**Background:**

**Research Questions:**

What were the experiences/ perspectives of the TA instructors while giving oral exams at a large scale?

What did we learn from attempting to implement oral exams at large scale?

**Prior experience of TAs vs Professor**

***What did the TA’s center their discussions on when talking about the oral exams?***

**1.The time commitment**

*Evidence:* Discussions, Surveys, Moodle Schedules

**D1:** 6:10 - 6:35 - one TA time commitment was around 12 hours for the week

**D2:** 8:10-8:20 - TA sending out a message every 30 minutes (I am running behind!)

12:10-12:15 - “I was losing my sanity (in a joking way) being on zoom for so long”

**D3:** 19:27 - 19:56 - TA says oral exam takes more time than grading HW, since “you have to block out time for exam”

19:57 - 20:20 - however, someone else felt the opposite, and said they felt similar to HW

25:20 25:40 - another TA also felt like grading HW was more flexible in terms of time, but not everyone feels this way

**Pre-Exam-Thoughts:** 3 TA’s off the bat say “time, timeframe”.

**After 1st oral exam:** “Took way too long”

Time concerns mostly

**After 2nd oral exam:** “Having to endure 18 hours on zoom”

Told that first year TA’s generally have lower workloads, but this was ignored all together and the time spent here was much more than other TA’s

One TA had students miss due to tech and others things, so now it’s extra time for them that has to be made up

“Overall very time consuming”, “Extremely time inefficient for TAs”

Mentioned it being 140 exams “grueling” even when spaced across multiple days

**2. Problems with the schedule not going according to plan (tech, lateness),**

**But also scheduling strategies, not just not going according to plan (two themes)?**

*Evidence:* Discussions, Surveys

**D1:** 1:00-2:55 - one TA talks about how if a student comes late, it can ruin the timing for all the students, even with a 5 minute buffer built in every 30 minutes

3:20 - 3:45 - another talks about due to zoom crashing, it caused a 15 minute delay which was handled ok since it was late in the day

3:45-4:45 - another talks about being people showing up and just doing their exams because they got a wrong link, so extra people not on the list showing up and still doing their exams when other people are not on time

5:30-6:00 - teacher mentioned for them only a few earlier in the week (3 for 1.5 hour slot), and filled up on the last day

11:00-11:18 some students had accommodations that would have allowed them to go beyond the 5 minute slots, which would have interfered with the other parts of the schedule (no accommodations needed though) **(Ask Justin)**

14:00-14:20 - TA mentions expect technical difficulties, expect it to take longer

**D3:** 11:30 - 12:20 - TA talks about having 2-4 people that had to reschedule for the next week, should have kept Friday open for rescheduled but didn’t this time, regretted it

12:20-12:35 - teacher also had some people miss without mentioning it

13:15 - 13:40 - One TA allowed Saturday, then people switched over

26:10 - 26:25, 26:45-26:56 - people missing still, having to reschedule and reschedule with them

26:00 - 27:45 - whole discussion about when to open up slots, creating multiple schedules, etc.

28:15 - 18:20 - rescheduling mentioned again

**Pre-Exam-Thoughts:** “The student’s scheduled slots being too spread out”, “Internet issues”

**After 1st oral exam: “**how to make everyone register and show up on time”

**After 2nd oral exam:** One TA had strong feelings about scheduling surrounding themselves, as in the oral exams were placed around exams, other projects, etc. It cut too much into their time.

One TA had students miss due to tech and others things, so now it’s extra time for them that has to be made up

“Students getting late or even missing”

When giving future advice, lots about scheduling. Getting in enough break time, but also making people show up on time, not doing it on Friday, all at once….different pieces of advice, all around scheduling

**3. Bias and equity**

**D1:** 7:00-7:40 - ambiguity in one question for (estimated from one TA) 75% of their students. They used data structure, but another TA used data type to deal with that question.

