

# UNBC Teaching Assistant Manual

Heather Smith, Editor  
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## Welcome from the Editor

*Heather Smith, Coordinator of Professional Development, UNBC Centre for Teaching and Learning*

Welcome to 2006 TA Manual!

When I became a TA I was thrown into a seminar with some expectation that I would run that seminar. I wonder now how I actually managed...but I did.

My case is not unique. Historically, teaching assistants, whether they are running labs or running seminars, received little instruction on instruction. But things are changing. Across the country universities are investing in training their graduate students to teach. Here at UNBC, this manual is one contribution to your training and we hope you find it useful.

Components of this manual are drawn directly from the Dalhousie TA Manual. The Dalhousie Centre for Learning and Teaching gave us permission to use whatever content we desired, as long as it was acknowledged. For this support I want to thank Lynn Taylor, the Dal Director of Learning and Teaching.

I would like to thank the Vice President Academic and Provost, Dr. Howard Brunt, for his continued support of the Centre for Teaching and Learning. In addition, I want to acknowledge the efforts of the members of the Committee on Teaching and Learning. Chaired by Dean Robert Tait, the committee is composed of myself, Lynda Williams, William Owen, Tracy Summerville, Stephen Rader, Saphida Migabo, Jennifer Hyndman, and Willow Brown. The work of the committee has been supported by Jennifer Payson and Jennifer Reade - both of whom have functioned at my CTL research assistant in the past year. Through the efforts of my research assistants and the Teaching and Learning Committee, the annual teaching workshop, pre-workshop sessions, the TA workshops, and the CTL Seminars on Teaching, are delivered.

It is crucial to note that the contents of this manual, unless otherwise indicated, are based on the experience and expertise of your colleagues. They are not “policy” but rather suggestions for enhancing teaching at UNBC based on best practice.

Finally, I strongly encourage UNBC graduate students to participate in the activities of the Centre for Teaching and Learning. Watch for our posters and please join us for our seminar series. As well - and as becomes readily apparent with the ‘draft’ watermark - this manual is in draft form and we would really, really value any comments from you on its contents. And...if you just need some advice, don’t hesitate to contact me.

I hope you find the manual useful.

Heather Smith

## Northern BC Graduate Student Society



Dear fellow graduate students,

As the president of the NBCGSS, I would like to welcome all new and returning graduate students for the 06/07 academic year. Congratulations on your position as a Teacher's Assistant. For those of you embarking in positions as Teachers Assistants for the first time, this is an especially challenging and exciting opportunity which will present some logistical difficulties resulting from balancing school, family and work related obligations. Being a Teachers Assistant is both challenging and rewarding. It allows you to straddle the space between student and teacher and experience the joys, pain, and challenges that are part of teaching. There are few experiences that are both as scary and as rewarding as standing in front of a classroom for the first time.

The Graduate Student Society is here to provide support and encouragement, as well as practical solutions such as work space, workshops, and a range of services to assist you.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact our Administrative Assistant at our office located in the main building of the University or by phone at 960-5671.

On a more personal note, I really loved my experiences as a TA and I hope you do too. If you have any questions at all or have any issues please do not hesitate to contact me directly at [gsspres@unbc.ca](mailto:gsspres@unbc.ca).

Best of Luck to you all at this very exciting time,

Kerensa Medhurst  
President  
NBCGSS

## Roles of the Teaching Assistant

*Dr. Robert Tait,  
Dean of Graduate Studies*

Your role as a teaching assistant has many facets. You are an employee of the university, the representative of a Program, role model and advisor for students, assistant to a professor, and a subject expert and facilitator of learning. Your task will be to co-ordinate these facets into a positive and rewarding experience for you and your students.

At the University of Northern British Columbia, a Teaching Assistant position explicitly involves forms of teaching; the position includes formal and informal interactions with students in the course. Interactions could include delivering lectures, conducting laboratory demonstrations, one on one teaching through informal tutorials or other instruction, or other direct interactions with students for instructional purposes. Additional duties can include, but can not be restricted to, holding office hours, assisting with marking that requires some subjective assessment, and providing other course preparation assistance to the professor.

In your role as an employee of the University and a representative of your Program, you should:

- expect fair and consistent treatment;
- be informed of the expected workload and have a clear understanding of your role;
- expect compliance with the provisions of your appointment;
- be able to say no to work that is not part of your agreement;
- expect the protection of University policies and have the responsibility to adhere to the same policies;
- expect to have your performance evaluated by students and by the course instructor.

In all your interactions with your students, you have the responsibility to:

- maintain a positive environment by being friendly, non-threatening and respectful;
- use appropriate teaching methods and techniques;
- evaluate their work on time and fairly (i.e., have an objective marking mechanism, keep records as evidence, maintain a distance to remain unbiased);
- set boundaries so that harassment of any type is not an issue;
- make your expectations and task expectations clear;
- be on time for meetings and be available during posted office hours;
- be aware of your own biases and not force your opinions on your students.

In your role as a content expert, you have the responsibility to:

- be prepared; to read background material, when necessary, in preparation for responding to students' queries.
- to listen carefully to the questions and statements of your students and respond accurately and honestly;

- do not overstate your knowledge; indicate when you do not know the answer to a question and then agree to find the answer before the next meeting;
- admit to errors if they occur and correct them promptly.

In your role as an assistant to a faculty member, you have the responsibility to:

- discuss with the faculty member exactly what your duties will be for the course;
- negotiate and then meet deadlines;
- be reliable and do what you have indicated that you will do;
- be familiar with the content of the text book and course outline;
- be responsible for your actions and admit your mistakes;
- give feedback, even if it is negative;
- maintain contact with the course instructor.

And finally, you should remember the main reason that you are at UNBC: to be a graduate student. Your primary responsibility is to ensure that you make satisfactory progress towards your degree. To do so, you need to:

- make regular progress on your own work;
- create and follow time lines for all of your academic responsibilities, which should include the time required to be a successful teaching assistant;
- excel on your own assignments.

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## Your First Class/Seminar/Lab

*William J. Owen (Psychology) and Scott Green (Forestry)*

The first class or seminar or lab is one of the most important days in each semester. In fact, your students will quickly assess how prepared and confident you are in your own ability to teach the course material, and if you are a “reasonable and fair” teaching assistant. Being adequately prepared will give you the opportunity to make the most of the first day. The following suggestions and questions may help you to prepare for the first class of each semester.

### Pre-class preparations

- Review the course syllabus
- If there are separate outlines for your lab or tutorial ensure you have sufficient copies
- Discuss your duties with your faculty member
- Visit the classroom (what are the benefits and limitations?)

### Four important introductions

Introductions help to set the tone of the class. An enthusiastic introduction of the course material is a key motivator for student learning.

- **Who are you?** How do you want the students to address you (Mr? Ms? By your first name)? What is your background education and how is this related to the course? Why are you teaching this course?
- **Who are your students?** Ask students to introduce themselves or the person sitting beside them. For larger classes, you can ask the students to fill in a brief information sheet that asks students about their interests, etc.
- **What is the course about?** What are the objectives of the course? Why are these objectives important? Ask students what goals they have with respect to this course. How are you going to use class time? How can students best prepare for your exams and assignments?
- **Classroom etiquette** (see: <http://ctl.unbc.ca/outloud/etiquetteoverhead.pdf> or have the students help you design a classroom code of conduct)

### Should I teach on the first day?

- Whether or not you teach on the first day will depend on the guidance you have received from your faculty member. Typically, by the time you get to the lab or tutorial classes will have already begun and you will be teaching on your first day!

## Other considerations

- What will you wear? (what tone do you wish to set?)
- How do you want students to address you both in and outside of the classroom?
- How formal do you want to be?
- Will you sit or stand?
- Class size
- Time allotted to introductions
- The “Siberia” students (reference to those students who tend to sit in the back of the classroom; see Ira Shor, 1996)
- Will the faculty member introduce you?
- Will you provide notes or semi-notes to the students? Why or why not?
  - Semi-notes are partial lecture notes that students have to fill in
- Will you see students outside of your regular office hours?

## Suggested tips

- Dealing with “first day” nerves
  - expect to be nervous
    - Be prepared; act confident; deep breathing; practice; humor
  - practice your first session
- Bring plenty of syllabi
- Arrive early and talk to the students
- Write the course number and section on the board
- Involve the students
  - Ask student athletes to provide a list competition dates
  - Ask student with disabilities to provide you with a letter outlining any necessary accommodations
  - Ask students to write an anonymous two-minute review of their reactions to the first class
- Stay after class to answer any student questions

## Resources

- Brinkley et al. (1999). *The Chicago handbook for teachers: A practical guide to the college classroom*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Davis, B.G. (1993). *Tools for Teaching*. Barbara Davis has provided some of her book, including the chapter for teaching your first class, on the web site:  
<http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/teaching.html>
- Shor, Ira (1996). *When students have power: Negotiating authority in a critical pedagogy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- <http://www.csuohio.edu/ucl/tchtips1.html> has tips for your first day, including 101 things you can try in the first few weeks.



- If you are teaching first year students, you may want to check out this web site: <http://www.flinders.edu.au/teach/teach/firstindex.htm>
- Other excellent teachers
- Your teaching “instincts”
- UNBC Teaching and Learning Committee Brown Bag discussion groups - watch for the e-mails.

