
Being a Learning Assistant in Language Studies

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University of Oslo



1. Introduction

- Gyula Szente
 - BA in German Studies, English Studies
 - BSc in Informatics: Language Technology
 - Learning assistant (læringsassistent) since February 2021
 - NOR1100 – Norwegian Grammar
 - TYSK1100 – German Grammar, TYSK1104 – German Syntax, TYSK2100 – German Semantics and Translation
 - Research assistant (annotating a language corpus for language research)
 - Introduce yourself
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2. Overview of the Role of Learning Assistants

- Facilitating the learning process (study sessions, Canvas-room, workshops, tutorials, clarify complex concepts for students to grasp challenging material)
 - “Translating” curriculum into accessible language
 - Bridge the gap between complex academic language and students’ comprehension levels in a clear manner
 - Utilizing analogies and draw parallels to everyday experiences to make complex concepts more relatable
 - Providing additional resources (exercises, online resources, compiled supplementary materials)
 - Sharing personal experiences (recounting challenges in the specific subject matter)
 - Effective study strategies, time management, exam preparation techniques
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2. Overview of the Role of Learning Assistants

- Encouraging active participation in discussions, group activities
 - Encouraging critical thinking and argumentation (if required by the subject)
 - Urging students to explore diverse viewpoints and present well-reasoned arguments
 - Guiding students in evaluating various perspectives and engaging in constructive debates by articulating their thoughts effectively
 - Enhances analytical skills, promotes deeper understanding of the subject
 - Assisting with assignments and exam preparation
 - Understanding assignment requirements and interpreting task texts accurately
 - Guiding self-directed learning (how to locate and use academic resources and seek answers to their questions)
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3. Discussion

- Any input to add regarding the overview of the role of learning assistants?
 - Discussion on applying practical insights in the context of your subject area
 - How to facilitate the learning process when it comes to language studies?
 - How to convey the curriculum to the students?
 - Speaking Norwegian/English or the target language?
 - How to handle diverse proficiency levels among students?
 - Share your best practices while studying or challenges you foresee
 - Thoughts on the use of AI (ChatGPT, Google Translate, DeepL etc.) for studying or writing assignments
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4. Before Getting Started with Your Work

- Ensure you have access to the Canvas room for staying in touch with students
 - Ask the students about potential times for organizing study sessions with them
 - Reserve a suitable seminar room well in advance
 - Apply for funding for academic social gatherings (pizza, quiz prizes)
 - Kick off the first study session with pizza, perhaps icebreakers and a quiz
 - Reach out to the course coordinators about the syllabus, exam format, and any assignments
 - Familiarize yourself thoroughly with the course material (refresh your knowledge)
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5. Attendance from the students' perspective

- It's possible that very few or no students attend (do not take it personally)
 - Remember to send reminders about attendance
 - Discussion: Can we do anything about increasing the number of students attending?
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