Physics & Astronomy

Teaching Assistant Professional Development Program

TAPD Facilitators (2011/2012)

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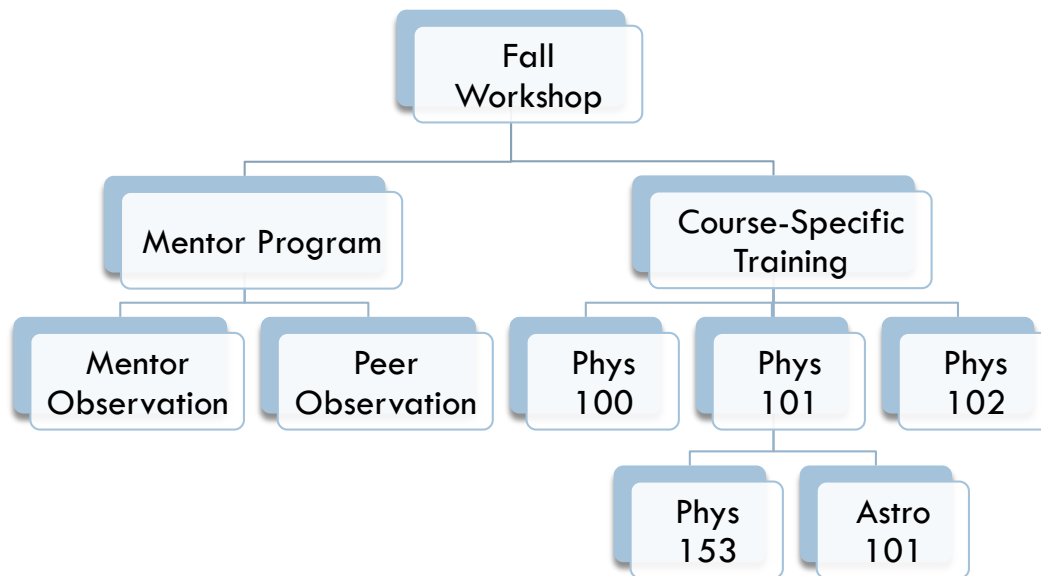
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All training information, including module slideshows can be found at:

www.phas.ubc.ca/~phys_ta

Program Overview

For New TAs

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                    Fall
                  Workshop
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        ┌─────────────┴─────────────┐
  Mentor Program          Course-Specific
                              Training
        │                         │
   ┌────┴────┐         ┌──────────┼──────────┐
 Mentor    Peer      Phys       Phys       Phys
Observation Observation 100       101        102
                                   │
                              ┌────┴────┐
                            Phys      Astro
                            153        101
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For Senior TAs

Workshop Development	Peer Review Training
Culture & Diversity Training	Peer Mentoring
Formative Evaluation from Trainees	Peer Observation

Skills & Competencies for new TAs

Fall Workshop

- Socratic questioning
- Formative evaluation
- Learning goals
- Presentation practice
- Culture & diversity

Course-Specific Training

- Marking
- Presenting particular labs/tutorials
- Ongoing support & follow-up

Mentor Program

- In-situ feedback
- Deliberate practice
- Reflection
- Ongoing support & follow-up

Skills & Competencies for senior TAs

Coordinators	CSTFs	Mentors
• Workshop development & delivery	• Workshop development & delivery	• Peer review training
• Facilitation of all TAPD programs	• Peer mentoring	• Mentoring & role model experience
• Funding & budget	• Course administration & development	• Observing other teaching styles
• Peer mentoring	• Receive feedback through final surveys	• Culture & diversity training
• Culture & diversity training	• Culture & diversity training	• Receive feedback from observations & discussions
• Gather feedback throughout the term		