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## Creating a Positive Teaching Environment

*Dalhousie University, Centre for Learning and Teaching*

Building a successful teaching environment depends on both the teacher and the student; however, the initial responsibility for achieving this state falls on the teacher the individual perceived by the student as the expert, the figure of authority, or the leader within the relationship. The leadership position must be exploited, not abused, such that a mutual respect builds between teacher and student. This relationship cannot be established instantly or with ease but requires hard work, a genuine interest in teaching, and a concern for others.

There are some general suggestions worthy of consideration as one engages in the teaching enterprise.

**The first step** is to remember you are the teacher; but do not forget what it is like to be a student. Remembering the first time you entered a laboratory or stood in front of a tutorial group will help you appreciate students' problems. This advice is probably useful for all teachers.

**The second suggestion** is to have realistic expectations of students. Most students are ambitious: they want to succeed, and they will respond to the challenges you present. Those students who truly don't care, and there are always some, can only be encouraged to the extent they allow. If they are not in the class or laboratory, you cannot help; but when an opportunity occurs, you should encourage them.

**The final general comment** is to remember your favorite teachers and what you liked about them; then try to behave in the same manner. You may be surprised by how good it feels to have a positive impact on your students.

## Quick Tips

*Heather Smith, (International Studies and CTL)*

These 'quick tips' are based on personal experience. Everybody you talk to can provide you with insights based on experience. It would be possible to provide 'tips' for just about any scenario, but I have provided just a few.

### In the classroom

- Leave the trials of the day behind you...students don't deserve to have to deal with the trials and tribulations of your day. When you enter the classroom, try whenever possible to leave the day behind.
- Smile...this helps with leaving the day behind and setting the tone for the class.
- Arrive a few minutes early...this too can work well in developing a rapport with the students and gives them a moment or two to ask questions if needed.
- Use your intuition...if you are running into problems or want a sense of how the class is going, take a mental step back and 'get a feel' for the class. This can sometimes help you to understand the obstacles facing some of the students or obstacles facing you when it comes to getting your point across. If you want more concrete feedback use some of the evaluation techniques noted in the section on evaluation.
- Try to enjoy the experience...teaching and learning (and we as instructors do both in the classroom) should be an enjoyable experience.

### Assignments/Grading

- If part of your task is to discuss assignments, try to be as clear as possible in the assignments. Remember that just because we think a task clear doesn't mean that the student understands the task at hand. This said, sometimes students want certainty. In some disciplines you can't provide the 'one and only correct answer' and so the task becomes trying to get the students comfortable with that lack of certainty.
- If you are doing the grading of assignments, talk to your faculty member about how they want you to give feedback.
- Ask the faculty member if they have a grading template.
- Find out how quickly you have to have the assignments graded.
- Talk to your faculty member about what to do if a student challenges a grade.
- Try not to grade in red pen - it sends negative messages (it's true ☺)

### General

- Having a problem? Respect confidentiality, but also understand that you can talk to your instructor.

- Find a mentor or teaching buddy...we often do not talk about our teaching. Yet, there is so much to learn from the experience. We should all have someone to talk to about our creative assignments or bad days. Colleagues and mentors provide support and insight.
- Always remember that as a teaching assistant you can potentially have a profound impact on your students. Don't give up on the student, who appears difficult, they can be your program's next superstar. Engage the quiet student before or after class because you may find out that they are simply shy.
- Be compassionate. This may seem odd to some. Indeed there are a multitude of teaching styles and philosophies but at the centre of my vision of teaching and learning is compassion. It is not always easy and you might run the risk of being taken advantage of, but there are also great benefits associated with compassion.
- Engage in teaching as learning. There are some great resources available that will inspire you to think in creative and innovative ways. Start with the website for UNBC's Centre for Teaching and Learning where you can find *Thinking Out Loud*. You can also search the net for centres of teaching and learning across Canada. The University of Saskatchewan has its teaching manual online and the University of Manitoba has access to several excellent online journals related to teaching and learning such as the *Successful Professor*. I've picked up great tips for the classroom from all the sites noted above.

GOOD LUCK AND HAVE FUN!

## What is "Learning Style"?

*Dalhousie University, Centre for Learning and Teaching*

Many of us who spend time in university classrooms (faculty and teaching assistants) do not realize that students vary dramatically in the way they process and understand information. These differences in learning, called "*learning styles*," refer to students' preferences for some kinds of learning activities over others. It is important to stress that we are discussing *how* students learn, and not *what* they learn.

Researchers have examined various types of learning styles and these can be organized into the following categories:

*Personality* - basic characteristics or predispositions, e.g., extrovert/introvert

*Information Processing* - how students tend to interact and behave in the classroom, e.g., concrete experience/abstract conceptualizing.

*Instructional Preference* - which teaching methods are preferred by students, e.g., lecture/small group discussion.

## Why is learning style important?

Information about students' learning style is important to both the teacher and the student for the following reasons:

- Low satisfaction or poor performance in a course or particular activity may be misinterpreted as lack of knowledge or ability, when it is actually difficulty with a particular style of learning.
- Teachers with an understanding of their students' learning styles are better able to adapt their teaching methods appropriately.
- Teachers who introduce a variety of appropriate teaching methods into their classes are more likely to motivate and engage students into learning.
- Students who learn about their own style become better learners, they achieve higher grades and have more positive attitudes about their studies, greater self-confidence, and more skill in applying their knowledge in courses.
- Information about learning styles can help teachers become more sensitive to the differences which students bring to the classroom.
- Information about learning styles can serve as a guide to the design of learning experiences that either match, or mismatch, students' style, depending on whether the teacher's purpose is efficiency of students' learning or developing skills with a style of learning in which the student is weak.

Information about learning styles can assist in working with poorly prepared or new university students, as the highest drop-out rates occur with those groups.

## How can teachers use information about learning style?

Some experts propose that teachers should accommodate learning style differences; others, while not totally absolving teachers of this obligation, shift the primary responsibility to students themselves. Any approach to the accommodation of learning styles should recognize the constraints inherent in teaching at the university level, e.g., large classes, limited contact with students. The most realistic approach should respect the following principles:

1. Students should be empowered through the development of awareness of their own learning styles.
2. Teachers should vary their teaching methods and assignments so that no learning styles are totally disadvantaged across a whole course.

One particularly helpful approach to learning styles is Kolb's "*experiential learning model*." This is described nicely by Anderson & Adams (1992).\* This model describes four dimensions in a learning cycle which include a learner's immersion in a *concrete experience*, followed by *observations and reflections*, followed by logically shaped or inductive formation of *abstract concepts and generalizations*, and finally, the empirical testing of the *implications of concepts in new situations*. This, in turn, gives rise to new experiences which starts the learning cycle again at a greater level of complexity.

Table I below lists teaching activities that support different aspects of this learning cycle. Any of these can be further adapted for individual or group, competitive or collaborative, in-class or out-of-class activities.

Table I

### ***Teaching Activities that Support Different Aspects of the Learning Cycle***

<u>Concrete Experience</u>	<u>Reflective Observation</u>	<u>Abstract Conceptualization</u>	<u>Active Experimentation</u>
readings examples fieldwork laboratories problem sets trigger films observations simulations/games text reading	logs journals discussion brainstorming thought questions rhetorical questions	lecture papers projects analogies model building	projects fieldwork homework laboratory case study simulations

## Tips for Instructors and Teaching Assistants

- Develop an awareness of the types of teaching activities or assignments that favor a particular type of learning style. (See table provided in this chapter for examples.)
- Vary your teaching activities and assignments so that certain learning styles are not constantly disadvantaged.
- Allow students to choose, if possible, how they demonstrate competence in some assignments, e.g., paper or project, individual or team work.
- Provide appropriate support when you know that an activity or assignment requires behaviours to which one style is unaccustomed. Techniques for doing this could include additional tutorials, group assignments, availability during office hours and peer support.
- Determine your students' learning styles as much as possible. In other words, try to understand not only *what* your students know or don't know, but also *how* they came to know it. Techniques for doing this could include observation, discussion, or asking students to write a mini-paper on "*How I learn best*" or "*My most rewarding learning experience.*" Questions also are available to assess various dimensions of learning styles.
- Conduct your own classroom-based "action research" on the relationship between learning styles and student satisfaction/performance. OI DT staff can assist you in designing and conducting these types of studies.

\* Anderson, J.A., & Adams, M. (1992). "Acknowledge the Learning Styles of Diverse Student Populations: Implications for Instructional Design." In L.L.B. Chism, Teaching for Diversity. New Directions in Teaching and Learning. no. 42, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

## Effective Communication

*Dalhousie University, Centre for Learning and Teaching*

How often have you heard the following? "Professor Wye sure knows a lot about his subject; I wish he could communicate it better."

Communication is inseparable from many of the recognized qualities of a good teacher. It has an impact on the way you present your material, create rapport with the students, and establish your credibility in and control of the class. And remember, communication involves receiving as well as sending - in other words, a good communicator is also a good listener.

