



GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

OF

BRYN MAWR  
COLLEGE

HANDBOOK FOR GRADUATE  
TEACHING ASSISTANTS

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## **1.INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BRYN MAWR COLLEGE AND GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

Bryn Mawr College is a small liberal arts college, part of the Seven Sisters network of women's colleges in the United States. Established in 1885, Bryn Mawr College offers students a vigorous education to the highest standard of excellence and prepares them for lives of purpose in all fields of endeavor. Academic excellence, civic engagement, and ethical commitment constitute the foundation of Bryn Mawr's identity. The College offers rigorous liberal arts undergraduate curriculum, distinguished graduate programs in social work, humanities, sciences, and math, as well as post-baccalaureate premedical program. Bryn Mawr is committed to supporting and providing students with an empowering role in their own education and to advocating for equity and inclusion. The Bryn Mawr experience provides powerful tools for its graduates to define their own success and make a meaningful difference in the world.

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) provides Ph.D. education in Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology; Greek, Latin and Classical Studies; History of Art; Chemistry; Math; and Physics. Bryn Mawr College's liberal arts environment provides graduate students with a broad educational foundation and promotes the development of well-rounded scholars, including the opportunity to work as Teaching Assistants (TAs).

This handbook is designed to provide graduate TAs with necessary information, help TAs to prepare for the semester, and share a list of campus resources and college policies with which TAs should be familiar.

### **1.2 TA RESPONSIBILITIES AND TA EVALUATION**

According to the College policy, TAs are not supposed to work more than 17.5 hours per week. Some professors know exactly what they will ask you to do. In other courses, the role of the TAs may not be clearly defined. It is to the TA's advantage to have the professor clarify expectations before the beginning of the semester. If the workload or the nature of the work seems unreasonable, it is easier to negotiate before the semester starts. It may help to ask previous TAs what was expected of them and how much time it required.



### **TA RESPONSIBILITIES MAY INCLUDE BUT NOT LIMITED TO:**

- Assisting course instructors (Professors) to teach courses
- Leading discussions
- Running and assisting with laboratory courses
- Mentoring and supervising students in science research laboratories
- Holding weekly office hours
- Conferring with students
- Holding recitation or review sessions
- Grading
- Lecturing (occasionally)
- Occasionally covering a class for a professor who must be absent.

For detailed information about your duties, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies in your program.

It is important that you find a balance between your TA responsibilities and your own schoolwork. If you find that your TA responsibilities are going beyond the required hours, you should speak to the professor that you are assisting. Your role is somewhere between student and professor, and you may become a buffer between the undergraduate students and the professor. You are a student to the professor you are assisting, but a teacher/mentor to the undergraduates. Thus, you will face expectations and demands from both your students and the supervising professor, and you will need to claim time for your own work. You should always remember that the professor is the one with final responsibility for everything in the course: structure, deadlines, most lesson plans, final grading, and any special circumstances that come up for the students. Having regular meetings with your supervising professor and asking them questions on any of these matters will help you balance your TA responsibilities.

Being a TA means guiding learners, deciding how to communicate with students, coping with busy faculty members, and considering your future role as a professional. While managing all your responsibilities can be challenging at times, the benefits of a TA position are impossible to deny. You will gain confidence, the ability to think on your feet, and the power of articulate communication. You will become familiar with the experience of helping students, making decisions, and coping with crises. Even if you do not make teaching your career, a TA experience can be rewarding and instructive.

### **TA EVALUATION:**

At the end of each term, you will receive an email about TA evaluation from the GSAS office for each course that you served as a TA. You should follow the instructions to distribute the TA evaluation link to students via email or Moodle. The GSAS Office will share your evaluation results near the close of the semester. The primary purpose of the evaluations is to document the contribution of TAs to the teaching of courses at the College and to help you become a better teacher. Frank and independent responses from the students are essential to achieving both of those goals. You may also ask your faculty supervisor to provide you with feedback on your teaching performance. In addition, these TA evaluations will be reviewed for determining teaching fellowships and teaching prizes. Your professors may also write letters of recommendation for you based on these evaluations.

### **1.3 FINANCIAL PACKAGE FOR TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS**

Teaching Assistantships carry stipends during an academic year, a health insurance subsidy, the possibility of a summer stipend, and a tuition award ranging from Continuing Enrollment (CE) up to two units per semester. Two units per semester is the maximum course load permitted to a TA. Teaching Assistantships provide stipends in exchange for a maximum of 17.5 hours of work per week in departmentally assigned TA duties. Teaching assistantships are available to students from their first year onward in Chemistry, Mathematics, and Physics. In Archaeology, Classics, and History of Art, teaching assistantships are typically awarded to more advanced students.

The Board of Trustees reviews and approves the annual budget during their spring meeting at the end of April each year. To provide graduate students with the maximum possible financial support, the GSAS office sends out the official financial support award letter to continuing students by May 15 of each year. Most departments finalize their funding recommendations for each student around April 15 (the deadline for prospective students to respond to admission offers) and submit the departmental recommendations to the Dean of Graduate Studies for approval. If you would like to know your funding decision earlier, you could contact the Director of Graduate Studies in your department in the second half of April.

### **TA PAYMENT:**

TAs receive their stipends biweekly during an academic year according to the student payroll schedule:

<https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/finance-administration/payroll/student-employees/student-payroll-schedule>.

Please note that this schedule is different than the payment schedule for those on fellowship.

A summer stipend is paid in full around the first week of June.

## TAX INFORMATION:

Teaching assistantships (considered as Internships for tax purposes) are taxable income for students and the College is required to deduct federal, state, and local income taxes from internship payments. At the end of the calendar year internship payments are reported as wages in IRS Form W-2. While fellowships are also subject to tax, there is no withholding by the college. This means that the paycheck you receive on a fellowship will differ from the one you receive as a TA, even if the total stipend is the same.

More information on the College's Fellowship and Internship Policy and Procedures can be found at:

<https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/finance-administration/purchases-payments/reimbursements-other-payments-fellowships>.

## 2. WORKING WITH THE FACULTY

Once you receive your TA assignment, you should set up a meeting with the faculty member in charge of the course. TA duties vary widely among departments and courses, so you can only get an exact sense of your responsibilities and begin preparing once you have met with the professor.

Before the semester begins, we recommend that you:

- Ask the professor for a course syllabus and about the types of students who tend to take the course: who they are and why they usually choose this course.
- Discuss the major goals for the course and projected learning outcomes for students with the professor.
- Clearly establish what your responsibilities will be. This may or may not include preliminary grading. If it does, discuss the professor's grading criteria and standards. Find out how much autonomy you have in determining grades.
- Find out whether the professor expects you to attend the lectures. It is usually a good idea to go to the lectures because it helps you keep in touch with what the professor is covering from session to session, and it may help you in responding to students' questions.
- If you are a TA for a humanities course, ask the professor to articulate how their theoretical positions represent, diverge from, or coincide with those of other scholars in the field. This may help you to decide how to approach a certain reading or how to place the professor's perspective in context for the students. Don't be afraid to refer student questions about a professor's theoretical approach back to the professor if you aren't clear on it.

