

School of Mathematics

Instructions for hourly paid work by postgraduate students

General

You will be sent a contract together with a form for bank details etc. It is essential to get the relevant lecturer to initial these forms and to send them to the Teaching and Learning Office promptly as payment cannot be authorised before this and the school needs to be able to budget properly. Contact the member of staff in charge of this particular task and find out the nature of the task. Keep a record of the number of hours you spend.

If you believe that something (e.g. illness, appointment) will prevent you from doing a particular task at a particular time, please follow the procedure below and **make sure that you do it in good time**. In exceptional cases, (e.g. transport chaos, emergency etc.) I do realise that this may not be possible but please do contact the lecturer as soon as possible.

- 1) Please arrange for a fellow-postgraduate to take your class. This should be somebody who, you believe, has the correct background for this task.
- 2) Make sure that your replacement is provided with all materials relevant to the class e.g. tutorial sheets, solutions, attendance lists etc.
- 3) Inform the lecturer of the class so that any additional materials can be given to your replacement and that the replacement can be informed about the current stage of lectures etc.
- 4) After the class, retrieve materials from the replacement and familiarise yourself with the progress that class and the course have made.

It is a condition of employment that you maintain good communications with the lecturers for the courses involved. This includes daily checks of your pigeonhole, extra checks just before classes, keeping the school informed of any changes in home telephone number etc. It is important to keep an e-mail account and to check it regularly. If you keep several accounts, you must check them all regularly or arrange for forwarding of messages. This applies in particular if your main account is not the one on the standard university records.

Training :-

The university will require you to attend a central university course which runs several times per year. A more mathematical event is that organised in conjunction with the MSOR centre in Birmingham (but which takes place in the Turing Building) (for 2009, Thursday 5th November). The school may also ask you to do a short 'mock' session in front of a few staff.

Tutorials : Determine from the lecturer exactly what form the tutorial is to take. Sometimes, you will be part of a team assisting the lecturer while on other occasions, you will be in charge of a small group.

Often the activity will centre around the tutorial sheets provided by the lecturer. Please establish some mechanism for the lecturer to give you the sheets and solutions. Try to keep your own progress through the sheets at a reasonable pace e.g. far enough behind when topics are covered in lectures that students have a chance to attempt the questions properly, but not so far behind that things go stale.

It is important to be familiar with the questions and do look at the solutions as preparation for each class. An occasional look at the solutions during an explanation is fine but this should be a reminder rather than anything else. An embarrassing sight is that of a tutor puzzling over the solutions in the company of students who end up explaining it to the tutor.

Do keep working during the class. In a class where the students are dealt with individually, when things are quiet, go round the class asking how the students are doing. A tutorial is not the place to read the newspaper ! Keep an attendance list. However, this should reflect who spent a reasonable time at the tutorial, not who came in, signed the sheet and left. Beware of practices such as signing for friends, for previous weeks etc.

Do let the lecturer know if there are any irregularities with the tutorial e.g. confusion over groups etc.

Marking of Exams or Coursework

The organiser will provide you with a marking scheme and will probably wish to discuss certain aspects of it. Even so, it is best to study the questions in detail to get a feel for the various techniques involved. The organiser will also let you know about the time-scale over which work is to be done. In some cases, this will mean a virtually total suspension of other activities in the department. In other cases, it may be determined that marking will take place in a specific room at specific times. The organiser will also let you know the number of hours for which payment has been authorised.

One of the first duties should be to ascertain if there exists a list of students who have submitted work. If such a list exists (e.g. for exams, a list should have been created at the time of the exam), the total number of scripts should be tallied with the list. If there is no such list, one should be created e.g. for coursework, there is an area on the R-drive where this is done. At the end of the exercise, the list of marks should be consistent with this list.

Mark in a colour different from that that a student has written in; red is perhaps best, even if students circle answers in red etc.

When marking, be aware of alternate methods for doing the questions and also do beware of flaws or errors in the marking scheme (hopefully these should be rare). Often when marking coursework, recording of comments is just as useful as providing a mark, so do write fairly detailed comments e.g. a student should be made aware of just why an answer is wrong, not merely the fact that it is wrong. Comments can also be made for correct answers e.g. pointing out more efficient methods etc. If you believe that you may end up writing exactly the same comment many times, feel free to prepare a sheet with these comments on and staple this to the scripts as appropriate (the organiser may be able to give guidance on when this is necessary). It is worth looking out for students copying work from each other. Clearly, not all culprits can be caught but we can clamp down on some. Often students hand in their work right next to the script copied from which makes it easier to detect. Signs include identical wording, notation, punctuation etc., and, of course, identical 'wrong answers'. If you detect suspected copying, draw this to the attention of the organiser.

Please record marks in the form 1/2, 3/5 etc. Students may not know how many marks were on offer for a question and simply stating that 2 marks were gained, may not be useful. It can also help to have a consistent notation e.g. write marks for sub-questions (3a, 5c etc.) normally, circle those for full questions (e.g. Q2, Q4 etc.) and write the total mark for the assignment in a box at the beginning.

For exam marking, feedback is not required but accuracy of mark is paramount. Please also include a red line up the left-hand margin of any work marked and on any blank pages. Do check that you have not missed out any isolated parts of the questions.

If it is necessary to take scripts from the office of a member of staff, or fellow-marker, it is essential to make this person aware of where the scripts are etc.

Computer Classes

Sometimes you will be asked to help at a computer class. Clearly, these differ in nature from each other so only general points are mentioned here. Some points you should consider are

- 1) How does the student open the software? What sources of information are available to the student?
- 2) What is the role of the tutor? Is it to help with the maths or to help with the software?
- 3) What is the procedure in the event of a hardware or software failure?