Being a TA

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Sta 771S - Teaching Statistics

Overview

What are (and are not) the responsibilities of a TA?

Running labs

Introductions

- Introducing yourself
- Introduction of each student – worthwhile if class is small

- You win or lose the attention of the students in the first 5 minutes
- The most effective way to get their attention (and respect) is to be (and appear as) an authority on the content
- The most effective way to lost these is to assume you can just wing it (especially when "it" is something as structured as a computational lab)
- Other tips: Eye contact, walking around, getting buy in by involving them in the introduction of the material

Example: STA 101 - Introduction to R and RStudio

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Guidelines: running labs

- Be clear on instructor expectations from you and the students
- Work through the lab on the same platform that the students will be using
- Be familiar with syntax course uses
- Don't be afraid of live debugging
- Do not debug student code directly, help them figure out the issue

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Sticky situations...

Imagine the following scneario:

- Student A is very confused, and keeps interrupting you to ask questions.
- Student B and C get annoyed with Student A's questions, they start rolling their eyes and quietly (but audibly) making judgmental remarks about Student A.

How do you handle this situation?

Office hours

One of you is the student and the other is the TA. Student asks the following question:

Why is it true that in simple linear regression $b_0 = \bar{y} - b_1 \bar{x}$?

Assume that this is part of the assignment student needs to turn in, i.e. you cannot just give away the answer. Instead you need to get the student to understand the answer well enough to be able to craft a response in their own words.

TA: Explain, Student: Write out a brief answer.

Guidelines: office hours

- Be familiar with text and class notes: use same notation, definition, perspectives as author of text and instructor of course

- Show interest in helping and being (and appearing) welcoming

- Avoid solving HW problems for students: ask guiding, probing questions, but get the student to do the thinking

- Work from the level of the student: which requires that you know (can evaluate) the level of the student

- Speak clearly, slowly, and audibly

- Do not fake it: if you do not know the answer, seek guidance, do not give incorrect information

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Answering student questions online

- Use your professional (Duke) email address if you can

- Read one more time before you hit send

- Do not invite a back-and-forth conversation

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Guidelines: Piazza

- Use the setting for "students can opt to be anonymous to other students, but not to instructors"

- Be careful about not using the student's name if they posted anonymously

How should (if at all) your responses on Piazza differ from email?

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Grading

Mock grading - 5 minutes

- Mark where you take of points
- Provide constructive feedback, but be realistic about how much you write (imagine having to do this for many students in a timely manner)
- Make sure your writing is legible

Suppose a students asks *"I lost 10 points on this question, but my friend who has the same answer only lost 5 points"*.

How do you handle this situation?

Visit a lab

Visit a lab

Take a look at this semester's course, specifically lab, schedule.

Pick a lab that you would like to visit.

Post on Piazza by Friday which lab you will be visiting.

I will post a form on Piazza for you to fill out with comments.

One page lab visit reflections **due March 1**.