- Look over the assigned materials and ask how those materials fit into the goals for the course.
- Be persistent in finding out what you need to know; the professor may not always be prepared to answer your questions but asking them to be clear on these issues will help not only the TA but also the students and the professor.
- If you are asked to contribute to the syllabus, try to keep in mind your own time constraints and try to imagine how well you can develop a discussion from the assigned materials.
- As a TA you are not usually responsible for creating graded assignments, but you will be responsible for answering students' questions about graded assignments and you might be the one to grade them. With that in mind, meet with your professor and request necessary information on any major assignments or exam papers before they are assigned. You might ask how much or what aspects of an exam you can reveal when asked or during review sessions. Make sure you and the professor are on the same page for any questions that the students might ask.

Since most TAs at Bryn Mawr do not design their own courses, they must work with a professor's teaching agenda. This peculiar context for teaching can ease the way for beginning teachers, but it can also raise some difficult questions.

In the best cases, TAs may find their relationship with the faculty member very rewarding since it can be an apprenticeship-type experience. In less positive cases, TAs can feel frustrated by unclear teaching agendas, political perspectives they do not agree with, or approaches to their disciplines that they find outdated. Simply because you and the faculty member have differing views about the field or the material does not mean you need to hide your own opinions, nor does it necessarily mean this variety of perspectives will confuse the students. After all, debate is at the heart of academia. You and the faculty member may find that your debates demonstrate an important concept about your discipline. You may well decide that it is of great pedagogical use to have students hear both sides of an issue. If there is one rule of thumb here, it is for the faculty member and the TA to be open and aware of these differences, to highlight them when they serve to facilitate students' learning, and simply to agree to disagree. It goes without saying, however, that, in stating differences of opinion, it is always inappropriate to make remarks to students that undermine the position of the professor. You should present a united front that models how academics respect one another's opinions.

If you feel you would like to make changes to the course and can realistically invest the time, you should approach the professor. Discuss, advocate, listen, then compromise, because it is essential for the success of the course, for the tenor of your teaching experience and for the students' learning that there

be peace and support between professor and TA. Undergraduates can find it confusing when the professor/TA's differences in approach are not made explicit or analyzed, or when the materials covered in the lectures, readings, and recitations are not clearly related.

### **3. TIME MANAGEMENT**

Good organizational and time management skills will be important in fulfilling your TA responsibilities. You should also be aware of your own graduate work while managing your time dedicated to teaching. This section is designed to help you improve your work efficiency as a TA.

#### **3.1 LAST-MINUTE COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

Occasionally, a TA may get a last-minute course assignment. Departments try not to assign TAs right before or after the term begins but when it happens, the late course assignments are generally given to an experienced TA.

If you receive a late assignment, you are certainly at a disadvantage and you must start preparing yourself right away. Orientation and first sessions may already be past, but you should speak with the professor about the objectives of the course and obtain all required course materials. Delay will only mean that you will have to devote a lot of time to catch up. You should also seek out other TAs or those who have worked on the course before, to learn about their experiences and receive some helpful tips.

#### **3.2 STAYING ORGANIZED**

There are two related problems involved in keeping organized during the semester. One is devoting too much time to your TA job; the other, doing only what is necessary to survive the next day or the next week.

The following tips may help you stay more organized as a TA:

- Set objectives for yourself and arrange them in order of priority. Keep a daily list of things to do based on the priority list.
- Make a schedule but keep it somewhat flexible. Budget your time among assignments, giving your most productive hours to the most onerous tasks. Make sure to reserve some time for breaks.
- Try to avoid making your schedule too monotonous. Keep both large and small items on your agenda, it will allow you to complete your work without losing momentum.

- Track your TA working hours per week. If your TA working hours are often over the expected time, you should have a conversation with your TA supervisor about how to work more efficiently or to adjust your TA workload.

#### **3.3 COPING WITH THE CRUNCH**

The problem is exacerbated around midterms and finals when students need the most help. Being accessible to your students while balancing your responsibilities is key. A helpful way to prevent surrendering the semester to a thousand small demands is to inform your students very early on in the semester about crunch times and that they should prepare themselves accordingly. It is not the TA's job to accommodate to each disaster that arises for individual students. There will always be some students who truly need extra time with you, but your emphasis on students' self-responsibility, if stated early and often, should reduce the workload later.

You can also help your students by informing them about resources available on campus. These include Academic Support and Learning Resources, Access Services, the Dean's Office, Peer Tutoring, the Writing Center, and Library & Information Technology Services. For more information, please see section 11.11 Undergraduate student resources or consult the Undergraduate Student Handbook. You can do a better job of teaching if you make use of college resources, and you will be doing your students a great favor if you can help them to plan for themselves.

#### **3.4 GRADING**

Grading can be particularly time-consuming among the rest of your TA's duties. Some TAs have grading as their primary responsibilities during the semester, some do not grade at all. It is usually a good idea to get your own work cleared away before the onslaught of midterms and papers. A good practice is to set a limit on the amount of time you will spend on each essay or exam. You should also find out from the professor how many exams and assignments will be required during the semester and what their deadlines are. Some professors will also meet with TAs to talk about the students' responses and to decide precisely what the grading standards will be.

### 3.5 WRITING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Although it is not part of TA's regular duties, you may be asked by your students to write letters of recommendation. Writing recommendations for students is a time-consuming and sometimes perplexing task. You are not obligated to write letters of recommendation for your students, and it is in the best interest of the students to have letters of recommendation from their professors. The Career & Civic Engagement Center (located in Student Life and Wellness Building; Tel: (610) 526-5174) maintains files of recommendations for students which can be quickly reproduced and sent to graduate schools or employers and has standard forms for instructors' letters of recommendation. The Career & Civic Engagement Center staff can help you to set up a recommendations file.

Below you can find some suggestions to help you decide when, and how, to write letters of recommendation:

- Since letters from professors are especially valuable for graduate and professional school applications, you and the student should explore which faculty member they know best. You should do everything in your power to convince the student to request a recommendation from a faculty member rather than yourself, as it will be a stronger support for their future endeavors.
- When a student asks you for a recommendation, you are under no obligation to write one. If you feel like you are not able to write a strong letter of support, you should decline the request without hurting the student's feelings. For example, you could say something like, "I'm not sure I know you well enough".
- Sometimes you may know the student better than the professor for whom you work as a TA, then you might agree to contribute to the letter from the professor.
- If you agree to write the letter, make sure you are given plenty of time, usually about 4-6 weeks.
- A student should provide you with all the forms you need to complete the letters. They should also include a draft of their personal statement and proposal.
- Since most letters of recommendation are written enthusiastically, neutral ones are interpreted as negative. Naturally, you wish to be honest, but an honest negative evaluation can have consequences far beyond what you may intend. If you are uncomfortable writing positively, you might consider declining.
- Omissions tend to be construed as negative. Make at least brief mention of your student's academic skills, motivation and commitment, and interpersonal skills.
- Avoid explicitly negative statements, no matter how many disclaimers are attached.

### 4. PLANNING AND LEADING TA SESSIONS

As a TA, you might teach on alternate class days, lead discussion sections, help with laboratory courses, and hold review or recitation sessions. The requirements will vary based on the department. This section of the handbook will provide you with quick tips for teaching your course sessions.