Improvements for 2011

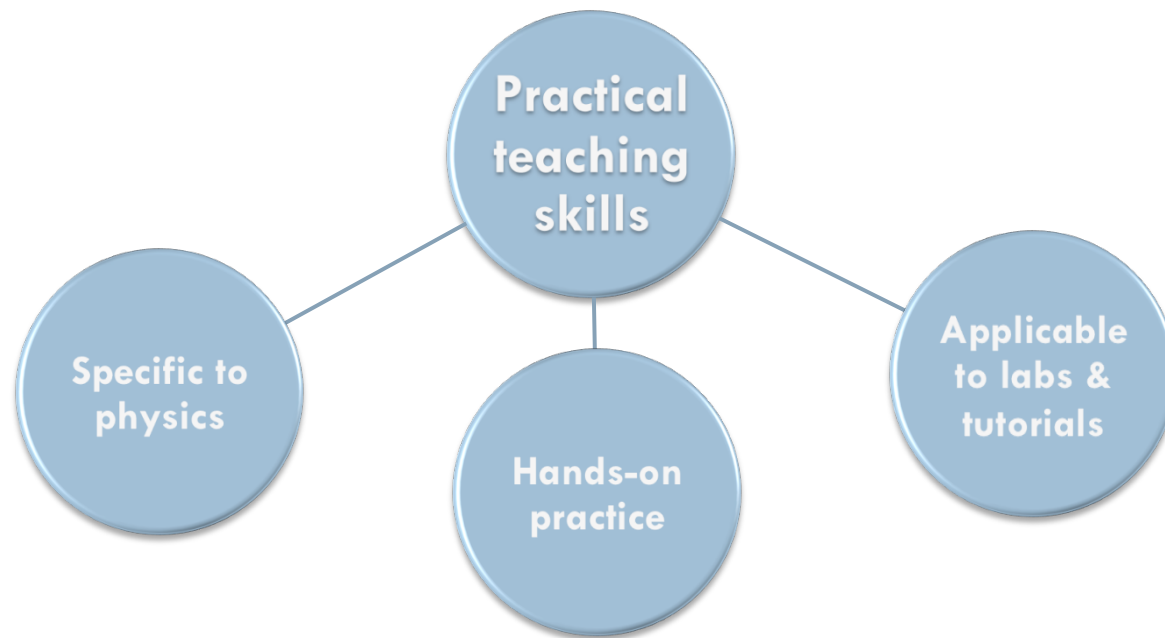| Based on 2010 feedback	
2010-11	**2011-12**
Fall workshop over 1 long day	Fall workshop splits over 2 half days
Course-specific training delivered after fall workshop	First course-specific training will be integrated in the 2nd day of the fall workshop
New TAs were observed by mentors in class	New TAs will also be invited to observe their mentor in class

Program expansions
New CSTFs will be hired for term 2 due to large TA turnover
New CSTFs will be hired explicitly for lab or tutorial components
Astro101 will now have a CSTF

Course-Wide Fall Workshop

- Developed by graduates students for graduate students

- The workshop is a paid mandatory training for all new TAs

- All graduate courses are cancelled for the duration of the workshop to ensure participation

Practical teaching skills

Specific to physics

Hands-on practice

Applicable to labs & tutorials

Fall Workshop

Module 1

From Learning to Teaching

TAs explore their own positive and negative learning experiences to determine the important aspects of teaching

- Effectively sets the stage for later modules by demonstrating the difference between learner-centred and teacher-centred learning

- Serves as an ice-breaker and sets a tone of open dialogue for the rest of the workshop

Fall Workshop

Module 2

Teaching by Questioning

TAs watch and critique recordings of real TA-student interactions and imagine what they would do if they stepped in and took over

- Introduces the use of Socratic questioning techniques in the classroom
- Videos are from the University of Maryland PER group

Fall Workshop

Module 3

Formative Evaluation

TAs learn effective techniques for obtaining constructive feedback from students

☐ Highlights the different roles of feedback in the classroom, such as

- ◻ Improving one's performance as a TA
- ◻ Assessing the students' understanding as new concepts are introduced

☐ Refers to techniques and questionnaires that TAs have already seen and participated in throughout the workshop

Fall Workshop

Module 4

Learning Goals in the Lab

TAs discuss learning goals and their role in the lab setting. They are given the opportunity to examine a sample lab from a first year physics course and develop an introduction for it.

- Introduces the importance of learning goals in the lab
- Allows TAs to practice delivering a properly structured introduction to their peers
- Provides a platform for receiving and giving constructive feedback and evaluation

Fall Workshop

Module 5

Gender and Diversity

TAs explore definitions of their identities and discuss possible origins for opinions expressed in several case-studies.

- Fosters an open and interactive environment ideal for discussion of sensitive gender and diversity issues
- Focuses on issues that could be encountered in a classroom, which are relevant to the TA positions

Note: TAs in leadership roles also receive formal training from the Center for Inter-Cultural Communication (CIC) so that diversity can be incorporated into all elements of the training program

Course-Specific Training

- Coordinated by graduate students as Course-Specific Teaching Facilitators (CSTFs)

- A course-specific workshop integrated in the fall workshop provides all the necessary tools and training TAs will need to comfortably lead their first lab or tutorial

- Focuses on skills specific to courses, such as marking, working with large groups, and problem solving

Course-Specific Training

CSTFs also have the opportunity to:

- Conduct optional workshops later in the term to:
  - Help refine new TAs' teaching techniques
  - Address any issues that may have arisen since the fall workshop

