

CTSI Tune into Teaching:

Building, Managing and Supporting Your Teaching Team of TAs

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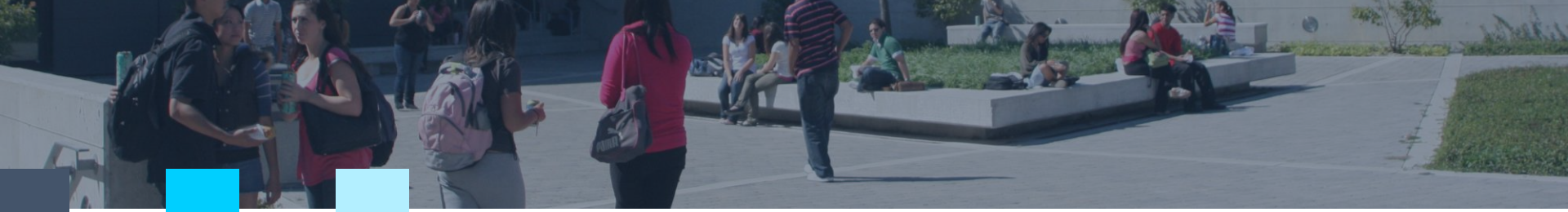


UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

CENTRE FOR TEACHING SUPPORT & INNOVATION

Checking in:
On this cat
scale, how are
things going
today?





Land Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge this sacred land on which the University of Toronto operates. It has been a site of human activity for over 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. The territory was the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island.

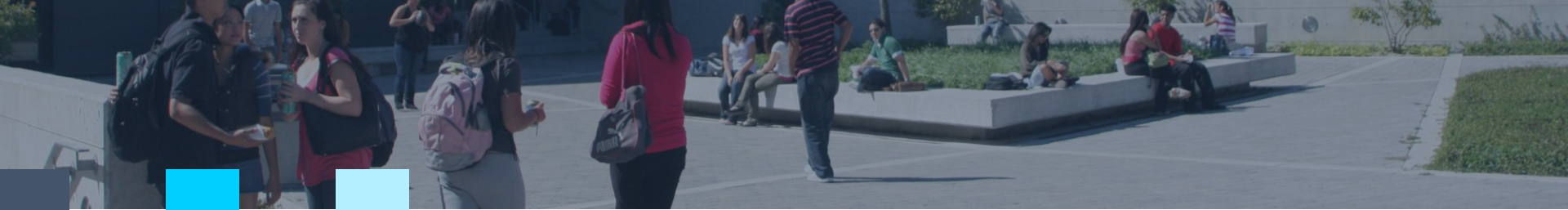
- Revised by the Elders Circle (Council of Aboriginal Initiatives)

Access Check

We understand access to be a shared responsibility between everyone in this space. We will strive to create an accessible space that reduces the need for you to disclose a disability or impairment for the purposes of gaining an accommodation. In doing this together, we strive to welcome disability, and the changes it brings, into our space.

Is there anything about the virtual space that we should address now?

Are there any other access needs that might affect your participation in the workshop that we could also address?



Learning outcomes

By the end of this webinar, you should be able to:

- understand best practices for working with your teaching team;
- learn strategies for building presence in your course for your TAs and your students;
- identify additional supports and resources for your TAs.

**1. Let's identify
key needs in
working with
your teaching
team.**



QUICK POLL

How many TAs are in your course?

- 1) One to two
- 2) Three to four
- 3) Five to ten
- 4) Ten +

QUICK POLL

How are your TAs teaching this semester?

- 1) In-Class
- 2) Online
- 3) Hybrid
- 4) Other



QUICK POLL

How confident do you feel about managing your TAs?

- 1) Not confident
- 2) Somewhat confident
- 3) Very confident
- 4) I could facilitate this webinar



Needs assessment:

What are your concerns?

