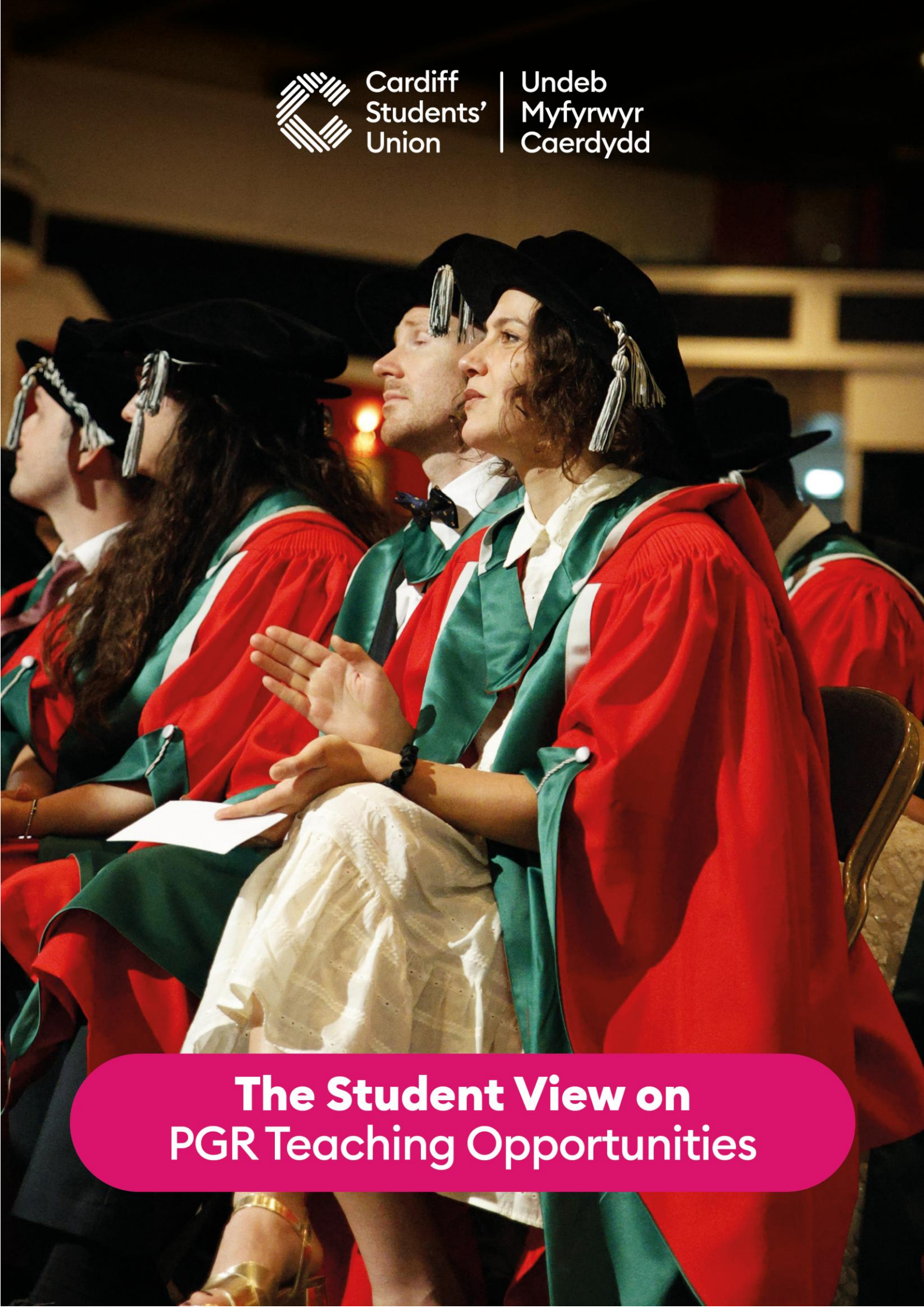




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The Student View on PGR Teaching Opportunities

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The Student View on PGR Teaching Opportunities

Introduction



Ensuring a positive and rewarding student experience is a core priority for both the University and the Students' Union. It is therefore imperative that both organisations listen and respond to student feedback across the calendar year to ensure that our frameworks improve, enhance, and shape our students' academic and extra-curricular experiences to the best degree. The PGR voice has always been considered 'smaller' in comparison to taught students at Cardiff University. Yet this does not mean their voices and circumstances are any less important.

With the election of Micaela Panes as VP Postgraduate Students in 2023/24 and 2024/25, PGRs were for the first time represented by an individual within their own community, and with that arrived some substantial, positive changes. In August 2023, despite some initial resistance from certain schools, Micaela led the roll out of the new Graduate Tutor and Demonstrator contracts across Cardiff University, securing additional standard rights for PGRs such as sick pay, increased holiday pay, and enrolment into the USS pension scheme. In 2024, Micaela also authored the Student View on '*The PGR Experience*', and through implementing the document's resolutions, we have seen how positive collaboration can enhance the PGR experience academically while also strengthening community and belonging.

Despite the positive changes that have already been achieved, the ongoing and substantial university transformation has left a large amount of uncertainty regarding PGR teaching opportunities. During the University's first transformation project – '*Academic Futures*' – the Sabbatical Officers were able to secure a commitment to keep Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators from being part of the redundancies carried out from January 2025. This saved PGR teaching opportunities at Cardiff University but also highlighted that these opportunities are not necessarily safe.

Ongoing university transformation continues to impact all academic staff, professional service staff, and students alike. As PGRs hold a hybrid identity, as both academic staff members and students, they feel a significant and unique impact. The continued uncertainty surrounding university transformation and how this is impacting individual schools, including closures, mergers, and budget cuts, will not only impact PGRs and their teaching opportunities, but by virtue will also have a significant impact on their professional development, financial stability, and overall student experience.

Sean Strong

VP Postgraduate Students (Education and Welfare) 2025/26

The Student View on PGR Teaching Opportunities

Overview of Student View Data

The Students' Union collects a significant amount of student feedback throughout each year with specific focus on offering students the opportunity to raise concerns and provide insight into their experiences through different formats. These include Student Staff Panels, College Forums, Student Senate, our Annual General Meeting, alongside specific campaigns dedicated to elevating the student voice, such as Speak Week. In Speak Week 2025/26, all students were encouraged to answer the question "If you ran the University, what would you keep and what would you change?", resulting in large volumes of 'Keep' and 'Change' comments.



