

Biology Teaching Assistant Teaching Award

Teaching Assistants (TAs) are vital to the success of undergraduates in the Biology Program. They play a key role in effective instruction and the smooth operation of all courses. To recognize the important role that they play in the Biology Program, the Departments of Botany and Zoology are proud to offer an annual award for Teaching Assistants for excellence in Teaching. This award consists of a cash prize of \$500 for the Winner, and certificates of recognition for the Winner and Honourable Mentions. In the past, there have usually been Honourable Mentions, in addition to the prize Winner.

1. Eligibility

The award is open to any Graduate or Undergraduate Teaching Assistant from any department who has TA'ed a BIOL course during the current, and/or the preceding academic year (i.e., from September 2023 to the present term).

Previous/past winners of the Science Teaching Assistant Teaching Award and of the Biology TA Teaching Award are not eligible. However, those who were nominated and did not win are still eligible for this year's award and encouraged to apply.

2. Nomination Process

Nominations are encouraged from teaching supervisors of Teaching Assistants (this includes faculty, contract faculty, sessional lecturers, staff, or other appropriate instructional team members), from colleagues working closely with the TA, and from the students who attended the TA's class or laboratory.

While TAs may not nominate themselves, they are encouraged to discuss their contributions to teaching with an appropriate teaching supervisor or colleague if they feel that they may qualify.

The first step is for the Nominator to notify both the TA and their teaching supervisor of the nomination. The Nominator is expected to write a Letter of Support for the Application Package.

Once a nomination has been secured, the nominated TA (the Nominee) must put together an Application Package. Since this is an important step in the professional development of the TA, it is strongly encouraged that the Nominator, or another appropriate interested party, advise on the development of the application package.

Application Packages, 10 pages maximum, must reflect the judging criteria (See Appendix I) and include supporting documentation (See Point 4, below).

Nomination deadline for 2025: all application packages must be submitted to biology.taship@ubc.ca no later than Sunday, March 23rd 2025 at 11:59 pm.

3. Adjudication process

A committee will be struck by the chair of the committee for the previous year, before the submission of application packages. This year's committee will consist of three faculty members and 1-2 TAs who are recognized as effective teachers and/or are recent teaching award winners in the

faculty. The enclosed criteria will be used by the committee to determine the nominees' effectiveness.

The TA awards are typically announced at the graduate symposiums of Zoology Graduate Student Association (ZGSA) or Botany Graduate Student Associate (BGSA) in late April or early May. Awardees will also be contacted via email.

4. Application Package

Application Packages, 10 pages maximum, must include the required supporting documentation listed below and reflect the criteria outlined in Appendix I.

I. Supporting documentation - REQUIRED

1. **One Letter of Support (two-page maximum)** from the faculty, staff, colleague or student who wishes to nominate the Teaching Assistant. This should be no longer than two pages, and be formatted as a formal letter. Letters should highlight why the TA deserves this award, and how their work reflects the criteria for the award set out in Appendix I. One additional Letter of Support may be included, but is not required. It should follow the same criteria.
2. **A Teaching Curriculum Vitae (one-two pages)** that includes:
 - a. the TA's department and lab affiliations (undergraduate TAs may state their program affiliation), and the TA's email address;
 - b. a summary of the TA's teaching roles and responsibilities in the Biology Program from the past two academic years, including the course number(s), number of students, type of teaching undertaken, hours per week in the classroom, other duties, and a brief description (1 paragraph) of the role of the TA in each of the courses.
3. **A Statement of Teaching Philosophy (one page)**. This is a statement of the Nominee's values and assumptions about teaching and learning in higher education, and how they apply these values and assumptions in their teaching. Appendix II lists some helpful resources for developing a teaching philosophy statement.
4. **A Summary of formal feedback from students, colleagues and/or supervisors (3 pages maximum)**. This may include:
 - a. Official Faculty of Science Teaching Evaluations/Students Experience of Teaching, including scores (out of 5).
 - b. Evaluations (formal or informal) from teaching faculty, colleagues and/or peers. Direct scans of forms are welcome.
 - c. Additional informal feedback related to a particular event or speaking to a specific characteristic highlighted in the Teaching Philosophy.

II. Additional supporting information

- Further evidence of interest and involvement in teaching and learning; for example, participation in seminars, workshops or programs that focus on teaching and learning, or

involvement in departmental or other University committees which examine teaching and learning issues;

- description of a recent instructional challenge that was faced by the TA, and how the TA met this challenge; any other additional work that the TA is involved with, which does not fall into any other category, but is considered to be central to the reasons why this award is merited (e.g., curriculum development, additional coordination duties).

Please note: the ENTIRE package must be no more than 10 pages and submitted as a single PDF file. Longer applications will not be considered.

APPENDIX I

EFFECTIVE TEACHING CRITERIA for the Biology Teaching Assistant Teaching Award

Successful candidates will have demonstrated skills, abilities, and contributions that result in a high level of respect from their students and academic or course supervisors, in several of the following areas:

1. Demonstrates a broad knowledge of the field, and the ability to help students actively learn new knowledge, skills and perspectives, evidenced by student/supervisor feedback. For example:
 - a. actively helps students to learn transferable skills such as oral and verbal communication, problem solving, critical thinking, numeracy, teamwork, leadership;
 - b. is enthusiastic about biology and conveys this to students;
 - c. constructively evaluates student presentations and other work;
 - d. organizes effective presentations, fieldwork or discussion groups that maximize student learning;
 - e. explains facts or information clearly and logically.
2. Shows evidence of working in a collegial manner with students, faculty supervisors and Teaching Assistant colleagues:
 - a. works with other graduate students and faculty to improve the learning environment for students;
 - b. demonstrates rapport with and support of undergraduate students through active listening strategies and actions;
 - c. encourages student collaboration through group projects and presentations.
3. Shows evidence of incorporating new teaching skills learned through workshops, seminars and/or self-directed learning.
4. Shows evidence of reflection and action on personal and professional development within the scope of the Teaching Assistantship.
5. Acts as a role model, demonstrating high academic standards, good listening skills and ethics, such as:
 - a. encourages and supports diversity and equity within and beyond the classroom;
 - b. provides useful constructive feedback (oral and/or written) on students' work;
 - c. is involved in community service (for example, involvement in science fairs, open houses, science outreach, undergraduate/graduate events);
 - d. initiates actions which help to make the classroom a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

APPENDIX II

SELECTED RESOURCES to support applicants in the development of their Teaching Philosophy statement:

- Teaching Philosophy Statement resources from UBC Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology: <https://ctl.ubc.ca/resources/teaching/portfolios/>
- Teaching Perspectives Inventory (discover your unique blend of teaching perspectives and how they may affect your teaching): <http://www.teachingperspectives.com/tpi/>
- Exercises to self-assess, explore and self-reflect on one's own teaching philosophy: <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/catalogs/tp-sheets/tools-reflecting-your-teaching>