Econ 495
Teaching Assistant Training Program

I Introduction: The Art of Teaching

The first issue that has to be addressed is why is it important for graduate students to attend a seminar or read on teaching. It may seem that teaching how to be a good teacher is not something that can be done. After all, teaching is an art and therefore there is no one right way of doing things. It depends on the materials, the goals, the personalities and so many other things. So why are we sitting here?

Notwithstanding this first impression, artists do learn techniques that help them in developing their natural talents and mastering their art. Mozart could not have become the genius he became if he had not studied the basics of song composing and other elementary music skills. Leonardo could not have painted many of his masterpieces without having any idea of the painting techniques available at his time.

With this insight in mind, the main purpose of this seminar is not to teach how to be a good teacher but rather to share with new TAs standard techniques that might help them in developing their natural teaching skills. Moreover, the seminar will also aim to introduce graduate students to the many rewards that teaching offers.

The second important goal of the course is to familiarize the graduate students with important regulations and some legal issues regarding teaching in UCLA.

Having the goals of the course clear, what are the techniques that the best teachers use very effectively? There are at least four essential techniques that they use intensively:

- Meticulous course organization and class preparation
- Student Motivation
- Objective, comprehensive and informative grading
- Continuous feedback

These four techniques and their roles are discussed in what follows in four different sections and in the Economics Department Teaching Resources Website at www.sscnet.ucla.edu/classes/econta.

II Course organization and Class preparation

Preparing a course and its classes meticulously is perhaps the most important thing to do for a novice teacher. Well-prepared classes give extra confidence to address the class and students will be grateful for it because materials will most likely be presented in a way that facilitates their learning. It is also a way of showing students that the instructor cares about their learning and can be motivated by that. In preparing a course and its classes there are two types of issues that have to be addressed:

(a) Administrative issues (e.g.: meeting times and places, office hours, grading policy, regarding policy, email, etc)
(b) Academic issues which are related directly to teaching the class.

Administrative Issues

Administrative issues may not seem important but they must not be disregarded because they are key to a well taught course. They essentially tell the students what the "rules of the game" are and therefore must be thought as an incentive scheme. The instructor must make sure that the rules give the students the incentives to do the things he wants them to do. Being clear from the beginning by giving the right incentives and defining the preferred way of working with students can avoid many problems later on in the course. Examples of such problems are excessive re-grade requests if the re-grade policy is ill defined and undesired phone calls to the instructors office or home from students "cramming" before exams. Students also prefer well specified rules because they know what to expect and what they should or should not do.

Before trying to set down the rules, it would be convenient to arrange a meeting with the Professor and the other TAs in the class being taught. In this way, a consistent set of rules with the global ones set by the Professor and qualitatively similar to the ones used by other TAs can be defined. In addition, the Professor's expectations on what should be done by TAs should be made transparent. The office of instructional development (OID) suggests a useful checklist of issues that must be clarified in this meeting:

What does the instructor expect of you?
What will you be expected to do?
How much grading will you do; will you attend lectures?
Will the instructor expect you to write the exams?
What are the instructor's and other TAs goals?
What does the instructor want to emphasize in the material?
How is the discussion section or lab integrated into the rest of the course?

Who are your students?
What level of knowledge will they have?
What prerequisites are there for the course?
How many students will you have?
How much control will you have over the content and planning of your sections?

After the meeting with the Professor and other TAs, a good way to address the administrative issues properly is to take the time to write down in a two or three page handout all the ground rules for the class that you consider necessary. Make sure that the students understand them right at the beginning of the course.

The more basic the course the more meticulous the handout should be. This is because in the basic introductory-level courses (such as Econ 2 which is Introductory Macroeconomics), many students will be satisfying general requirements and therefore come with little initial interest in the contents of the class. These students will try to read the rules carefully in order to find the "least-cost" way of passing the class. As a guide on what to include in the previously mentioned handout, a copy of the handout used in Econ 2 by one of our TAs is included in the accompanying handouts.

Office hours can be very useful to students. Some of them realize this too late in the quarter so it is good to include statements in the handout that encourage students to come to office hours. OID provides a list of things regarding office hours that are important in order not to discourage students from coming. These are included below.

Things To Avoid During Office Hours

- Spending too much time with a single student at the expense of others.
- Any situation that could be viewed as a sexually threatening one. Don't close the door. Office hours are the place where your relationship with the student is least clear and its boundaries may be tested.
- Showing up late or leaving early. If you make a schedule, stick to it. Students often make sacrifices to come to your office hours, so it can be frustrating for them if you aren't there.
- Concentrating/bickering over the details of grading rather than focusing on the learning process.
- Poor scheduling. Set aside realistic amounts of time to meet students. For example, 10-minute sign up sheets can be frustrating for students and send the message that you don't really have the time for them. Set your office hours so that as many students as possible can attend. For example, if you schedule your office hours to start on the half hour (say 10:30-11:30) you will get more students who can come because their classes will only overlap half of your hour. Stagger your office hours. Due to University Course Scheduling, if a student can not make it to office hours between 1 and 2pm on Tuesday

it is highly likely that they will not be able to make it during the same time period on Thursday.

