

# Policy on research students who undertake teaching activities

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The University of Southampton values the significant contribution that research students can make to the education of undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. The support they provide is mutually beneficial. The taught student educational experience is enhanced through the support of research-informed teaching, whilst research students can develop a range of professional skills.
- 1.2. The University is committed to ensuring that research students are offered appropriate teaching activities wherever possible, and that these students are properly trained and supported to undertake such activity. The University will not place unreasonable expectations on research students who undertake teaching activities, and teaching activities should not affect any research student's ability to complete their research degree.
- 1.3. The University is also committed to ensuring that the quality of experience of taught students, and will put in place appropriate mechanisms to assure the quality of teaching activities delivered by research students.

## 2. Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of this Policy and accompanying guidance is to:
  - Define the University's expectations for research students who undertake teaching activities.
  - Define the responsibilities of Faculties and Academic Units in the employment of research students.
  - Ensure a fair, transparent, and equitable appointment of research students to teaching opportunities.
  - Ensure that appropriate training, support, and mentoring is in place for research students who teach.
  - Ensure robust quality assurance processes are in place in order to maintain educational delivery standards

## 3. Scope

- 3.1. This Policy applies to all research students who undertake teaching activities as detailed in section 4 below.
- 3.2. Duties undertaken by a research student as a condition of a grant, bursary, studentship, or similar award made by a Faculty or Academic Unit are covered by this policy. This includes Mayflower Scholars.
- 3.3. This Policy does not apply to research students who have a substantive employment contract with the University and who are permitted to register for a research degree or to part-time research students who have separate teaching responsibilities related to their professional duties.
- 3.4. This policy does not apply to teaching or related activities or unaccredited provision, for example the University's Lifelong Learning Days.

## 4. Teaching Activities

- 4.1. A research student may be involved in the following types of teaching activity at both undergraduate and postgraduate taught levels:
  - Seminars, tutorials and workshops.
  - Laboratory and other practical classes.
  - Substantial assistance supporting taught student project work.

- Field trips.
- Assisting with assessment and marking, subject to clear marking criteria and suitable moderation and training.
- Developing and delivering distance learning materials

4.2. A research student may not be involved in the following types of teaching activity:

- Setting summative assessments.
- Teaching at the level at which they are studying (this does not include students participating as equals in group work activities).
- Delivering lecture courses, although research students may be invited to provide guest lectures if their research specialism is directly related to the topic of the module.
- Taking overall responsibility for a module.
- Providing pastoral care - research students should, however, be aware of the University's system of pastoral support, and know how to direct students to appropriate members of staff if the need arises.

## 5. Responsibilities

5.1. **Academic Quality and Standards Committee** is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is safeguarded.
- Ensuring that the research student's ability to complete their degree within the maximum permitted period is not put at risk through involvement in teaching activities.
- Providing research students with appropriate teaching and professional development opportunities, consistent with its responsibilities to maintain teaching quality and academic standards.

5.2. The **Faculty in which the research student is enrolled** is responsible for:

- Actively monitoring the hours worked by a research student to ensure that it remains within the University's stated hourly limits (for example for Tier 4 reasons).
- Approving the employment of a research student in a teaching activity. Approval is given by the Director of the Faculty Graduate School, on the recommendation of the research student's supervisory team.
- Discussing a research student's experience of teaching, and any related skills development as part of their formal progression reviews.

5.3. The **Faculty in which the research student is employed** is responsible for:

- Recruiting research students for teaching activities in a fair and transparent manner (see section 6). This will usually be organised through UniWorkforce.
- Ensuring that the Dean of the Faculty or their nominee(s) (usually the Head of Academic Unit or Director of Programmes) has designated an individual responsible for ensuring that all employment of research students for the delivery of teaching is compliant with this Policy.
- Providing research students undertaking teaching activities with a clear written indication of the work expected of them (see Section 8).
- Actively supporting research students undertaking teaching activities who have protected characteristics under the Equality Act.
- Providing discipline-specific training and support for research students consistent with their duties (see section 9).
- Asking research students to confirm that by undertaking the employment that they comply with any visa/funding body restrictions on the hours of work
- Providing information to the Faculty in which the student is enrolled on the number of hours worked.
- Evaluating the teaching performance of research students employed by them in order to ensure that taught students receive teaching of the appropriate quality.
- Providing appropriate mechanisms for research students to provide feedback to the Faculty on any concerns or issues related to employment, training and support in relation to teaching.
- Not knowingly employing a research student over the University's stated hourly limits (see section 7) or in breach of visa conditions in any capacity (inclusive of work, paid or

unpaid, outside the duties referred to in this Code). It is however the responsibility of the research student to declare the hours they are working, paid or unpaid, by any employer (see section 5.5)

- Protecting the health and safety of the research student as an employee of the University, and as an enrolled student in accordance with the [University's Health and Safety Policy Statement](#).

5.4. The **module leader** is responsible for:

- The overall content, co-ordination, setting of, and conducting of assessment within the module.
- Determining how collaboration with the research student will work.
- Giving guidance and advice to the research student as appropriate throughout the process of preparation, teaching, assessment and feedback.

5.5. The **research student** is responsible for:

- Informing their employing Faculty and their home Faculty of the number of hours they are employed, paid or unpaid, in any capacity and by any employer.
- Ensuring that they do not breach the work restrictions associated with their visa. More information can be found through the University's ['Working in the UK'](#) website.
- Meeting the requirements of their funding body, where applicable, with regards to employment.
- Ensuring that their ability to complete their research degree is not put at risk by any employment they undertake. For this purpose research students are recommended to regard the maximum hours of employment specified in section 7 of this Policy as being inclusive of all employment, including that with external employers
- Discussing potential teaching activities with their lead supervisor.
- Taking advantage of available teaching development opportunities consistent with their employment in order to keep their skills updated.
- Complying with the terms of reference of the university's Casual Worker Permit scheme, including the ['Guidelines on Consensual Relationship'](#).
- Ensuring that they are suitably prepared for each teaching activity they are asked to undertake.
- Complying with the regulations of the University of Southampton at all times.

