

HONORS EXPERIENCE

Supervised Undergraduate Teaching

Center for
Professional
Communication



Learn by Teaching Strengthen professional credentials

Effective Communication: The Indispensable Competency

In today's global workplace, agile organizations rely on both the technical and communication skills of talented professionals to solve problems, drive excellence, and thrive on change.

Leaders in every profession are those few who can articulate vision, align discrete projects with larger missions, set high standards for themselves and their teams, and foster diverse but complementary technical talents.

There is no better way to strengthen your own engineering and communication competencies than by teaching others. If you can explain it, you own it. If you can manage teams, you can lead.

Strictly aligned with the larger UB 2020 vision to grow a premier public research university with far-reaching impact, UB's network of Undergraduate Teaching Assistants (UTAs) is an integral and valued part of that community of learning, respected worldwide for its contributions to research, innovation, industry, and public service.

A small number of qualifying students are invited each semester to apply for the Center for Professional Communication's highly competitive and cross-disciplinary learning experience.

Those few selected from UB Engineering and the College of

Arts and Sciences meet regularly with faculty in small multi-disciplinary discussion groups to analyze case studies, identify best practices in outcomes-based learning, and develop proficiency with formative assessment tools designed to encourage revision and improvement.

Selected candidates sharpen technical and communication competencies by developing professional-quality communication products, and by facilitating cross-disciplinary teams of engineering students to achieve specific goals. Some may also elect to pursue potential follow-on UTA opportunities.

EAS 495**Supervised Undergraduate Teaching****How Does the Course Work?**

EAS 495 “Supervised Undergraduate Teaching: Technical and Professional Communication” is offered by invitation only to a limited number of students from the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and the College of Arts and Sciences. Currently, the course is cross-listed with the Department of English. The Center for Professional Communication requires formal student application for acceptance into the course to ensure balance among disciplines and high-quality participation.

As a minimum, students must have achieved junior status and a GPA of 3.0. Students are encouraged to submit a letter of intent during their sophomore year to indicate interest in limited openings. The Honors College has formally approved this course as fulfilling one of the six required HONORS Experiences if completed successfully with a grade of “B” or higher.

During this three-credit, one-semester course, students meet regularly and participate in faculty-led discussions to explore topics ranging from learning styles to crisis communication to author guidelines for publishing in scientific journals.

Designed to help students develop life-long learning skills as well as teaching skills, students prepare measurable personal goals for themselves and their as-



“I have always been a stickler for grammar, uniformity, and aesthetics in the work that I do. However, until the [team meeting] addressing format vs. design in the students’ projects, I did not realize that the design of a document can actually help convey the message of the document.”

Chemical Engineering UTA

signed student teams, against which they prepare required progress reports.

To refresh and expand technical and professional writing competencies, EAS 495 students work one-on-one with faculty to develop a substantive professional-quality communication deliverable on a student-selected/faculty-approved topic.

In addition, each EAS 495 student facilitates (under supervision) a team of multidisciplinary engineering students tasked with producing specific faculty-assigned outcomes and deliverables. Each student produces individual work, but learns to work collaboratively with a

team to evaluate, revise, and improve the work within time and project constraints.

The UTA functions not as a grader, but as a project manager and coach. Intimately familiar with assessment policies (since they are identical to those being used to assess the UTA’s work), the UTA helps his or her team focus purpose, organize for audience and context, revise to achieve appropriate tone, uncover supporting evidence, build logical arguments, critically examine claims, and finally apply editing tools to achieve an expected standard of quality. These skills often lead to requests to serve as a UTA in other courses or to job opportunities.

**Peer Teaching Opens Doors for UTAs**

Supervised Undergraduate Teaching benefits UTAs in two ways: (1) Improves understanding of engineering and communication concepts, and (2) Yields insights about career plans.

**Learn to teach
teach to learn****New Possibilities**

Students are often astonished to discover the UTA experience has led them to new and better places. Many are surprised to find that intense involvement in writing and teaching uncovers new layers in their own thinking or reveals unexplored ambitions. Many report making new connections as a result of the focused collaborative work.

Our UTAs develop high expectations for themselves and their teams. Observing first-hand the impact of revising for clarity, designing for emphasis, and

re-shaping information for various contexts leads UTAs to demand more of their own writing and speaking.

Many tell us that guiding others through the structured drafting and revision process has resulted in their producing richer, more focused communications in the same or less time.

Cool Projects

Our UTAs have contributed to faculty proposals, created podcasts explaining tough concepts, even contributed to the Concrete Canoe Team’s second-place win! A publisher recently asked us to review a book in manuscript. What cool project do you want to explore?

