

PGR Tutors/Demonstrators: Are you receiving your rights?

Postgraduate Research students make a huge contribution to the delivery of teaching at Cardiff University through working as Graduate Tutors or Demonstrators. The University-wide [Code of Practice for PGR Teaching](#) is the principal document that underpins the current PGR teaching arrangements. It sets out the rights and responsibilities of PGRs who teach, and the support they can expect. Despite this, many PGRs have told the Students' Union they have not seen this document before and generally feel they lack clarity regarding their rights and the support they should receive.

Below we have compiled a list of the key rights and support provisions PGRs who teach are entitled to through the Code. Please treat this as a checklist and consider whether it matches your own experience. As a minimum, PGRs deserve the support they are entitled to. We hope this document provides useful information and further clarity. If you have not been provided with all of the provisions outlined below, this checklist will enable you to request from your School that you are provided with all of the support which you are entitled to, assisted by this evidence.

Quotes and page numbers refer to the specific section of the Code of Practice.

Duties and hours

1. **Clarity should restrictions be placed on which years you can teach in:** *"Some Schools restrict the engagement of PGRs to particular years of study so as not to disrupt the settling in of the PGR or their completion. Any such restrictions should be made clear to PGRs when advertising the roles."* Page 3, point 14.

2. **Limits on the amount of teaching you can be asked to undertake:** *"...full-time PGRs should not spend more than an average of six hours per week engaged in teaching activities, and no more than 180 hours in one academic year."* Page 4, point 19.

Please note; externally funded students should check if their funder places further restrictions. The six hours includes all teaching related activities. Furthermore, you are still entitled to payment if you exceed this number of hours. *"In the very rare instances where 6 hours per week is exceeded, payment will be made for all hours undertaken."* Page 2, FAQs for PGRs who Teach document.

3. **Part-time students can choose to take on more teaching.** *"There is flexibility on the number of permitted hours for part-time PGRs and for all PGRs post-submission, up to a maximum of 35 hours per week, so long as this does not impact on the timely completion of amendments."* Page 4, point 23.



4. **Cannot be required to lead a module.** “PGRs cannot be required to take responsibility for the overall content of a module, its co-ordination, or the setting of assessments, but may prepare and deliver teaching within a framework of an agreed programme of contributions directed by the Module Leader.” Page 4, point 24.

5. **Not required to respond to general questions from students.** “The PGR may be required to respond to student queries relating to the content of the teaching, but is not responsible for addressing general queries about the module or providing additional support to students, unless specified as part of the role.” **Please note;** This is separate to 1 to 1 feedback meetings regarding assessments you have marked (see point 14 below). Page 4, point 25.

Recruitment

6. **Clarity and support if no teaching opportunities are offered:** “Where there are limitations on the opportunities that a School can offer, the reasons should be made clear to PGRs, and the School is encouraged to offer advice on seeking opportunities elsewhere in the University.” Page 3, point 12.

7. **Schools need to have, and communicate to you, a formal recruitment process.** “Each School is required to establish a process, criteria, and timeline for selecting PGRs for teaching duties, for allocating activities in accordance with this Code of Practice, and for communicating this information to PGRs and relevant staff members.” Page 4, point 28.

8. **Information which you are entitled to during recruitment.** “When advertising the opportunities available, Schools should provide the following information;

- the nature of the duties that are available;
- the hourly pay rate for the role; where known,
- class contact hours and the number of hours that will be allocated for preparation and marking, in accordance with the University’s PGR Teaching Tariff;
- training requirements, including the date by which mandatory training must be completed;
- eligibility criteria (e.g. subject-specific knowledge, professional registration, English language proficiency), including any restrictions to PGRs in particular years of study;
- details on the process of submitting application or expression of interest.” Page 4, point 29

9. **Right to feedback if unsuccessful.** “Since a PGR’s involvement in teaching may form part of their academic or professional development, unsuccessful candidates should be given the opportunity to request feedback on their application.” Page 5, point 34.

10. **You have to give your explicit agreement to teach.** “The PGR must confirm whether they agree to undertake the duties they have been allocated.” Page 6, point 39.



