

Strategies for Increased Class Enrollments: Management, Assessment, and Supporting TAs

**Teaching Council Members
October 25, 2021**

Introduction to Session

- Hybrid session!
 - Big thanks to Judy Bass (MH) for organizing!
- Three topics:
 - Class management (ME Hughes, PFRH)
 - Assessment strategies (Elizabeth Topper Golub, Epi)
 - Utilizing and supporting TA's (Jennifer Deal, Epi; Linda Chyr, HPM; Elizabeth Stone, HPM)
- ▶ Open Q+A





Course organization ME Hughes (PFRH)

The Challenge of Managing a Larger-than-Usual Class

- ▶ Two aspects
 - ▶ Administration: not just scaling up
 - ▶ Activities: staff workload and student engagement
- ▶ Overall strategy
 - ▶ Go through course schedule, including all activities and assessments
 - ▶ Ask how each item will “work” with 20-50% more students
 - ▶ Adapt as needed
 - ▶ Consult with TAs, co-instructors
- ▶ General steps to consider, with examples to illustrate



Refine Policies and Procedures

- ▶ Anticipate situations and make explicit policies, for example
 - ▶ Alternate assignment for students who know in advance that they will miss a Discussion Session
 - ▶ “One late quiz” policy
- ▶ Direct students to sources of information beyond course staff, for example
 - ▶ Links to videos, “how to” documents (e.g., for converting file to PDF)
 - ▶ Reminder about ctlhelp for technical CoursePlus issues



Inform Students about All Policies and Procedures

- ▶ Use CoursePlus syllabus page
 - ▶ Many pre-defined sections, e.g., “Definition of Participation”, “Group Work Guidelines”
 - ▶ Create custom sections as needed
 - ▶ Add links to documents that have additional details (e.g., assignment guidelines)
- ▶ Show students where to find the information
 - ▶ Tour of CoursePlus site
 - ▶ Faculty members use CoursePlus differently, explain how **you** use it



Set Expectations for Communication - 1

- ▶ Provide clear directions about where to ask questions: in class, via email, on Discussion Forum
 - ▶ Provide details and examples as needed (e.g., email all TAs, what is a “personal question”)
- ▶ Give timeframe in which to expect an answer or format of answer, for example
 - ▶ Responses to Discussion Forum within 24 hours generally, longer on weekends
 - ▶ Only response to request for quiz extension will be automatic email from CoursePlus



Set Expectations for Communication - 2

- ▶ Explain what will happen if do not follow directions, for example
 - ▶ Email response “Please post this question to the Discussion Forum” or “Please see the syllabus”

Example from a CoursePlus syllabus page

Communication and Questions

General questions about course content or administration should be posted to the appropriate section of the Discussion Forum. Using the Discussion Forum allows all students to benefit from the question and its answer. The Forum will be monitored and questions will usually be answered within 24 hours on weekdays; turnaround on the weekend may be longer. Students should always check the Discussion Forum before posting a question to see if their question has already been asked and answered.

Questions about course policies and procedures that are specific to an individual (e.g., a request for an extension) should be directed to Professor Hughes and the TAs, not to the LiveTalk or Lecture faculty. To ensure they receive a timely response, **a student should send one email, copying Professor Hughes and both TAs. Do not send separate emails to each staff member.**



Streamline “Behind the Scenes” Work

- ▶ Standardize or automate common tasks, for example
 - ▶ Pre-prepared response to quiz extension requests
 - ▶ Tools for scheduled emails and announcements in CoursePlus
 - Use prior year’s version as draft – can access in CoursePlus
- ▶ Facilitate sharing information among course staff, for example
 - ▶ Document on OneDrive to record extensions (and other information as needed)
 - ▶ Tag emails when TAs forward to faculty (e.g. “DECISION NEEDED” or “FYI”)



Adapt Course Activities for Greater Numbers

- ▶ Convert graded written assignments such as reflections to
 - ▶ Peer-review
 - ▶ Formative assignments
- ▶ Separate class into smaller groups for discussions, presentations
 - ▶ Faculty and TAs visit each group during discussion time
 - ▶ Create private section of Discussion Forum for each group
- ▶ Use weekly email to preview content, connect to what has already been covered
 - ▶ Reminders and announcements (reduce time used in class)
- ▶ Use CoursePlus QuizGenerator for problem sets or other assignments
 - ▶ Simplifies grading



