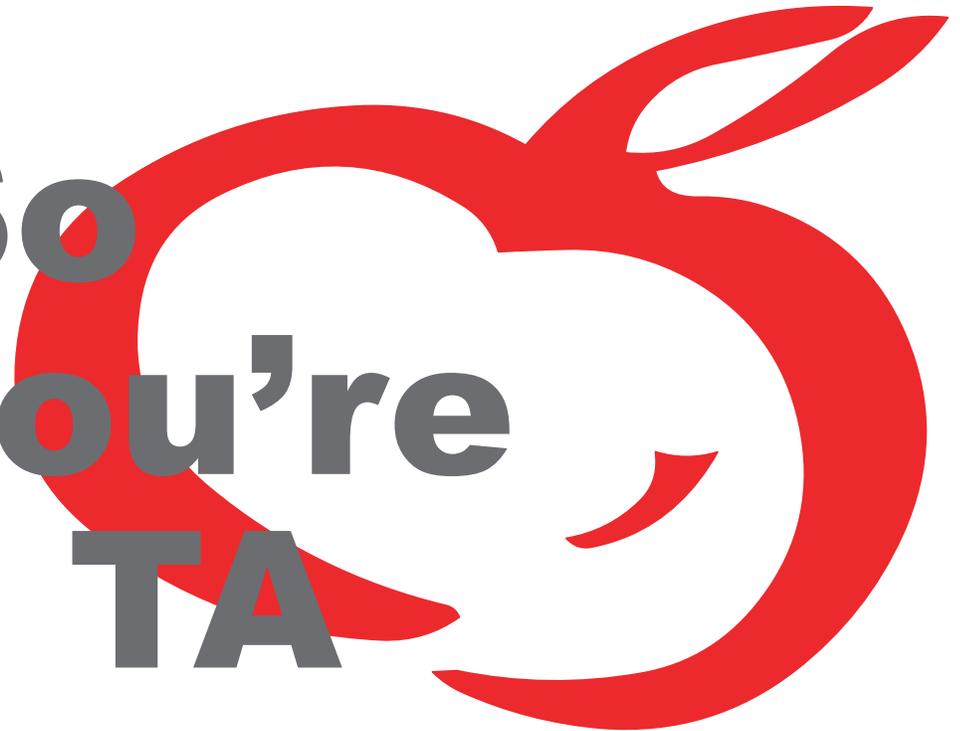


**So
you're
a TA**



**A Handbook on Teaching and Learning for
New TAs at York University**

cst
centre for the
support of
teaching

YORK

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UNIVERSITY

Third printing, August 2006

So you're a TA ... As a new TA, you have become an integral part of York's rich, lively and supportive learning environment. In this role, you can look forward to working with undergraduate students in several important ways – helping them grapple with the course material, fostering their development of critical academic skills, providing them with feedback and assistance to advance their learning, and generally helping them to succeed in your course to the best of their abilities.

This guide is designed for TAs who are just starting out in their teaching roles and to that end we did not attempt to be comprehensive on any one subject; rather, we tried to offer a range of ideas and strategies to help you get started and then point you to good resources on each topic so that you can explore them further on your own. The guide is intended to be advisory, rather than prescriptive – you need to identify the instructional approaches and strategies that you feel most comfortable with, then work to adapt new ideas and suggestions within that framework. In addition, we hope that you will take advantage of the ongoing professional development opportunities that are available to you through the Centre for the Support of Teaching and through Teaching Development GAs in your own department. The Centre offers a range of events and activities for TAs at all levels of experience, all of which can be credited towards formal certification in university teaching through the Dean of Graduate Studies. You can find more information about the University Teaching Practicum on page 29.

Some of the material in this guide was adapted from York's original handbook on university teaching, *Teaching and Learning at York: A Guide for TAs and Course Directors*, produced by the Centre for the Support of Teaching in 1989. Additional material was drawn from leading sources on teaching available at the CST Resource Library, including Brookfield and Preskill's *Discussion as a Way of Teaching* (1999), Phil Race's *Lecturer's Toolkit* (2002), Barbara Gross Davis' *Tools for Teaching* (1993), Dee Fink's *Creating Significant Learning Experiences* (2003), York's own *Voices from the Classroom* (2001), edited by Janice Newton et al, as well as TA handbooks from universities across the globe. Equally important are the contributions of individual TAs and faculty whose handouts and articles helped to round out the information in this guide and make it as helpful and relevant as possible to TAs just starting out at York. Further, we are especially thankful to Teferi Adem, David Babcock, Pablo Bose, Cheryl Dickie, Doba Goodman, Tomoko Mizuguchi, Tony Nield, Jan Rehner, Deanna Santos, Heather Sparling and Kandirra Wilson for their valuable input and advice.

We hope that you find your first year challenging and rewarding.

Best wishes,

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York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3
First printing August 2004
Revised August 2006

Established in 1989, the Centre for the Support of Teaching (CST) serves as a centre for dialogue about university teaching and learning at York University. The mission of the CST is to provide advocacy for excellence and innovation in teaching, and assist individuals, units and Faculties in improving student learning. This mandate is achieved through innovative and comprehensive programming, a progressive, collaborative approach, extensive resources, and the promotion of academic planning priorities in the area of teaching and learning. Further, the CST plays a leadership role in the coordination of services to support reflective and creative uses of technology that respond to diverse pedagogical needs.

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IN YOUR FIRST CLASS

Whether you are leading a tutorial, seminar or laboratory section, the first day of classes is very important both for you and for your students. Your students receive a lot of information during their first week and so they will likely remember few of the details you present. What they will remember is their initial impressions about the course and the atmosphere you create. The first class meeting is an ideal time to talk about your educational approach and your teaching strategies. As you prepare for your first meeting with the class, reflect on the course: what you will say about it; why it is relevant, important and interesting; how you will explain the content; what the students will know and be able to do at the end of the course; and what your role is in the context of teaching the course. The time and effort you spend preparing to teach tells students that you are interested in their learning and in the course (*Teaching Professor* 3.7 [1989]).

It isn't unusual for instructors at any level to feel anxious before the first meeting of a new class, even when they already have teaching experience. Usually though, once you get in the classroom, the anxiety will dissipate and the adrenalin flow will actually work to your benefit, giving you the intellectual and emotional energy to teach a better class than you would if you weren't nervous to begin with. Nevertheless, planning the first meeting in some detail will help you with some of those first class jitters.

Establishing a climate for learning

- If you want to achieve an informal style, arrive early and begin to get to know your students. This extra time will help you relax and help your students get to know you. Allow a little extra time for “lost” students.
- Once you begin speaking, try to speak slowly, using repetition whenever you feel panicky. Focus your attention on what you want to get across instead of how you are saying it or how you appear.
- You'll probably want to begin by introducing yourself and writing your name and contact information on the board. You might tell students something about yourself to help to break the ice. Tell them a little about your own background, your interests, and your hopes for the class (e.g., where you are from, your professional background, the degree you are working on, your research and interests, and why you are excited about the course).
- Get to know your students:
 - If the class is small, go around the room and ask each student to tell the group his/her name, major, and motivation for taking the course.
 - If the class is larger, ask students to introduce themselves to the student on their right/left.
 - Use a survey or assessment activity to find out more about your students (e.g., their background in content area, what they hope to get out of the course, their academic or career goals).

Ideas for learning students' names

Students often remember their best teachers as being those who took the extra effort to learn their names early in the term. Here are some strategies to help you do this:

- Familiarize yourself with the class list before the term begins
- Study the students' faces, clothing style, posture, haircut and other visual cues to help personalize each student
- On the class list, make a notation beside each student's name to help you remember who they are
- Draw up a seating plan of the classroom and note the students' names on it according to where they are seated (since it is often the case that they will return to the same seat they started the course in)
- For the first few classes, ask students to tell you their name before answering a question
- As students introduce themselves have them offer some information about their name, such as who they were named after, a nickname, the origin of their name, etc.
- Survey the students, in class, in small groups and/or in writing, to record their name, student number, email, background, and expectations for the course

Make notations on your class list so you'll learn students' names and needs faster. Remember that your students are probably at least as nervous as you are, and if you draw them out a little you'll relax everyone and establish a good climate for learning.

Sources: *Teaching and Learning at York: A Guide for TAs and Course Directors* (CST, 1989–90: 18), and Myron Jaworsky, “New Students, New Semester, How to Remember Names and Faces” (Honolulu Community College).

Things to check with your course director

As a TA, your responsibilities will vary from one department to another and from course to course, and so it is helpful to take time at the beginning of the term to get a clear idea of what will be expected of you throughout the term. Here are some questions you might want to discuss with your course director early in the term:

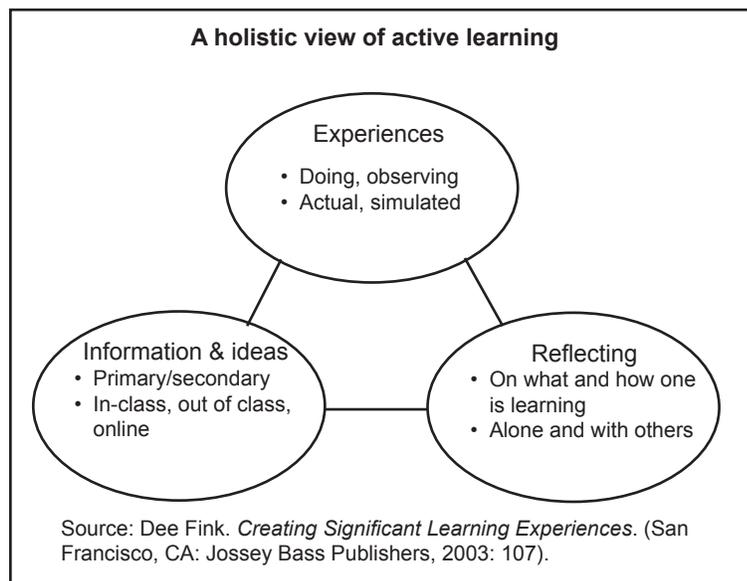
- What are the objectives of the course and what is to be accomplished in the tutorials/labs?
- When will the syllabus be ready?
- What is my role? What are my priorities? What is my position *vis à vis* the course director?
- How can I contribute to the course more generally (e.g., through assignment design, preparing written or web-based resources, guest lecturing, etc.)?
- If there are other TAs in the course, how is consistency maintained among tutorials?
- Do I structure my own classes/tutorials/labs, or are there outlines I should stick to? Should I stay close to the text or lectures?
- To what extent can I use class time to present new ideas, use different teaching methods, or present perspectives that are different from the instructor's?
- When conducting labs, what is the scope of my responsibilities? Do I keep track of supplies and materials? Do I design or revise experiments? Do I give demonstrations? What do I do in the case of emergency or accident?
- What should I do if I am unable to attend a class/lab/tutorial?
- Will there be separate readings assigned for tutorials by the course director? May I make my own assignments?
- Is section attendance mandatory? Is there a tutorial grade? If so, what criteria will be used to determine students' grades?
- How much responsibility for grading will I have?
- How many office hours should I hold and when? How do they fit in with my overall workload?
- If I am to give individual assistance, how much help is too much? What kind of assistance should I not give?
- What support is available for students with disabilities, ESL students, and students with poor academic skills?
- How do I handle disputes or difficulties with students?
- How do I report class concerns with lectures, assignments, exams, etc.?
- What audiovisual equipment do I need to know how to use? How do I arrange for it to be set up?
- How can I obtain feedback on my teaching? Where do I go for help on my teaching?
- How often will I meet with the course director during the term and what should I come prepared to discuss?

Sources: *Teaching and Learning at York: A Guide for TAs and Course Directors* (CST, 1989–90: 67) and "TA Checklist: Questions to Ask." *TRACE Tip Sheets* (University of Waterloo: <www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infotrac/tips/tachecklist.pdf>).

Helping your students gain the most out of your class

It is important to use a variety of instructional strategies to allow your students to actively engage with the course material in different ways. Research on teaching and learning styles has found that instructors often prefer to teach in ways that echo the way that they themselves would develop their understanding of the course material. Some of you might prefer to develop ideas by talking with others, and others might prefer to work things out on your own. Some of you would prefer to see charts, diagrams and pictures, while others prefer listening and reading. Some deal best with concrete illustrations and following an orderly sequence of facts, while others work best from principles and frameworks. And further, what works well for you in learning about one subject (say, gourmet cooking), might not work well in learning about something else (say, string theory) and so you are likely to use different approaches when learning about different things. Likewise, your students each learn and think about different things in different ways.

