

# Working with Your TAs in the Academic Year

## Before we get started



Let us know if you can hear us when we do **Audio checks**



Download **Presentation Slides** at [uoft.me/ctsi-videos](https://uoft.me/ctsi-videos)



Turn on live captions if you would like closed captioning (see screenshot for details)

## During the webinar



Your **microphone** will be muted until Q&A at the end of the session



Type questions and comments into the **Chat**



This session features a short activity in breakout rooms.

## Following the webinar

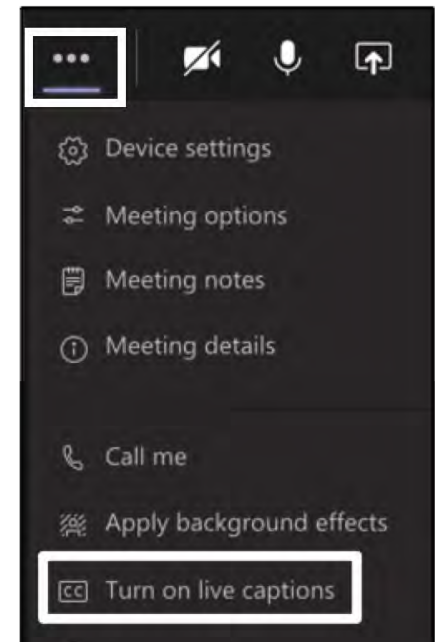


View **Session Recording** at [uoft.me/ctsi-videos](https://uoft.me/ctsi-videos) in 2 business days



Complete **Feedback Survey** (link sent via email)

# Welcome!





**CTSI Tune into  
Teaching:**

**Working with Your  
TAs in the  
Academic Year**

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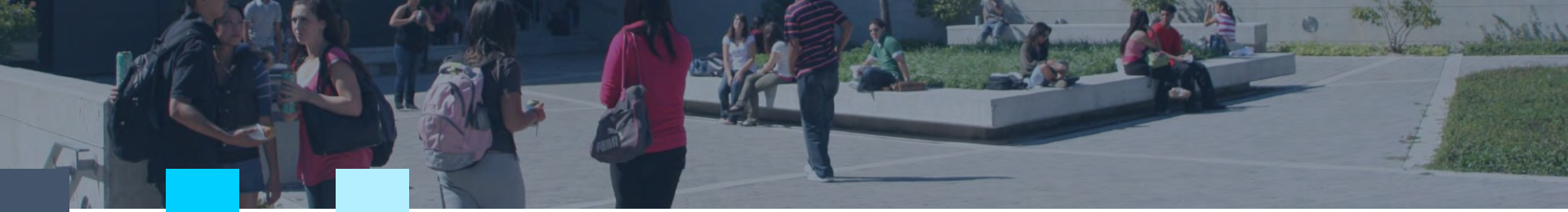
Faculty Liaison  
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**August 25, 2021**



UNIVERSITY OF  
**TORONTO**

CENTRE FOR TEACHING SUPPORT & INNOVATION



# Land Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge this sacred land on which the University of Toronto operates. It has been a site of human activity for over 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. The territory was the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island.

- Revised by the Elders Circle (Council of Aboriginal Initiatives)

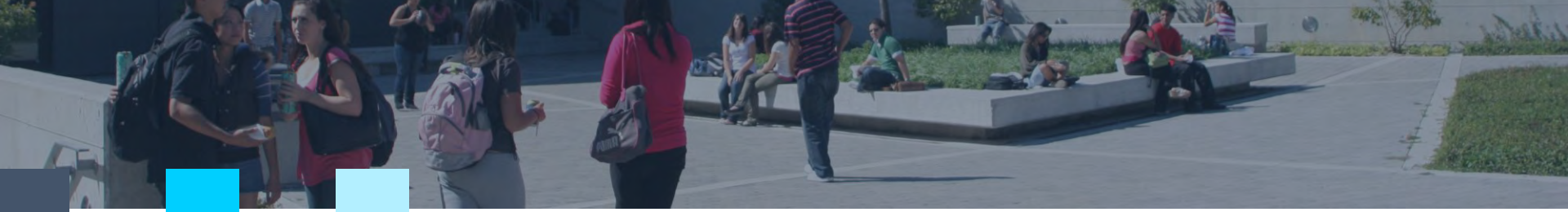
## Access Check

We understand access to be a shared responsibility between everyone in this space. We will strive to create an accessible space that reduces the need for you to disclose a disability or impairment for the purposes of gaining an accommodation. In doing this together, we strive to welcome disability, and the changes it brings, into our space.

