

# Feedback for TA Workshops- Fall 2023

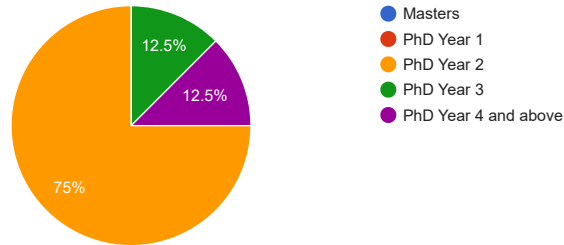
8 responses

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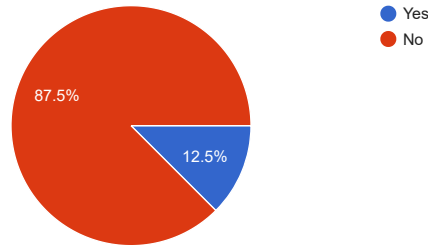
8 responses



Was this your first TA workshop with the Department of Economics?

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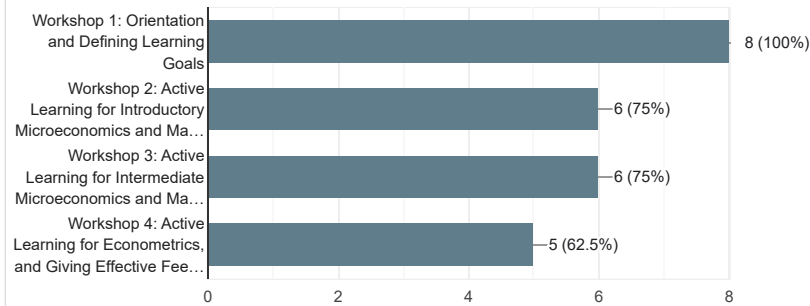
8 responses



Please indicate which of the following workshops you attended

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8 responses



In your own words and understanding, what are the top three things you learned in these workshops? These could be bigger picture ideas or theories, or specific practices or skills.

8 responses

Inclusive, active learning, creative

- 1,) be realistic in setting your expectations for your sections
- 2.) options for group exercises/ active learning in class
- 3) how to give feedback

I'll outline two, and I'm sure there would be more if I had attended all of the sessions!

1. Planning a section backwards based on learning outcomes
2. Specific practices like gallery walks/think-pair-shares

1. The very first learning for me was the importance of measuring the learning outcomes because it is not unusual to lose students' attention halfway through the sessions and having them do different exercise can help realise what they struggle grasping the most.
2. Using different techniques to get all students to interact and engage in the session and pace the session in a way that everyone can follow through. This is something I struggled with first time I worked as a TA.
3. Giving constructive feedback, I do not usually give feedback to students but I realise it is sometimes important to reach out to students in case they need any extra assistance that could improve their performance in the coursework.

Active learning techniques in different contexts, student management and effective listening skills

1) I learned a multitude of different active learning strategies that I could employ in sections for some of the most common Econ courses offered in the department. 2) Additionally, I learned how to throttle the exercises in order to aid learning but try not to make students uncomfortable in a way that hinders an individual's learning. 3) Finally, I learned what some of my peers are implementing already to see what works better in practice for certain classes. I.e, I do we do you do for stata courses etc.

Specific skills that will help me to cope with some specific situations I had in the past

Learned about various active learning methods and how to combine components from the methods to come up with something that allows for better practices to lead a section/discussion. Also learned about the importance of assigning roles to deal with disruptive behavior or students who monopolize on time.



In your own words and understanding, what are a few things that we covered in the workshops, that you felt were not the most relevant or adaptable for your teaching contexts?

8 responses

All things are relevant

The roles for group exercise, I just didn't like having this ramen that can be restrictive

Having attended the first workshop only, I found everything covered during that to be relevant.

I am not sure about explicitly assigning roles to students in group activities. It could sometimes discourage students from attending the sessions.

Most techniques felt more efficient in person and not very adaptable to online learning

The only thing would be that there are some courses that we may TA for where these tactics are not as relevant just due to the nature of the course. As such, there were some things covered that couldn't really be implemented in my current course, though they were useful to keep in mind for other courses.

I do not remember anything useless, every single tool could be used in different contexts

Most of the active learning methods require more time than is typically available to me in a section. There is a problem set or exam every week in my course, so the 65 minutes in the section is devoted to going over some problems similar to those on the problem set. I understand, however, that the methods covered in the workshops are useful and with more experience, I will find ways to incorporate them into the sections better.

