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**ABSTRACT**

A handbook for teaching assistants (TAs), teaching fellows, and graduate student assistants at the University of Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) is presented. After a brief history of the university and an overview of the school's organization, the teaching assistantship role is considered. The official Policy Statement for TAs is included, along with information on the appointment, benefits, reappointment, responsibilities, early termination, and the appeals procedure. The income tax status of TAs is also covered. Guidelines on academic integrity and the university's policy statement on sexual harassment are provided. Additional contents cover: teaching style, planning a course, lectures and discussions, workshops, science and language labs, classroom aids such as the chalkboard and audiovisuals, class discipline, advice for non-native English-speaking TAs, assigning paper topics and helping students to write successfully, developing quizzes and exams, the university's grading policy, responding to students' work, academic dishonesty, writing letters of recommendation, evaluating and improving teaching, and information on the university's academic and personal resources for the TA as an advisor. An annotated bibliography is appended.  
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The materials in the Special Collection on the Training of Teaching Assistants were developed through the active efforts of numerous educators who first met at the 1986 National Conference on the Institutional Responsibilities and Responses in the Employment and Education of Teaching Assistants held at the Ohio State University. Assisted by more than 80 individuals, the committee chairs listed below were able to establish the collection which will be developed and maintained by the ERIC Clearinghouse for Higher Education. This arrangement will enable faculty members, faculty developers, administrators, TA supervisors, and graduate teaching assistants to have access to TA training materials produced by institutions across the nation.

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# **A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

**SECOND EDITION**

by

**Gillian Cannell and Ileen DeVault**

Produced by  
the Office of Faculty Development  
of the University of Pittsburgh



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# Foreword

## To The University of Pittsburgh Teaching Assistant

Teaching is an art. And it's a difficult one. You know how few truly great artists there were among the more than 100 teachers you've had in your own sixteen years or so of schooling. And yet, probably with no training in the art at all, you now find yourself expected to walk into a classroom and teach. It's as if you were expected to go into a studio to paint or sculpt after merely observing the art collections in the great — and the not-so-great — museums and galleries of the world.

You have vivid recollections of those few great teachers you've had. (But will their styles work for you?) And like a child who swears he'll never treat his kids the way his parents treated him, you know a lot of things that you've sworn never to do to your students. (Or are you just waiting to get even?) Your department may arm you with schedules, procedures and rules of the teaching job. (But do they tell you how to excel?)

You're being sent onto the classroom battlefield with fragmentary weapons and holes in your armor. Besides having a feeling of vulnerability, nobody enjoys doing something poorly. Being a poor or even a mediocre teacher is no fun. How then, can you manage to do a job of teaching that you won't be ashamed of — that you can even be proud of?

You could, of course, embark on a program of teacher training that would at least equip you with some tools and techniques of the trade. But you don't have the time for that. Your main business at Pitt is to earn a master's degree or a doctorate. Even if you intend to stay in the academic world as a career, your teaching assistantship is now little more than a means of keeping body and soul together.

This Handbook, which has been completely revised and updated from the first (1980) edition, is designed to help you do the job comfortably and well. It was prepared in the Office of Faculty Development by Pitt Teaching Assistants for Pitt Teaching Assistants, with the support and encouragement of the Provost and the Graduate Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Having it by your side will not make you a great teacher. But it will give you some guidance and practical tips that we hope will get you through that frightening first week with your self-respect intact, and it can be a source of constant advice as the terms and the years roll by.

If, in an attempt to address the common problems of teaching in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and professional schools, we have occasionally strayed beyond the bounds of generality and into the province of a specific discipline, we apologize. And if you question the applicability of any of the advice in this *Handbook* to your specific situation, by all means check with your own departmental supervisor.

We are pleased that the first edition of this *Handbook* has been received so well, both by Pitt's TAs and by other universities who have asked permission to produce adaptations of it.

Please feel free to drop us a note at any time to let us know what you've found to be most useful or what you feel might be improved in future editions.

Good Luck.

Robert L. Wolke  
Director  
Office of Faculty Development

# Preface

This handbook grew out of a project of Rosemary Anderson Kendall's, undertaken as part of an internship in the Office of Faculty Development. We are indebted to her for her careful compilation of materials on the needs of TAs here at Pitt, as well as for her collection of TA training materials and handbooks from other universities.

These handbooks from other universities were especially helpful to us, both in deciding how to organize ours, and in providing us with a wealth of practical teaching advice. We should like particularly to acknowledge our debt to the handbooks published by the University of Oregon, the University of California at Berkeley, the University of California at Santa Barbara, Stanford University, and the University of California at Los Angeles.

Dr. Robert L. Wolke, Director of the Office of Faculty Development, oversaw the project. We are also grateful for the hours of effort he put into careful editing of the manuscript. Graduate Dean Elizabeth U. Baranger of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences provided enthusiastic support for this handbook at every stage — from its inception to its completion.

Lastly, but certainly not least in importance, we should like to thank our own students, friends, fellow TAs, and professors. They have all contributed immeasurably to the experience which enabled us to write this handbook.

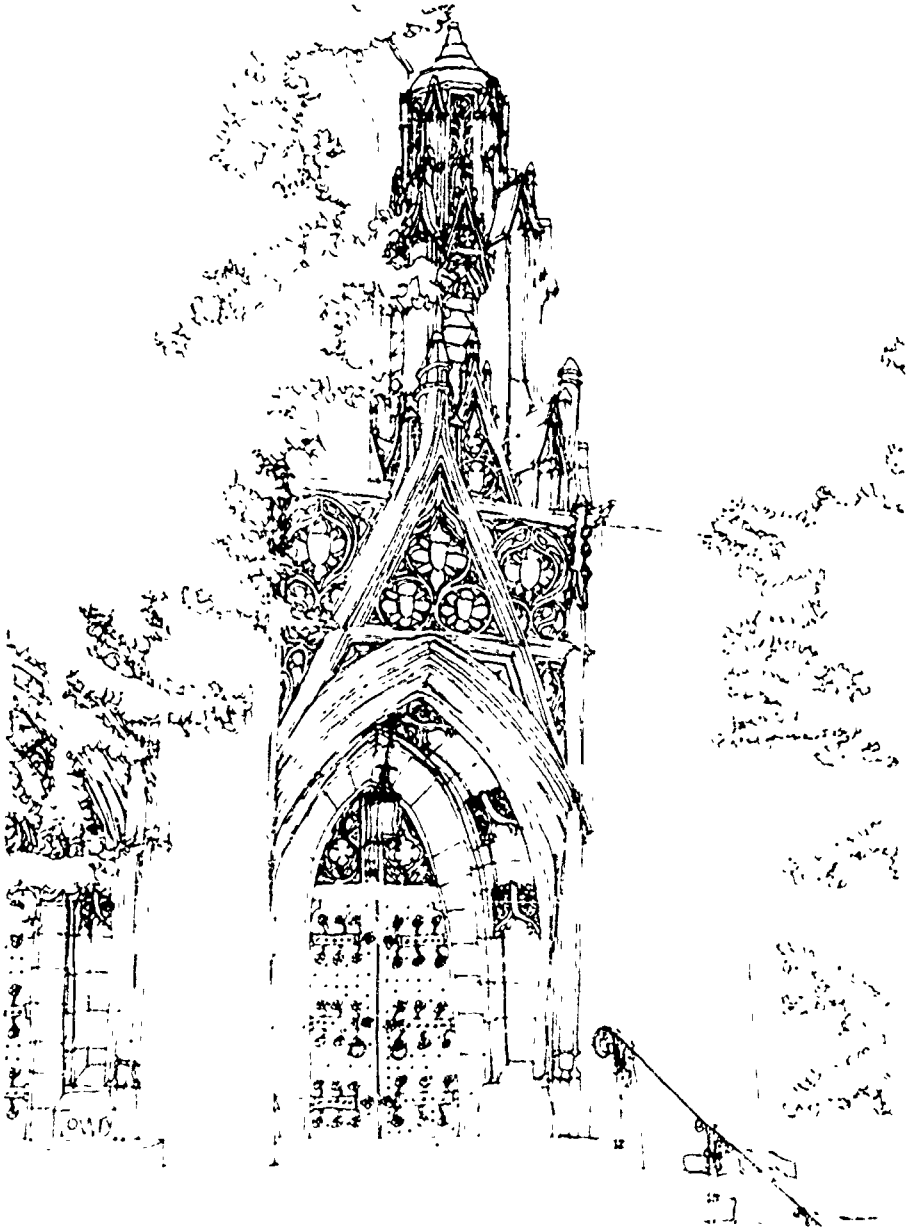
Gillian Cannell  
Ileen DeVaul:  
July, 1980

Unless otherwise stated, the generic term, Teaching Assistant (TA), as used in this handbook, encompasses the three positions of Teaching Assistant, Teaching Fellow (TF) and Graduate Student Assistant (GSA) at the University of Pittsburgh.



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# Part I.

## Introduction

### Pitt Then and Now

#### A Brief History of the University

The University of Pittsburgh began in 1787 when, as the Pittsburgh Academy, it was established by Commonwealth charter. Unique as the first school of higher learning west of the Allegheny Mountains, it was actually convened in a log cabin until a brick building was constructed for it in what is now downtown Pittsburgh. In 1819 this institution became the Western University of Pennsylvania. In the course of the nineteenth century it took under its wing the Allegheny Observatory on the north side and the Western Pennsylvania Medical College. Several great fires in the city caused moves from building to building until 1908 saw its relocation in Oakland, with another name change — to the University of Pittsburgh — which meant the beginning of the university we know today.

The campus was designed as an "acropolis" of classically-styled buildings, climbing the hillside north of Fifth Avenue. But then, in 1926, Chancellor John G. Bowman's dream of a single great building to house virtually all of the University's activities began to take shape. The construction of an extraordinary Gothic skyscraper, to be called the Cathedral of Learning, got underway; it was thirty years before it was finally completed and dedicated.

During the nineteen fifties and sixties under Chancellor Edward M. Litchfield, a great program of expansion radically changed the nature of the University into a multifaceted organization of schools and centers. In 1966 a new financial arrangement with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania made it possible to continue that expansion, in terms of both new buildings and a larger student enrollment at lowered tuition rates. Today the University exists in a form that never could have been envisioned when it began almost 200 years ago over two thousand faculty

members and thirty-five thousand students in a complex of fifty-three buildings in Oakland plus four regional campuses. The organization of such a large institution is necessarily quite complicated.

## Organization of the University

Despite a complex administrative hierarchy headed by the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees, a student might prefer simply to think of the University of Pittsburgh as consisting of sixteen schools, ten of which are the responsibility of the Senior Vice Chancellor and Provost and are thus informally designated as the Provost's Area, and six of which are the responsibility of the Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences. The ten Provost's Area schools are the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, Graduate School of Business, College of General Studies, School of Education, School of Engineering, School of Law, School of Library and Information Science, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, and School of Social Work. The six schools of the Health Sciences are the Schools of Medicine, Dental Medicine, Health-Related Professions, Nursing, Pharmacy, and the Graduate School of Public Health.

In addition, the Provost's Area is augmented by numerous centers, institutes, and service departments, which are, however, not degree-granting as are the Schools themselves. Similarly, the Schools of the Health Sciences are associated with a complex of facilities, clinics and hospitals which together comprise the University Health Center of Pittsburgh. For the most part this handbook is directed towards TAs in the schools of the Provost's Area, but Health Sciences TAs should also find much of the material useful.

Since Pitt TAs' teaching responsibilities are almost entirely concerned with undergraduates, you as a TA should know something more about the organization of the undergraduate schools here. Although nine of the sixteen schools have undergraduate programs, by far the vast majority of Pitt freshmen embark on their careers in the College of Arts and Sciences (*i.e.*, the liberal arts college) and the College of General Studies (Pitt's night school for part-time students in all disciplines). However, it is also possible to enter Pitt directly into the School of Nursing or the School of Engineering, although only a few students do so. The School of Pharmacy accepts students at the sophomore level, while undergraduate majors in four other schools commence in the junior year: the Schools of Education, Social Work, Library and Information Science, and Health-Related Professions.

All undergraduates in the professional schools are obliged to take some liberal arts distribution courses, but College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)

students register only infrequently for professional school courses (most often Education, Social Work and Information Sciences) and are actually limited to taking a maximum of 18 credits outside CAS. Thus, if you are a TA for a CAS or College of General Studies (CGS) course, your students may well represent the whole gamut of professional and academic disciplines. It would be good to remind yourself now and again of the heterogeneous nature of that student body, so that your terminology and explanations in class are sufficiently clear to everyone, especially those who are uninitiated in your own discipline.

As a TA at Pitt, you may find it helpful to consider the general character of the Pitt undergraduate you are most likely to have contact with. An important distinction can be made between CAS and CGS students: Whereas the CAS student is by and large in the 18-22-year age bracket and is single and unemployed, the CGS student is probably at least 10 years older, married and employed full-time. These "adult" CGS students, as a result of their greater life experience, bring to your class a wide spectrum of knowledge, firm opinions and a high degree of motivation for achievement. You should thus be prepared for the additional challenge that CGS students provide, and try never to make the mistake of thinking of these part-time students as being in any way less worthy than their full-time counterparts in CAS.

## The Teaching Assistantship

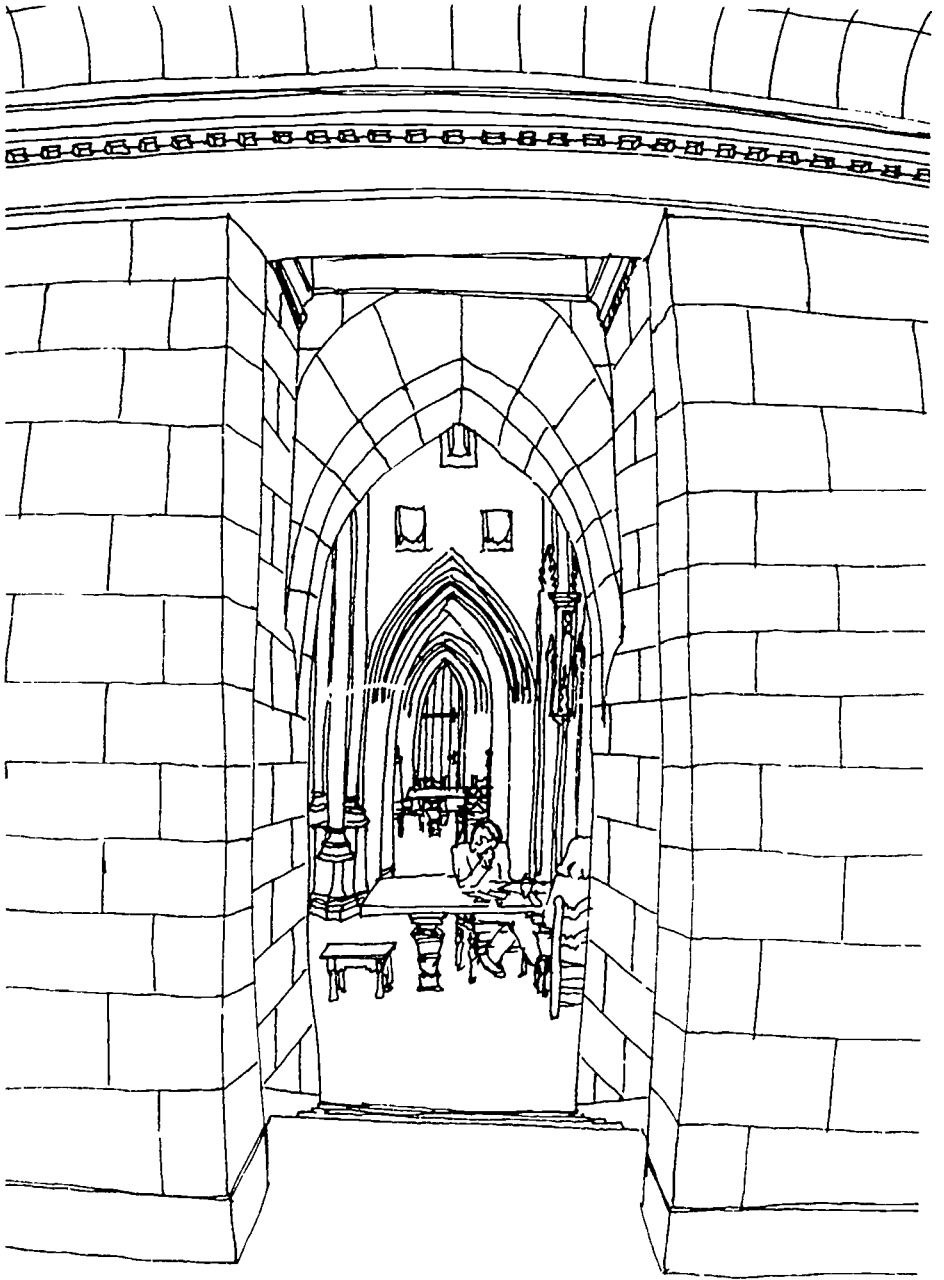
As a TA, TF, or GSA you play a unique role in the University. You have come to Pitt to pursue a graduate education, and your assistantship will help you to do so through its financial assistance. At the same time, however, you are performing a vital function for the University. The work you do not only keeps the University functioning smoothly by providing support services and assisting busy faculty members, but it also comprises a large amount of the face-to-face education that the University's undergraduates receive. This is not only because TAs generally assist or teach large introductory classes, but also because, by virtue of their less-intimidating stature, they probably have more personal contact with undergraduates than their faculty supervisors do.

But the role carries with it rewards as well as responsibilities. There are of course the rewards that are intrinsic to teaching: you are helping to spread an understanding of your chosen field to a wide range of people. But that isn't enough to keep your morale at a consistently high level. Your students are usually much less interested in the field than you are, and your assignment will therefore often seem more frustrating than rewarding.

If you see teaching as your post-graduate career goal, however, a teaching assistantship provides obvious benefits. This is an opportunity to find out what teaching is like and to gauge whether this is really what you want to do for the rest of your life. An assistantship will also ultimately help you on the job market; a vitae showing your proven teaching experience does carry weight in these competitive times.

