

“Cross-Cultural Dimensions in ITA Office Hours Training”

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7:00 – 7:45 am

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Undergraduate Responses

Major: Year:	1. Do you attend TAs' office hours? Yes _22 No _3	3. What should a TA do or say to make you feel comfortable during office hours?	4. Is it important for you that the TA be approachable? Yes _16 No _1	5. Is it important for TAs to show enthusiasm during office hours? Yes _18 No _7
<p>U of M: 2 English; Child Psych., Accounting; AEM 2 – Biochemistry Astrophysics; Individualized Studies</p> <p>MSU: 2 Finance; Business, EE, 2 Physiology; Premed., 2 Communication Disorders; Nursing, 2 Nutritional Science Education; Human biology; Linguistics; Genetics Global Studies Comm. Public Relations</p> <p>U of M: 3 seniors 3 junior 3 sophomores 1 freshman</p> <p>MSU:</p>	<p>How often do you go to your TA's office hours?</p> <p>4 _ Weekly 4 _ Monthly 15 _ Rarely 3 _ Other (explain)</p> <p>Depends on difficulty of material or in preparation for an exam</p> <p>2. Why do you go to office hours?</p> <p>Solving homework problems/questions (13)</p> <p>Prepare for exam (5)</p> <p>Receive extra help (4)</p> <p>Grading error on exam</p>	<p>Friendly / welcoming (8)</p> <p>Open (3)</p> <p>Encourage independent learning/actively guide thinking (2)</p> <p>Not interrupt; be slow & clear (2)</p> <p>Let Ss know if you can't be there (1)</p> <p>Give full attention to Ss (3)</p> <p>Take time to explain (2)</p> <p>Listen (2)</p> <p>Be patient</p> <p>Not be condescending</p> <p>Treat student as equal</p>	<p>What does being "approachable" during office hours mean to you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Be friendly, smile (3) ❖ Be available during OH time (3) ❖ Be prepared (1) ❖ Not intimidating/demeaning (3) ❖ Willing to help (3) ❖ Take time to answer (3) ❖ Don't look bothered (1) ❖ Don't do personal work like talking on the phone, etc. (2) ❖ Explain beyond the textbook (1) ❖ Giving hints & tips (1) ❖ Open & not reserved (2) ❖ Predict common S mistakes & how to help them (1) ❖ Be OK w/ unexpected drop-ins ❖ Open to meeting outside of 	<p>What does being an "enthusiastic" teacher during office hours mean to you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Willing to listen/help (9) ❖ Be happy to be there (3) ❖ Being encouraging (4) ❖ Being interactive (1) ❖ Being engaged (4) ❖ Not necessarily be excited but be helpful (3) ❖ Not monotone ❖ Be attentive ❖ Maintain confidentiality ❖ Don't act like student is wasting your time

9 seniors 5 juniors 4 sophomores		Not be judgmental when asked questions	❖ regular office hours (1) Space should be inviting	
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ITA Responses

(Note: This is not a complete list. Contact us for a complete list.)

Number of respondents: 34 (14 in University of Minnesota and 20 at MSU)

Country : Korea (10) China (18) Taiwan (2) Vietnam (1) Belarus (1) Iran (1) Thailand (1)

Department: 2-DHA/Piano Performance /AEM-2 /4 ECE /5- Chemistry EE/BME/Civ Eng. /Geology/
6-Math /4 Stats/3 Econ./ Management/Advertising/Philosophy

Part I: Background Information about you

1. Do instructors (professors? TAs?) hold office hours in your home country? Yes-14 **No**-12
2. If so, have you ever attended office hours in your home country? Yes-18 **No** -15
3. Have you ever **attended** office hours in the US? **Yes** -33 No- 1
4. Have you **held** office hours in the U.S.? **Yes** -24 No-10
5. How are offices hours different in your country? Explain.

