

Teaching Orientation @ Ohio State: Session Agenda

Introduction to Teaching & Learning – Part I

Coordinator: UCAT Staff, ucat@osu.edu

Date: Autumn

Time: 2:20 – 5:00 p.m.

Rationale: This session provides an introduction to what TAs need to know **before** teaching the **first day** of class.

Goals: Participants will understand that becoming a teacher is an ongoing developmental process and that there are resources to help them, some of which will be introduced during the orientation. Participants will consider how to get to know students, how to find out what their exact teaching responsibilities are, and how to establish and maintain a classroom environment. By the end of this session, participants will understand that they are not alone in their concerns about teaching and will hopefully feel more comfortable with teaching generally.

Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants will:

- be able to articulate what it means to see themselves as teachers
- be able to recognize and possibly adopt a student-centered focus to their teaching and teaching philosophy
- be able to identify and formulate questions they need to ask themselves and others before (and while) they teach
- be able to make preliminary decisions about boundaries and expectations they want to set for their classrooms and be able to implement them in their classrooms
- have developed an actual plan of what to do when they enter the classroom on the first day

Timeline:

The structure of this agenda must be followed in the order given. Options for activities within each section are provided on the following pages.

2:20 - 2:40 **I.** Introduction & Icebreaker
2:40 - 3:10 **II.** Cultivating Your Teaching Identity
3:10 - 3:30 **III.** Knowing Your Students
3:30 - 3:40 Break
3:40 - 4:10 **IV.** Responsibilities of Teaching in a specific context
4:10 - 4:45 **V.** Setting Expectations
4:45 - 5:00 **VI.** Overall Wrap-Up

Other Details:

My co-facilitator is _____

Contact information: _____

We will be presenting in Central Classroom Building, room # _____

I. Introduction & Icebreaker (2:20 - 2:40)

Rationale:

This is the first time the participants are be together. Because they will be in this group this afternoon and tomorrow morning, it is important that they get to know each other. These activities will also aide participants to ease into the session, know you as facilitators, understand expectations for participation in the orientation sessions generally (like the fact that they will be doing discussions and activities), and allow participants to see an example of what they could do in their own classes on day 1.

Goals:

Participants will get to know facilitators and each other and will learn what to expect during the three-day orientation. Participants will also have the opportunity to think about the what they bring to their up-coming teaching experience, the specific goals that they have for themselves, and how they can begin to address those goals during the orientation.

Objectives:

By the end of this part of the session, participants will:

- have participated in at least one ice-breaker activity that they can use on the first day of class

Materials:

- Orientation Organizer (*participants will have received these in the opening session; you will have some extra copies in your materials bins for people who were not at that session.*)
- Paper handout: “Planning for the First Day of Class” (*in the materials bin; also on flash drives*)
- Name tags (*in the materials bin*)
- Markers (*for name tags, in the materials bin*)
- Attendance sheet (*in the materials bin*)
- Pens (*participants were asked to bring their own, but there will be a few available in your bin*)

General Notes:

- *You will likely have participants entering the session throughout this introduction, as stragglers are common. Try to begin the session on time, and allow new people to be folded into the introductions as it becomes possible.*
- *You will need to send around the attendance list and pass out materials at some point during the session.*
- *Encourage all participants to wear the nametags they’ve been given.*

Activities

(1) Introduce yourselves.

(2) Introduce the session.

(a) Let participants know they are in this group based on teaching context and discipline cluster; briefly describe your group, and check that all participants are in the right place.

(b) Introduce the guiding questions of today’s session as the basis for getting started.

(Note: In past years, participants commented in their feedback that it was useful to have those questions written on the board or on an overhead. You could write them as you introduce them, or you could have them already up at the start of the session.)

- Who am I as a teacher?
- How can I get to know my students and find out what they already know?
- What will my teaching responsibilities be?
- How do I set up a good learning environment?

(3) Do an example of a first-day activity

If you have a favorite first-day activity (5 minutes or less) one of you has used to get to know your students, or to set expectations, do it now with your participants.

Consider including participants' answers to the first question on page 3 of their organizers: "What is one skill, talent, or experience that you will bring with you to your teaching role." Possible activities that you could use include a demographic survey, an interest poll, a pre-conception check, or an introductions activity.