- Follow the link to the Needs Assessment (shareable document).
- In each of the categories indicated below, add your concerns, reflections or questions:
 - determining TA duties, responsibilities and expectations
 - managing TAs
 - responding to the realities of Covid-19
 - supporting TAs as a community of teaching staff
 - troubleshooting problems
 - other
- You have 5 minutes to add your comments.



2. Integrate tutorials into your course design.



Integrate tutorials into the course design framework: connect the dots between...

course elements:

- lectures and tutorials/labs/field work
- online and in-class learning
- synchronous and asynchronous components

(Garrison & Vaughan, 2008)

pedagogical approaches:

- pedagogical practices and learning environment in the lecture and tutorials/labs

teaching team:

- different team members for consistent student learning experience

Integrate tutorials into the course design framework:

Figure out the teaching role(s) of TAs:

- Manage simulations, labs, case studies, problem sets, etc.
- Run active learning activities, practice sessions, etc.
- Check for student understanding
- Take questions and provide content clarification
- Review and apply lecture content
- Conduct chalk talks
- Facilitate a studio or practice session
- Grading and feedback
- Etc.



Develop the DDAH form and share it with your TAs

- What are key areas that you would want to discuss with your TAs in the very first meeting?

Reflect on what your TAs will be responsible for doing and what your obligations will be towards your TAs.

Please share your ideas and suggestions in the chat.

Your first meeting with your TA

The first meeting is a good time to discuss:

- Course goals
- Course policies
- Assignment due dates and grading deadlines
- Date and time of the midterm review

These are the issues that automatically get bumped to me.

Do you know how to use Zoom?
Do you require training?

Here is the grading rubric that I would like you to use.

This is how we will manage extensions.

This is my approach to accessibility.

This is how we are conducting hybrid/in-person teaching.

Your second meeting with your TA

The second meeting is a good time to discuss:

- Adjusting allocation of hours (re: office hours, exam support, etc.)
- Expectations for the rest of the course
- Classroom concerns
- Professional development and tutorial observation

Is grading taking longer than expected?

Would you like me to observe one of your tutorials?

Do you have any classroom or course concerns?

Do you have feedback on the tutorials for future iterations?

Here is what you should focus on in the upcoming review tutorial.

Intentional planning for your tutorials:

Let's explore two resources to guide your planning and preparation:

- Developing Tutorial Learning Outcomes
- Overall Tutorial Planner

In your individual worksheets, fill out a few course learning outcomes (LOs). Next, consider how your TAs might support these LOs in their tutorial sessions. Jot down ideas for tutorial structure, activities, or assessments. We will do a brief take-up but you can keep these for your own reference.



3. Foster community in your teaching team



Building community and cohesion in your course and teaching team:

- **Design** makes a difference!
- Encourage TAs to **personalize content** and build their social presence in the course.
- **Make your teaching team visible** to students (in Quercus and in the first class).
- Discuss **the role of your TAs** in student learning.



Supporting TA presence online

- **Tech choices:** keep the same platforms for all tutorials (Zoom, Teams, etc.) to ensure consistency across tutorial sections
- **TA duties:** management of discussion boards; grading of quizzes; etc.
- **Grading:** decide on feedback models: e.g., audio/video in SpeedGrader; announcement tool; etc.



TA home page in Quercus:



Hi! I'm Cristina Marie D'Amico, your TA for CSC301. Call me Cris: I use she/her pronouns.

I'm looking forward to teaching you this semester!

Need to get in touch? Contact me using the [Quercus Inbox](#). I respond to emails M-F, within 48 hours.

You can find our tutorial syllabus [here](#), and our course syllabus [here](#).

Want to learn more about my PhD research? Connect with me on [Academia.edu](#)!

Supporting TA presence in-Class/hybrid

- **Spaces:** encourage TAs to explore their teaching space
- **TA duties:** help TAs identify active learning activities and how to implement/manage them; etc.
- **Collaborate with TAs on creating expectations for in-class conduct:** promote the use of community agreements; etc.