To help all your students gain the most from your classes, you should aim to provide opportunities for them to grapple with the ideas and material in the course in a variety of ways. Your classes should not only present information and ideas, but also provide opportunities for students to “do” and observe the processes they are learning about, as well as to reflect on and make connections with what they are learning. By presenting your material in different formats, by structuring a variety of instructional activities, especially experimentation, problem solving, and collaborative work, and by providing alternate ways of meeting course requirements, you will help more of your students achieve a deeper understanding of the course more often.



Ideas for integrating active learning in the classroom

Here are some instructional activities that you might consider using to help your students engage more actively in the course material. Further information on these and other ideas can be found at the CST Resource Library.

- Debates
 - Practice exams
 - Problem solving
 - Brainstorming
 - Pop quizzes
 - Structured controversy
 - Idea maps
 - Writing breaks
 - Value lines
 - Simulations
 - Five minutes each way
 - Fieldwork
 - Analogies
 - Journaling
 - Critical incidents
 - Observations
 - Rhetorical questions
 - Classroom “talk show”
 - Buzz groups
 - Silent reading
 - Student presentations
 - Story telling
 - Ice breakers
 - Fishbowls
 - Fact finding
 - Student polls
 - Jigsaws
 - Think-write-pair-discuss
 - Feedback sheets
 - Film or video analysis
 - Guest speakers
 - Reading aloud
 - Interviews
 - “Truth statements”
 - Panel of experts
 - Role playing
 - Case studies
 - Oral exams
- Others:

Introducing your course

- Be organized. Prepare a handout to give to your students with relevant contact information, such as the name of the course, number and section, as well as your name, office number, office hours and directions to your office if they are complicated.
- Distribute the course syllabus, which includes course information such as course name, number, and course director; the times and locations of class meetings; course objectives; evaluation information such as the grading system, assignments (format, description, length, due dates, submission information, etc.), tests and examinations; the required text and supplementary readings; a schedule of topics and readings; the academic honesty policy and other relevant procedures and policies.
- Explain the overall course structure. Discuss how the topics relate to course objectives and how the course fits into the overall academic program.
- Discuss what you expect of your students and what they can expect of you (e.g., preparation, availability).
- Discuss your office hours, and offer suggestions on the different ways that students might make good use of them (see page 22).
- Discuss policies affecting student grades: attendance; examinations; assignment content, weight and deadlines; policies and penalties for late assignments, plagiarism and cheating. (See the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty at <www.yorku.ca/univsec/legislation/senate/acadhone.htm>.)
- Discuss texts, required readings and library reserve readings and how to access them.
- Develop ground rules for class participation, discussions, projects and general classroom environment (see page 7).
- Describe, or demonstrate if time permits, a class discussion to give students a sense of what your sections will be like. Consider reviewing the important issues or concepts of the first week's lectures.
- Let students know you are receptive to suggestions and constructive criticism.
- Try to stay a few minutes after class to address questions or concerns that students have. This is a useful way to gauge how effectively you are communicating right from the outset of the semester.

Who are York's students?

In 2002, a survey was conducted of students at all levels of study enrolled in direct-entry undergraduate programs. Below are some of the findings:

- The average age of full time students was 22 and the average age of part time students was 32.
- 44% of students were born outside of Canada; they came from 88 different countries.
- Students not born in Canada have been here an average of nine years, but 40% have been here five years or less.
- 41% of students grew up speaking a language other than English at home; a total of 68 different languages were reported.
- 15% of students are married and 11% have children.
- 56% of students come directly from an Ontario high school.
- 53% of students live with their parents or spouse and 13% live in residence.
- 96% own or have access to a computer and 92% have internet access.
- Full-time students worked an average of 15 hours per week.
- 20% of students are involved in volunteer work.

Excerpts from "Who are York's Undergraduates? Results of the 2002 Undergraduate Student Survey." (Office of the Vice-President Students, 2002).

Dealing with nervousness

As a new TA, you may be concerned about nervousness and some of the following suggestions might be helpful to you:

- Prepare well, especially your introduction. Outline the points you need to cover and focus on these items. Prepare plenty of questions to help with transitions and to emphasize the main points.
- Rehearse your first session by visualizing how it will go. Practice your opening introduction on a friend or TA colleague.
- Accept that it is okay and normal to feel nervous – even more experienced instructors feel nervous on their first day of class.
- Start to build rapport with your students by arriving early for class and chatting with the students as they come in.
- Breathe deeply with your diaphragm, drink lots of water, and speak slowly and clearly.
- Identify those parts of your body where you feel tense (neck, jaw, etc.) and try to relax them.
- Don't feel that you have to know all the answers. If you are unsure about a question, admit it, then either promise to find out the answer, suggest a reference, refer the question back to rest of the class, or ask a student to find out and report back the next week.
- Stay confident! Concentrate on the ideas you want to get across, not on your own nervousness.

Race and ethnic relations

York guarantees to its faculty, staff and students an environment in which they can teach, work and study free from racial discrimination and harassment through its University Policy Concerning Racism (1995). The spirit of the policy aims at ensuring that all individuals can contribute to and benefit from the educational experience at York without having race or ethnicity as an impediment. The primary task at York is to provide quality education. Racial and ethnic diversity are not barriers to this. If this diversity is used creatively, it can enhance and enrich the intellectual development of all at the University.

York's policy on racism can be found at www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/

Things to bring to class

Being organized and prepared will help reduce your nervousness. Below is a list of items that you might bring along to every class:

- ✓ The course syllabus
- ✓ A handout with your relevant contact information
- ✓ A recent class list and attendance sheets if needed
- ✓ The course text and readings
- ✓ Visual materials, artifacts, cartoons, audio recordings, etc., that are relevant to the day's topic
- ✓ An interesting journal or newspaper article relevant to the day's topic
- ✓ Transparencies, overhead pens, chalk
- ✓ Calculator
- ✓ Extra pens/pencils, erasers and rulers
- ✓ A bottle of water

AV in the classroom

Almost all classrooms at York are equipped with an overhead projector, and an increasing number offer a full range of technology – including PCs, digital projectors, internet connections, DVD & CD players, document cameras and slide projectors – that are either built in or can be rolled in to your classroom at a nominal charge.

Consider integrating visual and audio material into your classes to break down, emphasize, illustrate or expand on your ideas, or bring a new perspective to the topic. To arrange for AV support, check with your departmental secretary or call the Instructional Technology Centre (ITC) – see Resource Section.

Want more?

For further ideas and resources on meeting your first class and helping students gain the most out of your classes see:

- Felder, Richard. "Reaching the Second Tier: Learning and Teaching Styles in College Science Education." *Journal of College Science Teaching* 23.5 (1993): 286–290.
- Fink, Dee. *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Publishers, 2003.
- Kolb, David. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984.
- Powlacs Lunde, Joyce. "101 Things You Can Do in the First Three Weeks of Class." *UNL Graduate Student Development*. 2004. University of Nebraska at Lincoln. 28 July 2005 <www.unl.edu/gradstudies/gsapd/instructional/101things.shtml>.
- McCarthy, Bernice. "A Tale of Four Learners: 4MAT's Learning Styles." *Educational Leadership* 54.6 (March 1997): 46–51.
- Newton, Janice, et al., eds. *Voices from the Classroom: Reflections on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. Toronto ON: Garamond Press, 2001.

IN THE TUTORIAL

Tutorials provide an opportunity for students to discuss topics developed in the larger lectures, probe the course material more deeply, exchange ideas, develop critical and analytical skills, and work collaboratively with their peers in a smaller group setting. If you are TAing a course in statistics, testing, or other skills-based subjects, you might also review the next section on “In the Laboratory.”

Discussion in the tutorial

Discussions are important to student learning because they offer students an opportunity to explore the diversity of views about an issue and to reach a deeper understanding of the course material. Brookfield and Preskill, in their book *Discussion as a Way of Teaching* (1999), observe that discussion serves a variety of important functions, namely:

- Helping students reach a more critically informed understanding about the topic or topics under consideration
- Enhancing self-awareness and capacity for self-critique
- Fostering appreciation among students for the diversity of opinion that invariably emerges when viewpoints are exchanged openly and honestly, and
- Acting as a catalyst to help the student take informed action in the world (Brookfield & Preskill 6).

Planning discussions

Effective discussions, regardless of whether they take place face to face or online, require prior planning and review of the course material. As a first step, it is important to work out how you are going to get the discussion started. You might consider basing your discussion on questions your students generate (either submitted in advance of the session or brainstormed at the beginning), posing a contentious or provocative statement, selecting a quote from the readings, or asking students to consider relationships, outcomes, applications, or speculations. In your planning and review of the course material, you should also anticipate the kinds of questions that are likely to emerge in the discussion, build a store of examples, stories and recent events to help make the discussion more relevant to the students, and develop your own questions that can be used to broaden the discussion, introduce different points of view, or move it into a new area.

Discussing ground rules

To encourage students to participate in the discussion, it is helpful to spend time at the beginning of the course talking about the ground rules they would like to adopt.

- How would they like to be spoken to by their peers?
- How do they feel about respectful exchange in discussion and what does this look like?
- How do they want to handle any breakdown in respectful exchange that might occur?
- How do they indicate that they're ready to speak?
- Is it okay for the TA to call directly on individuals? (Brookfield and Preskill 54)

Ideas for asking questions

Asking questions is one of the most effective ways of starting discussions and pushing them further in tutorials. Flinders University offers the following questioning strategies for use in tutorials:

- **Pausing:** allow students time to think about a question before responding
- **Re-phrasing:** perhaps students aren't responding because they have no idea what you mean
- **Direct the question in different ways:** e.g., ask your question then ask for a volunteer to answer; ask your question then ask an individual to respond; identify a student and ask your question directly to him/her
- **Redirecting:** a useful technique to involve other learners and draw out other views
- **Reacting:** always react in a positive way despite the response. In the case of an inadequate answer it may be necessary to clarify the question or redirect it to another student
- **Probing:** probing questions might help to clarify or elicit examples
- **Including all students:** make sure the questions involve all the students as much as possible
- **Encouraging questions:** allow time for reflection and respond positively to questions that emerge

<www.flinders.edu.au/teach/sessional/resources/tutbkv4.pdf>

Moderating discussions

- If you habitually can't get discussion started you first need to pay more attention to the topics you're picking; they may not be broad enough. Or you may be using ineffective questioning skills, or putting students on the spot or embarrassing them.
- If one or two students consistently monopolize the floor there are many causes at work, but the end result is a great deal of tension. You don't want to reject the one student, but then you don't want to alienate the rest of the class. You may want to take one of two approaches. Either you can use their comments to redirect the discussion back to the class ("You've raised an important point. Maybe others would like to comment."), or you can acknowledge the comments and offer another outlet ("Perhaps we can discuss these ideas d after class.>").
- If there is a lull in the discussion, relax. Every conversation needs a chance to catch its breath. It may mean that your topic is exhausted or it may be a pause for people to digest what they've heard. If the lull comes too frequently, though, you may need to give more attention to the types of topics you're picking. You may also be inadvertently shutting down discussion by dominating rather than facilitating.
- Encourage students to not just talk to you, but to each other as well by leading with your eyes, looking occasionally at others in the room. This will lead the speaker to do likewise.
- If you notice that some students are dominating the discussion, while others are habitually silent, make a point of gently drawing them into the discussion when you see that they have something to contribute ("Mary, you seem to disagree with John's opinion. How would you approach that subject?"). In such cases, be careful not to put the student on the spot, and when s/he responds, try to be especially appreciative. You may want to make a point of speaking to the student before or after class to indicate your interest in hearing her views in class more often.
- If a debate breaks out over an issue, then you've got a hot topic on your hands! Facilitate! Your major task here is to keep the argument focused on the issues. Don't let it turn personal, under any circumstances.

Source: *Teaching and Learning at York: A Guide for TAs and Course Directors*. (CST, 1989–90: 44).

Engaged pedagogy in classrooms

The Office of the Ombudsperson and Centre for Human Rights (the Office) at York University supports faculty, staff and students in advancing a culture of human rights, equity and fairness. The classroom is an extremely important environment in which to model and consistently apply those principles. The Office encourages TAs to acknowledge their own lens, establish ground rules – e.g. what is acceptable and what is not, acknowledge that some communities experience marginalization and need particular encouragement to participate. TAs are reminded to be inclusive by remembering their lens is only one and how their own conditioning influences their behaviour in the classroom.

When stereotypes arise, address them in class and acknowledge their role in marginalizing and hurting individuals and communities. TAs are discouraged from asking members of racialized groups to represent their experience as though that individual represented an entire community, thus creating a monolithic understanding of a group; responding to students without acknowledging their own conditioning, invalidating a racialized person's experience or response because it is not consistent with how you would respond.

This summary is only a guide. Should TAs feel uncertain about how they should respond to a particular situation, we encourage you to call the Office of the Ombudsperson and Centre for Human Rights for further discussion and assistance <www.yorku.ca/ombuds/>.

Classroom management

In most cases you will eventually face students who present various kinds of classroom management situations.

- **Talking too much** – A common example is the student who wants to talk too much, frequently about irrelevant material. You can treat these students with respect but make it known that they are overpowering the discussion. By systematically calling on many members of the class, you can often get a very active class. The students seldom want one person to dominate any more than you do.
- **Talking too much II** – If a student continues to dominate the discussion it might be useful to talk to the student outside of the class. Students usually respond to your request for less or different participation on their part. Sometimes they lapse back into the old pattern. Remember that these students are seldom deliberately destroying the class; they think that they are adding to the class with their participation. Don't hesitate to remind them politely if they forget their talk with you.
- **Wisecracks and insults** – It is important to distinguish between the constructive and creative use of humour and sarcasm by students and teachers – often an important release valve for deflating tensions, lightening the mood and diminishing or making less oppressive power relations – and obstructionist or hurtful insults that can constitute little more than petulance at best and verbal abuse at worst. Techniques to deal with nasty insults and abusive or disruptive jokes include challenging the speaker, in a non-threatening manner, on the substance of the joke. What makes it funny? Why was the comment made? It is important not to devote too much time, space, and attention to such behaviour; however, ignoring insults and wisecracks rarely diminishes their presence and will instead create an atmosphere of unresolved and ongoing tension in the classroom. By engaging students who exhibit these forms of behaviour, one can potentially draw on their restlessness to increase the energy and dynamism of the whole classroom.
- **Disagreement and confrontation** – In dealing with disagreement, confrontation, and inappropriate behaviour, TAs should seek guidance from a more experienced person, i.e., department heads and coordinators, for they have dealt with similar problems and can advise you on appropriate steps. New instructors are often reluctant to share problems because they feel that these problems are their own fault or constitute a poor reflection on their teaching abilities. Similar problems arise continually, however, with new and experienced faculty, young or old, outstanding and less capable. In fact, students sometimes sense an inexperienced TA and believe they can “get away with it” more because of the TAs lack of experience. For these reasons, and for the reassurance it gives, it is usually best to discuss your interpersonal problems with someone who can help you.

Edited by Pablo Bose, Environmental Studies, York (2005). Source: *Teaching and Learning at York: A Guide for TAs and Course Directors*. (CST, 1989–90: 26).

Want more?

For further ideas and resources on leading discussions and teaching in tutorials see:

- Brookfield, Stephen D. and Stephen Preskill. *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1999.
- Frederick, Peter. “The Dreaded Discussion: Ten Ways to Start.” *Classroom Communication: Collected Readings for Effective Discussion and Questioning*. R. Neff and M. Weimer, Eds. Madison, WI: Magna, 1989. (Also available online at <www.irc.uci.edu/TRG/Enhancing_Learning/Discussion/Leading_Discussion.htm>).
- Gross Davis, Barbara. *Tools for Teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1993.
- Newton, Janice, et al, eds. *Voices from the Classroom: Reflections on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. Toronto ON: Garamond Press, 2001.
- “Ten Techniques for Energizing Your Classroom Discussions.” *Faculty Resource Guide*. Grand Rapids Community College Center for Teaching and Learning. 28 July 2005 <web.grcc.cc.mi.us/ctl/faculty%20resources/ten_techniques_for_energizing.htm>.

Strategies for dealing with a student who is angry

In the uncommon event that you encounter hostility or verbal aggression in the classroom, the following suggestions might be helpful:

- Remain calm and polite; keep your own temper in check.
- Maintain eye contact; speak clearly without raising your voice.
- Defuse the situation by offering to talk privately during a break or in a quiet place, if you feel it is safe to do so.
- Acknowledge the student's anger and frustration; allow him/her to vent and tell you what is upsetting him/her.
- Listen and try to understand the real issues that the student is concerned about.
- Summarize and clarify your understanding of the student's concerns.
- Avoid disagreeing; rather, build on or around what has been said.
- Look for ways that will give the student a way to gracefully retreat from the confrontation.
- Encourage the student to generate solutions to the problem being addressed.

What if I detect signs that the anger might be getting out of control?

The following suggestions may assist you if you are faced with a student who has become overtly disruptive, threatening or violent:

- Quickly and calmly acknowledge the intensity of the situation and actively listen and make sure you understand the student's concerns.
- Explain clearly and directly what behaviours are and are not acceptable.
- If, after indicating to the student that his/her behaviour is disruptive and the student has had a chance to conform to expected standards, the behaviour continues you may ask the student to leave the classroom. In all such cases, you should consult the **Senate Policy on Dealing with Disruptive and/or Harassing Behaviour**, which provides guidance on documenting the incident and how to proceed if the disruption continues.
- If the student refuses to leave the class, you may call on Safety and Security (ext. 33333 or 416 736-5333) for assistance.

For further information on dealing with disruptive students, see:

- "Senate Policy on Dealing with Disruptive and/or Harassing Behaviour." 1984. York University. <www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/>.
- "Disruptive Behaviour." From the *Security Services Emergency Guidelines* <www.yorku.ca/security/emergencyguides.htm>.
- "Conflict De-Escalation." *Classroom Resources*. 05 Sept 2003. Intergroup Relations Centre, Arizona State University. 28 July 2005 <www.asu.edu/provost/intergroup/resources/classconflict.html>.
- "Difficult Behaviours in the Classroom." *Faculty Development Teaching Tips*. Honolulu Community College. 28 July 2005 <honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/behavior.htm>.
- "The Verbally Aggressive Student." *Referring Distressed Students Resource*. Student Health Service, University of California Santa Barbara. 28 July 2005 <www.sa.ucsb.edu/distressedstudentsguide/>.

Sexual harassment

Issues of sexual harassment can be especially tricky for TAs because they occupy the roles of both instructor and student. As an instructor, you have some power over your students, and as a graduate student, you are subject to the power of the faculty over your academic record and letters of recommendation. Therefore, the issue of sexual harassment may be addressed from two directions: your potential for harassing, or being perceived as harassing, by your students, and the potential for you to be harassed by those who instruct and supervise you as well as by the students you instruct. You may also be the first person a student talks to about a problem of harassment. In all cases, the Office of the Ombudsman and Centre for Human Rights (see Resource Section) can help by providing confidential advice and assistance in a supportive atmosphere.

Setting boundaries

To forestall possible difficulties, the following tips may be useful to you in setting appropriate boundaries in your relations with students:

- Maintain a professional relationship with your students. Don't attempt to be one of them – your position precludes close relationships.
- When meeting with students in your office, leave the door open or arrange to be interrupted after a short time.
- If you feel a student is “making advances” make it clear by your reactions and verbal response that you are not interested. If the behaviour persists, seek advice from someone you trust who will take the problem seriously and can help you deal with the problem, or contact the Office of the Ombudsman and Centre for Human Rights for confidential advice and information (see Resource Section).
- If you wish to have a personal relationship with a student, wait until the student has completed all course work and is no longer under your direct assessment or control.
- If a student approaches you with personal problems that may undermine a professional relationship, direct them to the appropriate area on campus that can help them (see Resource Section).
- When carrying on conversations with students, both in and outside of class, avoid commenting on their clothing or appearance.
- Sexual, discriminatory jokes and racial slurs are inappropriate in the classroom. Many students will be offended by such remarks. Put a stop to them immediately.
- If a student comes to you because they are being harassed, take the issue seriously. Offer them support, provide them with helpful information, and/or refer them to the Office of the Ombudsman and Centre for Human Rights. It is your responsibility to handle this problem quickly and appropriately.
- Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself on the receiving end of persistent unwanted attention or you may get derogatory remarks on the basis of your gender, feminist stance, sexual orientation, or racial or ethnic origin. York University is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free of harassment. If this happens to you, please seek support from the Office of the Ombudsman and Centre for Human Rights or CUPE 3903 (see Resource Section).

Source: *Preparing TAs for Teaching: Training Manual* (Centre for Teaching and Learning, Queen's University, 1999: 37) <<http://www.queensu.ca/ctl/resources/files/pdf/trainers2003.pdf>>.

York's policy on sexual harassment

York University strives to provide an environment wherein all students, faculty and staff are able to learn, study, teach and work free from sexual harassment, including harassment on the basis of gender identification and sexual orientation.

Sexual harassment is:

1. Unwanted sexual attention of a persistent or abusive nature, made by a person who knows or ought reasonably to know that such attention is unwanted
2. The making of an implied or express promise of reward for complying with a sexually oriented request
3. The making of an implied or express threat of reprisal, in the form of actual reprisal or the denial of opportunity, for refusal to comply with a sexually oriented request
4. Sexually oriented remarks and behaviour which may reasonably be perceived to create a negative psychological and emotional environment for work and study

For the full policy see: <www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/>

IN THE LABORATORY

Labs are a place where lectures, class notes and theory come together with hands-on experience, bringing science to life for students. Labs are an essential part of the learning experience for undergraduate students and science TAs play an important role in this process. It is rare that you will be a graduate student in the sciences and not TA a lab at some point during your degree, so the following is important.

Lab safety

Regardless of the lab you are teaching in, safety procedures such as exit locations, eyewash stations, fire blankets, extinguishers, showers, and any other safety information specific to your lab must be known and familiar to you. This information will usually be provided to you through your course director and through the mandatory WHMIS training that all science TAs receive; however, it is your responsibility to know all safety issues, preventative measures and emergency protocols before students walk into your lab.

Before going into the lab

As a TA you must be familiar with the material and the procedures that students will be performing during the lab. The greater your familiarity, the easier it will be for you to answer questions and troubleshoot problems that inevitably arise during a lab, saving students time and ensuring successful completion.

Each lab needs preparation on the part of the TA before it is explained and taught to students. The best way to become familiar with a lab is to actually do the lab yourself ahead of time. Pitfalls, equipment quirks, and even mistakes in the manual will usually be found at this point, saving you and the students much needed time in the lab.

If there is insufficient time or you are unable to complete the lab before you have to instruct it as a TA, you should at the very least read the lab manual and procedures for that lab.

Prelab talk

At the beginning of each lab, TAs usually give an introduction through a “Prelab talk” that lasts anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes. A TA should review and explain the procedures, parameters, mathematical theory, terminology and laboratory equipment tricks in addition to the safety issues that will help make the students’ experiments successful. Ask for questions, clarify any ambiguities, and demonstrate special procedures now rather than interrupting the experiment later.

It is also important to provide students with an explanation of what results you want recorded in their lab report and how to record them, and to let them know what you’ll be looking for when marking. While most students will perform the lab correctly, they often become confused about what results should be recorded and how these results are to be presented: for example, significant figures, graph titles and axis labels, showing calculations, etc.

Keep your pre-lab talk concise and try to concentrate your efforts on information that will give the students the best chance to be effective and efficient in the lab.

Health & Safety

The Department of Occupational Health and Safety (DOHS) provides resources and services to promote safety in the lab, including:

- The “**Lab Safety Manual**” which sets out safety standards and procedures for dealing with specific lab emergencies, as well as the roles and responsibilities for those who work in the lab environment
- Lab safety checklists
- Training in Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) – provided and required by York University for all TAs who work directly in science labs
- Accident investigation, prevention and response programs

Check out the Occupational Health and Safety web site at <www.yorku.ca/dohs>.

During the lab

Once the lab begins, the laboratory demonstrator is responsible, as stated before, for the safety of students and should take all precautions to prevent the misuse of lab equipment and/or lab materials that may cause injury or create an unsafe lab environment. TAs must be constantly evaluating the laboratory for hazards and once identified they must be removed immediately (e.g., even small things, like book bags on the floor, can present a danger as a tripping hazard).

If both you and your students are well prepared, you will be free to perform your most important role, that of guiding students' critical thinking and problem solving skills in science. Try to talk to each student at least once during the experiment. Technical and procedural matters can be handled quickly with a few words of advice or a very brief demonstration.

Helping students master the steps of scientific inquiry involves finding ways to help students solve problems for themselves. If lab partners ask "Why can't we get this to come out right?" try asking a series of questions that will lead them to discover the reasons for themselves, rather than simply explaining why or giving the answer. Students will quickly learn if you easily give away answers, causing students to immediately ask you for answers rather than working their way to solutions, which is one of the most important skills they learn in the lab. It's very tempting to help students by giving away the answers, but unless you resist the temptation, they are likely to falter in this or the next experiment.

Remember names if you can and use positive language when addressing student questions. This will aid in developing and maintaining a professional and respectful environment, which should be a continual goal for you and for the students.

Edited by David Babcock, Earth & Space Science, York (2005). Sources: Farrington, Glen "Suggestions for TAs in Science." *Core 3.1* (September 1992); *Teaching and Learning at York: A Guide for TAs and Course Directors* (CST, 1989-90, 44); and "Some Pointers for the Laboratory." *TA Survival Guide*. (University of Guelph, 2002-03)

Want more?

For further ideas and resources on teaching in the laboratory see:

- *York University Laboratory Safety Program*. August 2004. Department of Occupational Health and Safety, York University. 28 July 2005 <www.yorku.ca/dohs/documents/LaboratorySafetyProgram.pdf>.
- Health and Safety Training. Department of Occupational Health and Safety, York University. <www.yorku.ca/dohs/training.htm>
- "Demonstrating Laboratory Classes at Flinders University." Staff Development and Training Unit, Flinders University, Australia. 28 July 2005 <<http://www.flinders.edu.au/teach/t4l/teaching/sessional/resources/demo.pdf>>.
- "Science Labs." 30 Aug 2004. *Indiana University Teaching Handbook: Section Two*. 28 July 2005 <www.teaching.iub.edu/wrapper_big.php?section_id=labs>.

IN THE LECTURE HALL

In addition to your regular TA duties you may have the opportunity to give guest lectures in your course. A good lecture can serve to help students grapple with the course material in a variety of ways: to provide a synthesis of various materials; to help them make sense of their readings and assignments and to determine what's important, and why, and what is not; to whet their appetite and motivate them to explore the subject more deeply; to challenge their assumptions and preconceptions; and to foster a sense of community within the class.

Planning your lecture

Dalton Kehoe, a faculty member in Communication Studies at York, observes that an effective lecture requires a thoughtful balance between coverage of material and explanation and illustration to create the possibility of engaging student interest long enough to achieve a new level of understanding. In deciding what to cover in a lecture, remember that "less is more." A few concepts, well illustrated with helpful examples and presented with a clearly stated purpose, provide the key to an effective lecture (Kehoe 190).

Kehoe suggests that you plan your lecture to provide an orderly overview of the topic. To do so, divide the topics into broadly related sections, each of which should unlock understanding of the larger subject, contain its own main points, examples and qualifications, and conclude with a brief summary. Be clear about what you want to leave in and leave out and then structure your explanation. He advises using the following four communications techniques help to make it easier for students to follow a presentation:

1. **Signposts** – Use statements that signal the direction and structure of a lecture. This is best done as an overview at the beginning of the lecture. For example, "Today we will cover the following approaches... I will show the strengths and weaknesses of each and present examples of their application..." Students will have a much easier time following if you let them know where you're about to go.
2. **Frames** – Use verbal markers to delineate the beginnings and endings of topics and subtopics; for example, "Let me now turn to the next approach..."
3. **Foci** – Use statements that highlight and emphasize the key points in each section. Students want to know what's important. Tell them.
4. **Links** – Periodically link sections of the lecture together; for example, "So you can see that the first two approaches are complementary," or link them to the experience or previously acquired knowledge of the students, such as previous lectures or readings. The closing statement of a lecture should also act as a link.

(Kehoe 190)

Presentation detractors

Students generally appreciate lecturers who make an effort to avoid things that detract from their presentations, such as:

- Neglecting to provide an outline of the lecture (preferably in writing on the board or an overhead)
- Speaking in monotone
- Using a rhythm and pacing that never varies
- Mumbling
- Looking anywhere but at the students
- Being totally deadpan
- Using distracting phrases or gestures
- Failing to stop periodically to check students' understanding
- Speaking entirely in abstractions
- Running out of time and rushing through the conclusion

In addition, good lecture notes – ones that contain all the main points that you will make, in order, including any quotations or examples fully worked out – help to anchor the talk and, as far as possible, eliminate last-minute uncertainties and decisions. Having thought through the lecture enough to write it out, you will know enough to lecture on it (Green 185–186).

Delivering your lecture

Opening remarks – Your opening sets up the class for what is about to happen during the lecture; it is a critical signpost. The most effective lectures start with an overview of what you will say, beginning with a statement that describes the importance of the topic and how it links to what has gone before or will be coming, your agenda or set of questions that your lecture will address, and how you have structured the class time. In addition, openings can be used to convey your enthusiasm for the topic, highlighting for your students the sense that each lecture is an important event.

Style and clarity – Students at the lower levels may have had little experience in conceptual thinking and the use of formal language and so it is important to make an effort to ground your explanations and examples in plain language, particularly at the beginning of the year.

Focusing students' attention – Research shows that students' attention will begin to wander after 15–20 minutes and so it is important to build deliberate breaks into your lecture that will give students a chance to practice the concepts you are discussing, and re-energize them for the remainder of the lecture. See insert for a sampling of activities that might be used to break up the lecture.

Closing remarks – It is important to plan out the last five to ten minutes of your lecture to assist students in their understanding of the material. To appreciate what they've just heard, students need to be reminded of several key lecture points and how they link to one another, how they connect to the larger subject matter they represent, and most importantly, how those key points relate to the readings and to the next lecture.

Sources: Phil Race, *The Lecturer's Toolkit* 2nd ed. (London, UK: Kogan Page, 2001); Leslie Green, "Effective Lecturing Techniques," and Dalton Kehoe, "Improving Large Class Lecturing," both in Newton et al., eds., *Voices from the Classroom* (Toronto ON: Garamond Press, 2001).

Want more?

For further ideas and resources on teaching in the lecture halls see:

- Bligh, Donald. *What's the Use of Lectures?* San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Publishers, 2000.
- Gibbs, Graham, S. Habeshaw, and T. Habeshaw. *53 Interesting Things to Do in your Lectures*. Avon, UK: Technical and Educational Services Ltd, 1992.
- Middendorf, Joan & Alan Kalish. "The 'Change-up' in Lectures." *National Teaching and Learning Forum* 5.2 (January 1996). 28 July 2005 <www.ntlf.com/html/pi/9601/article1.htm>.
- Newton, Janice, et al., eds. *Voices from the Classroom: Reflections on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. Toronto ON: Garamond Press, 2001.
- Race, Phil. *The Lecturer's Toolkit*. 2nd ed. London, UK: Kogan Page, 2001.

Ideas for breaking up a long lecture

Here is a sampling of activities that you might ask your students to do during a lecture break:

- Create a question
- Solve a problem
- Record a reaction
- Conduct an experiment
- Brainstorm a concept, application, consequence, etc.
- Participate in a poll or survey
- Consider an illustrative example
- Complete a quiz
- Watch a video
- Listen to a recording

For more ideas see: Joan Middendorf & Alan Kalish, "The 'Change-up' in Lectures" (*NRLF* 5.2, January 1996).

ON MARKING & GRADING

Most TAs have some responsibility for grading student performance through weekly quizzes, essays, mid-term and final exams, lab reports or term papers, and can sometimes assign the final grades as well. It is important then that you develop a sense of academic standards as quickly as possible, explain them clearly at the beginning of the course, and apply them consistently throughout the term.

Preparing for marking and grading

- Make sure that you are competent to do the grading assignment you are given. Be prepared to devote a reasonable amount of preparation time before marking begins.
- Make sure that you know exactly what your course director expects from you and what criteria you will be using to assess the work. If you have questions make sure they are clarified before you start grading.
- Check to see whether your grades should conform to a certain distribution.
- Your course director is responsible in the first instance for the course grades. You should therefore get directions from him/her on how to interpret the different letter grades for the purpose of your particular marking assignment. “A” means “excellent” – but what counts as “excellent” at the level of the course in question and on the type of assignment you are grading? For example, what does a student have to do to get an “A” on an essay in that course – or a “B+” etc.? To ensure that your grading standards are in line with your course director’s, he/she may ask you to submit several of your marked papers to him/her before you finish the whole set.
- You should be fully aware of what the students have been told regarding the assignment you are marking (e.g., basic content and format of the paper, methods, citation requirements, etc.).
- Make yourself familiar with the principal sources for the assignment.
- Review the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty and know how to recognize plagiarism (the policy is posted at <www.yorku.ca/univsec/legislation/senate/acadhone.htm>).

Eight essential characteristics of effective assessment

Effective assessment:

1. Assesses what is actually taught
2. Provides information for improving student learning
3. Focuses on the process as well as on the products of instruction
4. Actively involves both teachers and students
5. Uses multiple and varied measures
6. Is carried out at various points during the term of instruction
7. Provides useful, timely feedback to those being assessed and those most affected – the students and teachers
8. Is an intrinsically educational activity – one that reinforces and furthers the teaching and learning goals it focuses on

Reproduced with permission from Thomas A. Angelo, workshop handout on Classroom Research and Classroom Assessment (University of California, Berkeley, August 1991).

Marking student work

- Read five or six papers before you start grading to get an idea of the range of quality.
- When you get tired, stop grading and when you start again, read over the last couple of papers to make sure you were fair.
- Some instructors select “range finder” papers – middle range A, B, C, and D papers to which they refer for comparison.
- When there are several essay questions or options on an exam, to be consistent you might want to read all the answers to any one question together, rather than reading straight through an individual exam.
- It is also good practice to return graded material as quickly as possible so students can derive the greatest benefit from the feedback.

- When returning work you might want to discuss with the class the basis on which the works were graded, any common problems you encountered and, if applicable, the statistical performance of the whole class.

Providing feedback on student work

- Write legible comments. You may prefer to use a pencil so that you can erase a comment if you change your mind. If you use a pen and change your mind, “white out”, rather than cross out, the comment you wish to delete.
- Keep your “marginal” comments brief and to the point. Avoid rambling, chatty remarks.
- Make your comments intelligible to students. To this end:
 - Avoid abbreviations, except for very common ones such as “i.e.” and “e.g.”. (Some students won’t understand “PTO”, “gr.” or “sp.”). Of course, it’s acceptable to use an abbreviation after explaining the meaning the first time you use it.
 - Avoid using vocabulary that your students might be unfamiliar with.
- Be polite. Avoid sarcastic comments at all times.
- If time permits, it is a good idea to re-read borderline exams or essays to confirm your sense that those works deserve the mark you gave them, say a B rather than a B+.
- Select the most insightful passages for praise and offer only the most shallow responses or repeated errors for comment so that students will have a sense of where the priorities lie; avoid the tendency to edit papers.
- Avoid making uniformly negative comments. Offer a word of praise or encouragement where you can.
- Before you comment on a point, make sure that you understand what the student is attempting to say. Try to get on the student’s wavelength. If the point is unintelligible, then indicate that you don’t understand it or query it. If you think you see what the student is getting at, then, if your marking time permits, rewrite the point in clearer terms, introducing it with a phrase like “I think you mean...” or “Are you saying that...?”
- In general, it is a good idea to provide some concluding remarks where you indicate areas of strengths as well as points of weakness in student essays, and if appropriate, offer some suggested steps for improvement.
- If a student has serious writing problems, refer him/her to your Faculty writing centre.

York’s common grading scheme for all undergraduate Faculties

Grade	Grade Point	Percent Range	Description
A+	9	90–100	Exceptional
A	8	80–89	Excellent
B+	7	75–79	Very Good
B	6	70–74	Good
C+	5	65–69	Competent
C	4	60–64	Fairly Competent
D+	3	55–59	Passing
D	2	50–54	Marginally Passing
E	1	(marginally below 50%)	Marginally Failing
F	0	(below 50%)	Failing

For further information on grading definitions policies at York and grade definitions, consult the Senate Policy on Grading Scheme and Feedback at <www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/> or the student programs office in your Faculty.

The York Libraries

Librarians work in partnership with faculty to support student learning, teach proper research skills, and help in preventing potential instances of plagiarism. Services include:

- Consultation with librarians when creating student assignments
- Bibliographic instruction seminars for students on library research and the importance of academic integrity
- Online tutorial for students on library research: “The Library Research Roadmap”
- Online “Ask a Reference Librarian” program

For further information see <www.library.yorku.ca/>

- If you suspect plagiarism, report the matter to your course director, who will initiate the policies and procedures outlined in the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty at <www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/document.php?document=69>.
- When you think you have finished commenting on a paper, reread your comments. Check for legibility and for errors (e.g., omitted words, spelling/grammar mistakes, poor use of abbreviations). Check too that your comments are all really worth making – that students stand to benefit from reading them.
- There is an important test that your comments should pass: taken together, they should suffice to explain the grade that you give the paper. For example, if you give the paper a “B”, it should be clear to the student from your comments why he/she didn’t get an “A”. Of course, you don’t need to say “the reason why you didn’t get an ‘A’ is ...”. You need only say enough to allow the student to deduce the reason for him/herself.
- A student may come to you requesting a higher grade. You should ask him/her to make a convincing case why the grade should be raised. If no such case is forthcoming, don’t raise the grade. If it is, don’t be afraid to raise it. If you are uncertain about what to do, talk to your course director.

Sources: D. Allen (Philosophy, University of Toronto), and *Teaching and Learning at York: A Guide for TAs and Course Directors* (CST 1989–90: 51–52).

Clues for identifying plagiarism

There are many situations that may lead you to suspect plagiarism in assignments:

- A sentence or segment of text might prompt you to look more closely at the student work, especially if it differs in style, expression and sentence structure from the rest of the submitted work.
- Sometimes the paper or a portion of the paper might remind you of something you have read previously on the Internet, newsgroups, library databases and CD-ROMs relevant to the assignment.
- As students progress through the course, you will become familiar with each student’s writing abilities based on the work they produce in class, and you will likely notice if there is a sudden, unexplained change in a student’s writing style or quality of work.
- As a TA, you should become familiar with the ready availability of essay services, both online and local, that offer free and custom paper writing services (essay mills), and take a look at papers relevant to the assignment.
- Some kinds of information are just too specific to be common knowledge, and you will likely know that the student must have read it somewhere, at some time, even if it is presented in his or her own words.

Source: York’s *Online Tutorial on Academic Integrity*
<www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic_integrity>

Using grading sheets

Many instructors have found that grading sheets can speed up the process of evaluating student papers and yet still allow for specific and individualized comments. Normally used to respond to formal written assignments, grading sheets provide a convenient way of focusing “end” comments, or the final, overall assessment of a student’s paper. As a teaching tool, grading sheets reinforce evaluation criteria, delineate a prioritized plan for the student to use to improve writing skills and/or to rewrite, and, because they can easily be photocopied, act as a more accurate guide than memory in assessing a student’s progress.

Grading sheets can save time. Instructors need only circle or check writing categories that need improvement rather than painstakingly repeat these suggestions on paper after paper when faced with a set of essays. Any lengthy or more detailed explanations of certain categories on your sheet can be given in class or during your office hours. Grading sheets also help alleviate the problem known as “rubber stamping”; that is, using the same catchphrases repeatedly to explain a certain grade.

Designing grading sheets

In order to be effective, grading sheets should be designed to reflect and prioritize the evaluation criteria you follow when marking. Take a few minutes to think carefully about the factors you consider when assessing essays – these factors might include analysis, argument, thesis statement, originality, organization, paragraphing, grammar, and so on. Then try to order your evaluation criteria from the most important to the least. For example, if effective analysis is weighted more heavily in your assessment than grammar, analysis should appear before grammar on your list.

Whatever priorities you list on your grading sheet, there are some other design features you should keep in mind:

1. Consider including evaluation criteria pertinent to your discipline. For example, defining key terms is an important aspect of writing in the social sciences, while in the humanities contextual definitions are often valued over dictionary definitions.
2. Try to keep the grading sheet relatively short. There is a fine line here between providing useful feedback and flooding the student with so much detail that the possibility for improvement seems hopeless.
3. Allow free space for writing brief holistic comments. Excellent writers deserve praise that is unique to them and novice writers need encouragement.

Source: Greenwald, T., J. Page, J. Rehner, and J. Spencer, *Teaching Critical Skills: A Manual for Course Instructors* (Toronto, ON: Arts Centre for Academic Writing, York University, 1992: 103–105).

Marking Matrix

James Sheptycki, a faculty member in Social Sciences at York, uses the following grading sheet for marking essays:

Substance

Originality of approach	1	2	3	4	5
Relevance to question	1	2	3	4	5
Coherence of argument	1	2	3	4	5
Depth of analysis	1	2	3	4	5
Range of relevant literature covered	1	2	3	4	5
Use of evidence	1	2	3	4	5

Presentation

Literacy	1	2	3	4	5
Accuracy	1	2	3	4	5
References and bibliography	1	2	3	4	5

(1 = excellent 2 = Good 3 = Satisfactory
4 = Poor 5 = Unsatisfactory)

For an elaboration on how Professor Sheptycki uses this matrix, please see his article on “Evaluation Using a Marking Matrix: The Pedagogy of Assessment” in *Core 13.3* (CST, April 2004).

Want more?

For further ideas and resources on marking and grading see:

- Newton, Janice, et al., eds. *Voices from the Classroom*. Toronto ON: Garamond Press, 2001.
- Gross Davis, Barbara. *Tools for Teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1993.
- Gibbs, Graham, et al. *53 Interesting Ways to Assess your Students*. Avon, UK: Technical and Educational Services Ltd, 1992.

Invigilating tests and examinations

Assisting in the conduct and supervision of tests and exams is an important function for many TAs. The Senate Policy on Invigilation of Examinations sets out the procedures to be followed during examinations, including seating examinees, signing in, distributing and collecting question papers and answer booklets, ensuring that cheating does not occur, and dismissal procedures at the end of exams.

In the exam room, it is important to create conditions that will reduce any temptation to cheat on the part of a small minority of students, and avoid such situations from disturbing other students in the hall. George O'Brien, a faculty member in mathematics and statistics at York, offers the following suggestions to minimize cheating in the exam room:

- Seat students as far apart as the room allows. Also, it is better to have students sit directly behind one another than a bit to the side.
- In sloping lecture halls, stand at the front of the room and look towards the students so that you can see whether the eyes of the students are looking in an appropriate direction.
- Have students remove hats that might hide wandering eyes.
- Have two or more versions of the exam distributed in alternate seats, so that students cannot easily see other copies of their version of the exam. For example, create different versions of a multiple choice exam by rearranging the order of the questions, or of the answers for each question. In the interests of prevention it would be appropriate to tell students in advance that you are using several versions of the exam.
- If there is reason to suspect during an exam that a student is copying from another student, but you are not completely sure, consult with another invigilator and, if appropriate, ask the student to move to another seat where copying is not possible. This should be done in a way that does not cause disruption to other students.
- Take steps to prevent the use of unauthorized sources. Have students leave personal belongings and materials at the front of the room to minimize the possibility that notes can be smuggled in, either at the start of the exam or in connection with a trip to the washroom, or that messages can be obtained via cell phones or other communication devices. Mark the official exam booklets in some way so that extra exam booklets containing information cannot be brought into the room undetected.
- Check student identification and signatures carefully to prevent impersonation by another student. When a student leaves the room temporarily to use washroom facilities, make sure it is the same student when he/she returns.
- Take steps to keep students from changing or adding material to their answers on a graded exam and then asking for a reappraisal without acknowledging the changes. Ask students to write their answers in ink. In addition, draw lines with coloured ink around the written material or just under the bottom part of an answer to make it difficult to add additional material without crossing the line or curve. If there is reason to suspect that an answer has been altered after having been returned to the student, it might be appropriate to make a copy of later tests written by the same student so that hard evidence can be obtained.

It is important for invigilators to take their invigilation responsibilities seriously, to watch for activities that suggest cheating, and to inform the Chief Invigilator immediately if you notice any student receiving illegal assistance during the exam, either from another student or from unauthorized material. Make sure students know in advance that cheating of any type is not acceptable, that TAs are vigilant, and that confirmed cases of cheating will result in serious penalties. It is also very important that students know exactly what constitutes cheating and the rules should be clearly defined. The best way to do this is to include information on academic honesty with the material handed out at the beginning of the course.

The Senate Policy on Invigilation of Examinations is posted at www.yorku.ca/secretariat/legislation/senate/examinvi.htm.

Source: "Examinations." 2002. *Academic Integrity in Courses at York University*. www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity.

ON CRITICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Tutorials provide the ideal environment for developing students' critical skills. Teaching critical skills is a developmental process involving two essential elements: making explicit for students the process of thinking within the discipline by breaking it down into discrete activities, and fostering attitudes of inquiry and reflection among students. The process of thinking involves a variety of activities, such as questioning, weighing the validity of evidence, analyzing a particular set of reading or situations, and writing clearly and persuasively about a subject. By making these processes explicit and visible, through assignments and classroom activities, and through explanation and illustration, students can learn and practice to think more effectively (Rehner 1–2).

To help develop students' critical skills, look for ways for your students to think about the information and ideas in your course and how they might practice using the critical skills of the discipline. When designing assignments and activities, consider the following questions to identify the critical skills that might be developed in your course:

1. What are the content goals of your course? • What three or four key questions are essential to your course? • How do you choose the texts for your course?
2. What tasks do your students need to perform in your course? • How did you learn to perform these tasks? • How did you learn to think in your discipline? • What activities do you engage in when you are thinking? • What first attracted you to your discipline/field? • What attracts you most now?
3. What are the assignments required for your course? • Which critical skills do these assignments reinforce? • Do all of the assignments reinforce the same skills? • Are your assignments sequenced in terms of skills development? • If so, how? • If your students were asked to explain the principles guiding your design of assignments, what would they say?
4. What happens in your classroom during a typical session? • What are you doing? • What are your students doing? • What skills/attitudes do these activities reinforce? • What risks do you take in the classroom? • What factors might prevent you from taking risks in the classroom?
5. What evaluation methods do you use? • What is an appropriate workload for your students?

Sources: John Spencer, "Critical Skills Worksheet" (York University Arts Centre for Academic Writing); and Jan Rehner, *Practical Strategies for Critical Thinking* (Toronto, ON: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994).

Want more?

For ideas and strategies for developing students' critical thinking, reading and writing abilities see:

- Greenwald, Thomas, et al. *Teaching Critical Skills: A Manual for Course Instructors*. Toronto, ON: Arts Centre for Academic Writing, York University, 1992.
- Kurfiss, Joanne. *Critical Thinking: Theory, Research, Practice and Possibilities*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 2. Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study in Higher Education, 1988.
- Meyers, Chet. *Teaching Students to Think Critically: A Guide for Faculty in All Disciplines*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1986.
- Rehner, Jan. *Practical Strategies for Critical Thinking*. Toronto, ON: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994.
- Wright, Alan, et al., eds. *Learning Through Writing: A Compendium of Assignments and Techniques*. Halifax: Dalhousie University, 2001.

A sampling of critical skills

- Critically analyse and evaluate previous research
- Distinguish between conclusions and interpretations
- Distinguish between facts and opinions
- Distinguish between warranted and unwarranted generalizations
- Draw sound inferences from observations
- Elaborate an argument and develop its implications
- Formulate valid conclusions from written material
- Generate new questions and experiments
- Identify cause and effect relationships
- Listen well and learn to respect the opinions of others
- Learn to read across and behind a text
- Rate the relevance of arguments
- Recognize a central thesis
- Support general assertions with details
- Specify underlying assumptions leading to a conclusion
- Understand, analyse and evaluate arguments

Sources: Joanne Kurfiss, *Critical Thinking: Theory, Research, Practice and Possibilities* (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 2, 1988); Joseph Tohill & Leanne Dustan. *A Quick and Dirty Guide to Being a TA in the Department of History at York* (2003).

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Office Hours

The TA's office is one of the few places where the impersonal environment at the University can be personalized. For students who want to learn more about the course material, for students who for various reasons are unable to ask questions in class, and especially for those in serious academic difficulty, the office hour is a place where they can find the individualized help they need to succeed in the course. For you, the office hour is a way to get to know each student's strengths and interests, and can also help you identify any difficulties or confusion that might be common to the whole class.

Setting up office hours

When setting up your office hours, check with your course director to determine how many hours you should allocate and how they fit in with your overall workload. Try to choose times when students are most likely to be free, perhaps just before or after the class lecture so that they can see you while their questions are still fresh in their minds. You might also indicate to students that they can make an appointment with you if they are unable to make it during those hours.

Encouraging students to come to your office hours

In your tutorial, invite students to drop by and repeat the invitation several times during the term. Offer suggestions on the kinds of things they might want to discuss with you (e.g., clarify concepts and understandings about the course materials, ask questions about assignments, explore career options, etc.). Advise them also on how they might prepare for their meeting with you (e.g., write down their questions, document steps taken to complete an assignment, bring problem sets that reveal recurring errors, etc.). Some students may have the impression that office hours are only for those in need of serious remedial help so you might work to counter this perception by noting the ways in which these discussions connect to what's going on in class. Make references as appropriate to the kinds of insights you gained from your individual discussions with students.

Give students a reason to come to your office hours.

- Review key topics periodically through the term and suggest that those who do not quite understand any of them see you during office hours.
- Have them pick up or drop off assignments.
- Allocate specific times for review sessions or mini-workshops that target specific skills (e.g., how to take multiple choice exams, how to develop a thesis statement, exam review, etc.)
- Have additional information or materials available only during office hours (e.g., sample assignments or tests, special books or artifacts).
- Invite students to bring in their first drafts of their papers to discuss how they might be strengthened.
- Indicate on students' assignments that you would like to discuss a certain issue with them during your office hours.
- If you receive a complicated email from a student, suggest that they come to your office hour to discuss the answer.

Making effective use of your office hours

Linda Briskin and Rachel Hurst in York's Division of Social Science suggest that you plan to meet students both at the beginning of the course to get to know them, and at the middle of the course to assess their progress and feelings about the course. They offer the following advice for making the most effective use of your office hours:

When you meet with students early in the term, it gives them a chance to ask questions that they may be reluctant to ask in tutorial. Many students come to university directly from high school and appreciate the opportunity to talk about this transition period. As high school students, they likely had a more established relationship with their teachers, so such a discussion helps them make a more concrete connection with their TA. You also have an opportunity to talk to students about their expectations

of the course, how they are feeling about the course, and how they are managing the workload and participation. With regards to participation, you can ask students if they would like to participate more, and what strategies would be most effective (for example, calling on individual students in class). After these meetings, participation in class often changes and students generally become more engaged – they are more likely to speak up in large discussions, take part in small group work, or simply make more eye contact with the TA. It also helps you get to know your students better and put a name and a story to the faces in your tutorial.

When you meet with students later in the term, you can provide them with a breakdown of their marks and attendance to date, and identify any potential disagreements before the rush and stress of compiling their final marks. You might also discuss with students strategies they might use to improve their performance in the course, and refer those in academic difficulty to the appropriate campus resource (e.g., writing centre, learning skills program, etc. – see pages 33–36). Students clearly appreciate having a chance to voice their concerns, praises, and critiques of the course, and specifically the tutorial. In the middle of the academic year, students are often more comfortable with their TA and will voice these comments openly, offering valuable feedback for the TA. Students will often suggest solutions to any problems they raise, demonstrating that they have an investment in the course and have agency to make changes to the tutorial. You might consider providing students with an option to meet in pairs or with their study groups, which may encourage quieter students to share their concerns more openly as they have peer support.

Sources: Linda Briskin and Rachel Hurst “Making Effective Use of Office Hours in Foundations Courses” (*Foundations for Instructors*, Social Science <www.arts.yorku.ca/sosc/Foundations/OfficeHours>); Jody Hendry, “Effective Office Hours” (Teaching Support Services, University of Guelph, 2000).

Helping ESL Students

The presence of students from English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) backgrounds is an important part of York’s academic and cultural make-up. They bring different perspectives to the learning process, create links with diverse communities, and bring meaning to the term “internationalization.” In many cases, they have achieved something remarkable by mastering a second language to the point where they are academically qualified for admission to the university.

Helping ESL students in tutorials

- Discuss the role of your tutorials in the context of the course, the teaching and learning format you will be using, and the expectations you have for class participation. Instructors have found that, for some ESL students, the problem is not language or culture so much as a lack of familiarity with the implicit assumptions of the course.
- Urge students to take opportunities to observe how native English speaking students speak and behave in their classes to get a sense of what the norms are. Students from ESL backgrounds, especially those who have been here a relatively short time, often encounter a familiarity and directness in the classroom that they are not accustomed to.
- Help students prepare for class by stressing the importance of doing the assigned readings in advance to help them become familiar with the vocabulary and concepts that will come up in class.
- Help students follow along in class by providing advance organizers, summaries, glossaries, study guides, checklists, etc.
- Encourage students to participate in class discussions by having them prepare their questions in advance, using paired discussions, and providing time in class for quiet reflection on a topic in class before you begin the full group discussion.
- Make your teaching as visual as possible by using overheads, photographs, charts, maps, graphs, Venn diagrams, timelines, flowcharts, etc.

- Write homework assignments on the board or in a handout.
- Use one sentence summaries and other classroom assessment strategies to gauge student comprehension.
- Encourage students to see you or the course director after class to ask about problems they have in the course. If you get the sense that students are slipping behind, encourage them to contact you during your office hours, or via email.

Responding to student writing

- Encourage students to submit first drafts if possible and focus your feedback on quality rather than quantity.
- Discuss plagiarism issues and provide instruction and resources on effective research and writing strategies.
- Arrange special library tours for students or encourage them to take a library introduction tour at the beginning of the term. Students will make better use of the library if they understand how to do simple library research.
- Teach editing techniques and allow time in class to review written work.
- Consult with your course director to determine whether extra time on tests or exams for ESL students is appropriate.

Learning strategies for ESL students

- Encourage students to take the time to be well-organized and prepared. Preparation helps them become more familiar with words and phrases that will probably come up in the class, making them better able to listen and understand. Forming study groups can be helpful in this.
- Encourage students to focus on the overall meaning of sentences and paragraphs in their readings rather than on individual words.
- Encourage students to seek out appropriate sources of help for their academic work early in the course. Be familiar with helpful resources such as the ESL Open Learning Centre, Essay Tutoring Centre, Centre for Academic Writing, etc. (see Resource Section).
- Encourage students to sit near the front of the class to make it easier to concentrate on the lecture.

Source: Nick Elson, "Helping your ESL Students" (handout for a TA Workshop at York University, November 2002).

Helping Students with Disabilities

Many of you will be working with students who have mobility, visual or hearing disabilities, disabling illnesses or conditions, psychiatric illnesses, or learning disabilities. York is committed to making reasonable and appropriate accommodations in order to promote the ability of students with disabilities to fulfill the academic requirements of their programs. To assist in this process, York's offices for students with disabilities (see Resource Section) can provide you with advice and information, and can work with you toward the resolution of individual situations. In addition, the following excerpts from the Senate Policy regarding Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities are relevant to teaching students with disabilities.

Identifying students requiring academic accommodations

Students qualify for accommodations through the appropriate office for students with disabilities by providing relevant medical, psychoeducational or psychiatric documentation in a timely manner. The office for disabilities then assists the students in identifying particular aspects of their courses that might present barriers and works with them to identify appropriate accommodations, provide supportive documentation, and assist students and instructors in providing or obtaining accommodations.

Arranging instruction-related accommodations

Types of accommodations may include:

- Timely provision of reading lists and other course material to allow for alternate format transcription
- Alternate format transcription
- Alternate scheduling for the completion of course, project, thesis work or competency exams
- Extension to program completion time limits
- Use of assistive devices or auxiliary aids in the classroom, laboratory or field (e.g., FM systems worn by course instructors, computerized notetakers in the classroom)
- Use of oral and visual language interpreters and/or notetakers in the classroom
- Permission for audio recording of lectures
- Permission for videotaping lectures
- Special seating, wheelchair accessible tables
- Adjustments to lighting

Arranging accommodations for examinations and evaluations

Types of accommodations for tests, exams, and assignments may include:

- Alternate scheduling of exams and essays
- Alternate forms of assessment
- Extended time to complete tests and examinations
- Use of special equipment (computer, assistive technology, etc.)
- Use of special facilities (exam room and proctor), and/or examinations in alternate forms (e.g., audiotape, Braille, etc.).

Whenever possible, the usual procedures for writing tests and exams shall be followed.

To review the full Senate Policy on Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities see <www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/>

Helping Emotionally Troubled Students

Should a student come to you with serious emotional problems, or if you become concerned about a student's emotional health because of comments made in class or in writing, you may want to refer the student to one of York's Counselling Centres (see Resource Section) where professional assistance is available. It is also advisable to consult with your course director first. York's counselling centres provide a broad range of services for all members of the York community in a confidential setting. For students, counselling services may include assistance in career planning, resolving personal loss and life adjustment problems, developing satisfying interpersonal relationships, improving study skills, and dealing with troublesome feelings such as excessive anxiety or depression.

In case of an emergency counselling situation where your own safety or the safety of others is imminently at risk, you are strongly urged to visit the reception area of the Counselling and Development Centre (CDC) as soon as possible, indicating the emergency nature of your concern to the receptionist on duty. An on-call staff person will attend to you immediately.

Instructors or staff wishing to assist a student in crisis are asked to encourage the student to agree to counselling and escort the student to the reception area of CDC, at which time an on-call staff person will attend to the student immediately.

Should you require assistance for an emergency counselling situation outside regular operating hours, please proceed to the emergency department of the nearest general hospital. Humber River Regional Hospital (formerly York Finch General Hospital) is located at 2111 Finch Avenue West, just east of Highway 400. The Emergency Department may be reached at (416) 747-3833.

Source: Counselling and Development Centre, 2004 <www.yorku.ca/cdc/>.

FOR INTERNATIONAL TAs

At York, we are fortunate to have students from around the world participating in our graduate programs and enriching the social and academic life of the university. In addition to the difficulties that can be part of the life of any TA, the particular situation of international TAs (ITAs) can bring with it extra considerations. There are many differences within the educational systems of various countries, and you can expect to have to make some adjustments as you teach here at York. Teacher and student behaviour in the classroom is culturally influenced. Here are some suggestions to help you adjust to the Canadian teaching situation.

Teaching tips for ITAs

- **Handling anxieties** – Common among new ITAs are anxieties and uncertainties. After all, these feelings of uncertainty are commonly felt even by local TAs who experience less general culture shock. One may feel uneasy, for instance, about going into a class where the students speak another language and have a different culture. Try to identify these fears and find a way to deal with them. Attending teaching workshops and seminars and talking to other TAs or your course director can be helpful. Remember, you are very knowledgeable in your subject or you would not have been chosen to teach. Be well organized and prepared for your class.
- **Using your global advantage** – When you enter the classroom, consider yourself as being a TA as well as an international TA. While it is important to introduce your nationality, educational and cultural background, it is not wise in many cases to overemphasize differences, which may impair your rapport with the class. TAs and their students also share many aspects of university life at York. Use the knowledge of your background to bring interesting, diverse and global perspectives into the class. Be yourself, and let your nationality and cultural distinctiveness work for you rather than against you.
- **Understanding Canadian teaching and learning styles** – You may be accustomed to a teaching context that is quite formal and disciplined and your expectations may clash with those of Canadian students in your classes. The approach to teaching and learning here tends to be more informal, with emphasis placed on getting students to work and think independently.

If you are teaching in a seminar or tutorial format, your main purpose will be to encourage the sharing of ideas, information and opinion among students centered on aspects of the course, and so you should familiarize yourself with teaching strategies that will encourage such sharing. Avoid the extremes of over-control and little student participation, and the classroom without direction or purpose.

It may be useful to observe some successful TAs or faculty to see what kinds of styles and classroom strategies they use in their classrooms. You can try some of these out in your own teaching and adapt those you are comfortable with and that seem to work for you.

- **Minimizing language difficulties** – It is possible that you come from a non-English speaking background and that there is influence of your native language on your use of English. It is reasonable to anticipate some difficulties and prepare for them. In the first class and periodically during the term, tell your students that they are encouraged to ask for clarification if for any reason they do not understand the points you are making. This is not only a response to difficulties they might have in understanding you, but it is also good pedagogy.

If you have trouble expressing your ideas clearly in English, make your explanations as visual as possible; use the blackboard, a handout, or audio/visual aids to assist in making your points and make specific references to the relevant parts of the course text. It is also helpful to present the same idea in different ways (e.g., “Let me present this in another way...” or “Another example of this is...”).

- **Talking to friends, asking students** – In handling discussion, grading exams, reading papers, making tests, designing classroom activities, etc., you may encounter some difficulties and you should seek out the help of other TAs, your course director, the CST and friends wherever possible.

Consider asking students to write a reflection and suggestions for the class. Further, consider inviting students to stay after class to discuss points you were trying to make in class and how you might do things differently. Try to get an informal discussion going and solicit feedback on your performance.

Edited by Tomoko Mizuguchi, Sociology, York (2005). Source: *Teaching and Learning at York: A Guide for TAs and Course Directors* (CST 1989–90: 74–75).

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

As a new TA, it is important to seek out opportunities for ongoing growth and development in your teaching. Indeed, the foundations of good pedagogical practice involve:

- Learning about and discussing new strategies and approaches to the various aspects of teaching and learning
- Systematically collecting feedback on your teaching from a variety of sources to reflect on and assess your effectiveness
- Making incremental changes and improvements to your teaching on an ongoing basis

Strategies for ongoing teaching improvement

Take advantage of the many opportunities to learn and grow as a teaching professional, including:

- **Talking about teaching** – Discuss your teaching experiences, both positive and negative, with TAs, course directors, faculty members, and teaching support staff and gain new insights into your teaching.
- **Attending workshops on university teaching** – Many departments have Teaching Development GAs who provide teaching development workshops and resources for TAs in their department. In addition, watch for workshops, conferences and courses offered by the Centre for the Support of Teaching, the Libraries, Computing and Network Services, and other units at York. All workshops and seminars on university teaching can be credited toward certification in the University Teaching Practicum (see page 29).
- **Seeking feedback from students** – Encourage students to give you feedback on your teaching in a variety of ways. Invite students to stay after class to discuss aspects of the course material you presented, ask one or two more thoughtful members of the class for their feedback, or conduct focus groups with students to find out how well you are teaching and how you might do things differently. In addition, use simple, informal classroom assessment techniques periodically throughout the course to gauge the effectiveness of your teaching (see page 29).
- **Assessing your own teaching** – Videotape your own teaching to help you develop and refine your teaching skills, identify your teaching strengths, and find areas for improvement. Each term during the exam period, the Centre for the Support of Teaching offers micro-teaching sessions for TAs in which participants design and deliver a 10-minute teaching segment which is videotaped (see TA workshop schedule at <www.yorku.ca/cst>).
- **Seeking feedback from peers** – Invite friends to visit your classes and ask them to give you feedback on your teaching, especially with respect to the quality of the learning environment, the level of student engagement and rapport, the clarity of your presentation, and the effectiveness of the teaching strategies you use.
- **Developing a dossier** – Create a teaching dossier that sets out your teaching philosophy and strategies, records your responsibilities and contributions to teaching, and assesses the effectiveness of your classroom practice. A dossier enables you to look systematically at the various components of your teaching, ground your instructional decisions, and engage in ongoing development as a teacher in a systematic way. Your dossier can then be refined and revised as an ongoing scholarly process throughout your academic career. For information on how to prepare a teaching dossier, go to <www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate/committees/scotl/> and select “Teaching Documentation Guide”.
- **Visiting the classrooms of successful teachers** – Take the time to attend the classes of successful colleagues and ask them if you can meet after the class to discuss their approach to teaching, the strategies they use and why, and the particular challenges they face in their courses.
- **Participating in the larger scholarly community on university teaching** – Look for opportunities to participate in the larger scholarly community, such as presenting papers at the annual conference of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE), contributing articles to pedagogical journals, participating in online discussion lists, and pursuing grants, fellowships and awards that focus on teaching development (see the CST web site at <www.yorku.ca/cst/profgrowth/>).

The University Teaching Practicum (UTP)

The UTP is a program of professional development for graduate students offered by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Centre for the Support of Teaching. Through a self-directed program, you can explore the theory and practice of university teaching and learning and reflect on your own teaching development and experience. When you complete all the requirements of the UTP you'll receive a formal letter of certification signed by the Dean of Graduate Studies. Participants who have completed the UTP are often considered more successful and more qualified as candidates for jobs in their fields.

The requirements of the UTP are:

1. Attending TA workshops, both general and discipline-specific, or taking the graduate course on University Teaching and Learning (UTAL 5000), and/or undertaking other forms of study in university teaching (25 hours in total)
2. Analyzing and evaluating your own teaching practice through micro-teaching, student evaluations and peer feedback
3. Preparing a summary dossier that documents your contributions and development as a university teacher

For further information on the University Teaching Practicum, please contact the Centre for the Support of Teaching or visit <www.yorku.ca/cst/>.

Classroom assessment

Classroom assessment is a helpful way to find out how well you are teaching throughout the term. Unlike tests and quizzes, classroom assessment can be used in a timely way to help you identify gaps between what you teach and what students are learning, and make adjustments to your teaching as your course unfolds. There are a variety of instruments for classroom assessment that can be administered in class or electronically, such as one-minute papers (see insert), one-sentence summaries, critical incident questionnaires, focus groups, and mid-year mini-surveys. It is best to integrate classroom assessment into your teaching in a graduated way, starting out with a simple assessment technique in one class involving five to ten minutes of class time, less than an hour for analysis of the results, and a few minutes during a subsequent class to let students know what was learned from the assessment and how you and your students can use that information to improve learning. After conducting one or two quick assessments, you can decide whether this approach is worth further investment of time and energy.

One Minute Paper

One Minute Paper can elicit feedback on student learning by asking students to respond anonymously to the following questions:

1. **What was the most important thing you learned during this class?**
2. **What important question remains unanswered?**

(Angelo & Cross 148)

Want more?

For further ideas and resources on teaching development and classroom assessment see:

- Enerson, Diane M., et al. "Classroom Assessment Techniques." 2004. Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence, Penn State University. 28 July 2005 <www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/Resources/AssessmentNeeds.asp>
- Angelo, Thomas A. and Patricia K. Cross. *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1993.
- Newton, Janice, et al., eds. Section VIII: Developing and Assessing Your Teaching. *Voices from the Classroom*. Toronto, ON: Garamond Press, 2001.
- "Teaching Assessment and Evaluation Guide" (2002), and "Teaching Documentation Guide" (2005). Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning, York University. <www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/scotl.htm>

IMPORTANT POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS

Selected Senate and University Policies Relevant to Teaching and Learning at York

SENATE POLICIES

- Academic accommodations for students with disabilities
- Academic honesty
- Academic implications for disruptions/cessations of the university
- Class cancellation
- Computing and information technology facilities
 - Guidelines for account management
 - Guidelines for use of electronic mail
 - Network security and management
- Examination books
- Examination invigilation
- Language of examinations
- Dealing with disruptive and/or harassing behaviour by students in academic situations
- Gender-bias language
- Grade sheet policy
- Grading and feedback
- Grading scheme
- Misconduct in academic research
- Personal relations between instructors and students
- Research involving human participants, ethics review process
- Sessional dates and scheduling of examinations
- Student evaluation of teaching
- Women's Remembrance Day

PRESIDENTIAL REGULATIONS

- #1 Conduct of students and student activities in non-academic matters
- #2 Conduct of students at York University (amendment to Pres. Reg. #1)
- #3 Student discipline: Complaints & adjudication

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Access to information and protection of privacy
- Accommodation in employment for persons with disabilities
- Computing and information technology facilities
- Employment equity policy
- Firearms and weapons
- Hate propaganda
- Pets on campus
- Physical accessibility of university facilities
- Prohibiting on-campus activity by essay-writing services
- Occupational health and safety
- Racism
- Sexual harassment
- Temporary use of space
- Weather emergencies

This is a selection of Senate policies only.

All Senate, Presidential and University policies, procedures and regulations are available on the University Secretariat web site at <www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/>.

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CLASSROOM AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY @ YORK

<www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity>

- ◆ Practical tools and resources for instructors on promoting academic integrity through course and assignment design, in examinations, and in seminar, studio and lab environments
- ◆ Resources for students, including an online tutorial on academic integrity, library guides and tutorials, as well as campus resources and services

BOOKSTORE – York University Bookstore

Keele: 416-736-5024 • Glendon: 416-487-6702 • <<http://bookstore.yorku.ca>>

- ◆ Full range of required and recommended text books, dictionaries, magazines, novels, study guides, binders, posters, CDs, computer software, stationery, calculators, and York clothing.
- ◆ Online textbook ordering service, including a mechanism for checking the availability of textbooks ordered for your classes.
- ◆ Course kit service – Provides thorough copyright clearance of all copyrighted materials and prepares kits for students that include table of contents, page references, citations, pagination
- ◆ Used book buy back service

CENTRE FOR THE SUPPORT FOR TEACHING (CST)

416-736-5754 • cst@yorku.ca • <www.yorku.ca/cst>

- ◆ Workshops, discussion groups, forums, publications and special programming for TAs and faculty throughout the academic year to improve the quality of teaching at York
- ◆ University Teaching Practicum, a certification program in university teaching for graduate students
- ◆ Graduate course on university teaching and learning (UTAL 5000.03)
- ◆ TA Day, an annual conference of professional teaching development for grad students
- ◆ Teaching Development Graduate Assistant

(TDGA) Program – peer support and teaching development initiatives within departments

- ◆ A range of consultation and ad hoc services in areas such as feedback on teaching, “micro-teaching” sessions, and teaching and learning with technology.
- ◆ Resource library – print and web resources

COMPUTING AND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT
CLIENT SERVICES AND THE HELP DESK

416-736-5800 • helpdesk@yorku.ca

Full range of technical support for students, faculty and staff including setting up email accounts and websites

FACULTY SUPPORT CENTRE

416-736-2100 x30351 • faculty@yorku.ca • <www.fsc.yorku.ca>

- ◆ Consultation and assistance in the use of technology to support research and teaching activities
- ◆ Workshops on a variety of computing applications including electronic gradebooks, Powerpoint, web site creation, working with multimedia, and the WebCT course management system
- ◆ Drop in lab offers a range of hardware and software for creating course materials

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY CENTRE (ITC)

Keele: 416-736-5065 • Glendon: 416-487-6700 • <www.yorku.ca/computing/facultystaff/teach_learn/itc/>

- ◆ Media support for courses, special events and research, including delivery and set-up of digital and audio-visual equipment, development and production of multimedia materials, audio-conferencing, video-conferencing and satellite technology.
- ◆ While many classroom services are available at no charge, other specialized services are charged back to departments or to individual users

CUPE 3903

416-736-5154 • cupe3903@tao.ca • www.cupe3903.tao.ca

- ◆ Funds in support of research, teaching and professional development
- ◆ Dental, drug and vision care benefits
- ◆ Workload and overwork information
- ◆ Committees, including Trans-Identified and Women-Identified Caucus, International Graduate Students' Committee, Accessibility Working Group and Anti-Racism Working Group

GRADUATE STUDIES

416-736-5521 • www.yorku.ca/grads/

- ◆ Academic and administrative oversight for all doctoral and masters level education at York - primary contact for graduate students is through their home graduate program
- ◆ Financial support for graduate students through graduate and research assistantships, internal and external scholarships and bursaries
- ◆ Support for mentoring and supervision
- ◆ Sponsors University Teaching Practicum and TDGA program in collaboration with CST

HEALTH AND SAFETY

SECURITY SERVICES

416-650-8000 or x58000 • Emergencies: 416-736-5333, or x33333 • www.yorku.ca/security

- ◆ In a life-threatening emergency, call 911 directly.
- ◆ For other urgent security matters, call x33333. Public emergency agencies responding to 911 calls are met by Security Services personnel and escorted directly to the location of the emergency. This practice ensures that valuable time is not lost searching for a campus location. All security personnel are trained in First Aid and CPR.
- ◆ York has an Emergency Response Plan to provide for the safe evacuation or containment of people within the York community in the event of any potential life-threatening situation. For general information, or if you are not sure what to do about a particular security concern, or problem, call extension 58000 (416-650-8000) for assistance or referral.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

416-736-5491 • www.yorku.ca/dohs

Training in health and safety, radiation safety, chemical control, work accommodation, occupational health and hygiene testing, First Aid/ CPR training, ergonomics, Workers' Compensation, workplace safety and insurance case management, laser safety

CUSTODIAL SERVICES

416-736- 2100, x22453

Provides cleaning services and chalk (white board markers can be acquired through your department)

MAINTENANCE

416-736-2100, x22401

Provides repair services and maintains temperature control

LIBRARIES

416-736-5150 • www.library.yorku.ca

- ◆ Ask a Librarian – online electronic reference service
- ◆ Online tutorials and guides, including How to Find Stuff, Library Research Roadmap, Understanding Citations, etc.
- ◆ Student survival guide
- ◆ Information Literacy Classes – Can be tailored to meet individual course needs
- ◆ Subject specialist librarians attempt to make all listed materials available on your reading list and keep you aware of changing topics
- ◆ Online resource for developing creative library assignments, with sample assignments. The CST Library Associate is also available to provide feedback on the design of a library assignment

SCOTT LIBRARY

- Archives and Special Collections • 416-736-5442
- Circulation and Reserves Desks • 416- 736-5181
- Reference Desk • 416- 736-5181
- Map Library • 416-736-2100 x33353
- Resource Sharing • 416-736-5808
- Services for Library Users with Disabilities • 416-736-2100 x88877
- Sound and Moving Image Library
 - Film: 416-736-5508
 - Sound: 416-736-2100 x88880

FROST LIBRARY

- Glendon Campus • 416-487-6726

BRONFMAN BUSINESS LIBRARY

- Schulich School of Business • 416-736-5139

LAW LIBRARY

- Osgoode Hall Law School • 416-736-5205

STEACIE SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING LIBRARY

- Steacie Science Building • 416-736-5084

ACADEMIC SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Refer students to home Faculty

- Arts • 416-736-5022
- Atkinson • 416-736-5222
- Education • 416-736-5001
- Environmental Studies • 416-736-5252
- Fine Arts • 416-736-5135
- Glendon • 416-487-6710
- Graduate Studies • 416-736-5521
- Health • 416-736-5299
- Osgoode • 416-736-5030
- Schulich • 416-736-5060
- Science and Engineering • 416-736-5085

ESL OPEN LEARNING CENTRE (ESL-OLC)

<www.yorku.ca/eslclc/>

Programs and assistance related to language needs of ESL students, including workshops, small group learning, independent language learning using print and multimedia materials, and individual tutoring

CDC LEARNING SKILLS PROGRAM

<www.yorku.ca/cdc/lsp/>

Resources and programs offered through the Counselling and Development Centre (CDC) to help students develop successful study skills such as reading, note-taking, time management, stress management, and test and exam preparation

OFFICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

<www.yorku.ca/dshub/>

LEARNING DISABILITIES PROGRAM

Counselling and Development Centre • 416-736-5297

PSYCHIATRIC DIS/ABILITIES PROGRAM

Counselling and Development Centre • 416-736-5297

OFFICE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

416-736-5140 • TTY: 416-736-5263

ATKINSON COUNSELLING CENTRE

(for Atkinson students) • 416-736-5225

GLENDON COUNSELLING AND CAREER CENTRE

416-487-6709

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Program Coordinator's Office • 416-736-5971

WRITING PROGRAMS**ATKINSON ESSAY TUTORING CENTRE**

416-736-5289 • <www.atkinson.yorku.ca/Writing/>

One-to-one and small group instruction for Atkinson students and those taking courses at Atkinson (by appointment)

ARTS CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC WRITING

416-736-5134 • <www.arts.yorku.ca/caw/>

- ◆ Practical instruction, individual tutoring and electronic tutoring in all aspects of writing for students in the Faculties of Arts, Fine Arts, Graduate Studies and Schulich
- ◆ Some tutors specialize in working with ESL students, and students who have disabilities affecting language learning
- ◆ Credit courses and group workshops on effective essay writing
- ◆ Web site provides links to academic resources, such as style guides, dictionaries, an encyclopedia, and an on-line writing centre

GLENDON WRITING WORKSHOP

416-487-6863 • <www.glendon.yorku.ca/writingworkshop/>

Non-credit workshops covering all aspects of essay-writing, research techniques, essay organization and development, editing and revision. Tutoring available in French and English.

BETHUNE WRITING CENTRE

736-2100 x22035 • <www.yorku.ca/bethune/bethunewriting.html>

- ◆ Academic writing assistance for students in Bethune College, the Faculties of Science and Engineering, Environmental Studies, and Science and Society
- ◆ One-to-one tutoring in writing for essays, research reports, lab reports, case analyses, essay exams, or critical reviews

NON ACADEMIC SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

CAREER CENTRE

416-736-5351 • career@yorku.ca • <www.yorku.ca/careers>

- ◆ Online resources including online workshops, job listing websites and other online career development tools
- ◆ Services include a résumé critique service, interview practice and one-on-one career advising
- ◆ c.v. critique and dossier assistance for grad students, as well as online resources for preparing for an academic career and undertaking an academic job search

CHILDCARE SERVICES

COOPERATIVE DAYCARE SERVICES

416-736-5190 • daycare@yorku.ca • <www.yorku.ca/daycare>

Full time licensed daycare for 119 children from 6 weeks to 10 years of age

LEE WIGGINS CHILDCARE CENTRE

416-736-5959 • <www.yorku.ca/children>

Part-time flexible childcare centre catering to children from 18 months to 5 years old (not subsidized)

COUNSELLING SERVICES

COUNSELLING AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (CDC)

416-736-5297 • <www.yorku.ca/cdc/>

Personal counselling, crisis intervention, learning skills, groups to promote personal and interpersonal growth, specialized services to students with learning disabilities and support for students who have been diagnosed with long-term mental health needs

ATKINSON COUNSELLING AND SUPERVISION CENTRE

416-736-5225 • <www.yorku.ca/atkcsc/>

Personal counselling, workshops, and career exploration provided by professional counsellors experienced in working with adult learners for the Atkinson community. Services for students with special needs are also provided.

GLENDON COUNSELLING AND CAREER CENTRE

416-487-6709 • counselling@glendon.yorku.ca • <www.glendon.yorku.ca/counselling>

Personal and career counselling, academic skills training, psychoeducational workshops and a support program for students with disabilities

DISABILITIES, OFFICE FOR PERSONS WITH

416-736-5140 • TTY: 416-736-5263 • opd@yorku.ca • <www.yorku.ca/opd/>

- ◆ Information, support, and advocacy on behalf of students, staff and faculty with physical and sensory disabilities as well as medical conditions
- ◆ Office assistance includes pre-university advising, orientation for new students, advising on financial and academic matters, referrals for personal counselling, as well as other University services and community resources such as the Independent Living Assistance Program

GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

416-736-5865 • gsa@yorku.ca • <www.yugsa.ca>

- ◆ Central governing body of graduate students
- ◆ Funding in support of conferences, skills development, thesis, emergency loans and others
- ◆ Laser printer, photocopies, fax services and meeting rooms

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTE (YUELI)

416-736-5353 • yueli@yorku.ca • <yueli.yorku.ca>

Non-credit language courses (full and part-time) designed for students who wish to improve their English for university entrance and/or professional purposes

ESL OPEN LEARNING CENTRE

<www.yorku.ca/eslolc> - see previous entry

YORK INTERNATIONAL

416-736-5177 • yinfo@yorku.ca • <international.yorku.ca>

Programs and services to enhance the academic experiences of international students at York, foster international student mobility and collaboration of faculty with partner universities

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON AND CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

416-736-5682 • ombuds@yorku.ca • <www.yorku.ca/ombuds/>

- ◆ Offers an accessible, impartial, non-adversarial and confidential resource for the timely and fair resolution of problems about university-related concerns with respect to alleged unfairness, discrimination or harassment.
- ◆ Provides impartial information, advice, referrals, problem solving and informed intervention.

STUDENT COMMUNITY AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

416-736-5144 • sclld@yorku.ca • <www.yorku.ca/sclld>

- ◆ Student leadership training and development
- ◆ Student organizations and activities
- ◆ Aboriginal counselling and services
- ◆ Health education and promotion
- ◆ Off-campus housing
- ◆ Residence life and the Pond Road Residence

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES
COMMUNITY AND LEGAL AID SERVICES PROGRAM (CLASP)

416-736-5029 • clasp@osgoode.yorku.ca • <www.osgoode.yorku.ca/clasp>

Provides help with basic legal problems, representation in certain courts and tribunals and provides legal advice on a confidential basis, free of charge to full-time York students and persons living on low income. Staffed by law students who are supervised by qualified lawyers.

FOODBANK (FOOD 4 THOUGHT)

food@yorku.ca • volunteers:fftvolunteer@yahoo.ca • <www.yorku.ca/food>

Food services, clothing collection and emergency bursary program for members of the York community in need

STUDENT PEER SUPPORT CENTRE

416-736-5494 • spsc@yorku.ca • <www.yorku.ca/spsc/>

Peer counselling for support, information and referrals in academic concerns, depression and suicide, stress management, substance abuse, sexual and verbal harassment, sexually transmitted disease, and birth control

SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVOR'S SUPPORT LINE (SASSL)

416-2100 x40345 • TTY: 416-650-8187 • <www.yorku.ca/sassl>

- ◆ 24 hour telephone support for survivors of sexual assault and other crises including personal and academic problems, stress, sexuality and related issues
- ◆ Referral of individuals to other organizations and services both on and off the York university campus
- ◆ Outreach programs to educate students, staff and the community about sexual violence, including training manuals, pamphlets and educational videos
- ◆ Supports individuals of all backgrounds, cultures, opinions, genders, sexual orientations and perspectives

WOMEN & TRANS PEOPLE AT YORK, CENTRE FOR

416-736-2100 x33484 • ywc@riseup.net • <www.yorku.ca/ywc>

Peer counselling, referral services, library and other resources, and above all, a safe, comfortable environment for women. Events include educational forums, self defence classes and film series

TRANSGENDERED, BISEXUALS, LESBIANS, AND GAYS AT YORK (TBLGAY)

416-736-2100, x20494 • tblgay@yorku.ca • <www.yorku.ca/tblgay/>

Provides a safe space for queer students to make friends or connections in the community and has many brochures and information on queer organizations

VOLUNTEER CENTRE OF YORK UNIVERSITY

416-736-2133 x33576 • volcentr@yorku.ca • <www.yorku.ca/vcyu>

- ◆ Liaises between York students who would like to donate their time and skills and non-profit organizations seeking volunteers
- ◆ A branch of the Volunteer Centre of Toronto

RECREATION YORK

<www.yorku.ca/sprtyork/>

Fully staffed fitness centre with 23 cardio machines, selectorized machines and free weights, 4 gymnasias, 3 dance studios, 6 North American squash courts, 25-metre swimming pool. Outdoor facilities include 9 tennis courts, 5 playing fields, 1 stadium field, 4 softball fields. Beatrice Ice Gardens has 7 rinks (including the York arena and a conditioning centre) Toronto Track and Field Centre has indoor and outdoor tracks and weight training areas.

SCOTT RELIGIOUS CENTRE

Scott Podium - Messages for the Inter-Faith Council may be left at the Student Community and Leadership Development Office, 416-736-5144

- ◆ Inter-Faith Council, worship schedule, various religious societies, chapel, and meditation room
- ◆ Religious organizations recognized by the Interfaith Council are listed at <www.yorku.ca/scld/organizations/clubs.php?list=religious>

WELLNESS CENTRE

416-736-2100 x39355 • <www.yorku.ca/wellness>

- ◆ Programs in meditation, yoga, and healthy eating/weight management, and other health and wellness issues, including the "Ask a Wellness Expert" program
- ◆ Directory of all York University health and wellness resources, as well as a number of critical community resources.