



QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST

# POLICY & GUIDANCE ON TEACHING AND TEACHING SUPPORT

provided by PhD students (PGTAs)  
and Teaching Assistants (TAs)

Revised JUNE 2022



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	Context	4
B.	Definitions and categories	5
C.	Policy on Teaching and Teaching Support by PGTAs and TAs	6
D.	Teaching Support Framework	12
E.	Academic Governance	12
F.	Exceptions to the Policy	12
G.	Guidance on Implementation of the Policy	12
H.	Equality and Diversity	12
I.	Section 75	13

## A. CONTEXT

The University has undertaken a full review of its frameworks for the allocation and remuneration of individuals contracted to work on teaching and teaching-related duties. The aim has been to create a transparent, fair and consistent model which has been benchmarked against comparator institutions and which can be applied across all Faculties.

The University recognises and values the significant contribution made by PhD students and other Teaching Assistants to the delivery of the highest quality of teaching provision and is committed to ensuring that the model set out herein recognises this contribution appropriately and with clear accountability.

The following underpinning principles have been agreed in consultation with all key stakeholders.

- Each component element of teaching and teaching support duties to be quantified in terms of hours e.g., preparation, marking, delivery.
- Expectations in terms of preparation, delivery, marking, and other teaching-related duties, such as student support, to be made explicit at point of contracting.
- Teaching opportunities to be advertised transparently.
- Allocation of opportunities to be fair and transparent.
- Scheduling of regular payments to be communicated by individual Schools (monthly, by semester, etc.).
- Payment rates to be mapped onto the AC1/AC2 salary scales and to increase annually in line with the annual pay review.
- Clear governance process to be established to cover quality assurance of the new framework (see section F below).
- Access to be made available to resources including printing facilities and locker space as a minimum, hot-desking facilities where possible, and access to a regular space for office hours.
- Terms and conditions of engagement to be clearly defined, reviewed, and updated in light of legislative developments and or a wider review of atypical contracts.

The framework set out in the present document applies to the following groups:

- PhD students delivering teaching and teaching support (PGTAs), for whom access to such opportunities is a core part of their professional training and development.
- Teaching Assistants (TAs) who may be post-doctoral or who bring other expertise to the provision of a high-quality student learning experience, e.g., native speakers offering language classes in the case of language degrees.

## **B. DEFINITIONS AND CATEGORIES**

### ***PGTAs (Postgraduate Teaching Assistants)***

These are currently enrolled PhD students who are undertaking teaching at the levels set out within the policy included in Section C.2 for training and professional development purposes.

### ***TAs (Teaching Assistants)***

Tutors delivering teaching provision in which they bring expertise to complement and supplement that of full-time academic staff. This might include recently completed PhD students or tutors with other specialist skills/attributes e.g., native language speakers employed in Modern Languages to deliver oral classes.

### ***Further categories (not covered by the present guidance)***

Guest lecturers are appointed, normally on a one-off basis, to make a value-added contribution to programme delivery. Guest lecturers will offer, for example, a masterclass, lecture, or defined series thereof, which shares expertise not available within the University among academic staff and TAs/PGTAs. The guest lecturer role will differ to some extent across Faculties, but typically, they will be 'industry' professionals who will bring professional insight to the academic curriculum. For example:

- Creative Arts engages instrumental/voice tutors, and managers from the cultural arts sector to deliver the MA Arts Management
- Teaching support in MHLS is often provided by Health Service colleagues, and attracts rates agreed by the DHSSPS

Payment for guest lecturers/industry professionals should therefore be aligned to industry rates, as appropriate, and/or be negotiated and agreed on an individual basis.