Once you are comfortable with your knowledge of the material you are about to teach, here are some skills to help you communicate it effectively:

1. Know your students. If you know your audience, the whole communications process will be much easier.
2. Don't be afraid of silence - take a moment to think before you talk.
3. Use clear and precise terms.
4. Avoid using jargon; if you must, give a definition to ensure everyone understands.
5. Listen carefully to student responses.
6. Be sensitive to student behaviour and non-verbal communication in the class. A lot of chattering or restless shuffling could indicate that the class does not understand something. Stop and ask for an explanation.
7. Create a gender-sensitive classroom environment. Use language which is inclusive and examples which are appropriate and comfortable for everyone in the class (See section on Harassment and Discrimination).
8. Use humour, by all means, but make sure it is neither tasteless nor malicious.

## Question and Answer Techniques

Questions and answers are essential components of teaching and learning. You will ask questions of your students and answer questions from them.

Asking a good question will help you motivate students' curiosity about the topic, and it will help you assess how well they understand the material.



There are two kinds of questions: *closed* and *open*. A closed question (sometimes called a "lower order" question) is usually used to check student comprehension. It requires a factual answer and allows little opportunity for dissent; e.g., "What does 'x' equal in this equation?"; "Which of Henry VIII's wives survived him?" The answer will be either correct or incorrect.

An open or "higher order" question offers the students much more opportunity to speculate, draw inferences, extrapolate from data, or contribute their own opinions; e.g., "What do you think would happen if we reduced the temperature by 25 degrees?"; "Which of the two short stories provides the best description of adolescence?"

Open questions are frequently the springboards for lively class discussion. You might want to think of some possible answers to an open question before you ask it in class.

Answering student questions can be unnerving at first. If you do not know the answer, say so. It is better to be honest than to give an inaccurate answer which will have to be retracted later. Tell the students you will find out for them by next class; better still, invite the questioner to find the answer and report it at the next class.

Further guidelines for answering student questions include:

1. Take a moment to think carefully before you respond to student questions.
2. Listen to the question carefully. It may indicate that the student is having difficulty with the material. You may wish to answer with another question until you discover where the student's misunderstanding begins.
3. If the question requires a very lengthy response or demonstrates that the questioner has missed some classes, you may wish to ask the student to stay behind after class or come to see you at another time to get the answer.

Remember these points concerning questions addressed to the class:

1. Ask only one question at a time.
2. Wait at least 15 seconds for a response.
3. If there is no answer, rephrase the question and ask it again. Asking a different question will confuse the students.

### **Rapport in the Classroom: Responses and Respect**

Students are often very hesitant to speak out in class. Questions go unasked and unanswered, students remain silent because they are afraid to lose their self-esteem by being put down in front of their classmates.

Here are some hints for creating a more open, rewarding, and responsive classroom environment.

1. Listen to what students say without comment. Use eye contact, non-verbal cues such as a nod, and facial expression to indicate that you're interested.
2. Don't dismiss student comments with a vague phrase such as "uh-huh," or "okay."
3. Don't interrupt student comments or responses.
4. Try to incorporate student comments and responses into your material.
5. Encourage students to respond to each other by inviting them to comment on a remark a classmate has made.
6. Write good responses or comments on the board to emphasize the value of student contributions to your class.
7. If you are not sure what a student is asking, ask some questions which will help you clarify. Don't say, "I don't understand what you mean."
8. If you cannot answer a question, be frank with the class. Ask for help; maybe one of the students can give an example to help you out.
9. Repeat and paraphrase student answers. This shows that you were listening, helps you check that you understood what the student meant, and ensures that everyone in class hears what was said.
10. Never try to capitalize on students' confusion by ridiculing or joking about incorrect responses. "Humour" of that kind is bound to backfire and create the very kind of inhospitable climate that you are trying to avoid.
11. Never deter questions by saying, "Well that was really straightforward. I don't suppose there are any questions, are there?" You can bet there won't be.

## Running an Effective Laboratory Session

*Saphida Migabo, (Biology)*

One of the duties of a laboratory teaching assistant is to lead laboratory sessions. Depending on the program, these could be one or more sessions. Your responsibilities will depend on whether you are co-teaching the lab with the professor or Senior Laboratory Instructor (SLI) in charge of the class or you are on your own. The following are some suggestions to help you run your lab session.

### Advance Preparation

- Read the lab exercises over. Depending on the complexity of the lab, you may want to read the lab several times. Make sure you understand the objectives and learning outcomes of the exercise.
- Know your subject. If the topic is unfamiliar or you are a bit rusty do some background reading.
- Meet with your supervisor to verify lab procedures, availability of supplies and so forth. Note any changes that students need to be made aware of.
- If your supervisor has not provided you with a lab outline to follow, prepare your own. An example of TA-generated outline is provided at the end of this document.
- Prepare questions and examples to work from during the lab.

### Prep session

- Confirm that you have all the necessary materials and equipment.
- Familiarize yourself with the layout of the lab, procedures and equipment the students will use. Do not assume that materials and techniques are basic and you will have no trouble teaching them.
- It is strongly recommended that you are comfortable with all calculations that the students will be performing.
- Familiarize yourself with lab safety protocols and know the location of all safety equipments such as fire extinguishers, exit, showers and eye wash stations.
- Read the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), if the lab involves the use of chemicals.
- If there are things you can do before the lab, such as setting equipment out, do it at this time.

## During the lab

### Pre-lab talk

Be prepared to give an effective presentation to the students regarding the lab activities. What to include in the presentations largely depends on the lab. Keep the pre-lab talk to a minimal (10-20 minutes) to allow enough time for students to complete the experiments.

- Start your lab on time.
- Start by making any important announcement regarding the current or previous labs.
- Introduce the experiment. This may include providing background information such as relevant theories or concepts. You can use the whiteboard, overheads or Powerpoint if available.
- Remind students of the objectives of the lab.
- Relate theory to the lab objectives.
- As much as possible, relate the experiment to real world applications. This helps student see the importance of the experiment and enhances their learning.
- Provide a brief overview of what the students will do.
- Demonstrate any special or complicated procedures and/or equipment.
- If materials and equipment required are not on their benches, point their locations or where to find them..
- Go over any safety guidelines associated with the lab.
- Provide sufficient instructions for safe use of chemicals and other potentially hazardous laboratory equipment.
- Ask enough questions to ensure that students understand what is required of them.

## Conducting the class

- Encourage students to work in groups. Limit the group size to three students.
- Do not sit at the front of the room. Circulate throughout the room and see how students are doing.
- As you move from group to group, ask targeted questions to ensure students are learning the key points and understand what they are doing.
- Try and talk to every individual or group at least once during the session.
- Take attendance. Whether one takes attendance depends on course policy. Check with the professor or SLI in charge. You can take attendance while you circulate amongst your students.
- Answer student questions, offer encouragement and useful advice.
- If you find that students are having difficulties with one part of the experiment, it is advisable you alert the whole class and explain and/or demonstrate the procedure again. If one or two groups are having problems, probably the rest of the class is.

### Concluding the session

- Ask students to clean their workbenches and put equipment and other supplies in their respective locations if this is required.
- Reconvene at the end of the class and summarize important findings/conclusions. Explain results that are different than expected. Ask students to offer alternative explanations.
- Answer any questions students may have.
- Collect any assignments for marking.
- End the session on a positive note and remind students of any assignments/tests due during the week or the following week.

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## Classroom and Laboratory Safety

*Saphida Migabo (Biology)*

As the TA present in a classroom or laboratory, it is your responsibility to be aware of all safety rules and regulations. This is true even if you are not the formal authority (i.e. Instructor or Professor) normally present; make sure you can handle an emergency in the absence of the faculty member. The most effective way of ensuring you can handle a potential emergency is to be prepared.

All TAs planning on teaching any labs are required to take a mandatory TA training safety course before teaching or assisting. This course is offered twice during the year, at the beginning of fall and winter semesters. Check with your instructor or Senior Laboratory instructor for the dates.

The following tips will help you ensure classroom and lab safety:

1. Familiarize yourself with the UNBC Laboratory Safety Reference manual. This manual is available in all labs.
2. Each lab is equipped with a telephone. In case of an emergency, call campus security at 3333 (within Campus) or 960-3333 (outside campus). The number for non-emergency calls is 7058. Know where the telephone is located in the room.
3. Know the locations of fire/emergency exits, fire alarms, and the best evacuation routes. Evacuation plans for each building are posted in the lab and hallways. Know the Evacuation Assembly point for your building.
4. Know the location of fire extinguishers, emergency fire blankets, emergency showers, and eye wash stations and how to use them.
5. If you are using any chemicals in the lab, familiarize yourself with the accompanying Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS). From UNBC computers, they are available online at <http://ccinforweb.ccohs.ca>. In addition, you need to familiarize yourself with Workplace Hazardous Material Information System (WHMIS) symbols posted on the bulletin board in your room.
6. Familiarize yourself with fumehood operations.
7. Contain only small unhazardous spills in the laboratories. In the event of hazardous chemical spills, or major spills (several litres) follow the call out procedures posted in each lab near the phone. The first call goes to Security (3333) and then Security will contact the Chemical Safety Officer. Call security non emergency number (7058) for minor spills. In case of gas leak, if you can safely do so, try to confine the leak by shutting off the source of gas,

closing the door, etc. Report gas leaks or suspicious odours to Campus security.