11:30 - 12:30 - asking about grading and how to grade a certain question, wanting a particular structure for the grades to be more accommodating **(follow up with Justin)**

**D2:** 10:15 - 11:00 - TA says “I want to give people partial credit”, got right answer vs prompting vs prompting and right answer, 20 point scale

11:30-12:00 - one TA rounded up, other said they asked extra question not on there so adjusting, “as long as you are internally consistent” the teacher said

12:20 - 12:45 - Maybe the questions were a bit too broad

14:30 - 14:40 - TA piggybacked and liked the idea of a 20 point scale to not give “too low grades”

15:05-15:25 - Discussion of the question about libraries ... .teacher would preface it saying there are two types of libraries, other TA said what type of library, which gave very different answers.

16:35 - 17:40 - TA mentioned one student wanted to do it in person because they are ESL, and it’s hard for them to understand the question clearly. Teacher worried about equity, or sharing the reading question in chat.

17:42 - 18:25 - another student was sick, so TA did an oral exam and a quiz during office hours in person. Teacher leaves it up to them, enforces make it similar to keep fairness

**D3:** 14:00-14:50 - one test question was written wrong or seemed unfair, so they talked about changing the points allotted to it

15:15-15:45 - TA talking about themselves and another TA and a question taking others a long time

21:50 - 22:05 - TA talks about how giving two exams seems fairer than one, since students seemed to feel, “much more comfortable” the second time.

28:55 - 29:35 - one TA feels like 5 minutes may not be enough for everyone, hard to rate every one well (rater fatigue the teacher says)

**Pre-Exam-Thoughts:** Worry Students may find grading too subjective

Also fear about themselves not being good graders, like, forgetting or poor memory, differentiating between different points on answers, bias from familiarity. One person mentioned too flexible of criteria

**After-First-Exam:** Someone mentioned perhaps adding more levels to better distinguish between student answers?

Gets noisy/confounded with nervousness/ speaking ability

**After 2nd exam:** eat snacks and schedule well to avoid bias from your mood (Israeli parole hearings study)

Comment about ESL students need more time, since this is not an english test

**4. Negative affect (related to themselves)**

**D2:** 12:10-12:15 - “I was losing my sanity (in a joking way) being on zoom for so long”

**D3:** 28:00 - 28:35 - One said they would do it in a smaller class, but if it were larger they would “not do this to themselves”

**After 1st oral exam:** “15 hours on zoom will drive me insane”

**“**It makes me very sad”

**After second exam:** Causes me undue suffering and misery (same person as before)

“It’s frustrating when students come in fully unprepared, it’s incredibly grueling administering 140 oral exams”

**5. Positive affect (with the students)**

**D3:** 28:00 - 28:35 - One said they would do it in a smaller class, but if it were larger they would “not do this to themselves”

**After 1st oral exam:** “I had fun!”

**After 2nd exam:** “I enjoyed getting to talk to my students”

**6. Views on Oral Exam vs normal test**

**After 1st oral exam:** “Not sure what this accomplishes over HW/ moodle quiz”, “Paper quiz could serve same goal”

**After 2nd exam:** Comments about potentially losing integrity or losing a closed book environment, and the ability to evaluate the knowledge “on command”

Discussion about how a moodle quiz could be made to be more like an oral exam, focus on a quiz requiring longer answers, free response.

Also worries about grading and being able to follow up versus not being able to in oral exam (only 2 TAs)

**7. Misc**

**D1:** 8:30 - 9:00 - one TA forgot to create blocks, and asked “How could I use the bathroom”?

**D3:** 18:35-18:55 - one TA mentioned hearing complaints but also people saying, spontaneously, “I really like this”

25:55 - 26:05 - some students were getting 0’s

**Background:**

Oral exams are given through zoom

**D1 ends oral exam talk at 28:00**

**D2 oral exam talk begins 7:50, end at 18:50**

**D3 oral exam begins at 11:00 end at 30:50**

**Previous concerns before administering the exams**

Time, having a good environment to administer them, students not staying within the schedule

**Questions**

What is moodle used for? - **grading, scheduling**

How long did it take to do them on average? - **Not sure, but we have estimates from 12.5-18 hours**

How was it graded?

What was it like in the moment?

Why do the TA’s think ya’ll are doing oral exams vs doing a moodle quiz or HW?

What were the class sizes? **80 I think?**

Was the oral exam graded in real time or not? Were things recorded or not?

**Challenges**

Technology can fail. (mentioned in way more than just the places I listed)

**D2:** 14:01-14:25

**PM1** Mention tech issues as continuing concerns

Teaching the TA’s how to administer the exams and use the technology associated with it

Mixing up links and exams, etc.

