

## Determining Required Proficiencies for Student Assistants Providing Learning Support in Academic Libraries

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## Determining Required Proficiencies for Student Assistants Providing Learning Support in Academic Libraries

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**Abstract.** To effectively collaborate with student assistants providing learning support in academic libraries, it is necessary to determine required proficiencies for student assistants based on their role. This paper examines the Kyushu University Library as a case example of collaboration with students and focuses on the proficiencies of student assistants for learning support. We clarify basic and practical proficiencies, which are classified according to activity areas and approaches. In addition, in regard to each proficiency, we indicate whether librarians should provide training opportunities. The tables of proficiencies we propose in this paper are useful in the recruitment and training of student assistants and can contribute to the development of proficiencies among academic librarians tasked with supervising student assistants.

**Keywords:** academic library, learning support, peer support, collaboration, student assistants, proficiency

### 1 Introduction

In Japan, in the context of recent higher education reform promoted by the government, academic libraries are expected to play a new role as places for out-of-class learning. The Scientific Information Committee suggested in its summary of discussions [1] that development in libraries accomplished through the organic coordination of three elements—content, learning spaces, and human support—is key to enhancing the learning environment. Regarding human support, the summary also indicated that the establishment of a system for student support incorporating graduate students, librarians, and faculty members is essential and that promoting peer tutoring by students is desirable while ensuring the quality of support.

Since around 2010, as a measure to develop human support in Japanese academic libraries, collaborations between students and librarians have increased [2]. Developing the human support system through effective collaboration requires quality peer support; hence, it is necessary to determine proficiency requirements for student assistants after clarifying the roles of librarians and students. While there have been many case reports on individual student collaborations, little work has been done on necessary proficiencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) for student assistants in the

Japanese context. The aim of this study is to determine the necessary proficiencies for student assistants providing learning support based on a practical example at an academic library.

## 2 Methodology

This study focuses on the Kyushu University Library as a case example of collaboration with students. In March 2013, to promote active learning, the library began a learning support project with graduate students in its employ. The project was a part of the university's Enhanced Education Program. In the project, the library named the graduate students "Cute.Supporters," or "Cuter members," and assigned them the tasks of providing consultation at support desks in the library, providing assistance for library workshops, creating learning guides on the web platform (LibGuides), planning exchange events for students, and others. Eighteen graduate students, including one international student, worked as members of Cuter at three campuses as of April 1, 2015.

In our previous study [3], we examined Cuter activities during the period from April 2013 to September 2014 and analyzed them from the perspective of role differences between student assistants and librarians. Consequently, we classified their activities into five areas and seven approaches with reference to preceding studies and specified the role of student assistants in the classification.

Based on our previous study, three librarians (including one of the authors) who supervise Cuter members listed proficiencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) required of Cuter members, the timeline according to which these proficiencies should be developed, and training that it would be desirable for librarians to provide.

In this paper, we identify the necessary proficiencies for student assistants more generally according to the aforementioned list made by the librarians and based on a review of the standards of the ACRL [4] and studies on student assistants that have been conducted in North America [5, 6]. In addition, we consider opportunities to acquire such proficiencies.

## 3 Results

Tables 1 and 2 show necessary proficiencies for student assistants based on an analysis of Cuter activities. Table 1 shows the basic proficiencies classified into five activity areas as well as general activities. Table 2 focuses on practical proficiencies necessary for student assistants to carry out their activities. Student assistants are expected to exhibit their proficiencies based on the combination of the activity areas in Table 1 and approaches in Table 2.

Check marks in the right column, "Training by librarians," indicate those proficiencies for student assistants for which it is desirable for librarians to provide training opportunities. Proficiencies without such check marks are those that student assistants must acquire in the pursuit of an undergraduate degree course or in personal experiences of campus life.

## 4 Next Steps

In providing learning support through collaborations with students, employing good students and training them effectively is necessary to ensure and enhance the quality of support. The tables of proficiencies we propose in this paper are useful for developing recruitment standards for student assistants and can provide a reference for designing training programs once students are employed. Moreover, as a reference, it can contribute to the development of proficiencies among academic librarians tasked with supervising student assistants.

In fact, we are reorganizing training programs for student assistants at the Kyushu University Library based on this analysis by determining training programs to enhance proficiencies that should be added to those already existing. We are also planning to develop staff manuals and electronic learning materials based on the proficiency tables to facilitate the accumulation and transfer of learning expertise pertaining to support for student assistants, as student assistants only work at academic libraries for a few years.

The activity areas and classified approaches cover major activities for learning support in Japanese academic libraries. Therefore, it is possible to apply these proficiencies to student assistants in other libraries.

We will continue to update the proficiency tables, as the expected roles of academic libraries may change with the advance of university reform.

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**Table 1.** Basic Required Proficiencies for Student Assistants

Activity Areas	Required Proficiencies (Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes)	Training by librarians	
I. Library Instruction	1. Impressing	knowledge about the role and value of the library	✓
	2. Service Guide	knowledge of the holdings, facilities, and services of the library	✓
	3. Information Retrieval Instruction	skills to utilize information retrieval systems	✓
		skills to access information	✓
	4. Information Management Instruction	skills to evaluate information and information sources	✓
		skills to record and organize information	✓
5. Information Presentation Instruction	skills to extract and summarize information	✓	
	academic writing skills such as for reports and theses		
	presentation skills		
II. ICT Instruction	skills to utilize ICT services of the university and its library	✓	
III. Learning Skills Instruction	subject expertise		
	first-year student skills such as note-taking and academic reading		
IV. Campus Life Support	knowledge about overall campus life including career support		
	knowledge about life support facilities at the university		
V. Other	(included below)		
General	knowledge about the role and value of student assistants	✓	
	knowledge of office rules pertaining to student assistants	✓	
	skills to operate work tools (e.g., Google Calendar)	✓	
	time management skills		
	communication skills		
	English skills		
	attitude of compliance with rules and codes		
	attitude oriented to interacting and collaborating with others in a positive manner		
	attitude to undertake challenges on personal initiative		

**Table 2.** Practical Required Proficiencies for Student Assistants

Approaches	Required Proficiencies (Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes)	Training by librarians
a. Consultation Desk	interview skills	✓
	teaching skills	✓
b. Web Guide	knowledge of guide creation rules	✓
	skills to operate Web guide platforms	✓
	planning skills	✓
	web design skills	✓
	writing skills	
c. Exhibitions	planning skills	✓
	coordination skills	✓
	writing skills	
d. Library Tours	presentation skills	
e. Lectures and Workshops	instructional design skills	✓
	presentation skills	
f. Exchange Events	presentation skills	
	facilitation skills	
	planning skills	✓
	coordination skills	✓
	reporting skills	✓
	assessment and evaluation skills	✓
g. Other	(included above)	