We will _____

(4) Give participants an overview of the three days of orientation.

(a) Point out to participants that, as they learned, they are all different and all bring different things to the table. That means that they all have different goals. Have participants look at the goal they wrote on page 3 of their organizer.

- Depending on time, consider having some participants share their goals.
- Remind participants that it's up to them to identify the information that they need in order to meet their goals, and that as facilitators you are there to help them with that.
- Point out that pages 5-8 of their organizers are set up to help them take notes about the things they learn in their sessions that will be particularly helpful to them.

(b) Give participants a brief overview of the orientation. (This can be quick, since they will have recently heard this information in the opening plenary session.)

- Today: things they need to prepare for the first day
- Tomorrow: things they'll need while teaching (e.g., understanding student learning, teaching methods, getting feedback, a chance to apply and practice)
- Thursday is specific teaching topics in more detail.
- They may also have programs in their departments, and there is the opportunity for ongoing support from UCAT throughout the year.

(5) Set expectations for today.

(a) Explain to participants that this session covers a lot of big concepts; it is meant to give a start but not be the end. Emphasize that there are many different styles of good teaching, and that their choices for how they teach and what kind of classroom environment they want to establish will depend on the answers to those guiding questions

(b) Have participants consider the goals for today's session and think about what they are hoping to learn today. If applicable, they might write a particular goal for themselves on the bottom of page 3 in their organizers.

II. Cultivating Your Teaching Identity (2:40 - 3:10)

Guiding Question

Who am I as a teacher?

Rationale

Many new TAs haven't yet begun to think of themselves as teachers. They see themselves as assistants, or see only that assistantships are funding. But students will certainly see them as teachers. We may not feel like we have any power, but students think we have a lot of power. This section starts having participants explore their identities as teachers.

Goals:

Participants will develop an awareness of themselves as teachers and understand that they have choices in how they present themselves as teachers.

Objectives:

By the end of this part of the session, participants will:

- be able to articulate what their roles are as teachers (what is entailed by being a teacher vs. being a student)
- be able to describe what it means to have a teaching persona and give examples of some ways of establishing such a persona

Materials:

- No new materials (Continue using the "Planning for the First Day of Class" handout.)

General Notes

Make sure to use participants' names as much as possible during this session, so that they begin to get to know each other. You can point out this practice as a meta-teaching example of how they can get to know their students' names and develop community in their own classrooms.

Activities

(1) Opening activity

(a) Engage participants in discussion in pairs, small groups, a whole class, or any combination. Select one of the following discussion prompts, or a hybrid. (*Note: You may want to make lists on the board as participants share their answers, which may help in the ensuing discussion and debriefing.*)

- Ask participants to answer this question: "Who was your best teacher? What did they do that made them good teachers? How would you want to be like or different from them? Why?"
- Ask the participants to share their images of college teachers (what does a college teacher look like, what are their traits, etc). Their answers will likely reflect some stereotypes that may or may not reflect who *they* want to be as teachers. Ask participants to redefine for themselves what they will be like as a college teacher (what would be different or the same from the previous list of images?).

- As facilitator(s), share your stories of when you first became teachers. What was it like for you? How did you see your role? What has changed?
- If you have participants who have taught before, you could ask them to share their stories of when they first became teachers (in groups or as a whole class). Have them answer questions such as “What were those experiences like?” and, “What did you learn from them?”
- Ask participants to answer: “What does it mean to be a college teacher?” “What significance does this role have?” “What power is inherent in this role?” Discuss and connect their responses to how a student’s experience in our class will end up on their transcript and the power that we have as teachers. Students will think of us as teachers even if we don’t think we are.
- Tell participants: “You are a teacher now.” Ask, “What does that mean to you?”

The prompt(s) that we are planning to use is/are: _____

(b) Debrief the activity above. In the debrief, try to address the following issues:

- There are a range of teaching styles, some better than others.
- Good teachers are not necessarily born good teachers.
- There is a lot that we can do to become great teachers; things we talk about today are a good starting place to discover what type of teacher you want to become.

(c) Feelings about becoming a teacher

(Do this activity only if it did not come up already in the previous discussion.)

