will be subject to the code provisions in effect at the time the action or proceeding was brought. The Code of Conduct (5-301 through 5-307), remains in effect with regards to students to the extent it is not inconsistent with this policy. If both the Code of Conduct and the Student Code of Conduct address an issue regarding a student, the Student Code of Conduct will govern that issue.

Student Judicial Affairs—Office of Student Life—Arizona State University—480-965-6547, [https://eoss.asu.edu/dos/srr/codeofconduct](https://eoss.asu.edu/dos/srr/codeofconduct)
Weapons, Threats and Violence: Campus Safety Issues at ASU

Although ASU has long had policies prohibiting weapons, threats and violence, several of those policies have recently been revised to promote a safer campus and learning environment. Following the off-campus student shooting in spring of 2005, President Crow asked law professor Myles Lynk to chair a committee to conduct an independent investigation into the incident and to address related campus safety issues. The committee recommended enhanced education of the campus community with regard to incidents (on- and off-campus) that involve weapons, threats and violence. The committee recommended that the university provide clear guidance on prohibited conduct and require that students and employees be required to refer or report all incidents of disruption to campus police and other appropriate campus offices.

This briefing paper summarizes the current ASU policies. Additional detail is available in each of the referenced policies, which should be consulted for guidance in individual circumstances.

Weapons

ASU prohibits the use, possession, display and storage of weapons, fireworks and explosive devices AND requires all students and employees with knowledge of violations to report those violations to ASU DPS. (DPS201-05)

This prohibition extends to all: land and buildings owned, leased or under the control of ASU or its affiliated or related entities

- ASU residential facilities
- ASU vehicles,
- Non-ASU vehicles present on any property owned or controlled by ASU or an ASU affiliate or related entity, and
- ASU or ASU affiliate sponsored events and activities.

ASU students and employees are required to report known and suspected violations of the weapons policy to ASU DPS immediately. Failure to report as required may result in sanctions under applicable ABOR and ASU policies governing student and employee conduct.

The only exceptions to the weapons policy are:

- A certified peace officer performing official duties
- Authorized activities with the prior written approval of the director of ASU DPS or the director's authorized representative

Threats and Violence

Violent, threatening or disruptive behavior by students, employees and guests on campus will not be tolerated. State law authorizes ASU to adopt rules for the maintenance of public order on all property used for educational purposes and provides that those rules may govern the conduct of students, faculty, staff and all members of the public. In addition to general codes of conduct that govern employee and student behavior, ASU has adopted policies regarding disruptive student behavior and violence in the workplace to protect the campus and promote a safe educational environment. The following sections highlight the policies regarding disruptive conduct by students and employees.

Disruptive Student Conduct

All incidents and allegations of violent or threatening conduct by an ASU student (whether on- or off-campus) must be reported to ASU DPS and the Dean of Students Office. If either office determines that the behavior
poses or has posed a serious threat to personal safety or to the welfare of the campus, the student will not be permitted to return to campus or reside in any ASU residence hall until an appropriate threat assessment has been completed and, if necessary, conditions for return are imposed. ASU DPS, the Dean of Students Office, and other appropriate offices will coordinate the assessment in light of the relevant circumstances.

The Office of Student Life (965-6547) is available to answer questions about responding to incidents of disruption and general questions regarding classroom management.

**Disruptive Conduct in the Workplace**

Any act of intimidation including menacing and harassing behaviors, threat of violence, and acts of violence committed against any person in the workplace is prohibited. Any person experiencing or observing imminent violence in the workplace should call ASU DPS at 911.

All incidents and allegations of violent or threatening conduct by an ASU employee (whether on- or off-campus) must be reported to ASU DPS (480/965–3456) or the ASU Employee Assistance Office (480/965–2271) immediately. If either office determines that the behavior poses or has posed a serious threat to personal safety or to the welfare of the campus, the employee will not be permitted to return to campus until an appropriate threat assessment has been completed and, if necessary, conditions for return are imposed. ASU DPS, the Employee Assistance Office, the employee’s supervisor, and other appropriate offices will coordinate the assessment in light of the relevant circumstances.

Any ASU supervisor, manager, or individual in authority who receives a report of a suspected violation of this policy shall document and report the suspected violation to the appropriate authority.

Employees found to be in violation of this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Any employee who intentionally brings false charges will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination (see SPP 809, “Discipline”).