In the last month or so, have you observed any changes you have made to your teaching practice that are related to these workshops? OR: Are there any changes you're planning to make to your teaching?

8 responses

I tried to make changes, but students prefer to have individual based polling questions

I try to do an active learning activity in my sections

The introduction of a pedagogy-focused teacher training in the department really motivated me to rethink how I approach teaching. As a fairly experienced TA, I was stuck in a rut going through concepts that had become, to me, very repetitive and preparing for sections had become quite a monotonous task for me. However, these workshops gave me ideas to how to prepare for sections differently and make it more interesting. For example, while teaching my students about production costs, I conducted an exercise wherein I asked the students to come up with their own business ideas and frame a cost table, based on a specific rubric that I provided. These and other active learning exercises have helped me to engage with my students more and it seems to be helping them too.

Yes, I add short exercises in the sessions to measure the learning outcomes. Also, I try to use one or two technique to try engage all the students that attend the sessions.

Very little but yes

I'm planning on using the active learning strategies when I TA for courses where the content might lend itself nicely. Again, the current course I'm aiding is such that these are difficult to implement in their shared form.

No, but I am planning to incorporate (some of) them in the future

I have incorporated aspects of the "I do - You do - We do" active learning method in my sessions, but I am always short on time, so I cannot incorporate too much given the nature of the course I teach.



For those of you who have attended TA trainings with the Department of Economics before, what do you think was the key difference in (a) how the workshops were conducted, and (b) how the attendees responded?

8 responses

I didn't attend any training before

A) these workshops provided wayyyy more information and you had an opportunity to practice the new concepts

B) I think since the sections were more engaging, attendees were more receptive

(a) This training had a strong emphasis on pedagogy and good teaching practices which was completely absent from previous trainings. This was a glaring gap, as many of the entering graduate students are teaching for the very first time.

(b) The sessions were highly interactive, allowing participants to frame teaching practices in collaboration with each other. As a result of this, I think the attendees were much more engaged, and walked away with concrete ideas of what to do in their sections.

(a) It was more interactive and engaging compared to previous workshops. I would say that there were many aspects of training that I did not understand because we just had one session and not covered everything as thoroughly we did this time. And I better understand the objective of the sessions. I think it was good that we did activities depending on the nature of course we are teaching for. I have not yet assisted for course like Econ 114 but I do now understand the issues a TA face for these courses.

(b) I do not exactly recall all the sessions but most of the discussions were productive and it was nice to know about some of the senior's experiences who have been TAing for a much longer time.

more engaging and collaborative

I think the key difference was more of a standardized approach and direct examples for the main courses offered. As a result, I think people responded better since they had, in some ways, cookie cutter exercises they can implement to start and then make tweaks later.

(a) since we have 4 different meetings, we had more time to discuss content; (b) there was definitely more participation

It was more engaging and the hands-on approach facilitated more discussion and learning among the attendees.



Can you think of a few ways that you might conduct these workshops differently? This could be more or less emphasis on certain topics, or different modalities for the workshop.

8 responses

No

Again, I think the roles I would focus on less or frame then in more general terms. I would also think about how to make all the sessions more relevant to all the classes if possible

N/A

There should be less emphasis on explicitly assigning different roles in group activities as it could push certain students out of their comfort zones and could stop coming to the sessions. I understand that whole point of these training workshop is to understand the importance of active learning but it is also important to reach out to students who wants to be able to present without having to actively participate

Haven't thought about it yet

Not that I can think of, I liked this format and content more than the ones I had taken in the past!

I would ask participants to submit like a final assignment in which they show how they incorporate the skills learned in the workshops. If the workshops are taught during October these assignments could be turned in during December.

Some time could have been devoted to talk about courses like Econ 125, 136, 197. At the same time, I think 4 sessions of 1.5 hours each were demanding. 2 sessions of 2 hours each might suffice. A brief discussion on trying to get students more engaged for an online section would have been useful.

Is there anything else you'd like to ask or that you'd like me to know?

4 responses

I appreciate the fact that you're available as a sounding board for when I'm planning my sections, it's very helpful!

NA

Gagandeep, I think you are very good doing this, keep doing it in the future!

I think you did a great job at getting people engaged with methods of active learning. We expect the students to learn by doing and you helped us understand that we learn (how to lead sections better) by doing too, while underscoring the importance of planning out a section.

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