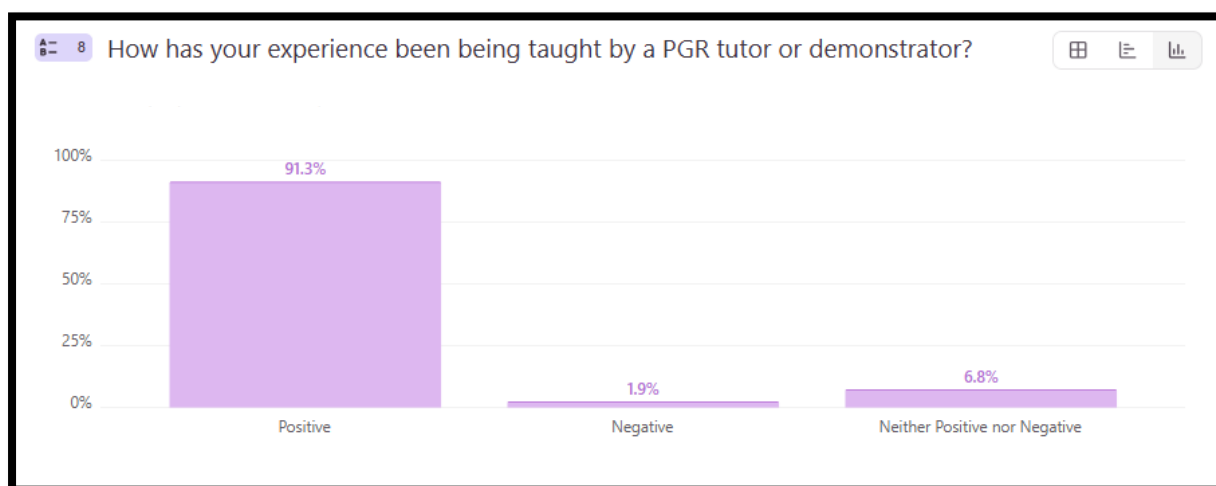
This year, a specific campaign on the PGR teaching experience was conducted in February 2026 titled '*PGR Power: Fuelling Your Teaching Experience*'. This campaign sought to provide insight into the importance and lived experiences of PGR teaching. The survey included multiple-choice questions as well as open-comment fields, and gathered responses from Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators themselves, as well as those who had been taught by Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators, and academic staff who supported them in the delivery of undergraduate teaching. The survey received over 250 responses, and further comments were provided by those who engaged with the various outreach stalls hosted throughout the campaign period. Responses were received across a wide variety of schools within the institution, representing all colleges.

This Student View's data is therefore a culmination of PGR responses from Speak Week 2025/26, the '*PGR Power*' Survey, comments from PGR Cross-College Forums, the Postgraduate Executive Committee, Student Staff Panels, and individual comments and/or emails. Having been a Graduate Tutor in SHARE for the past four years, I also bring lived experiences of many of the areas explored in this Student View.

The Student View on PGR Teaching Opportunities

Theme 1: The Importance of Teaching Opportunities

Postgraduate tutors and demonstrators remain integral to Cardiff University's delivery of undergraduate teaching, alongside assessment and feedback. As shown in Graph 1, 91.3% of the undergraduate students who completed the 'PGR Power' survey believed they had had a positive experience of being taught by a Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator.



Graph [1]: UG Experiences of Graduate Tutors/Demonstrators, PGR Power Survey (Feb 2026)

Individual student comments from the 'PGR Power' survey reinforce the importance and positive experiences that Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators provide to their undergraduate students.

“High level of accessibility and approachability. Even the hard problems which we couldn’t understand in the lecture they explained in a really easy way. And their recent experience in the field helped us to feel like our own people teaching us. Without hesitation we could ask any questions. And they were really enthusiastic to walk around and come near us and explain things.”

Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey

“...The PGR tutor was knowledgeable, approachable, and explained complex material clearly...”

Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey

“I thought they were not going to be as good as a lecturer as they would not have as much experience, but in many ways it is better, as I feel we can relate to them more...”

Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey

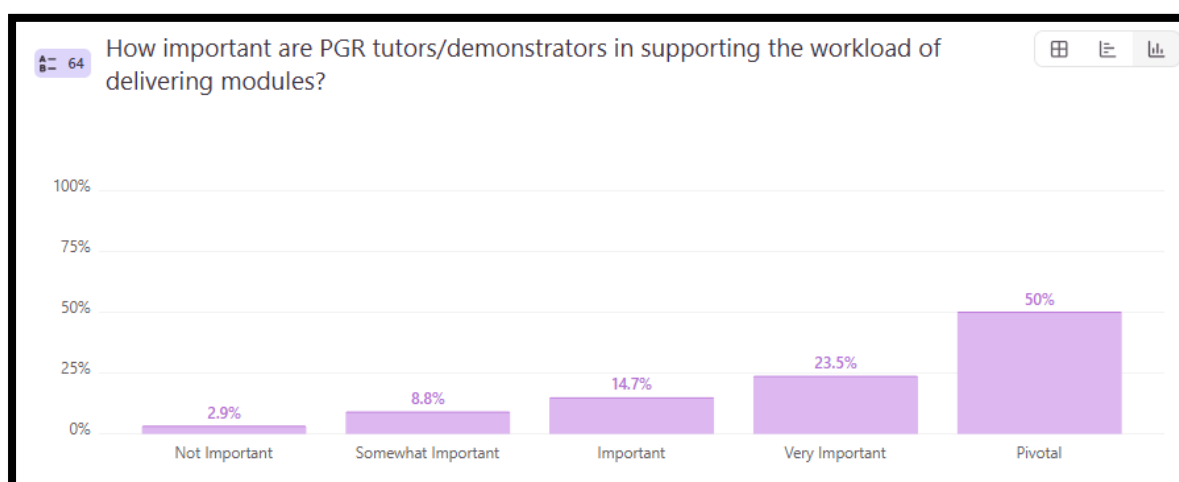
Alongside the many positive and affirming responses highlighted in the ‘PGR Power’ Survey, it is also valuable to consider the key qualities of what a Graduate Tutor and Demonstrator looks like to undergraduates at Cardiff University.

<i>Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators: Positive Attributes Described by UG Students</i>
▪ <i>Approachable</i>
▪ <i>Accessible</i>
▪ <i>Interactive Engagement</i>
▪ <i>Current Knowledge in Field</i>
▪ <i>Adaptability</i>
▪ <i>Understanding of UG Experiences</i>

Table [1]: Graduate Tutor/Demonstrator Attributes, PGR Power Survey and Speak Week 2025

During the PGR Power Campaign, many undergraduate students shared that they did not know whether they were taught by a PGR student or a lecturer. This highlights that there is limited difference in the experience undergraduate students receive from a Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator as opposed to an academic member of staff and supports a universal and consistent teaching experience. However, this does mean that undergraduate students may not have the opportunity to appreciate the Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator’s ability to competently teach. It also adds some confusion when undergraduate students ask questions to their seminar/lab tutors, not knowing they are not actually lecturers, and therefore they are not able to provide answers.