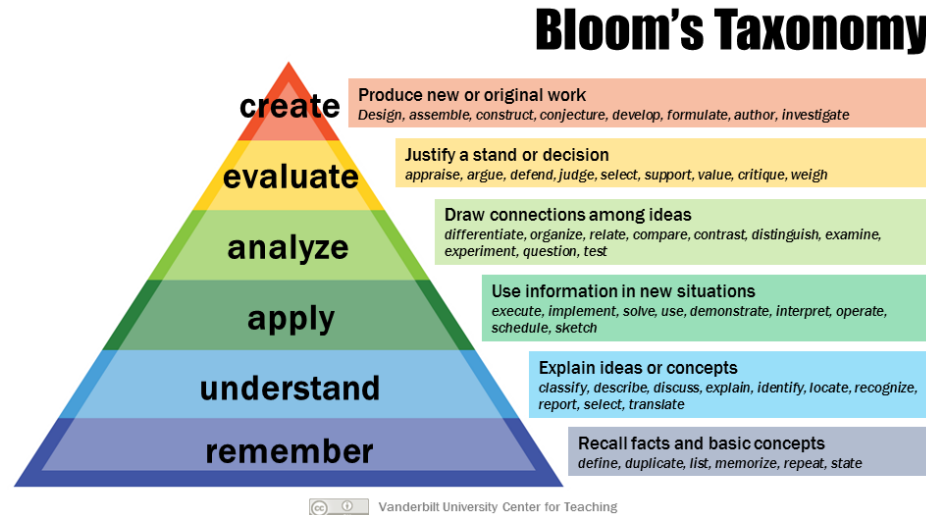


Assessment strategies

Elizabeth Topper Golub (Epi, OPAL)

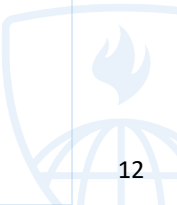
Assessment: The Challenge

- ▶ **Ideal:** Design assessments that target higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy



- ▶ **Challenges:**

1. These are more difficult to create than those at the bottom
2. With large class sizes, these can take a LOT of time/effort to grade!



Strategies for Challenge 1: Go Higher

- ▶ **Require critical thinking on assessments**
 - ▶ It's easier to objectively and consistently evaluate items like multiple choice, T/F, and matching – but they aren't as good a measure of learning as items like essays and short answer.
 - ▶ One way to avoid simple multiple choice "guessable" items is to incorporate **range responses**.
 - ▶ Rather than asking students to respond back with verbatim course material, have them **apply** their new knowledge to a new scenario; ask them to **analyze** or **evaluate** the results, or even to **create** something new.
- **Develop a rubric for these assignments**
 - Sets expectations
 - Removes ambiguity
 - Helpful for subjective assessment



Strategies for Challenge 2: Scale up


- ▶ How to logistically do all of this with a large class?
 1. Lots of TAs, if possible
 2. Group work – students say they hate it, but...
 - a. They often come back later and say they liked it
 - b. It's reflective of workforce experience
 - c. Fewer assignments means less grading burden
 3. Peer assessment – have them evaluate each other's work
 4. Incorporate both formative (non-graded) and summative (graded) assessments
 - Why? We learn by making mistakes!
 - Can grade completion yes/no



Formative Assessments: Examples

Assessment	Advantages
Pre- and post assessments	<u>Pre</u> : Tells instructor baseline level and gives students a roadmap for the course <u>Post</u> : Shows progress
Practice Problems	Lets students try out their new skills; To avoid the need to grade/correct, post answer key
Small group project	With or without presentation to the class / discussion
In-Class Polling (during class)	Can be done online; gives instructor the “pulse” of the class, can adjust on the fly
3 Main Points (at end of class)	Can be done individually or in groups; Ensures the main points got across
Elevator Pitch (outside of class)	Short (set parameters!); doesn’t take long to read, indicates whether student is on the right track



A stylized graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a flame-like shape at the top and a globe-like shape below it, both rendered in a light blue color against a dark blue background. The globe has a grid of latitude and longitude lines.

