



DOCUMENTATION OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

Including the current semester, I have served as a teaching assistant for eleven semesters, from fall semester 2014 through spring semester 2019 and again Fall 2021, with experience teaching Introductory Microeconomics, Introductory Macroeconomics, Money & Banking, and Economic Theory at the graduate level.

For the first eight semesters and the current semester, I worked in the Department of Economics, where typical TA duties consist of holding weekly 50 minute discussion sections for students, holding regular office hours, and writing questions for homework assignments and exams. During the remaining two semesters, I worked as a TA in the Business Learning Center (BLC), which provides optional extra help for students, holding twice-weekly hour-long help sessions and office hours.

In three semesters I served as a head TA for large introductory lectures (between 250 and 400 students), where I had additional responsibilities such as working with the course instructor to put together exams, ensuring exams were printed on time in sufficient quantities, and managing the course grade records.

The following pages of this document include the following:

1. Summary of my most recent teaching evaluations,
2. Selected student comments from those evaluations, and
3. The most recent evaluation by my supervising professor.

Complete teaching evaluations going back to fall 2014 are available upon request.

SUMMARY OF RECENT EVALUATIONS

The Department of Economics conducts evaluations of all TAs every semester consisting of a standard student evaluation and a qualitative evaluation by the course instructor. Below I've highlighted the responses to the five substantive questions on the student evaluations:

- “How would you rate the TA’s ability to lead discussion or present material in your section?”
(1 - “Poor” to 5 - “Excellent”)
- “Of those sections, what proportion were interesting and/or thought-provoking?”
(1 - “Almost none” to 5 - “Almost all”)
- “Overall, what is your assessment of the TA’s knowledge of the material related to this course?”
(1 - “Poor” to 5 - “Excellent”)
- “How responsive and helpful did you find your TA during office hours?”
(1 - “Not at all helpful” to 5 - “Extremely helpful”)
- “Given the professor’s role and the structure of this course, how would you evaluate your TA’s performance?”
(1 - “Poor” to 5 - “Excellent”)

	Econ 713 (PhD Level) Spring 2017		Econ 101 (Head TA) Fall 2017		Econ 101 (Head TA) Spring 2018	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Ability to lead discussion	4.36	5	4.22	4	4.35	5
Sections interesting	4.29	4	3.74	4	3.83	4
Knowledge of material	4.59	5	4.85	5	4.91	5
Office hours helpful	4.45	5	4.32	5	4.07	4.5
Overall Rating*	4.59	5	4.52	5	4.52	5
*Department averages for these three semesters were 4.14, 4.11, and 4.12 respectively.						

In each of these semesters, I received at most 2 (out of around 25 responses) student evaluations with an overall rating below 4 (1 student in each of fall and spring 2017, and 2 students in spring 2018).

In my final two semesters as a TA (working in the BLC), I did not receive the usual TA evaluation. The BLC conducted an evaluation for Fall 2018, but there was no bottom-line overall rating question, though the evaluation did include some useful student comments. The student survey was also conducted two months after the end of the semester and thus had very few responses. For reasons unknown to me, the BLC did not conduct an evaluation for me for Spring 2019. However, given that BLC sections are completely optional and are completely independent of the main course (and thus have no direct effect on grades), I take it as a relatively positive evaluation that my sections were regularly near capacity that semester.

SELECTED STUDENT COMMENTS

Below are some selected student comments from the last four semesters for which I received an evaluation (no evaluation was received for my final semester working for the BLC).

(Comments reported exactly as written)

Fall 2018 - BLC Econ 101

"I only want to thank a lot to Gary Baker. I attended all his sessions and it helped a lot. I would say that it was because of him that i really learned econ. I started attending his sessions after the first midterm (in which i got a B). After that, i never missed one of his sessions. He cared a lot about the students and never mind going at a slow pace so we can really learn the materias. The next two midterms i had, i got an A in both. I am completely sure it was because Gary helped me understand the logic behind econ. I am really thankful to him and this is the least i can do to show my gratefulness. Thank you Gary, you are the best!"

"As Econ 101 is a class that requires a lot of out of class practice, the BLC was a great was to test your knowledge with practice problems, in an environment that allowed you to ask questions."