Q&A

Frequently Asked Questions

When may I take EAS 495?	Students may enroll in EAS 495 as early as the first semester of the junior year.
May I repeat EAS 495 for credit?	Yes. You may repeat EAS 495 for up to six (6) credit hours (with departmental approval).
Are there any prerequisites?	Yes. Students must have junior status, a minimum GPA of 3.0, and instructor permission to enroll.
Who may apply to take EAS 495?	Currently, EAS 495 is cross-listed in the School of Engineering and the Department of English. If you are not enrolled in either Engineering or English, please send an inquiry to Dr. K.L. Bernard, Director, Center for Professional Communication.
Does EAS 495 qualify as one of the “Honors Experiences”?	Yes. EAS 495 “Supervised Undergraduate Teaching: Technical and Professional Communication” qualifies as one of the six required “Honors Experiences.” To receive Honors credit, you must earn a “B” or higher in the course.
When does EAS 495 meet?	The discussion class meets regularly as posted. In addition, you are required to facilitate one student team meeting each week.
Is EAS 495 given every semester? Is there a “distance-learning” version?	EAS 495 is offered in the Fall and Spring semesters during the regular academic year. The course is not offered during the summer. There is no “distance-learning” version.
Does acceptance into EAS 495 require an application?	Yes. Class size is limited to ensure personalized attention, high-quality participation, and balance among disciplines.
Where may I find an application?	You can request an application by contacting Dr. K.L. Bernard, Director, Center for Professional Communication, UB Engineering, 313 Bell Hall, North Campus, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York at Buffalo, 14260 E-mail: kbernard@buffalo.edu Phone: 716-645-3470 x2158.
Does the application require a writing sample?	Yes. The application requires a writing sample. The writing sample can be a piece you prepared for another purpose that represents the quality of your work. We’re more interested in where you want to go than where you have been.
May I apply to EAS 495 during the drop-add period?	Yes. We welcome students during this period, but expect students to catch up with the class by using the course materials posted on <i>UBLeans</i> .
Are students who have English as a Second Language eligible to apply?	Yes. We encourage international students with English-language competency to apply.
How are students selected to participate?	Selection is based on a number of factors including responses to the formal application, writing samples, interviews, and faculty recommendations. Students are also selected to maintain a multidisciplinary discussion group.
If I am not selected to participate in one class session, may I apply for another?	Yes. Since class size is limited, we may not be able to accommodate all qualified students in any given semester. Students are encouraged to apply multiple times. We also welcome letters of intent to apply as early as the sophomore year.
How much time will this course require?	Prior students report this course requires the same amount of in-class and out-of-class time as any traditional three-credit course. It’s just more fun than most.
Will this course qualify me for other on-campus UTA positions?	Several engineering departments have identified TechCom or ProCom Consultant positions for students who have successfully completed EAS 495.

BENEFITS

How Will EAS 495 Help Me Reach My Goals?

Profession/ Workplace	Advanced Education
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Q How good are your professional communication skills?</p> <p>A. “Actually, I was selected to help my peers develop these skills. Would you like to see both my writing samples and performance reports? We used several media channels...”</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Q Are you prepared to write a thesis about research findings?</p> <p>A. “Yes, I have developed a substantive document through multiple revisions against exacting standards. May I send you a copy?”</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Q Have you had any leadership or management experience?</p> <p>A. “I led a team of five multidisciplinary, multicultural professional students to achieve specific project goals. I ensured my team met interim deliverables, and formatively reviewed written and oral...”</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Q Are you qualified for a Graduate Teaching Assistantship?</p> <p>A. “Yes, I completed a UTA at UB—a premier research institution having the US’ 10th largest international student body. I helped multidisciplinary students improve their engineering arguments.”</p>

“Participation in this course was an outstanding experience. It provided me the opportunity to improve my own communication and instructional skills tremendously.”

Civil Engineering Student

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”

— Benjamin Franklin (adapted from Chinese proverb)



Get involved! learning is not a spectator sport

Good learning, like good work, is collaborative

You will rarely work in isolation. Professionals consistently report they spend 40% to 90% of their time communicating. The percentage increases with greater responsibility. Thus, it comes as no surprise that employers across all sectors and all disciplines consistently rank communication competencies the MOST DESIRED skill when making initial hires and when considering employees for promotion. As one former student put it, “Technical skills are a given; communication skills differentiate.”

Hands-on experience helping others to acquire these skills is an incomparable way to demonstrate excellence in this indispensable competency.

Participating as a UTA in EAS 495 also gives academically superior students an opportunity to exercise, test, and improve growing leadership capabilities in a supportive environment.

Students like working with UTAs because UTAs understand challenges and constraints. Faculty like working with UTAs because it allows them to incorporate more active learning into their classes, and permits them to write more specific and personalized letters of recommendation. Employers routinely request more candidates with this kind of experience.

Get involved now. Lend your talents and become an active participant in the UB community of learning.

For more information, please contact:

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