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Things you have to pay attention to

- Think carefully about where you hold your office hours: outside, in a lab, in an official TA office, in the office where you conduct your own research. Consider the following questions carefully: Do I want students coming to my personal office? Will a student feel uncomfortably in a particular location? Why?
- Students may bring personal problems to you. Don't get in over your head with trying to help students with these problems; you are not a trained counselor (or if you are, this is not your current role). Maintain knowledge of campus resources so you can refer students to the appropriate service for help

Academic Issues

Before going to class: Planning a TA Section

Keeping the "big picture" in mind

A very important piece of information necessary to prepare classes is having an overview of the complete course and the Professor's objectives. With this information it is possible to design class materials that prepare the student for "what comes next". This helps students to relate the different parts of the course with each other. This information can be obtained in the previously suggested meeting with the Professor, looking at old lecture notes from the course and by talking to previous TAs of the course as well as looking at old TA websites. A class archive with old class websites and TA websites is available on the Economics Department Teaching Resources website.

This global vision suggests ideally preparing all the classes before the quarter has actually started to ensure consistency with the course objectives and make adjustments during the quarter. But given the time constraints that many graduate students face, this may not be a realistic approach. A good "rule-of-thumb" is to always be three lectures ahead in your preparations. The key message is that when preparing a particular section, the role it plays in the "big picture" of the course must not be forgotten.

Preparing a section

There are a few questions that may orient your preparation of a section:

- *What are the main messages that have to be transmitted in the section? What is their importance and relationship to the rest of the course?* Professors tend to cover a lot of ground in class and the time constraint during sections is usually very tight. It may be preferable to be selective and focus on the messages that may be more difficult for students to understand rather than trying to cover everything.
- *What is the material and in what order should it be presented so as to deliver the messages to the students as effectively as possible given what they already know? What way of presenting the material would have made your own understanding better when you had to learn them? Can technological enhancements or other type of enhancements to the class help or will they just make things more complicated?* Think about examples that may help students understand the messages that have to be delivered. Specifically, try to combine the different languages that can be used to teach economics. Some students understand better the intuitive language, others prefer a graphical approach, while yet others like math. By using multiple languages you increase their chances of understanding.
- *What questions can be asked to assess if students understood the messages or are following the arguments?* In-class feedback is necessary to both to determine whether messages are being delivered effectively and to improve future sections.
- *What is the best way of summarizing messages and the logic behind them before finishing the class?* The final wrap up helps students realize what the key parts of the arguments are and what the punchline is. Always leave aside the last five minutes of class for this purpose.

A final remark is in order. Many TA sections in our department are completely focused in problem solving. In this type of section, TAs should try to make sure that the ways the problems are presented emphasize the logic and the intuitive messages that the Professor wants the students to get out of them. Passive problem solving must be avoided. Every problem is generally designed to illustrate a particular concept. Students should understand those concepts by the end of the section.

The first day of Class

In what follows, some suggestions on how to deal with the first day of class are presented. Some of them assume that you are teaching a low level undergraduate course. You may want to relax the discussion of the "rules of the game" part of the administrative issues handout more and more, the higher the level of the course is.

- Be sure to have practised your first lecture at least once *before* the first class. This will become less important once you get accustomed to teaching.
- Before going to the class, verify that all the necessary materials to teach the section are available. In particular have copies of the handout with the administrative issues available for the students and get a list of the students from Christine Frank or directly from your web page.[1]
- Try to avoid dressing "too casually" on the first day. You want to put a reasonable distance between you and your students at the beginning. You always have the option of allowing them to get closer once they know what the rules are.

- Check the room and times of the sections and have that information handy. Arrive early to the classroom to get familiarized with it. While you wait for the class start time, write on the board your name, the course name (eg: Econ 2) and the topics you will be discussing in the first class. This is to make sure that students know they are in the right classroom. Have the handouts ready on your desk so that students get them as they come into the class.
- At the beginning of the class, do a very brief introduction of yourself and then go through the handout very carefully and step by step. You want to look serious and credible at this time. Make sure that you emphasize that the rules of the game listed in the handout are extremely important and that you have every intention of enforcing what you said. Ask for questions regarding the handout to make sure it is understood. Announce also that your role is to help them in learning the course material and doing the best that they can in the course and that you intend to make every effort in fulfilling that. However, your effort cannot be a substitute for their effort in studying.
- After finishing with the handout, emphasize that you want to know everybody by name. A way of achieving that is calling the roll every class to remember them or asking them to say their name before answering a question. Students value this very highly so do not forget to do this. This is usually also a time for laughs given that you will misspell some of the names because they are very long or difficult to say. Some students who are on the waiting list for the class may ask you about their chances of getting in. TAs do not deal with PTE authorization numbers so refer them directly to the Professor or undergraduate counselor Julie Plotkin.
- Once this is done, start teaching your class using whatever teaching style suits your personality best (i.e. formal, informal etc).

