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Office of Undergraduate Education

TA
Orientation

2024 Annual Report



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2024 TA Orientation Report

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Executive Summary

The 2024 Fall TA Orientation sessions were attended by 854 students. Key takeaways from this year's orientation:

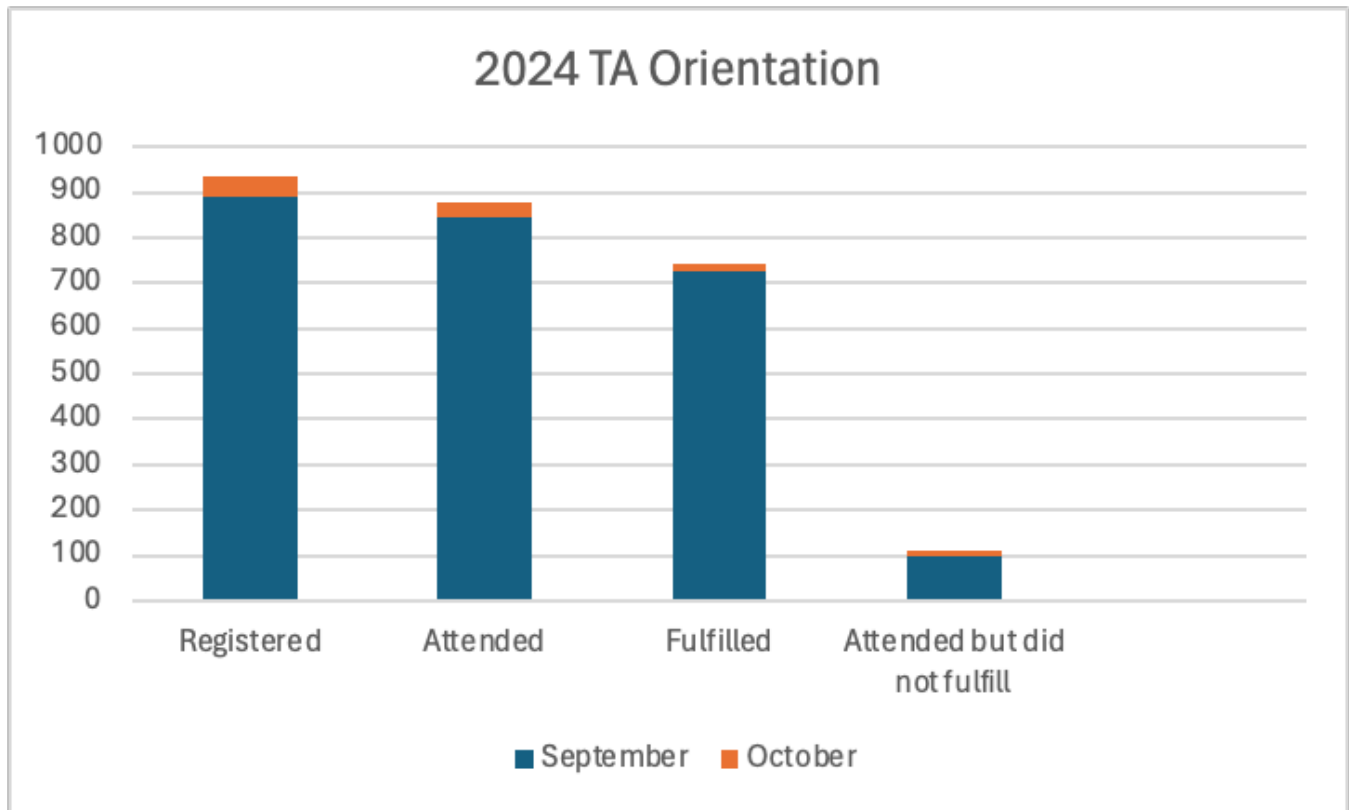
- Participants found the online modules very useful and commented on their inclusive and practical strategies.
- The *Working as a TA at UC Davis* workshop, led by TACs, was the highlight of the orientation; many participants noted the wealth of experience of the graduate student facilitators and the participatory design of the workshop.
- New for this year is a dashboard, which is accessible to department coordinators, for reporting out attendance data for TA Orientation, improving the efficiency and transparency of reporting participation to departments.