**Is there anything about the virtual space that we should address now?**

**Are there any other access needs that might affect your participation in the workshop that we could also address?**





# Learning outcomes

- By the end of this webinar, you should be able to:
- Understand best practices for working with your teaching team;
  - Learn strategies for building social presence in your course for your TAs and your students;
  - Identify additional supports and resources for your TAs (ex. Quercus).

**1. Let's identify  
key needs in  
working with  
your teaching  
team.**



# QUICK POLL

How many TAs are in your course?

1. One to two
2. Three to four
3. Five to ten
4. Ten +



# QUICK POLL

How are your TAs teaching this semester?

1. In-Class
2. Online
3. Hybrid
4. Other





# QUICK POLL

How confident do you feel about managing your TAs?

1. Not confident
2. Somewhat confident
3. Very confident
4. I could facilitate this webinar



# Needs assessment:

## What are your concerns?

Please follow the following steps to contribute to a shareable document:

- Follow the link to the Needs Assessment.
- In each of the five categories, add your concerns, reflections or questions:
- Figuring out the role of tutorials in your course
  - determining TA duties, responsibilities and expectations
  - managing TAs
  - responding to the realities of Covid-19
  - supporting TAs as a community of teaching staff
  - troubleshooting problems
  - other
- You have 6 minutes to add your comments.



## 2. Integrate tutorials into your course design.



# Integrate tutorials into the course design framework:

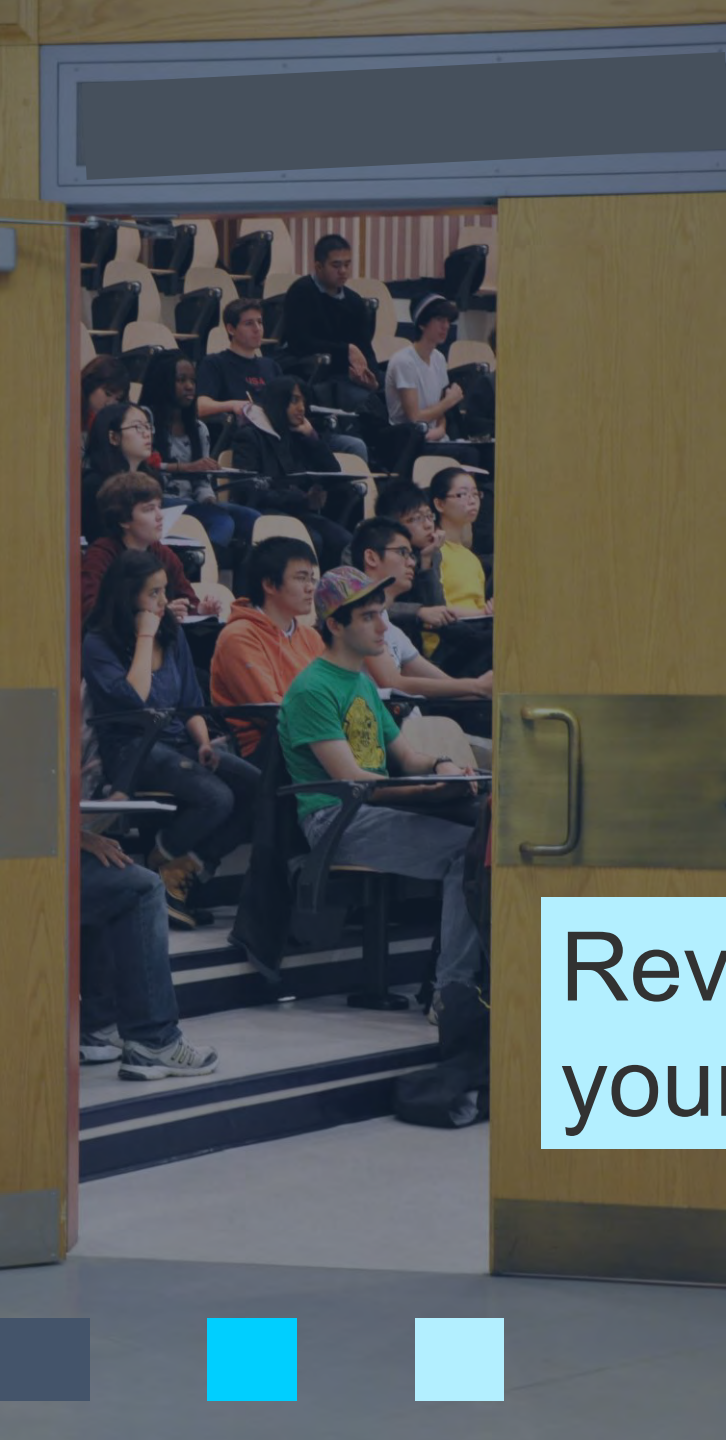
## **Connect the dots between:**

- Lectures and tutorials
- Synchronous and asynchronous components
- Online and in-class learning
- Members of the teaching team

