

**Title:** Research students who undertake teaching  
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**Approved:** Postgraduate Research Executive, 3 March 2015  
**Agenda:** Learning and Teaching Committee, 18 March 2015  
**Version:** Final  
**Status:** Open

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### Issue

Learning and Teaching Committee is asked to consider how best to support research students who teach, for their own sake and to ensure an excellent student experience for the undergraduate students they teach.

The Postgraduate Research Executive agreed on 22 November 2013 the scope of a review relating to postgraduate research students who teach at the University. The scope was agreed as follows:

1. To record the extent to which research students during 2013–14 were involved in teaching across UEA.
2. To record the procedures for advertising opportunities and recruiting to them.
3. To record the procedures for maintaining job descriptions and for setting up contracts and pay.
4. To record the procedures for ensuring that all research students who teach are appropriately trained, supported, developed and provided with feedback.

This review was originally scheduled to conclude within 2013-14 but its scope widened when the issue became one of the major campaigns of the Union of UEA Students with substantial involvement from the Postgraduate Education Officer (a new post which began in 2014). The Union would like the University to adopt the Postgraduate Employment Charter which was launched jointly by UCU and NUS. To assist with gathering information about this area the Union coordinated a short survey in January 2015 asking relevant members of staff in Schools to respond on current practice with respect to the ten points of the Charter.

Information on the four points above and the Postgraduate Employment Charter can be found in this paper, along with a copy of the existing Guidelines on Teaching Undertaken by Postgraduate Research Students (2006) and some proposed minor revisions.

### Recommendations

The Executive is asked to note the information in this paper and:

1. Approve the updated Guidelines which are attached as Appendix B. These have been agreed by the Postgraduate Research Executive (with some minor amendments which have been made). These guidelines should replace the 2006 guidelines currently on the LTS website.
2. Consider whether the University should consider adopting the Postgraduate Employment Charter, as recommended to it by the Postgraduate Research Executive. LTC is asked to note that research students would strongly welcome a commitment from the University to adopt the Postgraduate Employment Charter. This has been identified as a key issue by the Postgraduate Education Officer and is part of a major UUEAS campaign. UUEAS have a petition signed by 259 students requesting the University signs up.

If the University agrees to adoption of the Postgraduate Employment Charter in principle then we would recommend setting up a working group to report back to LTC. This group should consider how best to achieve compliance with the Charter and ensure that all practical implications are properly taken into account, particularly those relating to the process of appointing PGRs as associate tutors and checking whether they have completed relevant training. This working group would need to have representation from academic colleagues, School or Faculty Managers, LTS and PGR as well as student representation.

## **Resource Implications**

The practical implications of adopting the Postgraduate Employment Charter would need to be carefully thought through. For example, if the University decided that every associate tutor role had to be formally advertised, there would be substantive implications for every School and in terms of the timing of the process. It is likely that there are ways to achieve compliance with the Charter which are less resource-intensive, and careful thought needs to be given to implementation plans including consultation with Senior Faculty Managers, LTS and relevant academic staff members.

## **Risk Implications**

The University needs to assure itself that all postgraduate research students are appropriately trained, supported and developed while undertaking teaching. We need to consider risk implications (e.g. of insufficient training) on the undergraduate student experience and staff, and LTC may consider that these principles should apply to all associate tutors not just those who are also students registered at the University.

The relevant indicators of within the UK Quality Code are:

- B3, Indicator 4: Higher education providers assure themselves that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning is appropriately qualified, supported and developed.
- B6, Indicator 4: Higher education providers assure themselves that everyone involved in the assessment of student work, including prior learning, and associated assessment processes is competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities.
- B11, Indicator 14: Research students have appropriate opportunities for developing research, personal and professional skills. Each research student's development needs are identified and agreed jointly by the student and appropriate staff at the start of the degree: these are regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate.

Chapter B11 includes the following paragraph:

“Supporting the learning and teaching of others, and if appropriate assessing student work, provides research students with an opportunity to develop a range of personal skills. It can also reinforce research students' own knowledge of their subject. Higher education providers may offer research students non-compulsory teaching opportunities in some circumstances and subjects: these may be limited and not necessarily available to all research students. Where research students have teaching roles, they receive appropriate training, support and mentoring for their own benefit and to safeguard the experience of the students they are teaching. Where possible higher education providers enable research students to be part of a larger teaching team so that they can benefit from the support and mentoring provided by experienced teachers. They ensure that teaching duties are not so intensive or time-consuming as to affect the research student's ability to complete (see Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching and Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning).”

