

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS FOR TEACHING AND RELATED DUTIES

Introduction

This paper has been produced by University of Sheffield branch of UCU (SUCU) and will form the basis of discussion aimed at improving employment practices within the University of Sheffield for postgraduate students. The University of Sheffield should provide a code of practice on the employment of postgraduate student teaching staff including a statement of rights and responsibilities and a recommendation that Postgraduate students should join a recognised union.

Employing departments should show due regard to the graduate student teacher's personal research and course work. Departments should monitor teaching workloads to ensure that they do not present an obstacle to fulfilling academic course requirements.. Due regard should be paid to the requirements of the Research Funding Council regarding restrictions on the number of hours of work that can be undertaken.. *(See UOS Protocol for managing the dual relationship which states that postgraduate students are restricted to a maximum number of working hours of 180 annually which includes time spent on marking and preparation as well as teaching.)*

The Code of Practice

Each employing department should appoint a senior member of staff as a mentor responsible for co-ordinating postgraduate teaching and related work, and overseeing the training, development, support and assessment of postgraduate teaching staff.

The University of Sheffield should provide insurance cover to indemnify postgraduate teachers against legal liability arising from actions in the course of their employment.

The quality of the teaching provided by a postgraduate student teacher must be broadly equivalent to that which might be expected of a new full-time member of academic staff and teaching capability should be assessed before teaching starts, including the ability to communicate clearly and effectively. The postgraduate student teacher must have appropriate skills, experience and knowledge in the subject area being taught.

Teaching is a skill, and as such requires to be learnt. Training in general teaching methods and in any specific skills or knowledge necessary is essential. Training should be appropriate and adequate and those postgraduate student teachers who do not have formal teaching qualifications or experience of teaching should have teaching duties which are limited..

Assessment is at the heart of the maintenance of academic standards and the involvement of postgraduate students with assessments must be limited and carefully controlled. The Heads of Department should ensure that postgraduate student teachers are supervised by a named member of academic staff and provided with training appropriate to their role in the assessment process. Assessments that contribute to the final module/course mark should be moderated by a member

of academic staff and limited, as far as practicable, to those elements of assessment that do not contribute to the degree classification.

Postgraduate students employed to teach or demonstrate are entitled to expect:

- **The opportunity to state teaching preferences in the application process.**
Teaching preferences of applicants should be taken into account in the appointment process.
- **A written statement of their duties** to be presented and agreed.. This should include the number of hours required in preparation, marking, required hours of attendance including lectures and meetings, contact hours, office hours, invigilation, communication with students, administration and compulsory training etc.
- **Pay based on the actual number of hours required to complete all employment responsibilities.** This should include adequate preparation, required training, office hours, required meetings or hours of attendance, communication with students, invigilation, holiday pay, fieldwork and assessment or grading activities.
- **HR web pages.** The post graduate student's appointment letter should include a cross reference to the relevant HR web pages. The following web link provides information on the appointment, induction, guidance and supervision of post graduate students in teaching: www.shef.ac.uk/lets/design.
- **Appropriate and adequate training to prepare them for their work** (see below).
- **Supervision or mentoring by a senior member of staff.**
- **Information about what resources and support for teaching are available within the university.** Postgraduate students should have equal access to learning and teaching resources and also receive equality with regard to information provided to them.
- **Course materials.** A copy of all books and instructional materials required for students taking the class at no cost. In no circumstances should postgraduate student teaching staff be required to pay for materials that they need in order to fulfil their employment responsibilities.
- **Secure storage** for personal belongings and student assignments and appropriate means for communication with students and for the collection of student work.
- **Tutorial room.** Postgraduate student teachers should have a room set aside where they can meet individual students for tutorial purposes.
- **Evaluation and assessment** from a senior member of staff and feedback from student evaluation and assessment forms.
- **An opportunity to give feedback** on the course, teaching methods and the support available for teaching work.
- **Formal representation on the departmental teaching committee.**
- **The right to participate in course development.**

Training

Postgraduate students employed to teach are entitled to expect appropriate and adequate training to prepare them for their work. This will vary depending on the nature of the course to be taught, the teaching role and responsibilities and the previous experience of the postgraduate employee. However, postgraduate students employed to teach or demonstrate are entitled to expect.

- **Peer participation** in the development and delivery of training
- **Training** prior to the beginning of the course
- **Induction** and orientation to teaching in the department
- **A briefing** on the course to be taught including the role and professional responsibilities of the teacher and, as appropriate, an overview of the course, objectives of the course, the syllabus and reading list, course requirements, teaching methods, the administration of the course, and guidelines on the late submission of coursework and on extensions.
- **Training** in the skills which will be needed to teach the course which is specific to the course to be taught and the teaching role, eg laboratory demonstrating, class facilitation, small group work, lesson planning, presentation and communication.
- **Training** on relevant university policies including fire and safety regulations, equal opportunities and disability policies, sexual harassment policies, policies governing consensual relationships with students, guidelines on cheating and plagiarism, confidentiality guidelines and information about referring pastoral concerns to specialist offices or agencies and about student support services.
- **Appropriate training** on pedagogical theory.
- **Ongoing support and development** during the course (eg regular course briefing meetings, observation of teaching, meeting with a mentor, regular teaching workshops, teaching practice diary, participant-led peer support meetings).
- **Ongoing peer support.**
- **Training for Marking and Assessments..** For any postgraduate student undertaking marking and assessments, there should be adequate training on grading and feedback, as well as guidance in the form of marking scales and assessment criteria.
- **Special guidance for demonstrators.** For demonstrators there must be lab safety training and hands-on experience with any equipment used. Guidance should be given in advance of the demonstration work as to the expected results and common problems.
- **Peer review.** The opportunity to have their own class observed and to observe a peer teaching.

SUCU Committee
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