Ask participants how they feel about being the teacher.

Reassure them that being nervous or anxious is normal, even for experienced teachers. One goal of the orientation is to help build confidence, and one way to increase confidence is to decrease the unknown.

(2) First day planning

Talk about how students form impressions of the class and the instructor on the very first day, and the importance of how teachers introduce/present themselves to the class.

The two facilitators can compare/contrast the decisions you each make about introductions, dress, presentation style, etc. so that participants can see the variety and begin to think about how they’ll do it. Also, discuss how much you might want to (or not want to) share about yourselves, e.g. age, first time teaching, graduate school experience, research area, etc.).

(3) Wrap up.

Have participants complete the “Planning for the First Day of Class” handout, question # 1: “How will you introduce yourself to your students?”

III. Knowing Your Students (3:15 - 3:35)

Guiding Question

How can I get to know my students and find out what they already know?

Rationale

The importance of the first day of class is not only for students to get to know us, but for us to get to know them. Teaching is about teaching students, not just teaching content. We need to know who they are and what they know in order to help them reach our learning goals (which also helps build rapport). Teaching is moving students from point A to point B, so it's important to know the point at which they're starting.

Goals:

Participants will understand that students are diverse and have diverse backgrounds, and that student background will influence how they perceive the teacher, as well as how the teacher perceives them.

Objectives:

By the end of this part of the session, participants will be able to:

- describe how students are all individual, that they have complex lives that we'll never know, and that they have varied prior knowledge and experiences relevant to their courses.
- discuss why it is dangerous to make assumptions about students.
- describe how diversity and identity affect the classroom.
- implement some means of eliciting relevant information about their students.

Materials:

- Excerpt from "The Value of Diversity" by Kathryn Plank and Stephanie Rohdieck (*in the materials bin*)
- "OSU demographic data" (*on flash drives only*)

Activities

(1) Transition

Explain to participants that at this point in the session, they will be transitioning from thinking about themselves to talking about ways to get to know students. The only certainty of their classes is that their students will all be different.

You may find it useful to display the "OSU demographic data" (from your flash drives) as a way to begin or wrap-up this activity/discussion. Consider the following questions about that data:

- How much of this information would you typically be able to find about your students?
- What sorts of identities would be particularly relevant to the sorts of things you do or address in your class?

(2) Pick one of the following:

On the following page are four possibilities for how you might address student diversity with your participants. You and your co-facilitator may choose the approach that you feel most comfortable with. As you are deciding what you will do, be sure to reread the list of objectives above to be sure that you and your partner address them in the activity you do with your participants.

(a) Small group discussion: Ask participants to get in small groups (you need to end up with at least three groups, so try putting participants in groups of three).

- Provide them with the handout, "The Assumptions We Make About Diversity," that you read before training.
- Assign each group one of the three assumptions outlined: ask each group to read and discuss the assigned section and then draft a short summary about the authors' main point. (You can keep it playful by saying that it's a "Twitter Summary" and must be 140 characters or less.)
- After the small groups have completed their summaries, open discussion up to the whole group and share the summaries.
- Complete the activity by asking participants to reflect individually on the discussion with some free writing. Ask them to write about the assumption or assertion about diversity that was most revealing, compelling, or interesting to them personally. Be sure to ask participants to envision how it might connect with student learning in their specific teaching context.

--OR--

(b) Identity Statements:

- Ask participants to write a few sentences with the following structure: "I am _____, but I am not _____". The participants list identity categories with which they identify (or identities that are assigned to them by others), and list the reasons that that identity category's connotative baggage doesn't apply to them.
- Facilitators should provide an example or two to get the participants started. (*You may come up with a few examples during facilitator training and write them below.*)
- Debrief by asking for volunteers to share theirs with the group and discuss. Some participants may not feel comfortable sharing what they have written. Please do not push this.
- Ask participants to come up with other identities that students might inhabit that would affect their learning experiences in some way. Facilitators should press to ensure that each of these examples is explicitly connected to how it might impact learning.