8. In the event of fire, call 3333 to report the details and pull the fire alarm. Ensure the safety of students and other occupants of the building.
9. In the event of fire alarm, direct your students to evacuate the building by the fire exit or shortest route. Do not use elevators. Give assistance to handicapped persons and close the door but do not lock it. Do not return to the building until authorized.
10. In the event of serious injury or illness, do not move the injured person unless it is a life threatening situation. If possible, do not leave an injured person unattended. Call Campus Security at 3333 and give as much information as you can. Security will arrange for medical help and an ambulance, if required. Return and remain with the injured person, obtaining local medical assistance if available.
11. The following safety regulations must be adhered to:
  - i. No smoking or food or drinks are allowed in the labs. Lockers are available outside each lab for storage of these items.
  - ii. Appropriate footwear must be worn (open toed shoes, sandals, bare or stockinged feet present an accident risk).
  - iii. Shorts or short clothing (skirts/skorts/etc.) cannot be worn under the lab coats.
  - iv. Lab coats must be worn in all wet labs.
  - v. Contacts lens should not be worn in the lab.
  - vi. When required, wear appropriate protective equipment such as safety eye glasses, shields and gloves.
  - vii. No horseplay and pranks: they are potentially dangerous;
  - viii. Long hair should be tied back to minimize fire hazards and contamination of experiments.
  - ix. Develop a healthy respect for chemicals, know safety procedures (e.g. use of fumehood, gloves, eye protection and how chemicals should be stored), and be alert for unsafe practices and techniques.
  - x. Encourage students to wash their hands before leaving the lab and not to put anything in their mouths including pencils, fingers etc.
  - xi. No tasting of any substance or solution is allowed.
  - xii. Treat all live animals gently and with respect.
  - xiii. Use lab equipment properly. If you are unfamiliar with any equipment, check with your supervisor first or use the equipment manual if available.
  - xiv. Keep lab benches clean and clear of clutter. Students bags should be placed under their benches or at the front.
  - xv. Discard lab waste in the appropriate buckets and bottles. Waste is segregated into liquid, solid and sharps. Biohazard solid waste is disposed in the 20-L plastic buckets available in each lab. Familiarize yourself with disposal protocols posted in the labs. Liquid waste should be discarded in the glass liquid bottles. Record type of waste added to each bottle. In cases where you need immediate disposal, call the University Dispensing

Chemist at 6472. Sharps (blades, needles, scalpels etc) are disposed in the sharps container available in each lab.

xvi. Do not discard chemicals, radioactive materials, sharp objects or animal tissues along with regular garbage.

12. In cases when you are to take students outside even for brief periods, make sure you are aware of possible dangers and ways to minimize them. Ask students to familiarize themselves with the safety and risks clause which can be found on the first page of the Undergraduate/Graduate University Calendars.

13. At the end of each lab, return all equipment and supplies to their original locations.

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## Evaluating Your Teaching

*Jennifer Hyndman (Mathematics)*

As TA (and any teacher for that matter), you might wonder: how is my teaching going? Am I making sense to the students? Sometimes the only feedback you get is at the end of the year. There are, however, many ways to evaluate your teaching during the term. But remember, when considering evaluation techniques to use, it is very important to know your goal.

### Reasons for doing evaluation:

- you are a brand new teacher/TA and you feel like you don't know what you are doing;
- you are a seasoned TA and you feel like trying out something different in your lab or seminar;
- you want evidence to support applications for the CSAM TA Award
- you want to start building a teaching dossier

### Who can do an evaluation?

Evaluation can be done by your peers, staff and faculty associated with the Centre for Teaching and Learning, your students or yourself.

You can ask a colleague, your faculty member or staff and faculty associated with the Centre for Teaching and Learning to:

- watch one or more classes;
- talk to your students.

Techniques for involving students include:

- in-class dialogue on teaching;
- exam averages - they are related to your teaching but high averages don't necessarily mean great teaching;
- casual conversations with students in the hallway;
- daily critiques. Have each student write one sentence on the main topic of the lecture at the end of the lecture. Do the students agree with you on what the main topic of the lecture was?
- student logs recording work done and work habits;
- have students write tables of contents for their notes;
- have students write minute papers. Take five minutes at the end of class for the students to summarize the class content. Check out the website at Southern Illinois University for their description of the one minute paper: <http://www.siu.edu/~deder/assess/cats/minpap4.html>.

You can evaluate your own teaching. You do not have to go to others to evaluate your own teaching. Simply stop and think about how you teach and why you teach. You may

be surprised by what you learn. Another form of self-evaluation is to have your lecture video or audio taped. Watching yourself will show you your habits.

### What to evaluate?

Colleagues/CTL staff and associated faculty can help you evaluate:

- lecture pacing and organization
- lecture/seminar delivery style
- correspondence between your desired student outcomes and your assessment techniques
- course outlines, handouts, powerpoint slides

Evaluations can take place throughout the term and are used to get feedback from students but be careful about the questions you ask your students. Consider what is it that motivates your evaluation? Questions you can pose to your students can include:

- Why are you in this class?
- What did you find hard?
- What did you find easy?
- Are you bored in class?
- Why do you participate in class discussions?
- Why do you not participate in class discussions?
- How much time do you spend on each component of this course?
- Are you using the resources available?
- What is your background?

### When to do an evaluation?

Evaluation can be done throughout the semester. Student surveys can be done at the beginning, middle and end of a course. Peer reviews or videotaping can be done anytime. Self evaluation can happen all the time!

For example:

- You can use the one minute essay after any lecture or seminar to see if the students had picked up the key points in the lecture.
- You can ask a series of background related questions at the beginning of the term to get a sense of your audience.
- And of course you can have a summative evaluation at the end of the course
- A program could also do a survey of graduating students to get feedback on the program as a whole

If you do extra evaluation, be prepared to act on the feedback you get. Students notice if you ask how you are doing and then don't change your behavior.

One final note - you may wish to consult with your faculty member about your interest in evaluation and they can support you in this initiative.

## Resources

- If you search for *Evaluating Teaching Performance* on the web you will find many informative sites including:  
[http://www.tlc.eku.edu/tips/evaluating\\_teaching/](http://www.tlc.eku.edu/tips/evaluating_teaching/)
- <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teachtip.htm>
- <http://www.utexas.edu/academic/cte/getfeedback/>

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## Handling Student Grievances and Classroom Conflict

*Heather Smith (International Studies and CTL)*

The following document does not seek to be “authoritative”. It is drawn from my experience and reflects some of the issues that I have addressed in my class - sometimes successfully and sometimes not! Classroom conflict and student grievances are something that we all have to deal with, for better or worse. Having strategies to address conflict and grievances in advance is an important element of effective teaching.

For the TA it is crucial to understand that while you do need to be able to manage behaviour in your labs and/or seminars, that in cases of conflict over grades, or serious behaviour issues it is **the faculty member’s of SLI’s responsibility** to address these matters.

### Classroom Conflict

Classroom Conflict: for the purposes here, I have conceived of classroom conflict as tensions that exist in the classroom itself, between the TAs and the students and between the students themselves. From the faculty perspective, this may be translated into inappropriate classroom behavior and thus begs the question: how do we manage that behaviour. Behaviours may include the following:

- Student tardiness or lack of attendance
- Students talking during your lecture
- Inappropriate comments in classroom discussion (creation of an unsafe classroom environment)
- Student hostility toward the professor
- Students leaving the classroom
- Students sleeping

### Student Grievances

Student grievances: may include the following:

- “Public/institutional complaints” - These are gripes about the institution that may arise in the classroom. For example: “I have problems getting reserve readings”.
- Complaints or grievances about other students - These are concerns students raise about other students, for example in a group work context. What are you, as the professor, going to do about students who under perform in group work or if they get sick?
- Student complaints about course work or issues about timeliness of return of assignments
- Student complaints about other faculty members - ie. Unfairness in another class or harassment

- Student misconduct that results in a student grievance.

### Some Grievance and Conflict Management Techniques:

- One of the best ways to avoid student grievances is to “lay down the law” in your course outlines. Your course instructor should have all the key items addressed in the course outline.
- Try to be a “critically reflective teacher” - monitor your own behavior. Remember that our style and behaviour may be the source of some unexpected conflict. For example, a more personalized style which I tend to adopt, while encouraged from some pedagogical perspectives, can result in students assuming a flexibility on the professor’s part. If we seek to empower students in the classroom some students may seek to take advantage of the dispersed authority. Similarly, students may well take grades more personally if they feel more personally connected to you. *Each of us has our own teaching style and if we are self aware we realize that our teaching style and attitudes towards the classroom have implications.* We need to consider how our students are experiencing the classroom - that will help us address those unexpected conflicts or problems inside and outside the classroom.
- Talk to your assigned instructor or SLI. It is important to use care when discussing these issues especially given confidentiality rules at the university regarding student files, but many have experience in terms of dealing with difficult seminar or lab behaviour.
- Be consistent in the application of rules - special deals with students can cause you problems.
- If the student grievance is a result of your claim of misconduct (such as plagiarism or cheating) you should ensure that you have the necessary evidence to support your claim. How have you proven the cheating or plagiarism? See the strategy below regarding oral exams as a means by which to force the student to prove that their work is their own. Having a discussion in plagiarism and cheating in your class helps avoid this kind of conflict and having a section in your class outline supports your case if it goes to appeal.
- **If you are dealing with a case of plagiarism and/or cheating ensure that you follow the appropriate procedures.** There are forms that must be filled out and steps that must be taken to ensure due process. I strongly encourage you to report **ALL** cases of plagiarism and/or cheating.
- Students do have a right to appeal and you have a right to disagree with their grievance. To support your case, ensure you have appropriate documentation.
- If the grievance relates to harassment, this must be taken very seriously. Documentation is paramount as is discretion. The campus harassment officer can provide you with strategies for dealing with this issue. Contact Cindy Hardy, the Harassment Advisor and see also the section on Harassment and Discrimination in this manual.
- Remember that we all make mistakes and while you might want to confess to your class - experience suggests that you might want to rectify the problem in a fair but private way and at the same time try to “never let them see you sweat”. General classroom discussions about the fairness or accuracy of a multiple choice question can lead to mayhem (trust me!).