If you are headed toward a non-teaching career, your teaching assignments may appear at first to be extraneous. However, the skills that are necessary for productive teaching are skills that are easily translated into other situations and contexts. Learning to present material clearly and concisely helps you in graduate seminars, at professional meetings, in oral examinations and at job interviews. Similarly, learning to lead a productive discussion section provides you with communication skills for other situations. The experience of recognizing and resolving conflicts in the classroom is also applicable to other situations, as are the experiences of giving and receiving constructive feedback in the form of grades, comments, and teaching evaluations. Evaluating others and being evaluated yourself are inevitable parts of any career. Thus, though the payoff from teaching may not always be direct or immediate, it is far broader than you might expect.

There is conflict in your situation of being a TA as well. Your department expects you to fulfill the obligation of your contract: to show up at the proper times and places, properly prepared. At the same time, however, you are expected to carry a full load of graduate work and make adequate progress toward your degree. These two aspects of your role are not always in harmony. Therefore, you should think and plan ahead so as to avoid such conflicts to the maximum extent possible. No TA should face students unprepared. You have to make up your own mind regarding the appropriate expenditures of time and energy, always keeping in mind your important obligations to your students as well as your own academic goals.



# Part II.

## Policies and Procedures

### University Policy Statement

Reproduced in its entirety below is the current, official *Policy Statement* for TAs. You are advised to read this with special care, noting that as well as delineating your responsibilities, it also defines the responsibilities of others in relation to you. Notice in particular that the primary responsibility for all courses taught at the University rests with the faculty, and for this reason it is important that you take appropriate steps to provide yourself with a faculty mentor, if your department fails to do so, for any term in which you undertake any kind of teaching appointment. Your department has a further set of responsibilities towards you which are described in the appropriate section in the *Statement*; it is of course in your best interest to be aware of these also.

TAs, TFs, and GSAs at the University of Pittsburgh are graduate students who are receiving support in return for specified duties, as well as gaining teaching and teaching-related experience under the guidance of a faculty mentor. However, the primary objective of the TA, TF, or GSA—from the standpoint of both the University and the individual—should be to make steady progress toward an advanced degree. TA/TF/GSA employment status is dependent upon graduate student status.

The primary responsibility for all courses taught at the University rests with the faculty.

#### Definitions

The titles of Teaching Assistant, Teaching Fellow, and Graduate Student Assistant are reserved for University-wide use exclusively.

##### 1. Teaching Assistants (TA)

A teaching assistant is defined as a graduate student who holds a teaching or teaching-related appointment.



made in accord with the University-wide regulations pertaining to teaching assistants. No teaching assistant shall be employed to teach postbaccalaureate courses.

## **2. Teaching Fellows (TF)**

The definition of a teaching fellow shall be the same as that of a teaching assistant except that the teaching fellow is to be more educationally advanced or experienced than the teaching assistant, typically holding the equivalent of a master's degree. The University-wide minimum salary scale for TFs per term may be varied upward if a candidate has extraordinary experience and/or educational or related accomplishments. This can be achieved, however, only by a request from the department chairperson with approval by the dean.

## **3. Graduate Student Assistants (GSA)**

The graduate student assistant is defined as one who fulfills non-teaching assignments.

Appointments of TAs, TFs, or GSAs may be on a full-time or fractional basis. The duties, compensation, and tuition scholarship for appointments that are less than full-time will be in proportion to the fraction of a full-time appointment.

The base salaries for GSAs, TAs, and TFs are standard throughout the University. Each year the level of compensation will be considered and adjustments made when possible by the office of the provost. Salary levels progress from GSA to TA to TF.

## **Appointment**

The TA, TF, or GSA must receive a letter that states the general conditions of the appointment and that specifies the salary, general types of duties, duration, tuition remission, fringe benefits, and any other pertinent terms of appointment. A copy of the complete TA/TF/GSA Policy Statement should be included with the appointment letter. Duration of appointment ordinarily is for two terms (fall and winter). Students may receive an appointment for a spring term, a spring session, or a summer session. Under special circumstances, one-term appointments or fractional appointments (three-fourths, one-half, or one-fourth) may also be made in order to meet the requirements of individual departments.

The normal work-week for a TA/TF/GSA with a full appointment should not exceed a maximum of 20 hours. Fractional appointments should not exceed the corresponding fraction of the 20-hour standard.

The letter of appointment should be sent in triplicate to the student. If the student accepts the appointment, he or she must sign one copy and return it to the designated authority. The original and one copy should be retained by the student.

When a student accepts in writing an appointment, that appointment shall be binding on both the student and the University. In accordance with the policy of the Council of Graduate Schools in the United States, however, a stu-

dent, after accepting a regular two-term appointment beginning in September, may resign in writing before April 15 of that year. A department may, during the year, transfer a student, with the student's consent, from a teaching assignment to another appointment as a graduate research assistant or to another appropriate assignment which provides for essentially equal financial benefits and professional responsibilities.

## Benefits

TAs, TFs, and GSAs who receive full-time appointments in the fall and/or winter terms are expected to register for at least 9 credits in the term of appointment; those with fractional appointments are expected to register for at least the following number of credits: 3/4 appointment, 9 credits, 1/2 appointment, 6 credits; 1/4 appointment, 3 credits.

The maximum tuition scholarship that will be provided is as follows:

Full-time appointment	15 credits
3/4 appointment	9 credits
1/2 appointment	6 credits
1/4 appointment	3 credits

TAs, TFs, and GSAs who receive full-time or fractional appointments in the spring term, spring session and/or summer session, are not required to be registered in the term or session. A graduate student who registers will be provided a tuition scholarship proportionate to the appointment.

The student is responsible for his or her registration and for payment of all charges appearing on the student invoice not covered by the tuition scholarship. The tuition scholarship does not cover course-related fees and the student activity fee. In some schools arrangements have been made for the tuition scholarship to appear on the student invoice. If a tuition scholarship is not on the invoice, the student must report to the office of the dean, where a scholarship will be issued.

TAs, TFs, and GSAs who receive full-time or fractional appointments are eligible to participate in the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Major Medical graduate student plan. The University will provide individual coverage at no cost. Family coverage through the graduate student plan (for student, spouse, and dependent children) is available by paying the difference between the premium cost for individual coverage and family coverage. To enroll in either the individual or family plan, the TA, TF, GSA must complete a Payroll Personnel System Information Form and a Blue Cross/Blue Shield Group Information form and return them with a copy of the appointment letter to the Fringe Benefits Office within 10 days after the effective date of the appointment.

In addition, the University will provide the prevailing student health fee per term for TAs, TFs, or GSAs who receive a full-time appointment in the fall and/or winter terms and

are registered for at least 9 credits. If registration is for fewer than 9 credits, the student health fee will not appear on the invoice. The student has the option of signing up for the Student Health Service and paying the fee

The University will not pay the student health fee for any TA, TF, or GSA who receives an appointment in the spring term and/or sessions whether or not he or she is registered. The student has the option of signing up for the Student Health Service and paying the fee

## Reappointment

Although appointment as a TA/TF/GSA may be made for no more than one year, a student may be reappointed

While it is impossible to guarantee reappointments, most students who are making satisfactory progress toward a graduate degree and whose teaching or other service performance is satisfactory will receive at least one renewal of their appointment or an offer of other financial assistance. If it is impossible to offer renewals or other appointments to all qualified TAs, TFs, or GSAs, priority must be given to those with superior academic and teaching qualifications. The same regulations which pertain to original appointments apply to reappointments, with the following amplification

- 1 A reappointment should be made at the same level or be a promotion
- 2 Written notice of reappointment for the fall term or a written notice of non-reappointment, including an explanation of the circumstances, should be given to the graduate student by April 15, or as soon thereafter as possible. Extended delay should only be with the mutual agreement of the department and the student for specific reasons made clear to the student.
- 3 The criteria for reappointment are the quality of assigned work performed by the TA/TF/GSA and academic achievement. Examples of unsatisfactory academic performance would be a QPA below 3.0, completion of fewer than six credits of graduate work per term, or failure to pass preliminary or comprehensive departmental examinations as specified. As a basis for reappointment, TAs, TFs, and GSAs will be evaluated for teaching (or other services) and academic progress. These evaluations should be made at least once each term by departmental faculty, and records of performance maintained in the student's file

## Responsibilities

**Departments:** Each department is responsible for providing a suitable form of orientation and training in teaching before new TAs begin their assignments and a continuing program for all TAs and TFs designed to help them become more effective teachers. Each department is expected to assign one or more faculty members to

work closely with individual graduate students who are involved in teaching, both to assist them in carrying out their assignments and to facilitate their professional development as teachers. Similar efforts should be made to assist GSAs in participation in TA/TF programs is not suitable or responsive to their specific needs.

The final responsibility for any course taught at the University is, of course, that of the faculty of the appropriate department. In the event of serious illness or physical incapacitation, the graduate student appointee involved shall receive salary and related benefits for the remainder of the term. The department chairperson and supervising professor will arrange for completion of teaching assignments which result from such illness or incapacitation.

Each department is expected to carry out an evaluation of the performance of each appointee at least once each term. Each individual will be informed in writing of the conclusions resulting from the evaluation, and he or she should be given appropriate suggestions for improving the quality of his or her work. Special attention should be given to improving teaching performance.

A brief written description of each department's orientation and training and evaluation and supervision plans for each year should be available in the department and in the dean's office. It is the responsibility of the dean's office to assure that specific efforts in training, supervision, evaluation, and orientation for TAs, TFs, and GSAs are accomplished in departments within the school each year. The office of the provost will arrange for periodic reviews of practices in various schools as part of that office's general responsibility for the TA/TF/GSA policy.

Each term, every department is expected to provide all appointees with timely notification of specific assignments clearly outlining their duties and responsibilities during the term. The department should provide an opportunity for appointees to participate in departmental deliberations related to the courses in which they assist. In addition, a reasonable effort should be made to take into consideration the competencies and preferences of the graduate assistant as well as his/her graduate course schedule when assignments are being determined. Departmental assignments, with consideration for adequate preparation time, may not exceed 20 hours per week for any full appointment. Each term an appropriate summary of the specific assignments for each appointee should be available in the dean's office and posted on the departmental bulletin board where it will be available to all students and faculty members.

TFs should not be assigned to teach graduate courses. Exceptions may be made only in rare cases where the individual shows clear evidence of outstanding skills in specialized areas and when the individual is directly supervised by a member of the graduate faculty.

Each department is expected to provide all appointees with working space and an appropriate place for receiving mail.

**Students:** Graduate students holding full appointments who are involved in teaching are expected to carry out their assigned duties and to participate in departmental deliberations concerning their courses, as are all other persons who teach. They are expected to enroll for nine or more credits each term, unless exceptions can be justified on the basis of a student's advanced progress toward a degree.

Graduate students are not permitted to hold more than the equivalent of one full appointment within the University at a time. Normally, graduate students will find this to be a full-time demand, but in rare or minor exceptions, additional appointments must be approved by the department chairperson and the dean.

### **Early Termination**

Termination proceedings may be initiated only if the TA/TF/GSA has been evaluated on a regular basis and has received an appropriate written warning with respect to his or her performance, or has violated one or more of the major canons of institutional responsibility.

The TA/TF/GSA must be informed in writing by the dean of the reasons for termination, and the appeals procedure must be included.

Termination may result from unsatisfactory academic performance or from unsatisfactory professional conduct or performance. Examples of the latter include failure to meet classes regularly or failure to carry out departmental assignments. TAs, TFs, GSAs who are terminated or resign before the end of the appointment period lose the remaining period of benefit on the tuition scholarship and health insurance.

Ideally, graduate student grievances should be resolved at the departmental or school level through joint efforts by students, faculty, and administrators. Problems do arise, however, which escalate beyond these levels and require adjudication by the office of the provost.

### **Appeals Procedure**

- 1 The TA/TF/GSA may appeal, in writing, within one week of notice of termination, to the provost, who will convene an appeals committee.
- 2 The provost or his designee will serve as chairperson of an appeals committee and will appoint two faculty members from the University Council on Graduate Study and two graduate students who must be TAs, TFs, or GSAs, and who are recommended by the Graduate Professional Student Association, to serve on the committee. No one from the involved academic department shall be on the appeals committee, and involved parties shall represent themselves before the committee.

- 3 Within 21 days from notice of termination, the appealing TA/TF/GSA shall have been provided an appeals hearing, and shall be notified of the appeals committee decision as soon as is possible

## Income Tax Status of TAs

Most TAs at Pitt are required to pay federal income tax on their stipends. Often those who have opted not to do so have been audited and charged a lump sum for back taxes which added up to a large amount. Appeals to the IRS have not been very successful in most cases. You are therefore warned to proceed most cautiously if you think you should not pay these taxes. The following excerpt from a memo sent to FAS TAs by the Dean of Graduate Studies each January may be helpful:

*As part of its general policy, the University withholds taxes from the stipends paid to all our TA/TFs. Under some circumstances, a TA/TF can be eligible for a refund of these taxes, since the Internal Revenue Code states that income does not include any amount received as a scholarship or a fellowship grant. IRS's definition of a fellowship grant was clarified by a revenue ruling in 1975, but it still is a matter of interpretation whether in some particular case the payment to a TA/TF is salary or fellowship.*

*In recent years, the IRS has been increasingly questioning the returns of our TA/TFs and requiring them to pay taxes on their stipends. In the fall of 1978, FAS Graduate Council spent considerable time discussing this problem and consulting University attorneys. The following grew out of these meetings:*

1. *The TA/TF should realize that it is the IRS, not the University, which determines the tax status of the TA stipend. The case to be made to IRS should be made by the student, since it is the student who must demonstrate that his or her tax money should be refunded. To aid students to make a case or aid them to decide that they do not want to make a case, all TA/TFs will be sent a copy of the 1975 tax ruling on the subject.*
2. *In the past, most department chairpersons have written letters describing the conditions of the teaching assistantship, which have been filed by the TA with his or her income tax statement. This letter must present an accurate description of what a teaching assistantship means in that particular department. It should not copy the letter in the SPI manual,*

unless that letter is true for that particular department. To aid chairmen to prepare appropriate letters or to decide that they cannot send a useful letter, they will be sent a copy of the 1975 IRS tax ruling.

The National Association of College and University Business Officers distributed a Special Report in 1975 on the tax status of TAs. The following excerpt from the Report summarizes the 1975 ruling of the IRS on this topic:

A revenue ruling issued July 21 by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for the first time clearly defines the conditions under which the IRS will assume that payments to degree candidates for services, including research and teaching, are excludable from gross income.

The ruling, which is reproduced on pages 2 and 3 of this Special Report, states that under section 117(a) of the Internal Revenue Code, scholarships or fellowship grants are not a part of an individual's gross income. A scholarship or fellowship grant is one in which the primary purpose of the payment is that of furthering the education and training of the recipient.

The following conditions are necessary for the IRS to define such to be the primary purpose:

1. The recipient must be a candidate for a degree
2. The services performed must satisfy the stated requirements of the degree.
3. These requirements must be reasonably appropriate to the degree.
4. The services performed are not in excess of these requirements.
5. Equivalent services are required of every candidate for that degree, whether or not compensated.

The exclusion is not vitiated by the fact that the work performed might benefit the institution independently or that the funds may be granted to the institution under restrictive inventories, reporting, and other conditions such as those described in the second, third, and fourth paragraphs of the ruling.

The IRS states that it will not assume that the primary purpose test has been satisfied if the services are performed for someone other than the institution (such as practice teaching in a school district), or if the grant is made in view of past services or future employment.

# Pitt's Guidelines on Academic Integrity

Reprinted below are excerpts from *University of Pittsburgh Guidelines on Academic Integrity: Student and Faculty Obligations and Hearing Procedures*. The pamphlet including both these "Policy Guidelines" and a more detailed "Model Code" for the use of University of Pittsburgh Schools may be obtained from the University Student Judicial System, 738 William Pitt Union.

## Policy Guidelines

In March 1965, the Senate Council approved a policy statement on the subject of academic integrity. It was there declared, in language that is as true and vital today as then, that:

*The University of Pittsburgh seeks excellence in the discovery and dissemination of knowledge. Excellence in scholarship cannot be achieved in situations which are contaminated by dishonest practices. All members of the University community are obligated to adhere strictly to the highest standards of integrity in study, research, instruction, and evaluation.*

*It is presumed that those who instruct and administer observe such standards of integrity. Administrators and senior faculty members are presumed further to encourage these standards among their junior colleagues. Students are presumed to accept the concept of academic integrity and to seek to live by it but they may need continuing clarification of the concept and guidance in its observance. Particularly, students need the assurance that those who work honestly will not suffer thereby in comparisons with the dishonest. Those who cannot or will not adopt the concept and practices of academic honesty do not belong within the University.*

*These principles are reaffirmed.*

In February 1974, the Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom reported to the Senate Council, recommending a general statement on academic integrity as follows:

*The integrity of the academic process requires fair and impartial evaluation on the part of faculty, and honest academic conduct on the part of students. To this end, students are expected to conduct themselves at a high level of responsibility in the fulfillment of the course of their study. It is the corresponding responsibility of faculty to make clear to students those standards by*



which students will be evaluated, and the resources permissible for use by students during the course of their study and evaluation. The education process is perceived as a joint faculty-student enterprise which will perform involve professional judgment by faculty and may involve — without penalty — reasoned exceptions by students to the data or views offered by faculty.

Consistent with these considerations (and without limiting their scope and application in their entirety to the academic programs of the University), faculty and students are directed to observe the following guidelines:

1. Faculty should meet and students should attend their classes when scheduled. Faculty should be available at reasonable time for appointments with students and both parties should keep such appointments; faculty and students should make appropriate preparations for classes and other meetings; students should submit their assignments in a timely manner; and faculty should perform their grading duties in a timely manner.

2. The general content of a course or other academic program should be described with reasonable accuracy in catalogs or other written documents available to students. The content, objectives of and standards for evaluation (including the importance to be assigned various factors in academic evaluation) in a course should be described by the faculty member at the first or second class meeting.

3. Integrity of the academic process requires that credit be given where credit is due. Accordingly, it is unethical to present, as one's own work, the ideas, representations, or words of another, or to permit another to present one's own work without customary and proper acknowledgement of sources. The limits of permissible assistance available to students during a course on an academic evaluation should be determined by the faculty member and described with reasonable particularity at the first or second class meeting, or well in advance of an evaluation, so as to allow for adequate student preparation within the permissible limits.