[1] Detailed information on how to use the class-web system to create a pre-packaged website in just a few minutes is available in the Economics Department Resources Website in the Technology Resources section.

III Student Motivation

Student motivation should be always kept in mind when teaching a course or prepare a class. It is so important that it deserves a separate section. The essential issue dealt with in this section is how to elicit interest from students when leading a discussion. It does not matter that most students may be already interested in the course topics. A good motivation may increase the interest of the already motivated students even further and get the attention of those that were not so interested and give them an incentive to increase their effort to learn.

Before discussing any particular techniques to motivate students, it must always be kept in mind that the motivation of the instructor may be the greatest student motivator of all. If the instructor is motivated, that will be reflected in the level of effort he/she puts in. Moreover, instructors who are motivated by the subject matter can convey the material to students more effectively since they believe in what they are saying and are willing to work harder at transmitting it. Students are very stimulated by people who like what they are doing.

The worst courses are taught by people that are compelled by some regulation or lack of options to do so. There is nothing worse than a course taught by somebody who does not want to be there. In fact everybody looses when this happens: the person in charge of the course is loosing because he would prefer to be somewhere else and students are loosing too because they have to put up with a terrible course.

The message from these lines is try to teach subjects that elicit genuine interest in you or that motivate you. Otherwise, you may be doing something against your personal interest and the interest of the students. Having made this point and assuming that the problem is finding the appropriate way to motivate the students, here are some suggestions from OID and fom experience that may help.

Two of the major barriers to discussion in an undergraduate classroom are that some students are afraid to talk in a group, and that they may not be interested in the subject matter. Thus, the two most important things to do in stimulating interest in the material are to create a "safe" environment, and to motivate students by making the topic relevant.

The idea of a "safe" environment refers to the fact that we want students to feel comfortable about speaking out and sharing their views with the class. There are three major components to creating a safe environment:

1) Welcome the ideas of students. Let them know directly that an ideal discussion section is about discussion of ideas and perspectives among students.
2) Give all ideas and points of view reasonable consideration without rushing to judgment. Sometimes a student may be factually wrong about a topic and it is OK to point out their error.

However, when discussing more subjective topics try to give all ideas and all students equal time and consideration.

3) Maintain the focus of the class on discussion of ideas rather than the judgment of people. Some topics can evoke powerful emotions. Try not to let the discussion of ideas degrade into the judgment of people.

There are a number of different specific methods for generating a safe and comfortable environment for students:

Get to know the students and have them get to know you.

The discussion should really be an interaction among the students instead of all the individual students talking to you, or to each other through you. Getting students to know each other will stimulate their interaction with each other.

Here are some suggestions on how to build familiarity among students:

- Call on students by name
- Have them refer to each other by name
- Play some sort of name game or ice-breaker on the first day
- Ask students to react to other students' comments

Make the course material relevant to students' everyday lives.

Discuss how to make the material relevant to the students. If a discussion is too abstract students might lose interest. Find ways to remind them that what they are studying is important, practical, or real.

- Show the students your own interest in the topic. Muster up some energy without being falsely enthusiastic. Especially if you are teaching on a topic that is your field of interest, you should be able to convey why you have devoted your life to its study.
- Talk about why you find the material interesting.
- Ask the students to relate the material to something in their own lives.

Encourage class participation. Ask questions and give sufficient time for students to answer and to discuss among themselves. Avoid turning the class into a monologue.

Ask repeatedly if they have any questions to encourage and help students to feel "safe" to ask. Students tend to shy away from asking questions that they think are maybe too basic or even stupid.

Show that you care about their learning. Offer extra office hours or review sessions for them to ask questions.

What if you disagree with your students?

There are some cases when students might be factually incorrect, but what if they hold an opinion that is different from yours? How do you deal with this situation? Do you make your bias clear or pretend to be neutral? How can you show them how to respectfully disagree with each other?

- Explicitly tell the students that they are safe voicing their opinions.
- Consider writing student responses on the board to validate them and organize them
- Show your own vulnerability. Don't pretend you know everything. If you admit you don't know something the students will be less intimidated.
- Respond with more than just "good" and "okay". Describe specifically what you thought was good.

How do you deal with students who don't participate?

Should you call on them by name? Hopefully if you get to know the students well, and everybody feels comfortable and interested, you won't have too many of these. But if you do:
- Ask the student a question that has no wrong answers

How do you deal with students who monopolize the discussion?