- Rules regarding plagiarism and cheating are available at:  
<http://www.unbc.ca/calendar/undergraduate/general/regulations.html>

### Some general tips related to discipline in the classroom

- Be consistent in everything you do
- Do what you preach
- Don't just set the rules - stand by them.
- Apply all the same rules to everyone in class - no favoritism
- Make your expectations clear (about attendance, submission of work, participation, classroom behavior)
- Try to demonstrate understanding for your students, but at the same time be firm
- No matter what, do not lose your calm
- Use a firm voice, but do not yell or scream
- Do not confront an unruly student in front of the classroom, but rather talk to him or her in private
- Use humor to dissipate tension and frustration
- If you are having a bad day, do not bring it to the classroom
- Don't take things personally

(Taken from; Vesna Nikolic and Hanna Cabji *Am I Teaching Well: Self-Evaluation Strategies for Effective Teachers* (Toronto: Pippin, 2000), 162.

## Teaching Dossiers

*Jennifer Hyndman (Mathematics)*

### What is a teaching dossier?

One of the first questions in the 2005 brown bag session on Teaching Portfolios and Dossiers was: what is a teaching dossier and when do I use it?

The short answer to the first part of this question is that a teaching dossier is a snapshot of who you are as a teacher at the time you create the dossier. As you progress through your teaching career your dossier should evolve and grow with you.

### Items that you might put in your dossier include:

1. Table of contents.
2. Statement of Philosophy
3. Course Summary: statistics for each course taught
  - a. Course name
  - b. Course number
  - c. Univeristy/College course taught at
  - d. Number of students
  - e. lecture or lab or tutorial, instructor or teaching assistant
3. Course Information
  - a. Course outlines
  - b. Innovative course delivery
  - c. Course development
  - d. Course evaluations
  - e. Sample course materials
4. Letters
  - a. Peer evaluations
  - b. Student letters
5. Evidence of Educational Leadership
  - a. Teaching presentations
  - b. Workshops attended
  - c. Publications on teaching
  - d. Board memberships

### When is a dossier used?

As to the question of when is a teaching dossier used, it is probably most true that you only use parts of it at any one time.

- Job application: A job application might include your statement of teaching philosophy, your list of courses taught, summaries of course evaluations and one or two other highlights of your teaching career. A hiring committee member looking at 50 or 200 applications wants a clear, organized and short job application.
- Your evolution as a reflective teacher: As you progress through your career your dossier can also help you in your reflective practice. What worked? What didn't? Why?

Whatever you do, ask the question: *Who am I as a teacher?* You will need to know.

### Resources:

- Positive Pedagogy: Successful and Innovative Strategies in Higher Education is the online journal developed by winners of the STHLE 3M Award. Volume 2, Numbers 2/3 has philosophy statements of several of the award winners.  
<http://www.mcmaster.ca/cll/posped/index.htm>
- The website of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education has good information about what should go into a large teaching dossier.  
<http://www.mcmaster.ca/3Mteachingfellowships/index2.html>
- The University of Victoria's Teaching Dossier Kit includes instructions on how to collect the data you will need. Get your file folders ready!  
<http://web.uvic.ca/terc/resources/publications/teaching.htm>
- Excerpts from Peter Seldin's book *The Teaching Portfolio - A practical guide to improved performance and promotion/tenure decisions*.  
[http://www.city.londonmet.ac.uk/deliberations/portfolios/ICED\\_workshop/seldin\\_book.html#chapter1](http://www.city.londonmet.ac.uk/deliberations/portfolios/ICED_workshop/seldin_book.html#chapter1)
- Information to help you create a teaching dossier is available from many sources. A good link to follow is:  
[http://teachingperspectives.com/html/tpi\\_frames.htm](http://teachingperspectives.com/html/tpi_frames.htm)  
This site has a quiz that helps you focus on your attributes and values as a teacher.
- Writing a statement of teaching philosophy is easier after you have thought about the questions asked in the quiz. Your statement of teaching philosophy should be one or two pages and allow a reader to learn something about you. The University of Western Ontario site:  
[http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/dossier\\_menu.html](http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/dossier_menu.html) provides guidance on writing a statement of teaching philosophy and other suggestions for what goes in a teaching dossier.



## Teaching Tips for Students with Disabilities

*Maureen Hewlett, Disabilities Advisor*

There are students with disabilities at UNBC and in your class. Each is unique and has specific needs.

The following suggestions are just good teaching practice, but such practice is extremely helpful for students with disabilities. Included are some specific accommodations that would allow students with learning disabilities to achieve their full potential and enable you to accurately measure their knowledge.

### Suggestions for the classroom

#### General

- make available a detailed course outline prior to the course commencement
- choose well-organized texts with reader aids (e.g., chapter summaries, glossaries, indexes)
- assign readings in advance, and if appropriate, provide an alternate, less demanding reading list
- make available clear lecture outlines at the beginning of each class
- teach definitions and terms
- use a multi-sensory approach including visual, oral, and hands-on learning techniques
- provide examples of the main concepts
- emphasize points
- clarify relationships
- encourage students to discuss and compare their notes with each other
- encourage students to form study groups
- allow time for questions

#### Specific

- allow the student to use a tape recorder during class
- post summary lecture notes and/or Power Point presentations on a secure course webpage or in a WebCT shell

### Suggestions regarding assignments

#### General

- explain assignments particularly clearly, both orally and in writing, with clear interim and final deadlines
- permit plenty of time for completion

### Specific

- provide alternative assignment formats for students to enable demonstration of competence, e.g., class presentations, submission of assignments on audio or video tape
- encourage students with learning disabilities to discuss their writing assignments with Disability Services; money might be available for a tutor

## Suggestions regarding exams

### General

- give students plenty of time to complete exams
- give students information on exam format ahead of time. e.g., 30% multiple choice, 20% short answer, 50% essay format
- permit the use of calculators and dictionaries

### Specific

- permit the students with learning disabilities to write exams in a quiet room free from visual/auditory distractions, with extra time
- permit an oral exam, taped responses, large print materials, etc.
- permit the use of scribes, computers and word processors or other such technical aids that may be appropriate

## Universal Instructional Design - The Seven Principles

The learner-centredness approach to education aims to develop in each student, as early as possible, a sense of responsibility for his/her own learning. The emphasis is on self-reliant learning, which involves setting learning goals and monitoring one's own growth and development. It also includes making explicit the research/teaching link, skill development, and experiential learning.

For this approach to be successful, an academic environment must be fostered in which students are actively supported as they take responsibility for their own learning. Universal Instructional Design (UID) guides educators in their endeavor to develop learner-centred instruction and course content.

What is Universal Instructional Design? The core principle of UID is inclusiveness and equity. It suggests that ideally all students should be able to fulfill course requirements without special accommodations.

What are the benefits of implementing UID? UID avoids segregating or stigmatizing any student. UID creates a learning environment that respects and values diversity.

## Exploring Principle 1 - Be Accessible and Fair

Guiding question: Is it likely that students will have difficulties accessing course materials or participating in any essential activities related to my classes?

UID anticipates varying student needs and circumstances. It involves a commitment to remove barriers to accessing course materials and taking part in essential activities.

Suggestions:

- In your syllabus, include an invitation for students with disabilities to meet with you to review their specific needs.
- In advance of a lecture, post an online summary of the key points to be covered in the class.
- Ensure all online materials are formatted so that they can be used with screen reading software.

### Exploring Principle 2 - Be Straightforward and Consistent

Guiding question: Are there major areas of confusion or inconsistency among course objectives, your own expectations and/or how the course is presented?

UID overcomes confusion, coordinating all parts of the curriculum, and clarifying communications. Implementing what is known about learning and study skills.

*Suggestions:*

- Confirm that every question on your exam relates directly to information covered in class or within the written materials.
- Verbally communicate any changes to the course syllabus and also provide the changes in writing (e.g., online).
- Ensure consistency between written materials and PowerPoint slides - this guides learning by providing visual and cognitive clues, i.e., predicting meaning and actions.

### Exploring Principle 3 - Provide Flexibility in Use, Participation and Presentation

Guiding question: Does the course offer students enough choices in how it is presented so that they can, to a reasonable extent, approach the course in a way that suits their needs and abilities?

UID offers options in order to enable physical use, allow fuller participation, and permit suitable demonstration of mastery of course requirements. Use your imagination to create a rich learning environment for all involved.

Suggestions:

- Offer students the option of submitting a written report or doing a class presentation.
- Choose textbooks early and ensure the publisher will provide them in alternative formats (e.g., digital/electronic).

- Design group work projects so that students have choices in how they participate (e.g., face-to-face or online).

#### Exploring Principle 4 - Be Explicitly Presented and Readily Perceived

Guiding question: Are there barriers to students receiving or understanding the information and resources they need in this course?

