



University of
St Andrews

Doctoral students who teach

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2.0	Updated to provide more effective oversight of training and support provided at School-level.	Approved	Emmy Feamster, Deputy Head of Education Policy and Quality	7/12/2023

POLICY ON DOCTORAL STUDENTS WHO TEACH

This policy applies to doctoral students who teach, either on Graduate Teaching Assistant contracts or hourly paid contracts, and all other hourly paid teaching staff. This policy outlines the requirements of Schools and the University in terms of selecting and supporting postgraduate teachers and all other hourly-paid teaching staff. References to doctoral students or postgraduate teachers should be understood to include all individuals on a Graduate Teaching Assistant contract or hourly paid teaching contract even if they are not postgraduate students.

The policy begins with a list of key points, which are then explained in more detail.

1. **Scope of duties:** Doctoral students may routinely teach and mark coursework at sub-honours level. There are certain restrictions regarding doctoral students teaching and/or marking at 3000/4000 level. Doctoral students may only teach at 5000 level with permission of the Assistant Vice-Principal (Dean of Learning and Teaching) and Provost and with structured support in place. Doctoral students on hourly paid contracts should not co-ordinate, convene or teach modules independently.
2. **Limits on teaching time:** The School must ensure that teaching and marking responsibilities will not endanger the prospect of a student completing a degree programme within the time set by the University and funding agencies. In addition, external regulatory requirements must be adhered to (e.g. restrictions placed on paid employment by UKVI or external funding bodies).
3. **Selection process:** Schools must have a clear process in place for selecting postgraduate teachers, with selection criteria published in advance. When offering teaching opportunities Schools must use Templates 1 and 2 below.
4. **Initial training:** Before a doctoral student begins teaching, the School must confirm that they have completed all [essential training courses](#). The School must provide an induction for all doctoral students who are teaching in the School for the first time.
5. **Ongoing support:** Schools must ensure that all postgraduate teachers have a mentor and receive appropriate development and support throughout the period of teaching, including instruction in effective and appropriate marking and relevant pedagogical approaches.
6. **Monitoring performance:** Schools must monitor and provide feedback to postgraduate teachers on their teaching and marking performance. Marking by doctoral students must be second-marked or moderated by sample (see policy on [Assessment: Marking and standard setting](#)).

7. **Evaluation by postgraduate teachers:** Postgraduate teachers must have the opportunity to provide their views on the modules on which they have taught, and to give feedback on the support and development they have received in that role.

The policy should be read in conjunction with the **templates** listed below. These resources can be edited to some extent to customise them to the needs of each School (e.g. adding local role titles), whilst ensuring there is a consistent approach to supporting postgraduate teachers across the University.

1. [Application instructions](#) – *essential*
2. Postgraduate teaching: [Expectations & responsibilities](#) - *essential*
3. [School induction checklist](#) - *recommended*
4. Module description document: [Arts version](#) - *recommended*
5. Module description document: [Science version](#) – *recommended*
6. [Postgraduate teacher feedback prompts](#) – *recommended*

1. Scope of duties

Doctoral students who are contracted for teaching and assessment duties must be paid the appropriate standard hourly rate (see [Pay rates and arrangements for hourly paid casual teaching staff](#)). Any contract for such work should be agreed with the Head of School in advance of the performance of the duties. If there are no contractual obligations to teach, doctoral students cannot be compelled to undertake any teaching or marking duties.

Doctoral students can:

- Routinely give tutorials and seminars
- Assist in lab/practical demonstration classes
- Mark coursework and exams at 1000 and 2000 level
- Teach and/or mark at 3000 and 4000 levels subject to the requirements noted below.

Doctoral students should not:

- Be responsible for regularly setting tutorial topics
- Develop essay questions
- Be routinely expected to put in more time preparing for a tutorial than they are paid for
- Co-ordinate, convene, or teach modules independently at any level
- Normally teach or mark work at 5000 level.

Requests for exceptions to these constraints must be submitted to the Assistant Vice-Principal (Dean of Learning and Teaching) and Provost for approval. If a School is in doubt about the possibility of allowing teaching and/or assessment by a doctoral student, specific cases should be discussed with the Assistant Vice-Principal (Dean of Learning and Teaching) and Provost. This would include employing a postgraduate student studying below the doctoral level.

Doctoral students may only undertake **teaching** at 3000 and 4000 level when:

- Permission has been granted by the Director of Teaching
- The doctoral student has previous teaching experience or relevant practical skills and knowledge
- The total teaching by doctoral students is $\leq 30\%$ of the total taught contact hours for the module
- There is close oversight by the module coordinator.

Doctoral students may only undertake **marking** at 3000 and 4000 level when:

- Permission has been granted by the Director of Teaching
- The doctoral student has been involved in the teaching of the content being assessed (e.g. delivering a lab practical)
- A clear marking schema and guidance are provided
- Assignments marked by doctoral students comprise no more than 30% of the final module grade
- There is close oversight by the module coordinator.

