

Math/Stats Lab Guidelines for TA's

Kelvin Chan

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The Math/Stats Lab is a free, walk-in, and in-person service provided by the Department of Mathematics and Statistics to all first and second year students. The Lab is physically located in Ross South Room 525.

This document is a guideline for tutors working in the Lab. For the Fall 2022 semester, the Lab is coordinated by

- Kelvin Chan (ktychan@yorku.ca) for math TA's, and
- Chifeng Shen (senshenliu@gmail.com) for stats TA's.

Responsibilities and Expectations

As a Lab tutor, you are responsible for

- providing one-on-one or sometimes one-to-many tutoring service, and
- helping students on any topic in first or second year courses.

You are expected to

- actively help students,
- arrive on time and stay for the entire duration of your shifts, and
- sign in at the start of your shifts.

Last but not least, please DO NOT solve for-credit questions. It might be hard to detect what is a for-credit. Use your best judgements.

Schedules

For the Fall 2022 semester, the Lab will open every day at 10:30 am, excluding public holidays and University closures. The Lab will open from September 14, 2022 to the last

day of math exams.

There are two schedules for the Fall semester, one for the regular period and one for the exam period. You should have already received the one for regular period. The one for the exam period will be made available to everyone when exam schedule is announced by the University. That also means some of your Lab hours will be reserved for the exam period.

For this semester, TA assignments for the Lab are attached to some course. That means the course coordinators have some influence on the scheduling. In principle, we try to schedule TA's on lectures days of their associated courses. *Please note you are still obligated to help all students.*

If you were to reschedule your shift for any reason, you have a few choices.

- For one off changes, feel free to find another TA's in the Lab to cover your shift. In this case, please let the coordinators after you have made this change. It also becomes your responsibility to "pay back" your shift. You are more likely
- If you can't find someone to cover you, then please contact the coordinators.
- For other types of rescheduling, please contact the coordinators. Please note a dramatic change to your schedule might not always be possible since sometimes you might be the only one working in the Lab.

In case of emergency and you can't make it to the Lab, please immediately notify the coordinators, especially when you are the only one working in the Lab. In such case, we will rescheduled the missed shift to some other time.

Working in the Lab

You can make a difference in someone's journey of undergraduate studies. Often times, they are not math or stats majors. Since they don't get much "facetime" with instructors and TA's during lectures and office hours, coming into the Lab is one of the few ways they can get some "facetime" with an experienced mathematician or statistician. From past experience, they often appreciate and benefit greatly from someone who is willing to help.

So first of all, please be active and welcome students into the Lab.

As a graduate students, you will soon become an expert in your very own area. That means you will soon have to explain what feels like second nature to non-experts. In the Lab, you are the experts and students are the non-experts. So while you are helping students, they are also helping you to develop a communication style that suits your personality.

Here are a few tips to help you succeed as a tutor in the Lab.

- Proactively approach students as they enter the Lab. Some students can be a bit shy and might need some encouragement.
- Introduce yourself when meeting a new student, and ask for their names. This helps connect with students and make them feel welcomed and comfortable.
- Be encouraging and patient with students. Remember, first- and second-year students are still novice learners.
- Learning takes time. Giving students some time to think and to absorb is a safe way to build trust and their confidence.
- Most students prefer concrete examples over abstract descriptions. Feel free to use the blackboards to your advantage.
- Decline to solve for-credit questions. Here are some ideas to still be helpful in this situation:
 - Try work through a similar problem.
 - Try asking guiding questions to the best of your judgements.
 - Offer to explain relevant concepts and techniques.
- It is okay to not know everything. In such case, you can offer to review relevant materials with students to refresh your memory. You can also ask another tutor for help.
- If a student is exhibiting disruptive or inappropriate behaviour, you have the right to refuse help. Contact 911 in case of emergency. Contact the coordinators immediately. At least one of us will be on camps during the Lab's opening hours.