

Balancing Academic Freedom, Professional Development for TAs, and a Uniform Experience for the Students

Fardad Firooznia

City College of New York, Department of Biology, 160 Convent Ave., New York NY 10031 USA
(ffirooznia@ccny.cuny.edu)

One of the problems with teaching large lecture classrooms with multiple lab sections that are taught by several TAs is the disconnect between the experience with the lecturer versus that with the lab instructor. The more intimate setting in the lab means closer connections and perhaps easier monitoring of the progress and the learning of individual students. Each TA deserves the opportunity to explore his/her interest in pedagogy and develop his/her teaching skills and if interested develop and participate in pedagogical research. It is incumbent upon us as course coordinators and instructors to provide some level of professional development for our TAs and to allow them to experiment with their teaching and exercise their academic freedom while at the same time ensuring some uniformity in the experience of the students in different lab sections of a multi-section class. In this mini workshop we will discuss steps the course coordinators/instructors can take that involve TAs to ensure some kind of uniform experience for the students in the different lab sections. Examples which I will provide to jump start the discussion are: weekly lab prep sessions, guide timelines for lab instruction, practice lab reports, grading rubrics, and lab exam question pools. We will also discuss ways that the course coordinator/instructor and the department or the university can help to ensure opportunities for professional development and growth for the TAs. Examples for discussion are video-tape recall microteaching, teaching observations/feedback, exam writing practice, and pilot lab tests.

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/>.

Papers published in *Tested Studies for Laboratory Teaching: Peer-Reviewed Proceedings of the Conference of the Association for Biology Laboratory Education* are evaluated and selected by a committee prior to presentation at the conference, peer-reviewed by participants at the conference, and edited by members of the ABLE Editorial Board.

Citing This Article

Firooznia, F. 2013. Balancing Academic Freedom, Professional Development for TAs, and a Uniform Experience for the Students. Page 309 in *Tested Studies for Laboratory Teaching*, Volume 34 (K. McMahon, Editor). Proceedings of the 34th Conference of the Association for Biology Laboratory Education (ABLE), 499 pages.

<http://www.ableweb.org/volumes/vol-34/?art=24>

Compilation © 2013 by the Association for Biology Laboratory Education, ISBN 1-890444-16-2. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

ABLE strongly encourages individuals to use the exercises in this proceedings volume in their teaching program. If this exercise is used solely at one's own institution with no intent for profit, it is excluded from the preceding copyright restriction, unless otherwise noted on the copyright notice of the individual chapter in this volume. Proper credit to this publication must be included in your laboratory outline for each use; a sample citation is given above.