--OR--

(c) Facilitator Designed Activity: During your facilitator training, you and the other facilitators in your teaching context may come up with an activity

--OR--

(d) Freeform Discussion

The activity we will use is:

(3) Debrief:**(a) Other things to think about:**

- What are some strategies you might use to be as inclusive of all students (particularly those who might be easily alienated) as possible?
- Even if it seems like a student's identity isn't that relevant to your class, you need to be open to the fact that there will always be things you don't know that can influence a student's experience in class.
- Students will also have certain preconceptions about you as an instructor that may shape their learning in some way.

(b) Facilitators share what they do in their classes to get to know their student, including information about the students' prior knowledge (i.e. background probes, questionnaires, misconception/ preconception check, classroom polls, attitude surveys on Carmen, etc.).

(4) Outside Resources

Point participants to the flash drive resources for this topic – 02 Introduction to Teaching and Learning\Additional Resources on Teaching and Learning. Mention specific titles/topics because we want them to get a sense of specific identity/diversity topics that may not have arisen in the discussions above. Here is that list again:

- Folder: "Fast Facts on Disability and Learning" (in folder '02 Introduction to Teaching and Learning') There are 5 pdf documents in here on various aspects of teaching students with disabilities, including universal design for learning, and points on syllabus construction.
- PDF full text resources in the folder (path) '02 Introduction to Teaching and Learning/Introduction to Teaching and Learning – Teaching in the Independent Course':
 - *Students in a Diverse Classroom* (C. Stanley)
 - *The Value of Diversity* (Plank & Rohdieck)
- The same folder has a file entitled "Additional Resources on Introduction to Teaching and Learning" in which there several useful links. For this topic in particular:

Diversity and Inclusion

Fast facts for faculty on teaching students with disabilities (collection of resources, a few of which we have given you the full text) <http://ada.osu.edu/resources/fastfacts/>

University of Michigan Teaching Strategies: Multiculturalism / Diversity in Teaching
<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/tstrategies/tsmdt.php>

University of Michigan Creating Inclusive College Classrooms
http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/P3_1.php

(5) Wrap-up

Have participants complete question #2 on the "Planning for the First Day of Class" handout: "How will you get to know the students and let them get to know each other?" Refer back to icebreakers as one possibility; then have participants share some of their ideas.

IV. Responsibilities of Teaching in a Specific Context (3:40 - 4:10)

Guiding Question

What will my teaching responsibilities be?

Rationale

Transition participants from how students will get to know them and how they'll get to know students, to now understanding more about the way the course is structured, how it fits into the curriculum, and what responsibilities they will have. This part of the session is meant to empower participants to ask of their department and the course instructor the questions they need answered in order to best do their job. Every teaching position and course will be different and they cannot be expected to know in what ways. Many new TAs assume that they will be told exactly what they will need to do to teach effectively, but unfortunately this will not be the case for all of them at all times. Hence, they need to know what to ask and of whom.

Goals:

Participants will understand responsibilities for teaching in a particular context (recitation, lab, independently, studio, etc.) will vary by department, and that they need to find out what those are and how they influence the way they run their classes. They will also consider how to communicate the course structure and course goals to students.

Objectives:

By the end of this part of the session, participants will:

- be able to describe factors that relate to specific responsibilities for their teaching context
- have prepared a list of questions that they need to ask in their home department, and have thought about whom they will ask
- have generated preliminary ideas for introducing the course to students

Materials:

- Post-it notes
- Overhead Transparency "Whose Responsibility Is It?" (*transparency in bin, or project from your flash drive*)
- Notecards (*in materials bin*)
- Continue using the "Planning for the First Day of Class" handout.

Activities

(1) Introduce the new topic.

(a) Find out how many of the participants even know what a recitation is first! Then describe what it is. Describe possible formats for recitations as well as instruction team structures. Some ways that recitations look in different departments are...

(b) Discuss the unique position GTAs are in when they lead (blank) context. Facilitators can share their own ideas, or they can solicit ideas from the participants first. For example, leading recitations

- Leading recitations can provide a building block for teaching independently
- Leading recitations provides students more direct contact with instructors
- Students will look to you as an instructor (not as a student)
- Regardless of your future career this teaching experience will help you with communication skills, it will provide opportunities to see and teach with fellow graduate students, it will help you feel like a part of the teaching community in your department.

(2) Whose Responsibility is it?

