

Guidance on Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) and Postgraduate Researchers

Introduction

Manchester Doctoral College Strategy Group (MDCSG) and the Institute of Teaching and Learning (ITL) recognises and values the significant contribution that postgraduate researchers (PGRs) make to teaching activity.

PGRs are encouraged to engage in professional and [career development training and opportunities](#) during their research programme and teaching is one type of such activity that PGRs may consider. Through teaching PGRs will have the opportunity to develop professional skills and gain practical experience, which will be of value in any future career path. PGRs who do undertake teaching have the option of using their teaching activity to receive a formal, national qualification via the Leadership in Education Awards Programme. Further information about this programme and how to apply is available from the [Institute of Teaching and Learning](#).

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) are an integral and valued part of the teaching community, but it should be noted that their primary role is research and their GTA activities should therefore not take precedence over the requirements of their research programme.

The aim of this guidance is to outline key principles, the expectations upon those involved in teaching activity and to provide information about teaching opportunities, training, and support.

Definitions

This guidance relates to PGR Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and is not applicable to all Teaching Assistants (TAs). A PGR GTA is defined as a current University of Manchester postgraduate researcher who is employed on a part-time basis to provide teaching and learning support to academics. PGR GTAs must be studying on a PhD, MPhil or a Masters by Research programme. PGR GTAs who are in the Faculty of Humanities should also refer to the Humanities Teaching Assistant Policy. Teaching Assistants in the Faculty of Humanities who are not PGRs should also refer to the Humanities Teaching Assistant Policy.

Key Principles

- i. Teaching and teaching-related activities must not detract from a PGRs main goal of completing their programme of research within the funded period.
- ii. The availability of teaching and teaching-related activities will be driven by the needs of the UG and PGT community and will be determined by Teaching and Learning colleagues at Department, Division and School level. Therefore, the amount of teaching activity will vary from year to year and between Faculties and there is no guarantee of teaching and teaching-related opportunities being available.
- iii. Teaching and teaching-related activities provides a valuable career development opportunity.
- iv. Undertaking teaching and teaching-related activities is optional for PGRs. PGRs are not obliged to commit to undertaking teaching and teaching-related activities. PGRs with

concerns about being pressurised to undertake teaching should discuss these concerns with their supervisor or with their School/Department PGR Director.

- v. PGR GTAs will be paid appropriately (in accordance with the 2013 agreement between the University and UCU) for all teaching and teaching-related activities and the associated mandatory training they undertake (see contracts and payments section).
- vi. PGR GTAs will be provided with appropriate training and support to undertake all face-to-face and online teaching and teaching-related activities as required (see training section).

Expectations

PGR GTAs are expected to:

- i. Engage in no more than the full-time equivalent of 120 hours teaching and teaching-related activities per academic year. This limit includes teaching delivery, teaching preparation, mandatory training and marking if applicable.
- ii. Ensure that their primary commitment remains their research and the completion of their degree within the prescribed length of their programme and their funded period.
- iii. Discuss and agree with their supervisor(s) the amount, nature and timing of any teaching activity prior to undertaking it.
- iv. Ensure that they have completed all mandatory GTA training prior to undertaking any teaching activities.
- v. Identify their own development needs in relation to their GTA role and consider engaging in continued professional development opportunities as appropriate, noting that time spent on activity and opportunities such as the LEAP programme and which are not required by the course unit lead are unpaid.
- vi. Raise any issues / concerns with any aspect of their teaching or teaching activity with the course unit lead at the earliest opportunity.
- vii. Discuss any concerns that they may have with their academic progression due to their teaching workload with their supervisor(s) at the earliest opportunity.

PGR supervisors are expected to:

- i. Ensure that they discuss the amount, nature and timing of any teaching work with their PGR prior to them undertaking the work.
- ii. Encourage and support the PGRs they supervise to undertake teaching activity by signposting their PGRs to relevant GTA opportunities and information on GTA training and other relevant continued professional development opportunities.
- iii. Discuss with the PGR and the course unit lead any concerns that may arise if it is felt that time spent teaching is negatively impacting the PGR's academic progression.

Course Unit Leads in Divisions/Departments/Schools are expected to:

- i. Brief the PGR GTA on all matters specific to the unit, to oversee the PGR's teaching activity, and to provide the materials necessary for the successful discharge of the PGR's teaching responsibilities.