## 6. Opportunities to teach

6.1. Teaching opportunities vary across disciplines, dependent upon the nature of the subject/discipline and its preferred models of delivery. Teaching may be unavailable in some disciplines, or may be limited and not available to all students in others. However research students with the appropriate skills, training and experience may seek teaching opportunities in their own or any other part of the University.

6.2. The University will attempt to make all relevant research students aware of any teaching opportunities available to them including: the process for application; the duties; and likely hours involved in the position, including the time required for preparation.

6.3. Recruitment will be carried out in line with the principles of the University Recruitment and Selection Policy of merit, fairness and transparency. Selection will be based on the teaching required, and an appropriate balance of the research students' teaching and communication skills, experience, and knowledge of the subject.

## 7. Maximum Hours of Work

7.1. As a guideline, employment of any full-time research student should not normally exceed six hours per week in total (although short term exceptions to this may occur, with the support of a research student's lead supervisor, when a research student is employed, for example, to support field work), and should not exceed 180 hours per academic year. The pattern of work and study for part-time research students should be adjusted proportionately.

- 7.2. Research students who are funded by Research Councils should abide by the [Terms and Conditions of RCUK Training Grants](#) and the [RCUK Training Grants Guide](#). These stipulate that the total time spent (including preparation and marking) should not interfere with the progress of the PhD. The amount of time is at the University's discretion but it is recommended that this is no more than six hours in any week.
- 7.3. Students on a Tier 4 visa must comply with any relevant restrictions relating to their employment including any restriction on the hours of work. Up to date information can be found through the University's ['Working in the UK'](#) website

## **8. Salary and Payment**

- 8.1. Students will have a Casual Worker Permit from the University, organised through UniWorkforce.
- 8.2. Research students contracted for teaching duties will usually be employed through UniWorkforce, although other arrangements, such as a Bursary Scheme, may apply.
- 8.3. In addition, research students must be provided with a written summary by the employing Faculty which gives a clear statement of the activities in which they will be engaged, the likely number of hours involved and the rate of pay. This would normally be provided through UniWorkforce portal. Students may either be recruited through UniWorkforce or names passed to UniWorkforce. These expectations may change during the course of a research student's period of teaching activity, with any changes agreed by both the research student and employing faculty and confirmed in writing.
- 8.4. There may be occasions where research students may wish to volunteer in an unpaid capacity to assist with teaching activities where this would further their own development. Such activities must be agreed as part of the Academic Needs Analysis and must be in the best interests of the student.
- 8.5. Unless there is a contractual agreement PGR students cannot be compelled to take on teaching duties.

## **9. Training, support and quality assurance**

- 9.1. All research students who undertake teaching must receive appropriate training as recommended by the PGR QME Sub Committee under the framework of the Centre of Higher Education Practice. This must include:
- As a minimum, an initial general training course on teaching skills (currently Orientation to Teaching/Demonstrating) which must be taken within six months of starting to teach
  - A module specific annual induction for the relevant module(s) the research student is involved in.
- 9.2. There may only be exceptions to these requirements where a research student's previous experience in teaching is clearly documented. Such variations can only be agreed by the relevant Director of Programmes and must be set out clearly in the research student's letter of appointment.
- 9.3. The University deems it good practice for inexperienced research students to begin their teaching activities by contributing as part of a larger team.
- 9.4. Summative assessment will always be the responsibility of an academic member of staff. However for some forms of assessment, and in some subject areas it may be appropriate to employ assistance from research students (for example, to provide taught students with

timely feedback on coursework). When research students undertake summative assessment, it is the responsibility of the module lead to ensure that:

- The research student has the appropriate level of technical expertise
- The research student has been suitably trained for the particular assessment, and has been given clear and detailed guidance by the module leader on the assessment criteria (including a detailed mark scheme where appropriate) and the feedback that should be given to taught students
- The research student has the relevant experience to undertake the assessment.
- The marking of assessments by a research student must be overseen and carefully moderated by an Academic member of staff, this would normally be the module lead.

- 9.5. Any teaching or assessment activity performed by a research student should be mentored and monitored by a member of academic staff.
- 9.6. Where the Faculty responsible for the delivery of the teaching activity has concerns that the research student is not fulfilling their teaching duties effectively, it should make arrangements to discuss its concerns, initially with the student, and to agree appropriate remedies. If this fails to resolve the issue research students who do not meet the requirements of the teaching activity they have been selected to undertake may be suspended from this post.
- 9.7. Where the research student’s supervising Faculty has concerns that the research student’s teaching responsibilities are having a negative impact on progress of the PhD, this should be raised initially with the student during a supervisory meeting. It may also be necessary to refer to this in a Progression Review meeting.
- 9.8. Faculties should also have appropriate mechanisms in place to enable research students to raise any concerns or issues related to employment, training and support in relation to teaching.
- 9.9. If a research student wishes to raise a complaint about the support they have been offered in relation to their teaching responsibilities, this does not fall under the terms of Regulations Governing Student Complaints, as such a complaint relates to their employed position. If attempts to resolve the situation informally are unsuccessful, it may be appropriate for research students to raise a [formal grievance](#).

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