

Teacher (T1)

1) How did you work with TEP students in your teaching, and how does this differ from your usual use of teaching assistants or student helpers?

Answer: I use different types of student assistants in my courses, including traditional teaching assistants and other student helpers. In practice, I did not experience a major difference in how TEP students performed compared to other assistants. They all work as teaching assistants regardless of the specific program they belong to, and in terms of teaching tasks, I would say their performance was quite similar.

2) What impact, if any, did TEP students have on the learning environment or teaching practice in your course?

Answer: One noticeable difference was that TEP students felt more integrated into the department community. They seemed to have a better understanding of how things work at the departmental level and were able to help more independently. This sense of belonging made them more proactive and engaged. In contrast, teaching assistants are often focused only on their assigned tasks without being involved in the broader departmental context. From this perspective, the stronger community attachment of TEP students was a positive contribution.

3) From your observation, did students who were not part of TEP benefit from the presence of TEP students? If so, how?

Answer: It is difficult to say for certain. In some cases, TEP students naturally took on leadership or support roles when working in groups of teaching assistants, which could be beneficial for others. However, I have also seen non-TEP teaching assistants take similar initiative in the past. So while there may be some indirect benefits, it is not entirely clear how distinct or consistent this effect is.

4) How would you assess the preparedness and autonomy of TEP students compared to traditional teaching assistants or student helpers?

Answer: TEP students appeared more confident and autonomous when working within the department. They seemed more comfortable navigating departmental routines and expectations. That said, when it comes specifically to course content and subject knowledge, I did not observe a significant difference compared to traditional teaching assistants.

5) Is there anything else related to TEP students or the TEP program that you would like to mention?

Answer: Overall, I think TEP is a positive initiative for the department. It creates a group of students who are more closely connected to departmental activities, which may have longer-term benefits. One concern, however, relates to workload. The number of allocated working hours is quite high, and it is sometimes unclear how closely these hours are monitored. There is also a question of how this workload might affect students' academic progress if not carefully balanced. Ensuring that students can manage their responsibilities without negative consequences for their studies is an important consideration.

Teacher (T2)

1) How did you work with TEP students in your teaching, and how does this differ from your usual use of teaching assistants or student helpers?

Answer: One major difference is that I no longer need to independently search for teaching assistants each year, which is a significant relief. The program provides a steady pool of engaged students who understand what they are signing up for. This makes the collaboration much smoother, as everyone is already aligned regarding expectations and responsibilities. As a result, we can focus directly on the actual teaching-related work instead of spending time clarifying roles, motivations, and administrative details. This saves a substantial amount of time while still allowing for good interpersonal interaction with the students.

2) What impact, if any, did TEP students have on the learning environment or teaching practice in your course?

Answer: The main impact is that we can rely on having teaching assistants who are genuinely engaged and motivated to support students. The selection process helps filter out those who may not be as interested in contributing to the learning environment. While we have had very good teaching assistants in the past, there were also cases where assistants were more focused on their own interests rather than student support. With TEP students, there has been a noticeable increase in empathy and willingness to help. Students who seek assistance tend to receive higher-quality support, and overall, there are simply more engaged assistants available than before.

3) From your observation, did students who were not part of TEP benefit from the presence of TEP students? If so, how?

Answer: It is difficult to assess this directly. In some cases, it feels as though the engagement and motivation of TEP students positively influence others,

potentially encouraging a more supportive attitude overall. However, this effect is hard to observe consistently, especially since teaching assistants are sometimes distributed across different campuses or work remotely and therefore do not interact directly with one another. That said, from the students' perspective, they benefit from having assistants who are willing, capable, and motivated to help in a meaningful way, rather than simply being present for contractual reasons.

4) How would you assess the preparedness and autonomy of TEP students compared to traditional teaching assistants or student helpers?

Answer: On average, TEP students are more engaged and better prepared. An important factor is continuity: the same students often assist across multiple courses and even return to the same course in subsequent years. This continuity has been extremely valuable, as returning assistants already understand the course structure and expectations. While we have had excellent teaching assistants before, TEP students are generally very well prepared for the tasks they are assigned and require less initial guidance.

5) Is there anything else related to TEP students or the TEP program that you would like to mention?

Answer: Having access to a pool of prepared and motivated students has been a major relief and has significantly improved our working conditions. From my perspective, the program should definitely continue. The hiring structure allows for clearer expectations, and TEP students tend to be more willing to go the extra mile when needed. That said, it is important to remain attentive to workload and avoid overutilizing students, especially since they may feel reluctant to say no. At present, this has not been a major issue, as communication with students is generally open and constructive, but it is something that should be monitored.

