



Welcome TAs !

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Study Director D-INFK

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Your Importance

- We have about 3000 bachelor and master students at D-INFK, plus students in service courses and teach about 65 courses with exercise classes per semester
- Learning does not (only) work like this:



- The assistants' (your) contribution to learning is highly relevant for the success of teaching.

Being a TA at D-INFK

Felix Friedrich
Study Coordinator D-INFK



Your new role

As a TA

- You take on a **new role** at the D-INFK department
- You make important contributions to computer science education and have a share in the success of teaching at our department
- You have new responsibilities



Your new role

Rules

- Take your new role seriously and behave professionally, be loyal to your employer
- Do not misuse your power
 - In your new role you are not the best friend to be asked for favours
 - Do not confuse interest in content with personal affection
 - Be respectful
- Protect yourself
 - You are there to help, but you are not responsible for solving other people's problems



TA profiles

- Tutor
 - typically holds weekly exercise sessions with 20-30 students
 - typically grades homework exercises
- Study-center TA
 - answers students' questions at a fixed (typically weekly) time and place
- Back-office TA
 - helps with creating exercise / course material / exam material (PhD)
- Head TA (typically PhD level)
 - manages exercise sessions, schedules TAs, TA meetings,
 - keeps an overview over the exercise material
- Project interview
 - makes 1:1 interviews with students, assessing and grading project work
- Exam Supervision or -Grading
 - helps with proctoring or grading exams

Traditional Courses

Most (traditionally taught) courses at ETH are organized on a dual basis

- Lectures
 - Convey material in a systematic way
 - *students see an algorithm*
- Exercises enable
 - to secure the newly learned knowledge
 - *know an algorithm -> understand an algorithm*
 - to bridge the gap between passive, systematic knowledge and active knowledge for applications
 - *know an algorithm -> implement an algorithm*
 - to use new tools
 - *know an algorithm -> apply an algorithm*

“Systematically acquired knowledge is structured, organized and retrievable differently than most practical application situations require. Knowledge that is principally available remains dead, lazy and unused, although it is actually needed to solve certain problems. The discrepancy between learning and application conditions is usually very large. By now, the scientifically founded conclusion can be drawn that learning must be both systematic and situated.” [Weinert (1998)] *

from Norbert Hungerbühler's Training of teaching assistants, D-MATH

Misconception

- Knowledge and understanding of a teacher can be transferred error-free to the learners
- Exact definitions cannot be misunderstood
- What is logically correct is also understandable

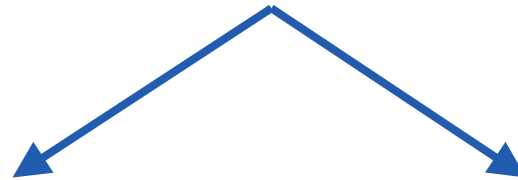
from Norbert Hungerbühler's Training of teaching assistants, D-MATH

Challenges

Heterogeneous pre-knowledge, particularly in the first year

“The key factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. You have to determine this prior knowledge and then you teach your students accordingly.” [D.P. Ausubel et al (1980/81)]

from Norbert Hungerbühler's Training of teaching assistants, D-MATH



Find out:

- Interactive lessons
- Quizzes
- Grading Homework
- Informal queries

Know what has been covered in class !

- Consult lecture slides, lecture notes and / or video recordings, if necessary

Official Expectations

(From "Qualität der Lehre an der ETH Zürich", Qualitätskriterien für Studiengänge und Lehrveranstaltungen sowie Erwartungen an Personen, basierend auf der Lehrpolicy der ETH.)

Commitment

- The assistants are **competent** in terms of course content and methodology. They clarify their role and contribution as assistants in the respective courses with the lecturers. They recognise opportunities for **optimising the teaching process**, are committed to teaching innovations and take advantage of opportunities to get involved. Assistants are familiar with the rules of the study process that are relevant to them.

Support for learning

- Assistants support students in acquiring subject-related competencies and transferable skills as described in the qualification profile. They act as a **link between students and lecturers. They pass on their own observations and insights to the lecturers. Assistants promote an optimal learning atmosphere and team spirit among students.**

Communication

- Assistants **communicate learning objectives and study requirements to the students.** They give constructive **feedback to lecturers and students** and deal with criticism of their own behaviour.

