

Business School: College Code of Good Practice

Employment of Postgraduate Students

This College code provides information and guidance to supplement the **University Code of Good Practice - Employment of Postgraduate Students**:

<http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/tls/tqa/Part%207/7Nteacher1415.pdf>

PGR students and staff are required to adhere to both codes, noting particularly the responsibilities set out in the University Code, and the limits on hours of work undertaken.

Terminology

PTA: Postgraduate Teaching Assistant: a PGR student who teaches in the College.

PRA: Postgraduate Research Assistants: a PGR student who provides expert support to research projects and conference organization.

PTA Coordinator: member of academic or administrative staff responsible for PTAs/PRA.

PTA/PRA Representative: a PTA who acts as a representative for all PTAs/PRA in a discipline.

Module leader: member of academic staff with overall responsibility for a module.

Introduction

The Business School employs PGR students to support research activity as well as Undergraduate and Masters level teaching. This can be requested in a variety of ways, including running tutorials, laboratory classes, and marking student assignments or helping with conference organization and supporting projects. In order to fulfil this role successfully, PTAs/PRA need to have an appropriate breadth of knowledge in the area to be taught/researched, plus commitment and excellent communication skills. In order to undertake teaching duties effectively, PTAs must be trained and supported in this role.

Recruitment and selection

The following process for recruitment and selection will be run by the PTA Coordinator:

- PTA/PRA opportunities are advertised in accordance with 4.1 of the University Code. Specifically, this will involve the advertisement of a job description using the Hours Allocation Form, where available, and accompanied by the generic role description for PTAs.
- An email will be sent to all PGRs within a Discipline to advertise the PTA/PRA opportunities available and solicit expressions of interest, an indicative number of hours they wish to work (including preparation, teaching and marking), and the subject areas or modules which they would feel comfortable teaching. There is no guarantee at this stage that a student will be given the teaching they have requested.
- The PTA Coordinator should then match the teaching needs of the discipline with the expressions of interest from the students. Discussions with PGR supervisors and module coordinators should also take place at this stage to determine whether the PGR student fits the

teaching role, given the requirements of the module, and consider any impact on the PGR student's studies.

- Where there are more applicants for PTA/PRA work than positions on a particular module, it may be required to interview relevant PGR students to determine the best candidate(s).
- Employment will be conditional on the student's continued status as a registered student of the University: where a student so employed ceases to be a student of the University, his/her employment will be terminated.
- PTA/PRA work is allocated on an annual basis and work is not guaranteed from one year to the next.

Criteria for selection include:

- Studentship/funder requirements/limits.
- Student's breadth and depth of knowledge in the subject to be taught.
- Relationship of module topic and the PGR student's research project.
- Ability to fit teaching into doctoral workload, so PTA/PRA work does not compromise the ability of the student to complete in a timely fashion.
- Previous teaching experience and demonstrated commitment to teaching.
- Communication skills and English language competence.

These criteria for selection form part of the generic PTA role description, which can be found towards the end of this document, and any selection process will use the full range of criteria available.

Communication of selection decisions:

- PTA Coordinators email PGR students to confirm their decision. Whilst there is no obligation on the PTA Coordinator to enter into any discussion about the selection process, feedback will be provided to unsuccessful candidates.
- Selected PTAs should confirm their availability to teach on the specified modules within one week of receipt of the selection decision email.
- If the PGR student does not wish to take up the offer, or prefers not to teach the allocated module, s/he should communicate this within one week of receipt of the selection decision email.
- PTA Coordinators complete an Hours Allocation Form for each PTA and attach that to their TCR1 request form, and return to the contacts indicated on this web page.
- A letter of appointment will then be issued, using the Template contract for postgraduate teaching and research assistants, which confirms the terms and conditions of employment, sets out the method of payment, and to which is appended a Role Description and a completed Hours Allocation Form.
- The Hours Allocation Form will give details of the teaching offered and specify the duties to be undertaken. It will include preparation for tutorials, laboratory workshops and similar activities plus any training required.