Not getting people in on the time they signed up for (falling behind)

Doing it within the 20 hours

(**D1:** Someone mentioned it took 12-12.5 hours that week)

**PM1:** Respondent 2 said it took 15 hrs (drove them crazy being on zoom that long)

**D3:** Having to block out time, vs being able to do it whenever (though some like blocked out time)....

The Oral exam itself may not be perfect (like most first time tests

**D1:** 6:50 - 7:40

had to elaborate what R object meant to around 75%, other TA agrees,

25:55-26:45 one TA had almost every person get hung up on the answer to the PROC SORT question, even with follow up questions)

**D2:** 12:15-12:40 Another TA felt the questions might be to broad so the student wasn’t exactly sure how to answer them

**D2:** 11:44-11:55, 14:30-14:40 - suggestions for 20 point scale to give partial credit for partial answers or eventually correct answers to assign (is this good or bad?)

Subjectiveness of grading?? **D2: 11:44-** TA wanted to give half credit, would round up since the scale at the time didn’t allow for that. Talks of how different people would grade…..training maybe needed? **Doesn’t seem to solve another fundamental problem of grading, that the grade is not an objective measure but depends on the teacher. Depends on the questions asked, follow up, etc. Standardized between TA’s?**

**PM2:** Trying to not let food bias you….really, fairness across exams, loss of subjectivity

**D3:** They talk about some test questions being hard, not being answered….again, that’s any test you administer

**D3:** Timing in HW not giving enough time for relearning for test….too much, too little time

**D3:** Oral exam not doing what it was supposed to be doing (students still not responding, vague, not prepared, frustrated when they got 0)

Experience of TAs

Using the bathroom haha **D1:** 8:30 - 8:35

**D1:** 10:40-10:50 People joining the meetings when they see an open spot signing up in the moment, not ahead of time

**D3:** Getting a snack, standing up, walking around, having a break, etc.

Scheduling **D1:** 23:55-24:10 (wishing the exam wasn’t right right after HW, grading for TA’s, etc.)

Student Behavior **D2:** 7:25-8:00 students being terse or upset about things not happening on time

Not immediate feedback was confusing?: **D2:** 16:10-16:17 Justin says this, what does he mean?

Student accommodations:

Not being able to understand it through zoom, preferring it in person etc. **D2:** 16:45-18:00. Is it fair if all the other students are doing it through zoom?

**PM1** May be harder for those who are very nervous or not confident in their English-speaking abilities, equitable in this regard? Probably not, though not unlike exams on paper, but with added speaking components……

**PM2** Also mentioned about second language english students need some more help, and they suggest more time for them

TA’s not being sure of the purpose or what this accomplishes over a normal exam. 2 TA’s expressed this **PM1**

TA’s being worried about their own workload/schedules **PM1**

**Mentioned Solutions**

We can see that having a debriefing meeting

**D1:** 9:45-10:05 - position yourself by bathroom, ask for the student to wait or choose a different time, etc.

**D1:** 10:45-10:55 - Adding guard times (how do you do that? How does that work with different software)?

**D2:** 12:50-13:10 - Anticipating a range of student solutions, and creating better follow up questions

**D2:** 17:00-18:00 - Solution to not understanding, or being sick, or not feeling up to the oral part is using the chat feature instead, or as similar as possible in person experience, but Justin also says we can say no to in person. Address concern, give solution.

**D3:** 13:10-13:45 - Allowing for tests on Saturdays….which one TA liked, but only this one

**Solutions in general**

Need to have a team, what would we recommend? How many TA’s per student?

What about their backgrounds?

Need to give the TA’s time to do so with their already big work load

**Oral Exam Advantages**

**D1:** 6:50 - 7:40 - Ambiguity in what an R Object was was actually sidestepped by the TA being able to offer alternative explanations or clarify the question (measuring what they know versus how well they can interpret the question and then what they know. Real world is like this)

Takes less time

**Other thoughts**

With the recordings I can hear Justin really well, but the other TA’s can be hard to hear. What is the recording set up?

**Potential questions**

How long does it take them to do the exams? I feel like we don’t need an exact answer, and this could be asked in the discussion itself.