- Assist the course instructor with course development

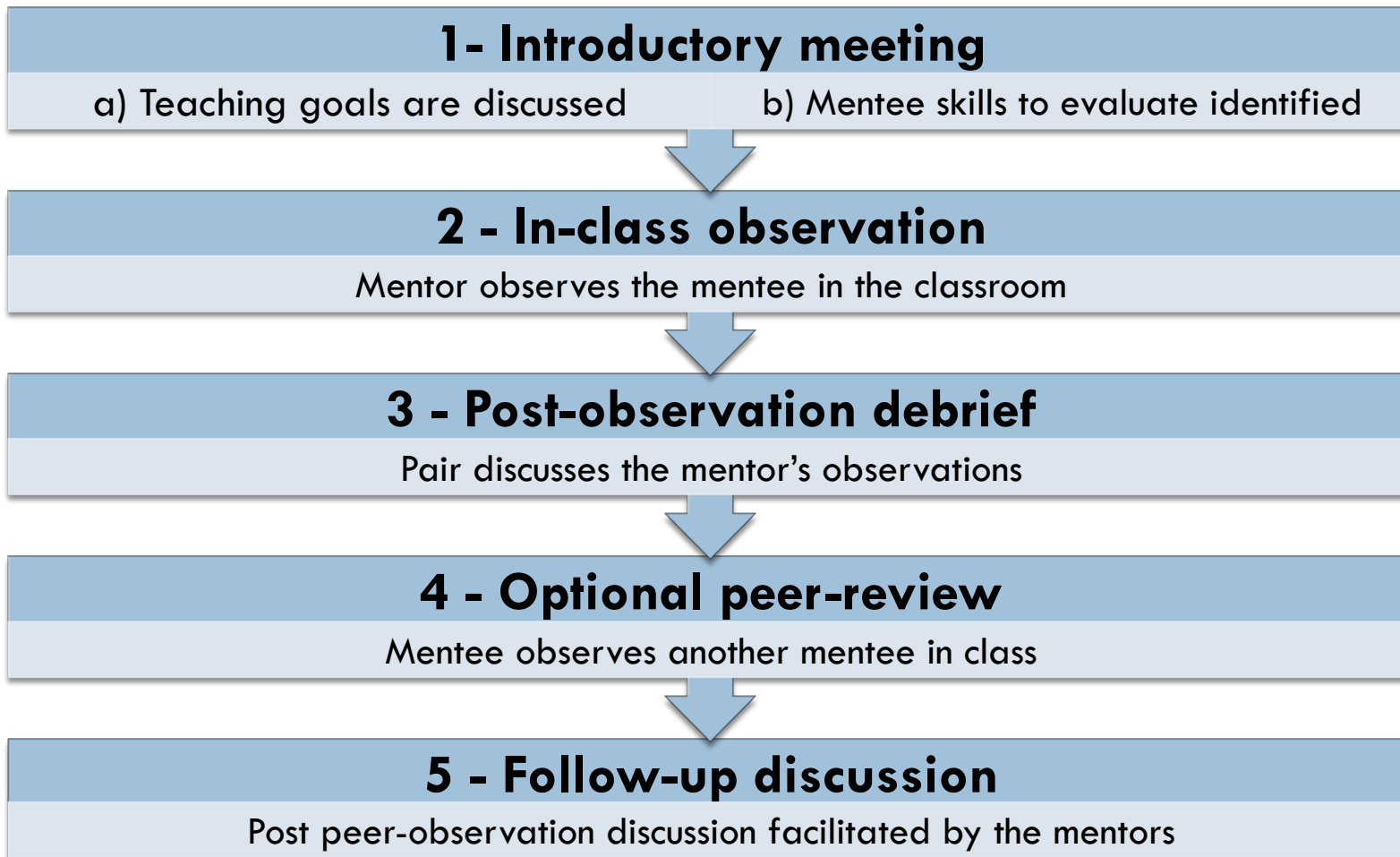- Facilitate communication between the TAs and the instructor

Note: CSTF duties vary widely depending on the nature of the course

Mentor TA program

Each new TA is paired with a single Mentor TA for the duration of the fall term, and participates in a series of peer-review sessions.

- All mentors participate in a peer review training session offered by the Center for Teaching Learning and Technology (CTLT, formerly TAG)

- The program is mainly facilitated by a Head Mentor whose responsibilities are to:
  - communicate with and support the mentors
  - coordinates the pairing of mentors with mentees
  - act as a liaison with the TA Training Facilitators

Mentor Program Overview

1- Introductory meeting

a) Teaching goals are discussed   b) Mentee skills to evaluate identified

2 - In-class observation

Mentor observes the mentee in the classroom

3 - Post-observation debrief

Pair discusses the mentor's observations

4 - Optional peer-review

Mentee observes another mentee in class

5 - Follow-up discussion

Post peer-observation discussion facilitated by the mentors

Testimonials from new TAs

"[The TAPD program] is absolutely necessary! I wouldn't have liked to go in front of a class without any training/advice. This training had a very positive impact on my teaching overall."

"[The training] provides good concrete ideas for how to approach teaching, and it makes the TA aware of how his or her teaching might be improved."

"The workshop gives everyone a chance to meet one another and provides useful hands-on experience."

"Having a TA training program really improves the overall quality of teaching and shows that UBC is taking teaching seriously."