Overview

The 2024 Fall TA Orientation took place on September 23rd and 24th, with a makeup session held on October 14th. 891 individuals registered for the Fall TA Orientation sessions offered in September and the October makeup session. Of those who registered, 724 attended and fulfilled the requirements (86% of registrants), 97 attended but did not fulfill the requirements (11% of registrants), and 70 registered but did not attend (.07% of registrants). For the online makeup sessions, of the 46 who registered for the

October session, 33 attended and 19 fulfilled the requirements (57% of registrants). It should be noted that some students at the makeup sessions did not need to fulfill all requirements because they previously completed online modules or partially attended workshops.



In addition to the October makeup session, there will be one additional session offered in Winter quarter for graduate students who plan to TA in Spring but have not attended TA Orientation.

TA Orientation was offered in a hybrid, “flipped” format. Participants were first asked to complete four self-paced, online modules hosted on Canvas:

- Starting Out: Working as a TA at UC Davis
- Inclusive Classrooms
- Planning for Student Success: From Objectives to Active Learning Activities
- Assessing and Grading Efficiently, Effectively, and Equitably

The modules were designed to take approximately 1.5 hours to complete and included a combination of text, videos, and self-assessments (quizzes and reflection prompts). After completing the modules, participants attended three live, in-person sessions at the Teaching and Learning Complex, which introduced additional topics but also allowed participants to discuss and apply what they learned in the modules. The live component consisted of the following sessions:

- Inclusive Classrooms (facilitated by staff from the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion)

- Working as a TA at UC Davis (facilitated by the Teaching Assistant Consultant [TAC] Fellows and GTC facilitators)
- Union presentation

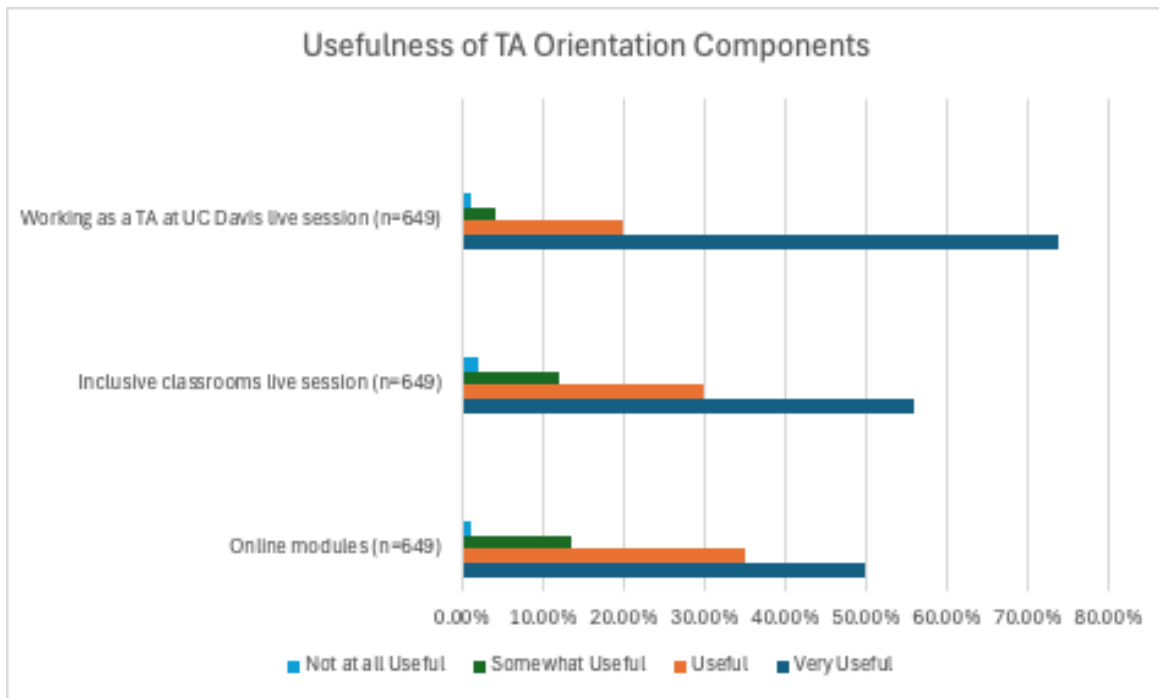
The live sessions at the September orientation took place in person and the makeup sessions were facilitated online.