## **C. POLICY ON TEACHING AND TEACHING SUPPORT BY PGTAs AND TAs**

### **1. Opportunities to Support Teaching and Principles for the Engagement of PGTAs/TAs**

- 1.1 All PGTAs and TAs who are eligible to provide teaching support should be made aware of the opportunities available to them and of the process for application. It is recognised that such opportunities to support teaching will vary across Schools, dependent upon the subject and its preferred models of delivery.
- 1.2 The process and arrangements for selecting PGTAs and TAs to be involved in the teaching process must be fair, transparent. Selection will be based on teaching support requirements and the relevance of the PGTA/TA's skills and knowledge to the subject area.
  - 1.2.1 While Postgraduate Research (PGR) students cannot be compelled to take on PGTA duties, the University strongly encourages them to apply for opportunities to support teaching where such opportunities exist, in light of the benefits in terms of professional development.
  - 1.2.2 Teaching support activities must not, however, impede the successful completion of the student's own research degree and must not contravene any relevant funding, or UKVI, conditions. For example, students in receipt of Department for the Economy (DfE) funded studentships must not exceed six hours per week in paid engagement/work.
  - 1.2.3 PGR students may only undertake teaching support activities with the advance permission of their Head of School or nominee (usually the Director of Education), taking account of the academic performance of the student. The student's supervisor should be consulted as part of this process, and reasons provided to the PGR student in writing if not deemed eligible to undertake teaching support activities. PGR students delivering teaching support activities must be registered students of the University. Students on a temporary withdrawal or suspension will not be eligible to engage in teaching.
  - 1.2.4 Only those PGR students who have successfully completed differentiation may undertake teaching support under PGR Band B (see 2.2 below).
  - 1.2.5 PGR students registered as 'Thesis Only' should not undertake teaching support. Where 'Thesis Only' students undertake teaching support, it must be with the express support of their Principal Supervisor and take due account of the demands of writing up their thesis.
- 1.3 The University will provide reasonable adjustments to disabled applicants throughout the process of recruiting PGTAs and TAs. If

applicants require any support during the selection process, they will be asked to disclose this at application, or they can contact the relevant School to discuss their requirements.

- 1.4 It should be noted that the University operates an Ineligible Applicants policy which relates to ex-employees who have been dismissed, not confirmed in post or who have resigned prior to, or during, the course of investigations. In addition, a student who has been expelled, instructed to withdraw or suspended could be defined as an ineligible applicant if the University considers that the reason for expulsion is sufficiently serious to warrant their application becoming ineligible. There are also restrictions on remuneration relating to those who have left the University under a severance scheme. The policy places restrictions on such individuals receiving further remuneration by the University for a prescribed period. If further guidance is required in relation to this, please contact Human Resources.
- 1.5 Under current immigration regulations, all organisations are required to check, and hold evidence of having checked the right of individuals to work in the UK.
- 1.6 Tax and National Insurance contributions will be deducted as appropriate unless exemption from such arrangements is accepted. The payment of fees should not exceed £5,000 per annum for any individual.
- 1.7 Further information will be made available on the relevant section of the HR website as the review of atypical contracts across the University progresses:  
<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/Resourcing/Recruitment/RecruitmentandSelection/Non-StaffAtypicalWorkers/TeachingSupport/>

2. Activities and Responsibilities

- 2.1 PGTAs and TAs will be paid an hourly rate based on the activities for which they are engaged.
- 2.2 In the case of PGTAs, the activities will fall within the following bands:

PGR Band A	<p>Range of roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laboratory Assistant</li> <li>• Demonstrator</li> <li>• Field Trip Assistant</li> </ul> <p>May assess practical work (subject to moderation) and against clear guidance and expected answers for all Levels.</p>
PGR Band B	Range of roles:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of undergraduate seminars/tutorials, using prepared materials to small groups of students (with additional paid preparation time).</li> <li>• Formative assessment and marking, subject to mentoring, clear marking criteria and suitable moderation.</li> <li>• Marking of summative assessment (under the following conditions):             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. where clear guidance and expected answers are provided</li> <li>b. for modules at Level 1, and</li> <li>c. exceptionally for modules at Level 2<sup>1</sup> and should not normally exceed 50% of a module assessment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>PGR students shall not be permitted to provide summative assessment of assignments for modules at Level 3 or 4 of undergraduate programmes or any PGT modules.</p>
--	--

- 2.3 While PGR students should not deliver lectures, they may be invited to provide an occasional lecture or seminar on a module directly related to their PhD research.
- 2.4 PGR students should not be involved in supporting teaching at postgraduate level.
- 2.5 TAs may undertake all of the activity outlined above and may additionally offer teaching support at higher levels as set out in the Teaching Support Framework included with this Guidance.
- 2.6 The following principles should be applied for all PGTAs and TAs involved in teaching-related activities:
- 2.6.1 **PGTAs and TAs shall not have responsibility for module design, co-ordination or convenorship.**
- 2.6.2 PGTAs and TAs must undertake such training as is designated by the Head of School (see section 3 below).
- 2.6.3 The convenor(s) of the module(s) on which the PGTA or TA has assigned teaching support responsibilities will act as mentor for the PGTA/TA. The module convenor(s) will guide and advise the PGTA/TA and will monitor the quality of teaching.
- 2.6.4 The module convenor (or nominee) will undertake a peer evaluation of the PGTA's and TA's teaching in the course of the semester in which teaching is offered for the purposes of professional development.