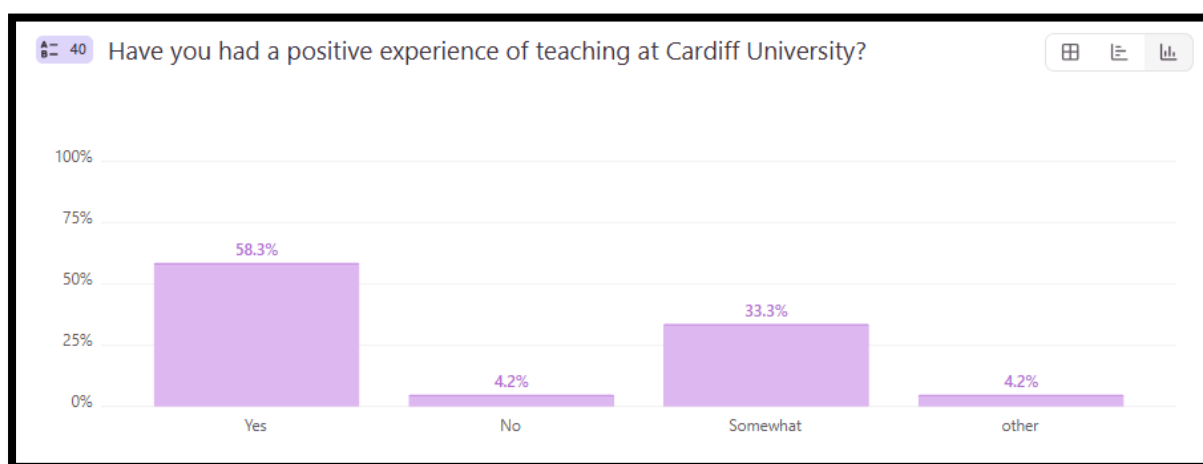
Academic staff have also praised the work of Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators with 97.1% stating they are important to delivering undergraduate modules and 50% commenting they were pivotal. Without PGR support, teaching delivery across the institution would be disrupted, leading to increased workloads for academic staff and a likely deterioration in the quality of undergraduate education.



Graph [2]: Graduate Tutor’s and Demonstrator’s Impact on Workload, PGR Power Survey (Feb 2026)

Professional Development

The teaching opportunities that Cardiff University provides its PGR students is a highly positive and rewarding venture which should be commended. These opportunities offer PGRs with invaluable skills and experience within the Higher Education sector that will set them up for future careers in academia or beyond. This means that they must be defended, and the University must recognise that removing these opportunities will not only negatively impact on the PGR student experience but will also dissuade potential students from electing to come to Cardiff University.



Graph [3]: Graduate Tutors/Demonstrators Experience of Teaching, PGR Power Survey (Feb 2026)

When Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators were asked whether they had a positive experience of teaching at Cardiff University, 58.3% responded positively, 33.3% responded 'somewhat', and 4.2% disagreed or selected 'other'. Whilst the opportunity to teach at Cardiff University is a positive opportunity, there is still some room to maintain and enhance these experiences.

In discussion with PGRs at PGR Cross-College Forums and the Postgraduate Executive Committee, several highlighted that after their supervisor, the teaching opportunities available at the university were the most significant factor in their decision to attend Cardiff University. This is important to remember and maintain when delivering on the University's strategy, thus keeping Cardiff University relevant to prospective research students. This was also clearly demonstrated by the positive outcome at the recent QER visit, where PGR students were able to speak to the opportunities they had been afforded through the University's Learning and Teaching Academy and the Associate Fellowship Programmes.

Financial Security

Cardiff University has many full-time and part-time self-funded PGRs who rely on gaining extra income to support their research.

"Teaching for PGRs. I am not getting any teaching this term, and I need money to live off."

PGR LAWPL (yr 3) – Speak Week 2025/26

Many students may have decided to undertake their research through part-time engagement because of financial barriers or other personal circumstances, such as parenting or caring responsibilities. Additionally, many full-time PGRs are seeking meaningful employment opportunities, such as taking on undergraduate teaching responsibilities, to progress their careers, enhance their professional growth, and ensure they can sustain themselves to complete their studies. Removing or reducing teaching opportunities would greatly impact our PGR community's financial stability, and if they were unable to sustain themselves through external work opportunities, they might be forced to withdraw from their research.

Consistency and Enhanced Opportunity

There is some discrepancy between which schools currently offer PGR teaching opportunities and those that do not. There has been some feedback from PGR Cross-College Forums, Speak Week data, and the 'PGR Power' Survey that demonstrates that PGRs across the entire institution wish to be offered teaching opportunities. This was most evident through comments made by PGRs in SOCSI.

"Provide PGR teaching opportunities for PGR students in SOCSI/ the new school for SOCSI and GEOPL. I am a PGR in SOCSI and am only able to teach because my undergrad was in another school and I am able to teach there."

Postgraduate Research Student (SOCSI) – PGR Power Survey

"Never had the chance to teach before socsi banned PGRs from teaching."

Postgraduate Research Student (SOCSI) – PGR Power Survey

Providing teaching opportunities across all schools and colleges would allow equal opportunity and therefore, a more consistent PGR experience.

Following on from equal opportunity is enhanced opportunity. Cardiff University is in a positive position to expand its PGR teaching opportunities due to having several experienced Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators, many of whom have undertaken formal HE-certified training through the Associate Fellowship Programme.

"I think there should continue to be teaching options available for PGRs at a range of levels - from occasional teaching commitments (e.g. SSC PRE in the medic school) to more consistent hours, so that everyone who wants to can engage."

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey

Experienced Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators would be in a suitable position to help with the delivery of other types of teaching outside of the traditional level 4 UG modules, such as level 5 and 6 module teaching. This would not only allow Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators to increase their professional growth and sustain their economic viability, but it would also allow undergraduate students to learn from PGRs and their current research. The opportunity would allow undergraduate students to

engage in active and ongoing research whilst also progressing with their studies, setting many up for their third-year dissertation projects. There is not only appetite for this from Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators, but also from the undergraduate community too. Speak Week data from 15 schools reinforced this message.

“Lots of seminars to consolidate my learning.”

UG ENCAP (yr 4) – Speak Week 2025/26

[Keep] “Student Lecturers.”– [Change] “Add student staff members”

UG LAWPL (yr 1) + UG PSYCH (yr1) – Speak Week 2025/26

“More seminars / small group projects in STEM to get to know people better.”

UG BIOSI (yr 3) – Speak Week 2025/26

“More tutorial time.”

UG CARBS (yr 2) – Speak Week 2025/26

Offering experienced Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators the opportunity to aid in the delivery level 5 and 6 teaching provision would allow Cardiff University to stand out to potential candidates seeking to start postgraduate research programmes, enhance the employability of our current researchers, and improve the undergraduate teaching experience, positively impacting our standing against other UK institutions.

