

CTLT TEACHING ASSISTANT CERTIFICATE PROGRAM PILOT

Rebecca Tallman (CTLT Graduate Student Professional Developer)

Travis Reinheimer (CTLT Graduate Student Professional Developer)

Heather Smith (Acting Director, CTLT)

February 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1: Program Overview.....	3
Section 2: Program Rationale.....	7
Section 3: Management of the Program.....	9
Appendix I: Graduate Student and TA Training Trends in Canadian Institutions.....	11
Works Cited.....	17

SECTION 1: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Introduction

The UNBC Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology is committed to building, supporting and maintaining a teaching and learning community. Graduate students and teaching assistants are an integral part of that community. Our teaching assistants play key roles in the learning experiences of UNBC students. It is essential that we value and acknowledge the roles they play. One way to support graduate students and teaching assistants is to provide a breadth of opportunities for their professional development. To that end, the CTLT will be launching a Teaching Assistant Graduate Certificate Program in 2014.

Program Summary

The program is open to graduate students and undergraduate students engaged in various teaching activities at the University of Northern British Columbia. If students from the regions wish to participate they will be accommodated by the Director of the CTLT. This program institutionalizes current practices and acknowledges graduate student participation in our workshops. The key aim of the program is to help prepare students for future teaching opportunities.

In addition, all of the other three research universities in BC have T.A. or graduate student certificate programs. The creation of this program is the first step towards ensuring our graduate students and TA's have similar opportunities.

The program requires no new resources, although a teaching dossier workshop will have to be regularly offered. The program is not mandatory and not for credit, although in the future it is possible it could be transcribed. There is no fee for the program.

This program will be offered as a three year pilot. We will seek to evaluate the program at various stages and will use workshop feedback, teaching portfolios and where possible, pre and post assessment as a means by which to evaluate whether the learning outcomes are met.

Program Structure

The program will be divided into three different tiers of programming. At the end of each level participants will receive a certificate of completion. The tiers are scaffolded and therefore participants are required to do the tiers sequentially.

Level I

Learning Outcomes

By the end of Level I, participants will be able to:

- Engage in teaching practices with enhanced confidence
- Identify and apply formative assessment techniques
- Engage in community building and networking
- Identify and apply basic principles of lesson planning
- Engage in reflective practices
- Identify and apply basic classroom management strategies
- Recognize the roles, rights and responsibilities of teaching assistants

Requirements

- 20 hours of workshops/professional development events hosted by the CTLT
- Required: CTLT Teaching Assistant Workshop (6 hours)
- Required: UNBC Bullying and Harassment Training Module (2 hours)
- Additional workshops can be selected from Teaching and Learning Conference sessions, workshops, brown bag lunch series or possible online modules (12 hours)

Tangible Outcomes

- Five page (maximum) single-spaced paper on the learning outcomes of this level.
- OR a verbal de-brief with Certificate Program Facilitators.
- Alternative proposals for reflective practices are subject to approval by Certificate Facilitators.

Level II

Learning Outcomes

In addition to the outcomes identified in Level I. By the end of Level II, participants will be able to:

- Give and receive effective feedback
- Apply group engagement strategies
- Practice peer review of teaching
- Reflect on learning styles and learning outcomes
- Practice public speaking

Requirements (in addition to the 20 hours from Level I)

- Full attendance of the Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW) (24 hours)

Tangible Outcomes

- A five page (maximum) single-spaced reflective paper on the level learning outcomes
- OR a verbal de-brief with Certificate facilitators
- Alternative proposals for reflective practices are subject to approval by Certificate facilitators.

Level III

Learning Outcomes

In addition to the outcomes identified in Level I and II, by the end of Level III, participants will be able to:

- Create a teaching portfolio
- Engage in reflective teaching practices

Requirements (in addition to the 20 hours from Level I and 24 hours from Level II)

- Teaching Portfolio Workshop (6 hours)
- Teaching Portfolio Preparation (10 hours)

Tangible Outcomes

- Teaching Portfolio to be emailed to the CTLT.
- Teaching Portfolio one-on-one debrief and feedback session with Certificate facilitator.