4. All academic evaluations should be based upon good-faith professional judgment, in accordance with applicable standards, factors such as race, color, religion, sex, national origin, political affiliation, and activities outside the classroom that are unrelated may not be considered in matters of academic evaluation, academic assignments, or classroom procedures, nor shall reasoned views expressed by students during the course of study adversely prejudice any student.

5. University records, which shall contain only information reasonably related to educational purposes, shall be considered a matter of privacy not to be released except with student consent, or as may be required by law, provided however, that any student shall be permitted to review his or her own personal record, except for its confidential contents (such as the recorded comments of counseling personnel).

6. The faculty of each school shall establish rules implementing these principles, and procedures pertaining to the investigation and redress of grievances.

Such ideals and responsibilities cannot be achieved in the University of Pittsburgh as a whole unless they are achieved in each and every school. University-wide principles of implementation as outlined above are accordingly appropriate as an expression of a common understanding and dedication. These principles are presented in some detail in the two model codes of this statement, which deal with student and faculty responsibilities, respectively. Each faculty is required to adopt regulations conforming to these documents. The development of exact procedures remains sufficiently flexible to provide proper discretion on the part of the individual faculty; however, such procedures must be designed to assure fair and orderly review of particular cases, and should when feasible adhere closely to the language of the attached codes.

The dean of each school will be responsible for furnishing to the provost the regulations and procedures adopted by the faculty, and any amendments. The codes of each school will be reviewed to insure reasonable conformity with the principles and procedures of the attached model codes. The dean shall also assure that all full-time and part-time students and faculty are informed about the existence and availability of the applicable regulations and procedures.

In cases that involve a student registered in one school, but in which the faculty member involved holds his appointment in another school, the jurisdiction shall be held by the school which offers the course (usually the school in which the faculty member is appointed). Remedial action benefiting the student must be approved by the dean of the school in which the course is offered.

However, in offenses involving academic integrity, only the dean of the school in which the student is matriculated can suspend or dismiss the student from the University. In cases that cross school boundaries, consultation between the deans may be appropriate.

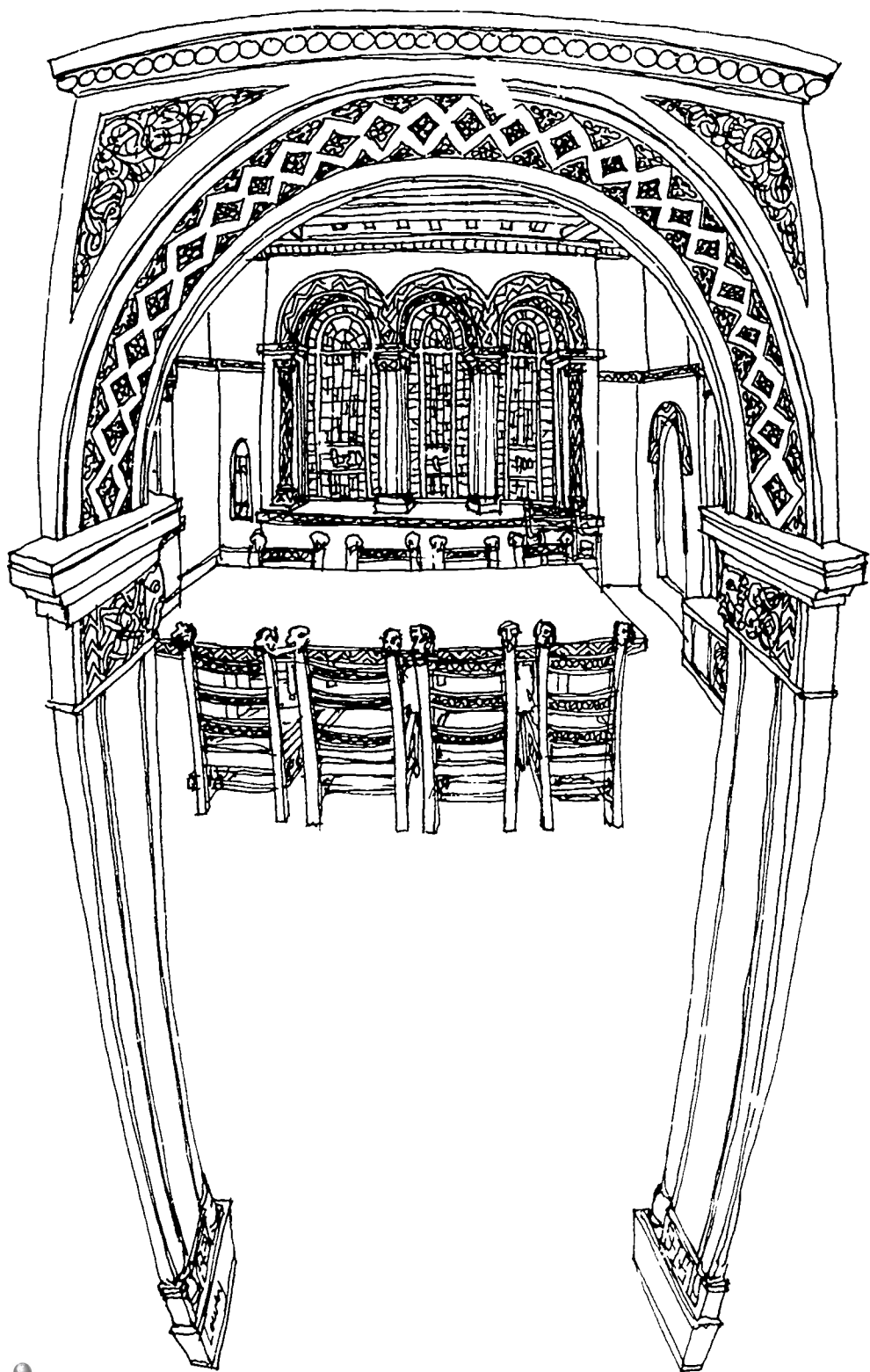
## **Sexual Harassment Policy**

Following is a statement of the University's policy on sexual harassment, adapted from the University of Pittsburgh Affirmative Action Program for Employees, page 118.

Sexual harassment is prohibited by federal regulations and by the policies of the University of Pittsburgh. It is defined as any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other

verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment and/or pursuit of his or her academic goals, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for academic and/or employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive academic or working environment.

The Office of Affirmative Action is available to all members of the University community to answer questions and to provide assistance on this and related matters. To make an appointment, call Ext. 6350.



# Part III.

## The TA as Teacher

### Introduction

Specific assignments made to TAs, TFs, and GSAs vary widely, depending on a number of factors. For example, TAs and TFs are almost always given teaching-related assignments, while the assignments of GSAs are likely to be more removed from the classroom. Individual school and department policies also determine the nature of assignments. The individual faculty supervisor of each TA, TF, or GSA has a great deal to say about the nature of the work to be done and the conditions under which it will be carried out. It is thus of the utmost importance to find out not only what your department's general policies are regarding your employment, but also to check the actual details with your supervisor.

Despite the variations from department to department, there are several broad categories of assignments. The first category includes having the primary responsibility for an entire course. This is most often a course offered in the evenings in CGS, either in Oakland, off-campus, or in the Saturday College. Less often, TAs are asked to teach regular daytime classes within CAS. These may range from basic introductory courses to advanced, specialized ones. The second category is that of an assistant to a faculty member. Such an assignment might include the responsibility for laboratory or recitation sections (in discussion, lecture, or workshop form) in a large lecture course, grading and commenting on papers and exams, and/or aiding the faculty member with classroom activities. Some faculty supervisors will tell you exactly what material they want to have you cover in classes and in what manner, while others will give you *carte blanche*. The third broad category of assignments is a miscellany of (usually) non-teaching activities. You might be asked to help a faculty member with a research project, do editorial work, help advise undergraduates, supervise computer work or a performing arts group, work in a departmental library, or perform some combination of these and other activities.

Obviously, given this wide range of assignments, not all of the information presented in this book will be helpful to everyone. This particular section focuses on teaching-related issues and problems. You should read whichever of the following subsections are most relevant to your situation.

# Teaching Style

We cannot tell you how to teach. You cannot magically become a great teacher by reading this book or any other. (But see the Bibliography at the end of Part IV for some excellent and helpful books.) The teacher-student relationship is one of many human relationships; its variations therefore encompass the entire range of personalities and behaviors. The proper "style" of teaching for you to adopt is not necessarily that of your favorite teacher from the past; your teaching style has to develop as naturally as possible from your own personal characteristics.

These are several facts to be kept in mind as you approach the question of developing your personal teaching style: You are by nature either a formal or an informal person; you know more than your students do about the subject of your class; you are being paid to help them learn that subject; the students have various reasons for being in the class. Your behavior must be based on these realities, and not on any preconceptions you may have as to what you think the situation should be. Obviously, your teaching style will also depend on the constraints of your particular assignment.

The information which follows is given to you, not as the right way to teach, but as a series of suggestions to help you in the various situations you may encounter. Going over this material before your assignment officially begins should help you to become aware of situations before they become crises. Later, you may want to reread particular sections as specific issues arise. All in all, we hope that the suggestions that follow will help you to develop both your own style of teaching and the skills necessary for the effective performance of your assignment.

## Before Class Begins

### Basic Obligations of a TA

As a TA you should be aware that you play an important part in the undergraduate teaching process at Pitt. You may be a small cog in the

teaching machine, but you are a vital one, both in terms of the practical aspects of running a course and in the psychological processes that involve undergraduate attitudes toward the University. You must therefore be nothing less than exemplary in your punctuality and attendance at classes, whether you are teaching the course yourself or assisting the professor. If some unavoidable disaster occurs and you are unable to meet a class, you must let your department know at once. Don't be tempted to change the time or place of your class, since that would create more problems than it solves. Never arrange for a friend to take the class without conferring with your faculty supervisor first. And most important of all, never simply fail to show up.

TAs in an assisting capacity should inform their professor as soon as possible if it looks as if they'll have to miss a class, so that arrangements can be made to cover the class in some way. Call the night before if you suspect you're getting sick; it's a lot easier to cancel a substitute than to find one at the last minute. If you have the sole responsibility for a course and no substitute can be recommended by your department, you should already have devised some procedure by which your students can be informed if you are unable to meet them. In many cases, this can prevent students from traveling unnecessarily to the campus. If you are teaching in CGS at an off-campus site, make sure that you inform each member of your class of the cancellation, and notify in advance the Community Education Services Office at Ext. 6617 so that CES is not charged for unused rooms.

When you do meet your class, make sure that you arrive in plenty of time to set up any necessary equipment and arrange your notes, hand-outs and graded papers. Be prepared to start the actual classwork on time. Give the impression of organization and efficiency. Remember in all dealings with students to behave towards them with basic human courtesy; never use ridicule or sarcasm. Respect your students. Do your best to respond to their problems and questions. If you are unable to immediately, then be meticulous in taking steps to discover the answer and report back to the student later.

As you approach the first class meeting, be aware of the University's policy on sexual harrasment, as it is stated on page 18. Your status as an instructor obligates you to guard against abuse of your authority in such matters. Even if an undergraduate seems to welcome a romantic relationship, a power imbalance exists which puts the student at a serious disadvantage and exposes you to charges of unprofessional conduct. In addition, any personal relationship can bias, or even appear to bias, an instructor in favor of one student at the expense of others. Even if you are scrupulously fair, it is likely that other class members, who are bound to notice the relationship, will believe that that student has a privileged status. This perception will be severely damaging to class morale.

If you are attracted to one of your students, any development of the relationship must be deferred until you are no longer in a position of power and authority over that student.

These, then, are but the minimum obligations of your appointment; they are intended to help you perform your duties in a dignified, professional and conscientious fashion. Further advice on these and other aspects of teaching will be offered in later sections.

## Ascertaining Responsibilities

The first step to take upon receiving your assignment is to get in touch with your faculty supervisor. Finding out exactly what is expected of you before classes begin will prevent later misunderstandings. As a minimum, you should get answers to the following questions before beginning your assignment:

- 1. When and where will class sessions be held?** Subsumed under this obvious question are a number of more subtle ones. If there are recitation or lab sections, can their times be changed under any circumstances? Are students allowed to change from one section to another? It is a good idea to check out the classroom well before the first class meets, to determine if the proper amount and kind of space has been assigned. If the classroom is inappropriate for some reason, ask your faculty supervisor what the procedure is for changing rooms.
- 2. What are the goals of the course?** Make sure you get a copy of the syllabus and the text(s) for the course before classes begin. Talk to the faculty member about his or her ideas on the subject matter and the ways in which the material will be covered. It is sometimes helpful to look at past exams from the course in order to get an idea of the professor's view of the most important themes and topics.
- 3. Are you required to attend course lectures?** Most TAs are required to attend lectures; even if your supervisor does not require your attendance it is a very good idea to do so. Not only will attendance at lectures give you a feeling for the way in which the course material is being covered, but it will also signal to your students that you are serious in your efforts to help them. Students often resent a TA's efforts to clarify material which was presented during a session at which the TA was not present.
- 4. What is supposed to take place during section meetings?** How do recitations or labs fit in with the goals of the course? Should they supplement or complement the lectures? Should new information be presented, or should the material from lectures or books be reviewed? Should they be based on problem sets or other assignments, or on the questions the students themselves bring up? Will student attendance at section meetings be required for the course, or merely recommended? Your freedom in the choice of material or format can vary over a wide range. It is therefore crucial that you clarify the guidelines with your supervisor at the very beginning of the term.



5. **Who will be responsible for grading?** Will you be expected to assign all or part of the grades for the course? What kind of record-keeping of grades is expected? What are the criteria for assigning grades in the course? Will class participation be counted at all? What will the procedure be for assigning final grades in the course? Will the instructor review any disputed grades?
6. **What non-teaching activities are you expected to carry out?** Will you be responsible for textbook orders or for putting books and readings on reserve in the library? Will you be expected to help with audio-visual equipment by operating it or picking it up? Will you help with developing or producing any handouts for the class, such as extra readings, assignments, or outlines?
7. **What sort of office hours are you required to hold?** Is there a required minimum number of hours? What kind of assistance should you give during your office hours?
8. **Will your performance be evaluated and if so, how?** Are you required to have your sections fill out official evaluation forms? Does your department have its own formal evaluation process? What informal evaluation (and feedback) will take place?
9. **Have there been any specific problems encountered in the course in previous terms?** If so, how have they been dealt with?

The emphasis here is on communication between you and your faculty supervisor. Such communication is vital to the smooth execution of a course. At the same time, many TAs also find it helpful to talk to fellow TAs who have had the same or similar assignments in the past. These TAs are sometimes more aware than the professor is of the particular situations you face.

## Planning a Course

If your role as a TA is an assisting one, the professor in charge of the course will be solely responsible for planning its content and schedule. However, remember that you can learn from his approach, and perhaps a discussion with him of his syllabus and its rationale would stand you in good stead when it is your turn to teach a course yourself. Also, keep a file of your copies of course syllabi; these will be helpful examples for you later.

If you are teaching your own course, don't underestimate the importance of time spent in planning the material to be taught. Before you decide on what you'll cover, you should consider the course from the point of view of the students and *what you want them to gain from it*. How does your course fit into the overall curriculum? Is it a prerequisite for other courses? Does it build on material introduced in earlier courses?

Think about who your students will be and about their special needs and concerns. The clearer you can become at this stage about what you're actually trying to do, the better your course will be. Only then should you make your decisions about the amount of material to be covered, your schedule for organizing it, and the methods you think will be most effective in presenting it. Put a rough outline of your syllabus down on paper. This will make you view it more realistically and perhaps force you to give up certain parts of it as being too ambitious. Show it to your faculty supervisor, explaining what your objectives are and what teaching method you intend to use.

Try to get all this together in plenty of time — at least before your textbook order is due at the bookstore, because the textbook is one more item you'll have to make a decision about. If you are responsible for the choice of textbook, there are certain points to bear in mind before committing yourself. Try to find a text that suits you and both supports and supplements your classes. Avoid texts with which you disagree in major respects; you will be likely to skip around when giving assignments, and some students find that confusing. Your goal at all times should be to present the course material in as logical and clear a manner as possible. A well-chosen textbook can be invaluable in providing a dependable frame of reference for your students, and can provide you with good jumping-off points from which to introduce more detailed or advanced material.

Instead of one basic textbook, you may prefer to use several short works that present different aspects of the course material, or that treat it from quite different points of view. This method can provide the basis of class discussions or even assignments, and can help your students appreciate the multifaceted nature of your discipline. In all cases, bear in mind the total cost of books for your course, and make sure you have departmental approval before sending your order to the bookstore.

Having received any advice your supervisor may be able to give, having chosen one or more texts, and having decided on the extent of your course material, you now need to break it down to fit into a schedule for the semester. Consider, as you do this, your class format. For example, are you meeting three times a week for fifty minutes or once a week for 2½ hours? In any case, try to be realistic about both the amount and complexity of the material. You'll only lose in the end by squeezing too much in and then having to take another class period to explain it all again. Consider also the nature of your material, and whether you can present it in some more appropriate format than a straight lecture. This is especially true of the 2½-hour time slot for CGS courses, when it is very important to vary the teaching format to alleviate fatigue. Besides lecture, discussion, recitation and written, in-class assignments, you could also introduce instructional media such as films and audio- or video-tapes. Consider asking a guest lecturer to talk on a special topic, or taking your class on a local field trip. In addition to providing variety, activities such as these can be very effective in extending the context of your course material beyond the confines of the

classroom and emphasizing its broader significance.

The assignments that you require for your course can play a similar role. Try in particular to choose papers and projects that will make the course more individually relevant to the students, and that will exercise their comprehension of certain aspects of the course material. And be realistic about your demands on students. New TAs can sometimes get carried away with enthusiasm and require far more than the normal 3- or 4-credit course work load.

You will need to schedule all these things well ahead, considering as you do so the overall semester calendar and the timing of assignments, tests and examinations. Don't forget holidays! Ask yourself if you have supplied all the necessary material to inform the students completely about what to expect in your course. Finally, incorporate all this information in a typed syllabus that you hand out to students on the first day of class. It will save you time and misunderstandings later if you include there *all* your assignments and their due dates, together with grading criteria for papers and tests (e.g., percentage of final grade earned on each).

