



Learning Assistance Program

Faculty Guide

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Learn more about the **Learning and Academic Resource Center's** SI Program, Learning Assistance Program and Learning Skills workshops at www.LARC.UCI.EDU



Learning Assistance Program

Overview

LARC provides a variety of academic support programs. LARC Learning Assistance Program is based on STEM Colorado LA Program which has gained national recognition since 2007 and provides workshops at the American association of Physics Teachers, the Physics Teacher Education Coalition and the National Science Teachers Association.

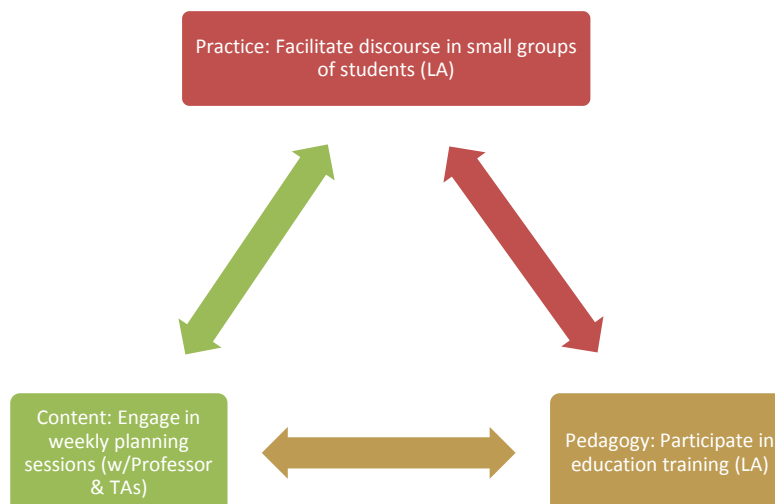
Learning Assistance Program

Learning Assistants are undergraduate students who are hired by an Academic Unit and supported by LARC to help transform undergraduate courses to include small groups of students articulating, defending and modifying their ideas about a relevant problems or phenomena. Learning Assistants are talented undergraduates who attend lectures, enhance student learning in challenging courses by making them more collaborative, student-centered, and interactive in their tutorials and discussion sections.

LA Experience & Goals

Although the LA experience is somewhat different for each course, the experience for all LA's involves three related activities and have similar goals of collecting data about student performance & perception, demonstrate the efficacy of reduced ratio, student peer collaboration and objective driven discussion.

1. *Practice*: LA's facilitate collaboration among students in learning groups by formatively assessing student understanding and asking guiding questions.
2. *Content*: They meet weekly with their faculty instructor to plan for the upcoming week, reflect on the previous week and analyze assessment data.
3. *Pedagogy*: All new LA's enroll in Uni Stu 175 where they develop techniques for facilitating collaboration for small group instruction; reflect on their own teaching, learning and make connections to relevant education literature. After Uni Stu 175 LA's will meet with coordinator in advisory sessions periodically during the quarter.





Learning Assistance Program

Faculty Best Practices

There is no dictated design of what course transformation should look like. Instead, faculty members who seek and are assigned LA's must agree to:

1. Promote LA's during lectures and encourage interaction / collaboration among LA's & students enrolled in the course
2. Meet in weekly content planning sessions with the LA's who support their courses
3. Meet mid-quarter with LARC staff regarding progress of the LA program
4. Attend a preparation session for using LA's
5. Evaluate transformations and assess learning in their own courses.

Weekly Content Planning Session

Meet once a week in content planning sessions with the LA's who support your course. Below is the recommended structure of these meetings.