If we are trying to ask questions with the intent of helping others potentially scale up oral exams, what would they need to know?

**Post Second Oral Exams**

*Moodle quiz vs oral exam?*

They used words like integrity, closed vs open book, knowledge on command, I think indicating that they believed one difference was that it was whether they had access to other information or not, closed vs open book.

They also talked about it being similar to a free response question quiz, but two noted that they allow for follow up, being more lenient in this way and getting a better understanding of what students are actually saying.

*Positives?*

These were all different, so no common consistent positive thing. Not everyone had something positive to say.

*Negatives?*

Everyone had something negative to say, and there were commonalities.

The number one thing was the time. One person said, “Overall, very time consuming”. Another said, “Extremely time inefficient for TAs”. Another, “It’s incredibly grueling to administer 140 oral exams, even spaced well across multiple days…..you can’t snack or use the restroom or walk around.” Another one said they felt, “quite literally drained after having to endure…..18 hours of a zoom meeting…”

Another was issues caused by the students missing exams or having to reschedule due to technical issues. One person mentioned students missing due to technical issues, and because it’s later in the week you have to schedule make up exams. Another person said almost the same thing, with tech issues with students.

*TA Affect*

Throughout TAs used words like “incredibly greuling”, “literally drained”, “literal attrition”, causes the TA “undue suffering and misery”, and other things mentioned on this page.

Positive affect? Enjoying talking with the students, but that wasn’t related to them feeling good….centered on students feeling better, doing better, and getting to know them (just one TA)....

*Advice for future TAs?*

The number one theme was scheduling. Recommending how to space out the days, not scheduling on certain days, make-ups, timing, and breaks.

**Big Questions**

With the way this was scaled up, did we lose what an oral exam was trying to accomplish?

Where were the biggest concerns and challenges?

What would we need to do differently to make this work?

Are there recommendations for doing something similar (at scale?)?

What are the grades like this semester versus the previous? Did the oral exam really do better in terms of showcasing student understanding and grading that?

**Round two: Listening to recordings again**

* Goals: contextualizing not just what was said but why.
* Listening for potentially more positive things
* Also, challenges beyond time and solutions

**D1:**

“What advice would you give to others doing the oral discussion”

00:20 – talking about recording and downloading videos, and cloud working for one TA, testing it

00:50 – uploading to google drive afterwards

Student lateness…..5 minute break for each 30 min suggested…..was not done I guess

Zoom crashing, 15 min late…..maybe an hour

Maybe far behind….people sneaking in…..people waiting…

Links were mixed up

Perpetually 2-3 min behind, but not too bad, no one too mad

(suggestion to add extra time slots, make them longer)

Q: “Was time commitment good (within 20 hours) or do you feel like it was ridiculous?”

Said it wasn’t ridiculous, lots of emails in some days, 12 hours within 20 hours

Q: What kind of R object was blank. TA asked

“What is R object”? – data structure vs data type

Q: “Any other thoughts about oral exam? Any questions from 307 people”?

Someone asked I didn’t delete blocks…..how do you handle a bathroom break?

My body just waited for me, or…didn’t think about it

Some people take faster times, so you can do it then

Go before you get into the stuff!

Get yourself near a bathroom

Maybe ask a student to move to a different time

Students are pretty chill

Justin added a guard time…add guard time where you can so people can’t just join

It went good

*Talking about grades*

11:50 – 12:10 Gave full marks on one quesiton (one TA)….might make grade distribution less painful…

Talk about grades……next week 12:30

Talking about averages….12:47

Differences in questions for rubric…..

Releasing grades, how to in moodle?

You should expect people to have technical difficulties

Technical details on emailing students, notifying them, grading

Q: “how did we deal with the zoom recording?”

One guy turned it on and off

No worries about individualized recordings is the advice they got. Just keep camera on

Resending script for SAS?

How to unhide oral feedback on moodle….

Logistics with grades in moodle

23:25: Q- “Anything about the oral exams you want to talk about?”

Nothing

25:15 – “Q: Anything with 307?”

From doing the oral exams this morning…

Some options felt harder than others, like question 2

Almost everyone didn’t get question 2

Q: Prompt with follow up?