Employees and supervisors may contact ASU Human Resources, the Employee Assistance Program Office, ASU DPS, or an ombudsperson for assistance in maintaining a safe work environment.

**Campus Safety**

All members of the campus community have a shared responsibility for maintaining a safe campus. ASU’s annual “Campus Security Policy and Crime Statistics Report” is a valuable information resource that addresses ASU’s security policies and steps that members of the university community can take to improve their personal safety. In addition to recent crime statistics, the report includes contact information for numerous campus and community support organizations. Printed copies of the report are also available at the ASU Department of Public Safety, the Office of General Counsel, the Office of Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action, Human Resources and the Student Services Building.
Managing Hot Moments in The Classroom
by Lee Warren, Derek Bok Center

Sometimes things seem to explode in the classroom, and what do we do then? Knowing strategies for turning difficult encounters into learning opportunities enables us to address important, but hot, topics —religion, politics, race, class, gender—in our classroom discussions.

Hot moments occur when people’s feelings—often conflictual—rise to a point that threatens teaching and learning. They can occur during the discussion of issues people feel deeply about, or as a result of classroom dynamics in any field.

For some instructors, hot moments are the very stuff of classroom life. They thrive on such moments, encourage them, and use them for pointed learning. Others abhor hot moments and do everything possible to prevent or stifle them. For them, conflict prevents learning.

Fortunately all of us can develop techniques to handle the unavoidable difficult moments. Using them can open doors to topics formerly avoided and classroom dynamics formerly neglected. Most importantly, exploring these tensions can lead to deep learning.

The challenges of dealing with hot moments are

- to manage ourselves so as to make them useful and
- to find the teaching opportunities to help students learn in and from the moment.

Strategies suggested here rest upon the assumption that it is the teacher’s responsibility both to help students learn something from the moment and to care for and protect all the participants, perhaps particularly the student(s) who has generated the hot moment. This does not mean that discomfort can be avoided: sometimes learning about hot topics is difficult and uncomfortable. But no one should be scapegoated. Everyone should be protected so that learning can happen.

A True Story

“We were ten weeks into Introduction to Afro-Am and were discussing Louis Farrakhan,” a young instructor told me. “Near the end of section, a very smart Jewish woman said, ‘Only uneducated black men would believe in Farrakhan.' Six black men in the class turned on her and attacked. “Class ended, and she ran out of the room, down the hall, in tears.”

“I went after her and told her that if she was ever going to understand this stuff she had to go back the next time and listen very hard to what those guys, highly educated, say about why they might believe in Farrakhan.

“I then went back into the classroom. Luckily the men were still there, still talking about the incident. I told them that if they were ever going to get it, they had to listen very hard to why a Jewish woman might think that only the uneducated would believe in Farrakhan.”

This young man was able to turn a hot moment into a profound learning opportunity for his students. He did it by keeping his head, not taking sides, and letting both groups know that they would gain immeasurably by understanding the arguments of the other side.

Finding Teaching Opportunities in the Moment

It’s not easy to see the teaching opportunity when a student says she doesn’t think the U.S. should have gone to war to prevent the Holocaust “because they weren’t Christians” -- or when a male student makes a joke...
about irrational numbers being female -- or when one student heatedly says, “The trouble with you is you talk all the time and never listen!” -- or when the Jewish student says that only uneducated black men would believe Louis Farrakhan.

**How We Think About the Moment**

The first route to making such unanticipated and difficult occurrences productive lies in how we think about the moment -- as instructors. If we can get out of our own emotional confusion, we can begin to see the heat as an opportunity to explore different views about the topic. In the case above, for example, it could be helpful to students to examine why someone might think that religious affiliation was a reason to go or not to go to war.

We can also use the image of leaving the dance floor of the discussion and our emotions and going up to the balcony. From there we can look for a relevant meta-level issue that the hot moment raises. Often the difficult statement illustrates the complexity of questions being discussed, as in the instance of the Jewish student’s remarks about Farrakhan. Such a comment presents an immediate example of Jewish/African-American political difficulties.

It helps sometimes to think about listening for “the song beneath the words” of the student. What is the sub-text? What is the student really saying? Why is this coming up at all, and why at this time? Often students can’t articulate clearly what they are thinking. After double-checking our impressions with the student, we can use this information to further the conversation.