UID maximizes all communication media, without presumption that students are physically or cognitively enabled for all media. Use a two-pronged review of course materials, resources and delivery. There is a difference between explicitly *presented* and readily *perceived*. Imagine a clearly spoken lecture presented in a dim room with a hearing-impaired student in the back row.

Suggestions:

- Provide an in-class demonstration of the course website or WebCT.
- Post online summaries of key lecture points and/or provide online lecture notes.
- Ensure all online pictures and graphics have text-based descriptions.
- Provide a choice of file formats on your website or WebCT.
- Provide verbal explanations of key information presented in class through visual aides.

#### Exploring Principle 5 - Provide a Supportive Learning Environment

Guiding question: Will students feel respected as individuals, welcome to express their thoughts and able to explore new ideas in the course?

UID is about attitudes and actions that demonstrate respect for students as adults, contributing to the learning of all. Encouraging questions and comments and respecting individual needs.

Suggestions:

- Encourage experimentation and make it ok not to succeed at first.
- Provide an online option where students can post comments and ask each other questions - *define guidelines for use!*
- Encourage students to sit beside someone different at each lecture and give them 2 minutes to introduce themselves.
- Encourage more experienced students to share their knowledge with others - create a collaborative learning atmosphere.

#### Exploring Principle 6 - Minimize Unnecessary Physical Effort or Requirements

Guiding question: If there are physical challenges or obstacles to participating in this course, can they be reduced or avoided?

UID recognizes that students will be of a wide range of ages, backgrounds, physical characteristics and personal circumstances. Systematically eliminate, or at least adjust, anything that requires physical effort.

Suggestions:

- Ensure you have an efficient, user-friendly interface for your course website or online materials.
- Assignments requiring physical effort should be designed as group activities.
- If the course includes online conferencing provide students with a summary of netiquette, include a reminder to put new information at the top of a forwarded message so that students using screen readers do not have to re-listen to old information before hearing the new information.

### **Exploring Principle 7 - Ensure a Learning Space that Accommodates Both Students and Instructional Methods**

Guiding question: Is it likely that students will find any of the materials or activities in this course to be inappropriate or unsuitable?

UID recognizes that learning happens in intellectual as well as physical space. Review the entire student experience from the standpoint of appropriateness, suitability, and psychological accord, avoiding discord.

Suggestions:

- Check your class enrollment numbers and visit the assigned classroom prior to the beginning of the semester.
- Adapt your course plans if needed, be creative.
- Design an online component that will enhance learning and alleviate classroom constraints.

### **UNBC Resources**

Centre for Teaching & Learning ~ Disability Services ~ Educational Media Services ~ Learning Skills Centre and YOUR STUDENTS

**If you have questions or would like additional information please contact Disability Services at 960-5682.**

## Guidelines for Invigilation of Exams

*Lynda Williams (Project Leader, Centre for Teaching and Learning)*

Preparing for an exam is the art of abiding by institutional policy and adopting useful habits. The trick is to anticipate all possible complications and to state your approach to them in advance.

### Key Points in UNBC Policy

For UNBC policy issues relating to exams, in general, see sections 38 to 43 of UNBC Regulations at <http://www.unbc.ca/calendar/undergraduate/general/regulations.html>.

- No exam can be worth more than 50% of the course grade and a final exam can be no longer than 3 hours in duration. *(Note: but it may be shorter.)*
- One final exam per each 24 hours period is the limit. Where conflicts occur, one or more instructors must agree to make alternative arrangements. *(Note: There is no explicit institutional support for this requirement. Ask your secretary what other faculty in your program do in such cases.)*
- A student has the right to ask you to review an exam with him/her on an informal basis, but only after the grade has been released, and before the expiry of the 60 days for which you are obliged to retain the exam papers.
- When you are ready to dispose of exams, get them shredded or otherwise disposed of in a secure fashion.
- Devices such as calculators or any additional aids (e.g. books, computers, reference sheets, etc.) are allowed only with your permission. You may disallow any of them you wish. *(Note: You may lose this right in the case of a student with a particular disability.)*
- Students may not enter the exam room more than 30 minutes after an exam has started. For the first 30 minutes of the exam, students may not leave. Students who need to leave after the first 30 minutes may do so only with the invigilator's permission.
- Students must turn in all materials (including rough work) when they leave the exam room.

### Good Habits for Invigilators

- Declare your policy with regard to washroom visits. It is best to tell students they will not be permitted to leave the room once the exam starts. You can suggest they go before getting their paper, if you are prepared to accommodate that.
- Have a space for the student's name and student number on the first page of the exam. Number the pages of the exam in your footer and include the total number of pages in the document. (e.g. "Page 2 of 6").

- If using booklets, let students know how to get extra ones (if permitted) and remind them to put their names and student numbers on all booklets and any extra pieces of paper that might contribute to their grade.
- Keep exams in a secure place before you take them to the exam. (e.g. do not leave them anywhere accessible to students.)
- If you have cause to keep blank exams from students after the examination at hand, then number exams to keep track of them and bring a sheet with the numbers written down one side into the examination. As students hand in exams, record the name of each student beside the number of the exam. This is also a handy way to reassure yourself you have all the exams handed in to you, later.
- Decide whether you want students to put any backpacks or book bags down the front of the class or you are comfortable with them keeping them at their feet. Declare and enforce your decision.
- If you have enough seats, require students to spread out such that there is at least one empty seat between them in all cases.
- Know in advance whether you will allow calculators, if meaningful.
- Policy does not require student cards be shown, but if you require students to show their student cards, let them know how you intend to check them. Will you circulate during the exam, or require the card be shown when the student hands in his or her paper?
- Tell students whether they can use pencil or only pen. If you accept pencil, and the exam is one that is returned to students (midterm), warn the students you will not be able to re-grade tests based on claims that an error was made in the marking, or else have a plan for marking papers that will preclude students erasing answers and altering them before re-submission. (It is easiest to require pen.)
- Arrive early and establish the rules with regard to backpacks and seating arrangements as students come in.
- Inform students what sort of questions, if any, you will entertain during the examination and how they should approach you. It is wise to discourage questions during exams, in general, but even the best exam can have a typo in it, so some allowance might be vital. If every student is accessible, you might request that students raise their hands so you can go to them, but this can be disruptive if you have to get past other students. If you agree to entertain questions beyond pointing out possible errors in the exam, have a plan for how to process them. One way is to request students leave the problematic question to the end, and ask you about it when they hand in their paper. Encourage them to make the questions ones that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no", and be prepared to say "I cannot tell you that" if a student asks something that would give him or her an unfair advantage.
- If a student must talk to you during the exam, take him or her outside or ask if it can wait until after the exam is finished. At the very least, insist the student keeps his or her voice down and do your best to minimize the disruptive potential of the exchange.
- Do not let any students start the exam before you have finished your announcements.
- Plan how you will distribute the blank exam papers so that students are able to start all at once, or with minimal delay. You want to avoid giving some

students a head start because they are seated in a particular location. One way is to place papers face down on each seat, in advance, if you know exactly how many students to expect. In a small class, you might hand them out personally. In a larger class, it might be useful to request a few students to assist you. If your exam is based on a single essay question, or a couple of short questions, you may opt to use a projector or to write the questions up on the board instead of handing out an exam paper. This gives all students exactly the same starting point. If you use this method, you should make sure the questions are equally accessible to all students for the duration of the exam and let them know they don't have to copy the questions down.

- Tell students how to hand in their exams, when they are finished, and what is expected of them. For example: "When you are finished, please stack your paper on top of this pile, face down, and leave quietly through the doors at the back after picking up your backpack."
- Close the doors to your room after the exam starts, especially if people are talking in the hall and try to minimize the disruption caused by late arrivals, if any.
- Once the exam starts, spend a few minutes reviewing the exam yourself to look for typos. If you find one, interrupt the whole class by calling for their attention, tell them which page the problem is on, and write a note about the problem on the board or projected display at the front of the class so students can refer to it. Do not apologize; just make it crisp and surgical.

#### **Note on Invigilation by the Disability Services Office**

The Disability Services office invigilates exams for students with documented disabilities. Students cannot be referred to them for invigilation purposes for other reasons. Disability Services has a handbook for instructors available online at <http://www.unbc.ca/disabilities> for further information. See also the section on disability management in this manual.



## Responding to and Preventing Harassment and Discrimination

*Cindy Hardy, Harassment & Discrimination Advisor*

“All individuals have the right to work and learn without discrimination or harassment...”<sup>1</sup>

### What is Harassment & Discrimination?

**Harassment is an abuse of authority, or aggressive or threatening behaviour. There are three types: personal, criminal and discriminatory - and each with distinct status under the law:**

#### **Personal.**

Hostile threatening conduct that creates a hostile work and study environment. Includes bullying and abuse of power.

Addressed by:

- Student Code of Conduct.
- Standards of Conduct Policy.
- Faculty and staff agreements.

#### **Criminal.**

Behaviour that causes the target(s) to fear for their safety. Includes stalking, following, watching, and communications directed at a target and/or their friends and family.

Addressed by:

- Criminal Code; go to police.
- On campus assistance available from:
  - Security x3333 (urgent) or 960-7058
  - Women’s Centre (safe space) 960-5632
  - H&D Advisor 960-5814 or 960-6618

#### **Discriminatory.**

Harassment directed at an individual because of their membership in a particular group (i.e., discrimination on “prohibited grounds”).