Yeah, but they still got stuck

Maybe add more follow up? Try to be consistent! Make plan (from Justin)

**D2:**

They started taking the exam survey first!

Make sure you’re available (from student). Emails from students

Q: 307 who gave oral exams, anything you want to talk about, maybe paraphrase what you wrote about?

I want to give people partial credit/ 20 point scale

On 2 point questions.

Prompting vs no prompting, answer versus not

Q: Do ya’ll wish you had a more refined scale?

One TA is not too worried…

Looking at average….10 out of 12. 85%

Rounding up for people if they got half credit

Justin (as long as you are consistent)

Ryan, one, I’m losing my sanity..

But maybe questions are too broad in some case?

Follow up prompts to be consistent with, thinking about how students would answer (Justin)

Purpose of R markdown

Maybe more open ended floundered, meandered, etc.

Another TA feeling like not behind 5 minutes….

Q: Any other feedback? Ask another TA?

Maybe 20 point scale would be better

Lots of people lingering around some broad questions as well like Ryan

Justin (Getting better follow up questions)

Q: Any other issues with your classes?

Was rubric for oral exam given beforehand?

Some people saying not knowing how to be graded…Ryan

Student confusion with not getting immediate feedback

Oral exam, one student, discussion in person

What reason?

ESL

Concern about equity (Justin), maybe them reading the question, or something

Keeping uniformity

DRO example, did someone’s oral exam during office hours

Address concerns

**D3:**

Began with the survey!

Q: “Anything you guys want to bring up about the oral exams?”

2-4 students need to do make ups

“I wish I hadn’t done scheduling for Friday”

Justin 3 people missed, didn’t say anything

Scheduled Saturday Times, scores on Saturday much worse

Seemed like more people were more comfortable, even with harder content

Maybe studying harder

For one TA, they did not do better

Changing how much one question was worth

Q:0 points on 1 part b?

I asked them……maybe dropping points

Q: 308?

Second question difficult, maybe change?

Another TA, not much different the second time around, based on average grade

Can we offer class eval credit? No

Sending out stuff to get student evaluations

I had a couple people tell me they liked the oral exam format

19:10 Q: Do you think you’d do Oral exams? Outside of a class taught by me?

No

I think it takes more time than HW

Also the type of time, I have lots of time to grade, more flexible

Another TA felt the opposite

One drawback with oral exam, missing instructional time

HW before, people missing HW by not sticking around

But (justin) they’re adults

Grading both oral exam and grades at once hard…

Same stuff on HW wrong and on Test, need time for them to do the HW

People more comfortable on second exam….

Also, it would be great if the ICA’s incorporated more practice with oral exams or explanations

TA agrees it would be great practicing talking….but hard to do

Maybe adapting to show how to turn R markdown into presentations for Business students, would be hard (also practice)

Q: yuka, would you do an oral exam in future class

It’s like another version of a HW or quiz. I don’t think it’s that bad

Q: Grading time wise with HW?

This TA preferred HW, more flexible

Q: What about you? Another person?

Sure

I have some students who would get 0 points

Frustrating there, and rescheduling people not showing up

Maybe having a better structure for rescheduling?

Another TA said they would use this with a smaller class size

TA likes to be able to get up and walk around, get a snack, and not be on zoom

Easier with 40 people, 20 people. But if it were just me, 120, I would not do this to myself

Many people felt like 5 minutes was not enough, maybe change time?

Rater fatigue (hard to control consistency over time)

Some people will try to answer in a vague way to get extra credit…..some people just reading code. Follow up more details, but then they just repeat it.

Chain, it checks percentage? Are they just using computer? Oral exam lets the TAs see those issues.

**Looking at surveys round 2 (looking at context and the questions being asked especially, noticing differences in the two data sources as well)**

*Pre-Survey*

Q: What concerns do you have logistically for giving oral exams via zoom?

Timeframe, the ability to stay upbeat enough to administer a large number of them back-to-back-to-back.

The students scheduled slot are too spread out

Keeping roommates at bay/background noise control

Time and internet issues

"1.) Students may go over time allotted.

2.) Students may disagree with judgment about grade, and if it's a bit subjective, how do we make them feel like that's fair?"

Interactive

Q: What concerns do you have about grading an oral exam via zoom?