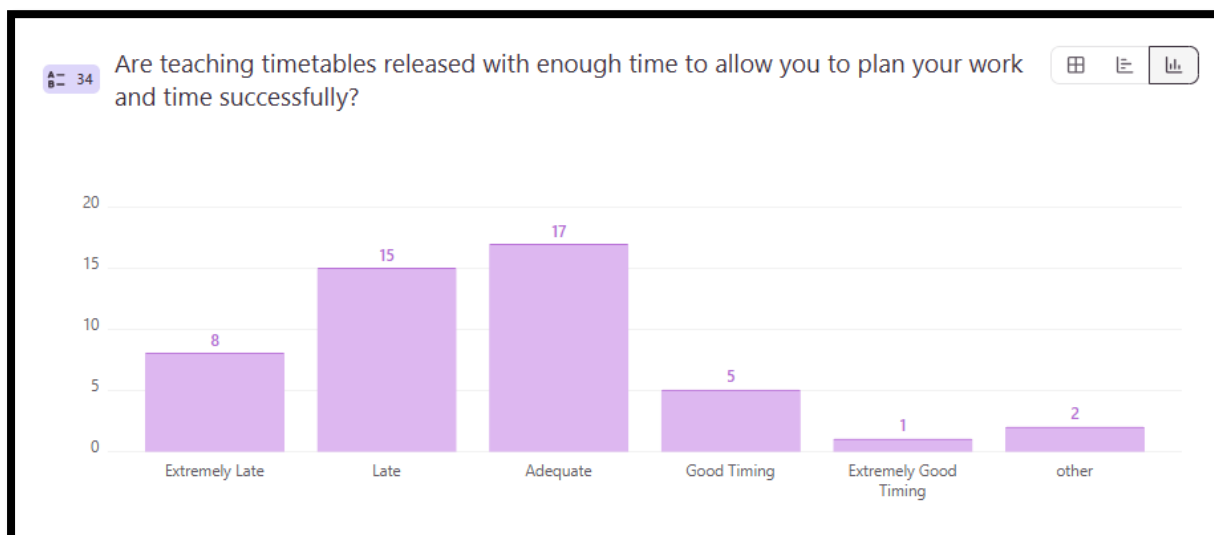
Recommendation 1: Maintain and safeguard PGR teaching opportunities against ongoing cuts, whilst also reflecting the need for consistency of teaching opportunities across all schools.

Recommendation 2: Provide experienced Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators with opportunities to aid in the delivery of teaching on level 5 and level 6 modules.

The Student View on PGR Teaching Opportunities

Theme 2: Timetabling

Timetabling has been a critical issue for the University in the academic year 2025-2026. Whilst there is another Student View dedicated to this topic it is still important to briefly mention its impact within a PGR context.



Graph [4]: Timetabling Question, PGR Power Survey (Feb 2026)

Shown in the graph above, 47.9% of PGR respondents noted their teaching timetables were released late or extremely late, meaning they did not have enough time to effectively plan and prepare for their teaching arrangements alongside existing commitments, such as research.

PGR-specific comments received through Speak Week commented on the poor timetabling, labelling it the main thing they would change about their entire University experience, and specific feedback was provided by Student Academic Reps in their Student Staff Panel that further emphasises the difficulties for PGR students who teach.

"Any changes to demonstrating schedule are informed in advance by [STAFF MEMBER] through email. However, there was one day this term, where the time of the session was changed on the day itself. [STAFF MEMBER] was not informed and hence the demonstrators could not be made aware in advance."

Student Academic Rep (CHEMY) – Student Staff Panel

Students completing the 'PGR Power' survey were also asked 'What should the University maintain, improve, or introduce to enhance the PGR teaching experience?' In response to this question, there were several mentions of poor timetabling affecting their practice, with some stating the following:

“Earlier timetable publication prior to the start of the semester would be optimal.”

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey

“Give more advance notice on teaching times...”

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey

Whilst the PGR experience was not as largely impacted as their undergraduate colleagues, the poor release schedule of timetables does, and will continue to have an impact on Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators being able to effectively prepare for their teaching arrangements and therefore delivering high-quality teaching. The lateness of the timetabling schedule has caused a large amount of stress on Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators, especially those who would have been teaching for the first time. Timetabling is clearly an issue, but it is one that impacts the entire institution, from undergraduates, Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators, and academic staff.

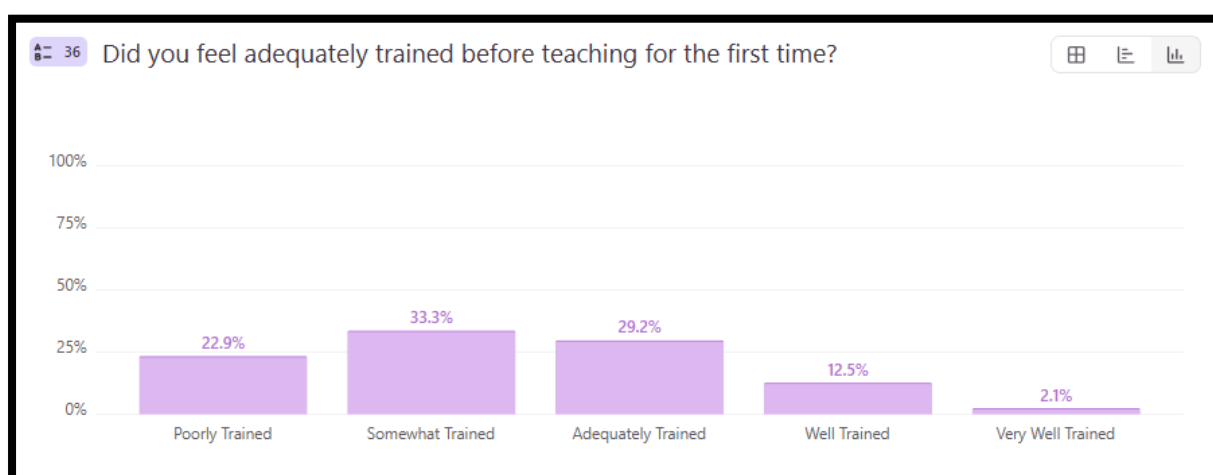
Recommendation 3: Consider and consult Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators when releasing academic timetables, allowing them sufficient time to prepare for high-quality teaching.
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The Student View on PGR Teaching Opportunities

Theme 3: Training and Professional Development

Launchpad, Associate Teaching Fellowship, and Additional CPD

Many Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators have stated that their experience of the Associate Teaching Fellowship was positive. However, several of our Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators believed they needed more training before stepping into the classroom, and therefore its visibility and accessibility before teaching should be improved.



Graph [5]: Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators – Training Perception, PGR Power Survey (Feb 2026)

Graph 5 demonstrates that 56.2% of respondents believed they were not adequately prepared/trained enough to teach for the first time, with 22.9% believing they were poorly trained. Whilst this could be down to the content of the training, it could also be down to PGRs not knowing about the additional CPD on offer to them.

One of the most significant pieces of feedback provided by Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators was that the content of their training did not provide them with the necessary tools to practically tackle teaching for the first time. Currently, launchpad training is focused on the theoretical elements rather than the practical elements, which PGRs have explicitly requested. This was also mirrored by some undergraduate comments.

“Better training/opportunities to shadow seminars...”
Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey

“I have had PGR tutors who ask a question and receive silence, and then go on to just explain everything themselves. I think that students should be promoted to speak... maybe more focus on prompting questions to guide a student to the answer...”
Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey

“They sometimes struggled to engage students in seminars and so often asked questions that no students volunteered to answer.”

Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey

Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators would value training on some of the practical elements of teaching rather than learning solely about the theoretical and pedagogy that lies behind it. This includes managing a classroom, shadowing a seminar to learn how it works, and how to formulate conversation. Having a better understanding of these fundamental elements of teaching would allow Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators to be more confident in leading classes and deliver a proficient learning experience.

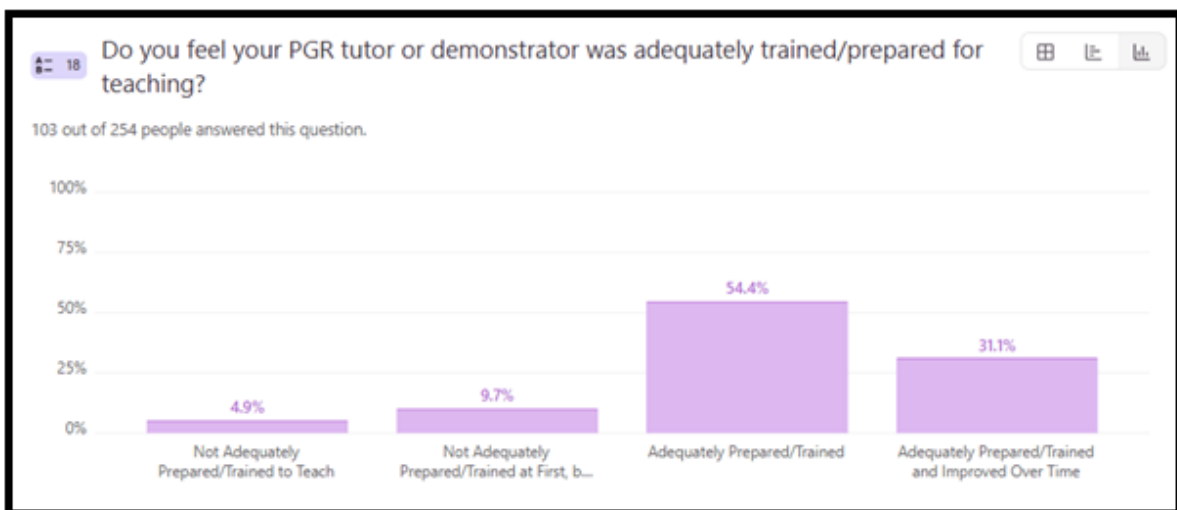
“I think they just need more confidence. I understand they will not have the same level of experience, but when they lack confidence, it really shows.”

Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey

“They are smart and have the credentials to prove that so be confident.”

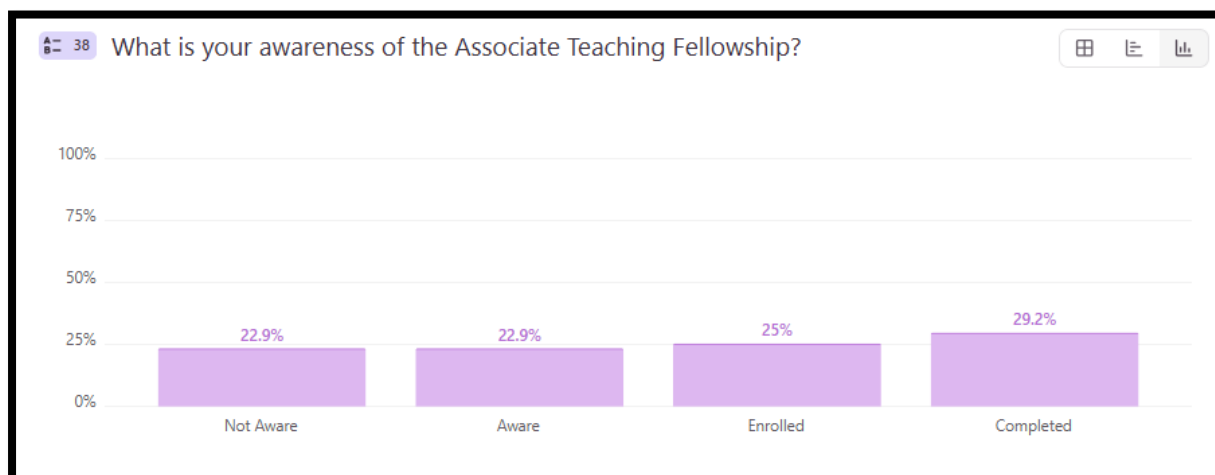
Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey

It still remains that 85.5% of undergraduate students believed their Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators were adequately trained to teach them straight away with 31.3% stating that they were sufficiently trained and improved over time and 9.7% stating that whilst they did not believe they were trained enough at the start, they showed signs of improvement as time went on. This is a testament to the adaptability and resilience of our Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators when faced with teaching – demonstrating that many of them were able to move past their inexperience to deliver a positive teaching experience.



Graph [6]: Undergraduate's Perception of PGR Training, PGR Power Survey (Feb 2026)

It is also important to examine the perception and engagement with the Associate Fellowship Programme.



Graph [7]: PGR Awareness of Associate Fellowship Programme, PGR Power Survey (Feb 2026)

In Graph 7, we see that over 50% of Graduate Tutors or Demonstrators are actively engaged with the Associate Teaching Fellowship Programme, but with 22.9% not even aware of the opportunity, a dedicated teaching induction at school level might be useful to develop to effectively communicate the opportunity.

“More information on the associate fellowship program. Only just found out about it.”

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey.

“More information about our rights should be shared with PGR Demonstrators. For example, I was not aware university has an Associate Fellowship Programme. I just heard from this survey.”

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey.

It is essential that Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators know about all the opportunities available to them, and that this is worked on collaboratively between the Fellowships Team and the Students’ Union. This not only extends to the Associate Fellowship Programme, but also the extensive CPD that is also accessible to Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators throughout the academic year. This would enable more seminar tutors to feel confident in their teaching practice, develop their professional skills, and prepare them for life after the PhD. Ensuring that opportunities are advertised and accessible to all Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators will also allow for better consistency in the undergraduate teaching experience across all colleges.

First-Time Tutors: Training and Check-In

Teaching for the first time can be highly daunting. It is a rewarding experience, but one that needs some extra guidance to prevent it evolving into a stressful and overwhelming process.

“Introduce mandatory support for PGRs teaching for the first time - I’ve had absolutely no support with beginning teaching and nobody even told me about the fellowship until it was too late to apply this term.”

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey

“If the person is a first time ever teacher, they should have more support and checks on their work.”

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey

“More focus on training and resources ahead of the first session teaching.”

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey

Whilst there is undoubtedly some great practice being undertaken by individual module-leads across all schools and colleges, there should be a standard process that enables first-time Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators to check-in with a member of staff to support them through the early stages of their teaching journey. Whilst line-management was introduced with the Graduate Contracts, there needs to be a less-formal mechanism with an individual involved in the teaching of the tutor’s specific module. This should be continuous practice, such as an informal catch-up with the module lead to ensure that everything is going well and to answer any questions.