#### 4.1 GETTING ORGANIZED ON THE FIRST DAY

If you are assigned your own section to teach, you probably have some concerns about the first few days. You will not generally have the first day of class on your own and your professor will be there to help.

The following suggestions should also help you get organized before classes begin:

- It is always a good idea to visit the classroom assigned to you before the first class.
- Check out whether there is chalk or markers, and an eraser.
- If your course requires the use of audio and visual materials, check if the classroom computer and projector are working properly.
- Bring extra handouts on the first day in case more students are added to the course.
- Introduce yourself. Students will want to know what you know about the subject, how you became interested in the field, and why you think it is worthwhile to dedicate several years (or a career) to it. In many cases, students will be interested in your method and approach to the subject.
- You should make sure your email and office hours are listed on the syllabus by the professor.
- Learn who is in class and ask students why they are in the course.
- Explain how the course is set up by referring to a syllabus. Note exam and assignment dates for your students. Make clear, if you can, what the major emphasis of each part of the course will be.
- Whether to introduce substantive material on the first day depends to a large extent on the course.
- If you have handouts for the students, distribute them yourself rather than giving the whole lot to one student to pass on. You can begin to make eye contact with your students this way.



## 4.2 DEALING WITH ANXIETY

- If you feel nervous about the first day of class, you should come a little early. You can say hello to a few students at a time and feel that you are welcoming them to the class rather than walking in, precisely on time, to face a room full of strangers.
- Do not feel obligated to say that you are nervous, or that you are new. Students expect a teacher, so to a certain extent you can role-play for the first few days. As your confidence level rises, you can cut back on “acting” like a teacher as you internalize your role and become a teacher.
- Do not worry if you do not know all the things you will be asked whether about the course or the material. Your students may at first expect you to be the complete authority on your topic but if you let them know that you are an informed, advanced student and teacher, you will both ensure reasonable expectations and provide a model of a thoughtful, non-authoritarian member of the profession.
- Make a note of questions you are not able to answer, check with your professor or the course supervisor, then get back to the student with an answer.

## 5. LEADING INTERACTIVE DISCUSSIONS

Many people’s image of discussion is one of straight question-and-answer sessions with the teacher or leader posing a stream of questions to an interested group of students and waiting hopefully for responses. This section provides some alternative approaches to leading discussions.

### 5.1 INTERACTIVE TEACHING

What is a discussion group supposed to do? We can start to answer this by emphasizing that discussion groups are the ideal setting in which students can learn the art of critical thinking. To achieve this, the discussion group leader needs to employ interactive teaching methods. Such methods allow students to become active in the learning process. This in turn allows them to test ideas, to develop problem-solving skills, to recognize new insights, and finally to become independent and critical thinkers. The emphasis here is on getting students to become active participants in what is going on in the classroom. This requires giving up the traditional role of the teacher as primary information-giver. Some strategies include dividing students into smaller groups, incorporating student presentations, asking students to submit questions in advance, taking “devil’s advocate” positions, organizing debates, role-playing, and handing out questions in advance.

### 5.2 CHOOSING YOUR APPROACH TO THE CLASS

An important step in deciding how best to develop your role as a discussion group leader is to define your approach and goals. Start with some basic questions about the course itself and your place within it:

- Is this a required course, an introductory course, or an elective course designed for majors?
- Will you be dealing primarily with first-year students or with upper-class students?
- How many students are you working with?
- What kind of classroom are you dealing with?

Next, establish your goals for the session you are teaching by asking yourself some simple key questions:

- What is the main goal of the course?
- Where are we in the course?
- Are there major events/concepts/issues to clarify at this stage?
- What would excite students and encourage their interest in your subject?
- Is there a gap at this point in the course that needs to be filled?

Keep in mind that your own discussion goals should fit into the professor’s overall course objectives. Also, be mindful of the students’ perspectives. At the beginning of the course, they’re more likely to want basic classifications. At the end, or before an exam, summary or review session will be more helpful.

### 5.3 QUICK TIPS FOR PLANNING DISCUSSION CLASSES

- Do not let your anxiety get out of proportion, especially the first few days. Remind yourself that you’re only a part of one course in one semester of the students’ four years as undergraduates. If you stumble the first few times, no one’s entire future is at stake!
- Bring written class plans with you. Use one or two outlined sheets of paper, a few index cards or whatever seems most comfortable. Highlight or underline the main issues or concepts you want to cover and any primary questions. (It is also a good idea to have two or three back-up questions in case students do not respond to your first question.)
- Have some contingency plans in case your primary plan does not seem to be getting off the ground (or is dealt with faster than you anticipated).
- Monitor small groups to make sure that they remain focused on the discussion topic.
- Leave time for each group to report back and share what it discussed.
- Summarize the results of small group discussions.

## 5.4 TA-RESOURCES FOR HYBRID AND ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

### ONLINE DISCUSSION TOOLS:

**Moodle:** TAs can use Moodle ([moodle.brynmawr.edu](http://moodle.brynmawr.edu)), the College's learning management system (LMS), to set up discussion forums, blogs, and chats in asynchronous discussion classes. Moodle offers different solutions for fostering communications and collaboration, such as Forums, Messaging, and Groups.

- Forums allow one to communicate with students in a discussion-board format, including posting media so that conversations can continue online.
- Messaging enables individuals and groups to message each other, both in real-time and through email.
- Groups can be used for collaborative activities and break-out group discussions.

Some professors also use other online discussion tools, such as Piazza and Padlet, etc. You can check with your course instructor or TA supervisor for such resources. You can also email [help@brynmawr.edu](mailto:help@brynmawr.edu) to contact Library and Information Technology Services (LITS) staff if you need help setting up Moodle or Piazza for discussion classes.

**Zoom:** Zoom is a web-conferencing tools that enables collaborative virtual meetings. It is available to the Bryn Mawr College community through the institutional license which allows individual users to set up their accounts. TAs can use Zoom to hold virtual discussion classes. For more information, please contact the Help Desk: [help@brynmawr.edu](mailto:help@brynmawr.edu) or 610-526-7440.

## 5.5 USING AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIAL

- Summarize the results of small group discussions.
- Slides/videos/photographs/music are effective ways to illustrate complex, difficult to explain points.
- Students more easily retain information from audio-visual material.
- Useful way to break the ice with new groups and to break up monotony in continuing groups.
- TA must ensure the material's relevance is understood.
- TAs can use the Digital Media and Collaboration Lab which is located on the main (A) level of Carpenter Library in preparation for discussion classes.

## 6. TEACHING ASSISTANCE IN THE SCIENCES

TAs in the physical or applied sciences at Bryn Mawr College may lead discussion sections, help to conduct laboratories, grade assignments, quizzes, and laboratory reports. This section covers the main responsibilities of TAs in the sciences.

### 6.1 LABORATORY TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Many science courses have an associated laboratory session conducted under the supervision of a laboratory instructor as well as TAs. The main goal of these sessions is to teach basic lab skills, develop the students' critical thinking, and analytic abilities. They provide the students with the opportunity to link the theory taught in the classroom with practice. Some labs may not be synchronized with the associated lecture course but teach students to use experimental methods to explore scientific concepts. The major responsibilities of the TA may include teaching, maintaining safe conditions during lab, and grading lab reports.