- Ask for other people to contribute
- Talk to the student specifically

III Grading

A formal grading system is the basis on which grades will be assigned to students. Once the system is disclosed to students, it is reasonable to presume that they will develop strategies to get the highest grade possible with the lowest possible effort given the incentive scheme implied by it. Designing a formal grading system appropriately is therefore extremely important.

Although Professors usually define the generalities of the formal grading system, they will certainly accept comments on the part of TAs on how to make it better. In addition to this, when doubts regarding procedural issues arise while grading, it is important to keep in mind what a good formal grading system must attempt to achieve.

A good grading system has at least three important attributes:

- Evaluates students as comprehensively as possible. The system evaluates, as thoroughly as possible, the knowledge of the material taught in a course as well as the capacity to think creatively on the basis of them. Exams, papers and other formal evaluations techniques are designed in a way that it requires a firm grasp of all the material taught in the course in order to do well. The system is structured so as to elicit maximum effort out of the students.
- Assigns grades to students in a way that allocates the same grade for the same qualitative performance.
- Assigns grades in a way that can provide as much feedback to the students as possible regarding their performance. Grades point out clearly student strengths and weaknesses to suggest areas of improvement.

Attribute 1 has two motivations. The first is that an attempt is being made to assign a grade with as much information as possible regarding the students academic performance and the second is that if the grading system is not comprehensive and leaves part of the taught material out, students will not study the materials on which they are not graded to focus more on the material on which they will be graded.

Attribute 2 is just requiring fairness and to guarantee that requirement, the grade assignment process must be as objective as possible. Unfortunately, given human nature and for different reasons, some students may generate more sympathy on the part of instructor than others. Sometimes, even unconsciously, this can have effects on grade assignment. This tendency must be fought as hard as possible.

Attribute 3 is simply ensuring that the system has to tell the student what he/she is doing right and what he/she is doing wrong in order to elicit improvement.

Having the general picture of a good formal grading system in mind, in what follows attention will be focused on suggestions on how to tackle the “Nuts and bolts of grading” based on OID materials and experience. In addition this section will end with important UCLA regulations regarding grading and Academic Dishonesty and where to find more information regarding them.

The Nuts and Bolts of Grading

Before grading

- Meet with other TAs to organize the grading work. Before every exam or grading assignment, it is advisable to meet with other TAs to set criteria for grading, organize the work and produce deadlines for when it should be ready. Professors sometimes hand out answer keys to TAs to guide their grading. Have the Head TA of the course coordinate the meetings and supervise that work is done, deadlines attained and that the agreements reached are respected. Unfortunately lack of coordination and respect for deadlines and agreements can produce much inefficiency. These inefficiencies may make grading a prolonged and agonic process. Some TAs take too much time to do their jobs and tension is created reducing the group work effectiveness. In fact sometimes, certain TAs default on their obligations and unfairly overburden other TAs with the work.

- Lay out your grading criteria before you look at the first paper/ project/assignment.
- What exactly are you looking for?
- Will you be grading the student on the process they went through or just the finished product?
- Is getting the problem right as important as making a good case for their answer?
- Will you be concerned with grammatical errors and writing style as much as content?
- Will there be partial credit for wrong answers to problem sets?

During grading

Avoid Grading Bias

Do everything you can to keep your personal feelings about students from biasing your grading (in either direction). Trade grading sets with other TAs in the same course. Make sure that the same person grades a particular question. Having different TAs grade the same question is generally a source of grading inconsistencies and problems. Do everything you can to maintain consistency and perspective. Some graders try to grade all of one section at once for this reason. However, make sure you get started early enough so you can take breaks and don't end up exhaustedly skimming the last few papers.

Produce grading criteria update and common mistake sheets for all other TAs in your course to have.

Professors may hand out an answer key with broad grading guidelines. Usually partial credit answers are not specified and even less frequently the points they should receive. Generally Professors allow TA discretion in these matters because the kind of partial credit answers you will get cannot be clearly expected ex ante. Once you have finished grading, produce a sheet explaining how you awarded partial credit points for other TAs to know when students go to their office hours to see their exams and to conduct re-grades if requested. This is a way of ensuring grading consistency. The second piece of information to include in that sheet is a common mistakes summary found during grading. This will allow other TAs to explain in their section the exam questions and concepts behind them that generated difficulties for students.

After grading

Dealing With Student Complaints

You will prevent many complaints if you establish fair policies, explain them clearly from the start, and apply them consistently for everyone all the time. Be sure that these policies are consistent with the ones that the professor applies and have an agreement with him on how to deal with complaints. An example on how to do this is shown in the handout illustrating how to handle administrative issues under the heading "Re-grade Policy". Bear in mind thought that hearing some complaints will not be avoidable every once in a while.