Planning a course is a lot of work. But with a well-thought-out syllabus in hand you will feel confident about the overall coherence of your course even before you begin. Don't disappoint your students by digressing too far from it. But if you are forced to change or omit something, be sure to make clear to the students what you are doing and why, and that your initial, overall goals for the course are not being compromised.

## Office Hours

When and where your office hours will be held should be determined before your first class meeting and should be made perfectly clear to your students. Some departments require a specific number of office hours per week; in some courses, a larger amount of one-to-one interaction with students is desirable. If your department has no set requirements, it is reasonable to begin by establishing two to four hours a week for your office hours. Offer hours at different times during the week so that they will be convenient for students with varied schedules. For example, you should not have all of your hours on one day of the week, or even at the same hour on two different days. Obviously, it is difficult to set up office hours that will be convenient for all of your students. You should therefore also make yourself available to your students by special appointment. It is, of course, crucial that you show up for your office hours and appointments.

Instructors in CGS have additional scheduling problems. Evening students usually cannot come to daytime office hours and off-campus students find it inconvenient to come into Oakland at all. For classes in which it is crucial to hold office hours for tutorial assistance, hours

can be scheduled either before or after the class. CGS instructors should also stress their availability for consultation by appointment. While some CGS instructors attempt to use the breaks in their 2½-hour classes as office hours, this is not advised, not only because it does not provide a very relaxed or private atmosphere, but also because the instructor then gets no break of his or her own.

Students should also be told how to get in touch with you to make appointments or in emergency situations. This could be through your departmental mailbox or phone, or you could give your home phone number. Opinions on the advisability of giving out home telephone numbers vary. Do what feels comfortable to you. Once again, CGS instructors should keep in mind that working students may not be able to spend time during the day contacting their instructors, and it is therefore highly recommended that CGS instructors give their home phone numbers to their students.

What goes on during office hours depends on the subject matter of the course and on your attitudes towards the situation. If you have a receptive attitude toward your students, then getting to know them on a one-to-one basis during office hours creates a rapport which will carry over into the classroom. Some instructors find it helpful to require each student to make an initial office visit, perhaps after the first assignment has been handed in. This provides an opportunity to get to know the students better and also encourages them to avail themselves of your office hours. Another technique is to hold group office hours or review sections before exams or major assignments, but these should never take the place of a student's opportunity to see the instructor privately.

## **In the Classroom**

### **The First Class Meeting**

The first class meeting can be a nerve-wracking experience for those on both sides of the lectern or table. The students are getting their first chance to find out what the course is going to be like, and the instructor therefore has to set the tone for the rest of the term. Especially for the beginning TA, the first class meeting can be an anxious time. The following suggestions are given in the hope that they will lessen the anxiety all around. As was pointed out earlier, planning the first class meeting carefully will go a long way toward calming your nerves. If you walk into the class knowing that you have prepared for it, your first-day jitters will be minimal.

Handing out a syllabus on the first day serves two purposes. It gives the student concrete information on what the course will consist of and what will be expected of them, and it provides you with something concrete to do at the beginning of the class. Included on the syllabus handout

should be your name, phone number(s), office location and office hours. If you are teaching a recitation section for a lecture course, this information may be listed on the syllabus for the major lecturer only. In that case, make sure that you write the information about yourself on the blackboard and/or hand it out on a separate piece of paper. Go over the syllabus with the students and answer any questions they have about how the course will be run. Again, if you are teaching a section of a larger course, let the students know how the section meetings fit into the course as a whole.

An important topic to cover on the first day is the grading procedures and requirements for the course. If the requirements include papers or take-home examinations, spend some time on the first day discussing the difference between simply using sources and plagiarizing them. This initial discussion may head off problems later in the term. (See section on *Academic Dishonesty*, below.)

Many instructors pass out index cards on the first day, asking the students to write their names, year in school, major, social security number (student I.D. number), a phone number where they can be reached in an emergency, and other coursework they have had in the field. If there is other vital information you would like to have, you can ask that they include it on the cards as well.

In addition to having students fill out these cards, it may be a good idea to have everyone introduce himself or herself to the class. Introduce yourself as well, of course; students are as curious about you as you are about them. The introductions might include the students' names, majors, where they are from, whether they commute or live near campus, if they have a part-time job, why they took this particular course, and anything else that they think might be interesting about themselves. Your spontaneous responses to this information as it is given let the students know that you care about them. Introductions such as these actually serve two purposes. They get an informal discussion going on the first day and they provide information that will help you to remember individuals and to deal with problems as they may come up in the future. Jotting down the high points of the introduction on the students' index cards will help you to match names, faces, and backgrounds later on.

Introductions, however, are not to be used as an easy way to get through the first hour. Class time is precious and should not be squandered. The amount of actual course material you cover on the first day will vary, especially if you are teaching sections. You may want to use this class period to correct deficiencies in the students' preparation, or to go directly into the course material. If you use the first class constructively, you will waste neither your time nor that of your students.

You may find that you're scheduled to teach three or four sections of a course per week. It takes a bit of effort during the first week to remember that each of these is a true "first class meeting." While you may have gone over the same basic material several times, it will be new to each group of students. You'll probably find that each section has

its own character. After a short time, therefore, you'll lose the feeling of repetitiveness throughout the week and recognize each section as a different group of individuals with whom you have initiated a personal relationship.

## Lectures

As a TA at Pitt you may find yourself lecturing under a number of different circumstances. The most common initial experience, however, will probably be the most unsettling: being asked by your professor to fill in, or to give a special lecture to the class that he normally teaches. However, just as you will learn to cope with lecturing to your own recitation sections or, later perhaps, teaching your own course, you will be able to meet that challenge as long as you make sure that you are adequately prepared and organized. Preparation and organization are the keys to successful lecturing. That fact just cannot be stressed enough.

Your preparation should begin with an honest appraisal of the amount of material to be presented. Whatever your topic, you will never be able to "cover the subject." Therefore, force yourself to make a realistic choice among alternatives, bearing in mind the context of your lecture in the course as a whole and the particular needs and learning level of the students. You will have to omit a lot that you'd like to include, agonizing as that may be. But a really good lecture ideally consists of a few, well-selected, significant and interesting points, rather than a wealth of undifferentiated information.

Now you can begin to organize your material and make a rough outline, trying to arrive at a logical progression which builds and flows to a conclusion. Remember that preparing a lecture to be heard is not the same as writing for print. A complex subject can be organized on paper in such a way that is quite comprehensible to a concentrating reader, but it might be impossible to follow in an oral presentation. Lectures have no subtitles or boldface type so you must plant deliberate, oral signposts along the way. Make doubly sure that your main points, and the relationships among them, stand out clearly.

Plan your lecture in three parts: the introduction, in which you briefly state what your lecture will be about and what you'd like to accomplish; the actual *body of material*, in the form of three or four main points (no more), supported by examples and explanations; and finally a summary of the lecture, with perhaps a brief preview of the next one, in order to relate the parts of the course to one another. And when you are getting down to the nitty-gritty of preparing your lecture notes, try always to relate the new material to what has been done in previous lectures and also, when possible, to reading assignments, laboratory experiences, and even examination questions. In this way, you pull everything together for the students and reinforce concepts that might have seemed vague or irrelevant to them before.



As part of this preparation for your lecture, you might also plan any props you might use, such as handouts, slides, diagrams or lists to be written on the blackboard and so on. Remember that audiovisual aids can be invaluable in making the theoretical "real;" like well-chosen examples, they will stick in the students' minds long after the rest of your lecture has been forgotten. Be flexible in your selection of examples, so that you are better able to cope with the difficult problem of timing your lecture to fit the time slot. If you have some extra examples that might be left out if time runs short, you will be more confident of not running out of material before the class ends. (That is a very common, but usually groundless fear.)

If you find after all this preparation that your notes are too copious to refer to when you are actually delivering the lecture, add very clear, flagged headings in brightly colored ink, so that you don't have to search through a sheaf of notes for your next point. As you gain confidence, your lecture notes will become less wordy and take on more of an outline form. You might also find that a stack of index cards with phrases on them suits your personal style, but this system isn't generally recommended because cards tend to get dropped or shuffled and are, in any event, difficult to keep.

If you make the effort to prepare as carefully as this for a lecture, you are bound to feel and sound confident — and thus convincing — when you present it. The effort and thought has meant that you know and understand your material well. You will be able to relax, speak naturally, refer very little to your notes, and welcome, rather than dread, questions from your students.

When the time approaches for your lecture, a few quiet moments spent reading through your notes will ensure that the main points are securely in the front of your mind. Try to arrive early at your designated classroom, so that you can accommodate yourself to the space and make sure that any equipment you plan to use is functioning properly (and that you know how to operate it!)

Sometimes chatting with students before class can help you forget your nervousness. It is also a way to begin the very important process of setting up a rapport between yourself and your class during the lecture. This feeling of comfort and confidence between you and your class can make all the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful lecture. It makes you feel good and behave naturally, and it puts you in peak form to lecture. The students will be receptive to the new ideas you present to them, and a positive and pleasant learning experience will be had by all.

It is up to you to establish such an atmosphere at the beginning of your lecture. Be natural and frank, not pompous. Don't be afraid to reveal yourself as a person. Some TAs feel that an aloof, superior attitude will convince students of their expertise and the validity of their teaching. In point of fact, however, this can set up an irrevocable barrier and can be actively resented, especially by adult students. You might make an occasional personal reference or simply show by the naturalness of your

own style that you are an interesting person, not a teaching automaton. Be interested in your students, too. If you are teaching your own class, learn their names if possible. Respect them as people. Look at them individually when you are addressing the class. And genuinely encourage questions and comments, even if the lecture is a one-time event and in a formal auditorium setting. The suggestion of a two-way process will do much to relieve the mutual tension that is inherent in a speaker/audience situation. Use any activities you can think of at the beginning of the lecture to achieve a relaxed attitude: distributing handouts, mentioning administrative details, giving your thoughts on the course in general or a comment or two about the last lecture. This kind of informal introduction, brief though it will (and must) be, prepares the ground for launching into the lecture proper, and gives you an invaluable chance to find your voice and set your pace and tone for what follows.

During the lecture be sure to communicate clearly the organization of the material that you were so careful to achieve during its preparation. The structure of your lecture can be conveyed to the students by cue words and phrases such as "There are four principal results of this interaction. The first is . . .," or, "We've already seen A; but in contrast B has the following properties . . .," or, "Now we're going to look at . . .," or, "This is the most important point." Emphasize important points by repeating them, pausing afterwards, illustrating them with good examples, and then summarizing them, using phrases such as "All right, here's where we stand now . . ." You can, of course, also communicate the structure of your lecture by writing an outline on the chalkboard, giving a careful introduction that enumerates the points you'll make, or by handing out a summary of the lecture. This last is somewhat above and beyond the call of duty, but such summaries can be useful to have in your own files, as well as being helpful for absent students.

Of course, you must speak distinctly and loudly enough when lecturing so that your audience can hear you comfortably. A common and infuriating habit that some lecturers have is to drop their voice at the end of a sentence, perhaps adding a parenthetical comment that nobody can hear. Pause frequently; it helps note-takers. Look at individual students, not over all their heads. Sound enthusiastic about the subject. Gesture and vary your voice, its tempo and expression. Move around in front of the class; you are not nailed to the floor! Imagine (if necessary) a sleepy student in the rear of the room and try to do all you can to pull him back to attention. Watch for telltale clues such as bewildered frowns or agreeing nods. You might also check comprehensibility by simply asking, "Is that clear?" etc., after your main points.

The rapport that you established at the beginning can be maintained throughout your lecture by an occasional light touch: perhaps a bit of humor if that's comfortable for you, or a catchy example. Remember that if something goes wrong in the middle of your lecture, it is not the end of the world; take it patiently and in good humor. Usher out the intrusive



dog or change the bulb in the projector, and when be flexible enough to skip an example and carry on.

At the end of your lecture, briefly summarize its most important points, even if you have taken pains to hammer them home throughout. Remember that each good lecture has a shape of its own: a beginning, a middle and an end. There is nothing drearier than a lecture that simply picks up where the last one ended, and automatically feeds students successive chunks of material in, say, chronological or textbook order. Think of your final summary as a form of gift-wrapping, which enables your students to take away the content of your lecture in a manageable and attractive form. Make sure you allow time for the summary. As a beginning teacher, you are likely to prepare too much material and underestimate the time it will take to deliver it. The structure of your lecture will then suffer, as you speed up at the end to squeeze in the last point, or leave it dangling until the next time. Worry more about having too much material than too little, and have some of those optional examples up your sleeve to give you confidence.

Lecturing in a 2½-hour time slot presents additional problems associated with fatigue, both yours and that of your students. The key is to plan your time in segments, changing the format and the pace several times. For example, between two short lectures insert a discussion session, or perhaps a 10-15 minute written assignment such as a miniproblem based on the material in your first lecture. Or two formats could even be combined, the assignments being used as the basis for discussion, thus providing the additional benefit of immediate feedback for both you and your students. Again, remember that rapport is established through dialogue; you will feel more relaxed and more in touch with the class if you get them to participate actively. They will be roused from the torpor of notetaking; their adrenalin will be forced to flow by your insistence on their personal involvement in the learning process. At the very least, give the class a ten-minute break or break up a bit in the middle of a 2½-hour lecture, and try to differentiate the topics of the lecture into two clearly defined bodies of material.

Good lecturing is not something that comes naturally or easily to a new teacher — or even to old ones. It results from much planning, hard work and conscientiousness. For at least your very first lecture, you might well consider doing a “dry run” for practice; it will be time well spent. Remember that even the most experienced lecturers often preview their more important public lectures in front of their immediate colleagues.

Finally, observe carefully those whom you consider to be good teachers, noting how they structure their lectures, deliver them, answer questions and generally interact with their audiences. Good models are invaluable for TAs. Adopt their successful techniques and aspire to their high standards, but remember not to copy their personal styles; your teaching debut is the time to establish your own.

# Discussions

When is it appropriate to use a discussion format for a class? In his book, *Teaching Tips: A Guidebook for the Beginning College Teacher*, Wilbert J. McKeachie suggests that a discussion format is appropriate when the instructor wants to do any of the following:

1. Use the resources of members of the group.
2. Give students opportunities to formulate applications of principles.
3. Get prompt feedback on how well objectives are being attained.
4. Help students learn to think in terms of the subject matter by giving them practice in thinking.
5. Help students learn to evaluate the logic of, and evidence for, their own and others' positions.
6. Help students become aware of and formulate problems using information to be gained from readings or lectures.
7. Gain acceptance for information or theories counter to folklore or previous beliefs of students.
8. Develop motivation for further learning."<sup>1</sup>

Opportunities for students to engage in discussion give them practice in integrating and applying the course material. Another author reminds us that "teachers should continually attempt to involve students in discussions because commitment to an idea forces a person to defend, reformulate, or strengthen his thinking. Ideas that remain in one's mind are uncommitted."<sup>2</sup>

Once you have determined that a discussion format will best fit your needs, you can begin to structure individual discussions. The amount of structure you want to provide will be dependent on your goals for each session. If you want students to learn how to pick the most important ideas from the materials for themselves, you will want to provide minimal structure. However, since this can be quite time-consuming, you will want to provide more structure when large amounts of material are to be covered. Consider beginning with a fair amount of structure, and then moving to less structured sessions over the course of the term.

Focussing on the current assignment provides a common base of information for the class discussion. When you tell students ahead of time how to prepare for a certain class, be sure that you follow up

<sup>1</sup>McKeachie, *Teaching Tips* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath & Company, 1978) pp. 35-36

<sup>2</sup>Bernstein, Harvey R., *Manual for Teaching* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, Center for Improvement of Undergraduate Education, 1975), p. 44

your instructions by both covering the material assigned and by making it worth the students' while to have completed the assignment. For example, if you assign a specific reading for a session and then monopolize the entire discussion yourself, the students will assume that they do not have to take your assignments seriously, that there was no need for them to do the reading after all. One or two experiences of this sort are enough to encourage the students to put off or even skip the reading for the course.

As you prepare beforehand for a discussion section, take notes on your goals for the session and the topics you want to make sure are covered. Keeping an eye on your notes during the discussion will aid you in covering all the necessary ground. If you share this "agenda" with your students, they will understand where the discussion is headed.

Getting a discussion started can be difficult, but there are several techniques you can use. Some kind of common experience (a film, demonstration, lecture or reading selection) can provide a good jumping-off point. Sometimes a discussion can be initiated by having the students formulate a list of problems presented by the material. A few good opening questions can also successfully stimulate a discussion. Certain discussion topics can be introduced by posing a controversy, and thereby inducing debate among the students. (If you choose a debate format for the discussion, it can be clarified by setting up a two-column listing of arguments on the blackboard for the two sides.)<sup>3</sup>

Once the discussion has been initiated, it has to be maintained. One method of doing this is to focus the discussion by breaking it down into logical steps. Begin the discussion by formulating the problem or defining the issue at hand. Next, suggest a hypothesis. This is followed by collecting the information necessary to confirm, reject, or prioritize the various hypotheses. The final step is then to evaluate the alternative solutions and discuss the consequences and implications of the conclusions reached by the group.<sup>4</sup>

Not all topics are suitable for the procedure described above. At times you will have to use your questioning skills to draw out the students in order to maintain a purposeful discussion. There are several things to consider when formulating your questions. Yes/no questions or questions that call for mere fact recall ("What year was Lincoln elected?") rarely encourage animated discussions. Neither do "programmed" questions, such as, "Don't you think the theme of this book is man's inhumanity to man?" If you find yourself asking a lot of questions like these, you might re-evaluate your use of the discussion format. The material you want to cover may be more suitable to a lecture format. Many discussion leaders find it useful to begin the discussion

<sup>3</sup>McKeachie, op. cit., pp. 38-41

<sup>4</sup>McKeachie, op. cit., p. 37.

with a few basic factual questions to establish a body of common information. From this base, subsequent questions build into more conceptual problems or toward applications of the concepts.

Even with the best of planning and questioning skills, however, a discussion session can flop. Students are unfortunately used to being passive recipients of education; it is the task of the discussion leader to break through that passivity and encourage students to become active participants in the process. And that's not easy. The encouragement must begin with the asking of well thought-out questions at a level appropriate to the material and the students. After you ask your question, wait for answers. Become comfortable with silence in your classroom; wait at least ten seconds before breaking the silence yourself. Assure your students that there is nothing wrong with taking their time to formulate responses. You should also take care not to call always on the first person who responds to a question; giving everyone time to consider the question and possible responses gives the quieter students more opportunities to participate. If too long a silence ensues, rephrase the question or ask your students why they aren't responding.

