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TA Orientation Day for Physics Students at SFU - The Design, the Implementation, and Our Observations

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Simon Fraser University, like other universities, has offered an orientation day for teaching assistants for many years. While many of the sessions are aimed at a general audience, physics and other science students usually consider them to be not very useful. To address their needs, we - two faculty members and an educational developer - developed a 6-hour program designed specifically for the needs of our new graduate students who are about to start their first TA job.

We will report on the development of this program, how our observations from previous work with first-time TAs influenced our design decisions, and the outcomes that we are aiming for. In particular, we will point out how our program differs from the general audience TA orientation, and how it is integrated with a mandatory course for first year graduate students at SFU called "Introduction to Graduate Studies: Research and Teaching in Physics".

We will share the final orientation program, with a focus on some specific examples, and our observations from the first implementation in the Fall of 2013. Some of the feedback we received after the session will also be discussed and compared to reflections by participants after they had completed their first term as TAs.

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