If a student comes with a grade or other complaint, listen as sympathetically as possible without giving in to pressure or guilt. Explain to them exactly why they received the grade you assigned. However, occasionally teachers make mistakes, and if warranted, you can offer to have the professor re-grade the student's work. Often professors will tell students that re-grading can result in a lower grade as well as a higher one if the professor disagrees with the TAs assessment.

Regardless of how hard you try to be fair in grading, you may not be able to make everyone happy; no one ever likes a low grade. Treat disgruntled students with continued respect and fairness. You may also face students that will start crying. Showing them precisely where they made mistakes and helping them find ways to improve can often turn a discouraged, angry student into one with hope. Make sure that you refer the student to a counselor from the college of letters and science. They are specially trained to give advice to students in particular on what to do when they are having trouble In our department, Julie Plotkin is the undergraduate counselor and Lora Clarke is the graduate counselor.

Don't give your students the power to get you in trouble. For example, never criticize the instructor on a personal level in front of your students, regardless of any complaints you may have about the instructor yourself.

If you have been forcefully intimidated or physically threatened by a student, do not hesitate to inform the professor, other TAs, the department, and/ or the campus police.

Some important UCLA policies regarding grading and Academic Dishonesty

Maintaining Student Confidentiality

According to state and federal law, and UCLA policy on privacy and confidentiality of student records, instructors cannot post grades by name or leave exams out for pick-up by students.

The confidentiality issue may seem an unnecessary annoyance, but many students are really quite uncomfortable about public posting of grades. Also, there is an increasing problem with thefts of exams and papers that have been left out unattended. To comply with legal and policy requirements, graded materials should only be returned by the following means:

(a) Faculty members may hand out papers directly to students during class or office hours. If the instructor cannot recognize a student, he or she should check the student's photo ID.
(b) Faculty members can arrange for someone in the department to hand out graded materials to students who come to the office to collect them; in this case, it would be advisable for the department office staff to check the photo ID of every student. The instructor is free to restrict the hours of collection. Instructors should check with their department before employing this option.

So far as posting grades is concerned, faculty members cannot circumvent the privacy issue by using student numbers or initials. These are considered "personally identifiable" in Federal Privacy laws. If posting grades is the only feasible option, obtain signed waivers from students before using student numbers or initials. Final course grades are available to students through URSA Telephone or URSA On-line within 48 hours of grade submission to the Registrar.

Policy on changing grades

Many instructors inform students that they will not change a student's grade once assigned. Instructors should assure students that they always carefully consider a grade before assigning it. Instructors may be willing to recheck students' scores, but it is against University policies and regulations to change a grade based on a student's scholastic or personal situation, and it is not fair to other students in the class. Once again, it is advisable to incorporate the policy regarding these matters into the course syllabus and openly discuss it in class at the first meeting.

Student personal situations

When an instructor is concerned about a student's personal situation, he or she should check with the student's staff counselor in their school or college for the available options. It is not one course alone that leads to a scholastic problem. Typically, a student's academic difficulties are due to a continuing pattern of poor performance.

Supporting TA authority

If teaching assistants (TAs) are doing the grading for a course, the instructor should decide before the course begins how to handle grade disputes. If a student is displeased with the grade assigned by his or her TA, will the instructor review the examination or paper (informing the TA that there is a dispute)? Or will the instructor make a blanket policy of standing by the TA's grade? Whatever policy the instructor decides in this regard, it is important to inform both the TA(s) and the students at the beginning of the course. Generally, it is preferable for the instructor and TA(s) to present a united front on such questions, rather than to allow students to undermine a TA's authority by circumventing them.

Using test scoring services

The Evaluation of Instruction Program (EIP) maintains a test scoring service that is available, on a limited basis, to UCLA instructors who teach large undergraduate courses. The guiding philosophy of the test scoring service is to make the scoring of multiple-choice exams more efficient with the intention that the reports generated should be used by instructors to improve the testing process itself. The service does not seek to encourage the use of multiple-choice examinations where student learning may be better assessed through other means. It is, for example, pedagogically difficult to justify the use of multiple-choice examinations in courses with fewer than 75 students. Short answer questions, essay questions, research papers, group projects, oral presentations, performance testing, and a variety of other assessment procedures should be considered in such circumstances.

Those with larger courses, who are interested in using the test-scoring service, should employ the test-scoring forms (provided free of charge by EIP), which will then allow the optical scanner/software to read student responses and compile a variety of detailed statistical reports for the instructor's information.

Academic Dishonesty

General Policy guideline and Definition of Academic Dishonesty

Prevention is, of course, the best way to protect academic integrity on campus. Prevention can begin only after all members of the community understand the problem. Well-defined expectations and written standards reduce students' uncertainty about the appropriateness of their own actions. Academic dishonesty can be divided into four categories and defined as follows.

