

Performance Guidelines for Teaching Assistants

We would like to thank you for your generous help, and hope that your role as a Teaching Assistant will be a rewarding experience. The evaluations we receive from course participants repeatedly confirm how important your help is to their learning process - your time, energy and expertise, as representatives of the Barral Institute, are greatly appreciated.

To make the courses successful and enjoyable for all concerned, we kindly request that all TAs observe the following instructions carefully. The objective is always to create a safe, supportive environment for each student's growth and education. Respecting and supporting the students' learning experience, other teaching assistants and all seminar staff while maintaining clear and professional boundaries is paramount. Remember, we are working as a team. The better the assistants and teacher work as a unit, the better the class will run.

1. Please be ready to meet with the course instructor and course facilitator before class starts on the first morning of the course for any necessary instructions. Bear in mind that the instructor is in charge of the class itself whereas the facilitator is responsible for the overall organization of the course. In addition, it would be valuable to mingle with course participants during registration on the first morning. TAs should be available to meet with the instructor at the end of the day, as needed.
2. Be on time each day - it is disturbing for the instructor and students to have people enter the room after the lecture has begun.
 1. Please do not carry on side conversations during lectures or labs - it is too distracting for everyone.
 2. Avoid treating other TAs (or any other person) at the back of the room any time during the course.
 3. Although there is no strict dress code, please keep in mind that you are representing the Barral Institute - dress comfortably and professionally.
 4. Be aware of personal hygiene. Occasionally, participants have commented on offensive body odors (it might be a good idea to have mints handy, especially after lunch).
 5. If you need to go out of the room, please do so either during breaks or when the instructor is giving lectures, this way you will be available during labs, when students may need your help.

3. Observe and circulate as much as possible during class in order to meet students' needs as they arise - TAs should be able to anticipate and respond to students' requests. Please refrain from standing in a group at the back of the room, talking or treating each other.
 1. Please be prepared at the end of the day to give feedback in a brief group meeting with the instructor.
 2. Kindly take note during class of exceptional students or students who are lagging behind with regards to general concepts or palpations skills.
4. When working with students, make sure to use the same hand positions which were demonstrated by the instructor - variations tend to confuse rather than help. If you have a different opinion from the instructor, please discuss this privately during a break as it is disruptive to debate techniques during a lecture or in front of the class.
 1. You may use analogies to demonstrate techniques but remembers that the function of the TA is not to repeat the instructor's lecture; rather your role is to clarify and assist with palpation skills.
 2. You may demonstrate with your hands over their hands, with your hands on their body, or with your hands in the air.
 3. Actions speak louder than words - sometimes too many words are a distraction from actually getting on with the lab itself.
 4. There is seldom the need to spend more than a few minutes at each table at any time. It is important to remind yourself that you are there to assist, not to treat.
 5. Be aware of the goal of the lab and its length - students will need to take turns practicing palpation skills on each other within the time allocated for each lab.
5. The most important thing to remember is that if you have your hands on a student during a practice session for more than a couple of minutes, you are TREATING, not TRAINING. This ends up being a disservice to the students at that table. Remember that positive reinforcement is essential: **PRAISE is the best learning motivator**. Emphasize what students are doing correctly and when they have got it right.
 1. We must request that you DO NOT TREAT participants at any time during the course. You MUST abide by this rule for liability reasons.
 2. At all times during a course, we ask that you keep techniques to those being taught.
6. If you find yourself answering the same question repeatedly, please tell the instructor so it can be addressed with the whole class. This also applies when you see several participants having difficulty with a particular technique.

7. When there is an odd number of students in the class, you may be called upon by the instructor to act as a "partner" for one of the participants - kindly do so when needed but make sure to alternate with other TAs.
8. If you have suggestions about the venue, or ideas about books, audiovisuals or other products and materials, please let the facilitator know.
9. We appreciate having written evaluations from you after each class - please kindly fill in the forms provided and hand them in to the course facilitator.
10. You are entitled to a 15% discount on most products bought from the facilitator's table.
11. You will also be evaluated by the teacher, participants, facilitator and fellow TAs. These evaluations will be used to determine your progression as a TA.

The score scale is:

5=excellent; 4=very good; 3=good; 2=fair; 1=poor.

Evaluation scores are averaged. To progress as an assistant, you need an average score of 4.0 or better from the teacher, participant and facilitator evaluations. To become a certified teaching assistant, you will need average scores of 4.5 or better from the participant evaluations and 4.0 or better from the teacher, TA and facilitator evaluations from each TA assignment. TA certification status will be reviewed annually.

1. If you would like to qualify to assist additional levels in the curriculum, please inform the instructor so that you may be evaluated during the course.
2. If you would like to start a study group in your area, please inform the instructor so that he or she can review your skills and provide feedback.

Thank you once again for helping us ensure that every course from the Barral Institute provides the best quality of learning experience for all participants.