Furthermore, Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators would like to see more training and/or guidance for teaching before term starts. This would allow them to build their confidence and to understand properly the complexities of everything involved in effective teaching. Again, this reinforces the importance of running regular inductions for new Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators but also suggest that some form of training needs to be accessible to PGRs during the sign-up process over the summer. This could be in the form of running a Launchpad session during the summer months or during the first week of the first term, before teaching commences.

Additional Training for Disciplinary, Neurodiversity, and Safeguarding

There is also demand for more specific training to enhance the Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator’s ability to meet students’ needs, as an educator, but also in their role as someone students can turn to for answers. This includes essential training on how to ensure teaching practices incorporate the needs of neurodivergent students, but also how the school can help and support Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators who have neurodiversity themselves.

“Guidance for PGRs with additional learning needs/neurodivergence for teaching.”

PGR SHARE (yr 5) – Speak Week 2025

“Training on how to teach and safeguarding before beginning teaching.”

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey

“Providing subject relevant training and better access to information would be useful. For marking assignments, I have had some good support but it always depends on what the individual lecturer - and even they are often not up to date on what training we have or haven’t had.”

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey

Additionally, there has been demand for more training on safeguarding and expectations within the classroom or lab setting. There seems to be a need for more discipline-specific training that will help Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators understand the course content in its entirety; consequently, providing undergraduate students a better teaching experience due to enhanced interdisciplinary learning. For example, a historian who deals mostly with literary material might be teaching an archaeology seminar and therefore some prior training with handling material culture and how evidence is used within that discipline would be beneficial.

Academic Staff: Approachability and Future Training

The vast majority of University staff are a testament to Cardiff's high-quality teaching, with ample Speak Week comments reinforcing this. With that being said, there have been several comments from undergraduate students that highlight that academic staff can be unapproachable and less interactive than their Graduate Tutor and Demonstrator counterparts.

“I think that most PGR can relate to the undergrad experience more, as they have been through the same thing recently. I also think it can be a bit less intimidating, especially in first year, to share your thoughts with a postgrad as opposed to a lecturer. I’ve also found them to be very encouraging.”

Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey

“It ended up being far better than speaking directly to professors because there was more of a back and forth, indicative of communication rather than just listening.”

Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey

“No disconnect - they [PGRs] know exactly what it’s like being a uni student so they can appreciate that and the teaching feels more connected in a way.”

Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey

Whilst it is positive that undergraduate students feel comfortable in approaching and asking Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators, it is also important they feel the same way with academic staff members. This highlights a clear need for some additional training across the institution to support the approachability of academic staff, and the ways in which students would feel comfortable to engage inside and outside of the classroom. This will either reinforce an academic's use of best practice techniques, or it might offer some staff time to reflect on their practice to adapt to the realities of teaching today's modern learners, ensuring a better undergraduate teaching experience.

“I had seminar classes led by a PGR, and it felt like a friendlier and less intense environments to have those debates/conversations that are covered in seminars. Everyone seemed to come out of their shell a bit.”

Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey

“They [PGRs] are so much better at explaining things, especially in labs because they know what it is like to be a student, and they are so much more approachable than lecturers.”

Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey

When speaking with colleagues in the Learning and Teaching Academy, there is a clear drive to ensure that all academic staff are trained to the same standard across the institution, thus providing assurance that staff are delivering high-quality and impactful teaching. Although the Fellowships Team have been working to increase the number of staff members who now hold a recognised Higher Education qualification in teaching, there are still members of academic staff still not qualified with an appropriate qualification. Continued commitment in this area will enable the institution to have a better consistency across the delivery of undergraduate teaching, whilst also aligning academic staff and Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators more closely with modern learner needs.

Recommendation 4: Expand the prerequisite and mandatory training for Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators to include practical elements of teaching, including how to manage a classroom and how to facilitate discussion, alongside teaching students with neurodiversity and/or learning difficulties.

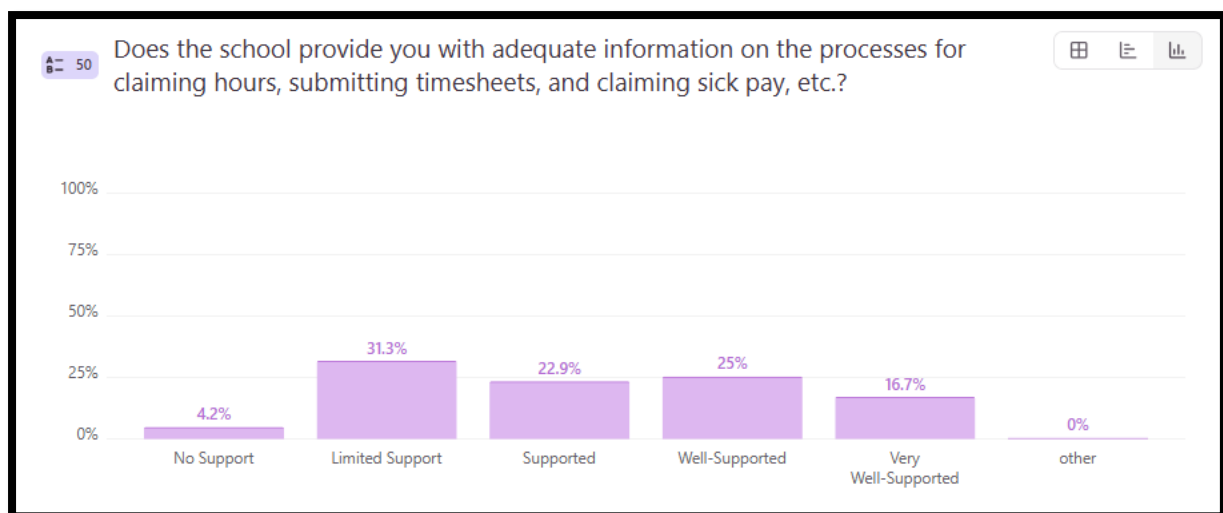
Recommendation 5: Academic staff to receive a form of updated training on Higher Education teaching practices, including topics such as inclusivity and encouraging engagement. The Learning and Teaching Academy to develop a module titled: *‘Teaching the Modern Learner.’*

The Student View on PGR Teaching Opportunities

Theme 4: Accessibility of Information

Induction and Living Memory

Throughout the year, PGRs attend a mandatory school induction where they are provided with relevant information for their studies. In this induction, the school's Director of Postgraduate Research (DPGR) usually provides information on expectations of work, research culture, supervisory relations, and so on. Yet, there is no equivalent 'induction' for those wishing to undertake teaching arrangements. Although Launchpad training is provided to new Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators to give them a baseline of expectations/training for teaching, inclusion of what else is involved at a school level, such as administrative duties (inputting timesheets, claiming sick pay, how to find cover, etc) is not standard practice.