Cheating
Intentionally, or without authorization from the instructor, using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. "Unauthorized materials" include other students' test papers during examinations.

Fabrication
Intentional or unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. Students have been known to create "facts" or citations when they are completing assignments, often at the last minute before they are due.

Facilitating academic dishonesty

Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty. Students' roommates and friends often overstep the bounds of academic honesty because it is not clear how much collaboration and outside help a particular assignment allows.

Plagiarism

Representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. For example, a student may copy text from a library book into his or her paper, either verbatim or paraphrased, as though it were his or her own words.

Strategies For Preventing Academic Dishonesty

Although it is unpleasant to realize that some students cheat or plagiarize, it is a fact that all instructors must face. Many instructors routinely incorporate into their course syllabi a statement about academic dishonesty that includes the above definitions of dishonesty, adjusted to fit the course specifically, as well as the consequences of such dishonesty. Faculty members might also advise students of their legitimate alternatives to dishonesty, including consulting with the instructor or their TA about any difficulties that they are encountering with an assignment and the appropriate tutoring options.

There are additional steps that faculty can take to reduce the likelihood of such dishonesty and to identify the student who does break the rules of academic integrity.

Examinations

Preparing students

Faculty members should state, preferably in writing and well in advance of an exam, their expectations for academic behavior. For example, let students know whether any materials will be allowed in the exam room, and be as specific as possible in describing those materials; whether collaboration is permitted and what that includes; whether photo identification or bluebooks will be required; if texts are allowed, whether writing in the text or note cards marking pages will be allowed; whether students may enter or leave the room while the exam is in progress. While it is the student's responsibility to ask if he or she is unsure of the instructor's expectations, chances are good that if a behavior is not clearly prohibited, a student might assume that it is allowed. Instructors need not intimidate students, but many students are unaware that cheating may result in suspension or dismissal from the University. Do not belabor the point, but it may be worth mentioning from the outset to forestall any misunderstandings later on. Faculty members should also try to make students aware of the resources available to them if they are having difficulty with the material, including instructor office hours, special study sessions that TAs might organize, etc.

Preparing the examination

Even if instructors are not inclined to have completely different sets of questions for one exam, some disincentive for cheating is achieved by printing the same page on different colored paper so that it appears that different versions are being used, by collating the pages in different orders, or by scrambling the question order on several different versions of the exam. (Of course, instructors who use one of these options should number or letter the exams and have students indicate the appropriate number or letter on their bluebook.) Instructors who allow students to use notes or a page of formulas might consider providing that document themselves at the beginning of the exercise. Blue books can be collected before an exam and redistributed randomly, or faculty members may wish to provide blue books or paper from their department. Faculty members who are inclined to offer make-up exams might consider reordering the questions or using a different exam.

Grading the examination

On occasion, a grader makes a mistake and marks an answer incorrectly. Many instructors routinely consider requests from students to correct those errors. Unfortunately, some students have attempted to exploit this practice by changing their answers after the exam has been returned and then resubmitting the fabricated work for credit. To minimize the likelihood of such fabrications, some departments photocopy all graded exams before returning them. If department resources do not permit this, some instructors photocopy the graded exam of students who, on earlier exercises, have requested re-grade that resulted in a significant increase in the grade. If another re-grade request is submitted, the returned exam is compared with the photocopy prior to modifying the grade. Another very simple strategy to discourage changes after a graded paper is returned is to draw a line through any remaining space at the end of an essay, lab report, or any other paper that might conceivably be altered.

Confronting Academic Dishonesty

Confronting cheating on examinations

During the exam, try if possible to get a second opinion from TAs or another observer to confirm the behavior suspected. If possible, try to move the student who is allegedly responsible to another location, creating as little disturbance as possible. Take note of the time, circumstances, and location of the observation. It is also important to take notes as to where the student was sitting in the room, whether there were empty seats separating the student from others, who was sitting nearby, etc. This will be especially useful if trying to compare examinations later. Remove any unauthorized materials that a student is using during an exam, again creating as little disturbance as possible, and note the time and place in the exam.

Instructors should always allow the student to complete the exercise. Although it may seem unlikely at the time, there is always a chance that the instructor is mistaken in his or her suspicion.

After the exam, the faculty member should approach the student whom he or she suspects of cheating and explain his or her concerns. Be as objective as possible, and avoid being accusatory.

Confronting plagiarism

A student's decision to complete an assignment by plagiarizing is one of the most unpleasant experiences a faculty member can face. Instructors may take some comfort in knowing that UCLA not only outlines an official procedure for handling plagiarism but also recognizes the unique contours of each case. A faculty member who believes that a portion of a student's paper was plagiarized should talk with the student. It is probably best not to begin by accusing the student of plagiarism, which may provoke belligerence in a guilty student or create panic in an innocent one. Instead, indicate what the evidence is and ask the student to explain how she or he wrote the paper. Instructors may use the word "plagiarism" when conferring with the student, although he or she will probably become defensive.