Participant Feedback

At the end of Fall TA Orientation, participants were asked to complete a brief survey on their TA Orientation experience. 651 participants completed the survey, for a response rate of 77% (18 from the October makeup session).

Usefulness of TA Orientation Components

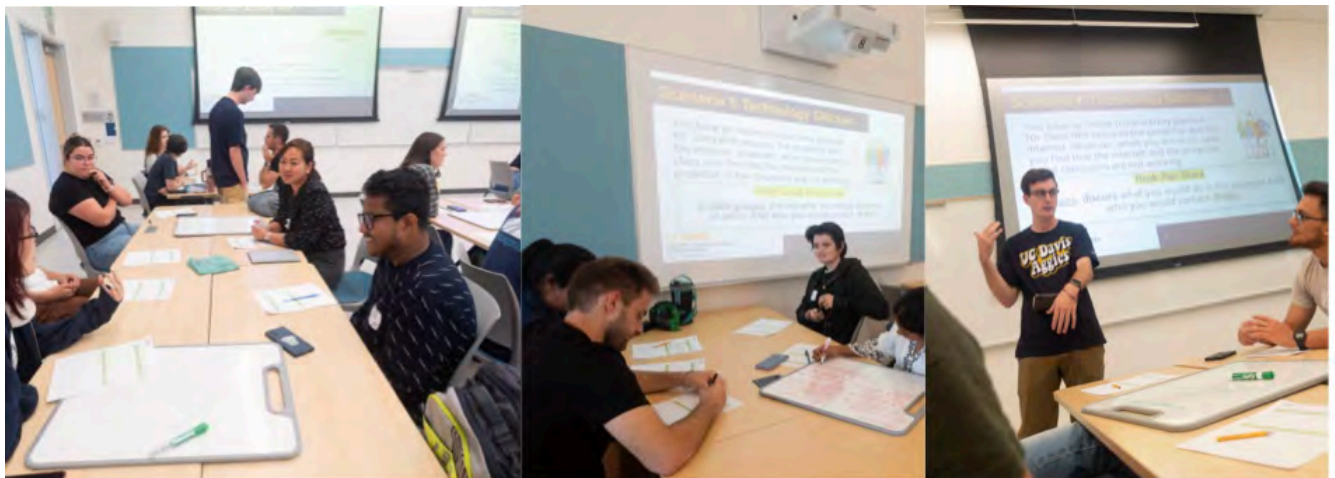
Participants were asked to indicate on a Likert scale how useful they found each component of the orientation. Below are the results:



Open-Ended Responses

Participants were asked to provide feedback on what was useful about the online modules and live sessions, as well as what could be improved. They were also asked for suggestions on additional content that could be included in TA Orientation in the future. Below are the main themes that emerged among the open-ended responses.

