



Checklist for Starting the Teaching Term

Note: this page will save you time and anxiety ☺

The page at http://www.eos.ubc.ca/research/cwsei/eossei-times/EOSSEITimes_4.7StartOfTerm.html has live links.

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Basic preparation

- Is the course new to you? (1) Talk to previous teachers. (2) Do not make unnecessary changes.
- Are you one of two or more instructors in this course? Meet with your colleagues! A teaching team is like a research team; it takes collaboration to deliver a quality result. See page 1 of the multiple instructors report at <http://www.eos.ubc.ca/research/cwsei/resources/mi-mar2010.pdf>.
- Check the class list via the Faculty Service Centre (<https://ssc.adm.ubc.ca/fsc/servlets/SRVFSCFramework>), including student photos! Don't know how? Ask a colleague, STLF, or staff person. It's easy!
- Finalize your syllabus. Include clear information about (1) the goals of the course, and (2) marking. If you haven't developed learning goals for the course yet, talk to an STLF about getting started, even just with overarching goals.
- Check out the classroom and its equipment early. Classroom services modernizes classes during the summer and you do not want to encounter surprises on your first day. If a key is needed to get to the equipment, find out where to pick it up each day. It also helps to know who (and how) to call for help if something doesn't work (like a projector bulb going out ...)

What improvements will you try out this term?

- Less lecturing? A new lab exercise? Modified pre-reading with quizzes? Etc. ...
- Talk to an STLF! A single chat? Regular meetings? You choose. See contacts below.
- Don't be too ambitious! Don't let one good idea turn into major changes in content, flow, etc.

Vista: does the course use UBC's course management system?

- Initialize the course via <http://www.elearning.ubc.ca/lms/instructor-resources/request-a-vista-section/>
- Using that form, ask for the previous term's content to be rolled over into the current version.
- Work through the site and either HIDE, modify or delete modules, quizzes, assignments, discussions, etc. Avoid having a Vista site that is confusing when students see it for the first time.

Have you planned those all-important first two lessons?

- Set the precedent for how class will work; for example, use clickers, worksheets, groups etc. in the same way you have planned for "normal" classes.
- Explain to students how AND why the course is structured the way it is.
- Review the 2-pager from CWSEI http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca/resources/files/First_Day_of_Class.pdf

Is there a diagnostic test for checking pre-requisite knowledge?

- Check the questions – modify the test if needed, but get someone else to check new questions!
- Set up the diagnostic quiz – online using Vista, in class with Scantron ... whatever is being used.

Will you be using clickers or other forms of participation?

- If you're brand new to clickers, contact the UBC clicker people for basic setup and support information: <http://www.elearning.ubc.ca/toolkit/clickers/>
- Talk to a colleague who has used clickers.
- Grading: consider making use of the "80% rule" – that is, a student can achieve 100% of total possible clicker or participation grades by engaging in 80% of the opportunities.
- Best practices are being established very rapidly these days. Check out resources and videos at http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca/resources/SEI_video.html, especially "*How to Use Clickers Effectively*". It is only 12 minutes.
- Ask an STLF to provide advice: from a single clicker question to general strategies, we can help prioritize your energy and prevent a disappointing experience for you and students.

Are TAs (teaching assistants) contributing in this course?

- Meet them early. Meet with them often. They are part of the teaching team, and, just like research teams, teaching teams are most effective when they are collaborative.
- Set up a TA hours budget and share it with the TAs, so they know what you expect.
- Graduate students are often nervous in their new role, but keen to do well. Be a mentor.
- Set clear expectations. Consistency requires "how-to-mark" rubrics, not just answer keys.

Are there labs or field trips? (See also "TAs" above.)

- Are instructions and resources up to date?
- Is everyone involved clear about the lab space and logistics of resources, samples, and grading?
- Never leave TAs all alone to figure out how labs work. It's your course, and they are very much beginners at the teaching game.

Do you use special resources? Examples include scratch-&-win quiz cards, demonstration materials, Scantron sheets, a document projector, etc.

- Everyone else will be leaving it to the last minute to obtain these resources. Avoid the rush!

Remember that STLFs are here to help (for another year or so only!) so drop in to EOS-south rm361, or email / phone to chat about anything education-oriented. Contact information is below. AND – many of our / your colleagues have really cool ideas and tricks of the trade. Be collegial ! Finally, if you have any other good ideas (or corrections) contact Francis Jones (contact details below).

All the best for the coming teaching terms!

Contact EOS-SEI: To talk about your course(s) or teaching and learning in general, visit EOS-South 361, or contact Francis Jones (fjones@eos.ubc.ca), Brett Gilley (bgilley@eos.ubc.ca) or Sara Harris (sharris@eos.ubc.ca). See also <http://www.eos.ubc.ca/research/cwsei/>. Phone is 604 822-2138.