Maximum hours of work

See section 6 of the University code for detailed information on this. The main point 6.1 reads:

Employment of a full-time student should not normally exceed 6 hours per week in total (exceptions to this may occur, with the support of a student's lead supervisor when a student is employed, for example, to support field work or Grand Challenges) and in all cases must not exceed 180 hours per year in total averaged over the course of the academic year. For part-time students, employment may be offered up to the equivalent of a 0.5 fte standard contract (i.e. 111.5 days / 814 hours per year).

See point 6.7 for students who are not nationals of states in the European Economic Area.

The Business School will maintain a record of the hours each PTA works within the Business School; however it is the responsibility of the PTA to monitor their own workload if undertaking duties outside of the Business School, and to inform the Business School of the time commitment for these responsibilities (for example, if undertaking work for another College).

Note that every PTA is responsible for:

- Informing their home College of the number of hours they are employed across the University in any capacity (as explained above)
- Ensuring that their ability to complete their degree programme is not put at risk by any employment they undertake and as such are recommended to give consideration to the maximum hours of employment specified in this Code as inclusive of all employment, including any with external employers.
- Taking advantage of available development opportunities consistent with their employment in order to keep their skills updated.
- Meeting the requirements of their funding body, where applicable, with regard to any employment.

Induction and training

All PGR students who teach in the College will be expected to take part in an induction session; these will take place at the start of each semester. PGR students may be inducted individually at other times by the PTA Coordinator. Induction sessions will be organised by the PTA Coordinator and will usually be specific to each discipline. Induction will include:

- expectations and requirements of the PTA/PRA role within the discipline;
- workload (preparation, classroom management, marking and office hours) and balance with research work;
- support from module leaders and the College and training, including the Learning and Teaching in Higher Education programme;
- administrative requirements;
- printing and access to teaching resources;
- general discussion/question and answer session on teaching issues;
- University, College and discipline-specific marking criteria and strategies;
- good practice in feedback (written and oral) for formative and summative assessment,
- marking practice activity;
- guidance on how to continue personal development whilst carrying out the PTA role, including the ASPIRE framework;

- mandatory training to meet legal obligations such as Health and Safety and Equality and Diversity;
- reference to key Human Resources policies, including the 'Code of Professional Conduct: relations between staff and students/between staff';
- requirements of professional, statutory or regulatory bodies, where relevant.

Students who are engaged in the delivery of laboratory sessions and fieldwork will be required to take appropriate Health and Safety and related training courses.

All PGR students who teach within the College are required to take the Learning and Teaching in Higher Education stage 1 course (LTHE 1) before commencing employment. LTHE 1 is offered in September and January each year and provides an introduction to a range of principles of teaching and learning.

Students undertaking a lead role in the teaching activity, without the presence of a member of staff, or in formative and/or summative assessment, are required to take the LTHE 2 course. LTHE stage 2 comprises six 2-hour sessions and looks in more depth at learning, teaching, student support, assessment and evaluation. LTHE 2 is also offered twice a year, following LTHE 1.

Information on the [LTHE courses](#) is available by clicking on the link.

A PGR student can request a waiver from part or all of the above training requirements (for example LTHE 1 and/or LTHE 2) if their previous competence in teaching can be clearly documented. Where the requirements are varied, this variation and the reasons for it should be clearly set out in the letter of appointment issued to the PTA/PRA. The PGR student should discuss this in the first instance with the PTA Coordinator.

Teaching and related activities

Responsibilities of PTAs/PRAs

Every PTA/PRA should meet with the module leader/project leader to discuss their duties at an early stage. The following are standard responsibilities for PTAs:

- It is the responsibility of the PTA to plan and organise unsupervised classroom or laboratory sessions for which s/he is responsible, guided by the module leader.
- The PTA should ensure that students are provided with the relevant materials for the teaching session and that the classroom environment is conducive to the teaching activities planned, as directed by the module leader.
- Some modules might be monitored for student attendance. If a PTA is provided with a register for his/her sessions, the completed registers must be returned as soon as possible.
- Records of marking and feedback should be returned to the module leader.
- PTAs are responsible for marking work as set out in their Hours Allocation Form, under guidance from the module leader. Assessed work will be marked according to the agreed marking scheme or criteria provided by the module leader. The module leader will moderate the marking to ensure consistency and reliability according to the marking criteria.