#### TEACHING:

- Main teaching responsibilities will include working with students on experiments one-on-one and teaching them how to use laboratory equipment and instruments.
- It is essential that the TA is prepared for the laboratory session. The TA should be familiar with the experimental technique, the scientific principle it demonstrates, and its relevance to the course. This might include performing the experiment yourself, especially if the TA has not done it before. Practicing the experiment beforehand can help the TA troubleshoot potential problems during the experiment and provide better instructions utilizing specific equipment and techniques in the laboratory.
- Most science departments will use a laboratory manual in their courses. The TAs should read and think about the experiment ahead of the lab. Occasionally, there will be changes in the procedure and the TAs should be aware of them. Most laboratory instructors will inform the students of the modified experimental procedure during a short discussion of the experiment or a laboratory lecture. In some departments, the TAs are required to attend weekly laboratory lectures as part of preparation for laboratory sessions.
- During a lab session, the TAs should circulate among students, observing technique, answering questions, and offering advice.
- Some science departments require students to submit pre-laboratory assignments. These assignments are specifically designed to help prepare students for laboratory experiments and the TA is responsible for collecting and grading them.

- Some laboratory instructors might hold weekly TA meetings to help prepare the TAs for teaching labs.

#### **SAFETY:**

- Every TA is required to attend an annual safety training offered by the Environmental Health and Safety Officer.
- During the first lab session, the TA should make sure students are familiar with good laboratory safety practices.
- The TA's responsibility is to look out for incorrect laboratory setups, smoke, cracked glass, exposed wires, spilled water, and other safety hazards.
- TAs should be very familiar with the safety protocol for each laboratory experiment.
- In case of a laboratory emergency, immediately notify a laboratory instructor and contact the office of Environmental Health and Safety: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/environmental-health-safety>

#### **OFFICE HOURS:**

- The number of office hours will vary based on department so check with your lab TA supervisor for the expected TA office hours. As the TA, you should not overburden yourself by holding too many office hours. This can lead to an imbalance between teaching and your own graduate education.
- The TA office hours should be scheduled considering general availability of most students in the section. A survey in the first week can be useful here.
- During office hours, TAs must always be prepared to help students solve problems without directly giving them the answers.

#### **GRADING:**

- Grading guidelines are typically provided by laboratory instructors.
- The TAs might be allowed to adjust grading guidelines to reflect any possible modifications to the experiment.
- To ensure grading consistency, laboratory reports should be graded section by section.
- The points subtracted for mistakes should always be clearly written along with a few words describing the error.
- Check with the laboratory instructor for how to penalize the repetitive error.
- The TA cannot give students extensions without asking for permission from the laboratory instructor.
- Check the details of grading guidelines with the laboratory instructor.
- Try to give the students concrete and prompt feedback by grading the lab reports within one week, if possible.

## **6.2 DISCUSSION AND REVIEW SESSIONS IN THE SCIENCES**

Recitation is an integral part of science courses. It involves reviewing information from the previous or current week's lectures. Below are important steps for TAs conducting a constructive review session:

- Establish an informal atmosphere where participation is encouraged.
- Know the background of the average student enrolled in core science courses.
- Take attendance (if required) and be aware of any students who are consistently skipping.
- Make review sessions as lively as possible and encourage students to ask questions.
- Involve the students in the problem-solving process and avoid the urge to completely work out the problems yourself.

## **7. LECTURING**

Occasionally, you may be asked to prepare a lecture to gain experience in presenting material to a group. More frequently, TAs give mini-lectures in their recitation sections to present new material or to reiterate information that their students have missed. By understanding how students learn from lectures, you can anticipate and minimize the problems students have and encourage active thinking about the subject at hand.

### **7.1 PLANNING THE LECTURE**

Lectures are more appropriate than discussions or other activities in several cases, for example:

- When print material on a topic is out of date.
- When various sources of information are available on a subject.
- When you are presenting your own ideas or a sample method of approaching a topic.
- When the material is easily obtainable from students' textbooks.
- When the topic is basically factual.
- When the material has little connection with the other lectures and discussions in the course.

As you choose your material, keep in mind that people can process only a limited amount of material in a certain amount of time. Overloading students can be counterproductive, beginning lecturers should ask themselves, "If there is any one main point I want students to walk out of this class knowing, what is it?"

## 7.2 BEGINNING THE LECTURE

The next step is to plan your beginning. No matter how confident you are about lecturing, it is a good idea to plan the beginning and the end very specifically, even to write the first and last few sentences out. The opening of a lecture is particularly important in engaging students' attention. It can arouse their curiosity and provide a framework which will help them connect the ideas you will present.

From a dynamic beginning, you can proceed to lay out the major points the lecture will cover. Let students know what your focus will be so they can comprehend what you are doing and understand why you are doing it that way.

If you are concerned about remembering everything you want to say, use detailed notes, and write out those sections that are crucial to your point. Quotations should be written out in full, so that you can read them accurately. But writing out everything you will say will most likely result in a flat, dull reading. A combination of notes and written text should be enough even for beginning lecturers.

## 7.3 KEEPING STUDENTS' ATTENTION

Studies have shown that students' attentiveness to lectures begins to diminish after the first 10 minutes, so you are well advised to make the most of this initial period. But lecturers also need to keep students' attention after the first few minutes are up. If your introduction is interesting and clear, the students will be able to observe and think ahead as you bring information to the problem at hand. They will also be able to follow you better if you give them a conceptual model that will give structure to the material presented.

Some suggestions to keep students' attention in class:

- Signpost transitions and how they relate to the lecture.
- Define your terms and don't be afraid to repeat definitions.
- Ask rhetorical questions.
- Give examples.
- Avoid monotone.
- Use props and visual aids.

## 7.4 FINISHING UP

It is important that you leave enough time at the end of the period to summarize and to bring your audience to a conclusion you have written out ahead of time. If time is running short, it is preferable to omit a final example or anecdote and recap the things you were able to cover in full. Avoid going too fast at the end of the lecture, as you may lose your students' attention in the drive to cover everything on your agenda.

## 7.5 OUTLINE FOR CONSTRUCTING YOUR LECTURE

Selection of the topic:

- Make clear how the lecture fits into the context of the course and how it relates to readings.
- Set goals; think in terms of what the students can learn.
- Do not be overly ambitious in how much you can cover.
- Have a contingency plan and keep your goals in mind in case you need to cut material.

Organization of the material:

- Focus attention at the beginning of the lecture. Some options include:
  - Present a set of incongruous facts.
  - Pose a complex question.
  - Tell an anecdote that illustrates the material.
  - Link the topic to common knowledge.
  - Illustrate the problem through props (using the blackboard, handouts, a newspaper clipping) or your actions.
- Select a rhetorical strategy:
  - Find a structure and emphasize it (cause and effect, pro and con, concept and application; be clear when you are moving from one point to another).
  - Review the whole before moving on to the parts.
  - Make it easy to take notes (build in pauses, repetition; use conjunctions carefully because they indicate the relationships within the lecture).
  - Make it easy to map the lecture.
- Select useful examples and anecdotes.

Presentation strategy:

- Decide whether to provide a brief handout.
- Tell students your strategy.
- Relate the lecture to recent lectures.
- Make legible notes for yourself:
  - Make them easily readable.
  - Write out quotes and definitions.
- Plan use of the blackboard and indicate it in your notes.

