

## Improving your teaching

Although it seems a trivial statement, the following statement is absolutely crucial. To become a better instructor, you must want to because it requires effort to collect information from colleagues and students and to change your bad teaching habits!!!

A good starting point is to self-evaluate. The first question to ask is what would a perfect section be like?. Then, taking this as a benchmark, ask yourself seriously: How am I doing? Use all the objective measures you can to base your answer like midterms, graded problem sets and formal evaluations. The next question is: Why am I doing well or bad? Which ideas worked, which ones did not? How can I improve upon this performance?

A second way of getting feedback is directly from your students. The simplest way of doing this is learning to read their faces during your session. Another way of getting feedback from them is asking them to evaluate your class and give you suggestions on how to make it better. Also, have your students do things which are informative with respect to your teaching like quizzing them in section before you finish your class. Finally, office hours can also be informative. Encourage students to go and ask them if they are doing well or not, if they feel they are learning or not and have them explain their answers. This is usually the most valuable source of information you will have.

A third way of getting feedback regarding your teaching is asking experienced fellow TAs or the teaching assistant coordinator to come to your section and evaluate you using a formal evaluation sheet. An experienced eye will see many things you do not and give you good advice. A sample evaluation sheet that you could use is included and an explanation is included in separate pages

### Economics 495: TA Evaluations Forms

The Teaching assistant is rated on a scale of 1 to 5 in each of the criteria in the evaluation form below. The meanings of the categories are explained in an accompanying sheet. Below the form, a space to allow for general comments and suggestions is also included. The grading scale is as follows 1 means poor, 2 means fair, 3 means adequate, 4 well done and 5 means excellent.

<i>TA Name:</i>	<i>Date of Observation:</i>
<i>Categories</i>	<i>Score per category</i>
<b>Motivation</b>	
<b>Structure of Talk</b>	
<b>Substance of Talk</b>	
<b>Verbal Skills</b>	
<b>Vocal Projections</b>	
<b>Eye Contact</b>	
<b>Posture and Gesture</b>	
<b>Energy</b>	
<b>Interaction with Audience</b>	
<b>Pace of Delivery</b>	
<b>Timing</b>	
<b>Overall Impression</b>	

Comments and Suggestions:

The focus of the sections in our department is to teach economic concepts and their applications by having students solve problems that involve their understanding. Given this general objective, the categories represent partial objectives that TAs should achieve in section that are considered necessary to pursue it.

**Motivation:** Is the TA doing a good job in explaining the importance of the topics and concepts dealt with in the problems?

**Structure of Talk:** Are the problems presented in a sensible order given the topics to be covered? Does the TA stop to summarize what is learned in each problem after finishing it?

**Substance of the Talk:** Is the logic of the problems clearly explained and illustrated? Are the intuitive lessons from the problems clearly conveyed to the students?

**Verbal Skills:** Is the TA's English clear?

**Vocal Projections:** Is the TA speaking loud enough, slow enough among other things for students to understand properly what he is saying?

**Eye contact:** Is the TA keeping eye contact with the class to check their understanding? Can he read properly signals of problems and react to them?

**Posture and Gesture:** Is the TA using strange postures and gestures to teach that may give students the wrong message, confuse them or distract them?

**Interaction with audience:** Are students participating actively in the session asking questions and solving problems? Is the TA asking adequate questions to see if students are getting the concepts?

**Energy:** Does the TA devote enough energy in emphasizing the crucial points in different ways to help students understand and adapt to different learning styles?

**Pace of delivery:** Is the TA teaching at a pace that allows students to understand and think about the ideas presented?

**Timing:** Is the TA managing the class time well enough to finish explaining the problems properly and allocate the last 5 or 10 minutes to wrap up?

**Overall Impression:** How is the TA doing everything considered?

Students that score low are revisited until their performance is satisfactory. Scores must be at 3 or above in all the categories.

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