

Fostering Belonging and Student Voice through Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) Development

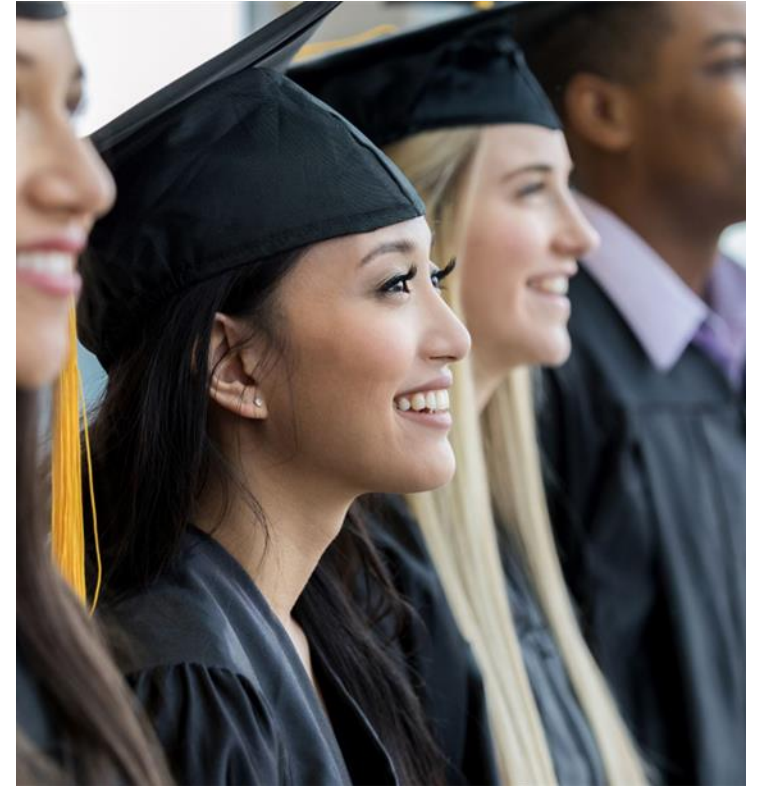
The University of Manchester Teaching & Learning Conference

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Agenda

- Introduce a GTA-led development programme
- Explore how it fosters inclusive practice and belonging
- Share practical strategies and outcomes





Introduction and Context

- GTAs are vital to teaching delivery across Higher Education
- Common challenges:
 - Limited pedagogical training
 - Role uncertainty
 - Weak institutional belonging (Smith et al., 2023)
- Impacts both GTAs and student experience



Rationale for the Programme

- Gaps in traditional GTA training models
- Importance of peer support and contextual relevance
- Desire for GTAs to co-create solutions
- Integration of GTAs into the academic community to collaborate and connect with peers

Overview of GTA Mentoring Programme

- Designed by GTAs for GTAs
- Structured mentorship
- Peer learning communities
- Reflective practice



The Structure of the Mentoring Programme

Five scheduled mentoring session:

- Pre-semester welcome event: Meet peer mentors
- 3 meetings (choice of online or on campus)
 - Session 1: Teaching & Learning scenarios
 - Session 2: Discuss common challenges
 - Session 3: Reflection and professional development (AFHEA)
- End of semester event: Celebrating success

4 Peer mentors and approx. 36 GTAS

Reflective Practice and GTA Voice

- Embed GTA feedback into the development and revision of internal staff guidelines for working with GTAs
- Valued feedback and reflection
- Familiarity with academic culture
- Enhance teaching quality
- Develop inclusive teaching skills
- Observation of more experienced GTAs
- Collaborative conversation amongst GTAs



Impact on GTAs

"Now I feel like part of the teaching team, not just a helper." GTA

- Increased teaching confidence
- Increased confidence communicating with other staff members
- Greater sense of belonging
- Professional growth: Communication, Critical thinking, Adaptability, Self-awareness
- Greater institutional connectedness
- Clearer professional identity as educators



Did the scheme help you feel more connected to your GTA peers? if so why and how?

Absolutely! I think it was extremely helpful to speak to other GTAs to understand how they manage their seminars, what their struggles are and how we can all help each other

I met people I hadn't met before, felt more confident to ask for help and know where to ask

Yes, could be talk about the challenges and discuss the issues

New scheme, slightly unfamiliar. Difficult to fit into schedule.

Unfortunately i was unable to attend due to other commitments eg 2nd year viva and training! However it was good knowing that there was a designated peer mentor that i could speak to should i have con

Meetings have helped to raise profile of GTA work
Good to engage with other GTAs and share experiences

Yes. Connections

Impact on Students

- Student centered-teaching: High participation, supportive learning environment, more confidence in asking questions and sharing problems
- Improve engagement and feedback
- Raised student voice
- Enhance learning: placing the student at the heart of practice
- More inclusive and responsive teaching
- GTAs better equipped to engage diverse learners
- Raised student voice in curriculum delivery



Sem 1 Share your T&L good practice/Highlights

Starting on time

Reflection during session

Encourage all groups in seminar to speak and get involved Bring energy to the class to encourage learning
Be clear about expectations for the class

Making use of online programmes such as mentimeter to help with engagement and getting quieter students to contribute

Encouraged small group work - they feel more confident to share rather than in larger group. Use of Menti and google slides.

Preparing the slides and being confident to adjust style of slides with what worked well with students in previous sessions

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Scalability and Institutional Value

- Scalable, peer-led and cost-effective
- Improves teaching quality and student satisfaction
- Supports staff pipeline and teaching excellence



Challenges and Lessons Learned

- Time commitment and coordination
- Sustaining engagement and peer networks
- Importance of departmental and senior buy-in
- GTA development must be inclusive and dialogic
- Belonging and voice are mutually reinforcing
- Peer-led models offer sustainable solutions



Moving Forward

- Consider how institution supports GTAs
- Reflect on models that prioritise voice, inclusion, and growth
- Embed GTA voice in teaching policy
 - Encourage GTAs to co-create in pedagogy
- Build communities where both GTAs and students thrive



Thank you for listening!
Any questions?