

# Asking the right questions

Congratulations! You have accepted a postdoc appointment at ABC University. Your teaching assignment for Fall 2020 is MATH 101 Calculus 1 Section 1. Tomorrow, you will be meeting with one of your future colleagues to discuss the course. List the questions that you will ask.

- What is the coursework and the course topics?
- How large is the class?
- What are the department's standards/policies on cheating?
- Do we have past materials? Can we use them?
- How can we make this class inclusive to different kinds of students?
- Are there some grades / courses required as prereqs?
- What type of students are in this course? Applied math, pure math?
- How often do you hold office hours?
- What do you wish you would have known before you taught the course?
- What other advanced courses depend on Calc I? (So I can cover all the prereqs for those courses.)
- To what extent are sections supposed to collaborate? Can we make our own assessments?
- What was the last textbook used for this course?
- How long is this course? How often is it?
- What is the students' background like?
- How should I handle regrades / grades contents?
- Is the content focussed more on theory or procedure?
- What forms do exams take, historically?
- Should I write on a blackboard, or write notes prior to the course?
- What's the historical grade distribution?
- Is there an established syllabus for the course?
- What are the topics students often find difficult, or struggle with?
- What is the physical layout of the room?
- Is there an expected grade distribution?
- Does the university subscribe to a specific online homework system?
- What is the late homework policy?
- What strategies will we use to collect feedback on the course?
- Do you usually expect to curve exams?
- What is the university context of this course? Grades relate to majors, applications for other colleges, etc.
- How many exams or homeworks should we prepare?
- How to photocopy files?
- What are helpful classroom activities?
- What are the general learning goals for the course?

- How many TAs will I be assigned?
- May I get a detailed course schedule?
- Is there a list of technology available to me as an instructor? (just in time teaching, assessments, etc)
- Will we compose the exams together?
- What are the teaching methods you adopted, and are they effective?

Corrin adds:

- What is the culture of the institution with regards to the students? Do students ask questions in class or not? Are they grade focussed or not? Are they competitive?
- Is there an instructors' guide for the textbook?
- What resources are provided by university? Are there tutoring services on campus? Disabilities services?
- How many sections are there to this course?
- Demographics / personal situations of students.

## Themes

- Mathematical content of the course
- General background of the students
  - what other courses have they taken?
  - how large is the class?
  - demographic / personal info
- University resources for instructors and students
  - how to print & copy
  - tutoring
  - disability services (accommodations if a student requires extra time on exam, etc)
  - instructor resources
- Grading
  - how to grade
  - grade distribution
- Logistics
  - class size
  - room setup
  - how often / how long meet
- Culture or context of the course
  - what if student gets a C?
  - are students grade-oriented, do they answer questions, ...
- Personal experience
  - your experience teaching this course
- Accessibility (can lump in with another category?)
  - how to make it fair to people from various backgrounds