For example, the student in the holocaust story was African-American. Her sub-text might have been that we needed to deal with the United States’ own race issues before taking on those of other nations. That idea is certainly a valid one for discussion in contemporary international politics. Had the instructor been able to bring this to the surface, rather than avoiding her remarks altogether, the class would have come away with enriched understanding.

**Helping the Students Think About It**

To help students think productively about issues raised during hot moments, establish discussion norms early in the term, or at the moment if necessary. Don’t permit personal attacks. Model norms that encourage an open discussion of difficult material -- by being open to multiple perspectives and by asking all students to argue their point responsibly.

We can take the issue off the student who has made the offensive remark and put it on the table as a topic for general discussion. Say something like: “Many people think this way. Why do they hold such views? What are their reasons?” and then, “Why do those who disagree hold other views?” This protects the student while also encouraging others who disagree to understand a view they dislike and then to argue their position later.

Another strategy is to require that all students seek to understand each other’s perspectives, as a prerequisite to understanding the subject at all. Ask them to listen carefully to the other point of view, to ask questions, and then to be able to restate or argue for that position. This can work for the hottest of subjects.

Ask students to write about the issue, either in class, as a reflective and hopefully calming exercise followed by discussion, or outside of class. You can ask them to do some research on the subject and write a more balanced essay. You might require them to argue the position they most disagreed with.

Sometimes it is important to talk with students outside of class, particularly those who have been most embroiled in the hot moment. Help them to learn something substantive from the experience—about themselves, about others, about possible positions, about the topic as a whole, and about how to voice their
thoughts so that they can be heard, even by those who disagree. These conversations can save a student and keep them coming to class with an open and learning mind.

If a student breaks down as a result of the original outburst, acknowledge it, and ask them if they would like to remain in the classroom or leave for a while. At the end of class, find the student and ask if you can be of any assistance. In extreme cases, urge them to see a counselor.

**Getting the Students to Do the Work**

Ask students, when things get hot, to step back and reflect upon what they might learn from this moment. This can move the discussion to a level that helps everyone see what issues have been at stake and what the clash itself might mean.

I’ve seen this work in a class in which a white student and an African-American student were wrangling at length and without apparent movement toward any understanding. When the teacher asked all students to explore what they might learn from this, the discussion shifted gears quickly. They began to think about the difficulties in black-white communications when different belief systems were at work, the reasons for those difficulties, and possible ways to bridge the gaps.

Another strategy is to ask students to think about how their reactions mirror the subject at hand and what they might learn from their own behavior. Often groups act out in their own discussion the topic under discussion. For example, when discussing how women’s remarks are often ignored in business settings, the class or the instructor may be ignoring the remarks of women in the class. Seeing this and talking about it in the moment can enhance people’s understanding of the issue.

**Don’t Avoid the Issue**

When hot moments occur because of inter-student dynamics, in ways not related to the subject matter, it can still be important to address the issue, even in a math or physics class.

For example, if a student complains about another’s speaking behavior, it is tempting to go on as if the outburst hadn’t occurred. However, a discussion about who speaks and who doesn’t and why, and how to enable the quiet ones to make room for themselves and the talkative ones to listen, could help every student in the room and make room for a greater diversity of ideas in the class.

Or if a student makes a joke like the one about irrational numbers being female, it could be useful to stop to examine why and how men make such jokes and how they affect women’s experience in math and science classes. It might be helpful to the men to understand why the women get upset by their good-humored jokes and to the women to understand how to counter them. A discussion of this sort could open the classroom to far greater collaboration the rest of the term.

To ignore such remarks has its own consequences. Students learn that such behavior is OK and that they are not protected from it. They miss the opportunity to learn about their own behavior and its consequences. And they miss the opportunity to have a more open classroom in which a wider range of ideas can be explored.

It is, of course, almost always useful to talk about the moment outside of class with the individuals involved, to give them support, and help them to learn from the experience.

Having a fallback position
If you are unable to find a workable position in the moment, defer. Tell students that this is an important issue and that you will take it up at a later time. You then have time to plan strategies. This approach lets all the students in the room know that you take such occurrences seriously.

**Managing Ourselves**

We often forget that a primary task is to find ways to manage ourselves in the midst of confusion.

Hold Steady. If you can hold steady and not be visibly rattled by the hot moment, the students will be better able to steady themselves as well and even learn something from the moment. Your behavior provides a holding environment for the students. They can feel safe when you appear to be in control; this enables them to explore the issues. Your behavior also provides a model for the students.