- Feedback on student work should be timely, individual, easily understood and developmental (i.e., it should explain why the work received the mark it did, and what could be done to improve it).
- If a PTA is to hold Office Hours, this is to be indicated in the Hours Allocation Form, in which case it may be necessary to request the booking of a room by the Education Support team.
- PTAs will have diverse students within classes with varied needs, possibly detailed in an Individual Learning Plan, and it is the responsibility of the PTA to be aware of these different needs and to accommodate them as far as possible.

Responsibilities of module leaders

Above all, good communication and the early identification of any problems or concerns is key to effective teamwork between module leader, PTAs and others delivering a module. The following general guidelines should be adopted by module leaders:

- The module leader should meet PTAs involved in teaching the module prior to the commencement of teaching to discuss the syllabus and to explain the intended learning outcomes and the rationale behind assessments.
- The module leader has overall responsibility for the quality of the teaching and feedback.
- The module leader is expected to arrange classroom observation of PTAs in order to assist in the professional development of the PTA through feedback.
- All module leaders are expected to provide background information (details of the syllabus, an overview of the lectures and tutorials or seminars, reading lists and assessment tasks, for example in ELE) in a timely fashion to allow PTAs to familiarise themselves with the syllabus and reading material.
- If there are specific module requirements, these should be communicated to the PTA in good time to allow for appropriate preparation.
- Module leaders must discuss assessment issues with their PTAs, including mark schemes or other assessment criteria.
- Module leaders will moderate the marking to ensure consistency and reliability according to the marking criteria and mark schemes.
- The module leader will also ensure that feedback to students by PTAs is consistent with the Business School assessment and feedback strategy.

Monitoring and feedback

Every PTA should be observed in class at least once per year and be given feedback. The peer observation may be carried out by the module leader or other qualified person. PTAs are also encouraged to observe each other to facilitate professional development.

MACE feedback from students should be shared between module leader and PTAs as a means for discussing how well a module was received by students and to consider ways to improve it.

The PTA Coordinators and Representatives will facilitate the provision of feedback from PTAs on issues relating to employment, training, support and workload in order to further improve the management of teaching by postgraduate research students, for example through PGR Liaison Fora.

Illness/inability to teach a class

PTAs who are ill or for good reason unable to attend teaching sessions must notify their PTA Coordinator and/or module leader as soon as possible so a replacement teacher can be found or the class cancelled in good time.

Rates of pay and payments

The rates of pay applicable for PTAs are those published annually by the University for Occasional Teachers, which is linked to the first point on grade E on the pay spine, and includes a pro-rata allowance for accrued holiday comparable to the entitlement for full time staff on the same grade. The method of payment will be through the University payroll in monthly instalments. Claims forms will only be used for ad-hoc work.

Grievance, performance and conduct procedures

Any concerns that the PTA may have relating to their employment by the University – including the termination of employment - will be managed in accordance with procedures issued by Human Resources, which can be found in the appendix of the terms and conditions for postgraduate students.

http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/employment/payandconditions/casual/ptas/t&c_ptas/grievance_p&c/

Where the College has concerns that the PTA is not fulfilling their duties effectively, the College will make arrangements to discuss its concerns and agree appropriate remedies, in the first instance with the PTA Coordinator. Where, following such meetings, the student's performance does not improve to the required standard, the College should take advice from the HR Business Partner for the College. The performance and conduct procedures for student employment in the appendix of the terms and conditions (web link above) will apply in such circumstances.

END OF COLLEGE CODE

Postgraduate Teaching Assistant Coordinator role descriptor

The PTA Coordinator is an academic in each discipline or an administrator who will be expected to:

- Plan and allocate budget regarding PTA teaching in modules for their discipline.
- Organise advertising, selection and recruitment of PTAs.
- Organise the generation of letters of appointment and hours allocation forms.
- Ask PTAs to specify the total number of hours they are employed across the University in any capacity, and to check that this falls within the University limits.
- Organise and run general and individual induction sessions for PTAs.
- Liaise with the PGR administration team, in order that a PTA Representative be appointed from PTAs in the discipline.
- Liaise with the discipline PTA Representative, and pass on feedback to other College postholders and committees.