Documentation

11. **Right to essential documentation before commencement of teaching.** “PGRs who are selected for teaching should be informed of their duties in writing prior to the date of commencement of those duties. PGRs should receive a Letter of Engagement from the School, accompanied by the appropriate Task List, the Allocation of Hours Form and the Engagement Form for Graduate Tutors/Graduate Demonstrators.” Page 5, point 36.

12. **Right to clarity regarding duties, pay and teaching schedule.** “The Letter of Engagement and Allocation of Hours Form together specify:

- a description of the role, indicating the required duties
 - dates and times of class contact
 - a schedule and deadlines for any assessment and/or feedback duties
 - the hourly rate of pay for teaching time and the allowance for preparation, assessment and other activities, in accordance with the University’s PGR Teaching Tariff
 - details of any duties which will be unpaid
 - details of training requirements and how training is to be accessed
 - a named contact for the module(s) on which they are teaching
 - name and contact details for their Mentor (where applicable, cf. 50) and the PGR Teaching Co-ordinator
- monitoring arrangements.” Page 5, point 37.

Information and resources

13. **Information you should receive during induction.** “PGRs appointed to PGR Teaching duties in the School should be provided with information necessary for their role, through an induction session and/or written guidance, including:

- arrangements for payment
- reporting sickness/absence
- access to facilities and resources
- monitoring arrangements
- School contact points and route to raise concerns
- links to key Codes of Practice: Close Personal Relationships; PGR Teaching
- further professional development, where applicable.” Page 6, point 41.

14. **Teaching resources you should receive.** “PGRs should have access to all the necessary resources to undertake their tasks effectively. This may include, as appropriate:

- access to and an allowance for photocopying and printing facilities
- timely access to relevant required readings (hard copy and/or electronic)
- timely access to relevant Learning Central modules
- stationery for teaching
- a suitable room in which to conduct their teaching
- a suitable space in which to meet students to provide feedback.” Page 6, point 42.



Training and support

15. **Entitlement to training and module information.** “Required training and briefing includes:

- generic training relevant to the type of activity to be undertaken (e.g. small group teaching, laboratory demonstrating)
- Equality and Diversity training (available as a series of PowerPoint slides)
- specific information about the module(s) to which they will be contributing (see below).

It is the responsibility of the Module Leader to ensure that PGRs contributing to the teaching and learning support of that module receive relevant information in advance of the teaching activity. This will include, as relevant: learning outcomes; assessment strategy; marking criteria; resources available to support student learning; guidance on feedback to students; health and safety. Schools should specify the required training as part of the recruitment process and in the appointment information.”

Page 7, points 44, 45 and 46.

16. **Right to mentoring, observation and feedback (for Tutors).** “The University requires all PGRs engaged as a Graduate Tutor to be appointed a Mentor: a suitably qualified member of staff with personal experience of teaching and an understanding of pedagogy...The Mentor is responsible for:

- observation of the PGR’s teaching
- providing guidance and feedback to the PGR on their teaching (including preparation and assessment)
- providing a written report on the observation of the PGR’s teaching to the PGR Teaching Co-ordinator and a copy to the PGR.” Page 8, point 50.

For Demonstrators; “The University requires PGRs engaged in demonstrating duties to be observed, monitored and provided with written feedback, but this should be proportionate to the role and is undertaken typically by the Module or Laboratory Leader.” Page 8, point 52.

Task list and pay rates

17. **If you believe you are undertaking enhanced duties, you should be given a pay uplift.** “The generic Task Lists cover the majority of tutoring and demonstrating roles in the University. The titles given to these roles reflect the activities most commonly undertaken by someone appointed to that role, and remuneration is commensurate with the level of responsibility involved. Hence, a PGR engaged as a laboratory demonstrator but with a higher level of responsibility than is usual for the Graduate Demonstrator role, which might include the co-ordination and supervision of other demonstrators and/or require a higher level of academic or professional judgement in supporting students and assessing their work, will be appointed as a Graduate Tutor. Any PGR Teaching role which is substantially different from the generic Task Lists should be addressed separately through College HR teams and graded appropriately.” Page 8, point 53.

