

TA Training Methods: Training Through Assessment

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This mini-workshop was part of a series on teaching assistant (TA) training. The session outlined the TA training methods employed by the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Alberta. Our department employs 135-140 graduate student teaching assistants each semester, with the majority of TAs being assigned to first and second year lab courses. All new TAs are required to attend ten hours of teaching workshops. In addition, they are assessed three separate times in their first semester of teaching. The first assessment takes place within the first three weeks of their teaching assignment. It involves having 15-30 minutes of their teaching session video-taped. Following the video-session, the TA is given the opportunity to watch and evaluate his/her own performance and receives feedback from his/her teaching mentor. The second assessment comes in the form of an online mid-semester evaluation in which the TA's students provide anonymous feedback on their TA's teaching style. The final assessment is an end of term evaluation that includes the results of formal instructor surveys, as well as a critique of their performance by their teaching mentor (or course supervisor). The workshop explored the merits and challenges of training through assessment.

Keywords: TA training, assessment, evaluation

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Citing This Article

MacRitchie, D.M. 2013. TA Training Methods: Training Through Assessment. Page 336 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=30>

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