## **Equality and Diversity**

It is important for those who appoint individuals to Associate Tutor roles to consider whether they may have any particular needs – for example if appointing someone with a disability that may need reasonable adjustments to be agreed and implemented. This has been included in the revised Guidance notes.

## **Timing of decisions**

This paper relates to items that are current in March 2015.

## **Further Information**

Contact Vivien Easson, x1835 [v.easson@uea.ac.uk](mailto:v.easson@uea.ac.uk) for enquiries about the content of the paper.

## Background

### 1. Extent to which research students were involved in teaching across UEA, during 2013-14

Number of associate tutor contracts issued between 1 May 2013 and 31 July 2014: 951

The proportion that were issued to postgraduate research students for that period was not available from HR, but an analysis of current PURE data suggests that just over 400 research students are recorded as being on Associate Tutor contracts during 2014-15. Thus we would expect that around 40% to 50% of all Associate Tutor contracts are issued to postgraduate research students and that, at any given time, around 30% of research students are on these contracts.

### 2. Procedures for advertising opportunities and recruiting to them

Number of vacancies advertised via UEA site between 1 May 2013 and 3 July 2014: 3 (each multiple)  
(Vacancies advertised via <http://www.uea.ac.uk/hr/vacancies/associate-tutors>)

These were advertisements for multiple Associate Tutor vacancies as follows:

- Associate Tutor, NBS – April 2014
- Associate Tutor (problem based learning), MED – July 2014
- Associate Tutor (curriculum support), MED – July 2014

It is clear that the vast majority of Associate Tutor opportunities at the University are not advertised externally through the UEA HR site.

Comments from the UUEAS survey (Principle One) show that much advertising is completely closed – “the offer may be made by their supervisor” (EDU) or “most teaching is allocated to lecturers’ own PhD students” (DEV). Some Schools have made progress on transparent advertising processes, for example NBS note that “we developed PGR teaching guidelines last year to ensure a fair process”.

### 3. Procedures for maintaining job descriptions and for setting up contracts and pay

Associate Tutor contracts are maintained by HR and compliance with using these appears to be very good across all Schools. However, there is a need to ensure that students are always given a copy of the contract.

### 4. Procedures for ensuring that all research students who teach are appropriately trained, supported, developed and provided with feedback

We had the following data from PRES 2013, which had a 33% response rate across UEA. Answers to the relevant questions are summarised below.

Question	FMH	HUM	SCI	SSF	UEA
Q16: Please indicate whether you have taught (or demonstrated) at your institution during your research degree programme. (% Yes)	34%	53%	67%	58%	57%
Q16a: 'If yes,'" to what extent do you agree that you have been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching? (% agree)	50%	56%	58%	56%	56%
Q16b: "Did you receive formal training for your teaching?"	44%	87%	63%	79%	71%

Since then the Head of PGR Service has met with School and Faculty Managers to investigate whether training is checked before Associate Tutor contracts are issued, or made a condition of taking up the role. Practices are not uniform, so there is a clear need to review processes in this area; this will be taken forward if the revised guidelines are approved.

## Overview of likely current compliance with the principles of the Postgraduate Employment Charter

This summary is based on the data above and on School responses to the UUEAS survey.

Principle	Comments
1: Fair, transparent and equitable appointment processes	Not yet achieved: contracts are used but advertising is not always transparent.
2: A fair rate of pay for all hours worked	Fully achieved in most Schools due to widespread use of AT contracts and standard pay scales. However, there is a need to check whether hours are correctly calculated and cover preparation time.
3: Compulsory teaching and teaching bursaries	Fully achieved in most Schools due to widespread use of AT contracts but it would be worth checking if there are any outliers.
4: Supervision or mentoring, line management and review of progress provided by a suitably qualified member of staff who is not the research supervisor	Actively working towards: the module organiser is not usually the supervisor. Revised guidelines and Module Organiser role descriptors assist here.
5: Formal and informal feedback on performance and support for improvement	Actively working towards: an area for further discussion with ADTP, LTS and ADs (LTQ). This is an area we have identified for improvement.
6: Induction and initial training, and support for continuing professional development	Actively working towards: 71% of research students responding in PRES 2013 did have formal training. All students have access to suitable training.
7A: Representation within the institution	Representation at SSLCs is not yet addressed but is a current issue in the LTC review of SSLCs.
7B: Representation by a trade union	No barriers. UUEAS might wish to take a lead here in promoting benefits of union membership. UCU attend Faculty PGR inductions.
8: Integration into the professional academic culture	Actively working towards: sharing of good practice across Schools should help here. This ties into PRES action plans with respect to research culture and research environment and the wider Research Degree Education Strategy.
9: Access to the necessary facilities and resources required to undertake the role	Fully achieved in most instances: a focus on PGR space should help improve matters further. It would be useful to ensure that PGR students who teach have a clear way to raise issues that may arise.
10: A reasonable balance between employment and research	Fully achieved in most instances: it would be worth trying to understand how outliers are detected. The research student concessions process shows that there are some situations where this is a tension.