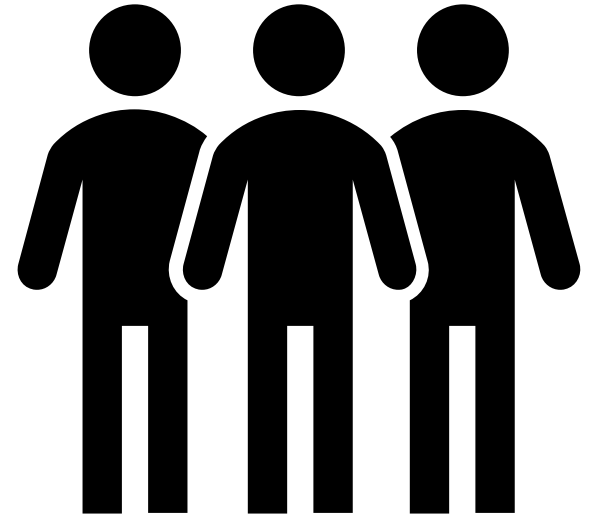
Tips for building cohesion with your team:

- **More check-ins:** Schedule group meetings throughout the semester (initial and mid-course: maybe one or two more?)
- **Feedback culture:** encourage reflective practice and have your TAs submit brief monthly 'teaching reports.'
- **Create shared documents:** resources, teaching practices and tips, technical support, etc.
- **Observe** your TAs and offer feedback.



What strategies do you use or would like to use to promote a sense of teaching staff community?

Let us know in the chat!



Activity: Community Agreements

A community agreement is a shared agreement between learners about how you want to work together over the term.

Let us know in the chat:

- What can be included in a community agreement?
- Consider what would help your TAs create an effective learning environment?



4. TA Teaching Considerations



Considerations for TA contract hours:

Tasks to consider:

- Moderating synchronous lectures.
- Facilitating in-class tutorials/labs.
- Building content in Quercus.
- Training on new platforms and software.
- Managing in/class learning: e.g., activity learning activities.
- Other administrative duties.



Logistical considerations:

- **Equipment and resources:** hardware, internet connection, software, lab equipment, access to lap top and screen projector, etc.
- **Tech skills:** don't assume your TAs are all digital natives (e.g., online/hybrid teaching or Quercus might be new for them).
- **Departmental resources:** don't assume that TAs know your departmental resources (e.g., photocopying).
- **EdTech tools:** when selecting EdTech tools or platforms, determine key supports and additional resources for TAs and students.
- **Spaces:** Figure out tutorial/lab space and supports.



Managing tutorial sections in Quercus:

- Setting up course roles and [permissions](#) in Quercus.
- Creating [online “spaces”](#) for your TAs:
 - E.g., managing tutorial sections in separate shells vs. cross-listing your tutorial sections
- Office hours: Zoom or [MS Teams Meetings](#) integrated in Quercus; physical office space at the dept.
- Determine level of flexibility in individual tutorials to make student learning experience consistent.





Setting up engagements:

- Use variety of methods for interactions: learner-to-content, learner-to-instructor, and learner-to-learner (peer) interaction.
- Identify course engagements (online vs. in-class; synchronous vs. asynchronous) and role of TAs
 - E.g., Is setting up asynchronous material a task for your TAs? What supports do they need to help you with teaching (e.g., breakout groups during webinar)?
- Ensure consistent student experience across sections/tutorials: tools, teaching presence, activities, interactions, office hour, etc.
- Develop netiquette or community agreement for in-class and/or online interactions: EDI, accessibility, mental health, etc.

Quercus Support Resources for your TAs. Consider adding contract hours to review this primary material.

Considerations for assessment and feedback:

- Clarify assessment practices, including communication of deadlines and assessment requirements.
- Use effective rubrics in Quercus for various synchronous/asynchronous assessments, including discussion boards, breakout group work, presentations, etc.
- Promote use of SpeedGrader with embedded comments and audio/video feedback.





