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 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 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

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, and 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   Issue: Most instructional videos used for ITA Training are staged by professional actors and are outdated.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. Repairing 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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