Forgetting something someone says, difficulty with asking "follow-ups" to try and gear/pry the right answer.

The criteria could be too flexible.

Bias based on familiarity with students

Poor memory

"1.) Student answers may not fit easily into specific bins for grading.

1b.) How to differentiate between a 2-3-4 pt answer?"

NA

*Post Oral exam 1 survey*

Q: On a scale of 1 (very poorly) to 10 (very smoothly), how do you think the administration of the exam went? That is, consider the mechanics of the exam here (Moodle scheduler, use of Zoom, use of the Moodle rubric).

8

8

8

6

10

9

Q: Please provide any detail to the above question about oral exam administration here.

BLANK

Took way too long

Very smooth - could be improved with slightly longer time periods (so if TA builds in more breaks) and I would like bigger point scale (more ability to give partial credit).

"When splitting the students into two groups on Moodle, some still somehow accessed the right calendar but the wrong Zoom link, Zoom refused to do the waiting room correctly

I think of myself as technologically literate but the oral exams have challenged that conception"

moodle, zoom all goes well

Scheduler and Zoom things went well. Sometimes it is a little bit hard to determine which level it should be.

Q: Do you think the grading of the exams was fair to the students? If not, why and how could it be improved?

Overall, yes -- the "harsh" penalties are avoidable if students prepare, as the questions were relatively straightforward.

Maybe not clear what answer is expected. Questions are too broad compared to the expected answer.

It was fair, but as above: I want to be able to assign partial credit to distinguish between correct answers that took a lot of poking and correct answers without poking.

I think grading was mostly fair, though I perhaps was also more lenient

not sure, seems some students expect to see the example code in my second day.

Maybe not. Some behaviors of different levels have to be divided into the same level for the rubric. Maybe we can add more levels?

Q: Logistically, do you have any concerns about giving the second oral exam?

Being awake (with other exams that week)!

Time concerns mostly. 15 hours on Zoom will drive me insane.

None! I hope we have a surprise code on it though, one they haven't seen before.

Zoom failing to do waiting rooms mostly

how to make everyone register and show up on time

NA

Q: On a scale of 1 (very poor) to 10 (very useful), how would you rate the use of the oral exam generally?

8

2

9

6

8

9

Q: Do you have any other thoughts about oral exams? Please share them here!

BLANK

It made me very sad.

I had fun! Not sure if my students had fun.

Mostly just reinforced ideas that I was already getting from both the homeworks and seeing students in class in regard to their uptake of material

feel like a paper quiz can serve the same goal

BLANK

*Post Oral Exam 2 Survey*

Q: After the first oral exam, a few people commented that a moodle quiz would have accomplished the same thing. Do you agree or disagree with this?

It's Complicated

Disagree

It's Complicated

It's Complicated

Disagree

Disagree

Q: Please explain your answer to the previous question about the utility of an oral exam vs a normal quiz.

You could certainly \*make\* the Oral Exam a Moodle quiz, but you lose the integrity that comes with a closed-door, 1:1 environment.

If our goal is to evaluate how well students can produce knowledge "on command" then Moodle quizzes with full access to notes and sufficient time don't well encapsulate that. A Moodle quiz with questions requiring longer answers than just regurgitation of use-cases may be able to capture that to some degree but may end up measuring something different instead.

oral exam give harder questions. but if we can grade moodle quiz by human I guess they are the same. then the only difference is close book or not.

Causes TAs (me) undue suffering and misery

The oral exam tests whether you're able to explain the topics we cover in class, which a quiz doesn't do. \*Maybe\* if a quiz were free response, this would be similar to an oral exam, but less lenient than an oral exam - in an oral exam, if a student says something confusing, they can still get points for correcting course.

More follow-up things, easier to know how deep students understand questions

Q: What positive things (if any) about the oral exam experience can you share?

The Oral Exam experience was nice in the sense that students who clearly knew the material were able to showcase this understanding, while highlighting areas in which others need to improve.

"One student had no clue what the %>% was (answer to the tune of ""checks if the % is greater than""), so we are catching what we want to. Did fine on other questions, though.

Two students independently told me they really like the oral exam format.

Students were noticeably more confident, comfortable on the second oral exam."

