Teaching Statement

Alexey Filatov
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and Barcelona GSE

I strongly believe that transmission of knowledge is vital and a critical part of being a scholar. That's why I've been teaching since my undergraduate years. Being a physics student, I taught math and physics to a secondary and high school students in Russia. I enjoyed the feeling of helping students to really understand the material and observing how the pieces of the puzzle fall into their place for them. It is at that time that I realized that the most important and effective instruments for teaching are the personal connection, practice, examples, and interpretation of the material. Technically, my approach includes presenting the theory, explaining it by means of analogies and simplifications, and fixing things with applied examples.

A very important part of learning is student's involvement. The best sign of the involvement is a question from a student. If questions are asked, students are interested in the material. And if students are interested, they will put more effort. I consider this is my job as a teacher to get a student to ask questions. However, some students feel uncomfortable to ask what they perceive as an "obvious" questions, the ones they might think the answer is clear for everyone except themselves. This is where the personal connection comes into play: if the students feel comfortable during the class, they will also be comfortable with asking questions. When a question is asked, I know that the learning process began. I encourage students to ask questions to me, to their peers, to themselves.

As a graduate student, I had a lot of practice as a teaching assistant at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and the Barcelona GSE. The courses I taught included graduate level Macroeconomics, Microeconomics, introduction to MatLab and basic numerical methods for macroeconomists. On top of that, I developed and taught MatLab brush-up course for Barcelona GSE students specializing in Macroeconomics. Teaching evaluations for my courses are enclosed and are also available on my website.

As a teaching assistant, I had two main duties. First, I had to solve the weekly homework assignments myself and explain the solution to the students. Second, I had to grade the solutions that students submitted.

I was a teaching assistant for graduate Microeconomics II course in 2014-2015 and 2016-2017 academic years. Microeconomics II is the second microeconomics course in the first year of the PhD program in economics at the UAB. The course covers a range of topics, including general market equilibrium theory, welfare analysis, market power, problems of informational asymmetry, signaling, and screening. During my classes, I was solving the problems in great details. Not only I demonstrated the necessary algebra but emphasized the significance of every assumption of the problem and the relation of the problem to the general theoretic framework we were studying. As a rule, I suggested the small variations to the problems and encouraged students to discuss how these variations should affect the answer. Over the course of a class, I highlighted the economic intuition behind the important graphs or systems of equations. In order to deal with more difficult problems, I often offered a simplified version of the same problem as a starting point and was building on top of that afterward.

I employed the similar approach for the course of Macroeconomics I, which I taught in 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 acdemic years. This is the first macroeconomics course in th first year of PhD program at the UAB. It covers basic neoclassical growth models in discrete and continuous time, the overlapping generations model, dynamic programming, and the elements of fiscal policy analysis. Apart from the theoretical problems, the specifics of the course also involved numerical ones. As a result, I had to introdue students to key concepts in numerical simualtions in Matlab.

Finally, I developed a 10-hours MatLab crash course for master students at Barcelona GSE. The course covers the basic material necessary to understand functionality and potential use of MatLab. By the end of the course, students were able to write functions that calculate a numerical Jacobian, or solve a system of linear equations, or use the method of Monte-Carlo. The course contains many examples, from very simple to elaborate, and a set of homework assignments to fix the ideas.