- Maximize students' attentiveness. Some options include:
  - Using a variety of materials and teaching aids.
  - Changing the focus by posing problems or asking questions.
  - Varying pitch, pace, intensity of delivery.
- Establish a rapport with students:
  - Speak as though in a dialogue, not giving a speech.
  - Make eye contact.
  - Acknowledge the expertise of the audience.

## 8. EVALUATING AND RESPONDING TO STUDENT WRITING

This section addresses problems that arise as TAs encounter student-authored texts.

### 8.1 TEACHING WRITING

Writing provides students with the opportunity to think critically, to develop their reasoning ability, and to engage the material of the course actively. Responding to students' writing is crucial to their intellectual development. You will provide them with an intellectual model, encourage them to take ideas (including their own) seriously and to see the clear communication of ideas to an audience as a vital skill for them to develop.

### 8.2 EVALUATING WRITING IN A LARGE LECTURE COURSE

#### GUIDELINES FOR QUICK EVALUATION:

Try not to read the papers all at once. Organize your time so that you can do an equal amount each day and be sure to take frequent breaks. Do not begin the final evaluation of the students' papers until you have a clear idea of what you are looking for. One idea is to develop a typology of what the papers should contain and then use it as a model for evaluating and commenting on each paper. Make sure to discuss your model with the professor before you begin. For example, you might decide that a well-written paper must have all or most of the following:

- A strong thesis statement.
- A cogently expressed argument – one relevant to the field, and one that requires thought and research.
- Sufficient and well-documented evidence.

- An exploration of possible alternative explanations, particularly those which address the other side of an active debate in the field.
- A clear and easy-to-read prose style.
- A well-informed discussion of the relevant literature in the field.

This loose collection of ideas is an example of one possible typology or rubric. Your own should address the specific writing assignment you are evaluating. This may seem at first like just another chore, but it will save you considerable time and confusion; it will also satisfy students who have questions about their grades. If they have questions, however, you should direct them to the professor, who is the final arbiter of grades. You should be prepared to inform the professor of your rationale. You will find that by referring to the rubric:

- You can go through the papers more quickly because you know what to look for.
- You can keep concise notes for yourself as you go through the papers, making the final grading decisions more quickly apparent.
- You can quickly write evaluative comments at the end of each student's paper without having to re-invent a context for each one.
- You can feel confident your comments provide students with valuable information, since they address the broad range of the individual student's writing, the specific assignment, the course, and the field.

### 8.3 RESPONDING TO PAPERS

#### WRITING COMMENTS:

Providing students with constructive feedback is an important but challenging aspect of evaluating students' writing. Try to make specific comments which anticipate students' questions and help them improve their writing in later papers. A typical comment might be, "Good introduction," but a more valuable comment for the student might be, "This is a strong introductory paragraph because it raises questions that engage me as a member of the historical profession," or "This is a good introductory paragraph because it gives a clear explication of the issues and indicates what's to come." These clearer and more specific comments help students understand where they have failed or succeeded and what they can do to improve future papers.

Another widespread challenge that TAs face is how to respond to the writing of students who are new and have not grasped the writing conventions of the discipline, especially when these students are used to doing well in their own discipline. Students who are good writers in one field may have difficulty writing a good paper in a new discipline. Making disciplinary conventions explicit at the assignment stage is an excellent way to teach students to be aware of differences between audiences.



One way of doing this is to have students read and dissect a “classic” text in your field to see how language is used, evidence marshaled, and arguments made.

If you play an active role in planning assignments and have course enrollments which allow you the time, you might consider teaching writing by building the process of drafting and revising into your assignments. Revising to clarify the theme to develop an argument, or to refine the overall structure of their work is often simply beyond students’ knowledge or experience. However, when offered structured opportunity to revise, students have a chance for feedback on their writing while there is still time to do something about it.

If you are inclined towards allowing students to submit drafts for your comments, you should be aware that reading drafts can take up a lot of your time. When you encourage students to draft and revise, you add a dimension to the course that requires you to teach writing as well as your own subject. Since writing is such an important component in various disciplines, many TAs find themselves voluntarily assuming this additional role. You can also direct them to the Writing Center. Be careful to balance your time and theirs.

#### **OTHER QUICK AND EFFECTIVE COMMENTING STRATEGIES:**

In some cases, you might consider selecting just one aspect of the student’s writing on which to focus. Limiting yourself in this way is not simply convenient for your busy schedule but is truly helpful to students who cannot learn if they are overwhelmed by the comments you have made on their written work. You might consider some important aspects, such as how to structure an argument or how to support a position with appropriate evidence.

Another option is what is commonly referred to as “reader-response” commenting, where you respond not as a teacher but as a reader. You will find that this is a faster process which aids your students but does not require that you become a grammarian. In fact, many writing instructors and researchers argue that this form of commenting is most beneficial for students who gain the valuable knowledge of how their writing is seen through a reader’s eyes. This method is especially useful for commenting on drafts.

Students can also share drafts or papers and give each other responses. “Peer review” allows students to respond to papers as readers and it encourages student writers to keep their audience in mind when writing.

#### **GRAMMAR, SYNTAX, AND SPELLING:**

Many teachers feel students benefit more if comments are focused on ideas, but grammar, syntax, and the like are still important. Resist any impulse you might have to correct their work for them but instead encourage students to take responsibility for these aspects of their own writing. There is certainly no shortage of appropriate and helpful texts which students are perfectly capable of using.

You can also make grammatical and syntactical comments on one paragraph to give the student an idea of the kinds of changes that are required. By limiting this type of comment to one paragraph, you save time and avoid overwhelming the student.

#### **HINTS AND CAUTIONARY NOTES:**

- Students are less likely to pay attention to comments written on papers due at the end of the semester. Feel free to pace yourself with more extensive comments on the earlier work in the term.
- Keep your own time limits in mind and the length of your comments reasonable. Remember that students have limits on how many corrections or recommendations for improving their writing they can absorb at one time.
- Always provide at the end of the paper some summary explanation of the paper’s grade and its relationship to the student’s writing strengths or weaknesses. It can be short, but students expect this, probably have a right to it, and will learn from what you tell them.

## **9. GRADING**

### **9.1 GRADING CRITERIA**

Grading is a complex process which provides students with useful feedback and should accurately reflect their work in a particular course. However, there will be times when you, as a TA, feel challenged about a grade. Grading criteria are established by the professor and should make it faster and easier for you to provide students with intellectually useful feedback. Thus, it is important that you follow it for grading student assignments. It should also be clear to students that you are not responsible for establishing the grading system and all questions related to grading methods should be directed to the faculty instructor. To avoid considerable grading controversy, TAs should be familiar with the professor’s grading philosophy. During the first class, TAs should be able to answer students’ questions about the grading policies and clarify how grades are affected by attendance, participation, and missed deadlines.

Grading is typically faster and easier for “objective” tests with clearly defined points for each question. With written exams or papers, however, the process is more complex. Before you start assigning grades for written assignments, you should quickly go through all the exams or papers and organize them into the range of grades. As you grade each assignment, use the grading criteria to guide you in making grading decisions and in writing comments on the students’ work. It is important that you provide specific comments and explain your grading decisions constructively.

