

Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook

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Sue Davies, HR Business Partner, Human Resources		Peter Brook, Director of Human Resources (HR)	
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Graduate Teaching Assistant Handbook

Summary

What is this Handbook about?

This Handbook applies to Graduate Teaching Assistants as agreed locally by the University of Portsmouth and the University and College Union (UCU). It provides information about the description of the role, including the arrangements for supervision, research and contract.

Who is this Handbook for?

This Handbook is for all staff and managers.

How does the University check this Handbook is followed?

Human Resources maintain an overview of the management of Graduate Teaching Assistants and reports are presented to the Governors' Human Resources Committee.

Who can you contact if you have any queries about this Handbook?

All enquiries should be directed to the appropriate HR Adviser and details are available via the HR webpages at www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/humanresources/contactus/hrservicecentre/.

1. Graduate Teaching Assistants: Description of role

1.1 Purpose

- 1.1.1 To provide a clear medium term career development pathway in teaching and research for new graduates.
- 1.1.2 To contribute to the teaching of some full-time academic staff who undertake research or other professional activities.
- 1.1.3 To foster the further development of the research culture by increasing the number of part-time postgraduate researchers.
- 1.1.4 To strengthen the links between the research and teaching functions.

1.2 Duties and supervision arrangements

- 1.2.1 In their first year they will:
 - undertake up to eight hours of 'Assistance to Teaching' duties each week as defined in 1.2.6 below;
 - undertake the Graduate Students Professional Development Programme (GPROF) Foundation Pathway of the APEX Programme offered by the Department of Curriculum and Quality Enhancement (DCQE). No teaching or supporting learning activities should be undertaken until Graduate Teaching Assistance (GTAs) have attended the GPROF induction;
 - register and study for a research degree (PhD) on a part-time basis and submit for Annual Progress review;
 - undertake a minimum of five days development activities to support their research degree.
- 1.2.2 In their second year they will undertake:
 - up to 12 hours of 'Assistance to Teaching' and/or 'Teaching' duties each week. 'Teaching' duties are as defined in 1.2.7 below;
 - submit for Major Review;
 - successfully complete the following units run by the Academic Development Centre (ADC):
 - i) Open and Resource Based Learning;
 - ii) The APEX Associate Fellowship Pathway, or depending upon the range of 'teaching' duties undertaken, discuss the possibility of undertaking the APEX Fellowship Pathways for academic staff new to teaching;

- study for a research degree on a part-time basis and submit for the Major Review;
- undertake a minimum of five days development activities to support their research degree.

1.2.3 In their third year they will undertake:

- up to 12 hours of 'Assistance to Teaching' and/or 'Teaching' duties each week;
- study for a research degree on a part-time basis having passed their Major Review and achieved sufficient progress towards the PhD completion.

1.2.4 In their fourth, fifth and sixth years they will undertake:

- up to 12 hours of 'Teaching' duties each week;
- undertake a minimum of five days development activities to support their research degree;
- study for a PhD and submit for Annual Reviews with the expectation that their thesis will be completed by the end of the sixth year.

1.2.5 A Graduate Teaching Assistant will have a First Supervisor and at least one other supervisor for their Research programme. They will also have a Teaching Mentor who will not be involved in the Research Programme and will be a FHEA. The duties of the mentor are to ensure that the Graduate Teaching Assistant properly executes their teaching duties and also ensure that those duties are reasonable and will enable the Graduate Teaching Assistants to complete their PhD. Their line manager, however, is the Head of Department who will nominate both the research supervision team and the Teaching Mentor.

Graduate Teaching Assistants will have access to appropriate Researcher Development Training (e.g through the Graduate School Development Programme).

1.2.6 'Assistance to Teaching' is defined as any of, or combination of, the following scheduled activities:

- demonstrating in laboratories or studios;
- assisting in tutorials or classes;
- assisting in demonstrating IT software and in IT teaching generally;
- assistance/training in preliminary marking of course work/examinations and the provision of feedback;
- assisting with foreign language work such as language conversation and use of language laboratories;
- participation in discussions and seminars.

1.2.7 'Teaching' is defined as any of, or combination of, the following scheduled activities:

- those activities defined as 'assistance to teaching';
- taking tutorials or classes to include preliminary marking of course work/examinations and provision of feedback;
- demonstrating IT software and IT teaching generally, practicals, workshops, laboratory projects, studio work;
- lecturing for training purposes or lecturing related specifically to the expertise of the appointee.

1.3 Research arrangements

Not less than 50% of the Graduate Teaching Assistant's contracted time should be made available for the pursuit of the research study for a research degree (PhD).