(Garrison & Vaughan, 2008)

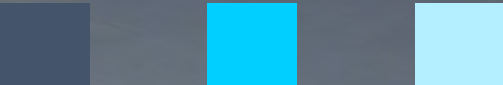
## **Figure out the teaching role of TAs:**

- Manage simulations, labs, case studies, problem sets, etc.
- Run active learning activities
- Check for student understanding
- Take questions and provide content clarification



- What are your TAs responsible for doing?
- What are your obligations towards the TAs?

Review the DDAH form with your TAs



# Intentional planning for your tutorials:

In your individual worksheets, fill out a few course learning outcomes. Next, consider how your TAs might support these LOs in their tutorial sessions. Jot down ideas for tutorial structure, activities, or assessments. We will do a brief take-up but you can keep these for your own reference.





### 3. Foster community in your teaching team



# Building community & cohesion in your teaching team

- Design makes a difference!
- Encourage TAs to personalize content and build their social presence in the course.
- Make your teaching team visible to students (in Quercus and in the first class).
- Discuss the role of your TAs in student learning.



# Supporting TA Presence Online

- **Tech choices:** keep the same platforms for all tutorials (Zoom, Teams, etc.) to ensure continuity across the tutorial sections
- **TA duties:** management of discussion boards; grading of quizzes; etc.
- **Grading:** decide on feedback models: e.g., audio/video in SpeedGrader; announcement tool; etc.



# TA Home Page in Quercus:

## ENG A02: Critical Writing About Literature



Hi!

Welcome to ENG A02.

I'm your instructor, Katherine Shwetz.

Call me Katherine; I use she/her pronouns.

I'm very excited to be teaching you this term!

You can find out more about me, including my research experience, teaching philosophy, and how to contact me, by [clicking here](#).

### Looking for the syllabus?

There are two versions:

- For the full syllabus, complete with all course policies, [click here](#).
- If all you need is to review the due dates for assignments, you can find a "quick reference" version of the syllabus by [clicking here](#).

### Have a question?

First, check out this list of frequently asked questions to see if you can find an answer by [clicking here](#).

You can find all the required reading for the course by [clicking here](#).



# TA Home Page in Quercus:



Hi! I'm Cristina Marie D'Amico, your TA for CSC301. Call me Cris: I use she/her pronouns.

I'm looking forward to teaching you this semester!

Need to get in touch? Contact me using the [Quercus Inbox](#). I respond to emails M-F, within 48 hours.

You can find our tutorial syllabus [here](#), and our course syllabus [here](#).

Want to learn more about my PhD research? Connect with me on [Academia.edu](#)!

# Supporting TA Presence In-Class/Hybrid

- **Spaces:** encourage TAs to explore their teaching space
- **TA duties:** help TAs identify active learning activities and implement/manage them; etc.
- **Collaborate with TAs on creating expectations for in-class conduct:** promote the use of community agreements; etc.





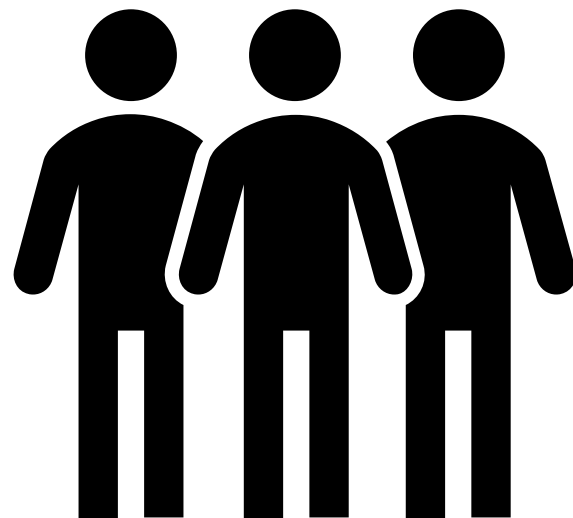
# Tips for Building Cohesion with your Team:

- **More check-ins:** Schedule group meetings throughout the semester (initial and mid-course: maybe one or two more?)
- **Feedback reports:** encourage reflective practice and have your TAs submit brief monthly 'teaching reports.'
- **Create shared documents:** resources, teaching practices and tips, technical support, etc.
- **Observe** your TAs and offer feedback.