Discriminatory harassment includes sexual harassment.

Addressed by:

- BC Human Rights Code.

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<sup>1</sup> UNBC Harassment & Discrimination Policy, Section 1.1. Available at [www.unbc.ca/assets/policy/facilities/facilities\\_security\\_harassment\\_and\\_discrimination.pdf](http://www.unbc.ca/assets/policy/facilities/facilities_security_harassment_and_discrimination.pdf)

- Harassment & Discrimination Policy.

Prohibited Grounds:

- Race, Colour, Ancestry, Place of origin, Religion, Family status, Marital status, Physical disability, Mental disability, Sex, Age, Sexual orientation, Political beliefs, Criminal or summary conviction offence unrelated to employment

**Responding to Harassment and Discrimination:**

Role of H&D Advisor

- Provide education about H&D. Call me if you have questions.
- Respond to complaints.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Act as neutral third party.

**Responding to Harassment and Discrimination:**

Your Role

If someone tells you they are experiencing harassment or discrimination:

- Listen, take their concerns seriously.
- Make suggestions about where to get help (e.g., H&D Advisor, Student Services, NUGSS Ombudsperson).
- Maintain confidentiality.

If you are involved in or observe an incident of harassment or discrimination:

- Support the person who was the target of harassment, if you can do so safely.
- Report the event to appropriate authorities (e.g., Security, H&D Advisor).
- **Make a written record of the incident (who, what, where, when) as soon as possible.**

**Preventing Harassment and Discrimination**

- When interacting with students, faculty and staff, adhere to the Student Code of Conduct.
- Respect differences. Be curious, not judgmental.
- Be aware of power imbalances in your working relationships, especially when you are the one with greater power (e.g., if you are a Teaching Assistant responsible for marking assignments and exams).

*'En cha huná* (Translation: He/she also lives.)

UNBC's motto, this Carrier saying reminds us to respect others and to be willing to recognize different perspectives.

Contact information: Dr. Cindy Hardy, Administration Building, Room 2003 960-5814 or 960-6618 hardy@unbc.ca

## Teaching Awards

### CSAM Graduate Teaching Excellence Award

Each year, the College of Science and Management (CSAM) presents one award to a graduate student who has taught courses in the college during the current academic year. The recipient of the award is publicly acknowledged and receives a monetary prize.

#### Nominations

Five students must nominate the candidate, and provide a detailed letter that:

- identifies why they believe the teaching assistant is an exceptional teacher
- demonstrates the clarity and effectiveness of the nominee's instructions and assistance
- describes how the nominee motivates and inspires students

Nomination forms are available from the Office of the Dean of CSAM or from any CSAM faculty member.

For additional information contact the Office of the Dean of CSAM at local

## Counselling and Career Centre

The Counselling and Career Centre consists of a team of registered / certified, caring professionals dedicated to assisting students in their academic, personal and career success. The counsellors are highly educated, trained and experienced in providing services to help students manage the challenges of university life.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

*Client records are held in strict confidence within the UNBC Counselling & Career Centre. Client information will not be released without written consent by the client. Exceptions will be made in a life threatening emergency, or as required by law or public health regulations.*

### Services Provided

- **Personal Counselling:** Professional, registered / certified counsellors provide a confidential and discrete atmosphere in which students can discuss any topic or situation of concern. The Centre is dedicated to helping students explore options and create solutions. The counsellors supervise and mentor bachelor and master's level practicum counsellors who also provide therapeutic and other services.
- **Career Counselling:** Through the use of the Career Centre and with the assistance of professional counsellors and career peer helpers, students are supported in making informed career decisions based on critical self awareness. We provide current and relevant information and tools to promote personal and career awareness and to assist in the decision making process.
- **Group Counselling and Workshops:** Throughout the academic year, supportive groups, training and workshops are offered for students, faculty, staff and volunteers in a number of different areas of interest. Please visit our website or check with the receptionist for current information.
- **Psychiatric Clinic:** Psychiatric Clinics are offered one afternoon a week at the Prince George campus. The psychiatrist works in close partnership with the counsellors and will complete a full assessment and may provide ongoing support. Students must be referred by a physician. Please contact the UNBC Counselling and Career Centre for more information.

### Emergency and Crisis Response (Prince George Only):

CALL US: (250) 960-6369

Crisis situations are responded to immediately between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm Monday through Friday. Crisis response is provided for all members of the UNBC community.

For personal crises occurring after hours, please contact:

**Campus Security** from any phone on campus at 3333, or 960-7058

**Prince George Regional Hospital** at 565-2000, or

**The Prince George Crisis Line** (24 hr service) at 563-1214.

- **Consultation:** The UNBC Counselling & Career Centre provides counselling services to UNBC students only. Consultation is provided to faculty, staff, students, family members and friends who may have general questions or concerns related to student well-being. In addition, consultation and support services are provided for dealing with “at risk” students.
- **Community Services:** The Counselling & Career Centre provides services in partnership with a number of community agencies which includes but is not limited to, groups, workshops and training, in-service, crisis response, etc. Information and referrals are available to link students, faculty and staff with resources and services available in the community. Contact the Centre for a detailed list.
- **Regional Services:** Regional campuses provide access to personal counselling through agreements with registered, professional counsellors. For further information regarding regional counselling services please contact the Coordinator of Counselling at (250) 960-6362.

### **Counselling & Career Centre Contact Information:**

**Telephone:** (250) 960-6369

**Facsimile:** (250) 960-5182

**In-person:** Student Services Reception, Room 7-726

**E-mail:** [counsel@unbc.ca](mailto:counsel@unbc.ca) (note: email is not a confidential form of communication)

**Website:** <http://www.unbc.ca/counsel>

## Students In Distress: A Guide For Faculty and Staff

*UNBC Counselling and Career Centre*

### Signs of Distress

There are warning signs for difficulties that, when present over time or considered in combination, may suggest a level of distress that is cause for concern. In these circumstances you might observe the following:

- Depressed or lethargic mood
- Hyperactivity and /or rapid speech
- Social Isolation or withdrawal
- Marked change in appearance, hygiene, sleeping/eating patterns
- Repeated falling asleep in class
- Uncharacteristic changes in academic performance
- Uncharacteristic changes in attendance of class, labs or meetings
- Requests for special consideration, especially if the student is uncomfortable/unwilling talking about the circumstances
- New or recurrent behaviour that pushes social limits or interferes with the effective management of your class, work group, etc.
- Unusual or exaggerated emotional responses
- Talking or writing about suicide

### Tips for Helping Students in Distress

#### 1. Urgent Concerns

Urgent concerns involve disturbances in thoughts, feelings, or actions that require an immediate response. These include:

- suicidal intentions
- a threat of violence or imminent harm to self or others
- disorientation, hallucinations or delusions
- extreme anxiety or obsessive thinking

#### Suggested Action:

- Remain calm.
- Call campus security (960-3333) or police (911) for assistance.
- For assistance in assessing the situation, call the Coordinator of Counselling: during business hours 960-6362; after hours through campus security 960-3333; Counselling reception 960-6369.
- Ensure that someone remains with the student while contacts are being made, or assist the student to the Counseling Centre or Security (after hours).

- Never leave the student unattended.

## 2. Preventing Violence

You should be concerned if you observe any of the following:

- verbal or physical threats, menacing behaviour, and/ or objects that may be used as weapons
- recent acts of violence, including damage to property
- alcohol or drug intoxication
- paranoia or agitation
- impulsive behaviour

### Suggested Action:

- Protect yourself.
- Ensure the safety of others, only if it does NOT jeopardize your own safety.
- Be alert to the potential for violence (i.e., survey the scene for potential hazards).
- Do not deal with the situation alone; enlist the help of others.
- Contact Security (960-3333).
- Approach the individual in a non-threatening manner and speak in a calm, firm but reassuring voice.
- Do not touch or physically restrain the student.
- If you are attacked use only enough force to restrain the student.
- Try to minimize environmental stimuli such as noise, lights, and people.

## 3. Non-Urgent Concerns

Non-urgent concerns involve those situations where students may be distressed (see “Signs of Distress”) but do not require an immediate response.

- Talk to the student as soon as possible, in private when both of you have time and are not rushed. Try to eliminate the possibility of interruptions.
- If you are not comfortable to speak with the student, contact the Counselling Centre (960-6369).
- Share your observations and concerns in a gentle and honest manner. Avoid assumptions, judgments and suggesting solutions.
- Listen very carefully.
- Maintain clear interpersonal boundaries while emphasizing your concern.
- Refer to the appropriate resource. If in doubt, call the UNBC Counselling Centre (960-6369). Staff can assist with assessment and referrals.
- Arrange to follow-up with the student to ensure student follow through. Continue to provide support where necessary.
- All counselling sessions are confidential and information can not be shared with the referring party unless a Release of Information form is signed.

