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TA Training - How Much Is Too Much?

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As laboratory coordinators, we hire, train and supervise teaching assistants for a variety of biology laboratories. With the increase in our TA population over the years, we have developed both departmental and course specific training sessions for our biology TAs. At the beginning of each semester, we provide our TAs with a handbook of 'Guidelines for Biology TAs'. This handbook includes tips geared specifically towards effective teaching in laboratories, the logistics of laboratory marks administration, and a selection of case studies to help our TAs leverage challenging laboratory situations. At our departmental TA training session, we present and discuss essential sections of our handbook and encourage our experienced TAs to participate in the discussion and provide anecdotes from their own experiences. Course specific training focuses on the 'nuts and bolts' of the specific laboratory experiments. At these course specific training sessions we also review and provide our TAs with a detailed marking scheme and correction sheets, and either guidelines and background information to assist in the preparation of the pre-lab presentation or the pre-lab presentation itself. With this wealth of information available to them, we ask the question: "Are our teaching assistants better prepared?" In terms of presentations and marking schemes:"Should we be focusing more on consistency by providing our TAs with complete presentations and detailed correction sheets or should we allow our TAs more flexibility and individuality in their preparation?" In this mini-workshop we intend to stimulate broad discussion about TA training practices and explicitly "How much information should we provide to our TAs?"

Mission, Review Process & Disclaimer

The Association for Biology Laboratory Education (ABLE) was founded in 1979 to promote information exchange among university and college educators actively concerned with teaching biology in a laboratory setting. The focus of ABLE is to improve the undergraduate biology laboratory experience by promoting the development and dissemination of interesting, innovative, and reliable laboratory exercises. For more information about ABLE, please visit **http://www.ableweb.org/.**

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