Further development

- Teaching assistants continuously **develop their own teaching skills** through personal further education in the pedagogical-didactic area and an open exchange of experiences.

Our Expectations

- **Be informed**
 - Know the course you teach
 - Know what has been taught in the lecture
 - Go to assistant meetings and be prepared
- **Communicate**
 - Ask, when you don't know what is expected from you
 - Ask, when you don't understand the material
 - Proactively inform, when you see any issues
 - Give constructive feedback!

Solve tasks for yourself and help improving them

Preparation of your lessons

- **Be prepared**
 - Follow a **plan** (what, when / how long, how)
Improvise only where necessary
 - Have a plan B (for technical problems)
 - Be on time
- **Reflect** tasks in terms of their **content**
 - what are students supposed to learn
- **Reflect** tasks in terms of **didactic**
 - expected prior knowledge
 - existing knowledge
 - difficulties to expect
- Think about **required introductions** and hints



gap! →

Prepare your sessions sufficiently ahead of time. Doing things in the last minute might sometimes be necessary but it is **not cool**.

Prepare hints and repetitions in written form

Short (!) summary of the theory
Offer a repetition where necessary

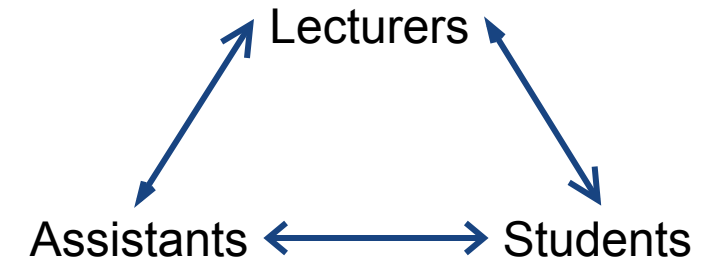
Lessons

- Be a **coach rather than a teacher**
 - Never solve a task (alone) by yourself in front of the class
 - Interactive problem solving!
 - Exercise sessions are **no second lecture**
 - Pose questions, as many as possible
- Create a **climate of trust**.
 - Competence without Arrogance -- condescending or even contemptuous remarks have no place in the classroom.
 - Admit mistakes or ignorance. Ask for time to think about questions you cannot answer.
- Provide ample **opportunities for success**
- Do not expect everyone to love you.
 - Try to distinguish between individual opinions and issues that are relevant to many.



Feedback and Debriefing

- Collect **commonly made mistakes** and bring them to the classroom
 - what were the perceived difficulties?
 - strategy to overcome?
 - takeaways for the future?
- Provide **individual feedback**, as much as reasonably possible
 - Prepare statements for frequently made mistakes (efficiency)
 - Ideally: monitor submissions and ask
- **Quality and Quantity**
 - Be reasonable with help and feedback:
Give good quality, personal feedback. Try to involve all individuals but don't overdo it.
You are neither a human debugger nor should you invest time in "hopeless" cases.
Obey the 20/80 rule: do 80% of the work in 20% of the time (or so).
 - (Only) invest time where your support is appreciated. If in doubt: ask!

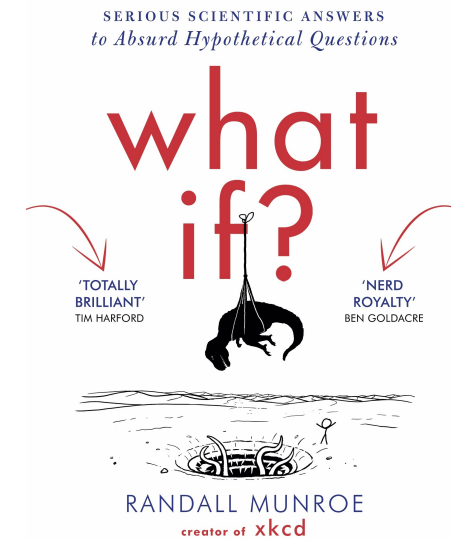


Communicate your findings to the lecturers!

- Do tasks need adaptation?
- Observed misconceptions?