SECTION 2: PROGRAM RATIONALE

Introduction

The overall aim of this program is help build a teaching and learning community and improve graduate student teaching capacity at UNBC. This is consistent with CTLT past practices. Too often we approach teaching as a largely solitary practice. We seek to encourage an understanding of teaching as part of community, just like we engage in our research as part of a broader community. Across the country, post-secondary institutions are actively engaged in systematic graduate student training, either broadly under the label of graduate student professional development or more narrowly under the umbrella of TA training (See Appendix 1 for programming elsewhere). UNBC does not have a set of identified graduate student competencies, consistent with the Tri-Agency Statement of Principles on Key Professional Skills for Researchers (2007) and CAGS Report on Professional Skills Development for Graduate Students (2008). Our aim is to not address all ‘competencies’ but to focus on teaching related skills. However, the structure of the program is sufficiently flexible that additional workshops addressing additional competencies could be added. As noted above, our teaching assistants play key roles in the experiences of our students. Increasingly academic job postings require candidates to submit teaching portfolios that include statements of teaching philosophy. We believe this program can help better prepare students for future success in teaching and employment opportunities.

Benefits and Limitations of Certificate Programs

The development of certificate programs across the United States and Canada has been largely based in research and scholarship of teaching and learning. Most of the literature on certificate program development has identified the benefits and limitations of such programs for both the participants and the institutions.

Benefits for participants:

- Better prepare junior faculty and graduate students for jobs when they graduate (Lane Tice et al 1998, 264).
- Students will benefit from the expertise, mentorship and guidance of both experienced researchers and teachers (Lane Tice et al 1998, 264).
- Certificate programs provide a structure through which graduate students can improve their teaching and develop reflective teaching practices (von Hoene 2011, 110).
- One outcome of certificate programs is the development of peer learning communities (von Hoene 201, 108).
- Provides incentives for graduate students to attend CTLT workshops and provides a value added for students who are already currently participating.

Benefits for faculty/academic departments/institution:

- Stronger relationships between departments and teaching centres (von Hoene 2011, 110).
- Allows faculty to develop mentoring skills (von Hoene 2011, 110).

- Better undergraduate instruction (von Hoene 2011, 110) because graduate students teach a large number of first year classes and often have the most face-time with undergraduate students (Piccinin et al 1993, 105).
- Starts to align UNBC with other BC universities in terms of TA and graduate student training.
- Provides multiple opportunities for collaboration across academic and administrative units.

Limitations/Concerns of Certificate Programs

- Programs that are focused on ‘competencies’ are too job market oriented, therefore they are not focused on professional development and instead focus on participants looking good (Lane Tice et al 1998, 272).
- Faculty may have concerns that the certificate program could impact the time it takes for graduate students to complete their degree (Lane Tice et al 1998; von Hoene 2011).
- There is difficulty in assessing the efficacy and effectiveness of certificate programs (Bort and Buerkel-Rothfuss 1993; Trigwell et al 2011; von Hoene 2011) lack of evidence about the effectiveness of these programs may limit the job market value (Lane Tice et al 1998: 272).

In order to address these concerns we have:

- Purposefully chosen not to focus on competencies broadly, instead we want our program to focus on specific skills related to teaching. The language of competencies is contested, but we also believe that enhanced teaching skills sets have broad and significant benefits.
- The program as noted above does not have a particular time limit nor does it require a significant investment of time during one particular semester. To complete all three levels there is 60 hours of in class time and over two years that is less than one work week at year.
- We will be trying to build in effective evaluation but the certificates are not graded and there are no grades assigned to the students. Our aim is to enhance teaching skills and practices and to do so in safe environments for the participants. Our hope is that the intended outcomes will be revealed in the teaching portfolios of the participants.