---

<sup>1</sup> To be submitted to Academic Affairs ([egp@qub.ac.uk](mailto:egp@qub.ac.uk)) for approval via the Dean of Education



- 2.6.5 The appropriate preparation time for each module/subject area should be determined within the School (led by Module Convenor and agreed by School). This should be agreed in advance of each academic year and published as part of the engagement of PGTAs and TAs.
- 2.6.6 PGTAs and TAs will participate in evaluations of learning and teaching and discuss the evaluations with the module convenor or the School's Teaching Support Coordinator (or equivalent).
- 2.6.7 PGTAs and TAs should not undertake a personal tutoring role for students. They should, however, be made aware of the University's system of pastoral support and know how to direct students to appropriate members of staff if the need arises.
- 2.6.8 PGTAs/TAs involved in supporting teaching must be engaged contractually for teaching support duties (including preparation and assessment time as appropriate) and be allocated work and paid the standard rate as outlined in section D: Teaching Support Framework Key and section E: Marking Ranges. The contract must be agreed with the Head of School (or nominee) before the PGTA/TA takes up teaching support duties.
- 2.6.9 Other than in unforeseeable circumstances – for example, where another PGTA/TA is unable to deliver their teaching at short notice e.g., because of illness – PGTAs/TAs should not be asked to undertake duties outside of their contract.

### 3. Training and Support

- 3.1 All PGTAs and TAs who undertake teaching support must receive appropriate training. For PGTAs, this is to support professional development and is not paid. TAs will be paid to attend training at the rates set out in the Teaching Support Framework. Training should include:

Prior to undertaking Teaching Support activities:

- A discipline-specific induction, which must be provided by the School before the PGTA/TA undertakes any teaching support activity. Support from the Centre for Educational Development (CED) is provided to Schools for this activity. Training may also be provided by the Graduate School.
- An overview of/provision of copies of the University's Equality and Diversity Policy to ensure inclusive teaching support provision.

Preferably before, but required within six months of starting Teaching Support activities:

- At least one of the training courses for academic staff provided by the University – details are available at: <http://www.gub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/EventsandCourses/workshops/>. The appropriate course will depend on the PGTA/TA's previous teaching support experience and may be prescribed by the School.
- 3.2 It is deemed good practice for PGTAs/TAs to begin their teaching support experience by taking part in a co-taught or team-taught unit.
  - 3.3 PGTAs and TAs engaged in teaching support activities should be mentored and monitored by a member of academic staff (typically the module convenor). The mentor is responsible for providing the PGTA/TA with feedback on their teaching support through continuous monitoring/observation and providing guidance to the PGTA/TA on undertaking appropriate assessment processes. The module convenor should also support and advise on any teaching materials devised by the PGTA/TA.
  - 3.4 The required date and time commitment should be set out to the PGTA/TA undertaking teaching support activities as far in advance of teaching support beginning as is practicable. This is to enable them to make appropriate arrangements for childcare or other dependent care responsibilities. Where scheduling conflicts arise due to religious practices or holidays, the PGTA/TA should discuss this in reasonable time with the module convenor, and wherever practicable will be supported to make appropriate alternative arrangements (e.g., convenor arranging alternative teaching support for that day, adjusting schedule for that week).
  - 3.5 PGTAs and TAs undertaking teaching support activities, and who have a disability or long-term medical condition, are encouraged to disclose this to the relevant School, and discuss reasonable adjustments which may be required to support them in undertaking the activities.
  - 3.6 In the case of PGTAs, teaching support activities, and any related skills development, should be discussed as part of the formal review of their development and progress, in line with the requirements for Annual Progress Review as set out in the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes.