Supporting TA's: Challenges and Solutions

Linda Chyr (HPM), Elizabeth Stone (HPM),
Jennifer Deal (Epi)

About Us

- ▶ **Linda Chyr** - PhD Candidate in Health Policy and Management
 - ▶ Served as a TA for various content-based and methods-oriented courses with large student enrollments in HPM
- ▶ **Elizabeth Stone** - PhD Student in Health Policy and Management
 - ▶ Served as a TA and Lead TA for various content-based courses with large student enrollments in HPM
- ▶ **Jennifer Deal** - Assistant Professor in Epidemiology
 - ▶ Instructor for large introductory epidemiology course (N~500 students, 2 instructors, 2 course coordinators, 1 Lead TA, 1 Exam TA, 11 TAs)



Challenge #1: Division of TA/Faculty Labor

TA focused solutions

- ▶ Communicate to faculty the responsibilities you have outside of being a TA this term (e.g., taking courses, dissertation research)
- ▶ Clarify expectations of the TA before the start of the course and throughout the course as responsibilities may shift

Faculty focused solutions

- ▶ Before class starts:
 - ▶ Imagine your ideal 'classroom' - what processes need to be adapted for the larger class size?
 - ▶ When offering the position, set clear expectations, including workflow & time
- ▶ During class:
 - ▶ Process in place for frequent TA check-ins

Challenge #2: Division and Coordination of TA Labor

TA focused solutions

- ▶ Delineate the responsibilities of the lead TA vs non-lead TAs
 - ▶ Administration vs grading
- ▶ For larger classes (>100 students), helpful to assign students to TAs to facilitate initial contact person for the course

Faculty focused solutions

- ▶ Clearly delineate the responsibilities of TAs (in writing is best)
- ▶ Task logging
- ▶ Regular check-in meetings with TA team to ensure fair division of work, reminders of upcoming schedule



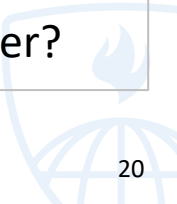
Challenge #3: Setting Student Expectations for TAs

TA focused solutions

- ▶ Introduce yourself as a fellow student who is also taking classes, doing research, etc. at the beginning of the term
- ▶ Schedule office hours to help streamline individual questions or concerns over emails

Faculty focused solutions

- ▶ Faculty clearly setting expectations at the beginning of term
 - ▶ Communication
 - ▶ Grading
 - ▶ Accommodation & flexibility
- ▶ Weekly faculty emails to students of what is happening this week in the course
- ▶ How can students support each other?



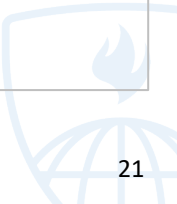
Challenge #4: Incorporating Flexibility for Students

TA focused solutions

- ▶ Use automated features in CoursePlus to track certain metrics as part of assessment (e.g., attendance, participation)
- ▶ Streamline systems for requesting extensions or other accommodation requests

Faculty focused solutions

- ▶ Make decisions and plan processes for requests before the term starts
- ▶ Prepare for accessibility needs and accommodations
- ▶ Consider the intention and equity of language and processes





Moderated Q+A

Thank You and Resources

- ▶ Big thanks to today's presenters!
- ▶ Email Liz Stuart (estuart@jhu.edu) with any questions, comments, or suggestions
- ▶ CTL Virtual and Hybrid Teaching Resources page: <https://my.jhsph.edu/sites/ctl/Pages/resources.aspx>
- ▶ Drop-In Teaching Chat scheduled for Nov. 11 at 3 pm and monthly thereafter (look for more information to come in School's Events Calendar)
- ▶ MS Teams group to continue the conversation: "JHSPH Discussions on Virtual Instruction Strategies"
<https://livejohnshopkins.sharepoint.com/sites/Office365Hub/SitePages/Teams.aspx>
- ▶ Reach out to your Department's Teaching Council member and/or Teaching Fellows for help
<http://ctltoolkit.s3.amazonaws.com/VirtualClassroom2021/TeachingCouncilAndTeachingFellowsAY21-22.pdf>
- ▶ CTL CoursePlus blog: <https://ctl.jhsph.edu/blog/>

