

# PED-9001

## Teaching assistant as a learning instructor

Day 5

11.11.2021

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# TEACHING ASSISTANT AS A LEARNING INSTRUCTOR

## Autumn 2021

### Pre-assignment

#### DAY 1

*Introduction and getting to know each other*  
Thursday 16.9. at 13.00-15.00

#### Assignments

Code of conduct  
Orientation for the Day 2

#### DAY 2

*Interaction and feedback*  
Wednesday 22.9. at 9:00-12:00

#### Assignments

Reading assignment  
& group reflection

#### DAY 3

*Approaches to learning, levels of thinking about teaching*  
Thursday 14.10. at 13.00-16.00

#### Assignments

Planning your observation  
Reading assignment  
& group reflection  
  
Orientation for the Day 4

#### DAY 4

*Different kinds of students*  
Tuesday 2.11. at 9:00-12:00

#### Assignments

Digital teaching tools  
assignment  
  
Orientation for the Day 5

#### DAY 5

**We as teaching assistants**  
Friday 11.11. at 13.00-16.00

Teaching observation 1  
(video)  
DL 12.10.

Teaching observation 2  
(a teaching session)  
DL 9.11.

**Sessions are organized in Zoom**  
**Materials, assignments and links are in MyCourses**

# Today's schedule

- 13.00 – 13:45**     **Jenni Tulensalo; Student administration**
- 13:45 – 13:55**     **Break**
- 13:55 - 14:30**     **What motivates you?**
- 14:30 - 15:30**     **Insights and feedback from the course -  
Learning café (including a short break)**
- 15:35 – 16:00**     **The assistant's bag of tricks, closing the  
course**

# Learning outcomes

**After the session you**

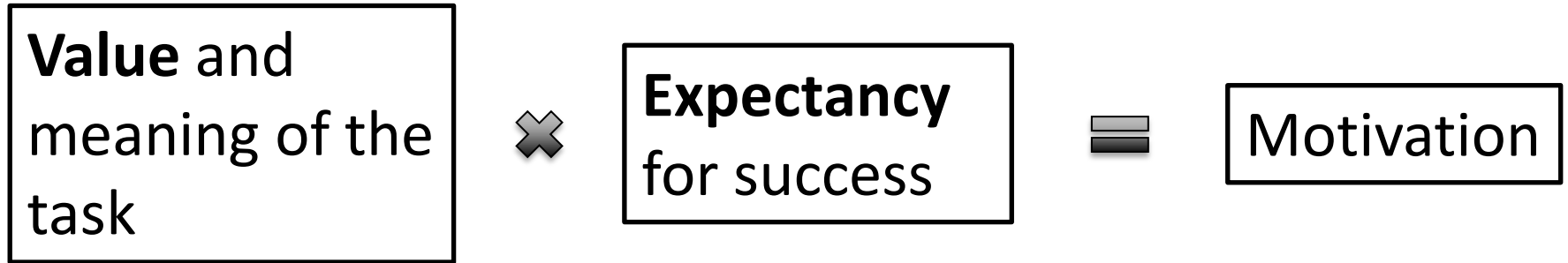
- **know that you have administrative responsibilities**
- **know where to find information about your responsibilities**
- **have reflected on learning and on the course,**
- **know some strategies how to advise students as a teaching assistant.**

# Teaching observation 2:

Thoughts? Questions?

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# Expectancy–value theory of motivation



(Eccles & Wigfield, 2002)

# What motivates you as a teaching assistant?

AnswerGarden » What motivates you as a teaching assistant?...- Plant a Question, Grow Answers! Generate a live word cloud with your audience.

# Think about your work as an assistant

## ■ What motivates you?

- What makes your work **more/less** meaningful?
- What makes it **more/less possible for you to succeed** in your work?
- What can you do to **support your own motivation**?
- What can **other people/the environment do** to support you?

15-minutes breakout room discussion.



# Insights and feedback from the course

# “Learning café”

Learning café is a method for group work [1]

Instructions for the virtual learning café:

- You all are divided into 3 groups / cafés -> and 3 breakout rooms in Zoom
- Each group / café has a specific topic to discuss and reflect on (~15 min/each topic)
- Group gets a new topic when the teacher gives a sign in Zoom (we have 3 topics all in all).
- Write on Google Docs document and express your ideas
- At each table, every group adds their own notes **and takes into consideration the opinions and suggestions made by the previous groups**
- At the last table / round, **pick 2–3 things** you'd like to share with others and add it in file's TAKE AWAY section.

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[1] Learning café, Section 4.13 in Hyppönen, Lindén: Handbook for teachers (2009), Chapter 4.13. Available as PDF in English and Finnish, <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-248-063-7>

# Learning café themes

Three themes (more info in each Google docs document)

1. Things you remember from this course so far
2. Things an assistant should remember
3. Things you wouldn't change, things you'd develop, and things you'd leave out in this course

Start from the theme which is your Zoom breakout room group number.