Breathe deeply. Take a moment. Collect yourself. Take time if you need it. Silence is useful -- if you can show that you are comfortable with it. A pause will also permit students to reflect on the issues raised. Deep breathing is an ancient and highly effective technique for calming adrenaline rushes and restoring one’s capacity to think.

Don’t personalize remarks. Don’t take remarks personally, even when they come as personal attacks. Such attacks are most likely made against you in your role as teacher or authority figure. Remembering to separate self from role can enable you to see what a student is saying more clearly and to actually discuss the issue. It’s not about you. It’s about the student and his or her feelings and thoughts, though often articulated clumsily and from an as yet unthought through position.

Don’t take remarks personally when they are about issues that you feel strongly about, or even about groups of which you are a part. Again, remember that both you and the group will be better served if you can keep some distance from the comments and find ways to use them to enhance people’s understanding.

Don’t let yourself get caught up in a personal reaction to the individual who has made some unpleasant remark. It’s easy to want to tear into a student who is personally offensive to you. To do so is to fail to see what that student and his or her ideas represent in the classroom and in the larger world. If you take the remarks personally, chances are you will not be able to find what there is to learn from them.

Know yourself. Know your biases, know what will push your buttons and what will cause your mind to stop. Every one of us has areas in which we are vulnerable to strong feelings. Knowing what those areas are in advance can diminish the element of surprise. This self-knowledge can enable you to devise in advance strategies for managing yourself and the class when such a moment arises. You will have thought about what you need to do in order to enable your mind to work again.

**Resources**


Videos. The Bok Center for Teaching and Learning at Harvard University has made two videos that can help people process difficult moments and develop strategies for confronting them. Each comes with a Facilitator's Guide. See the Bok Center website for information on how to obtain these videos:

Race in the Classroom: The Multiplicity of Experience

Women in the Classroom

A version of this “tip sheet” appeared in the NEA Advocate, October 2000.

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# APPENDIX C: GRADUATE EDUCATION CONTACTS

## Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education (Suite 285)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrew N. Webber, Vice Provost for Graduate Education</td>
<td>480-965-5906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pat Saldivar</strong>, Administrative Specialist</td>
<td>480-965-5906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla McNeil-Baxter, Administrative Assistant/Vice Provost's Scheduling</td>
<td>480-965-4253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy Reid, Administrative Specialist and Publications Supervisor</td>
<td>480-965-7279</td>
</tr>
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## Graduate Enrollment Services (Suite 170)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kim Naig, Executive Director</td>
<td>480-965-6113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iona Show, Manager</td>
<td>480-965-6113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Baker, Graduate Education Coordinator</td>
<td>480-965-6113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Mattson, Graduate Education Coordinator</td>
<td>480-965-6113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer May, Graduate Education Coordinator</td>
<td>480-965-6113</td>
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## International Enrollment (Suite 284)

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ajay Vinze, Associate Vice Provost</td>
<td>480-727-7357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yue (Abby) Song, Student Recruitment Coordinator</td>
<td>480-965-8536</td>
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## Graduate Student Programs and Assessment, Diversity Initiatives (Suite 288)

<table>
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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Andrew N. Webber, Vice Provost for Graduate Education</td>
<td>480-965-5906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pat Saldivar</strong>, Administrative Specialist</td>
<td>480-965-5906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Cason, Director of Graduate Support Initiatives</td>
<td>480-965-8968</td>
</tr>
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## Graduate Academic Programs (Suite 285)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eric Wertheimer, Associate Vice Provost</td>
<td>480-727-3111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda Morales-Calderon, Specialist</td>
<td>480-965-5999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamela Garrett, Academic Program Review and Digital Initiatives</td>
<td>480-965-2894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna Roelle, Office Specialist</td>
<td>480-727-3111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Administrative Services and Information Systems, Financial Awards (Suite 256)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent Blaylock, Assistant Dean</td>
<td>480-965-5991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Lurie, Director, IT Services</td>
<td>480-965-7630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidi Scheier, Business Manager</td>
<td>480-965-7627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Lebihan, Student Support Coordinator</td>
<td>480-965-6916</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Revised 4-29-13. The most current version of the Graduate TA Resource Guide can be found at: graduate.asu.edu/tad