

Biology Teaching Assistant Teaching Awards

Teaching Assistants are vital to the success of undergraduates in the Biology Program. In both large and small classes, graduate students play a key role in effective instruction, and the smooth operation of the course. In order to recognize the important role that Teaching Assistants play in the Biology Program, the Departments of Botany and Zoology are proud to offer an annual award for excellence in graduate student teaching. This award consists of a cash prize of \$500 for the winner, and certificates of recognition for the winner and honourable mentions. In the past, there have usually been two Honourable Mentions, in addition to the prize Winner.

1. Eligibility

The award is open to any Graduate or Undergraduate Teaching Assistant from any department who has TA'ed a BIOL course during the current, and/or the preceding academic year (*e.g.* 2019W1, 2019W2, 2020Summer, 2020W1, or 2020W2).

Previous/past winners of the Science Graduate Teaching Assistant Teaching Award and of the Biology Teaching Assistants Teaching Award are not eligible. However, those who were nominated, but did not win, are eligible for this award.

2. Nomination Process

Nominations are encouraged from teaching supervisors of Teaching Assistants (this includes faculty, contract faculty, sessional lecturers, staff or other appropriate instructional team members), from colleagues working closely with the nominee, and from the students who attended the nominee's class or laboratory.

While teaching Assistants may not nominate themselves, they are encouraged to discuss their contributions to teaching with an appropriate teaching supervisor or colleague if they feel that they may qualify.

The first step is for the nominator to notify both the Teaching Assistant and their teaching supervisor of the nomination. The Nominator is also expected to write a 1-page Letter of Support for the Nomination Package.

Once a nomination has been secured, the nominated Teaching Assistant must put together an application package. Since this is an important step in the professional development of the Teaching

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Assistant, it is strongly encouraged that the nominator, or another appropriate interested party, advise on the development of the application package, especially if the Teaching Assistant has no prior experience with this process.

Nomination Packages, 7-10 pages maximum, must reflect the judging criteria (See Appendix I) and include supporting documentation (See Point 4, below).

Nomination deadline for 2021: all nomination packages must be submitted to the 2021 committee chair (kalas@zoology.ubc.ca) no later than Wednesday, April 14, 11:59 pm.

3. Adjudication process

A committee will be struck by the chair of the committee for the previous year before the submission of nominations from departments. This year's committee will consist of three faculty members (Charissa Fung, Pam Kalas, and Stella Lee) and 1-2 Teaching Assistants who are recognized as effective teachers and/or are recent teaching award winners in the faculty. The enclosed criteria will be used by committees to determine nominees' effectiveness.

4. Application Package

Application Packages, 7-10 pages maximum, must include the required supporting documentation listed below and reflect the criteria outlined in Appendix I.

I. Supporting documentation - REQUIRED

1. **One Letter of Support** from the faculty, staff, colleague or student who wishes to nominate the Teaching Assistant. This should be no longer than one page, and be formatted as a formal letter. Letters should highlight why the Teaching Assistant deserves this award, and how the Teaching Assistant's work reflects the criteria for the award set out in Appendix I.

One additional Letter of Support may be included, but is not required. It should follow the same criteria.

2. **A 1-2 page Teaching CV** that includes:

- the TA's department and lab affiliations (undergraduate TAs: program affiliation), including their email address (so we can contact them about the results of the competition);

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- a summary of teaching roles & responsibilities in the Biology Program from the past two academic years, including number of students, type of teaching undertaken, hours per week in the classroom (or other duties, as applicable) and a brief description (1 paragraph) of the role of the TA in each of the courses.
- 3. A 1 page Teaching Philosophy.** This is a statement of the candidate's values and assumptions about teaching and learning in higher education, and how they apply these values and assumptions in their teaching. Appendix II lists some helpful resources for developing a teaching philosophy statement.
- 4. Summary of formal feedback from students, colleagues and/or supervisors** (no more than 3 pages in total). This may include:
- Official Faculty of Science Teaching evaluations, including scores (out of 5). Direct scans of evaluations forms received in the past 12 months are welcome.
 - Evaluations (formal or informal) from teaching faculty, colleagues and/ or peers. Direct scans of forms are welcome.
 - Additional informal feedback related to a particular event or speaking to a specific characteristic highlighted in the Teaching Philosophy

II. **Additional supporting information (may be included as appropriate)**

- Further evidence of interest and involvement in teaching and learning; for example, participation in seminars, workshops or programs that focus on teaching and learning, or involvement in departmental or other University committees which examine teaching and learning issues;
- description of a recent instructional challenge that was faced by the Teaching Assistant, and how the Teaching Assistant met this challenge; any other additional work that the Teaching Assistant is involved with, which does not fall into any other category, but is considered to be central to the reasons why this award is merited (i.e. curriculum development, additional coordination duties, *etc*).

Please note: the ENTIRE package must be no more than 7-10 pages. Longer applications will not be considered. It must be in an electronic format (Single .pdf files are preferred).

APPENDIX I

EFFECTIVE TEACHING CRITERIA for the Biology Teaching Assistant Teaching Award

Successful candidates will have demonstrated skills, abilities and contributions that result in a high level of respect from their students and academic or course supervisors, in several of the following areas:

1. Demonstrates a broad knowledge of the field, and the ability to help students actively learn new knowledge, skills and perspectives, evidenced by student/supervisor feedback. For example:
 - a. explains facts or information clearly and logically;
 - b. is enthusiastic about biology and conveys this to students;
 - c. organizes effective presentations, fieldwork or discussion groups that maximize student learning;
 - d. constructively evaluates student presentations and other work;
 - e. actively helps students to learn transferable skills such as oral and verbal communication, problem solving, critical thinking, numeracy, teamwork, leadership
2. Shows evidence of working in a collegial manner with students, faculty supervisors and Teaching Assistant colleagues:
 - a. works with other graduate students or faculty to improve the learning environment for students;
 - b. demonstrates rapport with and support of undergraduate students through active listening strategies and actions;
 - c. encourages student collaboration through group projects and presentations.
3. Shows evidence of incorporating new teaching skills learned through workshops, seminars and/or self-directed learning.
4. Shows evidence of reflection and action on personal and professional development needs within the scope of the Teaching Assistantship.
5. Acts as a role model, demonstrating high academic standards, good listening skills and ethics, such as:
 - a. demonstrates reliability and availability within the scope of the TA job description;
 - b. encourages and supports diversity and equity within and beyond the classroom;
 - c. returns assignments quickly, with useful constructive feedback (oral and/or written);

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- d. is involved in community service (for example, involvement in science fairs, open houses, science outreach, undergraduate/graduate events);
- e. initiates actions which help to make the classroom a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

APPENDIX II

SELECTED RESOURCES to support applicants in the development of their Teaching Philosophy statement

The following resources and resource hubs can be extremely helpful in developing or refining one's Teaching Philosophy statement:

- Teaching Philosophy Statement resources from UBC CTLT:
<https://ctl.t.ubc.ca/resources/teaching/portfolios/>
- Teaching Perspectives Inventory (discover your unique blend of teaching perspectives and how they may affect your teaching): <http://www.teachingperspectives.com/tpi/>
- Exercises to self-assess, explore and self-reflect on one's own teaching philosophy:
<https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/professional-development/enhancing-your-teaching/exploring-your-teaching-philosophy>