Graph [8]: Existing Knowledge of Employment Processes, PGR Power Survey (Feb 2026)

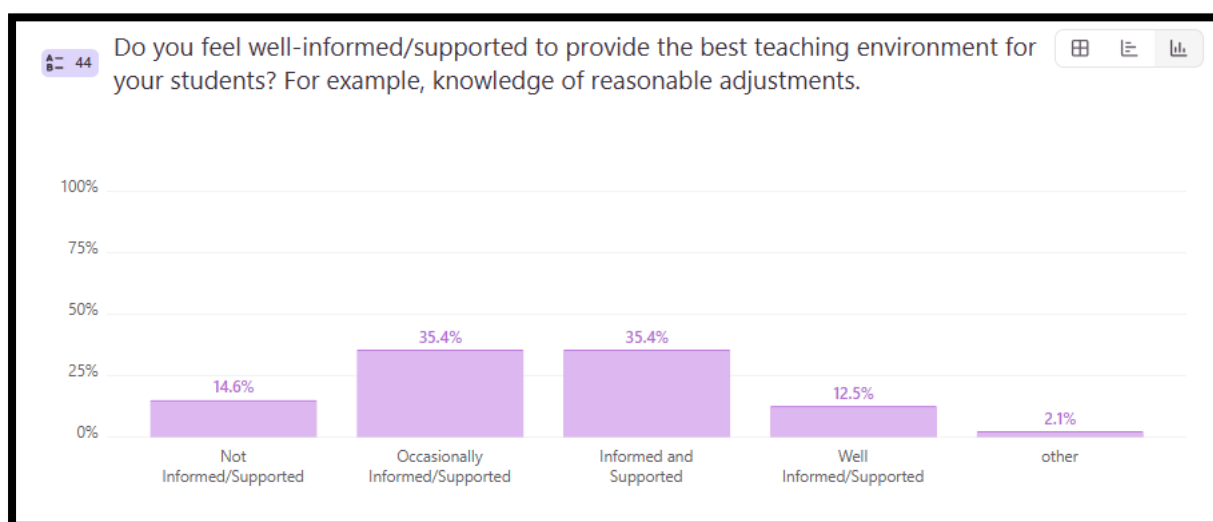
In the 'PGR Power' Survey, over a third of respondents (35.5%) stated they were not provided with adequate support for becoming Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators. Whilst it is positive that roughly two-thirds felt they were provided with appropriate information, there is still more work to be done to ensure that consistency is achieved across the university.

"Example more about the timeshare and how to log hours."
Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey.

Many schools have induction documents that are circulated to PGRs via email or kept on a certain page or link after the induction sessions have concluded. However, feedback has shown these are not easily accessible, and where shared via an online link, can be easily misplaced. This highlights the need for 'living documents' to be created for both school and teaching inductions so that information can be easily updated and accessible throughout the calendar year. Having a central location for these types of documents, especially for teaching, would reduce the reliance on PGR living memory and seniority within the PGR offices.

Module and Student Information

A student's lecture or seminar experience can be greatly impacted by who is teaching them and whether that individual understands the curriculum and their classes' abilities and needs. This is especially important for small-group teaching where Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators are expected to build a positive rapport with their students to build their confidence.



Graph [9]: Knowledge of Necessary Student Information, PGR Power Survey (Feb 2026)

In the 'PGR Power' Survey, exactly half of Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators felt they were ill-informed or only occasionally informed about their student's reasonable adjustments or wider module information and context. This results in Graduate Tutors feeling less confident and under-prepared when delivering their seminars – impacting not only their experience but also limiting the experience of undergraduate students. A Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator having access to appropriate knowledge relies on the module lead passing on that important information or the student themselves raising it with their respective seminar lead. This is highly problematic and can lead Graduate Tutors feeling at unease due to limited information and the student disadvantaged because they are not receiving the additional help they require. This would greatly impact students who have learning difficulties, who are neurodivergent, or who have disabilities (physical and hidden).

“Ensure PGR teachers have access to important information such as adjustments. This needs a better system as it currently relies on having cooperative and involved module leads to check lists of students handed to them by PGR teachers.”

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey.

The disparity and inconsistency of a Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator's accessibility to important knowledge shows a failing in the University's ability to implement meaningful reasonable adjustments. It also causes inconsistency between what a student experiences depending on a staff member's proactiveness in sharing such

information. Seminars, labs, and tutorials are meant to be a personal space to build critical skills and confidence and missing key information impacts that experience and the opportunity that students can be afforded.

“I had a student who had reasonable adjustments. I was not told until the second seminar when they brought it up to me directly. I immediately implemented the reasonable adjustment and went back to provide them with prior materials in the updated format. I apologised and inquired how they were getting on with their lectures – they told me their lecturer still hadn’t provided them with their reasonable adjustment even though they were aware.”

Graduate Tutor – Direct Correspondence

Limited communication between module leads and Graduate Tutors/Demonstrators can have a massive impact on delivering a high-quality teaching experience. This is not only limited to knowledge of reasonable adjustments, but can extend to limited understanding of course content, including expectations, facilitating thematic discussion, and assessment feedback.

“Module leads have been very last minute when it comes to providing guidance on what they want. It would be good to have mandatory meetings before teaching begins where certain things need to be provided e.g. learning outcomes for sessions, discussion of how the delivery feeds into the assessment criteria.”

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey.

“The PGRs clearly had limited information, they consistently tried but seemed to be less informed than they needed to be successful.”

Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey.

“I think this should be more aimed to module organisers. it’s the module organisers responsibility to ensure their PhD student is prepared to teach or fully understands something. If they do not, then they should wait longer before teaching so that they properly understand...”

Undergraduate Student – PGR Power Survey.

Addressing some of these issues would make Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators feel more prepared and confident when teaching, and would allow undergraduate students to have confidence in their seminar tutors – making the transition and experience of being taught by a member of academic staff and a Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator more seamless.

Recommendation 6: Create a dedicated, and standardised, induction for new and existing Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators – separate from normal induction.