Reporting Academic Dishonesty

Instructors may not assign a disciplinary grade (i.e., assign a student an "F" because he or she cheated on the exam). If appropriate, the instructor may tell the student that he or she is assigning a temporary grade of "DR" (deferred report) and referring the issue to the Dean of Students' Office http://www.saonet.ucla.edu/dos for resolution. The DR grade will not be calculated into the student's grade point average. Instructors will also want to put their concerns in writing, including copies of the original exam, with altered or copied answers marked and any supporting documentation. Materials should be sent to the Dean of Students' Office for adjudication (Academic Senate Regulation A-315). The Dean of Students will then inform the instructor about the outcome of the investigation and the instructor should in turn notify the Registrar of the final grade outcome.

For more information regarding UCLA regulations regarding grading and Academic Dishonesty see http://www.oid.ucla.edu/tatp/pedagogy/evaluation-frame.htm for a link to download an Adobe Acrobat file with the policy on grading. See also the links on the matter on the Economics Department Teaching Resources website.

IV Continuous Feedback

The creation of ways to get feedback from the students and giving students feedback is another important ingredient of good and effective teaching. It is important that this should not be a once in a quarter event. It should be continuous to allow the instructor and the student to learn and improve along the way instead of when it is already “too late”. In this section some advice will be given on how to get continuous feedback.

By giving feedback to the students, telling them what they are doing right and what they are doing wrong, the instructor can help them overcome their learning problems and improve their performance in the class. Formal evaluation techniques provide some feedback to the students telling them if they are doing well or not but not necessarily why.

By getting feedback from the students, the instructor learns what teaching, motivation and evaluation methods worked and what did not work. This information facilitates the introduction of improvements in many aspects of the course. In addition, by seeing which feedback mechanisms got the best answers to problems also helps to improve the ways of getting feedback. In short, learning how to become a good teacher is a dynamic process that involves trial and error. Feedback is the main way of determining what works and what does not.

OID in their guide of suggestions to get feedback focuses on techniques to prepare written questionnaires for students to complete[2]. Although a well thought out questionnaire may be a good way of eliciting information from the students, the problem with this method is that in many realistic situations they are completed under inappropriate conditions. Sections are very short and TAs struggling to cover materials due to time constraints usually do not have much time to allocate to this kind of feedback activity. Students are usually in a hurry and will not necessarily be willing to take the time to complete the many questionnaires that are required for continuous feedback. It is likely that they will not take them seriously either. Questionnaires may be useful if students are asked to fill exhaustive ones once a quarter and guaranteeing that they are filled in the adequate conditions.

The best way of getting feedback is to have all your senses in full alert when you are with your students and spending time with them. Pay attention to the questions they ask, their body language and to what they say in direct conversations with them. This is the best way of getting feedback. Questionnaires do not answer back when the answers the students gave to questions are not clear or cannot be easily interpreted. When the source of information is in front of you, you can ask for clarifications.

Some concrete suggestions

- Be very alert when you teach. Pay attention to the questions asked by students and their body language. Ask students questions continuously to make sure they are understanding the material and paying attention. Encourage them to ask questions when they do not understand and to interrupt when they are confused.

[2] For nice examples of questionnaires and how to produce your own, see getting feedback in the OID web page.

- Encourage them to come to office hours, talk to you and discuss class materials and the problems they have in understanding them. This is where you usually get the opportunity to talk to students one on one and see where their problems and confusions are.

- Try to spend some extra time with students by offering them extra office hours and review sections. Remember that direct interaction with them is the best source of feedback you can ever get.

- Read the department quarterly evaluations. Although as said above these are not necessarily the best way of getting feedback, they can be a valuable source of information.

V Bibliography

Office of Instructional Development Website www.oid.ucla.edu/tatp

VI Additional Readings

Please read carefully the notes on Sexual Harassment, Academic Dishonesty, Cheating and the resources for TAs available in the Economics Department Teaching Resources website.