- Reflect on previous week's discussions/activities (what worked? What could be improved?)
- Review Learning Objectives for upcoming discussion
 - Sample Learning Objectives:
 - In today's discussion, students will work in teams to categorize given measurements as either vectors or scalars.
 - Today, students will demonstrate checks and balances of the three branches of U.S. government through a group role play.
 - Pairs of students will create unique hypothetical scenarios that effectively demonstrate the relationship between supply and demand.
- Collaborate & Review any discussion activities/answers with LA's for upcoming sessions
 - Work with your LA's and discover what ideas/ activities they have that would incorporate into discussion.
- Meeting wrap up

How Faculty Can Utilize LA's During The Course

Introduce the LA's at the beginning of the course and let the students know LA's are there to help facilitate discussion. Encourage students to ask questions and seek help from LA's and other students in the course. Promote the value of collaboration and discussion amongst peers and actively remind students to utilize LA's during their sessions. LA's can also help proctor exams. LA's make ideal peer tutors for academic units with existing tutoring programs and serve as successful role models for students to take advantage of them.

Course Design:

There is no dictated design of what course transformation should look like in order to best utilize LA's. Help with course design is available through the [Learning and Academic Resource Center](#) and the [Center for Engaged Instruction](#) (located in the Division of Teaching and Learning). The following are recommendations.

Lecture Sessions

In lecture settings that use personal response system ("clickers"), Learning Assistants assist with the facilitation of peer instruction. They circulate the class (as does the instructor), making sure all students are engaged in discussion, promoting useful dialog, answering student questions and providing feedback to the instructor on student understanding.

What Faculty See From Students

After the instructors pose a question, students either respond on their own, or discuss with neighboring students before responding. Typical discussions for challenging conceptual questions last 2-3 minutes

How Faculty Can Utilize LA's During Lecture

LA's circulate among groups of students, asking them to share their reasoning and probing their responses. Their role is not to confirm answers but to help students articulate their ideas and justify their reasoning to themselves and other students.

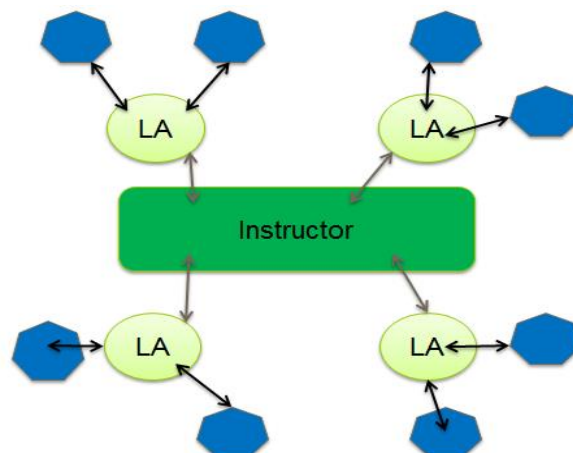
Materials Faculty Provides

Course Textbooks

Challenging conceptual questions 2-4 per 50-minute class session

Students need clickers or other technology to submit their responses

Instructors need technology to receive student responses





Learning Assistance Program

Discussion Sessions

During a discussion section students work in small groups on activities such as worksheets that emphasize the main concepts in the course. Tutorial instructors generally do not lecture but ask questions designed to help you find your own answers. Students are expected to construct answers for themselves through discussions with classmates and the tutorial instructors.

Occasionally, tutorial instructors may interrupt with a brief lecture to reveal common issues among groups. Since discussions require active participation, a small portion of the final grade for the course is based on students' participation in the tutorial sessions. There are many ways this can be accomplished, and faculty are encouraged to explore the resources available from the Office of the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning.

What Faculty See From Students

Students work together in groups on challenging activities or carefully sequenced questions that can help them build conceptual understanding or problem solving sophistication, critical thinking and analytical skills. Students are expected to defend their reasoning and negotiate meaning with their peers.

How Faculty Can Utilize LA's During Discussion

LA's circulate among groups of students, listening and observing groups as they work through context-rich problems and challenging analysis of relevant course material. When appropriate, LA's engage students in Socratic dialog, asking probing questions about the groups' current thinking. LA's also try to get students into discussions about the problem, concept, or exercise with one another. LA's do not give answers; instead they ask probing questions that can help lead students into productive discussions.