1.4 Contract arrangements

- 1.4.1 The contract will initially be for three years with the first year being a probationary period. Provided that the Major Review has been successfully completed within the three year period, a further three year contract will be available.
- 1.4.2 Graduate Teaching Assistants will be required to register annually for a part time research degree (PhD) in years 1 to 3, and if employed subsequently, to continue to register annually in years 4 to 6 to continue their PhD studies.

2. Guidelines for the determination of the lecturing duties of Graduate Teaching Assistants

2.1 Purpose

These guidelines are based on the institution being enabled to seek to achieve the following objectives:

- to achieve education provision of a high standard;
- to recognise the professional contribution which Graduate Teaching Assistants make to the HE sector to avoid Graduate Teaching Assistants undertaking unreasonable workloads;
- to enable the distribution of work to be carried out locally and fairly within an institution taking into account the local circumstances.

2.2 Principles

- 2.2.1 The duties and responsibilities of a Graduate Teaching Assistant are to contribute to the scheduled teaching commitments of their Department, to the maintenance and enhancement of high quality teaching in the University and to undertake post-graduate research to doctorate level.
- 2.2.2 The proportion of time an individual should devote to any of these activities is a matter for professional judgment, which is necessarily made on an individual basis, bearing in mind the needs of both the Graduate Teaching Assistant and the institution.
- 2.2.3 Both staff and management jointly have a responsibility to seek to enhance the quality of educational provision, but at the same time to increase access to HE to all sectors of the population, since the extent to which this is achieved is also a measure of the quality of the service. To this end there is mutual concern to improve flexibility and to bring about changes in working practices and methods of delivery, supported by a commitment to the professional development of staff.
- 2.2.4 Workloads, however, which damage performance and which are detrimental to the Graduate Teaching Assistant, students and the service must be avoided through good management practice in which Heads of Department and other colleagues collectively determine optimum working practices and balance of activities which safeguard standards for all aspects of a Graduate Teaching Assistant's role, and in which individuals manage their time in a fully professional way towards individual and corporate objectives. The formal scheduled teaching responsibilities of a Graduate Teaching Assistant may vary according to other duties and responsibilities.

2.3 Working hours

- 2.3.1 The post is full time and its nature is such that you are expected to work a 37 hour week.
- 2.3.2 Responsibility for scheduled teaching, and for assistance to teaching, will not exceed the hours set out in section 1.
- 2.3.3 Where possible in arranging a Graduate Teaching Assistant's timetable special regard should be given to the family responsibilities of the Graduate Teaching Assistant.

2.4 Factors to be taken into account

- 2.4.1 Subject to sections 2.2 and 2.3, the specific scheduled teaching responsibilities of an individual Graduate Teaching Assistant, and the time to be devoted to other duties, is a matter for discussion between the Graduate Teaching Assistant and the relevant line manager (Head of Department) and will be such as to enable the Graduate Teaching Assistant to be effective in the overall discharge of his/her professional responsibilities. In allocating responsibilities, the following factors shall be taken into account:
 - the full range and extent of actual duties to be performed (see section 1.2);
 - personal development needs both as a teacher and as a subject specialist and, in relation, to research and other scholarly activity and to overall career development;
 - teaching experience;
 - the numbers of students for whom there would be responsibility;
 - teaching group sizes, with particular regard for methods requiring interaction (for example, seminars), and the assessment implications;
 - differing subject needs;
 - the teaching methods appropriate;
 - the number and range of the curricula to be taught, with particular consideration given to the development and delivery of new (for the lecturer) and innovative courses;
 - the desirability of achieving a reasonable balance of activities.

- 2.4.2 Regard for the implications in Graduate Teaching Assistant's workloads should be had at the appropriate stages of course and institutional planning, particularly in relation to those courses having specific professional demands.
- 2.4.3 The role of the Graduate Teaching Assistant is one of contributing to the scheduled teaching of students whilst studying for a higher degree. The primary responsibility for the teaching of units of study falls to the unit coordinator. The Graduate Teaching Assistant may contribute to the programme of lectures but that contribution shall not be such as to interfere with their research study.