Doctoral students may only undertake **teaching** or **marking** at 5000 level when:

- All of the above conditions are met, and
- An exception has been granted by the Assistant Vice-Principal (Dean of Learning and Teaching) and Provost.
- The topic being taught and/or assessed is closely related to the doctoral student's own research studies and/or professional expertise.

Doctoral students will not usually deliver lectures but when it is appropriate to a module (by virtue of the student's research specialism) it is permissible for them to give an occasional "guest" lecture.

2. Limits on teaching time

The School must ensure that teaching and marking responsibilities will not endanger the prospect of a student completing a degree programme within the time set by the University and funding agencies. The number of hours spent on teaching, marking and preparation should not normally exceed the appropriate amount of time a student may spend on non-academic work in a working week. For a full-time student, this would amount to no more than half of their working week. In addition, external regulatory requirements must be adhered to, such as restrictions placed on paid employment by external funding bodies or UKVI (contact the [International Student Advisor](#) for advice).

When allocating teaching and assessment duties care should be taken to ensure the weekly workload is reasonable and will not be so great as to have a negative impact on a doctoral student's research. Supervisors should be notified of any paid teaching or assessment work to be undertaken by their doctoral students. While it is not expected that a supervisor would prevent their student from teaching, they do retain the right to raise concerns with the student and DoT (or named delegate)

if they feel the requested or allocated teaching load may jeopardise the student's progress. Additional factors may be considered when assigning teaching responsibilities such as the student's progress record.

3. Selection process

Schools should seek to appoint doctoral students who will be committed and enthusiastic, have sufficient knowledge of the subject to be taught and appropriate communication skills. Schools may determine their own criteria for selecting postgraduate teachers and allocating teaching and assessment duties but these must be communicated to potential applicants in advance.

When advertising teaching opportunities, Schools must provide potential applicants with appropriately customised versions of templates 1 and 2. Some elements can be edited to make them School-specific (e.g. adding local role titles), but the use of standard templates by all Schools will ensure that there is a consistent approach to supporting postgraduate teachers across the University.

- Template 1 (Application instructions): Provides all the necessary information required by University policy and the School to make an informed choice about applicants.
- Template 2 (Postgraduate teaching: Expectations and responsibilities): Postgraduate teachers, and the academic staff that support them, have clear and shared expectations of roles and responsibilities as required by this policy.

It is essential that Schools provide details for each module about the approximate time demands required for class preparation, teaching, office hours and marking, and any particular skills required to teach on the module. Skills developed by teaching on a module should also be outlined. Schools may use the optional module description documents (templates 4 and 5) for this purpose or may have an alternative procedure for providing this information.

4. Initial training

The University requires that doctoral students employed to teach or assess receive appropriate development for this purpose. This relates to their involvement in such activities as:

- Providing basic pastoral care and escalation procedures
- Occasional lecturing
- Seminars and tutorials
- Workshops
- Laboratory and other practical classes
- Dissertation project support
- Assessment and marking
- Discussion board moderation.

Training delivered centrally

Doctoral students must register on the [Essential courses for postgraduates who teach programme](#) in PDMS and complete one instance of each of the required components (covering teaching, assessment and academic misconduct, student services support, and diversity).

Schools are responsible for checking that doctoral students have completed the above training requirements before any teaching contract is issued. Where a doctoral student's existing competence in teaching can be clearly demonstrated (e.g. appropriate prior accreditation or experience), they may apply to CEED for exemption from certain elements of the courses, however exemption is not guaranteed.

Training delivered within the School

The School must provide a local induction for all new postgraduate teachers, as well as appropriate training and support throughout their time teaching. This induction might be delivered simultaneously to all new postgraduate teachers in the School, to cohorts of tutors/demonstrators on a single module, or on a one-to-one basis, as best suits the needs of the School.

It is the responsibility of the Director of Teaching (or other delegated person) to ensure that all new postgraduate teachers have received an induction (see the "School induction checklist"). The induction must cover the following at a minimum.

- If there are multiple tutors/demonstrators on the same module, they should be introduced to each other.
- Identify and, if possible, provide an introduction to key staff: e.g. Director of Teaching, Academic Misconduct Officer, Director of Postgraduate Research, Postgraduate Administrator, School Manager, and year co-ordinator.
- Explain contracts and pay and identify the person in the School who is responsible for this. Remind postgraduate teachers who are on a Student Visa that they can work no more than 20 hours per week in any form of employment.
- Clarify who the tutor/demonstrator should contact if they have concerns about a student (e.g. aggression, health issues, suspected misconduct); which issues should they deal with themselves, which should they refer to staff to deal with?
- Explain key deadlines, such as turnaround time for reporting grades.
- