Evaluation Instructions for Faculty:

The TAs you are visiting have been visited already by their Head TA or Adrienne, and have received feedback on specific skills they need to improve. Your role in this evaluation is to provide additional feedback on their overall ability to encourage active learning, and improvement (or lack thereof) since their first evaluation. Your participation in this feedback process will help the TAs become effective scientist-educators in their future careers, and you will become an important reference for them when they graduate.

Before the Discussion
1. Obtain and read over the Head TA’s evaluation of the TA.
2. Read over the Teaching Checklist (see next page) to remind yourself of the indicators of excellent teaching.
3. Choose a discussion that fits your schedule. If possible, choose a second or third discussion so the TA can feel more relaxed with the material.
4. Email the TA at least 3 days before the evaluation, and tell them which discussion you will be attending.

During the Discussion
1. Arrive on time. If the discussion is full, sit in a chair rather than a desk.
2. You can choose to participate in small groups as an interested observer, or just sit quietly in the corner. The TA can choose to introduce you as "Dr. ___ is visiting several discussions this week."
3. Take notes. Write down:
   a. The time each new activity or event occurs
   b. What the activity was
   c. What worked well for that activity and what can be improved
4. Avoid getting sidetracked with your laptop or cell phone.
5. Thank the TA for letting you visit. Tell them you will be emailing the evaluation in the next week.

After the Discussion
1. Use your notes to create an evaluation that summarizes what you saw, and offers specific suggestions. Find positive things to say before you make suggestions for improvement (see attached samples).
2. Email the TA, thanking them for the opportunity for you to visit. Include your evaluation. In the email, ask them to address or apply at least one of your suggestions during the next week, and then reply back to you with feedback.
3. CC Adrienne on the email. After the TA emails you the feedback, forward that as well.
Teaching Checklist

These indicators of excellent teaching are expected in TAs who are experienced, well-trained, and who have worked to improve their teaching. New TAs are not expected to succeed in all these areas, but this will help you quantify strengths and weaknesses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>An excellent discussion leader:</th>
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| **Subject** | - Focuses on material that students are struggling with  
- Chooses material that matches class learning goals  
- Covers material from recent lectures  
- Explains biology accurately  
- Admits when they don’t know an answer, and posts response after class  
- Writes quiz questions that are appropriately relevant and difficult |
| **Organization** | - Starts on time and ends early enough to allow individual questions  
- Keeps quizzes short and quickly administered  
- Requires higher Bloom’s order thinking from students  
- Thoughtfully prepares activities that vary from week to week  
- Keeps each activity shorter than 20 minutes  
- Lectures for less than 10 minutes total  
- Has students download materials from website for discussion  
- Creates worksheets that can be completed during discussion  
- Gives clear instructions and quickly corrects any errors in the activity  
- Keeps small groups at 2-4 students, no bigger |
| **Interaction** | When students are doing group work:  
- Cheerfully enforces group work  
- Visits groups to facilitate their work  
- Encourages students find the answers for themselves  
- Recognizes when groups go off-topic and gives new directions  
- Spends time with all groups  
When working with the class as a whole:  
- Has upright and positive body language  
- Is able to ask useful questions and elicit student responses  
- Understands student questions, and answers clearly and concisely  
- Has legible handwriting  
- Draws on board to help explain concepts  
- Prevents cheating by watching students during quizzes  
- Does not embarrass or stress students during class discussions |
| **Enthusiasm** | - Expresses that teaching is a valuable part of their graduate work  
- Reinforces value of active learning to students  
- Makes an effort to learn student names  
- Speaks clearly and at appropriate volume  
- Compliments student performance and corrects errors gently  
- Is patient when re-explaining material or answering questions  
- Speaks positively of lecture instructors, Bio majors and UCI as a whole |
A Sample Evaluation for a Struggling TA

TA: XXX, October 26, 2010

1. You had a general outline of the topics that would be covered in discussion. I like that idea and it makes it clear to the students what is coming.

2. Your opening address to the class commented on the number of students missing. That is entirely appropriate. However, you followed this with the offhand comment “perhaps students don’t find discussion useful”, and in the absence of any indication that you think it is important they attend, it sounded like you felt it might not be very useful either.

3. Starting at the top of the list on the board you said that you had “finally” graded all their assignments and the grades were now available in gradebook. Does that mean that they had not gotten any feedback on grades until this weekend or did you mean you were just catching up on the last week or so. As you know we want you to be uploading grades on a regular basis as it helps students to readjust if they need to.

4. In discussion of the mid-quarter evaluations you said that one of the most common suggestions was that the students asked for more clarification on lecture material so you were going to add that in starting today. This empowers the students and will make them more attentive if they feel you are responding to their needs. However, feel free to adjust the implementation so you feel they get the maximal benefit.

5. When you asked if any students had urgent questions about lecture material no one responded so you began discussing specific points in Lecture 17.18.19 that you thought were particularly interesting. While particularly interesting is good, indicating that you are choosing particularly challenging concepts can often be more useful. So while I thought your discussion of why pea plants were used was very good you spent a lot of time on this and relatively little active learning was taking place. In contrast your discussion of mechanisms for regulating gene expression on the X chromosome was very good, engaging, and conveyed a lot of material in a relatively short time. You drew a graph that was also helpful and many students participated in this discussion. The section in which you discuss recombination frequency, a drawing could have helped convey the information more clearly. And I would have also indicated at this point that they were going to have a worksheet problem that required that they understood this and they might have paid more attention.

6. At 10:20 you asked the students to form groups of 2-3 and you would hand out a worksheet and would at the same time collect the homework from Dr. Aguilar-Roca. This took much longer than it should have and you ran out of worksheets. I highly recommend that you post worksheets ahead of time and make the students download and print. Then you will not have the problem of running out and some of them will actually have looked at them ahead of time. We formed larger groups while you made more copies and then broke back into smaller groups. However, this took a lot of time and made it difficult to finish the activity in time to discuss it.
7. The worksheet problem on dog genetics was quite confusing, including the nomenclature for the alleles. I was also unclear about your explanation for wild-type, dominant and recessive. I did not have a copy of the worksheet but my group was clearly confused. One possible strategy for getting students to work on a relatively complex problem like this is to have them work together with you as a class to determine the genotypes from the pedigree that you gave them in the problem. Then set them to answering the specific questions.

8. The class ended before you had a chance to go over the worksheet in any detail. Please email me a copy of the worksheet and answers that you provide for the students.

Summary: You clearly have worked hard to get to know the names of many of your students and that is excellent. The students were not afraid to volunteer answers to your questions and appeared quite comfortable forming groups and asking you questions. However, you need to work on your preparation and time management/organization in the discussion. Perhaps you were a bit nervous because I was there but this is very important as the students not only need to work on the problems in discussion but you need time to go over the answers with them. That is when they learn the most.

Best,
Diane

A Sample Evaluation for an Excellent TA

Dear YYY,

I came to visit your discussion section on 11-__-2010. Below I have briefly described my observations. In particular, I have tried to focus on areas you are doing well and areas you may try improving.

12:55- I came in and you already had the seats organized ready to go for a group activity. This was great as the students know what is coming and they were quiet and ready to go before class even started. The class was ready to go suggesting they know what to expect from you and how you have the discussion organized. Well done.

1:00- You started going over issues related to the discussion section (a review for them, the last worksheet, etc). It is always good to manage expectations, which you did by telling them what was coming.

1:01- You told them they were going to work on a worksheet that was evidently very very well prepared ahead of time along with a FANTASTIC theatrical performance to introduce the crime detective problem to be solved. This was brilliant! A great way to
engage the students, get their full attention, and make learning about PCR and other technologies much much more interesting! Excellent job.

You went around from group to group to chat with students needing help and/or clarification of what they needed to do. All groups appeared to be fully engaged in the activity. This single activity required that they think about every topic covered in the last lecture, but more importantly, the application of the concepts covered in lecture. This is particularly difficult to do and you nailed it in ONE activity.

1:20-
You started going over each section of the worksheet with a representative student from each group. Again, a terrific job in working through the problem one step at a time with full involvement of the student at the board and with additional help from the class. By continuing the discussion "in character" you had EVERY single student’s attention. I’m sure this will be one they don’t forget.

1:42-
You had the last group solve the crime. The drama was fantastic. I can’t believe you had the energy to do this three times!

1:50
You ended class on time. This is great as it shows the students you respect their time and they will respect yours in return.

Overall, you did a truly outstanding job. I’m going to share with each of you things I observed from each discussion class I sat in on. That will come hopefully next week and be useful for all of you in the future. If there is anything you wish to discuss with me please let me know.

Best,
Marcelo