

Developing an Undergraduate Learning Assistant Program

*Session #3: Finding the Right Roles
for Learning Assistants in Your
Course*





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Session Facilitators



Welcome and housekeeping

Part I: Possible Roles for Learning Assistants

Part II: Configuring Your Learning Assistants' Roles

Workshop: Tailoring Roles to Match Your Key Challenges

Discussion and Q&A

If you have any questions before the Q&A at the end, feel free to place them in the chat. We will address them or try to return to them at the end.



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Part I: Possible Roles for Learning Assistants

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The Many Roles LAs Can Play: During Class

- Leading lab or recitation sections
- Keeping track of attendance and/or participation
- Facilitating activities in class (assisting students during group work; facilitating simulations; working through problems/examples)
- Taking the pulse of the class during lessons (e.g., to assess levels of engagement or instances of confusion)
- Helping to facilitate discussions in class
- Contributing to lessons (e.g., by helping to plan them or by giving part of a lecture)



The Many Roles LAs Can Play: Outside of Class

- Holding office hours
- Helping the instructor with grading and/or providing feedback
- Responding to student emails
- Sending emails or announcements about class matters
- Working with students who need to miss class



The Many Roles LAs Can Play: For Exams



- Proctoring exams or quizzes
- Leading review sessions
- Helping the instructor write and/or edit exams



The Many Roles LAs Can Play: Technology Assistance



- Setting up the classroom technology before class
- Helping to perform host duties during Zoom sessions (e.g., managing the waiting room, monitoring chat, etc.)
- Assisting students who encounter technological difficulties



The Many Roles LAs Can Play: Student Well-Being and Success

- Serving as an intermediary between the instructor and students (e.g., by receiving and responding to student concerns about the course)
- Monitoring students for signs of struggling (e.g., attendance dropping off, poor performance on an exam, etc.)
- Managing the “Message Students Who...” feature in Canvas (to follow up with students who appear to be struggling)
- Helping the instructor carry out disability accommodations
- Helping the instructor make class materials more accessible



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Part II: Configuring Your Learning Assistants' Roles

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Configuring Your Learning Assistants' Roles

Decisions about the exact roles to assign your learning assistants could be based on:

- The size, level, or format of your course
- How the learning assistant program is structured
- An individual learning assistant's experience, interests, or skills
- Your pedagogical ambitions
- An attempt at problem solving





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Workshop: Tailoring Roles to Match Your Key Challenges

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Key Challenges



Take 3 minutes to respond to the following prompt:

In the course you are considering using LAs for, how would you describe your key challenge?

Perhaps this is something that takes up more of your time and energy than anything else – or an aspect of the course that consistently turns out differently than you would like.



Key Challenges



Now take 3 minutes to respond to the following prompt:

Reflecting on what you just wrote, can you envision any way that learning assistants could help address this challenge? If so, how? If not, why not?



Key Challenges



Now take 15 minutes to discuss your observations in a breakout room.



Your group should prepare to share one of the following with the rest of us: a) the most novel use of a learning assistant that arose in this discussion, *or b)* a common obstacle that emerged – related to why people could not envision LAs helping with their key challenge.

Key Challenges



What is the most novel use of a learning assistant that arose in your group?



What is a common obstacle that emerged in your group – related to why people could not envision LAs helping with their key challenge?



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Questions or Comments?