It is also important to get the students into the habit of talking to each other, rather than always directing their comments to you. One way to do this is through non-verbal encouragement. Rather than staring intently at the speaker, look at others in the group: the speaker will follow your example. You can also ask the students to comment on each others' comments. Let this continue for a while on any given topic; reaching an early agreement on an issue may inhibit the most educational of discussions. With a little prior preparation, you can assign specific topics either to individual students or to small groups within the class. Reporting back on these topics enables students to experience the exchanging of ideas among themselves.

Special efforts may be necessary to get some of the quieter students to talk. Learning your students' names encourages them by giving them a feeling that you care about them. Calling quiet students by name can be combined with non-verbal encouragement such as nods, smiles or expectant looks. Very shy students often benefit from a private conference with you; you can then find out why they aren't talking. If you know that a quiet student has special knowledge of some topic, encourage his participation by asking him questions related to that topic.

At the other extreme is the "over-involved" student who ends up monopolizing the class time. Beware of two-way conversations — between you and the student only — taking up too much of the discussion time. As with the quiet student, a conference outside of class with the overeager student may ease the situation. If the problem is one of a student who constantly disagrees or argues with everything you say, take time outside of class to go over the contested issues.

# Workshops

One of the TA's most responsible roles at Pitt is the conducting of workshops of one kind or another. The workshop as a teaching format is used in almost every discipline and appears in a variety of guises. Its essential purpose, however, is consistent: it enables some practical aspect of the course material to be presented in a form that students can experience personally. It provides the student with an opportunity not only to practice the immediate application of theories already introduced in a more formal setting, but also to learn their broader relevance in the student's own life and in the world.

## 1. General

Because workshops are much more informal than lectures or even than discussion groups, one might think it unnecessary to go to great lengths to prepare for them. The reverse, however, is actually the case. Extensive preparation is required to ensure (1) that all the mechanical aspects will run smoothly; (2) that you yourself are adequately prepared, both to conduct the practical session and to explain it; and (3) that you are prepared for further discussion of the ramifications of the experience, most likely with individual students.

Your preparation can obviously make all the difference between, say, the tedious fulfillment of an apparently meaningless requirement and an exciting and stimulating learning experience. The workshop, then, is really more challenging than the other instructional formats. The TA is put on his mettle to pull together theoretical knowledge, practical expertise and administrative ability in order that the workshop will provide reinforcement and enrichment of the formal course material. To this end, then, preparation is all important.

Workshops are generally held less frequently than other classes and for longer periods of time, so that more than one kind of activity can usually take place. If it is your responsibility to organize those activities you will have to plan a logical and satisfying sequence of events for your students. Typically, this would consist of some kind of lecture or introduction, followed by the main practical activity in which the students will participate. The session would conclude with some kind of discussion to assess the conclusions and results. Your preparation should thus include not only a thorough acquaintance with the subject matter, but a thoughtful scheduling of the sequence of events, with careful attention to the mechanical arrangements for equipment, transportation or anything else that is necessary. Do not underestimate the extra time it takes to shepherd a group of people through some practical activity. Try to be as flexible as possible to allow for mishaps, unexpectedly protracted discussion or desperate queries from distressed and confused students. Remember: you've done it before, they haven't.

You can forestall problems by preparing the students — not only yourself — in advance. Announce the activities you've planned in a handout, or include them in a lecture at some time prior to the actual exercise, so that they'll know what to expect.

You can't anticipate all the problems that might arise, but your meticulous preparation will go a long way towards making the workshop "swing" and towards giving the students a worthwhile, even memorable, learning experience.

## 2. Science Labs

*"The primary purpose of laboratories is not the presentation of ideas. That is the function of lectures. It is to give the student an intense personal experience with the stuff and operations of science. The worst kind of conventional lab, which we derisively call 'cookbook' fails most often not because we are presenting the wrong principle or using the wrong operation, it is because it is not exciting, challenging, or cogent." . . . James Mathewson<sup>1</sup>*

The science laboratory is a particular instance of the workshop format. Therefore, most of what has been said above about planning, preparation, and anticipation of problems is applicable to the lab. A list of specific suggestions for the laboratory TA follows to help you ensure that your lab sessions will be as effective as possible. Remember, however, that there are unique demands for leading a lab in each of the various science departments: chemistry labs, for example, create a very different situation from, say, biology, physics or geology labs. Make sure that you are thoroughly familiar with your specific departmental requirements and regulations before embarking on your first lab.

To prepare for leading a weekly lab:

- (a.) Be thoroughly familiar with scheduled experimental procedure(s). In order to accomplish this, you should carefully read the experiment as it is described in the lab manual or other source. Prepare the necessary equipment (the same as the students will use) and data sheets. Perform the experiment yourself, making note of possible snags that the students might encounter along the way. Complete whatever calculations and written work are required as soon as possible after doing the experiment. Do not take it home to mull it over if you don't allow your students to do so.
- (b.) Study the theory on which the experiment is based. This is important for your own satisfaction, but also so that you can be confident of satisfying those students who might ask about

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Teach-In: Suggestions for Developing College Instruction, Learning Resource Program, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, 1972, Section 21 Labs.

the relationship between theory and practice. Such questions are often prompted by the firsthand experience of a particular procedure, as well as by the informal atmosphere of the lab. You might also include in this kind of preparation some consideration of the wider relevance of the experiment, as well as any pertinent historical information and anecdotes. All these things will make your lab sessions more memorable and meaningful for your students.

- (c.) A certain the amounts and types of materials and equipment (in working order!) that are required, and be familiar with the state of the storeroom. Your students have only a limited amount of time to perform: some often quite lengthy procedures and calculations; don't waste any of their time searching for, say, a missing reagent or a replacement for a broken item. Decide in advance whether the procedure is to be performed individually or in groups and then organize the equipment accordingly.
- (d.) Be thoroughly familiar with all safety regulations and procedures that are current in your department. Does your department have a brochure on safety procedures? Do you know how to handle hazardous materials? Do you know where the first aid materials are kept, and how to get emergency assistance?

When the time comes for your lab session to meet, make sure that you get there at least ten minutes early. Check that everything needed is available, and write the assignment on the board. Be ready to introduce the experiment as soon as the period begins by a short lecture, a demonstration, handouts, or perhaps by reference to the lab manual. It may be so obvious to you that you might forget, but make sure that your students are told explicitly what the purpose of the experiment is and what you expect them to learn from it. Otherwise, students may view the lab experience as aimless busywork. At the same time, make very clear the requirements for the written lab reports, for the cleanup procedures and for essential safety precautions.

When the lab is in session, don't assume that your task is over. You should play an active role in helping the students. Be visibly and personally involved as you move around the room, showing that you are accessible. You can demonstrate techniques and help with problems before they become catastrophes. You may be asked an important question that you should share with everybody else. Beyond just helping bogged-down or confused students understand what they're doing and why, you may also need to ensure that students are handling the equipment properly and safely, or even to enforce discipline at some point. Remember, though, that labs are more informal than other class formats, and that valuable learning can take place in a semi-social atmosphere, where interactions between student team-mates and between students and instructor can take place easily.



### 3. Language Labs

TAs supervising language labs should make sure they are familiar with the equipment and tapes available and should also use their time in the lab conscientiously. Many students will need help in making the most of the exercise tapes, but they might be too timid to approach a self-absorbed TA seated at one end of the room. Try to contribute to the students' learning experience personally and positively, and stay alert for those who may be about to fall by the wayside. Whether you are simply meeting some students at the lab for special practice or are meeting a regular session there, be reliable and punctual. The language lab is an invaluable tool for foreign language students, but it is easy for them to minimize its importance compared with other aspects of their course work, and not bother to attend. Your encouragement in every way is important for the satisfying and effective use of the lab.

## Classroom Aids

### The Chalkboard

You may be surprised to learn how important your use of the chalkboard is to your students. It is much more than a casual, convenient notational aid. In fact, if you use it only for impromptu scribbles, many students will copy them exactly into their notes. Indeed, some students only write down themselves whatever you write on the chalkboard! If your board is a messy assortment of apparently unrelated phrases and diagrams by the end of class, that is just what many students' notes will be, and those notes will be their only means of recalling what may well have been an otherwise carefully organized lecture. Bearing in mind, then, that most students take notes from what is on the chalkboard, what follows are some suggestions for making your boardwork a model for student note-taking. The ideal result would be for students to carry away an outline of the class you just presented.

Structure your boardwork. Consider writing on the board a brief outline of the material you plan to present in class, then your students will have a point of reference as you progress through your subject-matter. When you make further notes, use headings for the component parts of an argument or problem and use underlining, capitals and boxes to emphasize important points. It is important consistently to identify each problem or topic that you discuss by writing a brief statement or a key phrase on the board. Try to use the board for only the most important information. Trivia and squiggles will diminish the total effect. Plan your boardwork. Use the panels of the chalkboard with some forethought. Try to reserve one panel for the outline and use the others for details, computation, etc., starting at the top of each panel and working down. Then, when you have to erase, your essential ideas will remain in view.



Some practical tips:

- Have the facts and statistics you are going to put on the chalkboard written down on paper for your own ready reference; don't depend on your memory for complex configurations in a teaching situation. Work out your examples prior to class. Check your spelling or your figures. If working from a text, be certain that you are using the text's terms and definitions
- Erasing intermediate steps as you go along is very frustrating for note-taking students; it is better to put a line through something as you revise. Remember that students can't erase in a notebook, at least not without losing the record of essential intermediate steps that you made. In general, don't erase at all until you absolutely have to: when you've run out of space.
- Don't write on those parts of the board that are not visible to the whole class. Determine the visible board area by asking students at the back how far down they can see. Don't stand in front of what you have just written. Similarly, make sure that you can be heard by the whole class if you continue to talk while facing the board.
- Finally, at the end of the class, walk back and survey the state of your chalkboard. Is your writing easily legible? (Practice if not!) Can you reconstruct your lecture from what you've written?

## Other Media

Don't get stuck in a rut. You can take more into your classroom than magazines, newspapers or duplicated handouts. In particular, discover what the Media Resource Center has to offer. (The Media Resource Center, Ex. 4468 is a division of the University Center for Instructional Resources in the Pullman Library.) They can help you with records, tapes, slides, transparencies, filmstrips, films and videotapes and supply the equipment (and operator if necessary) you'll need to present them.

Audiovisual aids can bring your subject to life, but their effectiveness depends on the way you use them. It is not enough to play a tape or show a film and assume that your intentions for doing so are clear to your students. You must be careful to introduce these materials, explaining why you are using them, telling students what to look for and how they relate to the course material. Slides and visual material presented with an overhead projector can be accompanied simultaneously by your own commentary. After using audiovisual materials, don't just dismiss the class or swing on to the next topic. Make sure that some kind of follow-up reinforces those points you wanted to demonstrate; lead a class discussion, or give a written assignment, so that students have a chance to consider and evaluate what they've seen and heard. Your goal should

be to integrate this class with the rest of the course and to insure that the students are more than passive spectators.

## Discipline in Class

The atmosphere of your classroom depends on the climate you establish as a teacher. It is important initially to demonstrate to students that learning in your classroom is a co-operative endeavor, that students as well as the instructor are contributors; so that you avoid establishing yourself as an authority figure against whom some students might feel compelled to rebel. If you proceed in a natural, calm, but also confident way, making sure that your receptivity to the students is always evident, you should be able to maintain the kind of pleasant rapport with the class that is by and large incompatible with deliberate disorder. Your confidence comes from preparing and knowing your material well, your naturalness from never putting on airs, and your calm from the knowledge you have thus given yourself that you can cope with whatever your class has to offer.

When you start to lose a class — when attention wanders or students become fidgety — it is more often a sign that something is wrong with the teaching than that something is wrong with the students. In spite of all your hard work, the lesson may be poorly prepared or poorly presented. The material may be too advanced or too basic; students may not have come as far as you thought they had or they may be way ahead of you. Or perhaps they cannot see the relevance of a particular lesson to the objectives of the course. Every teacher, even the most experienced, will have classes that fail miserably. While you could resort to ploys such as telling students that this lecture material will appear on examinations so that they realize it is worth their while to listen and take notes, it would obviously be better not to have to do this. The good teacher is the one who is sensitive to his audience, quick to understand what's gone wrong, and quick to admit that it's time to stop, take stock, and start again.

In the unlikely event of a single student disrupting your class — either deliberately or inadvertently, it is very important that you remain calm. If the student is agitated or upset and the disruption is prolonged, ask him to wait and discuss the problem further with you after class. You could do this also with students who are taking up a disproportionate amount of class time to argue or to ask irrelevant questions. There are two possible ways of dealing with a student who genuinely and flatly disagrees with you: you could try and cite factual evidence to support your opinion, or, in the case of a controversial problem, admit that the student could be right. In the latter case you could reiterate why you have adopted your position so that the student has some basis for reevaluating his or hers. Such a dialogue could bring home to students

the continuously organic nature of all scholarship. What you should avoid in these or any circumstances is a "snow-job," when you try to overwhelm a questioning student with an avalanche of half relevant and far too high-level comments which then discourage all further questions from your class. If, however, the problem is more serious and a student is deliberately challenging you to make you uncomfortable, you will have to use other tactics. Wisecracks and sarcasms can be treated as though they are serious statements, or even ignored if possible. By refusing to "bite" you take the sting out of such comments.

At Pitt it is extremely rare that you'd have to deal with actual unruly behavior, but in that event, you should warn the student once or twice and then, if he persists, tell him to leave. You should then report the incident to your faculty supervisor who should take any further steps necessary to settle the matter.

## Advice for Non-Native English Speaking TAs

If your native language is not English it is extremely important that you be aware of the possibility that students have trouble understanding what you say. Even if your command of the English language is excellent, a foreign accent sometimes causes a psychological barrier to immediate comprehension. Students may expect not to be able to understand a foreign accent, or may not be able to adjust swiftly enough to words given unfamiliar pronunciation.

If your command of English is less than perfect, you have a very serious responsibility to make an immediate and consistent effort to improve your competency. The seriousness of that responsibility was emphasized in 1977 when the University Senate passed a resolution that foreign TAs be tested for oral English competence prior to their appointment, and that if a deficiency were found then immediate steps should be taken to correct it and no classroom duties could be assigned during this time. International students awarded teaching assistantships in FAS are examined for the comprehensibility of their English and are given non-teaching assignments and required to take special course work until a deficiency is corrected. In addition, all TAs and TFs in FAS who are teaching a class recitation or lab section are required to be evaluated by the undergraduates they are teaching. These policies will be implemented for all TAs and TFs in the near future. As a TA, you have an immediate moral obligation to make sure that you can communicate effectively with students. Do not depend on your own department to initiate the process. Remember that however confident you feel in your English ability, there may be a small accent problem which you are unaware of that could cause your students trouble and which could prob-

ably be alleviated with the correct tutoring.

For all foreign TAs, whatever your standard of spoken English, there are certain devices that can habitually be used to make doubly sure of the absolute comprehensibility of your classwork. Perhaps the most important is the comfortable atmosphere which you can create by a frank and natural attitude towards your own accent. If you initially acknowledge that your English is not quite perfect and that you are very willing to be asked to clarify a statement or repeat the discussion of a particular point, then you will make possible an easy dialogue in which neither you nor the students are embarrassed and thus prevented from a free exchange of thoughts and ideas. In addition to making sure that you do establish such an atmosphere, take care to speak slowly and distinctly, facing your class. Indeed, make an effort to solicit questions to check that you are getting your points across; you may have to explain something again which you had assumed was easy and clear the first time.

In addition, you could also use tactics such as writing new terms on the blackboard as you introduce them orally. This enables students to hear your pronunciation in association with the written word and will make it easier for them to remember the most important terms in your discipline. In fact, any written material that you can use will help your students. Consider using handouts that summarize lectures, or introduce labs, as an important supplement to your teaching. As a non-native TA it is your responsibility to make the extra effort to be understood in your classroom. The burden should not fall upon your students.

Another problem you may face is acculturation to the American classroom. The adjustment can be difficult for those who are accustomed to more formal professor-student relationships and stricter standards of classroom decorum. You should not take offense at the high probability that you will be called by your first name or even "nicknamed" (given another name) by the students. This is generally not intended to be offensive. You should also not be alarmed by the casual dress of some of the undergraduate students. Again, the manner in which students dress, especially in the summer, has no bearing on their respect or disrespect for you as an instructor. Finally, it is suggested that you take some time to tell your students something about your background — nothing too personal, but enough to satisfy the natural curiosity that students often have about their instructors.

## **Evaluating Your Students**

### **Assigning Paper Topics**

Paper topics assigned to students should be both challenging and fair. When you ask students to write papers (or essay exams) you are asking

them to combine and organize the course material and their own ideas into a coherent whole. That is the aspect of challenge. To make the assignments fair as well, you must think carefully about your goals for the course. What do you want your students to learn? The fairness of your paper topics depends largely on the extent to which they call upon the student to use the actual material or skills that are being taught in the course.

There are two main types of paper topics. The first, referred to above, calls upon the student to use material from the course, but to organize it and think about it in a new way or to draw new conclusions from it. The second type is the research paper which requires that the students use sources beyond the required readings. The type of paper you assign depends on both the level of the class and the goals you have set for the course.

The CGS instructor may find that his students, especially those in off-campus classes or those who work in the daytime, have a difficult time preparing papers that require extensive library work. The instructor must therefore be flexible, providing them with a range of options for different, though equivalent, assignments. While some students might have the resources to write a paper based on library work, others might do better if they were permitted a way to draw upon their personal work experiences, or to use newspapers, magazines, and interviews as source materials.

When you prepare the assignment sheets, keep in mind that vagueness will invariably lead to disaster. Topics should be worded clearly but succinctly. Establish detailed guidelines for both the content and the format of the papers. Make your grading criteria clear in advance. For example, if you are going to look at how well the paper is organized as one aspect of the students' grades, make this clear beforehand. Also, remind your students that it is only what they write down on the paper that counts; you cannot grade them on what they might have been thinking. If the students are given these criteria guidelines in advance on a mimeographed assignment sheet, they won't be able to claim later that they "forgot" or never heard what was expected of them. It is also a good idea to include in the assignment sheet yet another description of what constitutes plagiarism, and how to avoid it.