CASE STUDY

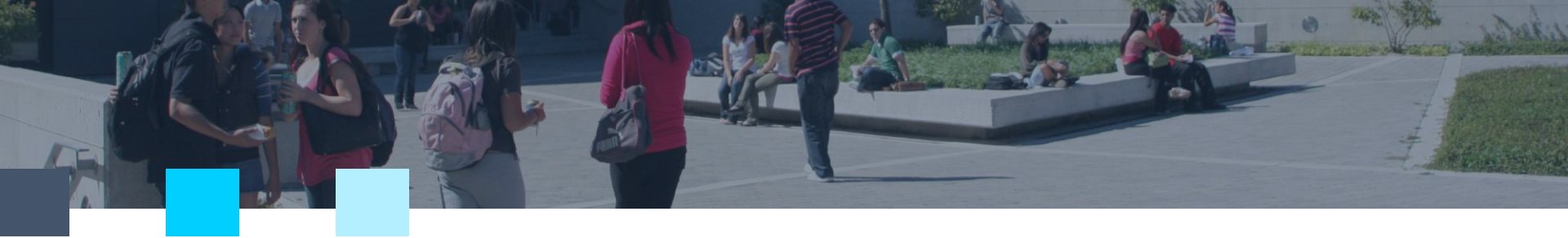
You're working with a team of five TAs and are having difficulty connecting with one TA. They doesn't attend the larger TA group meetings and do not readily respond to emails. You want to connect with them in order to learn more about what's happening in their tutorials.

- How would you respond to this in the moment?
- How would you preempt this situation in the future?

Please fill in your responses in the shareable document.

5. Training and Supports





How to support TAs:

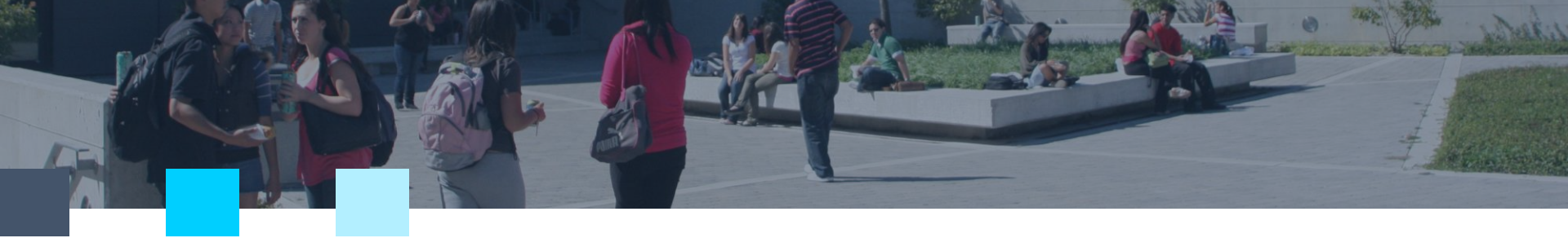
- Ensure TAs receive training on specific teaching strategies and/or Edtech tools (especially if there is a specialized tool/platform in the course).
- Provide a list of supports and in order of operations for managing teaching troubles:
 - First: in-course TA support (head or returning TA)
 - Second: Local IT support (departmental or divisional)
 - Third: q.help@utoronto.ca
- Help TAs develop strategies for student readiness: needs assessment; access to resources (e.g., [Getting Ready for Online](#)); normalizing conversations about mental health; etc.



COVID-19 Health & Safety resources for your TAs:

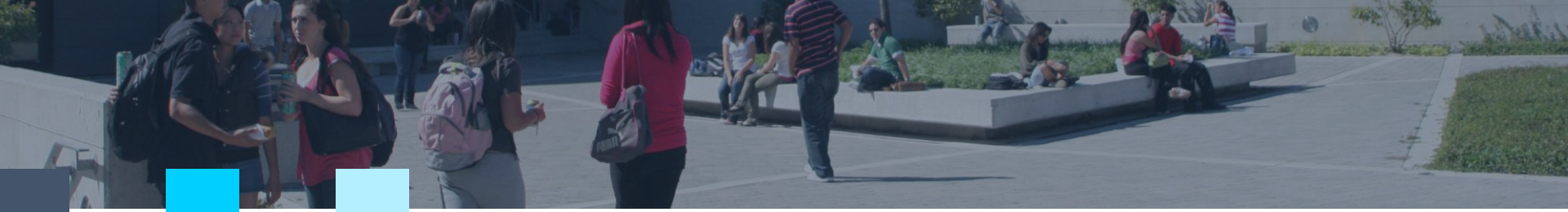
- [COVID-19 Provincial Guidelines](#)
- [Divisional Guidelines to Fall 2022 at U of T](#)
- [COVID-19 Information for University of Toronto Students](#)
- [COVID-19 Information from Environment, Health, and Safety](#)