Materials Faculty Provides

Textbooks

Guided-inquiry based activity documents or sets of well-sequenced questions that allow students to articulate defend and modify their ideas.

Large, mobile dry-erase boards are useful for students to build ideas, work problems and modify ideas collaboratively as a small group.



Learning Assistance Program

Uni Stu 175: Methods in Small Group Instruction

Learning Assistants are talented undergraduates who enhance student learning in challenging courses by making them more collaborative, student-centered, and interactive. This course is taught by the LARC Director & LARC Supplemental Instruction Coordinator.

- Learning Assistants for a particular course are recruited from among the top students who recently completed that course.
- Concurrent to teaching, new Learning Assistants participate in a credit/no credit pedagogy course that develops their pedagogical content knowledge.

By the end of this pedagogy course, LA's will be able to:

- Apply basic theories and principles concerning how learners experience information
- Design and implement their own plans for effective small group facilitation
- Provide written analysis of the methods they have implemented and evaluate their own performance
- Improve as a peer facilitator through instructor and peer feedback
- Develop awareness of the ways in which intellectual & cultural diversity impact learning
- Develop critical thinking & leadership skills they can use in their professional life

What LA's Are Saying About Uni Stu 175:

"I feel as though the techniques I learned in Uni Studies can definitely apply to my own habits"

"Uni Stu 175 has definitely helped a lot in terms of helping me to be an effective LA."

"My ideas of how I learn have definitely changed from my experience; I hadn't really analyzed my process of digesting information at a high level before. This experience has shown me insight into my own strengths and weaknesses as a learner and student."

Uni Stu 175 Lecture Topics

1. Planning for Interactive Groups
2. Motivation & Collaborative Learning
3. Communication & Questioning Strategies
4. Applying Bloom's Taxonomy During Instruction
5. Self-regulation & Metacognition
6. Learning Styles & Differentiated Instruction
7. LA Evaluations & Classroom Observations
8. Assessing Student Understanding
9. Self-Care & Student Perception
10. Addressing Student Difficulties



Learning & Academic Resource Center

LARC's Mission Statement

LARC's mission is to create independent, confident learners by connecting successful students trained as facilitators with peers enrolled in historically challenging courses, and by providing creative study strategies and encouraging active involvement in the enthusiastic pursuit of academic success. LARC connects "what to learn" with "how to learn" in a student-centered, collaborative learning experience.

LARC Tutorials

LARC provides regularly scheduled, out of class tutorial sessions where students work together to consolidate key concepts and develop effective study strategies. LARC tutorials are facilitated by "LARC Tutorial Leaders", students who have previously and successfully completed the targeted course. LARC tutorial Leaders attend lectures, take notes, act as model students for their peers. During their first quarter at LARC, Tutorial Leaders complete the Uni Stu 175 training course. LARC tutorials largely support used in student learning in historically challenging courses by making them more collaborative, student-centered, and interactive. Contact Tracie Welser (twelser@uci.edu) for more information.

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Academic Learning Skills & On-Demand Workshops

50-minute study skills workshops are open to all UCI students who wish to acquire new learning strategies, improve academic performance and become efficient, independent learners. Workshops cover a variety of topics, which are offered throughout each quarter. Any UCI unit can request academic learning skills workshops tailored to their students. LARC has facilitated academic learning skills workshops for SPOP, SOAR, Athletics, Student Support Services, International Peer Group, Transfer Student Center, Mesa Court Housing, Middle Earth and Thrive with School of Social Ecology. Contact Soledad Quartucci (squartuc@uci.edu) for more information.

Tutor Training Workshops-On-Demand

Any UCI unit can request tutor training facilitation tailored for their individual learning centers and programs throughout the year. LARC has facilitated tutor training workshops for Athletics' Al Irwin Academic Center, Economics Learning Center, Math Circle's Math CEO Program and Student Support Services. Contact Tanaz Gibbs (tgibbs@uci.edu) for more information.