Working As a TA



General Comments on Working as a TA Workshop

Many participants expressed gratitude and admiration for the facilitators, highlighting their engaging and supportive teaching styles. A significant number of respondents described the sessions as very informative, mentioning that they **learned a lot about being a TA and found the content valuable in preparing for their roles as TAs**. Comments reflected that group discussions and activities were beneficial, especially for first-time TAs, allowing them to connect and learn from each other. Many noted

the engaging nature of the sessions, which made learning enjoyable. Participants felt supported and appreciated the inclusive atmosphere, which helped them engage and participate more comfortably.

Suggestions for Improvement: Some participants requested more specific scenarios or practical advice, indicating a preference for hands-on learning.

Some quotations taken from survey comments:

- “Going through the scenarios and brainstorming solutions helped me understand the priorities, responsibilities, and options as a TA”
- “I appreciated the rubrics and resources readily available from the online modules.”
- “Meeting other TAs and discussing scenarios with varying perspectives”
- “Being able to work and brainstorm with peers provided varied perspectives on the same scenarios”
- “I thought the session about IT was very helpful because you never know what to expect so it’s important to be prepared.”
- “Having the experienced TA facilitators lead was great. When they shared their experiences it helped bring context.”
- “We had the most wonderful TA guides.”
- “I really liked having something to take home and being able to review strategies for real world examples.”
- “The graduate student facilitators were excellent! Love meeting other TA’s”
- “The orientation was surprisingly helpful and I have learned so much and now I feel prepared to TA!”
- “TA’s were very nice, helpful, and funny! Very engaging.”

TA Modules

Overall, participants appreciated the online TA modules for their rich resources, focus on inclusive teaching practices, and practical applications in teaching strategies and assessment. The self-paced format and structured organization made them valuable tools for new TAs. Respondents emphasized the need for ongoing access to these resources as they navigate their responsibilities.

Here are some key themes from the responses about suggestions for improving the online modules:

1. **Content Delivery:** Many respondents suggested incorporating **more videos or multimedia content** instead of long blocks of text. This includes using built-in videos rather than links to external sites. There was also desire for more interactive components, such as quizzes, activities, and scenario-based learning, to engage users better.
2. **Length and Conciseness:** Several comments indicated that the modules were too long or could be condensed. Respondents expressed a preference for more digestible content and less reading.

3. **Visual Enhancements:** There were calls for more visual representations of information, such as infographics, to aid understanding and retention.
4. **Timing and Preparation:** A few participants suggested that modules be made available earlier to allow adequate preparation time.

These themes indicate a desire for a more dynamic, engaging, and user-friendly learning experience in the online modules, focusing on improving content delivery and interaction.

Summary and Implications for the 2025 TA Orientation

Overall, participants found TA Orientation helpful in preparing them for their roles as TAs. In their suggestions for improvement, many called for more curriculum: more role play scenarios, more instruction on inclusive teaching strategies, and more information on working successfully with instructors and understanding department logistics. Many noted the importance of graduate student facilitators as providing experience and knowledge of classroom scenarios.

One improvement this year was the creation of an attendance dashboard so department coordinators can easily access attendance data for the graduate students in their department. This change brings efficiency to a process that was time consuming both for coordinators and the TAC program director.

Another change for 2025 is that TACs will be taking over the Inclusive Classrooms workshop from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. We hope that having graduate student facilitators for this group will further increase the valuable learning in that session.

Acknowledgements

Michelle Rossi is appreciated for her leadership and coordination of the TAC team during TA orientation.

Current TACs and GTCs facilitated TA Orientation sessions and also assisted with the check-in process at the Teaching and Learning Complex:

- Daisy Underhill (Philosophy)
- Ana Ruiz Alfonso Bartol (Linguistics)
- Nicole Keough (Animal Behavior)
- Sam Nelson (Musicology)
- Ben Eustis-Guthrie (Physics)
- Iam Lim (Physics)
- Siuoneh Didarloo (Psychology)
- Isabella Cantu (Sociology)
- Devin Romines (Genetics/Genomics)
- Meredith Carlson (Anthropology)
- Remy Beauregard (Economics)

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