Student Services Reception: 960-6369 Greg Beattie, Coordinator: 960-6362 Security: 960-3333 (Emergency); 960-7058 (Non-emergency) 24 Hour Crisis Line: 563-1214
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## Resources for Teaching Assistants

Dr. William J. Owe, (Psychology)

Teaching assistants perform a wide range of tasks within and across different academic departments. In the past, most teaching assistants had learn their tasks simply by doing them. However, teaching assistants do not have to learn *everything* on their own. Learning from others can be a valuable and timesaving component to completing one's responsibilities. The purpose of this short paper is to provide teaching assistants with a (partial) list of resources that can be used to help teaching assistants successfully carry out their responsibilities. I have divided the resources into several (overlapping) categories: Other People, Publications, Web Resources, and Centres of Teaching and Learning. However, the most useful resource teaching assistants have is themselves. So that's where we will start...

***One's self: to improve one's TA skills, one needs to recognize that there is help available.*** For example, there are: (1) **others** that have experienced similar TA situations, including supervisory faculty members, (2) **publications**, such as journal articles, books, and videos, on effective practices, (3) **web-based** resources, and (4) **Centres of Teaching and Learning**, all of which can be excellent resources for learning more about your TA issue(s).

***Knowing that such resources exist is a first step.*** Figuring out how to tap or utilize each resource effectively is next.

(1) **Others** (TA peers, graduate students, and faculty supervisor):

- **TA Peers**
  - Find out who was the previous TA and talk to them about your responsibilities
  - Ask if they have any tips for you
- **Graduate Students**
  - Find out which graduate students have had TA or teaching experience and talk to them about their experiences
  - Ask about teaching tips, and how to balance TA workload with your own course and research work.
- **Faculty Supervisors**
  - Get to know your faculty supervisor and his/her expectations
  - Have these expectations listed on a graduate teaching workload agreement, which can be downloaded at:
    - CSAM - <http://www.unbc.ca/csam/forms.html> then click on "a graduate teaching workload agreement"
    - CASHS - <http://www.unbc.ca/cashs/forms.html> then click on "a graduate teaching workload agreement"
  - See if the faculty supervisor would be willing to give you feedback on how you are doing (e.g., after marking one or two papers, or after teaching a couple of labs/classes). You may also want to ask your students about how you are doing
  - Ask them for tips regarding how to effectively carry out your TA responsibilities



**(2) Publications:** There are many publications dedicated to teaching in general that can assist you with your TA responsibilities. Some of these publications will be for a general audience (e.g., both chemistry and international studies students), whereas others are discipline specific.

- **Activities Handbooks** These are usually discipline-specific books or manuals that contain classroom exercises. Check with faculty supervisors, the library, on-line book stores such as Amazon or Chapters, or web-based teaching sites by typing in your discipline's name "+ teaching activities" into a search engine such as GOOGLE.
- **Discipline Specific Teaching Journals** Most, if not all, academic disciplines now have at least one journal dedicated to teaching in their discipline. You can find these journals by typing in your discipline's name "+ teaching journal" into a search engine such as GOOGLE or via one of the library's search tools.
- **Books on Teaching** Although each academic discipline has its idiosyncrasies, some of the same teaching and TA issues can be found to be similar in other disciplines. A couple of good books on teaching are listed in the Appendix to this document.
- **Newsletters** National or international research communities or groups, such as the Canadian Psychology Association (CPA) or the American Chemistry Society (ACS), often have teaching divisions that produce newsletters. Other, more general teaching organizations also have newsletters. For example, the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education has a newsletter of general appeal (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/stlhe/welcome.html>).

**(3) Web-Based Resources:** There are many web-based resources that can help your teaching and TA skills. Again, most national or international research communities or groups have websites that are dedicated to teaching issues. Similarly, there are national and international societies for teaching that have very useful websites. Below is a list of some web-based resources:

The On-Line Faculty Development Associates website has links to over 80 topics, organizations, conferences, etc. This website provides information on issues such as: Active Learning, Classroom Assessment Techniques, Classroom Management, Grade Inflation, Syllabus Development, Student Survival Skills, and many more topics...

- <http://www.developfaculty.com/online/index.html>

**(4) Centres of Teaching and Learning:** Most universities have a centre for teaching and learning. These centres are gathering points for faculty and teaching assistants so that ideas and resources can be shared. Several centres of teaching and learning post their resources on the web. Below is a list of a few centres of teaching and learning that have useful resources for teachers and teaching assistants...

- UNBC: <http://ctl.unbc.ca/>
  - Our CTL offers regular brown bag sessions on topics of current interest to faculty and teaching assistants.
  - Fall workshop on teaching
  - Workshops specific to teaching assistants.

- “Tech Tips” offers tips for best utilizing technology in the classroom...  
<http://ctl.unbc.ca/tt/>
- Teaching Tips: <http://ctl.unbc.ca/teach/index.html>
- Canada: <http://www.ku.edu/~cte/resources/websites/canada.html>
  - Has links to 20 CTLs across Canada
- University of Saskatchewan: <http://www.usask.ca/tlc/>
  - **Has information for graduate student teachers, including an on-line *Handbook for Grad Student Teachers* (found under the “resources” link)**
  - Slide presentations for several guest talks can also be found under the “resources” link. Some of the topics include: “why not lecture?” and “on-line learning...”

There are many resources to help you with your teaching assistantship responsibilities. One of the best strategies for helping you with your teaching and teaching assistantships is to talk; talk to other TAs, fellow graduate students, your faculty supervisor, people at UNBC’s Centre for Teaching and Learning, and people on the web.

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## Appendix Additional Resources

### Examples of Research Societies with Teaching Divisions and/or Teaching Resources

- Chemistry: <http://www.anachem.umu.se/eks/pointers.htm>
- Political Science: [http://www.apsanet.org/section\\_168.cfm](http://www.apsanet.org/section_168.cfm)  
Journal of Political Science Education
- Physics: [http://www.iop.org/Our\\_Activities/Schools\\_and\\_Colleges/](http://www.iop.org/Our_Activities/Schools_and_Colleges/)  
<http://www.aapt.org/>
- General: <http://www.developfaculty.com/online/index.html>

### Examples of Books

- Brinkley et al. (1999). *The Chicago handbook for teachers: A practical guide to the college classroom*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Davis, B.G. (1993). *Tools for Teaching*.  
Barbara Davis has provided some of her book, including the chapter for teaching your first class, on the web site:  
<http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/teaching.html>.

### General teaching tips:

- <http://www.csuohio.edu/ucl/tchtips1.html> has tips for your first day, including 101 things you can try in the first few weeks.
- If you are teaching first year students, you may want to check out this web site: <http://www.flinders.edu.au/teach/teach/firstindex.htm>

### UNBC Resources:

- Submit Reserve Reading requests to the library (note: reserve request forms can be downloaded from: <http://lib.unbc.ca/pages/services/faculty/reserves.asp> , processing takes up to 5 days)
- Book teaching aids (e.g., computer/projector system, VCR) through Education Media Services (EMS: 6470; <http://www.unbc.ca/ems/>)
- Take your course syllabus and other photocopying needs to Copy Services, or submit it on-line at: <http://www.unbc.ca/copy/>
- Order your textbooks and lab manuals via the bookstore <http://www.bookstore.unbc.ca/>

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## Contacts and Services for Instructors at UNBC

### Student Referrals & Reference Resources

#### Academic Advisors (what to take to get the degree)

- Local 6340 or Email [advising@unbc.ca](mailto:advising@unbc.ca)
- <http://www.unbc.ca/advising>

#### Centre for Teaching and Learning

- Lynda Williams for projects (e-learning)
  - Local 5613 or Email [williaml@unbc.ca](mailto:williaml@unbc.ca)
- Heather Smith for Pro-d advising
  - Local 6655 or Email [smith@unbc.ca](mailto:smith@unbc.ca)
- Request manuals
  - Email [pro-d@unbc.ca](mailto:pro-d@unbc.ca)
- <http://www.unbc.ca/>

#### Counselling Centre

- Reception, Local 6369 or Email [counseling@unbc.ca](mailto:counseling@unbc.ca)
- <http://www.unbc.ca/counsel/>

#### Disabilities Services

- Local 5682 or drop in to 7-103
- <http://www.unbc.ca/disabilities/index.html>

#### Harassment and Discrimination Advice

- UNBC Policy on Harassment and Discrimination
  - [http://www.unbc.ca/assets/policy/facilities\\_security\\_harassment\\_and\\_discrimination.pdf](http://www.unbc.ca/assets/policy/facilities_security_harassment_and_discrimination.pdf)
- Contact Dr. Cindy Hardy, Harassment and Discrimination Advisor
  - Local 5814 or Email [hardy@unbc.ca](mailto:hardy@unbc.ca)

#### Learning Skills Centre

- Local 6367 or Email [lsc@unbc.ca](mailto:lsc@unbc.ca) or [trujillm@unbc.ca](mailto:trujillm@unbc.ca)
- Drop in to 7-148
- <http://www.unbc.ca/lsc/>

#### Risk & Safety Questions/Concerns

- Email [safety@unbc.ca](mailto:safety@unbc.ca)
- <http://www.unbc.ca/safety/>

#### Security

- Non-Emergency, Local 7058
- Campus Emergency, Local 3333
- Residence Emergency, Local 7000

#### Technical Support

- EMS
  - Local 6470 or Email [ems@unbc.ca](mailto:ems@unbc.ca)
- Student Support Desk (CTS)
  - Room 8-265, Local 5321 or Email [labsupport@unbc.ca](mailto:labsupport@unbc.ca)
- Online Tech Tips
  - [Http://unbc.ca/](http://unbc.ca/) (CTL)

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