What if

- I don't understand the material
 - Ask, difficulties are normal, human and **expected**
- I don't feel well / I cannot hold a session
 - Inform the head TA or lecturers as early as possible
 - If possible, inform your students about unexpected changes
- My room is locked, or I have technical problems
 - Stay calm, call the building services, write a mail to the head TA, lecturers or mailing list
 - Improvise, use a different room, have a coffee with the students (etc.)
- I am having too much work to do, I'm afraid that my academic performance will suffer as a result.
 - Speak with the Head TA and / or the lecturers. This must not happen.
 - Do not work unpaid.



Technical / Administrative Issues

Slides by Astrit Thaqi
Employments Teaching Assistants



Registration Process from HAT to HR

HA-Tool-Reloaded Astrit Thaqi Logout X

ETH zürich Print Help Contact de

Start → Application →

Your application for:
Assistants and Student Teaching Assistants Autumn Semester 2024

Particulars Preferences Availability Qualifications General information Summary

Particulars (Step 1/6)

Base data Delivery address

Salutation * Street

Name THAQI, Astrit Addition

E-Mail * astrit.thaqi@students.fhns.ch Country *

Birth date * Zip code *

Mobile * Place *

Format e.g.: +41 12 345 67 89

Nationality * Study

Residence permit Stud No.

Cross-border commuter * Format: 12-345-678



1) Initially, you had applied through the HAT tool, after which the Head TA or Lecturer made an offer that you accepted.

2) Afterwards, you received a link to upload your documents (residence permit, CV, diplomas, etc.), which I then received and reviewed.

Make sure that your residence permit is valid at all times!

Registration Process from HAT to HR



3) HR reviews your documents.

The process takes longer for non-EU countries as additional approvals are required, resulting in 2-4 weeks delays.



4) HR then issues the contracts and sends them to your address.

Important: If you move to a new apartment, please update your address here: www.adressen.ethz.ch

Time-sheet Reporting

- To find out who the Head TA is, please ask the person who made you the offer, as this is often the same person.
- Please report your worked hours to your Head TA or lecturer (if applicable, some courses provide a fixed salary)



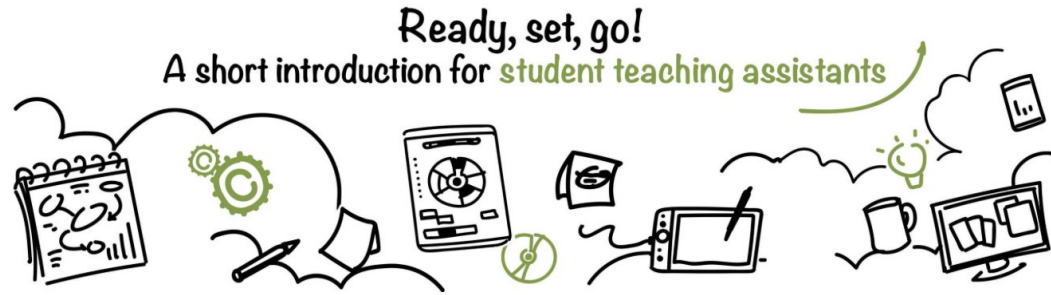
- Hours must be reported to your Head TA by the 10th of the following month. Some courses use a tool for this (<https://timetracker.inf.ethz.ch>)
- Your salary is paid on the 25th of the month.
- During the semester, you can work a maximum of 15 hours per week, typically around 10 hours per week. During semester breaks, it is allowed to work up to 41 hours per week.
- If hours are reported late, they will be paid out in the next month. **Avoid bulk payments with higher tax rates (particularly when you are not a Swiss citizen).**
- If you have forwarded your hours, but haven't received your salary, you should contact Astrit Thaqi.

Multiple Employments / Duration

- The duration of your contract is from **February to June, 2025**.
- You are allowed to work for multiple courses, but **note that you must not exceed** 15 hours per week during the semester and 41 hours per week during semester breaks.
- If contract extensions are needed, the Head-TA will contact you.
- Only start working after you have received the contract, as you are not insured otherwise.
- For questions regarding health insurance: internationalstudents@ethz.ch

Where can you learn more?

Offerings by Unit for Teaching and Learning (UTL)



The most important didactical competencies

6 hours

100% independent and online

0 KP

No requirements



Coaching Students

18 hours (spring edition has already started)

3 x 6 hours in person

1 KP

No requirements

<https://ethz.ch/en/the-eth-zurich/education/educational-development/continuing-education/hilfsassistierende.html>

Questions? Please contact karin.brown@ethz.ch