Community TAs Scale High-Touch Learning, Provide Student-Staff Brokering, and Build Esprit de Corps

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What are Community TAs?
CTAs are former top students who return as volunteer course staff. Massive online courses introduced Community TAs (CTAs) to help scale teaching staff support.

Our research, findings, & recommendations
A key benefit of CTAs is their brokering role that mediates staff and student goals. CTAs provide greater discussion forum coverage (both in quantity and time of day) compared to instructor and Head TA (HTA) capabilities and contribute to peer assessment. As CTAs are new teachers, physically distributed, and culturally diverse, clear division of responsibilities is especially important. This poster details our experience with CTAs in the HCI class on Coursera.

Recruitment
CTAs were recruited based on their performance in the course, participation in the discussion forums, and outstanding contributions outside of the class.

Global Distribution
The global diversity of the CTA talent pool resulted in distributed time zones, providing nearly constant forum monitoring.

Forum Posting
While student posts greatly outnumber other post types, CTAs contribute more forum posts than the HTA(s) and Instructor combined.

Division of Responsibilities
In addition to forum-monitoring, CTAs were responsible for their respective grading tasks, which were split based on expertise, preference, and availability.

Issue Tracking
When CTAs encountered an issue requiring instructor or HTA input, they created entries in a Google spreadsheet monitored by the HTA(s).

CTA Calibration Sessions
CTAs met once a week via Google Hangout, moderated by an HTA, to calibrate on proper grading practices by walking through 1-2 training assignments.

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100% 80% 60% 40% 20% 0%
Teacher Head TA CTA Students

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