- Based on school and major, the types of office hour are different. Students could always see professors or TAs as often as they can in my home country. Typically, students send email to professors or TAs to make appointment to see them.
- In our culture, we figure out problems with ourselves or friends rather than go to instructors.

Part II: Office Hours in the U.S. Context

Instructions: Take a few minutes to reflect on the questions below. Write down answers and provide examples, if you can.

1. Why do you think students come to see their TA during office hours?
 - Because they can talk to TA personally. They can say anything during office hours that they can't say in the class with some reasons.
 - They feel safer asking the TA than the instructor.
2. What should you do or say to make your student feel comfortable when they come in to your office?
 - Listen to their questions with patience, and try my best to understand and answer them objectively. Do not use preconception of a question, and do not only try to self-defend while facing divergence of opinions.
 - Sometimes I have to be careful to not only help them finish their homework but also make them understand the idea the professors likes them to learn.
3. American students would like their TAs to be “approachable.” What does it mean to be “approachable” during office hours?
 - TA should be around, available, patient and happy to help students.
 - Some students ask me for FACEBOOK and post greetings and questions there.
4. U.S. students expect their TAs to be “enthusiastic” teachers. What does it mean to be an “enthusiastic” teacher during office hours?
 - I think the TAs should be well-prepared, and ready to answer their question. Also, the TAs should try to get the students involved
 - Be active to students' questions. Do not be impatient when students ask a lot of questions, even very simple questions.
 - An enthusiastic TA would search for answers if he/she doesn't know how to solve the problem, and would get back to the student rather than saying I don't know.

References

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Office Hours Resources:

<http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/conflict/index.html>

These scenes present challenging situations between a student and an instructor. Following each clip are interviews with teaching consultants to get their perspectives on handling the conflict. Transcripts are available.

Michigan State University Roleplays

The following roleplays are performed by undergrads at Michigan State University. The purpose is not to give answers to difficult problems but to model appropriate language for ITAs.

Role Play: Cheating

http://clear.msu.edu/viewpoint/viewRecording.php?_ID= 24669_1236878448

Student - *You and your friend have been called to the TA's office because you are suspected of copying each other's homework. You sit together in class and are very close to one another. You both deny that you are cheating on your assignments. Your position is that it is just a coincidence that there is a similarity between your work. You say maybe the answers are similar because you think alike. In fact, you are a bit offended that the TA suggests you may be cheating.*

TA - *You suspect two students in your section have been copying each other's homework assignments. You have no proof -- just a suspicion. Since the assignments are graded and the students have been warned about cheating you decide to confront them. You are careful not to accuse them, but the similarities between their work are striking. You realize it might be a coincidence, but if it's purposeful, you feel responsible for stopping it. How should you discuss this touchy subject with them?*

Role Play: Grading

http://clear.msu.edu/viewpoint/viewRecording.php?_ID=_24669_1236878780

Student - *You have received a "C" in a course and you needed a "B" to keep from going on academic probation (which means you will lose financial support and have to withdraw from the university). This is a crisis for you and you are desperate. You feel deeply and sincerely that it is unfair that one class should prevent you from continuing in school. You are visibly upset as you approach your TA. You plan to plead with the TA to give you a "B," stressing the issue of fairness and emphasizing that the TA's decision is your last chance to continue your education.*

TA - *You are aware that everyone has a strong personal need to stay in school. You also know that the student did "C" work and by objective standards deserves no higher grade. Yet, you also feel the student's desperation, sympathize and need to respond on the spot. How should you respond?*

Role Play: Personal Problem

http://clear.msu.edu/viewpoint/viewRecording.php?_ID=_24669_1236878631

Situation - *You notice that a good student has stopped paying attention and participating in your recitation section, and then gets a lower than normal score on your most recent quiz. The student asks to talk to you personally. At first all she says is that she's been having a hard time lately. But after you speak to her sympathetically, she tells you her parents are getting a divorce. She seems quite depressed. What do you do?*