For both your benefit and that of your students, establish and announce a firm due-date policy and what the penalties will be for lateness. This will not only save you time and energy later on, but will help to control the students' natural tendency to let work pile up. Give assignments far enough in advance that students have time to come to you with their outlines, rough drafts, and questions.

# Helping Students to Write Successful Papers

If students are to write thoughtful, coherent, well constructed papers, they must take the task of writing as a serious venture that can benefit them in some way. We can encourage this attitude by spending class time talking not only about the subject-matter of the course, but also about the act of writing and the way in which this act relates to other kinds of inquiry that take place in the discipline.

Students often say that they have trouble getting started—a problem that afflicts all writers, both experienced and inexperienced. The difference is that experienced writers have developed strategies for getting over that initial hump. You can suggest some of those strategies to your students: jotting down notes, outlining, writing rough drafts, reading, and talking with others.

Students benefit from discussing samples of writing, not only professional papers from within the discipline, but student papers as well. Students seem to see the problems in their own papers more readily when they have discussed similar problems in someone else's. For example, students often make assertions in their papers which they don't explain or support. They should be encouraged to analyze the ways in which writers support or do not support their assertions and to evaluate critically the "evidence" that writers provide.

In addition to class discussions, you might also give assignments and comment on individual students' papers. To help students think critically about a topic, you can design a series of related assignments over the course of the term. Students might be asked to consider not only the essays they have just written, but all of the previous essays in the series. As they reflect on their writing in this way, they must reformulate the problem in gradually more complicated terms. Writing on the same problem over the course of a term encourages successively more complex thinking which in turn leads to both better writing and better learning.

Comments on students' papers encourage better writing by providing the viewpoint of an informed reader. You can comment on several levels; on grammar and punctuation, on organization, or on the conception and rhetoric of the writing, all of which are important. But whatever you comment on most will be taken by the students as the key to good writing. It is important to comment not only on mechanics, but also on the development and order of ideas, the structure of the argument, the tone, the voice, and so on. An overall comment which focuses on one or two problems rather than on many will direct the student's attention to manageable change.

Perhaps the best way to encourage students to learn from your comments is to ask them to revise their essays or to build several drafts

into their writing process. The revision of writing can be incorporated into a course in a variety of ways, but it requires that you refrain initially from demanding polish and closure. If you want students to revise, you must give them the time to do so as well as the impetus. Students may be encouraged to turn in one or more drafts before the final version is submitted, or to turn in a preliminary overview or an introductory paragraph. By commenting during these initial stages of a paper, you can lead your students in fruitful directions, warn them of pitfalls, suggest relevant sources, and question their assumptions. In short, you can provide guidance when it is most likely to make a difference: during the writing process, rather than after the final paper is handed in.

To help you students rework their drafts, phrase your comments as questions: "Why do you think this?" or "Why does this make a difference?" Such questions are often sufficient to lead to changes in structure and organization. Or if a student has difficulty choosing appropriate examples, you might focus your comments on that particular problem, waiting for the next paper to comment on other difficulties. Imagine each paper to be part of the semester-long process of improving your students' writing. Establish workable goals for each paper, offer comments that lead to achievable revisions, and point out where progress is being made.

If a paper contains a significant number of errors in spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure, it is often enough to return the paper with a request that errors be corrected before you give a grade. But if a student has persistent problems with mechanics, he may need to learn how to edit and proofread his own work. If there are many problems with grammar or sentence structure, you may wish to send the student to the Writing Workshop, where tutors can help him learn editing and other writing skills.

If you want your students to take writing seriously and to spend the time needed to write successful papers, then you, too, must be serious and spend the necessary time. Talking with your students about their writing in class, in private conferences, or via comments on their papers lets them know that you are interested in how they progress. That interest can be demonstrated by giving thoughtful and purposeful assignments.

The Writing Workshop, 501 Cathedral of Learning, is open to you and your students. Trained tutors are available to help at any stage of the writing process. They can assist you in writing assignments or in responding to writing problems. Students can call Ext. 6556 for appointments or stop by.

The College Writing Board has sample assignment sequences. If you would like to have copies of these assignments or to discuss assignment writing with an experienced teacher, call Ext. 6530 or Ext. 6552.



# Developing Quizzes and Exams

Often TAs are called on to make up quizzes and exams or to submit questions for them. If you are teaching your own course you will have to think very hard about your objectives for the course and exactly what, at any particular stage, you expect students to have learned. Then, when you sit down to write your test, your questions should not only cover all the material you have presented in class, but also test the kind of learning you intended to take place there. Traditionally, you have the choice of an *objective* test, an *essay* test or a combination of both. The nature of your discipline and course level will usually determine which is the most appropriate format. If your class has dealt mostly with facts, rules or data which you wish your students to recall, than a so-called 'objective' test, such as true-false, completion, matching, short answer or multiple choice, would be suitable. These kinds of tests have all sorts of advantages in terms of their efficiency in measuring learning and the ease with which they can be reliably graded, but remember their limitations — it is difficult for objective tests to measure the extent to which information can be organized, synthesized, or applied by students. To test this higher level of learning you can use the essay test or a writing assignment. Students, then, have to demonstrate a command of ideas rather than facts, and they are required to analyze and elaborate on the material presented in class. An essay test has to be very carefully constructed in order to adequately cover the course material, and it is harder to grade because of the subjective nature of the criteria involved. In general, when you give essay tests you should make sure that you discuss with your students ahead of time the criteria you plan to use to grade their exams.

When it comes to writing your test, try to make sure that your directions are clear, simple and unambiguous. If you are making up a combination test, use headings to designate the different sections, and weigh each question either in terms of time allotted or percentage points so that students can judge their relative importance. Be careful that the weight of a question is roughly proportional to the amount of class time you allotted that topic. When you write each question, consider the vocabulary familiar to your students: your test won't be very productive if it is incomprehensible! Similarly, avoid trick questions: they might give you some perverse satisfaction but they will create anger and frustration for the student. And when you have drafted your test, show it to your faculty supervisor who might see problems with it that you have overlooked.

If you do develop an objective test, it can be machine-scored through the Office of Measurement and Evaluation. As a part of this service you will receive a printout, summarizing the students' scores and providing information about your items to help you in revising your test.



# Grading

For both you and your students, the primary function of grades is to try to measure the extent to which the students are learning the material of the course. From the instructor's point of view, grades indicate how well he is doing at getting his points across. Students see grades not only as an indicator of how well they are doing in any particular class, but also of how well they are doing in their overall college career. Professional schools, graduate schools and others will later look at the students' transcripts and will expect the grades to reflect how much learning has actually taken place.

Grades are always measured in terms of some sort of comparison. They can compare students with the others in the class (grading "on a curve") or they can compare them with some established standard(s). Almost all grading is a combination of these two methods: the instructor has implicit standards as to what constitutes acceptable learning, and then tries to spread out the class' performance by exams and assignments in which some students will exceed that level, some will just meet it, and some will fail to achieve it. Because of the students' anxiety over grades, it is crucial to let them know as clearly as possible how their grades are going to be determined. Your grading procedures must be reasonable, be applied with scrupulous fairness, and be well publicized to the class.

If you are teaching a section of a large class, the professor may give you detailed instructions for grading standards and methods. However, if you are teaching your own class, or if your supervisor gives you free rein in grading, you will need to establish your own methods. In general, use a method that primarily compares students with one another if, 1) you feel it is most important for them to know how well they are doing compared with their peers; 2) you want to place limits on how many students can receive each grade (i.e., you don't want to give all As or Bs); 3) you are not certain of what your absolute standards should be; 4) you do not know how easy or difficult your tests will be.

On the other hand, you will want to assign grades primarily according to absolute standards if: 1) you feel that it is most important for your students to know how well you think they are doing; 2) you don't care how many students receive any given grade; 3) you are completely confident about your standards; 4) you feel that you know just how easy or difficult your tests are going to be.<sup>1</sup> Be aware, however, that even the best teachers sometimes make exams that everybody fails or that everybody passes. In other words, our "absolute" standards are sometimes unrealistic, and can miss the course's needs entirely. And this is more likely to occur with inexperienced teachers. If you choose the "absolute standard" method, therefore, make sure that you temper it with more relative interpretations.

<sup>1</sup>Betty La Sere Erickson. "Two Approaches to Grading". Instructional Development Program. University of Rhode Island. pp 7-8

There are a number of specific suggestions that will help you with the task of grading. In grading objective tests:

1. Assign a point value to each question. (This is best done even before the exam is given, and the students should be informed of the values.)
2. Prepare the answer key before starting to grade the papers.
3. Check to see if any questions might have more than one correct response.
4. After you have graded the tests, post your answer key for your students' reference.

The process of grading essay tests is somewhat different:

1. Prepare model answers to the essays, at least as a listing of points that should be made.
2. Check to see if any questions might have more than one correct response.
3. List the most common improper responses to one essay question before grading the next one.
4. Read and grade all the answers to one essay question before grading the next one.
5. Decide before you begin whether spelling and grammar are to be taken into account in the grades. Make sure you are consistent in this and that the students are forewarned.
6. Take the time not only to read the essays carefully, but to give the students helpful written comments.
7. Make some sort of answer key available to the students. You might perhaps mimeograph copies of your own answers or of the best answers from the class.

Whatever grading strategy and process you decide to adopt, you should make a plan for evaluating your students early in the term and stick with it. This requires early and careful discussion with your faculty supervisor, so that you can describe the grading process to your students at the beginning of the course. And, of course, keep careful records of your students' grades throughout the term.

All course grades must be given in accordance with the official University of Pittsburgh Grading Policy which follows:

## UNIVERSITY GRADING POLICY (Revised September 1, 1983)

The following policy includes all grades and their corresponding definitions which may be legitimately issued within the schools of the University of Pittsburgh. All available grading options and their use are also included. Each school may use any set of symbols and grading options it chooses, so long as the use and definitions are consistent with this University Grading Policy. All schools must provide both the Provost and the Registrar with a copy of their grading policy including any restrictions on grading options and the precise list of grades to be available. Students will be subject to the grading policy of the school in which a course is given.

### **Grading System Definitions and Quality Points\***

A +	=	4.00
A	=	4.00 Superior Attainment
A -	=	3.75
B +	=	3.25
B	=	3.00 Meritorious undergraduate attainment/adequate graduate level attainment
B -	=	2.75
C +	=	2.25
C -	=	2.00 Adequate undergraduate attainment/attainment below graduate level expectations
C	=	1.75
D +	=	1.25
D	=	1.00 Minimum attainment
D -	=	0.75
F	=	0.00 Failure
G	=	Course work unfinished because of extenuating circumstances
I	=	Incomplete course work, due to the nature of the course, clinical work, or incomplete research work in individual guidance courses or seminars
W	=	Withdrawal
H	=	Exceptional (honors) completion of course requirements
S	=	Satisfactory completion of course requirements
U	=	Unsatisfactory completion of course requirements
Q	=	Qualified
N	=	Non-credit audit
Z	=	No grade or invalid grade report
NE	=	No entry (will not appear on the official University transcript)

\*Notice the larger point differential between actual letter grades (Authors)

### **Grading Options**

- S/U (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory)
- S/N (Satisfactory/Audit)
- S/NE (Satisfactory/No Entry)
- H/S/U (Honors/Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory)
- H/Q/U (Honors/Qualified/Unsatisfactory)

### **Grade Assignments**

It is the responsibility of each faculty member of the University to assign only a standard letter grade or option grade as approved within their own school's grading policy to each student enrolled in an approved University course. All other grades will be recorded by the Registrar as a Z, an invalid grade.

### **Standard Letter Grade System**

Unless specifically notified as provided within the grading options section, the Registrar will record only those grades specified in each school's grading policy. An inappropriate grade report for a student will register as invalid, hence Z. Expanded (plus — minus) grades will be automatically converted to standard letter grades if they do not appear in a school's specific grading policy.

### **The N (Non-Credit Audit) Option**

A student may choose to audit any course on a space available basis. The student follows the same procedures as registering for credit except that the student must obtain the faculty member's permission/signature for the course he wishes to audit. Tuition is assessed for all audits. An N or W are appropriate grades for courses taken on audit.

### **Grading Options**

A student may choose any of the grading options for any course offered provided the option is available in that school and department, in accordance with the school's grading policy.

If the "grading option" is available for a course and a student is eligible to take the course on that basis, the student who chooses the option must notify the Dean's Office by the date established in the school's grading policy for the term or session in which the course is offered. (The Office of the Dean must forward all course option forms to the Registrar by the end of the fourth week of the term or the second week of the session if they wish the options audited for their school.) Once made, the decision to take a course on a grading option basis cannot be changed, nor may a grade of one system be changed to a grade of the other system without the approval of the dean of the school in which the course is offered. In the event that a grade is submitted which is not in accord with the agreement, a "Z" grade will be recorded.

In accordance with the school's grading policy, faculty at the school level or departments may determine which of the grading

options available in the school will be available for each of its courses. A decision may be made to:

1. offer a course on a letter grade basis,
2. offer a course on a grading option basis,
3. offer a course on either a letter grade and/or grading option basis.

If an entire school requires any of the above grading options for its specific use in all courses, since the school's grading policy will be on file with the Registrar, there is no need for course option notification.

### **Competency-Based Courses**

For competency-based courses and other courses which may require additional instructional time for completion, an I grade may be given at the close of the course period with the recommendation of the instructor and the approval of the Dean. The student may then be required, again with the recommendation of the instructor to register for a special TUTORIAL section of the course which has the same number as the original course and the additional course description TUTORIAL. The student registers for the number of credits that are deemed necessary by the instructor to cover the added instructional time needed for completion of competencies. TUTORIAL courses are always registered on an Audit. When the competencies are fulfilled, the I grade in the original course is changed to the appropriate grade.

### **G and I Grades**

A student may be graduated without removing G and/or I from the record provided all degree requirements have been met and the student's department recommends him/her for graduation. Individual schools may have regulations dealing with the removal of G and I grades.

### **Grade Changes**

A faculty member wishing to effect a grade change must include with the change of grade request a letter to the Dean of the school in which the course is offered explaining the change and signed by the faculty member.

While each school may determine a time limit for grade changes, in virtually every case, they should be put through no later than one year after the initial grade was assessed. There may be conceivable reasons which justify a later change of grade, but they surely are quite unusual in character, and should be considered as most exceptional. The Dean of the school in which the course is offered must approve a grade change before it will be honored by the Registrar and an exception must receive the dean's approval. Exempt from this are changes in I grades.

### **Course Withdrawal**

A student may drop a course (provided he or she continues to attend another or other courses) during the first ten school days of the 15 week term (first five school days of the 7½ week session) without record by filing a course change form.

A student who wishes to withdraw from a course after the add/drop date, but prior to the end of the sixth (third) week of the term (session) must complete a withdrawal form available from either the Registrar or the Dean; notify the instructor; submit the completed withdrawal form to the Registrar; and will then be issued a "W" grace.

After the sixth (third) week of the term (session), a student will be permitted to withdraw from a course only in extraordinary circumstances and with the permission of the instructor, and the Dean; in accordance with each school's withdrawal policy.

A student who stops attending a course and does not initiate the withdrawal procedures may be assigned an F, or a W in accordance with each school's stated policy.

### **Late Grades**

It is the responsibility of instructors to turn their grades into the Office of the Registrar by 12:00 PM on the day grades are due. A list of instructors not adhering to the dates published by the Registrar will be forwarded to the Dean and the Department Chairperson each term and/or session.

### **Official University Record: QPA Calculation**

A student's undergraduate (graduate) Quality Point Average (QPA) is obtained by dividing the total number of letter grade credits taken as an undergraduate (graduate) into the total number of quality points earned as an undergraduate (graduate) student. Only letter grades with QPA values will be used in computing the Quality Point Average.

If a D or F grade (also C grade-graduate level) is received by any student and the authorization to repeat the course is given by the student's advisor, the grade (C or D or F) for the course repeated remains on the transcript but is identified with an asterisk. However, only the last course grade is counted in computing the QPA.

To initiate this, the student, with the approval of the department chairman and/or Dean of that school, must file a repeat-course card with the Office of the Registrar by the end of the Add/Drop period for the term or session in which the course is offered. Any exceptions to time restrictions for repeating a course must be approved in writing by the Dean.

### **Internal School Record: QPA Calculations**

Each school for internal purposes relevant to specific degree requirements may specify rules and parameters within the constraints

of the SRK System for its own internal QPA calculation. For example, a school may want to have certain courses appear on its internal transcript but not used in its QPA calculation.

### **Changes in School Policies**

The responsibility for determining and amending the grading system in each school lies with the faculty. Changes affecting the University policy statement shall be proposed by the Dean of a school to the Provost, who will notify the Registrar of any appropriate modifications.

## **Responding to Students' Work**

Constructive and timely response is as essential to good teaching as good classwork and should never be thought of as secondary. Comments on papers and student conferences deserve as much care and thought as your formal classes, if not more. This is teaching in its most basic and effective form, where you speak personally to a student as guide or mentor. You play one role when you judge and evaluate a student's work, but you play another when you comment, give advice or encouragement, and speak as an expert in a field rather than as a teacher justifying grades. This is your chance to humanize the process of testing and evaluation which otherwise can seem destructively impersonal and competitive. By emphasizing the positive learning to be gained from your comments and de-emphasizing the letter grade, you will contribute to a much healthier and more satisfying college experience for your students. Full and thoughtful comments on tests and papers are the least that students should be able to expect after their work in your course. Remember, however, that many students feel threatened by criticism and thus can distort or misinterpret it; the following advice is offered to help you avoid that and to give you some ideas about how to give feedback in the most positive and productive fashion.

If you have charge of your own course, bear in mind that frequent and relatively informal opportunities for response will be more beneficial for your students' achievement in the course than the standard mid-term and final examination. In the latter case, any feedback from the mid-term probably comes far too late in the term for students to rectify misguided study methods or basic misconceptions about the initial material you presented. It is important to give some kind of quiz, project or writing assignment early in the term — in the first 3 or 4 weeks — to encourage good students and enable you to catch and help those less able ones. In any event, it is essential that your students have some sort of evaluation results before the end of the add-drop period. It is grossly unfair for a student to find out he lacks pre-requisite skills after it is too late to drop the course. Thereafter, supplement your formal exam



schedule with more casual opportunities for seeing and evaluating students' work — through homework assignments handed in for comments instead of methodically gone over in class, through scheduled conferences, through trial exams and classroom presentations.