When you receive the time signal, move to the next theme in numerical order: 1 → 2, 2 → 3, 3 → 1

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# Learning café theme 1:

## Things you remember from this course

**In this course we have discussed different topics, you have read a pedagogical text book, and you have observed teaching.**

- What do you remember from those activities?
  - What have you learnt?
  - What would you like to learn more?
  - Do you see difficulties in applying what you have learnt?
  - Other thoughts, feelings, etc.
  - What kind of learning/teaching methods were used on this course?
  - How can you utilize the learnt knowledge/methods in your work as a teaching assistant?
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# Learning café theme 2: Things an assistant should remember

**The teaching assistant has an important role in a student's learning process. From your point of view, what should a teaching assistant remember when she or he is**

- working with a teacher?
- guiding a student?
- planning the exercise session?
- in the role of teaching assistant?

# Learning café theme 3: Things you wouldn't change, things you'd develop, and things you'd leave out in this course

## **What do you think about the course assignments and observations?**

- Readings
- Peer group meetings
- Orientation for the next time questions
- Observation 1 (video) & Observation 2 (online/onsite)

## **What do you think about the course in general?**

- Would you like to change something?
- Would you like to know or learn more about something?
- What would you develop?
- What was good?
- In what way have you benefitted from the course?

**Break 10 mins.**

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# The assistant's bag of tricks



# What you are especially hoping to learn

- about **interacting with students**
- communication**
- how to
  - **engage** and **activate** students
  - **motivate** and **inspire** students to learn
  - be **inclusive** and how to take everyone into consideration

- assessment**
- build **effective lectures**
- explaining** the subject in a clear and supportive way
- online teaching **methods and tools**
- to
  - learn from each other
  - prepare self-learning activities and teaching material for student

# Believe that students can

**Try always to believe that students can if they want to and try hard. If *you* don't believe they can, it's more likely that they don't either.**

## **Self-fulfilling prophecy:**

The students of a teacher who is told their students are very good at something perform better than the students of a teacher who is told their students are very bad at it, even though there is no difference in the students' actual knowledge level.

# Some ways to proceed with those who are stuck

## Give feedback

- Say something positive about the proceeding

## Ask

- Can you explain how you got here?
- What was your main idea?
- Are there things you are unsure about?

## Use peers

- Is there someone in the same situation? Can they share ideas or help each other?
- Try to stay close and listen if they get on track. Give support if they do, keep asking questions if they don't

## Something extra

- Is there some extra material they could use?
- Some extra exercises more at the right level?

## Next step

- Make sure the students know how to proceed. If they still don't know, help with what to start with.

# Tips from a seasoned assistant

## At the course level

- **Talk to the course teacher throughout the course**
  - Exercises must be in sync with lectures, problems must serve a purpose (this is the teacher's responsibility, but you should know the purpose too)
  - Remind the teacher if necessary that the students don't know as much as he or she does
  - What does the teacher expect of you as an assistant?
  - Ask for help when you need it (from the teacher, colleagues, previous/other assistants)

# Tips from a seasoned assistant

## Prepare yourself well before your class

- **Solve the problems yourself even though you have the solutions**
- **Learn the exercise topics as well as you can in the time you have**
  - you don't have to know everything
    - *if you don't know something in class, you could say: "Hmm, that's a tough one. I don't know the answer, but I'll find out and get back to you in the next class." Return to it the next time!*
- **Think about what you will say and do in class (specially the first)**
  - how you wish the students and start the class (ice-breaking is important)
  - any extra information, jokes (be sensitive, you can be exaggeratedly outrageous too, but tread carefully), etc.
  - be prepared for the unexpected and to improvise
  - how you interact with different students (the shy ones need you too)

# Tips from a seasoned assistant

## Content-related things you can do in the class

- **Tell students what you are going to do, or ask the students to choose what you should do in class** (some possibilities are below)
- **Briefly go through only that theory relevant for the exercise**
- **Solve an example problem that covers all, most, or most difficult of the issues in the exercise problems *on the board*** (keep it there)
  - don't be afraid to make mistakes
  - consider making an error on purpose (this should serve a purpose)
- **If the solutions have a clear algorithm/procedure, present it**
- **Think of a small related puzzle for the students to think about when possible; return to it at a suitable point during the class**

# 9 Golden rules for instruction

1. Leave the joy of discovery to the student. Do not give answers, but lead subtly towards the solution.
2. There is usually more than one right way of thinking. Do not impose your own solutions.
3. Be supportive, especially when the student has had difficulties.
4. (New) students are shy. Approach them, do not necessarily wait for them to ask for advice.
5. Teaching assistants are not Wikipedias. The students must learn to read the course literature
6. Teaching assistants do not need to know everything, and they can let the students see this.
7. When evaluating answers, be concise. Underline the parts of the solution that are wrong and if necessary write a short comment. If there is much awry, do not spend time evaluating the assignment, but recommend asking an instructor for help.
8. Having the right idea is not enough. The answer has to be written correctly. The aim is to practice expressing oneself in a precise and readable way.
9. If in doubt about rejecting a solution, assess if the student will benefit from improving the answer.

# One last reminder

**If you want the two credit points from this course:**

- **All your course work must be handed in**
- **Do the makeup assignment if you have missed a session**
- **If some work is incomplete, come talk to us**



# Course feedback in Aalto

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# Thank you

**for your active participation,  
and enjoy your work as a  
teaching assistant!**

**Good luck!**