BLANK

BLANK

I enjoyed getting to talk to my students, and I feel like it's made us more comfortable with each other. I think they're also getting a little more comfortable speaking in programming lingo. I also thought it was a very fast and effective way to see who knows what's going on in the class and who isn't with us at all.

Enough break time to face unexpected problems

Q: What negative things (if any) about the oral exam experience can you share?

"Scheduling, scheduling, scheduling.

In both cases, Oral Exams have predated major exams that \*I\* sit. I do not enjoy lackluster preparation because I am quite literally drained after having to endure, most recently, 18 hours of a Zoom meeting because I had to accommodate for inevitable tech issues. This has already manifested itself in the first exam round, where I had 701 and 703 exams and homework assignments during and directly following oral exams; as for this week, I now also have two exams (558,701) directly following my oral exams. Combine this with grading, projects, homeworks, etc., and it is a lose-lose-lose for my students, my instructors, and me because it is literal attrition.

To solve these types of issues:

- Graders that jointly serve both classes, if we could get any? I know a 1-credit hour course is lower-priority for receiving gradersâ€¦ but it might make a difference!

- More autonomy in scheduling â€” it was as simple as telling students â€œdonâ€™t study vectors for the oral examâ€ this time around, i.e. modifying what wouldâ€™ve been last weekâ€™s lecture to address jointly the oral exam and new content not covered. This, seriously, would help my and other first-year instructors mental health. We were told â€œfirst-year TAs generally have lower workloads than senior TAsâ€ in an offer letter, yet it feels like that is ignored altogether in my case, whereas other instructors/first-years are not reporting the same level of issue."

A couple of students missed their appointments just due to misrecording when they were. A couple more missed their appointments for good reasons. These happening late in the week unfortunately means I need to try to do make-ups this week.

some people get zero points. overall, very time consuming.

"Extremely time inefficient for TAs.

Figuring out what students are saying is like squeezing water out of a stone."

It's frustrating when a student comes in fully unprepared. It's incredibly grueling to administer 140 oral exams, even spaced well across multiple days. Even though it takes about as much time as grading homework, you are fully occupied for that whole time - you can't snack or use the restroom or walk around if you're getting sore from sitting.

Students getting late or even missing

Q: Finally, what pieces of advice would you give to future TAs administering oral exams for 307/308 next semester?

In my experience, a few days of constant exams is better than having hours each day! :)

"If possible, avoid scheduling any time Friday so that you can make time then for any necessary make-ups and so avoid having to do make-ups the week after if someone flakes Friday.

A study of Israeli parole hearings found parole was much less likely to be granted if the hearing was just before lunch. Avoid bias caused by time-of-day if possible with snacks or clever scheduling and you will find it easier to be fair across exams."

try to make everyone schedule and show up on time. otherwise, you would have lots of 5-min meeting standing spread in your calendar.

Don't prompt too much, if student doesn't have a clear answer then move on (to save mental anguish)

I would encourage future TAs to get their students talking about R or SAS first thing in the semester and enforce the vocabulary. So many of my students are averse to using the correct terminology - some are still saying "variable" when they mean "observation", so it's hard to figure out what they mean. Also, build in more than a 5 minute break every 30 minutes - I think 10 minutes per 30 minutes is about right. Otherwise, your appointments will run over and you'll need to use your break to get back on time. (Or maybe schedule 6 minute appointments?)

Enough break time, reschedule if too late and there being following students

Q: Anything else? Write it down here!

"If the oral exam format goes unchanged, I am unsure if I am fit to be an instructor next semester. I will have a \*harder\* schedule in 702,704,705, and really donâ€™t see anything besides what has happened thus far in this semester happening if we donâ€™t adjust.

"

"While I am tempted by the idea of one oral exam (would provide separation from our own exam/crunch periods which is nice), how much more comfortable people were on the second round cannot be ignored. If only we could have one oral exam and it somehow be their second oral exam haha.

Also, having office hour days as Monday and Thursday rather than Monday and Tuesday may improve students' ability to seek help through OH as Tuesday OH tend to be dead as students have turned in assignments the night before and generally have not begun to consider next assignments yet."

BLANK

Students who speak English as a second language occasionally needed a bit more time - I think it should be explicitly allowed that they can have more time, since this isn't intended to be an English test.

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