## **Appendix: 2006 guidelines**

**University of East Anglia  
Learning, Teaching and Quality Office**

### **Teaching Undertaken by Postgraduate Research Student (Guidelines)**

Some students registered for UEA research degrees may undertake teaching responsibilities as part of their professional development and training. The University's Code of Practice for Assuring the Quality of Research Degrees specifies that full time students should not undertake more than 6 hours of teaching per week during the period of study. Schools may find it helpful to have some guidelines for managing the learning experience of undergraduate and postgraduate students on taught courses. The following seeks to establish guidelines for the recruitment of research students and the expectations in respect of volume of teaching within a unit and marking which they may undertake. Decisions on the appointment of research students as tutors will remain at the discretion of the School and will continue to be dependant upon resources.

As an institution which promotes research-informed teaching it is appropriate that research students participate in teaching as part of their own professional development where such opportunities exist. We see no distinction in the quality of teaching offered by research students, associate tutors and members of academic staff.

The following guidelines apply to students registered on research degrees who are not classed as teachers in the University (and who do not therefore receive a monthly salary from the University) or who did not have a contract of employment with the University covering teaching roles prior to registration on a research degree.

#### **Training**

It is assumed that all research students who undertake undergraduate and masters' level teaching will either complete the Centre for Staff Education and Development course designed to prepare and support students who are teaching for the first time in Higher Education, or provide documentary evidence of equivalent training.

Where students are undertaking teaching or a particular teaching role for the first time it would be best practice to assign a mentor to respond to any particular issues, provide general support and guidance and offer the opportunity for reflection. The mentor should be a member of staff who has significant experience in the role, such as a member of academic staff or a Technician with demonstrating experience.

## **Quality Assurance**

School Directors of Learning and Teaching should ensure that student feedback on teaching by research students is closely monitored. In this context careful thought should be given by the Director to the format and timing of feedback so as to best support the professional development of the teacher and ensure that standards are being maintained.

Where Schools have peer observation mechanisms in place it would be good practice for research students undertaking teaching to be included in the scheme.

Research students who are involved in the teaching and/or assessment of a unit may participate in quality assurance processes as members of the teaching team. However, no research student may be solely responsible for the quality assurance of a unit (since a research student may not be a Unit Organiser). Where a research student has information of relevance to quality and standards to be communicated to the Board of Examiners this should be referred to the Board by the appropriate Unit Organiser.

## **Workload**

It would not be appropriate to provide guidelines on the proportion or elements of a unit which may be taught by research students. Each School will need to consider for itself what proportion of its teaching may be delivered by research students (with regard to the guidance that no student should undertake more than 6 hours teaching per week), but should be sensitive to feedback from the students enrolled on the unit or participating in the learning activity undertaken by the research student.

No research student may act as a Unit Organiser or a Course Director.

Research students may not act as advisers to undergraduate or postgraduate taught students. Adequate guidance and support should be given to research students engaged in teaching on how to respond to welfare issues, for example the reporting of extenuating circumstances.

## **Marking**

Where research students have been involved in the teaching of a unit it is appropriate that they may also be involved in the first marking of assessed work (on the assumption that there are clear marking criteria in place). The normal expectations of double marking of assessed work will apply. If research students are involved in the assessment of student work it is assumed that they will complete the relevant modules of the CSED Teaching Skills programme.

Research students shall not be members of the Board of Examiners.

Adequate support and guidance should be given to research students in detecting plagiarism and collusion. If a research student suspects that there is plagiarism or collusion in a piece of assessed work this must be reported in the first instance to the appropriate unit organiser.

The unit organiser will be responsible for consulting with the Plagiarism Officer, meeting with the student and deciding on an adjusted mark.

A research student shall not participate in the Procedures for Dealing with Suspected Cases of Plagiarism or any Disciplinary Action arising from an allegation of plagiarism or collusion.

### **Transparency of Opportunity**

As good practice Schools should ensure that where teaching opportunities exist or arise, all qualified research students have access to those opportunities. Information on teaching opportunities should be made available to all research students in a timely manner and the allocation of teaching made in a fair and transparent way.