What strategies do you use or would like to use to promote sense of teaching staff community?

Please share your responses in the chat.



# Activity: Community Agreements

A community agreement is a shared agreement between learners about how you want to work together over the term.

## Let us know in the chat:

- What can be included in a community agreement?
- Consider what would help your TAs create an effective learning environment?



# 4. TA Teaching Considerations



# Considerations for TA Contract Hours:

## Tasks to consider:

- Moderating synchronous lectures.
- Facilitating in-class tutorials/labs.
- Building content in Quercus.
- Training on new platforms and software.
- Managing in/class learning: e.g., activity learning activities.
- Other administrative duties.





# Logistical considerations:

- Equipment and resources for TAs – hardware, internet connection, software, lab equipment.
- Don't assume your TAs are all digital natives (e.g., online/hybrid teaching or Quercus might be new for them).
- Don't assume that TAs know your departmental resources (e.g., photocopying).
- When selecting edtech tools or platforms, determine key supports and additional resources for TAs and students.





# Managing tutorial sections in Quercus:

- Setting up course roles and [permissions](#) in Quercus.
- Creating [online “spaces”](#) for your TAs:
  - E.g., managing tutorial sections in separate shells vs. cross-listing your tutorial sections
- Office hours: Zoom or [MS Teams Meetings](#) integrated in Quercus.
- Determine level of flexibility in individual tutorials to make student learning experience consistent.





# Setting up engagements:

- Use variety of methods for interactions: learner-to-content, learner-to-instructor, and learner-to-learner (peer) interaction.
- Identify course engagements (online vs. in-class; synchronous vs. asynchronous) and role of TAs
  - E.g., Is setting up asynchronous material a task for your TAs? What supports do they need to help you with teaching (e.g., breakout groups during webinar)?
- Ensure consistent student experience across sections/tutorials: tools, teaching presence, activities, interactions, office hour, etc.
- Develop netiquette or community agreement for in-class and/or online interactions: EDI, accessibility, mental health, etc.

**Quercus Support Resources for your TAs. Consider adding contract hours to review this primary material.**

# Considerations for assessment and feedback:

- Clarify assessment practices, including communication of deadlines and assessment requirements.
- Use effective rubrics in Quercus for various synchronous/asynchronous assessments, including discussion boards, breakout group work, presentations, etc.
- Promote use of SpeedGrader with embedded comments and audio/video feedback.





## CASE STUDY

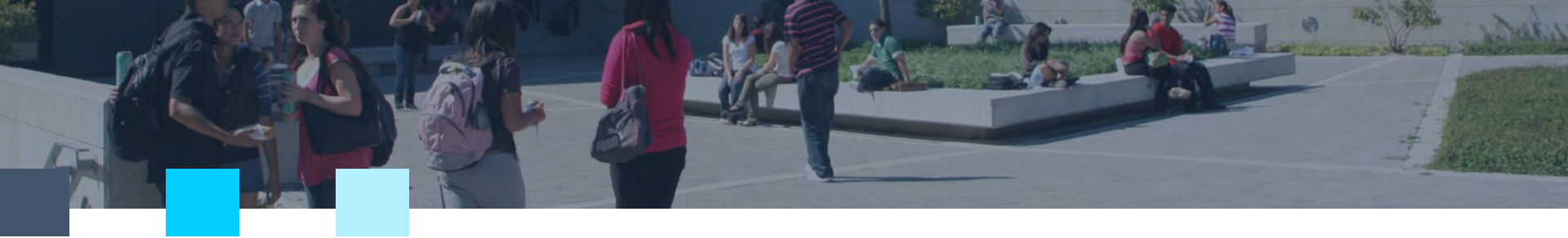
You're working with a team of five TAs and are having difficulty connecting with one TA. She doesn't attend the larger TA group meetings and does not readily respond to emails. You want to connect with her in order to learn more about what's happening in her tutorials.

How would you respond to this in the moment? How would you preempt this situation in the future? Please fill in your responses in the shareable document.

# 5. Training and Support







## How to support TAs:

- Ensure TAs receive training on specific teaching strategies and/or edtech tools (especially if there is a specialized tool/platform in the course).
- Provide a list of supports and in order of operations for managing teaching troubles:
  - First: in-course TA support (head or returning TA)
  - Second: Local IT support (departmental or divisional)
  - Third: [q.help@utoronto.ca](mailto:q.help@utoronto.ca)
- Help TAs develop strategies for student readiness: needs assessment; access to resources (e.g., [Getting Ready for Online](#)); normalizing conversations about mental health; etc.