SECTION 3: MANAGEMENT OF THE PROGRAM

Certificate Program Management and Processes

- Tracking of participation will be done by the CTLT.
- At each level students will receive a certificate of completion and a letter from the Director acknowledging student participation in these activities.
- Student participation and teaching portfolios will NOT be graded.
- Students can enter the program at any time and can sign up through the CTLT.
- The program will be retroactive up to two years prior to its inception in 2014.
 - Students, who have taken the ISW in the past two years and where there is documented participation in previous workshops in the last two years, can receive retroactive credit for the ISW and for up to 10 hours of CTLT hosted workshops toward the certificates but will have modified teaching portfolio requirements.

Teaching Portfolio Requirements

The Teaching Portfolio or Teaching Dossier is one of tangible outcomes of this certificate program. When creating their teaching portfolio, participants will engage in a number of reflective practices that will help them establish their overall teaching philosophy. Generally, “the teaching portfolio/dossier is an effective way for teachers to reflect upon, describe and document their teaching philosophy, goals and achievements” (Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness, University of Saskatchewan) While requirements of teaching portfolios vary depending on institutional guidelines, we have selected three common components for our certificate program.

The Teaching Portfolio Workshop in Level III of the TA Certificate Program will provide participants with guidelines and resources that will assist them when they are creating their own Teaching Portfolio. Once they have completed their portfolio they will be required to email their portfolio to the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology and then book an appointment with a Certificate Program facilitator to review their portfolio and receive one-on-one verbal feedback.

The required components of the Teaching Portfolio will be:

1. Statement of Teaching Philosophy

- This will be a reflective and scholarly piece that sets the stage for the entire portfolio.
- Participants will reflect on their past experiences in formal and informal education and how these experiences have affected how they teach or learn.
- Participants then derive a set of teaching principles from this reflective practice that informs their overall philosophy of teaching.
- The “Statement of Teaching Philosophy” will be the central focus of the Teaching Portfolio Workshop in Level III of the TA Certificate program.

2. Statement of Past Teaching Experience

- Participants will list past teaching experiences that support their teaching philosophy statement.

3. Evidence of Teaching Accomplishments

- Participants will select a variety of material that is representative of the work they have done and supports their teaching philosophy statement.
- This material may include:
 - Student test scores, grades, sample writing, sample assignments
 - Lists of courses
 - Enrollment numbers
 - Description of course materials or assignments
 - Sample syllabi
 - A description of steps taken to evaluate and improve one's teaching
 - Feedback from students, supervisors, colleagues, etc.

(Adapted from: “Parts of Teaching Portfolio” Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness, University of Saskatchewan <http://www.usask.ca/gmcte/resources/portfolio/parts>)

Assessment

The program will be assessed in a number of ways. We will engage in pre and post assessment throughout the three year Pilot in order to improve programming for participants. Assessment mechanisms are built in to the program and will include:

- Tracking participation rates
- Anonymous Summative Feedback. (All CTLT workshops and events include anonymous summative feedback which is shared with the facilitator(s) and the Director of the CTLT.)
- Pedagogical pre-assessment. At the time of registration participants will be asked to share their goals, expectations and previous experiences in teaching and learning. This will assist Certificate Program facilitators in addressing the needs of each participant.
- Post-Assessment. Upon completion of each tier there are embedded outcomes as noted above.
- Surveys. We will conduct an anonymous survey of the program after 18 months and again at 36 months.

Appendix I: Graduate Student and TA Training Trends in Canadian Institutions

Taken from a summary of 20 Canadian institutions and their programs.

Introduction

Following the emergence of certificate programs in American universities, many Canadian institutions have developed teaching certificate programs (Korpan 2011; Rose 2012). The STLHE special interest group on Teaching Assistant and Graduate Student Advancement (TAGSA) identified that certificate programs were one of the top three new initiatives within Canadian institutions in 2011 (Korpan 2011, 3). In this section we will outline some examples of certificate programs that have been established at Canadian Universities, the programs have been divided by program type: course based, workshop based and hybrid programs. We also identify common themes and trends that were identified in certificate programs across Canada.

