Ensuring Successful International Teaching Assistants (ITAs)

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Ensuring Successful International Teaching Assistants (ITAs)
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To ensure the success of both the ITAs and their students, various types of training and support are needed.

More than Just Language – 4 Take-A-Ways

1. Training
Issue: ITAs may be unfamiliar with the expectations for their role and unfamiliar with the campus.

Solution 1: Summer Prep Program on-site
• Taught through one or all of these:
  – ESL programs
  – Graduate College
  – Center for Teaching Excellence
• Allows ITAs to become familiar with campus
• Allows ITAs to become familiar with their duties and the expectations prior to teaching
• Allows for ITAs to form connections with their peers
• Can follow up with ITAs during the academic year with required and optional workshops on teaching and language use

Solution 2: Online Prep Program
Taught through one or all of these:
  – ESL programs
  – Graduate College
  – Center for Teaching Excellence
Allows ITAs to become familiar with the expectations, as Solution 1, but with the added pre-departure convenience.
  • Allows for ITAs for form connections with their peers
  • Can follow up with ITAs during the academic year with required and optional workshops on teaching and language use

2. Facilitating Discussions
Issue: This type of classroom activity may be unfamiliar to some ITAs due to the format of teaching in their home countries.

Solution 1: Provide specific instruction on expectations of American students
• Familiarize ITAs with Generation Z expectations
• Provide common strategies used in facilitating discussions, such as language use for
  • changing the topic
  • backchanneling
  • summarizing

Solution 2: Provide tips for common situations that occur in discussions, such as
• students who dominate the group
• students who don’t participate
• students who haven’t completed their homework prior to class

Solution 3: Provide workshops that have undergraduate volunteers who are “students” for the ITAs to practice their strategies
• undergraduates could earn service learning credit for participating

3. Utilizing Authentic ITA Teaching Videos
Issue: Most instructional videos used for ITA Training are staged by professional actors and are outdated.

Solution: ITA Programs collect authentic videos of ITAs in the classroom/lab. We can have a central location for all to use, including transcripts/worksheets for discussion during training.
• problems and their solutions
• language used to resolve problems

4.Reparing for Virtual Office Hours
Issue: This format for holding office hours is becoming more common at American universities; therefore, ITAs need information and support on how to hold virtual office hours. It hold unique challenges and opportunities for ITAs and their students.

Solution 1: Provide information about various platforms used for this
• Blue Jeans
• Zoom
• Google Hangouts
• Photo Booth (MAC)

Solution 2: Reveal typical challenges ITAs may encounter
• inappropriate discussions
• informal / unprofessional language

Sources

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