Finally, studies have shown that graders tend to be harder on papers or exams when they are tired, so it is important to take breaks, especially when grading many assignments.

## **9.2 AVOIDING POTENTIAL PROBLEMS**

### **KEEPING EVALUATION CONSISTENT WITH THE CURRICULUM:**

Grades should reflect the student's work in a particular course. This means that a student's personality, outside interests, or general academic ability should not affect your grading. This is particularly important when grades are decided on a curve, because one student's performance can affect the relative grades of all the others in the class. Therefore, evaluation should only be based on what has been taught and what material has been covered.

### **GRADING BLIND:**

Whether or not you choose to grade blind is your own decision, but many teachers feel that grading blind ensures grader objectivity. Whatever grade you give, every student deserves a review of your decision if she or he desires. The terms of that review should be clear. You should never change a student's grade because of their need (to graduate, to get honors, get into graduate school, etc.), but only because of mistaken evaluation or clerical error.

If you and a student cannot reach a resolution in a grading dispute, get a second opinion. Refer the student to another TA assigned to the course, if there is one, or to the professor in charge.

### **CONSISTENCY ACROSS THE SEMESTER:**

Some TAs like to grade "easy" for first assignments, feeling that lower grades will act as a disincentive or discouragement to students. Others prefer to set high standards initially and offer students the incentive to improve as the semester progresses. Either of these methods, however, can lead to complaints about students' final grades, since students use each successive grade as an indication of where they will stand in the course at the end. Maintaining consistency across the semester will help you avoid potential problems and complaints from the students. If the faculty supervisor decides to weigh the first assignment less heavily in the overall calculation of grades or use a different grading system, it is essential to be clear about it with the students.

### **INCOMPLETES AND EXTENSIONS:**

The conditions under which incompletes or extensions will be granted should be announced early in the semester by the professor. These decisions are governed by faculty rules and typically include consideration of the student's needs and of the instructor's ability to grade papers or give exams later. The professor in charge of the course is responsible for making a final decision on this

matter. If someone in your class often experiences this problem with the course assignments, you should advise them to talk with a peer mentor, their dean, or the Director of Academic Support Services for a referral to the appropriate academic support service.

## **9.3 GRADING PHILOSOPHIES AND OPTIONS**

The approaches summarized below should clarify grading options which are provided to the TAs by the professor:

### **CURVING:**

Curving is one of the most common grading systems in colleges and universities. When assignments are graded on a curve, the best and worst work within each individual class is used to determine the range of grades. Although most professors do maintain a threshold of minimum standards, grades are decided more on the individual class's performance and less on predetermined criteria.

Curving has been criticized for causing grade inflation and for invalidating grades as a consistent and reliable measure. On the other hand, it does check any ambiguities or mistakes made in constructing students' assignments or tests. If the professor fails to be clear about what is expected, or designs assignments that are inconsistent with what has been taught, the students will not suffer for the mistakes.

### **CRITERIA OR ABSOLUTE STANDARDS GRADING:**

Absolute standards grading is an opposite to curving approach. When grading on a curve, evaluation criteria are based on students' actual work and are not determined until after that work is completed. Absolute standards grading, on the other hand, is based on the faculty's expectations for student performance. Grades are determined by analyzing what has been taught to predict what students should have learned. Evaluation criteria are then determined before review of the students' work or grading begins.

Many educators believe that this grading option can reduce grade inflation and increase the reliability of grades across classrooms and institutions. On the other hand, absolute standards grading suffers from its own set of biases, since the evaluative criteria of different educators across classrooms and institutions is also likely to be inconsistent.

### **CONTRACT GRADING:**

In contract grading teachers and students design a contract that specifies what work students will do to achieve a given grade. The emphasis is generally on the amount and not the quality of work each student does. Advocates of contract grading stress the educational importance of involving students in the process

of evaluation. They also emphasize that this is the only grading system in which competition among students is minimized, with the emphasis on each individual student's process of learning. This grading practice is not widely used at Bryn Mawr, as it can be a source of considerable controversy.

## 9.4 CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Confidentiality and privacy are highly valued by Bryn Mawr students. This means that your sensitivity and consideration as a TA will be greatly appreciated by your students. To maintain confidentiality of student grades and performances, TAs should:

- Never publicly post grades (even in disguised form) or identify strong or weak performances.
- Hand back work in such a way that grades are not visible to other students.
- Make sure that difficult conversations are held where they cannot be overheard.
- Refrain from discussing one student's work or difficulties with another.
- Consider posting an overall grade distribution for students who wish to compare their academic standing in the course.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires all faculty, TAs, and staff at Bryn Mawr to maintain the confidentiality of any student academic records in their possession, including course schedules and grades. FERPA guidelines allow for the exchange of information among college faculty and staff but do not permit the release of a student's information to individuals outside the college without their written permission. If you have any questions about FERPA or seek advice when you receive requests for information about a student, please contact the Registrar Office ([registrar@brynmawr.edu](mailto:registrar@brynmawr.edu)) or the Undergraduate Dean's Office ([deansoffice@brynmawr.edu](mailto:deansoffice@brynmawr.edu)).

## 9.5 THE HONOR CODE

Bryn Mawr is known for its Honor Code, which governs the academic and social behavior life of all students. In general, the academic Honor Code means that faculty and TAs can and do treat students with confidence in their academic integrity while recognizing that these standards are not always self-evident. More information about the Honor Code can be found in the Undergraduate Student Handbook.

If you suspect a violation of the Honor Code, do not hesitate to consult with the faculty instructor you assist, dean, or faculty member of the Honor Board. Typically, the first suggestion would be for you to meet with the student and share your concern about their work. If after the meeting you continue to feel that there may have been a violation, the student should be asked to report

themselves to the Honor Board. Unlike in most other schools, faculty members at Bryn Mawr do not determine whether violations have occurred, nor do they impose penalties for them. The Honor Board, comprised of both faculty members and students, serves as an objective "third party" to mediate infractions and to establish an appropriate penalty.

## 10. INTERNATIONAL TAS AT BRYN MAWR

International TAs are a vital and integral part of the educational system at Bryn Mawr, as they bring diversity of experience and culture to the College. Despite many challenges international TAs might face, teaching American students is a rewarding experience. TAs who have come to Bryn Mawr from abroad can make their teaching experience more positive by learning the expectations of their students and their behavior in the classroom. The following information may also be useful to American-educated TAs, as various aspects of Bryn Mawr undergraduate life may still be unfamiliar to them.

### 10.1 THE CULTURE OF BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

As a TA at Bryn Mawr College, you are bound to play an important role in the lives of undergraduate students. Thus, knowing and understanding the culture of Bryn Mawr can help you improve your teaching skills and build better relationships with students.

#### THE STUDENTS:

The standard undergraduate education in the United States is a four-year program. An undergraduate enters Bryn Mawr College as a "freshman" after finishing high school, typically at the age of 18. "Sophomore" is the term for a second year undergraduate and "junior" refers to a third-year student. A "senior" is a student in their final year as an undergraduate.

#### THE COURSES:

To earn a bachelor's degree, undergraduates must successfully complete a set number of courses. Each of the departments or programs at Bryn Mawr has different degree requirements. Undergraduates typically take four classes each semester in consultation with the Undergraduate Dean's office.