Course Based Programs

University of Victoria

- "Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (LATHE) is a dynamic Certificate Program that focuses on the pedagogical knowledge and practical skills required to teach effectively in higher education. LATHE combines knowledge and practice about teaching and learning across the disciplines to create a future professoriate fluent in the foundational principles of post-secondary instruction. It will challenge participants to reflect on their practical teaching activities in a scholarly way within their disciplinary context." (from program brochure)
- Course based. Two year program with three courses that can be taken concurrently alongside graduate studies.
- Offered jointly by the Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, the Learning and Teaching Centre and the Faculty of Graduate Studies.
- The program runs for 2 years. The first year students take one course in the fall semester and one course in the spring semester. The second year there is a two-semester course that begins in the fall and ends in the spring.
- Offered primarily to doctoral students or future professoriate.
- Students pay for the courses, similar to tuition fees.
- First Year:
 - **ED-D 600: Learning and Teaching in Higher Education**
 - Explores instructional research and contemporary practices in higher education.
 - **ED-D 610: Contemporary Issues in Higher Education**
 - Critically examines the problems and issues that dominate current thought and discussion in higher education in Canada.
- Second Year:
 - **ED-D 605: Educational Psychology: Doctoral Apprenticeship in Teaching in Higher Education**

- This course provides guided teaching apprenticeship under the mentorship of the program faculty adviser, program consultant of the LTC and select faculty members.
- Source: <http://www.ltc.uvic.ca/servicesprograms/taprod/LATHE.php>

University of Saskatchewan

- The Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness provides graduate student teachers who are interested in teaching strategies, courses, and workshops the opportunity to participate in a number of professional development activities to better improve their skill sets.
- This is a course based program with no certificate. Just recognition of course completion that typically shows up on a student's transcript.
- Courses range from one term, to 10 weeks depending on the level of the course.
- Offered to graduate student teachers. Each course addresses graduate students at different stages in their teaching.
- Courses offered:
 - **GSR 979: Introductory Instructional Skills** - is a one term, 10-week course that introduces graduate students with no prior teaching experience to basic theories and skills for classroom teaching. This course prepares graduate students for their first teaching assignments.
 - **GSR 989: Philosophy and Practice of University Teaching** - is a two term course that delves into teaching theory, philosophy and skills. Applicants must have completed their first year of graduate school, and must have prior teaching experience.
 - **GSR 982: Mentored Teaching** - is for PhD students who have received a Teacher-Scholar Doctoral Fellowship from the College of Graduate Studies and Research. This faculty - mentored program prepares graduate students to become classroom instructors (term one) with a teaching practicum in their home department (term two).
- Source: http://www.usask.ca/gmcte/services/gradstudent_teaching

Workshop Based Programs

Trent University: TA Training Certificate Program

- “The TA Training Certificate Program provides graduate students with the opportunity to participate in workshops that have been developed to boost graduate students' confidence in the classroom and to equip them with the necessary skills and strategies to effectively fulfill their roles as teaching assistants at Trent University. The program consists of online workshops, interdisciplinary workshops, and a limited number of discipline-specific workshops”
- Participation in the TA Training Certificate Program is voluntary.
- As a graduate student, you have the length of your graduate program to meet the requirements in order to qualify for the Certificate of Completion.

- The 2012–2013 TA Training Certificate of Completion will be granted to graduate students who complete the following five components during their graduate studies at Trent University.

1. AODA I — Customer Service Standard

- Trent University is committed to inclusive education and requires graduate teaching assistants to complete the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Customer Service Training prior to their employment as a teaching assistant.
- The content of this online training module is provided as a pre-recorded workshop and is accompanied by a multiple-choice test.

2. Academic Integrity I

- Understanding the policy and definitions. This online training module is modelled after a unit assigned in many 1000-level courses at Trent University where undergraduates are required to demonstrate their understanding of the university policies and definitions of plagiarism and cheating before they submit their first assignment.

