

Concurrent Workshop Descriptions

Teaching Assistant Orientation

University of Massachusetts Amherst
Friday, September 4, 2009

These descriptions of selected workshops are intended to provide an overview of the kinds of workshops typically offered during the TAO.

Lecturing Effectively

TAs will identify essentials of effective lecturing, including advance preparation, delivery technique, and ways to actively involve students.

Course Design, Syllabus, And the First Day of Class

This session will discuss setting goals and objectives for a course, the essentials of a good syllabus, and how to prepare for the first day of class.

Learning Styles and Stages

This session will provide an overview of learning styles and developmental patterns TAs are likely to encounter in their students. Advice on how to use appropriate teaching strategies with each of these styles and stages will also be provided.

Critical Moments in College Teaching

TAs will discuss problems in teaching (e.g. disagreements over grades and grading standards, students talking during class, confronting issues of plagiarism or cheating) and identify possible solutions.

Cross Cultural Teaching and Learning

International TAs may face special issues in teaching at the University. For example, issues such as cross-cultural communication, English as a second language, and varying student perceptions and expectations. This session will afford international TAs the opportunity to discuss these issues with experienced faculty and graduate student instructors.

Leading Effective Discussions

The focus of this session will be on the preparation needed to ensure a lively discussion. TAs will practice questioning skills to keep discussion on target. The emphasis of this session will be on creating a classroom environment that fosters student participation.

Responding To and Evaluating Written Assignments

This session will suggest methods for providing timely and instructive responses that are appropriate to the nature of an assignment, evaluating fairly, and using your time efficiently.

Social and Cultural Diversity Issues in The Classroom

This workshop will examine four dimensions of the teaching and learning process-- what we teach and how we teach, who we are and who our students are-- to help TAs create learning environments that support an increasingly diverse student population.

Strategies for Effective Assessment and Evaluation

TAs will identify the dimensions of effective assessment and grading practices by learning how to better articulate learning outcome objectives, clarifying grading criteria, and timely communication of expectations.

Teaching Foreign Languages

This workshop will address strategies for creating and maintaining student motivation and enthusiasm in the introductory and intermediate level classrooms. Suggestions will be offered for warm-ups; pacing language instruction; and teaching in the target language.

Knowing Who are Our Students: Tools for Dialogues

TAs will examine several profiles of entering UMass students --- including their educational backgrounds, learning styles, expectations, goals and values. TAs will identify practical strategies for teaching and creating academic support systems for students in their early, most critical years on campus.

Improving Lectures by Actively Involving Students

TAs will identify essentials of effective lecturing, including advance preparation, organization, delivery technique and ways to actively involve students. Discussion will offer strategies useful in a wide range of disciplines.

Teaching and Learning in the Diverse Classroom

In this session, TAs will explore the diversity-related dimensions of teaching excellence by exploring what promotes learning and success for all. "Diversity," in this case includes what we bring to the classroom as instructors, who are our students, our pedagogical choices, and our core learning goals. We will identify personal teaching strengths and share some strategies and techniques for establishing an inclusive classroom.

Leading Laboratory Sections in the Sciences

A guide to help TAs develop good skills for conducting laboratory sections in the sciences will be presented in this session. Topics include promoting safety, preparation before the lab, how to conduct the lab, grading, office hours, and promoting good relationships with faculty, staff, and students