2.5 Procedure

Determination of a Graduate Teaching Assistant's duties will normally be achieved by annual consultation between the Head of Department and the individual Graduate Teaching Assistant, and should be linked to the institution's procedures for staff appraisal. However, there should be fairness in the allocation of overall duties and equal opportunities for all staff to develop their professional skills. Moreover, it will be important to maintain an ongoing review of the situation so as to adjust to changing circumstances and to deal with any difficulties which might occur. To these ends:

- the outcome of the process should be open within each peer group (Department);
- senior management has a responsibility to maintain an overview to ensure a measure of consistency across the institution in the application of the guidelines;
- grievances or disputes over the allocation of duties and the application of these guidelines at both the individual and collective levels may be dealt with under the grievance procedure or the collective disputes procedure, or be referred to the University Negotiating and Consultation Committee (UNCC).

3. Salaries

3.1 Salary scales

Graduate Teaching Assistants are paid at Grade 5. Current salary scales are available at www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/humanresources/payrewardandbenefits/.

3.2 Placement on scales

On first appointment to any scale, the incremental point will be determined by the University.

3.3 Incremental progression

Graduate Teaching Assistants, whether full-time or part-time, will be entitled to one increment on 1 September following appointment and each year subsequently provided that they have been in post for six months or more on that date. This will continue until the maximum of the grade is reached.

No increment will be withheld unless performance has been deemed unsatisfactory by the University.

4. Sick leave and sick pay

If you are sick your line manager must be informed as soon as possible on your first day of absence, indicating the likely length of the absence and outlining the reasons for it. It is your responsibility to ensure that your manager is kept well-informed. Your manager is also responsible for maintaining contact with you during a period of absence. If you are absent on grounds of sickness for up to and including seven consecutive calendar days, you are able to self-certificate this period of absence by entering absence details on the HR Self Service System and completing a return to work form with your manager. Should you be absent for more than seven consecutive calendar days, you will be required to submit a doctor's fit note to cover your absence from the eighth day onwards. Further information, including sick pay entitlements, is given at www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/humanresources/occupationalhealthservice/sicknessabsence/.

5. Family friendly entitlements

For information about maternity, paternity and parental leave and pay, adoption leave and pay and your right to request flexible working arrangements, follow the relevant links from www.port.ac.uk/intranet/humanresources/conditionsofemployment/familyfriendlyentitlements/.

Other policies and procedures can be found via the A to Z on the HR website at www.port.ac.uk/intranet/humanresources/conditionsofemployment/familyfriendlyentitlements/.

6. Annual leave arrangements

The University of Portsmouth's holiday year runs from 1 October to 30 September. In addition to statutory Bank Holidays, local discretionary holidays and days when the institution is closed in the interests of efficiency, you are entitled to 35 days paid holiday (*pro rata* for fractional contracts) during the course of the holiday year.

A maximum of five days' leave may be carried forward to the following leave year for both full- and part-time employees. All leave not agreed as carry over leave will be lost. The University will not pay employees for leave untaken as an alternative to carrying it over to the next leave year. If there are exceptional circumstances to carry forward leave in excess of five days, approval must be obtained by the Dean of Faculty or Head of Professional Service.

In the holiday year in which your employment commences or terminates, your holiday entitlement will accrue on a *pro rata* basis for each complete month of service; on the termination of your employment, holiday pay will be worked out on a similar basis.

The timing of your holidays is subject to the agreement of your Head of Department. Approval of requests for annual leave will not be unreasonably withheld. The University may require you to take some of your leave at specific times of the year; should this be the case you will be notified in advance of the dates concerned.

7. Undertaking paid external work

When considering the principle of paid external work it is important that the legitimate interests of the University and the member of staff can be fairly balanced within the terms of the contract of employment.

The majority of externally funded work undertaken by academic staff is administered either through faculty/departmental (University) accounts or through a subsidiary company of the University of Portsmouth: subsidiary companies are used for activities that do not conform to the primary purposes of The University of Portsmouth Higher Education Corporation. Determination of whether or not a specific activity falls within the definition of a primary or non-primary purpose requires detailed knowledge of the scope of the activity itself, the terms and conditions that apply to its performance and a sound understanding of HMRC rules and Charity Commission guidance.

The decision as to whether an activity should be undertaken via the University or a subsidiary company must be made by the Finance Department in consultation with faculties and contract specialists in Research and Innovation Services. It should be noted that activities routed through a subsidiary company of the University of Portsmouth do not necessarily result in staff being eligible for additional payments. Further information is available from the Research Team in the Finance Department.

The procedure described here only covers paid external work that is agreed not to be undertaken under the auspices of either the University of Portsmouth or through a subsidiary company of the University.

The University's principal objectives are to:

- encourage external work where this is supportive of a member of academic staff's responsibilities;
- ensure that this external work enhances teaching and/or scholarship and/or research;
- ensure that external work does not conflict with the University's interests.