Teacher (T3)

1) How did you work with TEP students in your teaching, and how does this differ from your usual use of teaching assistants or student helpers?

Answer: We worked with TEP students through a structured onboarding process. There were two meetings before the course started: an initial meeting to introduce the overall responsibilities, followed by a second meeting closer to the course start to clarify detailed tasks. Additional meetings were held during the course to coordinate activities such as assignment correction.

In my courses, TEP students and non-TEP teaching assistants were treated similarly in formal terms. However, in practice, TEP students often formed the backbone of the teaching assistant team because of their prior experience, particularly those who had supported the same course in previous years. In this sense, they functioned as senior teaching assistants.

In smaller courses, working with experienced TEP students required minimal supervision. After a brief preparatory meeting, they were able to manage most practical aspects of the course independently. They handled student questions effectively and escalated issues only when necessary. Compared to other teaching assistants, I found that TEP students required less oversight enabling me to focus on higher-level teaching and course development.

2) What impact, if any, did TEP students have on the learning environment or teaching practice in your course?

Answer: The main impact was linked to their experience and communication skills. TEP students were generally better at interacting with students, handling questions, and supporting the learning process. Their prior familiarity with the course structure and expectations contributed to a smoother learning environment and reduced friction during course delivery.

3) From your observation, did students who were not part of TEP benefit from the presence of TEP students? If so, how?

Answer: Yes, both the other teaching assistants and the course students benefited. Less experienced teaching assistants were able to learn from TEP students, who acted as informal mentors within the teaching team. In larger courses, we deliberately distributed TEP students across student groups to ensure that each group had at least one experienced assistant. This helped establish good practices and improve coordination.

For course students, the benefit came from interacting with teaching assistants who were confident, experienced, and effective communicators. On average, this resulted in better guidance and more consistent support across groups, even though there were individual differences among both TEP and non-TEP assistants.

4) How would you assess the preparedness and autonomy of TEP students compared to traditional teaching assistants or student helpers?

Answer: Overall, TEP students were more prepared and autonomous. If I were to rank levels of experience, I would place PhD students at the top, followed by TEP students, and then other teaching assistants. One practical advantage of the program is that I did not need to recruit teaching assistants independently; having a ready pool of qualified students saved a significant amount of time. This organizational aspect was highly valuable from an instructor's perspective.

5) Is there anything else related to TEP students or the TEP program that you would like to mention?

Answer: I strongly support the program. While the program size should be aligned with actual departmental needs, I believe it is inefficient to replace TEP students with senior lecturers for teaching assistant duties. Senior staff time is

better spent on course development, research, and strategic work, whereas TEP students are well suited for these support roles.

From a research perspective, TEP students also contribute meaningfully. Although they are still learning, they are involved in research activities and have already contributed to tangible outcomes, including early-stage publications. In this sense, they function similarly to junior doctoral trainees.

Another important benefit is recruitment. TEP provides a strong pipeline for identifying and encouraging students to pursue master's or doctoral studies. Several participants are considering or preparing for advanced degrees, and the program helps the department identify promising candidates early. This is particularly valuable given broader challenges in recruiting students into academic career paths.

Representative of Student Administration (RSA1)

1) How did TEP students contribute to community outreach activities compared to how these activities were previously organized?

Answer: Previously, I had to look for students myself, and it was really difficult to find students who were suitable for the activities and for the target group. With TEP students, they were already prepared to work with children and young people. It was easier to assign them to roles such as ambassadors and outreach activities. The coordination became much easier because I knew who the students were and what they wanted to do. Even though they sign up for themselves, I can still choose who is best for each activity. This made the overall process much smoother.

2) What differences, if any, did you observe in terms of preparedness, reliability, or continuity when working with TEP students?

Answer: I noticed that TEP students were more reliable because they had clear contracts and understood their responsibilities. They knew how many hours they had to complete, so there was less uncertainty or sudden cancellations. In the past, when I worked with other students, I had to continuously hunt for participants and ask them to join. With TEP, the students are more independent and motivated, and they plan their hours accordingly. Because they work with us for six months or one year, it is easier for me to plan and coordinate activities. They also know in advance what they will need to do, which improves continuity.

3) Can you briefly describe one or two outreach activities where TEP students played a meaningful role?

