

SFU

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION, ART, AND TECHNOLOGY

**TEACHING ASSISTANT  
FUNDAMENTALS  
WORKSHOP SERIES**



SCHOOL OF INTERACTIVE  
ARTS + TECHNOLOGY

how can I  
be a **better  
teacher?**

what are the  
**tricks of the  
trade?**

how can I easily  
organize course workflow  
and technologies?

we're  
listening

We've heard your feedback! Teaching Assistants at SIAT have expressed a strong desire for stronger professional development opportunities. The Fundamentals Workshop Series has been designed to help answer these questions.

These seven workshops, designed specifically for TAs, aim to help you learn and practice essential skills in topics such as:

- marking
- teaching software skills
- leading effective class discussions
- dealing with conflict, and more.

The Fundamentals program is based on extensive input from SIAT grad students, TAs and instructors and will provide a learning environment uniquely focused on teaching in the SIAT context. Each workshop will cover an essential teaching or course management strategy, and will provide opportunities to learn from and interact with peer TAs, SIAT faculty and learning support specialists from the Learning and Instructional Development Centre (LIDC) at SFU.

Priority registration will be given to SIAT graduate students and to individuals with SIAT Teaching Assistant positions in the Fall 2009 semester. If space is available others may register. Online registration for priority registrants will be available starting August 4 at <http://websurvey.sfu.ca/survey/41121379>. After August 24th, others may register depending on space availability. Registered participants will receive reminder emails one week in advance of each session with instructions on location, time, and what to bring.

This program is free. We encourage all participants to attend the full program or select those sessions that are most relevant to them. Participants who attend the full program will receive a certificate of accomplishment to recognize program completion.

If you have been hired for a Fall SIAT TA position you will have up to 6 hours of paid professional development time built into to your TA position as per Article XXV:N(1) of the TSSU Collective Agreement. If you do not attend the Fundamentals Program those hours may be applied to other instructional support activities assigned by the course supervisor. All other hours attending the program are unpaid and by personal choice.

People with TA positions in other departments should consult with the department manager and course supervisor for their position to discuss use of position hours to attend the program.

## Start your course off on the right foot

**September 2**  
12:30pm-4:30pm

### Start your course off on the right foot

Topics covered during this part of the workshop include a review of TA administrative resources such as the Time Use Guidelines, communicating expectations to students, interpreting the TSSU collective agreement, and running office hours. We also want to hear from you! You'll have an opportunity to provide input on the design for the rest of the workshop series.

### Introduction to TechBytes

How can TechBytes assist you and your students? You will learn what TechBytes is all about, including common FTP problems, undergraduate accounts, and more.

### Academic Integrity

After a brief overview of academic integrity, participants will learn how to identify instances of cheating and plagiarism. An experienced TA or faculty member will discuss SIAT's procedures and resources available to deal with academic integrity issues. We will also cover how best to communicate with students once plagiarism or cheating has been identified.

### Communication Skills 1

How can you better communicate important concepts to students? What can you do to grab and maintain students' attention? This session focuses on engaging students, refining your presentation skills, and improving vocal projection, clarity, and variety.

## Computer Labs, Software, and Discussions

**September 9**  
12:30pm-2:30pm

### Running Labs

Topics covered in the workshop may include strategies on running a lab course smoothly, how to structure your time and keeping your lab on task.

### Teaching Software

Are there any really good ways to teach software to students? This session will cover how to keep students on task, getting out from behind the computer and keeping students interested and working.

### Leading Discussions

How do you get what you want from in class discussions? This workshop will cover topics such as preparing for class discussions, getting students talking, keeping students on topic, and facilitating the discussion.

## Marking Strategies

**September 16**

12:30pm-2:30pm

### Marking Rubrics

A rubric is a grading tool that benefits both students and TAs because it can help clarify instructor expectations, promote consistent grading, facilitate the marking process, and provide clear indication of areas for improvement. Activities in this session will offer strategies for marking consistently and quickly, in both qualitative and quantitative contexts. Examples of common rubrics will be provided.

### Providing Oral Critiques

How do you communicate areas for improvement to students without crushing their spirit? This session will provide some tips on words and phrases that focus on the work, on areas for improvement, and on strengths.

### Providing Written Feedback

Feedback is an important communication tool between TA and student. Poorly written feedback can confuse a student and stall progress. This session focuses on developing your “voice” for giving written feedback, using examples of both directive and facilitative comments. We will also cover tips for clarifying what outcomes you expect the student to improve as a result of your feedback.

## First Month Check In

**September 23**

12:30pm-2:30pm

- This session will provide you an opportunity to bring your questions, concerns and ideas to the table. Discuss common issues with peer TAs and with faculty members. You will also be introduced to marking spreadsheets and using WebCT for grading.

## Communication Skills 2

**October 7**  
12:30pm-2:30pm

### Working with Language Barriers

It is common for persons facing language barriers to experience decreased motivation due to misunderstandings. What kind of issues do students face as a result of language differences? This session will focus on awareness building of basic literacy issues (such as accents, common English phrases, and cultural differences reflected in language) and how to overcome them.

### Dealing with and Preventing Conflict

You will occasionally come across students who resist learning in various passive or even aggressive ways (such as sleeping, eating loudly, or arguing with you). This negativity, if not dealt with, can grow and spread throughout the semester. This workshop will help prepare you to address common issues before they arise.

## Wrapping up the Course

**October 21**  
12:30pm-2:30pm

### Term End Communication and Marking

End of semester is a busy time for students and for TAs. This session will provide you with effective tips on communicating end of term requirements to students.

### Open Discussion

This session will be similar to the one-month check in on September 23. Bring any concerns or questions you have collected throughout the semester so far. Discussions will be led by peer TA's and faculty. Special topics to be determined through participant surveys earlier in the semester.

## Special topics to be determined

**November 4**  
12:30pm-2:30pm

- As needs arise, we may provide additional topics on this date. To be announced at a later date.

**what  
now?**

- Sign up online: <http://websurvey.sfu.ca/survey/41121379>.
- Priority will be given to SIAT Teaching Assistants' until August 24th. After this, others may register depending on space availability.
- Let us know what you think during the sessions so we can keep them fresh.

Please note: Topics are subject to some amount of change depending on your feedback, and speaker feedback.