Mentoring and Coaching Graduate Students: Teaching Assistants
UVIC, Political Science

• 12-14 Teaching Assistants for Poli 103: Worlds of Politics or grading TA
• Integral part of the team, but balance my class/philosophy
• What are your ROE?
• Expectations of the TAs
• What should they expect from you
Be Organized

• Write out expectations
• They can review the expectations later and less likely to forget what you said
• Remember some are keen to learn and facilitate students’ learning others less
• Some will require more of your time—based on their interest, knowledge, professionalism
• I give them a dossier w/ a two page letter (HR vetted)
• Sample assignments
• Sample graded work
• Mid-term and key
• Syllabus
• Breakdown of TA hours
I view the tutorial and your TAship as an apprenticeship for you. This is a learning experience and it should be rewarding work. To this end, it’s important that you understand that our working relationship is such that I am your supervisor. I will take special care to help make this experience a good one. Once the term is completed, you will have another person available as a reference for your teaching dossier or other work. I look forward to mentoring and working with you. My hope is that this TA dossier will help ease you into working with me. If you have any questions—please pop by office or email me at jaragon@uvic.ca
• Does your dept offer you any guidelines
• TAs get training
• Get the above information and review it (confer w/ LTC)
• Chat with a colleague who has TA’d previously in the dept—avoid landmines
• Note eligibility rules per CUPE 4163
  • The TA you want might be on the Priority 2 or lower list! Roll with it.
Communication

• Keep your emails
• Document
• Book all meetings early so that TAs schedule them, too
• Keep lines of communication open w/ TAs, Grad Sec, and Grad Advisor
• Check in w/ your u/g—they are usually honest
• Have your TAs’ back. Confer w/ them
Mentoring/Coaching

• Be open to allowing the more seasoned TA cover a lecture
• Allow the more seasoned TA to lead a writing workshop for the paper
• Ask them for their input
• Trust the TAs—some will impress you and others might not
• How does your dept allow you to evaluate the TAs at the term’s end?
Mentoring/Coaching

• Mentoring the new TA
• Coaching the more seasoned TA
• Share information as needed
• Keep them in the loop with the problem or more time intensive student issues
  • Gives them opportunity to see how you dealt with a situation or ask for their input
• If you run into issues:
  • No show at lecture, tutorial, office hours
  • Insubordination
  • Student complaints
• Confer with dept/HR consultant, but also review CUPE Agreement
  • Document everything!
Having TAs is work!

- A good or great TA is worth it
- A less competent TA can learn how to be a better TA (you will need to guide more)
- Establish your expectations soon
- Provide them with the tools for success
- Remember that they need direction (might not act like it)
- Let go, as needed!
Performance Reviews

• Did something different April and wrote the TAs Performance Reviews
• Gave them a hard copy and provided a copy to the Grad Advisor and TAs’ file
• Noted all their strengths and areas for future improvement
• Perfect for their dossier
• Each thanked me for the review