A major goal of American undergraduate education is to expose students to various fields of knowledge. Thus, during their four years at Bryn Mawr, undergraduates take courses in a wide range of subjects. The College has a distribution requirement that facilitates students' engagement in studies across a variety of fields. To ensure that students' education does not just involve exposure to many disciplines, they must choose an area in which they

intend to specialize by the end of their sophomore year. The declaration of a major is part of the Sophomore Planning Process which is posted on the Dean's Office website each fall. Students may also double major with the approval of both major departments and their dean. The precise distribution and major requirements for each degree are listed in Bryn Mawr College Undergraduate Course Catalog.

Courses which are not distributional requirements or major requirements are known as electives. Students elect to take them because they are either in their major field of study or simply because they are interested in the subject. Undergraduate courses have four different levels, ranging from introductory 000 or 100 level courses to 300 or 400 level special categories of work for seniors majoring in the subject.

#### **THE GRADING SYSTEM:**

Students receive grades for each course they take. The grades can be based on problem sets, quizzes, exams, written papers, laboratory reports, and presentations. Bryn Mawr undergraduate grades are on a 4.0 scale. Students must earn a 1.0 or higher in a course to receive credit. Students must earn a 2.0 or higher (grade above merit) to count towards college requirements and major requirements. The grades count towards a student's grade point average (GPA) which is a significant indication of a student's academic success. Students may take some courses under the Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) option. The grade for the CR/NC option course is not factored into the student's GPA. All student's coursework is recorded by the College on the official transcript. More information on grading and academic records can be found in Bryn Mawr College Undergraduate Course Catalog.

## **10.2 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CHALLENGES**

#### **LANGUAGE PROBLEMS:**

English is not the first language for most international TAs which sometimes can lead to challenges in the classroom. Although language differences can be problematic, they are a minor consideration compared to the amount of knowledge students can learn from you. The following tips might be helpful to solve language problems in the classroom:

- Make it clear that English is not your first language and ask students to speak slowly and clearly if necessary.
- Ask students to explain any slang expressions or colloquialisms that you don't understand.
- Be prepared for your classes and be patient with the students.
- Work with your students to establish two-way communication.

- Maintain a positive attitude towards your language challenge. Most students will overlook your language difficulties when they see your subject competence, willingness to help, and friendly attitude.
- Work on improving your English language proficiency. Practice your pronunciation, read more English books and newspapers to improve your vocabulary, listen to conversations in English, and consume English-language media such as movies, TV, and podcasts.

#### **CULTURE SHOCK:**

A lot of international students often experience some sense of "culture shock" which can be described as emotional distress upon arrival in a foreign country. It is a natural part of adjusting to life in a completely different environment. If you are having problems adjusting to living in the United States and experience prolonged symptoms of culture shock, you should seek help by contacting Bryn Mawr College Counseling Services and the Pensby Center. Patti Lausch (plausch@brynmawr.edu) is the Assistant Dean for International Student and Scholar Advising and will be your main contact at the Pensby Center. Additionally, you can contact International Graduate Student Representative on the GSA Board to find more information on social gatherings for international students. The following suggestions may help you relieve culture shock:

- Stay involved and try to keep yourself busy.
- Participate in various events organized on campus.
- Avoid socializing only with students from your country. Try to make friends with American students and learn more about their culture.

## **11. TA RESOURCES**

### **11.1 LIBRARIES**

Bryn Mawr College has three libraries: Canaday, Carpenter, and Collier, and shares collections with the Haverford and Swarthmore college libraries.

- Canaday Library is the College's main humanities and social sciences library. It houses the humanities and social sciences collections, Special Collections, the College Archives, computer labs, the Writing Center, the Lusty Cup Cafe, and many library staff offices.
- Carpenter Library collections support programs in History of Art; Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology; Greek, Latin, Classical Studies; and Growth and Structure of Cities. Carpenter also houses five classrooms

and the Digital Media and Collaboration Lab. The library houses the Visual Resources Center, which supports instruction by providing access to visual media and by facilitating the use of digital tools.

- Collier Science Library is located on the 3rd floor of the Park Science building and brings together the collections for Mathematics and the sciences. Collier is being rebuilt as part of the Park Science renovations in 2021-22 and is operating out of temporary quarters.

Tripod (<http://tripod.brynmawr.edu>), the online public access catalog, provides information about the more than three million books, journals, videos, sound recordings, and other materials in the Bryn Mawr, Haverford, and Swarthmore College collections.

Bryn Mawr maintains extensive relationships with other major academic libraries both in the region and worldwide through the EZ-Borrow system. You may also request items in almost any language from libraries across North America through interlibrary loan.

## 11.2 RESERVING SPACE

As a member of the Bryn Mawr community, you may reserve space in most buildings on campus through an online reservation system, the EMS Web App: <https://ems.brynmawr.edu/VirtualEMS/Default.aspx>.

All space requests are confirmed on a first-come, first-serve basis and you need to use a brynmawr.edu address. Contact the Conferences and Events office ([roomres@brynmawr.edu](mailto:roomres@brynmawr.edu)) directly to schedule a same day event. Beginning fall 2020, virtual public events now require EMS reservations.

## 11.3 COMPUTING

- The Help Desk is located on the main floor of Canaday Library and is available during building hours for walk-in help, email, and telephone assistance.
- The Canaday Media Lab, located on Canaday's A Floor just beyond the Lusty Cup, is equipped with advanced software for digitizing and editing text, images, audio and video for the creation of interactive presentations and courseware.
- Public computing labs can be found in all three campus libraries and the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research.
- Laptops and multimedia equipment can be borrowed from the Help Desk based on availability. Contact the Help Desk with questions. The email address is [help@brynmawr.edu](mailto:help@brynmawr.edu).

## 11.4 EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

### MOODLE:

Moodle is Bryn Mawr's Learning Management System (LMS). It can be used to share materials, give quizzes, surveys, and communicate with any closed-membership group. Sites are available for all academic courses and for student, faculty and staff committees and organizations. Built-in features such as Choice (a sign-up/polling feature), Assignment, Scheduler, and Gradebook can automate some aspects of course management, and teachers or TAs can set up discussion forums, blogs, and chats to foster communication and collaboration. LITS staff help Bryn Mawr faculty, students and staff use Moodle. If you cannot edit the moodle page for the course you can email the professor to request access.

### RECORDING LECTURES, TALKS OR INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO:

LITS offers a range of options for recording lectures, talks, and instructional videos:

- Panopto lecture capture system: Bryn Mawr subscribes to a cloud-based lecture capture and video streaming system that makes it easier for faculty, students, and staff to record lectures, talks and course-related instructional video. Panopto records audio of the speaker, a screencast of whatever is presented on screen or overhead, and (if desired) video, and streams them simultaneously on playback. Access to Panopto is currently through Moodle or through a direct link.
- Self-service recording and editing: Bryn Mawr faculty, students and staff can also check out video cameras and can use video-editing software available on all campus machines to record and edit their own videos.