18. **Cannot be paid less than Pay Tariff rates.** “No PGR can be paid at a rate that is lower than the University’s standard hourly pay rate for the role, or in a manner inconsistent with the PGR Teaching Tariff. In exceptional circumstances and where clearly justified, a higher pay rate might be paid by the School (e.g. to appoint a PGR who has extensive teaching experience...to cover unexpected staff absence)”. Page 9, point 56.



19. **Teaching can only be unpaid in exceptional circumstances, and must be clearly justified to you.** “...volunteer in an unpaid capacity to assist with teaching duties where this would further their own development. These duties should be limited, and the PGR should not substantially contribute towards teaching, or be involved in assessment and feedback...” Page 9, point 57.

“These opportunities are likely to be organised on a case-by-case basis and initiated by the PGR... There must be a clear justification as to why this is a development opportunity and unpaid.” Page 9, point 58.

Please note: The presumption is that all PGR teaching (encompassing many different duties) should be paid in accordance with the pay tariff. If you are being asked to teach students, supervise student projects or provide any other form of instruction/feedback without pay, we would urge you to raise the matter with your School Director of Learning and Teaching or PGR Teaching Co-ordinator and seek a full justification.

Raising concerns

20. **Your School should clearly communicate mechanisms to raise concerns.** “The University requires Schools to establish and clearly communicate mechanisms by which both PGRs and the students they support in their learning can raise concerns about any aspect of PGR Teaching.” Page 10, point 66.

Advice and Representation

Your School PGR Student Reps can raise issues with staff in School meetings. You can also contact your PGR Teaching Co-ordinator and your Head of School directly as they have oversight of PGR Teaching in each School. You can also contact HR staff in your School, College, or centrally in the University, as well as the Postgraduate Dean of your College and University Registry.

The Students’ Union is an independent, democratic organisation and provides an independent, confidential advice service called Student Advice. Our team of expert advisors can support you with any employment, financial or academic issues you are facing. They have daily drop-ins and can provide advice via phone and email. See www.cardiffstudents.com/advice and Advice@cardiff.ac.uk.

The elected [Vice President Postgraduate Students’](#) of the Students’ Union represents all postgraduates and can advocate on your behalf at every level of the University. They frequently meet with University HR and senior College and University-level staff to raise the concerns of PGRs who teach. PGR Reps from any School can also raise issues at the Students’ Union PGR Forums, chaired by the VP. VPPostgraduate@cardiff.ac.uk.

PGRs are able to join for free the [Universities and College Union \(UCU\)](#) who can also provide expert advice. Please note however that as PGRs are not currently considered employees the University does not recognise UCU as representing PGRs.

This checklist has been produced by Cardiff University Students’ Union based upon our evidenced interpretation of Cardiff University’s Code of Practice for PGR Teaching, which Schools have to adhere to. We have identified those areas of the Code that are most often not being implemented by Schools, and which PGR Reps have raised as concerns. Please use this checklist, along with the Code itself, to ensure that you and your colleagues are receiving all of the rights, training and support which you entitled to.



Your Students' Union has been working for the last couple of years to improve the collective position of PGRs who teach, and there are many improvements that still need to happen to give you the rights and status you deserve. If you would like support from the Union with PGR Teaching issues in your School, or would like to discuss this checklist and your experience using it, please contact the VP Postgraduate Students Jake Smith at VPPostgraduate@cardiff.ac.uk.

Further information and key documents:

[Code of Practice for PGR Teaching](#) (Link to full document)

[PGR Pay Tariff](#) (Check if you are being paid the correct rate for each task)

[FAQs for PGRs who Teach](#) (Answering frequently asked questions about the Pay Tariff)

[Contacts for PGRs who teach](#) (Contacts at School, College and University level to discuss PGR teaching issues)

Task list for [Tutors](#) and [Demonstrators](#) (Expected, reasonable tasks for each role)

[Engagement Form](#) (Terms and conditions, pension entitlement, holiday pay etc)

[PGR Teaching Support page on the Intranet](#) (Contains downloadable versions of all the above University documents as well as further useful information)