Spring 2018 - Econ 101 (Head TA)

"did a good job picking out topics to go over and create problems that are more challenging. It was helpful to work through these examples together as a class to get further understanding. Sending out the answer key to the worksheet handed out in class was also very helpful if we didn't get to all the problems during the section. Teaching style was good and overall a funny guy, I think he was clearly the best TA for the class."

"Overall, it is evident that Gary cares about this course and the students who enroll in it. I appreciate that he is open to criticisms about the exams so that he and the rest of the TAs and Prof. Kelly can make adjustments accordingly. Also, he is able to explain economic concepts more in depth during the discussions which helps me learn the material a lot more."

Fall 2017 - Econ 101 (Head TA)

"Gary Baker is an excellent TA and always gave real life examples of economic situations where certain concepts would be used; something not done very often in lecture. My discussion section for the Econ 101 class was something I looked forward to all week."

"Walked us through specific examples of concepts very effectively. I almost always left discussion feeling like I understood the concept he was focusing on better than I did after a lecture. This man could easily be teaching the course"

Spring 2018 - Econ 713 (PhD-level)

"Gary, first of all thank you sooooo much for your help. Without your generous office hour, I may have failed the course already. I really enjoy your thorough explanations. When I ask you a questions, you would explain it from the beginning to the end, which often help me to realize some other important questions I didn't notice. It helps most of the time."

"Gary is amazing! He presents examples in sections and office hours in a step by step way that allows you to understand the broader theory. His manner is always incredibly helpful; he's not condescending if you don't understand. 711/713 would have been much harder without him!"



April 27, 2018

To the TA Evaluation Committee:

Gary Baker is currently serving as a Head TA in my Economics 101: Introduction to Microeconomics class. This is the fifth semester that I have worked with Gary and the third semester in which he has worked as a Head TA. It continues to be fun to watch his growth and development over the course of his years in graduate school. Gary is far more confident and at ease than he was during his first semester as a TA; he is doing a great job as a Head TA and appears from my perspective to enjoy having the additional responsibilities that come with that position. Gary is careful in his work, eager to perform at a high standard, always respectful and interested in making sure that his work and efforts satisfy my standards, and always reliable. It has been a pleasure to see Gary's growing confidence and maturity across the years I have worked with him.

This week when I visited his classroom I found Gary to be very well prepared. He had an outline on the board of the day's topics and he had a handout with questions for the class. The section was well attended and students were willing to participate and comfortable interacting with Gary. Gary speaks fluently; his expression and grammar are impeccable. He is clear, logical, and easy to follow; his explanations and examples help to clarify challenging material. Gary maintains excellent eye contact; he has a strong, clear voice; and projects a confidence and ease when presenting material. His blackboard skills were excellent as well: his graphs were large and clearly labeled, his handwriting easy to read, and his use of board space was paced and well organized. His comfort before his class continues to grow: his confidence and competence is very evident and very reassuring. He clearly enjoys teaching and striving to communicate clearly and effectively to his students. He understands the material and wants to make sure that he expands his students' understanding and engagement with the material. He just continues to grow and mature into his role as teacher: it is impressive. I am very pleased with his progress as an instructor across the years. Gary's presentation was strong with regard to his expression, his eye contact, and his organization. I was very impressed with the strength of his intuitive explanations: they are much clearer and better expressed than they were when he first started teaching. His body language suggests that he finds the classroom a comfortable place and an enjoyable place to be. He is an excellent instructor.

Gary's written work is also done at a very high level of competency as well as creativity. He is a careful editor and proofreader and for that I am very grateful. Gary is quick to volunteer to help out and is a strong team player. Gary writes questions and problems that are that rare combination of clear, challenging, and insightful: it is a delight to have him support my course. I continue to be impressed with his ability to draft questions that get at the heart of a concept but are expressed without an alliance on math skills. Each of the exams this semester has combined a rare combination of challenge and insight that I really appreciate. A student executing the answer through what they have learned in the classroom feels a delight that they have done this! And, I think, often find that the question and the work to answer it have helped them identify and strengthen a key concept presented in the class. It has been a pleasure working with Gary this semester and I highly recommend his work to you. If I can be of further assistance to you in evaluating his work please let me know.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Sawyer Kelly
Faculty Associate