

## Reflections 3

My name is Joe Bales. I am finishing my degree in mathematics, and just wrapped up my second semester working with Lay-May Yeap in Math 254 — Intro to Ordinary Differential Equations.

Throughout the semester, I was able to take on more responsibility than I was previously. The course had a quiz each Monday, so I was able to run a weekly session designed to prepare the attending students for that. The course also had a written homework assignment due each Friday, so I held a session focused on the material relating to it. I also graded the submissions for this written homework, so I found myself becoming quite familiar with the thought process of each of the students, and could tell if there were any major conceptual errors, which improved the feedback I gave. I was able to take on additional responsibilities with the same amount of time spent as last semester because I was not only more familiar with the course material, but this class was also the honors section — there were fewer than 20 students, in contrast to my previous semester in the general Math 254 section with ~180 students.

I applied to graduate programs in statistics, so this semester I knew I wanted to continue practicing my abilities to help students, help a professor, and improvise when faced with material I don't actively study, so I applied to work with the same course and mentor. In the end, I've improved upon my ability to run problem sessions, review sessions, office hours, and grade with quality and efficiency. Anyone who wants to gain experience doing any of these, especially in a class they want to better understand, should apply to this program.

Applying to this program, in my opinion, should be with the intent to become a better educator and/or mathematician. If you'd like to better understand a course in which you've already done well, finding a professor teaching said course who'd like to work with you is important. All this to say that each hour worked in this job is spent with an active mind, and, if done well, can give you the opportunity to grow in more ways than one.

I was fortunate to be paired with two great mentors in my three semesters with the UTA Program. This made my experience productive and memorable, and I feel, frankly, more than prepared enough to work as a teaching assistant during my graduate school career.