Whatever method you are able to adopt, be sure that when you have the chance to respond to students' work you do so promptly. Students' interest in past work declines in direct proportion to the number of days it takes you to return it! And the longer you delay, the less chance they have of making use of your comments and criticism. Return material no later than one whole week after it is received. If the work is still fresh in students' minds, your comments are more likely to fall on fertile ground.

When actually writing comments on student papers, try to be moderate in the amount of comment or criticism that you make. It is almost as bad to overwhelm a student with an onslaught of criticism as it is to make no comment at all. It is also true that a student could be irreparably discouraged by a mass of comments when a few, well-chosen points would sink home and stimulate further work. As a new TA, don't get carried away on a power trip but really consider the most constructive way to encourage and correct student work.

One of the simplest ways of doing this is to make sure that your initial comment is a positive one; even the weakest paper will have some strong point that you can remark on. Criticism tempered by praise is much more easily taken, and praise, if selective, will reinforce beginning efforts to handle the course material. Similarly, don't exaggerate your criticism for effect; avoid blanket negatives like "no" or "never." And attempts at irony or wit will most likely be read by students as plain nastiness. The most constructive way to approach criticism is to concentrate on one or two significant points and then suggest ways in which they could be improved. This will encourage students to focus their attention and energy and enable them to perceive their task as quite manageable instead of bewildering and hopeless.

You could suggest improvement in a number of different ways. Constructive comments alongside student work can point out what might be added or changed to make the work more satisfactory. It is useful to provide a student unable to understand what you expect with a good test or paper written by another student. You can go even further and suggest specific sources of information or additional reading that could be done to strengthen a student's understanding in a particular area. In the case of paper assignments, it is important not only to suggest possibilities for revision but to allow students the opportunity, if at all possible, to revise once they've had the benefit of your commentary.

In addition to giving written feedback you should always make known your willingness to discuss tests and papers with students individually. Either in office hours or by appointment you can elaborate on and emphasize comments that you make on paper. Not all students, however, will take advantage of an open invitation to stop by. Some will need



the specific instruction, "see me about this." Be as patient and generous as possible with students who need extra help; your concern could make all the difference to a freshman who feels overwhelmed and discouraged.

Finally, feedback can sometimes be more acceptable if it comes from peers instead of the instructor. Consider occasionally, then, varying the process by discussing student work in class so that different viewpoints can be heard. This might help a sensitive student appreciate the validity of a critical comment, or substantiate your encouragement to an insecure student doing interesting work. Such discussions also, of course, often bring to light ideas that are new to you or challenge judgments that you feel were clear and obvious. They are, then, occasions for learning; they are more, that is, than opportunities for you to justify your grading system.

## Academic Dishonesty

A copy of the University's official policy on academic dishonesty (cheating) may be obtained from The University Student Judicial System, 738 William Pitt Union. It is based on the following premise:

*Integrity of the academic process requires that credit be given where credit is due. Accordingly, it is unethical to present, as one's own work, the ideas, representations, or words of another, or to permit another to present one's own work without customary and proper acknowledgement of sources. The limits of permissible assistance available to students during a course or an academic evaluation should be determined by the faculty member and described with reasonable particularity at the first or second class meeting, or well in advance of an evaluation, so as to allow for adequate student preparation within the permissible limits. (Guidelines on Academic Integrity, pp 5-6)*

As the policy suggests, it is important to define academic dishonesty for your students at the beginning of a term. Some instructors explain the policy verbally and then provide the students with a written policy statement. Students are requested to sign copies of the statement as an indication that they understand and agree to comply with the policy. The Computer Science Department distributes the following sample statement to its TAs, which they may use if they wish:

### PLEDGE

*Please read, sign, and return to the instructor.*

*It is recognized that an important part of the learning process in any course, and particularly in computer programming, consists of thoughtful discussions with fellow students. Such dialogue is encouraged in this course.*

However, it is necessary to distinguish carefully between the student who discusses with others the principles underlying a problem solution, and the student who merely copies from other students.

When an assignment gives the evidence of being plagiarized from some other assignment(s), ALL the assignments so involved will receive zero credit\* such penalty being, of course, subject to the established appeal procedures.

I have read and understood the above.

---

Signature

After explaining the policy at the beginning of the course, it is recommended that before important examinations or assignments, you once again go over how the academic dishonesty policy applies to that particular instance. Above all, remember that the prevention of cheating of all kinds is a lot easier than its detection, proof, and punishment.

A common form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism: an attempt by a student to pass off someone else's work as his own. Several steps can be taken to prevent plagiarism. Before assignments are given, discuss carefully with your students just what plagiarism is and is not. Make clear to the students when they are allowed to use materials from outside the basic class readings and when they should base their papers or projects entirely on the material presented in class. If, for example, you want papers based solely on the students' comprehension of the class material, spelling this out to them prevents them from heading for the library to find books on the topic. When students are asked to write major papers based on outside sources, plagiarism can be minimized by asking them to give periodic oral reports on their progress, or to attach an outline or rough draft to their final paper.

Plagiarism is not easy to prove. At the very least, you must be able to locate the original source of the material. If you suspect that a paper might be plagiarized, a first step to take might be to ask the student to give you a bibliography. When dealing with suspected or proven cases of plagiarism, remember that some students don't actually understand the difference between paraphrasing someone else's work and plagiarizing it. If a student is honestly having difficulty understanding this difference, it may be symptomatic of some basic writing problems — an insecurity about the quality of his or her work, or the result of a high school experience in which close "paraphrasing" of an author's work was entirely acceptable.

Cheating on in-class exams is a different problem, and must be dealt with differently. Preventive measures are best, and may save everyone a lot of grief.

Try, then, to create once again an atmosphere that discourages cheating. If possible, place the students in alternate seats during exams. Some instructors assign students to specific seats during an exam so that

they won't be able to sit next to their friends. Distributing several different forms of the same objective test is also effective; even as simple a device as mixing up the order of the questions discourages cheating. Unless the exam is open-book, all books and notes must be kept completely out of sight. Announce that fact clearly. If the test requires that the students use scratch paper to figure out the problems, require that they hand it in or use the back of the exam paper or bluebook.

In a large classroom, there should ideally be several proctors circulating around the room. If you notice suspicious behavior, approach the student and ask if the test instructions are clear. Students should not be allowed to wander freely in and out of the room during a test. Have them check with the proctor before leaving the room, depositing their exams with him or her for the time they are gone. If possible, only one student should be allowed out of the room at any given time. Another method is to collect the class' signatures at the beginning of the term and have everyone sign their examination papers before turning them in. While grading the papers, you can check the signatures for authenticity.

Be on the lookout for students who have other people ("ringers") take their tests for them. If there is a student at an exam whom you haven't seen before, ask to see his or her identification. Some instructors go the extent of having all students' IDs checked against the class roster at exams. If you are going to do this make sure that you warn the students well in advance that they will have their ID cards with them.

But what do you do if all your preventive measures have failed and you are confronted with a seeming case of academic honesty? First of all, keep *all* pieces of evidence, either the original paper or a copy. Discuss your suspicions with your faculty supervisor. You should both work out a plan for dealing with the situation. Confront the student only after you have done this. Try to resolve the problem informally. If both the student and the instructor accept a resolution to the situation that is proposed by either individual, then that will be the end of the case. If you are unable to reach an informal resolution, however, it will be necessary to file a written statement of your charges. Each school has its own procedures for this, so check with your dean to determine the appropriate channels for your complaint. If such a situation arises at the end of a term, the student involved is assigned a "G" grade until the case is settled.

## Writing Letters of Recommendation

Students may ask you to write letters of recommendation for them for jobs, graduate schools, or transfers to other undergraduate institutions. You should first encourage the student to approach a faculty member at the assistant professor or higher level to obtain a recommendation, because it may carry more weight than one from a TA or TF. If for so-

reason this is not possible, then by all means write the recommendation. Find out what the student is applying for; this will guide you in what qualities to stress in the letter. In general, include the following information:

1. Describe your relationship to the student. State how long you have known him and in what capacity.
2. Discuss the student's intellectual ability by comparing him to other students with whom you have worked.
3. Describe the student's attitude toward academic work. Were assignments completed promptly, carefully, and with enthusiasm?
4. If it is applicable to the situation, describe the student's performance in a laboratory situation. Comment on his preparation for labs and understanding of the experiments' underlying principles. You may also wish to note whether or not you would trust the student to work in a laboratory without supervision.
5. The student's communication skills, both verbal and written, should also be described. Are the skills appropriate to the work being contemplated?
6. Finally, discuss any personal characteristics of the student which you believe are relevant.

If possible, use specific examples or anecdotes to illustrate the points you make in your letter. Focus on what it is that makes this student different from others, but be careful not to overdo your praise. Be honest above all else. If you are approached for a recommendation and you feel that you cannot, in good conscience, write a positive letter of recommendation, suggest that the student ask someone else.

Your letter should be typed on your department's official stationery. If the student was in a lab or recitation section of which you were in charge, you may want to ask the instructor for the class to co-sign the letter of recommendation with you.

## Evaluating Your Teaching

Teaching evaluations provide you with the opportunity to assess your success as a teacher. They also let you know what areas you might work on to improve your teaching skills.

Teaching evaluations run the gamut from informal to formal. There are a number of relatively informal ways in which you can receive some kind of evaluation of your teaching. You may receive very informal evaluations during your office hours, when your students comment on the things they like or dislike about the class. Some TAs pass out an

open-ended questionnaire in the middle of the term, asking their students to comment on the course thus far. You can also evaluate your teaching success through "objective" measures such as test scores, class attendance, completed assignments, or the number of students who participate actively in the class.

Evaluation at the departmental level is also often available. This might take the form of interchanging classroom visits and critiques with other TAs in your department. You might also ask a faculty member, either your supervisor or some other instructor whose teaching you admire, to visit your class and discuss your teaching skills with you. Some departments require more formal evaluations of their TAs. These may take the form of Office for the Evaluation of Teaching surveys (see below), specialized departmental questionnaires, formal observation by your supervisor, or some combination of these.

Systematic surveys of students' opinion of teaching are carried out at Pitt through the Office for the Evaluation of Teaching (OET), Ext. 6147. OET provides questionnaires individually tailored to different schools and programs on campus. The questionnaires are of two basic kinds, one that obtains quantified responses and one that calls for students to write verbal responses to specific questions. Lab or recitation sections are evaluated through the use of open-ended, qualitative questionnaires, asking students to respond to general questions. Courses for which you have full responsibility are evaluated through the use of a standard form, which provides both quantitative summaries and qualitative comments from the students. You may add up to 10 additional items of your own formulation to the standard questions on this form.

Near the beginning of each term, OET sends request forms to each department for their TAs. It is the department's responsibility to distribute these forms. You must fill out one of these request forms in order to have an OET questionnaire administered to your classes. At present, OET administers quantitative evaluations only on the Oakland campus; off-campus instructors may use a special qualitative form that OET makes available.

## Improving Your Teaching

The Office of Faculty Development was established in 1977 to support faculty, student and administrative commitment to the quality and importance of teaching throughout the University. To stimulate high-quality teaching, the OFD provides several services for teaching assistants. Among them is a videotaping service for TA training. Departmental TA coordinators may request the use of OFD's portable videotaping equipment and operators in so-called microteaching exercises. The TA is asked to give a brief presentation, as if he or she were teaching

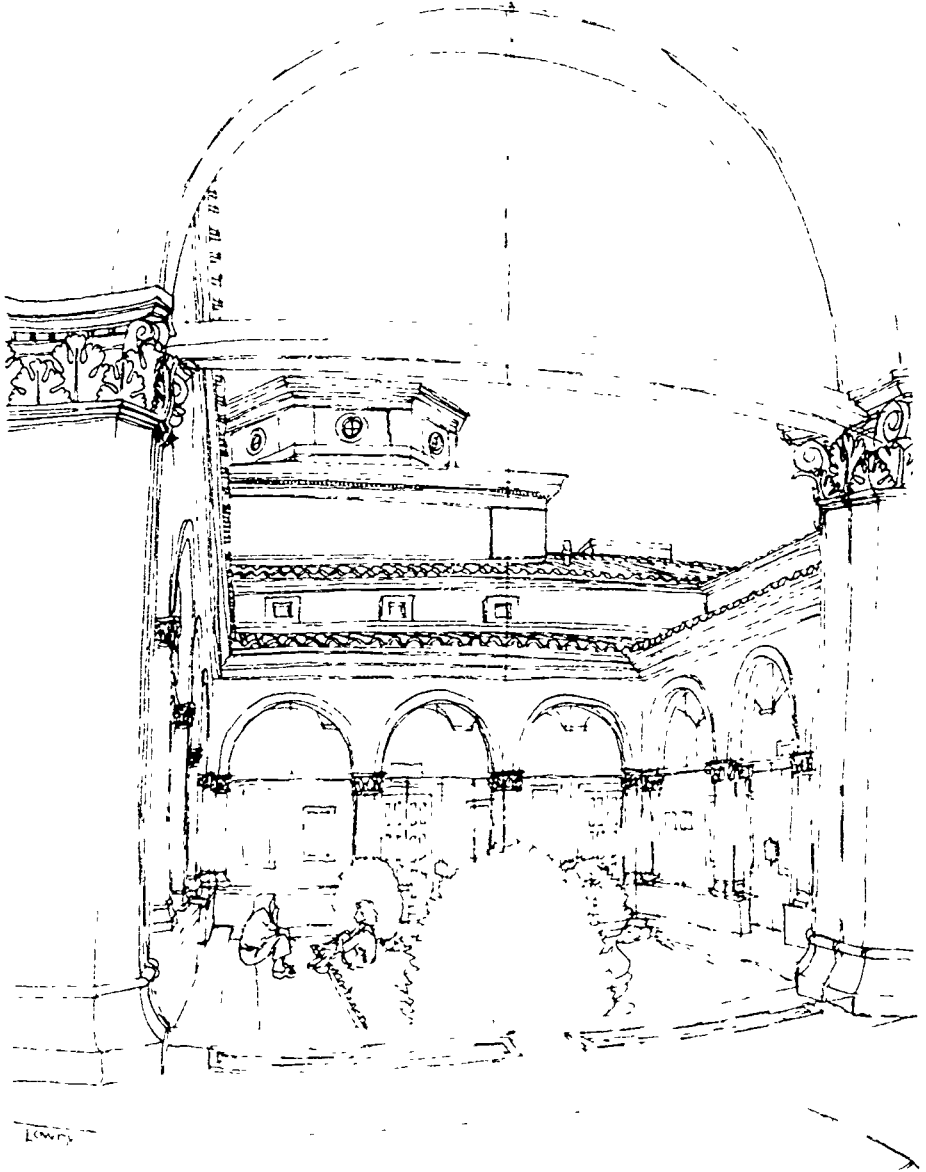
a class, either privately to the coordinator in the OFD consultation room or to a group of fellow TAs in another convenient location. The presentation is videotaped and then reviewed and critiqued by the coordinator or the group. The immediate feedback has been found to be most effective in addressing a variety of teaching problems.

The Faculty Seminar Series, run by the OFD, is a series of fall and winter term panel discussions in which distinguished University of Pittsburgh faculty and other experts discuss various aspects of teaching. Announcements are sent out each fall. All graduate students are welcome to attend.

A small, comfortable reading room located at the top of the Cathedral of Learning (3604) contains publications on professional growth and development as well as most aspects and problems of university teaching. A videocassette library consisting of professionally-produced videotapes on college teaching and videotapes of the Faculty Seminar Series is also located in the OFD. The tapes are available for private or group viewing in the OFD Conference Room simply by calling Ext. 6592 for an appointment. A partial listing of print materials and videocassettes may be found in the Annotated Bibliography on page 73.

The OFD also distributes the Handbook of Teaching Services, a comprehensive, alphabetically-arranged guide to the services and expertise that are available within the University to assist new as well as experienced instructors in carrying out their teaching function, and this *Handbook for Teaching Assistant*

Services related to testing and to scoring are provided to University faculty by the Office of Measurement and Evaluation. Professional staff are available to help faculty with test construction procedures. A scoring service for objective examination is provided at no charge with feedback of results available within twenty-four hours.



# Part IV.

## The TA as Advisor

### Introduction

Students often come to their TAs for advice on a wide range of matters. TAs are commonly seen by students as being more approachable than other instructors in areas of both academic and personal concern. This puts you in a real position of responsibility, and you should therefore always try to be as helpful and sympathetic as you can. Don't remember that you are not an academic advisor or personal counselor. Become familiar with the resources available on campus for students so that you can refer students to the appropriate offices. The listings below summarize these resources.

As a TA, you should also be aware of the formal advising centers for students in different areas. Advisors are concerned with all aspects of their students' academic careers and so are usually eager to help them in personal as well as academic matters. Also, their ability to advise students properly is improved if they know how students are doing in their classes. Therefore, if one of your students is having difficulties, you will be helping the student by calling the appropriate advising center and letting the advisor know about the problem.

#### CAS ADVISING CENTER

901 Cathedral of Learning — Ext. 6444

Every freshman and sophomore is assigned an advisor in the CAS Advising Center. The advisors are graduate students from a wide variety of Pitt departments and schools who have undergone an extensive training program. Each term freshmen and sophomores discuss with their advisors their course selections, possible majors and other academic options, as well as their career goals, educational plans, and any academic related problems. The advisors attempt to familiarize students with all academic programs, alternatives, and opportunities available to them at Pitt. In addition to discussing courses and plans, students fill out their



registration forms for courses each term with their advisors. The College of Arts and Sciences believes strongly that advisors are not just persons to sign required registration forms; they have much valuable information, and all students — especially freshmen and sophomores — are urged to take full advantage of their advisors as often and as soon as the need arises.

Usually toward the end of the sophomore year, CAS students select their majors and are assigned advisors in the departments of their choice. Some students choose to design their own majors. These students must find faculty members willing to serve as sponsors and advisors. Other students apply to undergraduate professional schools within the University and, if accepted, are assigned advisors in those schools. Students who decide on a liberal studies degree (no major) are encouraged to find a faculty advisor, but may remain with the Advising Center. All departmental advisors are provided by the departments themselves and have the knowledge and information necessary to advise students in their fields of concentration.