- ii. Ensure the high quality of student experience and teaching on their units, including that provided by PGR GTAs undertaking teaching duties.
- iii. Act as a first point of contact for PGR GTAs with concerns about any aspects of their teaching and teaching-related activity. Any issues, which cannot be resolved satisfactorily via the course unit lead, should be raised with the Head of School.
- iv. Provide PGR GTAs with feedback on their performance and give them the opportunity to personally discuss the feedback given.

Teaching and Learning colleagues in Divisions/Departments/Schools/Faculties are expected to:

- i. Manage the recruitment, allocation and induction of PGR GTAs in accordance with clear and visible selection criteria published in advance.
- ii. Ensure that all new PGR GTAs have the competence to fulfil their role and have completed the mandatory PGR GTA training and discipline specific training (if applicable) prior to undertaking any teaching.
- iii. Ensure that PGR GTAs receive appropriate development and support throughout the period of teaching, including instruction in effective and appropriate marking (where applicable).
- iv. Ensure that there are clear points of contact within the Faculty/School/Division/Department for the PGR GTA to raise any concerns.
- v. Ensure that PGR GTAs do not have sole responsibility for marking any work or examinations that contribute to a student's final mark in a unit assessment. Marking by PGR GTAs must be second-marked or moderated by sample. The [University Policy on Marking](#) states that 'marks awarded for summative assessment must be overseen by the Academic Unit Lead' therefore PGR GTAs should not be given sole responsibility for marking summative assessment; any marking they undertake should be overseen by the relevant Academic Unit Lead.
- vi. Ensure that PGR GTAs are provided with clear and transparent information on how to submit their claims for payments including details of the approval process and the frequency of payments.

Teaching Opportunities and Recruitment

Teaching and teaching-related activities offered to PGRs vary and may range from demonstrating in laboratory classes through to leading tutorials and seminars or lecturing. The practice of recruiting and appointing PGR GTAs may vary according to discipline. PGRs should contact the relevant Faculty for vacancy details, selection criteria and their eligibility to apply.

- [Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health GTA Opportunities](#)
- [Faculty of Humanities Teaching Assistant Hub](#)
- [Faculty of Science and Engineering Teaching Academy](#)

Please note that:

- PGRs cannot be engaged as PGR GTAs on any module that contributes to a programme on which they are enrolled.
- International students are eligible to be appointed as PGR GTAs. However, international students with a student route (formerly Tier 4) visa can only work for a maximum of 20 hours per week (this includes

paid, unpaid and voluntary work). More information is available on the [Student Immigration and Visa Website](#).

Training

All Faculties offer training to develop teaching skills and all PGR GTAs must complete the GTA training as specified by their Faculty. Information on the mandatory training in each Faculty is outlined below.

- [Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health Online GTA Training](#)
- [Faculty of Humanities Training, Support and Development](#)
- [Faculty of Science and Engineering GTA Training](#)

Additional training that PGRs can access to support their professional development and teaching activity include.

- Institute of Teaching and [Learning Resources and Toolkits](#) on all aspects of teaching and learning practice.
- Staff Learning and Development [Courses and Resources](#) on Communicating Effectively which covers topics such as Managing Difficult Conversations and negotiation and influencing.
- Training and resources from Faculty based Researcher Development teams:
 - o [Biology, Medicine and Health](#)
 - o [Humanities](#)
 - o [Science and Engineering](#)

Contracts and Payments

P&OD will issue all appointed PGR GTAs with an appointment letter and a statement of the terms and conditions of their employment. In terms of payments, PGR GTAs will:

- Receive payment for their teaching and teaching-related activities including time allocated for preparation, marking/assessment and any mandatory training hours attended.
- Receive an hourly rate of pay, according to the University [teaching assistant pay scale](#).

The process by which payments are authorised and made will be provided by the Faculty/School/Department/Division in which the PGR GTA is based.

PGR GTAs with any concerns or questions about the payment process should contact their [Faculty P&OD Services Team](#).

Employment Policies

PGR GTAs (when performing their duties as a GTA) are covered by specific relevant [P&OD employment policies](#). For example, where a PGR needs to take Special Leave falling on a teaching day they should refer to the [P&OD Special Leave Policy](#) in addition to the relevant [PGR policy](#).

Additional Policies and Guidance

[P&OD Guidance and FAQs for TAs](#)

[Faculty of Humanities Teaching Assistant Policy](#)

[University Policy on Marking](#)