### STREAMING VIDEO:

Bryn Mawr College subscribes to a wide variety of streaming video services and provides help with their use. For help with streaming video, contact Arleen Zimmerle, Media Librarian ([azimmerl@brynmawr.edu](mailto:azimmerl@brynmawr.edu)) or email [library@brynmawr.edu](mailto:library@brynmawr.edu).

## 11.5 DEAN'S CERTIFICATE IN PEDAGOGY

The Dean's Certificate in Pedagogy is offered by the two Graduate Schools of Bryn Mawr College and administered by the Dean of Graduate Studies. The program is available to all graduate and post-doctoral students who would like to develop and improve their teaching abilities and experiences. You can visit <https://www.brynmawr.edu/gsas/completing-your-degree/certificate-pedagogy> to find more information about this program. Upon successful completion of all requirements, students will receive the Certificate and a record on their transcripts. If you wish to learn more about the program, you can attend an information session on the Dean's Certificate in Pedagogy hosted by the Dean and the TLI Faculty every fall semester.



## 11.6 ONLINE TEACHING INSTITUTE (OTI)

The Online Teaching Institute (OTI) for Graduate Student Instructors was a fully online opportunity offered in July, 2021 in which graduate student instructors worked together to support the design of an online course. Throughout the Institute, graduate students new to teaching online had the opportunity to devise, create, and reflect on the different components of an online course. At the same time, participants with online teaching experience had a chance to work through the modules of the Institute to further reflect on their existing or previously taught online courses. Additionally, participants were able to attend collaborative synchronous sessions on Zoom. By the end of this Institute, participants were able to:

- Build and support a community of inquiry in an online course.
- Anticipate ways to efficiently manage student and instructor workload.
- Articulate learner-centered outcomes and objectives for an online course.
- Design effective online assessments aligned with course objectives.
- Plan, organize, and create at least one online lesson plan on Moodle.
- Identify which learning technology approach best fits a course's learning objectives.

Although the Institute is not currently being taught, you can still request access to the Moodle site to explore content and resources provided during the Institute. To request access to the Institute's Moodle site, please contact Maria Ocando Finol at [mocandofn@brynmawr.edu](mailto:mocandofn@brynmawr.edu).

## 11.7 TEACHING AND LEARNING INSTITUTE (TLI)

The Teaching and Learning Institute (TLI) embraces a partnership model of faculty and student academic development and is supported jointly by Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges. TLI was created in 2006 as a part of a larger initiative to achieve the following commitments and processes:

- To create new campus spaces and structures within which all members interact as teachers, learners, and colleagues.
- To collaborate and create relationships that move beyond the limitations of traditional roles available in higher education.
- To link everyone within the College community to educational opportunity and the opportunity to foster it for others.

For more information, please visit the expanded TLI website: <https://tli-resources.digital.brynmawr.edu/> which includes more information about pedagogical partnerships, TLI programming, and resources for teaching and learning in the Bi-Co and at other institutions.

## 11.8 PEDAGOGY CIRCLES FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Pedagogy Circles are open to faculty, administrators, staff, and students at Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges. They are facilitated by TLI Student Consultants, aim to support cross-constituency dialogue, and offer a space for members of the community to explore how they are acting on and working toward anti-racism, diversity, inclusivity, and equity within and beyond classrooms. Contact Alison Cook-Sather, Mary Katharine Woodworth Professor of Education and Director of the Teaching and Learning Institute, at [acooksat@brynmawr.edu](mailto:acooksat@brynmawr.edu) for more information about the Pedagogy Circles.

## 11.9 RESOURCES ON TITLE IX AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

Title IX is a comprehensive federal civil rights law, signed by President Richard Nixon on June 23, 1972, that prohibits discrimination based on sex in any federally funded educational program or activity.

On May 19, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education issues a Final Rule under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 that:

- Defines the meaning of “sexual harassment” (including forms of sex-based violence),
- Addresses how an institution must respond to reports of misconduct falling within that definition of sexual harassment, and
- Mandates a grievance process that an institution must follow to comply with the law in these specific covered cases before issuing a disciplinary sanction against a person accused of sexual harassment.

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing an inclusive environment, free from sexual and gender-based discrimination. The College is committed to addressing any violations of its policies, even those not meeting the narrow standards defined under the new Title IX Final Rule and has authority to investigate and adjudicate allegations under the policies and procedures defined within the Bryn Mawr College Sexual Misconduct Policy. Any community member concerned about a Title IX violation should immediately contact the College's Title IX Coordinator, Kimberly F. Taylor at [ktaylor4@haverford.edu](mailto:ktaylor4@haverford.edu).

A Title IX information session for teaching assistants is offered once a year, usually during the TA orientation in late August, for the purpose of explaining recent changes in the federal Title IX Rule and how they may impact you as a TA.

## 11.10 THE UNDERGRADUATE DEAN'S OFFICE

Unlike many other schools which have two different offices of the academic and student life deans, Bryn Mawr maintains a single Dean's Office, located on the "courtyard level" of Guild Hall. In most cases, each dean promotes the academic and personal growth of undergraduates at the College through advising and programming. Overall, the Dean's Office serves as a hub for most campus resources. As a TA, you should encourage your students to seek out their dean for any questions they might have. More information in terms of advice to students can be found at the dean's office website:

<https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/deans-office>.

Additionally, if you have any questions about the College's undergraduate regulations, requirements, courses, policies, procedures, and resources, feel free to contact one of the undergraduate deans directly ([deansoffice@brynmawr.edu](mailto:deansoffice@brynmawr.edu)).

## 11.11 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RESOURCES

If you find that students in the course are struggling academically, you should encourage them to meet with the instructor during office hours, come to your TA and review sessions, and meet with their dean. Your instructor and/or you might also direct them to the following student resources:

The Writing Center offers free, individual consultations on writing assignments of any kind. It also provides consultations on public speaking and professional tutoring for multilingual (ESL) writers. Visit the Writing Center Web site for more information: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/writing-center>.

The Office of Academic Support assists students in identifying and implementing strategies for effective learning by collaborating with each student to adopt methods that utilize their unique strengths. Rachel Heiser, The Director of Academic Support Services, coordinates the Peer Mentoring Program and the Peer Tutoring Program. Mentors are strong students who have been trained to help others improve their study skills and manage their time. Visit <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/academic-support> to find more information about academic support and learning resources for undergraduate students.

Access Services provides accommodations for learning-disabled students. If students speak to you about disability-related concerns, notify the faculty instructor for the course, so the faculty instructor can refer them to the Director of Access Services, Deb Alder ([dalder@brynmawr.edu](mailto:dalder@brynmawr.edu)).

When a student is at risk of not completing a course successfully, please express your concerns directly to the student and encourage them to make full use of the abovementioned resources. You should also notify the faculty instructor for the course who can communicate with the Deans if necessary.

## 12. REFERENCES AND USEFUL READINGS

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This handbook has been created in the summer of 2022 by Jenni Glaser and Diana Rachii, graduate students in Classics and Chemistry, based on previous version of the GSAS TA handbook, and revised by Xuemei May Cheng, Dean of Graduate Studies, and Abby Traucht, GSAS Programs Administrator and Assistant to the Dean. Comments and suggestions for change for this version should be directed to the Graduate School of Arts and Science Office ([gsas@brynmawr.edu](mailto:gsas@brynmawr.edu)).

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