3. Academic Integrity II

- Teaching your students about academic integrity. This online training module covers the common areas of confusion that undergraduates have about academic honesty.

4. Academic Integrity III

- You suspect cheating: Where to go from there? This online training module covers the how to use internet searches to find copied sources; how to mark up the paper and published sources to indicate plagiarism; the information you need to provide to the course instructor; and where to find the university policies, procedures, and resources.

5. Eight hours of workshops on instructional strategies.

The following sources qualify:

- Interdisciplinary TA workshops.
- Discipline-Specific TA workshops. A maximum of 3 hours towards the 8-hour requirement may come from this source of training.
- Teaching Effectiveness Program: This workshop series offered by the Instructional Development Centre is open to faculty, staff, and graduate students.
- Online Workshop on the Prevention of Sexual Harassment. This workshop is a self-study, online format.
- Graduate students are given the length of their program to complete the requirements for the certificate program.
- Source: <http://www.trentu.ca/idc/tatc.php>

Brock University

- “The Centre for Pedagogical Innovation offers a certificate program for TAs interested in attending a series of workshops. There are two levels of certification, basic and advanced. While all TAs are invited to participate, those who complete the program are awarded a certificate at the end of the academic year. The program is meant to give TA’s an

opportunity to gain practical hands on strategies for classroom management, create positive learning environments, teaching techniques, marking skills, diversity in the classroom, time management, and develop a teaching portfolio.

- The certificate program is open to any TAs interested in professional development. There are two levels”
 - **Basic Certification** - requires participation in 8 workshops offered throughout the year. Undergraduate TAs can also apply their certificate towards the Experience Plus Program.
 - **Advanced Certification** - requires achievement of the Basic Certification and participation in an additional 8 workshops, along with submitting a statement of teaching philosophy.
- This program is open to any TAs whether they are undergraduate students, graduate students or doctoral students.
- It should be noted that the participants who succeed in meeting the requirements of the certificate program attend a ceremony at the end of the academic school year that is attended by both the VP Academic and the centre director.
- Source: <http://www.brocku.ca/pedagogical-innovation/services-ctlet/ta-services/certificate-teaching>

Queen’s University

- The Queen’s University Center for Teaching and Learning has the following requirements for their certificate program:
 - **Certificate I:** Participants are required to attend six workshops hosted by the CTL, their department or the university. And reflect on each workshop, submitting their written reflections with their certificate package. Complete either a concise mini-report about what they have learned or a teaching dossier.
 - **Certificate II:** Participants must acquire teaching experience as a TA or presenter for three lectures, lab demonstrations or tutorials. Collect feedback from peers and students. Create three short sections for your teaching dossier specifying your teaching responsibilities, strategies and teaching effectiveness.
 - **Certificate III:** Create a literature review on some aspect of university teaching and learning that interests you and is related to your teaching. Present your findings in a formal setting (conference paper, workshop material, etc.). Add to your teaching dossier.
 - **Certificate IV:** Be a leader through mentorship or service to the university community. Collect feedback and write about your experience by writing a report or an educational leadership section for your teaching dossier.
- The completion of this program is at the responsibility of the participant and can be completed at anytime whether you are a TA or not. Certificates may be completed separately and in any order.
- Offered to graduate students. It does not specify between masters and PhD students. Works under the assumption that most students are engaging in these activities already.
- Source: <http://www.queensu.ca/ctl/ps/programs/putl.html>