#### 4. Quality Assurance

- 4.1 PGTAs and TAs shall not be Programme or Module Convenors, nor should they be members of the Board of Examiners, nor be given any responsibility for the management of programmes.
- 4.2 Schools must adhere to the arrangements set by the University Education Committee (Student Experience) for academic oversight and quality assurance of the selection, performance and evaluation of the teaching undertaken by PGTAs and TAs.

- 4.3 Schools must ensure that the extent of the involvement of PGTA and TAs in the support of a taught programme is managed and reviewed with the overall learning experience of undergraduate (or, if permitted, PGT) students in mind. The quality of this experience will be central to decision making about the type, content and amount of teaching support undertaken by any PGTA or TA.
- 4.4 As part of standard University quality assurance processes, the School (through the programme or module convenors) must evaluate the performance of PGTA and TAs who support teaching (during and at the end of the teaching activity, and including any assessment) in order to ensure that students receive teaching of the appropriate quality. Such evaluations must take account of the taught student feedback as well as any reports resulting from staff observation of the teaching. PGTA and TAs returning to teach may only do so following satisfactory feedback on their teaching in the previous semester/year.

5. Monitoring and Academic Governance

- 5.1 The Head of School (or nominee, usually the Director of Education) is responsible for ensuring that practices to engage teaching support align with the present policy and any other associated policies. A governance process involving Faculty monitoring and reporting to the University Education Committee (Student Experience) is detailed below under section F of this document.
- 5.2 Monitoring of PGTA/TAs in relation to Section 75 Equality Duties will be undertaken in line with overall monitoring processes.

## **D. TEACHING SUPPORT FRAMEWORK**

Full details of the competency requirements for the range of activities undertaken by PGTAs and TAs, including marking, can be found at [Teaching Support Framework and associated Marking Ranges](#).

## **E. ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE**

The power to appoint Teaching Assistants and PGTAs has been delegated from the University Education Committee (Student Experience) to Schools. This will be overseen by the Faculty Education Committee or equivalent. A report will be provided by each School to the University Education Committee in each cycle of business which will contain the names of the TAs and PGTAs who have been appointed in each cycle, together with the relevant module codes and names, and confirmation that training, as outlined in the Guidance, has taken place. The University Education Committee will note the reports and, in turn, report to Academic Council.

## **F. EXCEPTIONS TO THE POLICY**

Where exceptions to the policy are required, a request must be submitted to Academic Affairs ([egp@qub.ac.uk](mailto:egp@qub.ac.uk)) for sending to the Faculty for approval via the Dean of Education with the nature of the request stated clearly and the rationale for the request. Where such requests are permitted, these will be reported to the University Education Committee (Student Experience) for note.

## **G. GUIDANCE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY**

Advice and guidance on the implementation of this Policy and Guidance can be provided by the Dean of Graduate School or by Human Resources.

Should full-time staff, PGTAs or TAs have queries or concerns about the implementation of the framework that are not addressed via the processes above, they should contact the Dean of the Graduate School, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students, or, as appropriate, Human Resources.

Further guidance and templates, which will be updated as the wider review of Atypical Contracts progresses, are also available at:

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/Resourcing/Recruitment/RecruitmentandSelection/Non-StaffAtypicalWorkers/TeachingSupport/>

The implementation of the Policy and associated procedures will be taken forward by Schools under the oversight of Faculty Executive Boards.

## **H. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

The University seeks to provide equality to all, irrespective of gender, including gender re-assignment; marital or civil partnership status; having or not having dependants; religious belief or political opinion; race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, including Irish Travellers); disability; sexual orientation and age.

This policy applies to:

(i) all applicants for employment, employees and all those who work for the University (including members of Senate and its core committees) and relates to all decisions in respect of recruitment and selection, promotion, access to training and the provision of terms and conditions of employment; and

(ii) all student applicants and potential applicants and relates to all decisions in respect of the admission of students and the provision of all services to students including teaching and supervision, assessment, progression and award, and support services.

The policy is reflective of the University's commitment to develop fully and utilise the talents of all its staff and students.

A copy of the Equality and Diversity policy can be found at the following link:

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/DiversityandInclusionUnit/PoliciesandProcedures/EqualityandDiversityPolicy/#d.en.759342>

## **I. SECTION 75 STATEMENT**

This policy has been screened out with mitigation as per the Equality Commission's guidance on screening with no adverse impact with regard to equality of opportunity and/or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.