Select one of the following activities for using the “Whose Responsibility is it” worksheet, or design your own. Use the list on the worksheet to guide a discussion on the types of things a GTA might want to ask the department. Remind participants that page 4 of their organizer is designed for the kinds of questions that may come up in this section. *(Note: Remember that the answers to these questions will be different in every department, so the point of the activity is not to provide answers but to help participants figure out what they might need to ask about and who to ask.)*

- Have participants write the questions they have about their role on post-it notes (these will be provided in your materials bin), collect them, and then sort them on the board by type of question (those best answered by the department secretary, lead instructor, advisor, university policy, etc). Then display the worksheet on screen. Explain that there are (and why) various options/possible scenarios. Share a few experiences you have had/heard about.
- Show the “Whose Responsibility is it?” worksheet on screen. Pick a few items on the checklist to specifically go over (or have participants choose ones that they’d like to discuss) and then brainstorm together to come up with other questions participants might/should ask and who each question should be directed to. *NB: If you are running behind time-wise, this option is quickest.*

With each option above, make sure to discuss how the worksheet is meant to be used as a talking guide for participants when they talk with their instructional team/lead instructor. Share with them reasons why this is helpful to do (perhaps share positive experiences you have had with initial communication with the faculty/fellow TAs). Remind participants that the “Whose Responsibility Is It?” work sheet is on their flash drives and that they should use it as a tool to speak with their course coordinator, lead instructor, or instructional team.

(3) Relationship between the lead instructor and the GTA

(a) Briefly discuss aspects of the relationship between the TA and the lead instructor for a course. For example, it may be necessary to adjust to a different teaching style or be faced with unforeseen expectations from the lead instructor (hand-on vs. hands-off approach). Talk about potential ways to deal with these issues (for example, what do you do when you are faced with

V. Setting Expectations (4:10 - 4:45)

Guiding Question

How do I set up a good learning environment?

Rationale

Now that we've thought about who *you* are, who *they* are, and what the *class structure* will be like, we need to think about how you and the students will interact with each other. The previous activity showed us that there is much to find out about what will be expected of you in your teaching role. Students will need to know what is expected of them and what they can expect from you.

Goals:

Participants will learn that they have influence in shaping the classroom environment, and that there are pedagogical choices they can make to fit their course goals and personal teaching style.

Objectives

By the end of this part of the session, participants will:

- have made some preliminary decisions about particular behaviors that they want to encourage or discourage in their classrooms and about how to communicate those to students;
- have made preliminary decisions about what students can expect of them

Materials:

- ELIXR Video (optional) (*on facilitator flash drives only*)
- Overhead Transparency: "Classroom Behaviors" (*in the materials bin*)
- Continue using the "Planning for the First Day of Class" handout.

Activities

(1) Video-based discussion

(a) Choose two videos of teachers establishing the environment on the first day from the ELIXR collection (<http://pachyderm.cdl.edu/elixr-stories/1stday-slo/>).

1. _____

2. _____

(b) For each, discuss (in pairs, small groups, or as one big group):

- What is the tone in each classroom?
- What do you think the rules of classroom are for each?
- If you were a student in each classroom, what would you think of the learning environment?

(c) Discuss how in order to create these learning environments, we need to know what our expectations of the students are. Share a brief example from your own teaching (and/or a story you heard at facilitator training) about what could happen when you don't set those expectations for classroom behaviors. If you have participants who have taught before, you might consider asking whether they are willing to share their stories.