The supervisory team should discuss with the student the potential impact on the completion schedule of taking on teaching duties. The School Director of Learning and Teaching should retain an oversight of appointment of research students to teaching duties.

Joanne Ashman  
May 2006

## Appendix: proposed 2015 guidelines for consideration by LTC [including track changes from 2006 version]

University of East Anglia

### Teaching Undertaken by Postgraduate Research Students (Guidelines)

Some students registered for UEA research degrees may undertake teaching responsibilities as part of their professional development and training. ~~In line with the~~ The University's Code of Practice for ~~Assuring the Quality of Research Degrees~~, specifies that ~~full time students should not undertake more than 6 hours of teaching per week~~ **full-time registered students are not normally expected to undertake more than an average of 6 hours paid teaching per week, up to a maximum of 180 hours per academic year. Students should seek the approval of their supervisory team for any paid work undertaken. Some students will also have restrictions on employment in the conditions of their visa.**

Schools may find it helpful to have some guidelines for managing the learning experience of undergraduate and postgraduate students on taught courses. The following seeks to establish guidelines for the recruitment of research students and the expectations in respect of volume of teaching within a unit and marking which they may undertake. Decisions on the appointment of research students as tutors will remain at the discretion of the School and will continue to be dependent upon resources.

As an institution which promotes research-informed teaching it is appropriate that research students participate in teaching as part of their own professional development where such opportunities exist. We see no distinction in the quality of teaching offered by research students, associate tutors and members of academic staff.

The following guidelines apply to students registered on research degrees who are not classed as teachers in the University (and who do not therefore receive a monthly salary from the University) or who did not have a contract of employment with the University covering teaching roles prior to registration on a research degree.

#### Training

~~All it is assumed that all~~ research students who undertake undergraduate and masters' level teaching will either complete the Centre for Staff Education and Development course designed to prepare and support students who are teaching for the first time in Higher Education, or provide documentary evidence of equivalent training.

Where students are undertaking teaching or a particular teaching role for the first time ~~it would be best practice to assign~~ **they should be assigned** a mentor to respond to any particular issues, provide general support and guidance and offer the opportunity for reflection. The mentor should be a member of staff who has significant experience in the role, such as a member of academic staff or a Technician with demonstrating experience.

The role description for Module Organisers approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee on 22 October 2014 (LTC14D007) describes the role of Module Organisers in supporting research students who undertake teaching.

## Quality Assurance

School Directors of Learning and Teaching should ensure that student feedback on teaching by research students is closely monitored. In this context careful thought should be given by the Director to the format and timing of feedback so as to best support the professional development of the teacher and ensure that standards are being maintained.

It is good practice for research students undertaking teaching to be included in School peer observation mechanisms and observed as part of this. [The revised Code of Practice on Peer Observation approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee on 29 January 2014 \(LTC13D027\)](#) notes that associate tutors are included at the discretion of the Head of School.

Research students who are involved in the teaching and/or assessment of a unit may participate in quality assurance processes as members of the teaching team. However, no research student may be solely responsible for the quality assurance of a unit (since a research student may not be a Unit **Module** Organiser). Where a research student has information of relevance to quality and standards to be communicated to the Board of Examiners this should be referred to the Board by the appropriate Unit **Module** Organiser.

## Workload

It would not be appropriate to provide guidelines on the proportion or elements of a unit which may be taught by research students. Each School will need to consider for itself what proportion of its teaching may be delivered by research students (with regard to the guidance that no student should undertake more than 6 hours teaching **on average** per week), but should be sensitive to feedback from the students enrolled on the unit or participating in the learning activity undertaken by the research student.

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Research students may not act as advisers to undergraduate or postgraduate taught students. Adequate guidance and support should be given to research students engaged in teaching on how to respond to welfare issues, for example the reporting of extenuating circumstances.

## Marking

Where research students have been involved in the teaching of a unit it is appropriate that they may also be involved in the first marking of assessed work (on the assumption that there are clear marking criteria in place). The normal expectations of double marking of assessed work will apply. If research students are involved in the assessment of student work ~~it is~~

~~assumed that they will~~ **they will** complete the relevant modules of the CSED Teaching Skills programme **or equivalent training**.

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As good practice Schools should ensure that where teaching opportunities exist or arise, all qualified research students have access to those opportunities. Information on teaching opportunities should be made available to all research students in a timely manner and the allocation of teaching made in a fair and transparent way.

The supervisory team should discuss with the student the potential impact on the completion schedule of taking on teaching duties. The School Director of Learning and Teaching should retain an oversight of appointment of research students to teaching duties.

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Considered: Learning and Teaching Committee, 18 March 2015