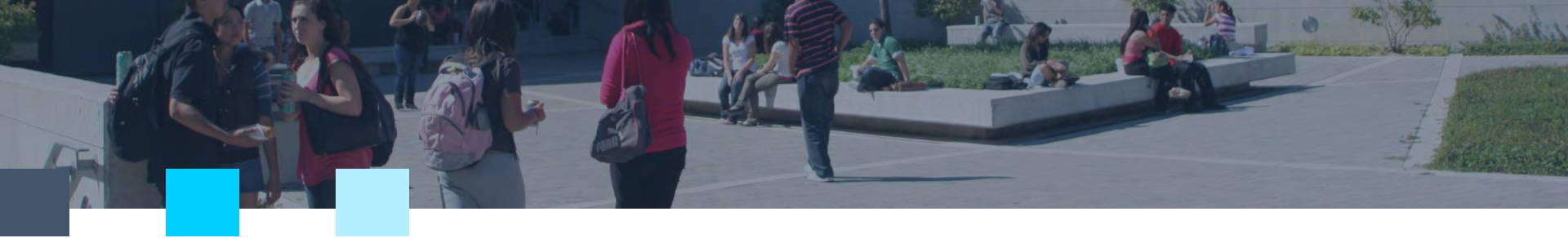
# COVID-19 Health & Safety resources for your TAs:

- [Divisional Guidelines to Summer and Fall 2021 at U of T](#)
- [In-Class \(In-Person\) Instructional and Teaching Lab Guideline PDF](#)
- [COVID-19 Information for University of Toronto Students](#)

## **Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation Resources**

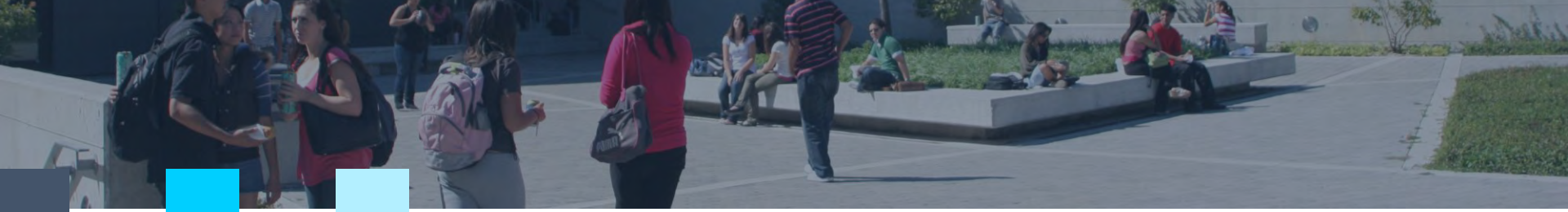
- [COVID-19 In-Class Instruction: First Lesson Mini-Guide](#)
- [COVID-19 In-Class Instruction Guidelines PDF](#)

If you can't find the information you're looking for, reach out to your department/division for additional guidance.



# How to help TAs respond to student learning challenges:

- perceived isolation: building sense of community
- challenges balancing study: how to get to know your students
- work and family commitments: flexibility in learning
- confusion with content: reporting mechanisms on course content
- poor academic performance: identifying students at risk
- time management: frequent check-ins



## Normalizing the use of institutional resources:

- Support resources are not remedial – encourage your TAs to use them and to share them with students!
  - [Assignment calculator](#)
  - [Accessibility services](#)
  - [Accommodations](#)
  - [Otter.ai](#) (for captions in webinars)

# 6. Professionalization of your TAs







# Help your TAs pursue professional development:

- Get TAs involved in course design/redesign
- Building a teaching dossier
- Conduct an in-class observation
- Ask TAs to deliver a guest lecture
- Help TAs reflect on their teaching
- Flag range of teaching PD opportunities:
  - [TATP Workshops](#)
  - [THE500 Teaching in Higher Education](#)
  - [MyGDP at the School of Graduate Studies Centre for Graduate Professional Development](#)
  - Non-traditional teaching professional experiences

# Review of Today's Strategies:

- ✓ Give consideration to TA work hours: make room for webinar facilitation, training on new pedagogies and technologies, and checking in.
- ✓ Give your TAs a presence in the course with images, home pages, and consistent course design in Quercus.
- ✓ Support teaching development for TAs: observe teaching and promote reflective practice.
- ✓ Share tips, strategies, and resources related to teaching.



# THANK YOU

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