Learning Assistants Information Sheet

Certified Learning Assistants Program

What are Learning Assistants?
Learning Assistants (LAs) are undergraduate peer educators that work with students in the classroom setting to support and facilitate active learning in courses that are traditionally difficult or have high enrollment. LAs in CLAP are unique because they are required to enroll in an LA pedagogy/training course concurrent to their first quarter as an LA. In most situations, LAs have taken the course (or a professor-approved, equivalent course) and performed well in it. LAs are an important part of the instructional team. In the classroom, LAs support professors and graduate teaching assistants (TAs) with active learning- typically in the form of group activities or discussions. Outside the classroom, LAs meet, reflect, and plan course curriculum and student progress with professors and TAs on a weekly basis. LAs are not permitted to lead instruction (unsupervised), meet with students about grades or course policy, or perform any course-related administrative tasks, such as grading.

What do Learning Assistants actually do?
The main responsibility of an LA is to support their professor and TAs by assisting students while they are engaged in active learning. LAs are expected to interact with students to facilitate collaborative activities and discussions. LAs are not expected to be content experts. LAs are trained to become learning experts. Undoubtedly, students will have many questions. LAs do not immediately respond to student questions or misconceptions with answers. Instead, LAs learn to guide students to their own conclusions at a metacognitive level. From an observer’s standpoint, LAs circulate the classroom, assist students that ask for help, and check for understanding with all students.

What are the Learning Assistants’ weekly commitments?
The following list is typical for most courses. Actual commitments will vary by course and/or professor. Since course schedules and availability vary from quarter to quarter, LA positions are re-assigned on a quarterly basis.

Learning Assistants are (typically) expected to commit to the following weekly commitments for the entire quarter:

LAs attend weekly planning meetings with their professor and TAs
- 1 hour/week

LAs attend/support all lectures in their assigned section
- 3 hours/week

LAs are assigned to attend/support 2-4 discussion sections or 1-3 lab sections
- 2-4 hours/week

Some LAs might…
- Lead supplemental practice or review sessions
- Monitor/facilitate discussion boards
- Mentor/support student groups outside of class
- Content-related Learning Sessions (similar to Office Hours, but cannot discuss grades or course policies)
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What is the Learning Assistant pedagogy/training course?

All LAs, new to the program, must enroll in UNI STU 176: LA Pedagogy during their first quarter as an LA. Once completed, LAs are certified and do not need to take the course again. It is a 2 unit, graded course that teaches LAs to be effective at facilitating Active Learning and collaborative group work. This training course is mandatory for all new LAs, and there are no alternatives or exceptions. While pedagogical theory is a focus of the course, its aim is to take that theory and put it to immediate practical use.

UNI STU 176 meets once a week: Weeks 1 – Week 10. Currently, UNI STU 176 has four sections and is offered Fall, Winter, and Spring. See the Course Schedule for days/times.

How do LAs get course credit?

LAs earn course credit in UNI STU 198: LA Mentorship and earn 1-3 units. LAs earn units based on the number of hours/week they are assigned to support their course. In most cases, LAs earn 1 unit per 3-4 hours/week. Though rare, departments may offer their own course for credit. Department-run courses must be exclusive to LAs and have Academic Senate approval.

Who recruits Learning Assistants?

Schools, departments, and professors are responsible for recruiting their own LAs. However, CLAP does assist with recruiting, when needed. Students interested in becoming an LA, should contact the department and/or professor for more information about their recruiting process.

Do you still have questions about the Certified Learning Assistants Program?

https://dtei.uci.edu/opportunities/faculty/learning-assistants/

Contact Josh Arimond, CLAP Lead Coordinator, at jarimond@uci.edu