### **CGS ADVISING CENTER**

454 Cathedral of Learning — Ext. 1670

The function of the College of General Studies Advising Center is to direct and counsel students in the planning of their programs of studies. Students admitted to CGS are assigned an advisor whose responsibility is to assist them in planning for and meeting requirements of their degree programs. The advisor is assigned according to the student's specified major, and works with that student from his or her first course through graduation. During conferences with their advisors, students have the opportunity to evaluate their academic progress and to seek counsel on the appropriateness of their educational goals.

### **PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS' UNDERGRADUATE ADVISORS**

School of Education

4C01 Forbes Quadrangle — Ext. 6170

School of Engineering

253 Benedum Hall — Ext. 5257

School of Health Related Professions

108 Pennsylvania Hall — Ext. 2960

School of Library and Information Science

505 Library and Information Science Building — Ext. 5230

School of Nursing

336 Victoria Hall — Ext. 2407

School of Pharmacy

1105 Salk Hall — Ext. 3272

School of Social Work

2228 Cathedral of Learning — Ext. 6302

# Academic Resources

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

2816 Cathedral of Learning — Ext. 5900

Tutors for non-native speakers of English and evaluation of English language proficiency are available at the English Language Institute.

## HILLMAN LIBRARY ORIENTATION

A self-operated audiovisual guide to the library is located on the ground floor, just in front of the elevator corridor. In addition, orientation lectures and tours are offered at the beginning of the fall and winter terms. An audiotape "walking tour" of Hillman Library is available at the Information Desk; versions in Spanish, Arabic and French are available. Brochures and guides describe the various library locations and services.

## LEARNING SKILLS CENTER

311 William Pitt Union — Ext. 5481

The Learning Skills Center offers assistance to any University of Pittsburgh student, undergraduate or graduate, who wishes to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of his or her learning skills. The following services are available:

1. **Reading Skills.** Group and individual programs for improving reading speed and comprehension and for vocabulary development.
2. **Study Skills.** Group and individual sessions for developing skills in textbook reading, lecture notetaking, memory improvement, time management and taking exams. When possible, students are given guidance in how to apply these skills to specific courses.
3. **Math Skills.** Group programs in how to study math and how to reduce math anxiety. Individual tutoring is available by appointment for introductory math courses up through and including Calculus 22/722 and Math 12/712.
4. **Anxiety Reduction.** Group and individual programs available for students who experience test anxiety or who are concerned about excessive stress around learning tasks.
5. **Skills Assessment.** Any student who is uncertain about what learning skills intervention is most appropriate for his or her needs, or who would like to have a diagnosis of reading, math, or study skills, can arrange for an individual assessment interview.

## NEW STUDENT PROGRAMS/CONSUMER INFORMATION SERVICES

738 William Pitt Union — Ext. 5834

This Student Affairs Office advising for freshmen entering

the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Schools of Engineering and Nursing. The coordinator and a student staff are also responsible for conducting orientation programs for incoming freshmen and transfer students. As part of the orientation program, the coordinator teaches a two-credit course (Current Problems 28) which is a prerequisite for students who wish to serve in leadership roles in the orientation programs. These students, who are known as mentors, then assist with a series of two-day advising sessions during the summer and the orientation which is held three days before the start of classes in the fall. This office also publishes the Student Handbook which is distributed to freshmen at orientation.

The coordinator is also responsible for institutional compliance with the Consumer Information Act which mandates that complete and accurate information for students be made available regarding the University and its programs.

### **OFFICE OF ACADEMIC SERVICES FOR STUDENT ATHLETES**

520 William Pitt Union — Ext. 6783

This office provides a comprehensive set of services to assist each student athlete in meeting his or her educational goals. These services include the assessment and development of basic skills, advising on course selection, counseling, monitoring of academic progress and tutoring.

### **OFFICE OF MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION**

G-33 Cathedral of Learning — Ext. 6440

The Office of Measurement and Evaluation provides services in test administration, test scoring and analysis, and research consultation. The standardized testing program conducted by the Office includes administration of nationally sponsored admission tests, University placement tests, and special purpose examinations. Announcements regarding dates for the national admission examinations are usually published each Fall and Winter Term in the *Pitt News* and *University Times* and applications are available in the Measurement and Evaluation Office. Further information related to the test scoring and research consultation services can be obtained from this Office.

### **PHI ETA SIGMA TUTORING SERVICE**

Fifth Floor, William Pitt Union — Ext. 5837

Free tutoring in many undergraduate subjects is volunteered by this honorary society.

### **UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

2726 Cathedral of Learning — Ext. 6588

The Office of University-Community Educational Programs (U-CEP) provides an educational opportunity for students considering a liberal arts education. U-CEP is a comprehensive educational program which

offers widened access to the University (flexible admissions) and provides a range of student supportive services and academic course offerings. The relevant learning atmosphere created in U-CEP is especially beneficial for those students whose educational opportunity and growth may have been hindered because of their academic, economic, or cultural backgrounds and experiences. An integral feature of U-CEP is its academic support component, which is composed of six full-time professional counselors. Each entering U-CEP student is assigned to a counselor who provides several services:

1. Registration and advising, help in planning a course of study, discussing the policies governing the student's choices, and counseling regarding how those choices fit into the general scheme of life choices.
2. Individual and group counseling on the bureaucracy of the University of Pittsburgh, career information, and academic and socio-personal development.
3. A three-credit course. (U-CEP 83, Study Skills.) This course is designed to facilitate academic and interpersonal skills development.

## **UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM**

3500 Cathedral of Learning — Ext. 6880

The University Honors Program (UHP) was established to meet the special academic and co-curricular needs of the University's most capable and motivated undergraduates.

Each term, the UHP offers a variety of courses for the undergraduate who desires intellectual stimulation. Although UHP courses are challenging and require significant effort, they are not overly specialized and have few if any prerequisites. UHP courses can be a source of electives, a way for motivated students to fulfill general education requirements, or a way to fulfill requirements in their major. The program offers solid introductory courses, interdisciplinary courses, as well as selected courses in the professional schools and individually tailored opportunities for independent study and research.

The UHP is not a membership program. Students receive permission to register on the basis of merit criteria which stress aptitude, motivation, and past attainment. Entering freshmen automatically qualify if they have a minimum SAT score of 1,200 and are in the top 10% of their high school class. Continuing students qualify if they have a minimum QPA of 3.25. Students who do not meet the formal criteria but who are seriously interested in participating are encouraged to speak with the program advisor regarding special permission to participate in the program.

Advising through the UHP complements other advising schemes in the University. The program's full-time advisor is readily accessible and works with students to help them creatively define their academic

and career goals, provide assistance with registration, information about special programs, scholarships and fellowships, and as a resource for other services within the University.

The UHP is concerned that there be a central place where students can gather informally to share their special enthusiasms or educational interests. In the Honors Center, located in 3500 Cathedral of Learning, students can read periodicals, newspapers, and books from the program's donated collection, quietly study, or discuss issues of contemporary concern. Students also use the Center to entertain visitors and faculty and to sponsor academic and co-curricular activities such as seminars and lunchtime lectures.

### **VETERANS' SERVICES**

722 William Pitt Union — Ext. 6500

Two veterans' counselors and their staff assist veterans, war orphans, and veterans' dependents in obtaining and using their benefits under the GI Bill. In addition to the educational benefit payments, the office also arranges for tutorial assistance and VA work studies. The counselors also serve as the veterans' representatives with the University, the Veterans Administration, and related agencies.

### **WRITING WORKSHOP**

501 Cathedral of Learning — Ext. 6556

Tutorial assistance on writing problems is offered to undergraduate and graduate students. Help can be obtained for typical problems such as failure to understand assignments, writing blocks, poor organization, and incorrect punctuation. In addition, each tutor has one or more specialties, such as assistance to foreign students; dissertations and theses, research papers; and scientific, business or technical writing. Office hours are Monday, Noon to 9:00 PM; Tuesday through Thursday, 10:00 AM to 9:00 PM; and Friday, 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

## **Personal Resources**

### **CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

333 William Pitt Union — Ext. 5804

The Career Development Program helps students to explore and implement their career decisions and goals. Comprehensive career planning help, including individual and group career counseling and testing, is available to students at all academic levels, including graduate or professional school. The following services are also provided:

1. Career Information Center. An up-to-date selection of career development materials, most of which may be borrowed.
2. Seminars. An annual program which brings together students and working professionals in an informal setting to talk about work

and education. The program helps inform students by giving them access to first-hand knowledge of several hundred professionals from diverse fields.

3. **Career Planning News.** Published every term, the News contains summaries of current career trends, alternatives to traditional careers, articles by successful people in various fields, and other topics of interest to college students in choosing a vocation.

Hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM throughout the year; and Monday evenings, 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM during the Fall and Winter terms.

### **DISABLED STUDENT SERVICES**

727 William Pitt Union — Ext. 6738 or 6739

The coordinator and staff coordinate the special needs of disabled students with available University and state services for the disabled. These services include personal counseling, arranging for readers, writers, and interpreters, and making other arrangements to accommodate special student needs.

### **INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY**

334 William Pitt Union — Ext. 5804

There are six counseling clinical psychologists and a consulting psychiatrist at the Counseling Service, all of whom work directly with students, faculty, and staff, usually through individual counseling, but occasionally in small groups. People may seek help from counselors because of personal problems involving relations with parents, spouse, or peers; emotional difficulties of many kinds; concerns about academic progress or direction; desire for assistance in planning graduate study or a career, etc.

All counseling contacts are confidential; no information is released to anyone without the client's explicit authorization.

Counselors also offer personal development groups for faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and couples, as well as groups focusing on specific problem areas such as career indecision, shyness, and academic underachievement.

Appointments may be made in person or by telephone; they can usually be arranged within a few days. In cases of unusual urgency, a counselor may be seen at once.

### **OFFICE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR WOMEN**

449 Cathedral of Learning — Ext. 6497

The function of this office is to encourage and assist non-traditional students, both women and men, to continue their education and clarify their objectives, and to give support and provide academic advising.

## **OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES**

706 William Pitt Union — Ext. 5740

Students from another country can receive help with cultural adjustment or personal problems from this office. Visiting foreign faculty and scholars are also served.

## **PLACEMENT SERVICE**

236 William Pitt Union — Ext. 5752

The main function of the Placement Service is to help graduating students to begin a career. The Placement Service helps students establish contact with employers in fields of business, government, industry and private research. Thousands of interviews, with recruiters from all parts of the country, are held on campus each year. The following services are also provided:

1. Placement Counseling and Orientation. Offered individually and in groups, to help students evaluate job opportunities and learn how to interview and to write appropriate resumes and letters.
2. Student Employment Service. Assists students seeking part-time work during the school year, or full-time summer work.
3. Credential Service. Helps students and alumni by collecting, filing and distributing letters of recommendation required for application to graduate schools or for employment. Hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

## **PROVOST'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S CONCERNS**

817 Cathedral of Learning — Ext. 5748

This committee focuses on University policy issues and procedures that impact on women. It provides liaison between University administrators and the University community, in order to make a more productive environment for students, faculty and staff.

## **SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY**

1109 Cathedral of Learning — Ext. 6571

Students who are in need of speech and language therapy may obtain help in the speech and hearing clinic for a nominal fee. Evaluation and therapy are available for all speech problems.

## **STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE**

204 Brackenridge Hall, Schenley Quadrangle — Ext. 5240

The Student Health Service, an outpatient medical facility, is staffed with full-time physicians of several specialties, nurse practitioners, nurses, psychologists and a health educator. The Health Service emphasizes the importance of prevention and assists students in programs of health maintenance. Clinical services include general medicine, internal medicine, office surgery, dermatology, gynecology, family planning, and allergy shots.

All full-time students (excluding General Studies) have been assessed a prepaid student health fee. Part-time students may purchase the health services. All others pay a fee-for-service. Since the Student Health Service has defined hours of operation and is not an emergency facility, students are encouraged to acquire hospitalization insurance for emergency and inpatient medical care not covered by the health fee.

# Annotated Bibliography

## Print Materials

The books, papers and periodicals listed below, along with many others, may be borrowed from the Office of Faculty Development Reading Room, 3604 Cathedral of Learning. The Reading Room also has copies of TA handbooks from other universities.

Althen, Gary, *Manual for Foreign Teaching Assistants*, Iowa City, IA: The University of Iowa, 1981 (Second Edition).

The Office of the Dean, FAS Graduate Studies, University of Pittsburgh, provides all new FAS foreign TAs with a copy of this manual. Requests for copies may be made through the Dean's Office (Ext. 6036)

Bernstein, Harvey R., *Manual for Teaching*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, Center for Improvement of Undergraduate Education, 1975.

This manual, written for both undergraduate and graduate teaching assistants, provides practical advice on a wide range of common teaching situations. An extensive appendix reprints articles on a number of teaching-related topics.

Bork, Alfred, *Learning with Computers*, Bedford, MA. Digital Press, Educational Service, Digital Equipment Corporation, 1981.

This book focuses on the use of the computer as a teaching and learning device.

Campbell, John R., *In Touch with Students: A Philosophy for Teachers*, Columbia, MO: Kelly Press, Inc., 1972.



The purpose of this book is to present ways of improving relations among students, teachers and administrators, and to suggest ways of achieving teaching excellence.

Change Magazine, published eight times per year, Heldref Publications.

Contains articles on economics and finance, administrative practice and governance, management techniques, curriculum, student recruitment, public policy, professional development and educational philosophy.

The Chronicle of Higher Education, published weekly.

News of the world of higher education.

Curwin, Richard L. and Barbara Schneider Fuhrmann, *Discovering Your Teaching Self*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975.

This book offers a new approach to the challenge of clarifying one's values and beliefs as a teacher and stresses the goal of achieving effective humanistic education through self-knowledge.

Davis, James R., *Teaching Strategies for the College Classroom*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976.

This book describes four theories about how people learn, develops each theory into a teaching strategy that can be employed by any college teacher and gives examples which illustrate how each strategy can be applied in a classroom setting.

Dressel, Paul L. and Dora Marcus, *On Teaching and Learning in College*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1982.

The authors present a fresh conception of college education, one that focuses on what students need to learn to maximize their full human potential, rather than on the narrow disciplinary emphasis now found in most colleges.

Gullette, Margaret Morganroth, *The Art and Craft of Teaching*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard-Danforth Center for Teaching and Learning, 1982.

A collection of eight essays about the practicalities of teaching.

*How to Succeed as a New Teacher. A Handbook for Teaching Assistants*, New Rochelle, NY: Change Magazine Press, 1978.

Many of the practical teaching suggestions in this pamphlet have been culled from TA handbooks for specific campuses. The practical advice is presented in the context of nationwide trends in the position of TAs.

Hyman, Ronald T., *Ways of Teaching*, New York, NY: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1974 (Second Edition).

This book offers a broad view of the various ways of teaching based upon a concept of the art that most teachers implicitly accept.

**Improving College and University Teaching**, published quarterly, Heldref Publications.

Provides an international, interdisciplinary forum on issues related to teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

**Journal of Instructional Development**, published quarterly, Learning Systems Institute, Florida State University.

Explores theoretical and professional issues in instructional development.

McKeachie, Wilbert J., *Teaching Tips: A Guidebook for the Beginning College Teacher*, Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1978 (Seventh Edition).

This book has become a classic in the field. Widely quoted, it contains advice on a broad range of topics, as well as suggesting the best use of some innovative teaching techniques. Practical suggestions are accompanied by overviews of theoretical work done on various topics. If you read nothing else on teaching, read this.

Milton, Ohmer and John W. Edgerly, *The Testing and Grading Students*, New Rochelle, NY: Change Magazine Press, 1977.

This article provides practical suggestions on constructing tests and grading students, as well as a discussion of the major principles and problems of tests and grades.

**Reports on Teaching**, Change Magazine, NBW Tower, New Rochelle, NY.

These Reports are special issues of Change Magazine devoted to descriptions of innovative teaching techniques in specific academic disciplines. Disciplines covered are: Chemistry, History, Psychology, Biology, English, Political Science, Economics, Mathematics, Philosophy, Geography, Music, Sociology, Anthropology, Foreign Languages, Physics, and Interdisciplinary Studies.

*The Importance of Teaching, A Memorandum to the New College Teacher*, Report of The Committee on Undergraduate Teaching, C. Easton Rothwell, Chairman, New Haven, CN: The Hazen Foundation, 1967.

This pamphlet discusses the functions of college teaching, institutional arrangements that affect these functions, and strategies for achieving good teaching.

# Videotapes

Videocassette tapes of the Office of Faculty Development's Faculty Seminar Series and Northwestern University's Center for the Teaching Professions College Classroom Vignettes are available for viewing in the OFD Conference Room by calling Ext. 6592 for an appointment.

Some of the titles are as follows:

## **Faculty Seminar Series**

- "Academic Quality"
- "The Art of Lecturing"
- "The Discussion Mode of Teaching"
- "Games, Simulation and Role Playing"
- "How to Develop a New Course or Revitalize an Old One"
- "Microcomputers in Teaching"
- "The Pitt Student"
- "Stress: The Cost of Academic Accomplishment"
- "The Use of Videotape in Teaching"

## **College Classroom Vignettes**

- I. "Using Questions to Stimulate Discussion"
- II. "Moderating Disagreements Among Students"
- III. "Helping Students Clarify Ideas"
- IV. "Analyzing Questions Before Answering Them"
- V. "Lecturing: The First Few Minutes"
- VI. "Responding to Student Questions"
- VII. "Demonstrating Learning"
- VIII. "Assignments"
- IX. "Lecturing Goals: Cognitive and Affective"
- X. "Attentiveness to Lectures: Nonverbal Clues"
- XI. "Teaching Styles"

### Non-discrimination Policy

The University of Pittsburgh, as an educational institution and as an employer, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, age, sex, or marital, veteran, or handicapped status. This is a commitment made by the University and is in accordance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

All relevant programs are administered by the Office of Affirmative Action, 159 Cathedral of Learning, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260. For more information, call: (412) 624-6350.

Students, employees, or applicants should contact the Office of Affirmative Action immediately in all cases where discrimination is alleged.