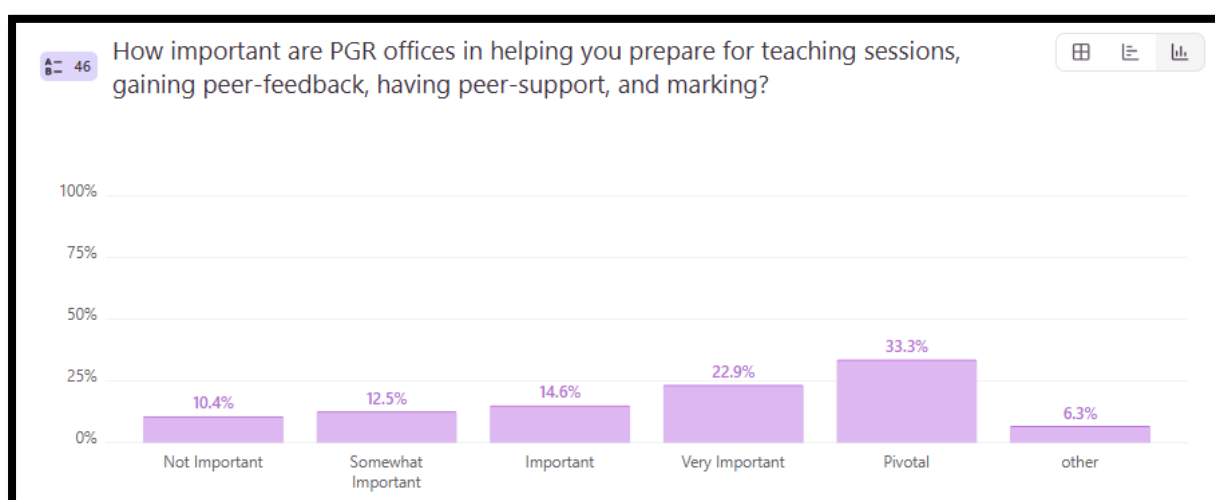
Recommendation 7: Ensure module-leads pass on essential information to Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators surrounding module information and students’ reasonable adjustments before the delivery of teaching.

The Student View on PGR Teaching Opportunities

Theme 5: Cynefin, Culture and Office Space

The Importance of PGR Office Space

The importance of PGR offices cannot be understated in enhancing a PGR student's belonging and fostering the University's commitment to 'cynefin'. They are pivotal to creating school-based PGR communities and establishing a sense of peer-support, providing an opportunity for PGRs to discuss research, teaching, and extra-curricular activities.



Graph [11]: Importance of PGR Office Space, PGR Power Survey (Feb 2026)

In the 'PGR Power' Survey, 83.3% of Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators believed that PGR offices were important to helping them develop their teaching practices, with a third (33.3%) stating that they were pivotal to this experience. An additional 6.3% of respondents selected 'Other', and when explaining their selection in the open comments, they noted that did not have access to a PGR office space on campus to have experienced this themselves. These comments were also reflected in Speak Week this year.

"PGR office spaces with SALTO access are essential, so that we have somewhere to prepare materials and handle potentially confidential student information."

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator – PGR Power Survey.

"The PGR office has been absolutely indispensable for teaching, not only because I can access working computers and printing, but also because I have access to the SHARE community and fellow colleagues, who help inform me of things I am unsure [of] because information is complex and hard to find... Without access to the SHARE PGR office, I wouldn't have had the confidence to teach."

Graduate Tutor or Demonstrator (SHARE) – PGR Power Survey.

“Our PGR Offices! They are a vital space for us to work and network in our PGR Community - especially in smaller departments where space is sparse!”

PGR MUSIC (yr 2) – Speak Week 2025/26.

“There should be an office for LAW PGRs not dumped in with the Business PGRs!”

PGR LAWPL (yr 1) – Speak Week 2025/26

Despite PGR offices being vital to their overall experience, their quality and availability vary across schools, especially with on the ongoing transformation projects and the introduction of school mergers. PGRs in the School of Music are very disheartened to have lost their PGR office during the ongoing mergers, leading to a significant impact on their research progress, culture and sense of belonging. This has been raised in several avenues, including the PGR Cross-College Forum and the Postgraduate Executive Committee and yet there has been no resolve to finding them an alternative space. The introduction of the new School of HUMAN also seeks to merge several existing schools together, leading to immense concern that PGR office space might be lost or poorly adapted.

“There is a study space in the main music building, but this is small with limited desk space and is shared with both UGs and PGTs. Other than this space, there is no other room that contains specialist music software other than our recording studios: which require pre-booking and access permissions and are also shared. Losing the space raises concerns for PGRs who cannot afford their own specialist software or lack access to suitable technology.

Music is not necessarily a quiet discipline, and working in shared, multi-use spaces would make essential aspects of work - like composition - very difficult for both our PGRs and others. Our current office has been a safe space for creating research, music, and a sense of community. Its loss - without clarity on replacement, if we are even to receive one at all - has caused significant concern, frustration, and stress...”

Graduate Tutor (MUSIC) – Email Correspondence

The permanent or temporary loss of PGR offices is being felt by PGR students across the institution, especially following repeated attempts from students in various schools to ask for appropriate spaces. Some PGRs have full access to modern facilities, some can only use out-of-date rooms, some have lost their office space, and some have never had it in the first place. This is not compatible with the University's commitment to providing a consistent student experience nor is the removal of PGR office space a representation of a positive and supported research experience.

Looking Ahead – The Graduate School

When assessing the requirement for dedicated postgraduate space, it is important to consider the physical space for the new Graduate School. Given this will be the new centre for ‘all things PGR’, it is critical that the University considers providing a sizable

and suitable physical location for this new institute that places it at the heart of Cardiff University. This location needs to be somewhere central, easily accessible, and identifiable to research students, including those visiting on research partnerships and who might undertake their studies part-time or through distance-learning.

Critically, the new Graduate School should be an extension of the School's PGR offices – **not its replacement**. The presence of the physical Graduate School is there to bring cohesion to the institution's PGR community, expanding and enhancing our PGR's local research communities into a wider university level. It should seek to be a location where PGRs work collaboratively, develop key partnerships internally and externally, and a place that embodies Cardiff's research innovation, fostering an interdisciplinary and institutional level of cynefin. This cannot be achieved if local research communities are destroyed or lost.

Recommendation 8: Ensure PGR offices are protected, and neither reduced in size unnecessarily nor moved away from the research community's respective faculty/department building. If PGR offices have been closed, a suitable alternative should be found in a swift and timely manner.
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The Student View on PGR Teaching Opportunities

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Maintain and safeguard PGR teaching opportunities against ongoing cuts, whilst also reflecting the need for consistency of teaching opportunities across all schools.

Recommendation 2: Provide experienced Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators with opportunities to aid in the delivery of teaching on level 5 and level 6 modules.

Recommendation 3: Consider and consult Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators when releasing academic timetables, allowing them sufficient time to prepare for high-quality teaching.

Recommendation 4: Expand the prerequisite and mandatory training for Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators to include practical elements of teaching, including how to manage a classroom and how to facilitate discussion, alongside teaching students with neurodiversity and/or learning difficulties.

Recommendation 5: Academic staff to receive a form of updated training on Higher Education teaching practices, including topics such as inclusivity and encouraging engagement. The Learning and Teaching Academy to develop a module titled: *'Teaching the Modern Learner.'*

Recommendation 6: Create a dedicated, and standardised, induction for new and existing Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators – separate from normal induction.

Recommendation 7: Ensure module-leads pass on essential information to Graduate Tutors and Demonstrators surrounding module information and students' reasonable adjustments before the delivery of teaching.

Recommendation 8: Ensure PGR offices are protected, and neither reduced in size unnecessarily nor moved away from the research community's respective faculty/department building. If PGR offices have been closed, a suitable alternative should be found in a swift and timely manner.



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