

Guidance: Teaching Undertaken by Postgraduate Research Students

Some students registered for UEA research degrees may undertake teaching responsibilities as part of their professional development and training. In line with the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees, 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 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 undertake an appropriate equivalent programme from a researcher development programme, or provide documentary evidence of equivalent training.

Where students are undertaking teaching or a particular teaching role for the first time 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 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.

No research student may act as a Module 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 they will complete the relevant module (Assessing Students' Learning) of the CSED Teaching Skills programme or equivalent training.

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.

Approved: Postgraduate Research Executive, 3 March 2015
Considered: Learning and Teaching Committee, 18 March 2015