

Getting Help Reworking Your Courses: Graduate Student Teaching Assistants and Course Development

EOSSEI is in its final year! In the future, you may not have the same level of access to STLF-type help for working on your courses. **There are still some options**; you can request help from the Faculty of Science, CTLT, you can use the Teaching Assistants you are allocated, or apply for a grant to help redevelop your course.

In the past 6 years, more than 26 courses have leveraged Teaching Assistants for help with course development. In some cases these projects were sponsored by EOS-SEI funds, but in many cases they were simply creative use of departmentally allocated TA hours.

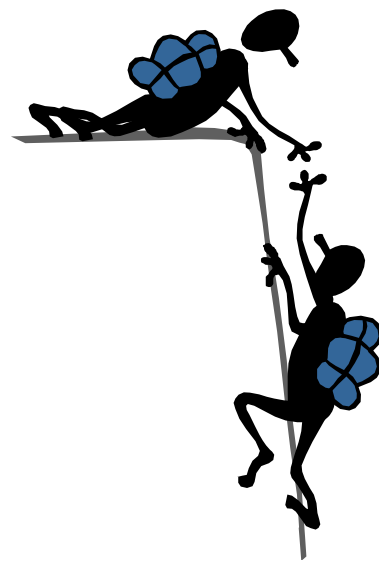
Benefits of Using TAs:

Teaching Assistants make great partners in course development. There are many reasons you might want to use a TA to help redevelop part of your course:

- If they've already been part of your course they may have a good knowledge of: Student difficulties; Labs or assignments that are too easy or too hard; Labs or assignments that need to be reworked; Common student misconceptions; or the current state of lab supplies.
- If they haven't taught the course before, they may still offer insights into how the students may interpret concepts or assignments
- They may be able to help vet new ideas, assignments, or activities
- They may have a more flexible schedule and be able to do work that you don't have time to do
- They may have additional expertise that you don't have, whether in course content or even in the use of Connect or other software
- Assigning something to your TA may be a way to complete something you think is important, but don't have the time to complete

Things to keep in mind:

- Clearly articulate what TAs need to do
- Create a specific TA hours budget for reference throughout the project
- Offer lots of guidance
- Make several checkpoints and deadlines for larger projects
- Carefully iterate edits or new labs and activities before inflicting them on students.
- New activities will likely need to be taught and iterated at least once or twice before you are happy with them



Examples of course development done by EOAS TAs: Departmentally Funded

Course #	Course name	TA(s)	What was done?
EOSC 111	Laboratory Exploration of Planet Earth	David Cassis and Leigh Gurney	Used their expertise in the discipline to redesign the Biodiversity lab with several new activities (using fresh specimens and new ideas)
EOSC 220	Mineralogy	Lauren Greenlaw	Reorganized the mineral specimens in the prep rooms and helped to redevelop the labs, using funds from a Skylight Development Grant and matching funds from EOAS
EOSC 331	Mineral Deposits	Leif Bailey	Organized mineral samples, updated labs & assignments and created new answer keys for the labs
EOSC 332	Tectonics of North America	Luke Beranek	Helped update the course for Just-in-Time Teaching (JiTT) and helped create quizzes in the Course Management System
EOSC 326	Earth & Life Through Time	Andrew Caruthers	Contributed to new labs developed for the course.
EOSC 516	Teaching and Learning in the Earth and Ocean Sciences	Andrea Cade, Brendan Smithyman, Emma Holmes, Rebecca Taylor, and Jason McAlister	Over the years many TAs have helped with the development of the course. All have developed activities and presentations used to deliver the course content

Examples of course development done by EOAS TAs: EOSSEI Funded

Course #	Course name	TA(s)	What was done?
EOSC 210	Earth Sciences for Engineers	Christine Miller	Rewrote most of the first 6 labs and the rock and mineral lab exam (with a back up variation). Updated and tweaked all of the rest of the labs. Created TA copies and answer keys for all the labs. Wrote a guide for subsequent head TAs
EOSC 333	Geochemistry	Lauren Harrison	Rewrote several labs and activities, updated other labs. Edited all for common formatting. Updated assignment associated with the field trip to ALS. Helped develop and implement lecture activities
EOSC 433	Geotechnical Engineering Practice	Geidy Baldeon	Developed rubrics for 4 design projects and two interactive, group-based exercises (intro. to design projects and peer review). Conducted the initial implementation of both new exercises. Also recorded grading and feedback in the terms both before and after introducing these.

For ideas on how to best use TAs for your classes, drop in to EOS South 361. Brett would be happy to give you a hand.

¹ CWSEI: <http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca/resources/index.html> EOS-SEI: <http://www.eos.ubc.ca/research/cwsei/>

² Questions? Comments? Talk to B. Gilley (bgilley@eos.ubc.ca) or S. Harris (sharris@eos.ubc.ca). Visit EOS-S. rm361.