<u>A Sample Handout</u>

Econ 2-Principles of Economics-Lec 2
TA Sessions - Sections 2A-2B

TA: Alejandro Simone
Office: Bunche 2265
Email: asimone@ucla.edu
Office Hours: Thursdays 6 pm - 8 pm
Extra Office Hours: Thursdays 10:30 am – 12 pm and by appointment. Another source of extra office hours is the extra review session I offer before every exam. In those review sessions I solve exercises and review important theoretical concepts to make sure they are properly understood before exams. I usually stay after every extra review session finishes until the last question is answered. The times and rooms of the extra review sessions will be announced by email during the quarter. ***Make sure that your email address is correctly specified in the URSA system. The email list I will be using will have the emails you provided to the URSA system. If your email address is not correct you will not be receiving my emails with important information regarding the course.*** If you want to change the email address to which you want me to send the course information, feel free to do so in the URSA system. Every time you change your email in URSA, my list will be immediately updated.
Problem sets, answer keys and handouts: You should solve the professors' problem sets and mine to prepare for exams. I prepare my own problem sets for you to have additional problems to work on and practice duly for the tests. Please bring my problem sets with you every TA session because we will be constantly working on them. I also provide additional practice questions and answer keys before every exam. This allows you to test yourselves and see if you are ready for the exams or not.
The professors' problem sets will be handed in during the lecture and they already contain a complete answer key. I ***will not*** have copies of the Professor's problem sets and answer keys. You can only get them by going to his lectures or by asking him a copy during his office hours.
My problem sets, additional practice questions and answer keys will all be posted on my website linked to the main Econ 2 one mainly in Adobe Acrobat format. This means that to be able to download and read the problem sets and answer keys you need to download and install the Adobe Acrobat reader in your computer. You will find a link helping you to do so in my website's list of links. The address of my website is http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/01S/econ2-2/simone.
The adequate pace to work through the problems is to solve all the problems you can, applying the concepts covered in the lecture or the TA sessions until a particular date of the quarter. All these problems will not be graded but doing them is ***crucial*** to understand the concepts taught in the course and to succeed in the course exams.
If there are special handouts, I will let you know and they will also be available in my website.

Classroom Rules

Ground Rules

General Principle:

Any activity that might perturb unnecessarily the class order and attention is not allowed.

In particular: *Eating, drinking, reading of the Daily Bruin or any other newspaper or magazine are not permitted in class.*

Asking Questions

Questions about the class materials are very welcome and I consider them very important. Because of this, whenever you want to ask a question lift your hand. In this way, I can be sure that everyone is listening and paying the due attention to your question.
If you have other questions regarding the course do not hesitate in coming to my office hours. I will be glad to answer them.

Grading Policy and Exams

Defined by Professor McDevitt. See Syllabus on Class Web page. You can access it through the social sciences computing network official home page (www.sscnet.ucla.edu) or using your myucla page.

Re-grading Policy

- **Re-grading requests will be considered until two weeks after exams were corrected and grades informed to you. Exams can be seen only during office hours or appointments. You will be able to see your exams until the last week of classes. If you want to see your exam after two weeks grades were informed to you, please send me a reminder email. Exams will not be shown after the last week of classes.**
- Exams will not be shown to you in class to make a better use of the class time. You are very welcome to come to my office hours or set up an appointment with me to review them. Grades will be informed to you in an individual basis before you leave the session to preserve the privacy of grades and calm the usual anxieties to know the results of exams.
- There is no partial re-grading. If you request a re-grade of your exam, the complete exam will be re-graded. Because the complete exam will be regarded, it is possible to find grading mistakes that were in your favor in another part of the exam. This means

that your score may be lowered if mistakes in your favor that were undetected are found in the regarding process.

- If you desire to have your exam re-graded, you have to write a brief re-grade request explaining the reasons that motivated your re-grade petition. Arguments such as " I think you lowered too many points for this kind of mistake " will not be accepted. Everyone will be graded on the same basis so that kind of complaint is irrelevant. Another kind of argument that will not be considered is " What I wrote implies the correct answer so my answer is correct ". Answers must be explicit, clearly written and duly justified (wherever this last condition applies) to get partial or full credit for them. Grades will be based on what is written and not on the implications of what is written.
- If the motive for requesting a re-grade is " unfairness", defining it as the fact that two exams with the same qualitative answers were graded differently, you must prove your statement. This means that you must name another student's exam whose answer you think is like yours but was graded differently. Both exams (your own exam and the other student's exam) will be completely re-graded. This implies that a possible result is that the grade of the student who did not request the re-grade might be lowered.

<u>Some suggestions to succeed in the course</u>

- ***Try to make the most out of every class. Ask all the questions you want. Do not be afraid of asking questions. There is no such a thing as a stupid question. You will notice that this will make studying for the exams easier.***
- ***Do all the problem sets you receive. They help you to understand the course materials and succeed in exams.***
- ***Avoid studying by heart. You should be able to reason the course materials. Use the office hours if you feel you cannot do that. It is my job and also my pleasure to help you.***
- Try to use efficiently the office hours. A very common habit is that every student wants to go to the office hours just before the exam date or a couple of days before. Because you are quite many and because of the office hours time constraints, I will not be able to answer all your questions if you come all at the same time. Do not accumulate your doubts until the last minute before the exam. It might be too late then. If you think you need the office hours, come regularly during the quarter. ***Learning gradually generally helps to get better grades.***
- Avoid grading problems. Write clearly and concisely the answers to exam questions and justify carefully where you are asked to do so. Remember grading will be based on what is written and not on the implications of what is written.