Hybrid Programs

Simon Fraser University

- SFU's program is divided into two parts:
 - **Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW):** A three day, 24 hour workshop that guides participants through various teaching techniques and pedagogical practices. Its most important aspect is that it allows participants to practice teaching and gain effective feedback through its micro-teaching component.
 - **Course in University Teaching and Learning (CUTL):**
 - "Principles and Practices is designed to engage participants in developing and refining their teaching skills. Sessions on curriculum design, assessment strategies, effective feedback, teaching philosophies, and research on teaching and learning will provide the foundation for practice with, and/or reflection on, essential teaching skills such as lecturing, presentations, leading discussions, working with educational technologies, teaching in large classes, and working with EAL students. The sessions are highly interactive and will offer resources, activities and feedback. On occasion, teaching and learning experts may participate as guests. The course is designed for graduate students who intend to teach in higher education contexts - with the university setting being the current, relevant context focusing our discussions." (from course syllabus)
 - The course runs for 13 weeks, typically over a semester.
 - Uses a cohort model and faculty involvement.
 - Participants are required to create a teaching that includes a course syllabus and teaching dossier.
- Source: <http://www.sfu.ca/tlc/programming/cputl/general.html>

Common Trends and Themes in Canadian Institutions

- Common themes addressed in workshops/courses:
 - grading
 - assessment
 - teaching methods
 - lesson planning
 - course design
 - teaching philosophy
 - mentorship
 - sexual harassment
 - giving/receiving feedback
 - academic integrity
 - customer service
 - scholarship of teaching and learning
 - fundamentals of teaching
- Common Trends identified from various programs:

- Instructional Skills Workshop as a prerequisite or certificate component (SFU, Ryerson)
- Most courses are non-credit, but provide a transcript notation (Dalhousie, University of Waterloo)
- Most course-based programs have multiple courses that build on one another (uVic, Windsor, York)
- Some programs require a fee (range between \$10 and \$310) (uVic, Concordia)
- Programs range from one to three years in length, a majority of which are flexible and student directed. A more rigid course program (like that of SFU, uVic, Windsor) has specific time limits, or semester dates that the courses fit into.
- Some programs are mandatory, most are voluntary.
- Participation is recorded usually by the Centre for Teaching and Learning.
- Most programs are housed through the Centre for Teaching and Learning or Graduate Studies - ALL have collaborative relationships between departments, graduate offices, etc.
- Common assignments/tangible outcomes of programs:
 - teaching dossier
 - reflective papers
 - research projects
 - teaching practicums
 - scholarship of teaching and learning
- A majority of the programs have a broad mandate to provide students with professional development beyond graduate studies, most of these programs focused on teaching and learning.

Works Cited

Bort, Mary B. and Nancy L. Buerkel-Rothfuss. (1993) "Evaluating the Evaluation Measures: What Do We Expect from TA Teaching and How Are We Measuring What We Get?" in *The TA Experience: Preparing for Multiple Roles* edited by Karron G. Lewis (Oklahoma: New Forums Press): 41-50.

Canadian Association for Graduate Studies. (2008) "Professional Skills Development for Graduate Students" Accessed from: <http://www.cags.ca>

Korpan, Cynthia. (2011) "TA Professional Development in Canada" *STLHE*. Accessed from: http://www.stlhe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/TA-ProD-in-Canada-Report_July-2011.pdf

Lane Tice, Stacey et al. (1998) "TA Certificate Programs" in *The Professional Development of Graduate Teaching Assistants* edited by Michele Marincovich, Jack Prostko and Frederic Stout (Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company): 263-274.

Piccinin, Serge J. et al. (1993) "Teaching Assistants in Canadian Universities: An Unknown Resource" *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* XXII (2): 104-117.

Rose, Marilyn. (2012) "Graduate Student Professional Development: A survey with Recommendations" Accessed from: <http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/>

Tri-Agency. (2007) "Statement of Principles on Key Professional Skills for Researchers" Accessed from: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/tss/id/currdev/Tri-university%20graduate%20attributes.pdf>

Trigwell et al. (2011) "Assessing the Impact of a University Teaching Development Programme" *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 37(4): 499-511.

von Hoene, Linda. (2011) "Graduate Student Teaching Certificates: Survey of Current Programs" in *Mapping the Range of Graduate Student Professional Development Volume 4* edited by Laura L.B. Border (Oklahoma: New Forums Press): 101 - 124.