- Train and liaise with new academic staff members as needed.
 - Liaise with the PGR administration team regarding advertising of, recruitment to, and monitoring of training, for example LTHE 1/2 and Health and Safety courses.
 - Act as the first point of contact for any grievance, performance and conduct issues, and aim to resolve these informally in the first instance, or if not to take up with Human Resources.
 - If required, attend PGR Liaison Fora/SSLCs to discuss teaching and PTA issues with groups of PGR students.
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Postgraduate Teaching Assistant role descriptor

Postgraduate Teaching Assistants may be required to:

- Teach as a member of a teaching team, in a variety of settings (from small group tutorials to large lectures) within an established programme of study.
- Facilitate learning and understanding, ensuring that the content, methods of delivery and learning materials meet the defined learning objectives for individual teaching sessions. This may involve developing your own teaching materials, methods and approaches.
- Develop the skills of applying appropriate approaches to teaching, reflecting on practice and the development of their own teaching and learning skills and seeking ways of improving their performance by reflecting on teaching design and delivery and obtaining and analysing feedback.
- Attend required professional development in teaching (**for which no additional payment will be made**).
- Attend appropriate Health and Safety and related training courses, in particular for those teaching in laboratories or during fieldwork (**for which no additional payment will be made**).
- Supervise the work of students, provide advice on study skills, help them with learning problems and, where necessary, refer them to additional support services.
- Assess the work and progress of students by reference to defined criteria and provide constructive feedback to students.
- Supervise students' projects under guidance and supervision.
- Supervise students' fieldwork and placements.

Skills and Competences

To achieve this, Postgraduate Teaching Assistants may be expected to (depending on the nature of the teaching):

- Engage the interest and enthusiasm of students and inspire them to learn by developing initiative, creativity and judgment in applying appropriate approaches to teaching and learning support and scholarly activities.
- Demonstrate that they possess sufficient breadth and depth of their subject.
- Communicate information and ideas of a specialist or highly technical nature to students orally, in writing and electronically, including writing handouts, ELE pages and other learning support materials, responding to pedagogical and practical challenges.
- Develop familiarity with a variety of strategies, teaching methods and techniques to promote and assess learning.

- Liaise with colleagues and students, building internal contacts and participating in internal networks for the exchange of information and ideas to form relationships for future collaboration.
- Agree their responsibilities and plan and manage their teaching, scholarly and administrative activities within the framework of the agreed programme and within the paid time allocation without detriment to their research degree, balancing the competing pressures of teaching, scholarship and administrative demands and deadlines.
- Actively participate as a member of a teaching team, including attending, and contributing to, relevant meetings.
- Collaborate with academic staff and other Postgraduate Teaching Assistants to identify and respond to students' needs, on the assessment of students' work and (where appropriate) on programme/curriculum development.
- Show consideration to others, using listening, interpersonal and pastoral care skills to deal with sensitive issues concerning students and provide support, while recognising when they should refer students to services providing further help.
- Appreciate the needs of individual students and their circumstances, including understanding equality and diversity issues as they may impact on academic content and issues relating to student need.
- Be aware of the risks in the work environment and their potential impact on their own work and that of others and, in relevant circumstances (e.g., laboratories) take appropriate responsibility for the health and safety of others and reducing hazards.
- Participate in assessment of their teaching, engaging positively with feedback.

Postgraduate Teaching Assistant Representative role descriptor

In addition to the Duties and Responsibilities already outlined for PTAs, Postgraduate Teaching Assistant Representatives in each discipline are required to:

- Attend a training or support session which explains the postgraduate teaching assistant representative role, signposting them to relevant contacts and ensuring that they are familiar with their responsibilities.
- Be available to all PTAs within their discipline, as a point of contact to discuss teaching issues.
- Coordinate PTA concerns within the discipline and feed them through to PTA Coordinators.
- Represent PTAs at relevant departmental SSLCs and PGRLFs.
- Provide feedback to the University or Students' Guild when a relevant teaching issue is being discussed.
- Attend any discipline PTA training or induction to introduce themselves and offer students the benefits of their experience.

Business School Postgraduate Teaching Assistant Coordinators in 2014-15:

- Management: Sarah Rose
- Organisation Studies: Beate Wilmhurst
- Accounting: Bill Peng

- Finance: Claire Lavers
- Economics: Juliette Stephenson

Administrative Contacts:

Business-School-HR@exeter.ac.uk

Business School PGR Administrators