

Becoming a Philosophy TA: things to do once appointed –

Actively reflect on the following:

The SKILLS and attributes brought from previous work and disciplinary experience

- Ask yourself about the values and goals of the discipline of philosophy and describe how these will inform your approach to being a TA.
- List your teaching related experience and the associated skills that you bring to the TA role (e.g. kayak guide, music teacher or math tutor). How can these experiences transfer to teaching philosophy in a useful manner?
- Recall successful teaching approaches that you encountered during your undergraduate degree and previous TA experience (if applicable).

Pursue the following:

KNOWLEDGE of...

1. Your own personal teaching identity

- Investigate “teaching philosophy statements” (found in professional teaching dossiers) or revisit your own, so that you can think about the values and goals you consider important.
- Seek feedback early and throughout the term. This can be via a combination of observation and/or written responses by professors, peers, and students. In other words, inquire about your teaching, facilitating, or other duties performed.
- Be critical about the strategies and methods you employ in your TA work. This will continually improve your ability to provide the best learning conditions for your students.

2. Discipline specific content

- Familiarize yourself with the content that is directly pertinent to the duties you will be performing. For instance, if you haven’t taken a Critical Thinking class recently it won’t hurt to brush up on the basics. Familiarize yourself with the methods used in your class and textbook.
- Search out your rights (e.g. CUPE 4163) and responsibilities (e.g. your professor) associated with your TA role, and reflect on your approach to fulfilling these duties—make a plan.

3. Effective teaching strategies

- Find out the most appropriate pedagogical methods to successfully fulfill those duties. For example, if you have been assigned to lead tutorials (or drop-in-hours), seek out strategies that you can use to encourage discussion, how to

develop questions suitable for the content, and how to work with students of differing abilities and engagement.

4. Different learning approaches

- Understand that your philosophy TA work is about the learner/student. Find information about different learning needs and ways to engage students through aural, visual, and active learning strategies.

SKILLS regarding...

1. Requirements to perform the duties assigned

- These skills may include, but are not limited to: the proper use of technology (e.g., CourseSpaces/Moodle/projectors); rubrics, class outlines, or student feedback forms; how to work with a diverse student population; how to give clear, concise, and stimulating presentations; how to keep focused on learner-centered teaching; how to mentor students; active listening; giving and receiving feedback; helping students work effectively in groups; engaging in effective communication; and asking effective questions.

2. Navigating challenges

- To moderate challenges in your TA work: manage your time efficiently (set priorities), manage your classroom, manage student expectations, and resolve conflict in a timely and tactful fashion.

ABILITY to...

1. Demonstrate Professionalism

- For instance, aim to be professional, confident, sensitive, and resilient with your interactions with everyone you work with.
- Be sure to actively balance your time between work and personal life.
- Ensure that you maintain integrity and confidentiality of student work at all times.

2. Practice effective interpersonal communication

- Actively seek answers from the course supervisor and let them know of any changes in your schedule that may affect fulfilling your TA duties.
- With colleagues: seek out support, resources, and engage in a collegial collaborative relationship by participating in professional development. For example, take advantage of UVic's TA Conferences (Fall and Spring semesters) and TA/Graduate Student Workshops (throughout the year).
- With your students: be available, approachable, inclusive, fair, and enthusiastic in all communication while maintaining professional boundaries.