Answer: Activity 1 – Digitalization Event: We participated in a national event focused on making digitalization more accessible to people. It was specifically for children, in partnership with a local organization. Around 6–7 TEP students participated, running different programming and coding activities. They were

responsible for various stations and performed very well. I was very pleased with their participation.

Activity 2 – Programming Course for Kids: Three TEP students conducted a programming course for children. Some of the children were challenging, but the TEP students managed the group successfully. They showed persistence and were able to complete the course, which made me proud. This activity was a good example of how TEP students can handle difficult situations and still deliver good outcomes.

4) From an administrative perspective, what aspects of TEP worked well for outreach, and what could be improved?

Answer: What worked well: For me, the best part is that I don't have to manage contracts or administrative paperwork. I don't need to create individual contracts or track hours manually. The students already have contracts, and they can decide how many hours they want to work. This makes my work much easier and more efficient.

What could be improved: Sometimes, I am not sure if all students are participating in activities because communication is not always clear. Some students participate more than others, and I'm not always aware of who is active. For example, there are students I don't see in any of my activities, but they may be busy with other tasks. It would be helpful to have better communication or a system to track which students are active in outreach activities. I could also check with the program coordinators to verify participation if needed.

5) Is there anything else related to TEP students or the TEP program that you would like to mention?

Answer: I think it is a very good program. The students are willing to cooperate, ask questions, and participate actively. I have never had a negative experience

with any of them. The program also helps the students feel more integrated in the department and the university. It benefits them because they can gain experience and include it on their CV. I hope the program continues.

I also believe the program could be expanded beyond the department to the faculty level, because many outreach activities are for the whole faculty, not only computer science. Right now, the department is paying for outreach that benefits other departments as well. So, if the program expands, it could support activities across the faculty more fairly.

Finally, the program has value beyond just our department. Writing a research paper about TEP can help strengthen the argument for expanding the program, showing it as a methodological model rather than something that only happened here.

Representative of Leadership (RL1)

1) What departmental needs or challenges did TEP aim to address when it was introduced?

Answer: TEP was introduced because the department had a strong need for resources, especially for tutoring resources like teaching assistants and student helpers. At the same time, the department also had a need for students to participate in outreach activities. These needs were previously handled by smaller contracts, such as hourly-based contracts, which were not sustainable. When the TEP structure was presented and explained, the department said, “Yes, this could be a good way forward,” because it fitted the needs that the department had at the time.

2) In what ways does TEP differ from traditional approaches where senior students are hired as teaching assistants on a course-by-course basis?

Answer: The main difference is the sense of community. Through TEP, the department creates a group of students working together and supporting each other, so they develop a team identity rather than being individual helpers. In traditional approaches, students are hired to support specific courses, specific teachers, and specific lab sessions, without forming a group.

Additionally, TEP students’ roles are not limited to teaching tasks. They also participate in research activities and outreach, which diversifies their portfolio and provides them a broader experience within academia.

3) From your perspective, who benefits from TEP beyond the participating students, and how?

Answer: I would say this is a win-win-win setup. First, the students benefit because they gain experience and learn how things work in academia, and they also learn how to transfer their knowledge to fellow peers in a pedagogical way. That’s one win.

The second win is for the department. We gain more engaged students, and these students become more interested in pursuing master's degrees and even research education.

The third win is for the coordinator of the program. They develop mentorship and leadership skills while coaching a cohort of teaching assistants. This is a long-term investment because a person who can manage a group of 8–10 students, coordinating their time and activities, is an investment the department gains. We always need future leaders in academia, and this helps develop them.

4) Based on your experience so far, do you see TEP as a sustainable or scalable model within the department or beyond it? Why or why not?

Answer: I think TEP is sustainable, for sure. Whether it is scalable depends on the economic constraints of each department. I'm working a bit on the informatics side to explore a similar concept, but scaling will depend on budgets.

On a semester or yearly basis, I would like us to constantly have a pool of around 8–10 students working part-time while studying. This pool would be a reliable resource for teaching tasks, research tasks, and outreach activities.

5) Is there anything else related to TEP students or the TEP program that you would like to mention?

Answer: I have noticed that TEP students are very eager to work. They have increased their sense of ownership and belonging to the department. Having TEP students working and interacting with staff members contributes to the dynamics of the department.

This also has an implicit impact on the social and personal work environment, making the department's atmosphere more dynamic and collaborative.