Permission to undertake external work will not normally be withheld for the following activities:

- external examining;
- acting as an assessor or moderator;
- occasional lectures or seminars;
- occasional media appearances;
- occasional newspaper articles.

For all other paid external work, academic staff must ensure that they do not give the impression that they are acting for or representing the University through, for example, the use of University letterheaded paper or a University of Portsmouth email address. Furthermore, staff undertaking private work should ensure that they have obtained the appropriate insurance indemnification, as the University's provisions do not cover such activities.

An obligation to undertake any external work, including consultancy, must be approved by your line manager and might necessitate a contract variation. To inform this decision, members of academic staff seeking to undertake external work should provide the following information to their line manager:

- the nature of the work;
- the person(s) or organisation(s) for whom it is undertaken;
- the relationship, if known, of the above person(s)/organisation(s) to the University or its clients;
- the amount of the time the work will take, including the phasing;
- any proposed use of University resources;
- a statement about whether or not the work was obtained through the agency of the University of Portsmouth.

Where the use of University of Portsmouth resources is necessary for the proposed work, prior approval must be obtained from your line manager and appropriate charges will be levied by the University.

Should your line manager decide that the proposed work will either interfere with the performance of your professional duties, or improperly compete or conflict with the interests of the University of Portsmouth, permission for you to undertake the work may be refused. You will be informed of this decision within five working days of submitting the original request, or an alternative mutually agreed timescale. Agreement will not be withheld unreasonably, and only after consultation with you: the reasons for withholding permission (see Appendix 2) will be provided in writing and will be subject to appeal. Any appeal must be made in writing to the Dean (or equivalent) within ten working days of the original decision.

Approval for external work will normally be limited to a period of one year. Further approval from your line manager must be obtained before any continuation or extension of external work is undertaken.

Appendix 1

Scholarship

Examples of types of scholarly activity include, but are not restricted to:

- Activities necessary to maintain the currency of course content and delivery.
- Active involvement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, and other professional practice relevant to HE (policy development relating to professions/disciplines, officer of professional body or learned society, fellow of professional body or learned society, some kinds of consultancy, National Teaching Fellowship).
- Engagement in Continuing Professional Development.
- Links with the business, public and voluntary sector (consultancy, some kinds of industrial research, product development, skills audits).
- Contribution to the local, regional and international economies (development plans, incubator units, environmental assessment, market assessment, urban regeneration projects, economic impact studies).
- Leadership in the community (active membership of local strategic partnerships, Health Authority).
- Knowledge Transfer (Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, patents, learning hubs).
- External educational partnerships (partnerships and access schemes, summer schools, progression frameworks).
- Conference organisation (referee of papers, membership of organising committee or programme committee, production and/or editing of proceedings).
- External speaker (HE events, conferences, national and international media presentations/appearances as expert).
- Participant at international, regional and national level in consideration of a subject discipline development or other educational matter relevant to modern higher education (invitations to and active membership of working groups, enquiries, networks, subject associations, related published reports and policy recommendations).
- Development of peer esteemed pedagogic devices, software and texts.
- Writing textbooks.
- Editorial and refereeing activity (member of Editorial Advisory Board, editorships, editor of journal, journal referee, reader of submitted manuscripts, production of critiques of creative/performance activities).
- Book reviewer (invitations and published reviews).

Appendix 2

Withholding permission to work off-site, take annual leave or undertake paid external work

The following list provides examples of circumstances that could lead to line managers turning down requests to work off-site, take annual leave at a particular time or undertake paid external work. The list is indicative rather than exhaustive:

- Where granting permission to be absent would reduce overall staffing levels such that core activities could not be safely delivered.
- When the request has a detrimental impact on scheduled activities e.g. when colleagues are not available to cover programmed undertakings.
- Where the proposed activities would create a conflict of interest.
- When pre-scheduled undertakings, such as accreditation events or exam boards, require staff to be present on a particular day.
- When the request is made on the basis of University policy/guidance, such as family friendly policies and procedures, but the line manager deems the request falls outside of those policies and procedures.
- Where the requested absence is detrimental to the support of students and colleagues, or the delivery of other departmental duties and responsibilities.
- For paid external work, where the requested absence would lead to an unmanageable workload on the individual member of staff or colleagues.

University of Portsmouth
Department of Human Resources
University House
Winston Churchill Avenue
Portsmouth PO1 2UP
United Kingdom

T: +44 (0)23 9284 3141
F: +44 (0)23 9284 3122
E: corporate-governance@port.ac.uk
W: www.port.ac.uk