If you can't find the information you're looking for, reach out to your department/division for additional guidance.



How to help TAs respond to student learning challenges:

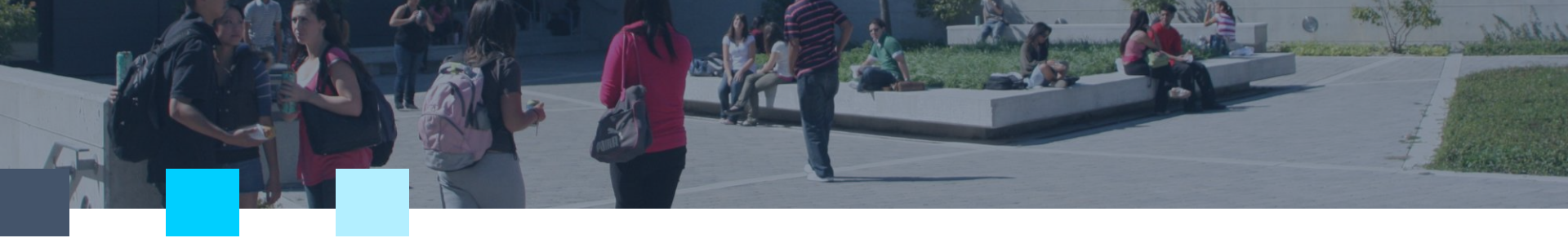
- **perceived isolation:** building sense of community
- **challenges balancing study:** how to get to know your students
- **work and family commitments:** flexibility in learning
- **confusion with content:** reporting challenges related to course content
- **poor academic performance:** identifying students at risk
- **time management:** frequent check-ins



Normalizing the use of institutional resources:

In the shareable document, please list any resources or services that you would like your TAs to share with students related to the following broad categories:

- Academic skills
- Health and wellness
- Community engagement
- Careers, networking and transferable skills
- Sports and clubs
- Equity, diversity and inclusion
- Edtech and IT supports



Approaching teaching as a team sport:

Reaching out to your liaison librarian....

Take advantage and ask about collections, workshops, research support and all other library services. <https://uoft.me/5M4>

- A point of contact for the UTL system!
- Library orientation
- Curriculum integrated instruction, including [information literacy](#) assignment support & design
- Make [course specific guides](#)
- [Library asynchronous tutorials](#): <https://utsc.library.utoronto.ca/library-tutorials>

6. Professionalization of your TAs





Help your TAs pursue professional development:

- Get TAs involved in course design/redesign
- Building a teaching dossier
- Conduct an in-class observation
- Ask TAs to deliver a guest lecture
- Help TAs reflect on their teaching
- Flag range of teaching PD opportunities:
 - [TATP Workshops](#)
 - [THE500 Teaching in Higher Education](#)
 - [MyGDP at the School of Graduate Studies Centre for Graduate Professional Development](#)
 - Non-traditional teaching professional experiences

Review of Today's Strategies:

- ✓ Give consideration to TA work hours: make room for tutorial facilitation, training, and checking in.
- ✓ Give your TAs a presence in the course with images, home pages, and consistent course design in Quercus.
- ✓ Support teaching development for TAs: observe teaching and promote reflective practice.
- ✓ Share tips, strategies, and resources related to teaching and learning in your discipline and beyond.



THANK YOU

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