Example to share: _____

(2) Classroom Behaviors transparency

- (a) Put Classroom Behaviors transparency on the overhead projector.
- (b) Show the side with student behaviors first (while covering the other side).
 (Choose two or three, then maybe ask participants to choose one or two more. DO NOT try to do all of these even if they want to!!)
- Have participants vote on their response to the behaviors (ok, depends, never ok). (This can be voting with hands or with feet.)
 - Tally responses on the overhead and add any behaviors you think of.
 - Talk about how there might be a discrepancy between their expectations vs. the students', and how things like culture and personality may play into it.
 - Remind them that they also need to consider what would bother other students as well.
 - Discuss how they can communicate their expectations to students, both on the syllabus and in class. Provide examples of how you do this.
 - Also, discuss how teaching context can affect classroom expectations. For example, teaching (blank) context could lead TAs to make different decisions than they would in a large class.
- (c) Show the side of the overhead with the teacher behaviors next.
- Again, have participants vote on their response to the behaviors.
 - Tally responses on the overhead and add any behaviors you think of.
 - If you did the activity in part 1 where you described typical college teachers, talk about how these behaviors may relate to those images/expectations.
 - Discuss how they can communicate these expectations students can have of them as teachers (verbally on the first day of class and in the syllabus—either the main course syllabus or their own syllabus supplement). Share examples of how you do this. You can show examples of ways to express this from your own syllabi (if you used syllabi), or suggest that they seek out senior TAs in their departments and ask how they communicated expectations.
- (d) Explain to the participants that tomorrow we will talk more about how to maintain those classroom expectations and boundaries. When they ask (and they will), “How do I stop that from happening, or prevent it from happening?”, explain to them that tomorrow we will talk more about how to maintain those classroom expectations and boundaries. Do NOT get pulled into talking more about this today.

(4) Introduce syllabi *NB: If you are out of time, skip this.*

Explain that a syllabus is a great tool for both the instructor and the students in setting the tone for the class. Note that recitation TAs do not necessarily write syllabi, but some of them can write supplements to the syllabus provided by the lead instructor. Discuss what aspects of the main syllabus they might want to go over in particular in the TA’s session. Discuss in what circumstances it might be helpful to have such a supplement and what kinds of information might go on it. Explain to participants what you do and why.

(5) Outside Resources

Point participants to the flash drive resources for this topic. The folder (path) ‘02 Introduction to Teaching and Learning/Introduction to Teaching and Learning – Teaching in the (blank) context has a file entitled “Additional Resources on Introduction to Teaching and Learning” in which there several useful links. For this session in particular:

First day and setting expectations

- Davis, “First Day of Class”, *Tools for Teaching*
<http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/firstday.html>
- Sorcinelli, “Dealing with Troublesome Behaviors in the Classroom”
<http://www.scottsdalecc.edu/adjunct/docs/DealingTroublesomeBehaviors.pdf>
- ELIXR videos, “First Day of Class”
<http://pachyderm.cdl.edu/elixr-stories/1stday-slo/>

(6) Wrap-up

Have participants work with a partner and discuss questions 4-5 on the handout “Planning for the First Day of Class.”

Emphasize that there are many different styles of good teaching, and that their choices for classroom environment will depend on who they are, who their students are, what they teach, what institutional expectations there are (e.g., are they required to take attendance by their dept?).

Notes:

VI. Overall Wrap-up (4:45-5:00)

Materials:

- Evaluations of Introduction to Teaching and Learning, Part 1. (*in materials bins*)
 - Flash drives
 - Autumn UCAT newsletters
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Activities:

(1) Wrap-up

- Collect note cards for the faculty facilitators if you have not already done so.
- Come back to concerns which we have not yet addressed.
- Check whether there are any last questions.
- Project “First Day Checklist” from the flash drive, tell them it’s on their flash drive, and encourage them to do as much as they can to familiarize themselves with the course, their department, and the classroom.
- Show the “Session Plan” on the back of “Planning for the First Day of Class.” Talk about how they can use this to plan their first class, discuss or have participants discuss suggestions for what they might do.

(2) Double-check that everyone has signed the attendance sheet

(3) Set the stage for tomorrow:

Remind participants

- that tomorrow is all about things they’ll need while teaching (e.g., understanding student learning, teaching methods, getting feedback, a chance to apply and practice.
- that they will be in the same place.
- that you will begin at 9:00am.
- which of the two facilitators will be returning.
- that they will meet a new faculty facilitator.

(4) Distribute materials

If you have not already done so, make sure all participants receive these materials before you leave:

- Flash drives
- Autumn UCAT newsletters

Be sure to mention to participants that we know they may feel overwhelmed by all of the information that they receive during orientation, so (a) these resources can be used to help them remember what they have learned as they plan to start teaching and (b) we hope that they will put these resources somewhere that they can refer back to them after they are feeling a bit more situated and are ready to think about further development as teachers.

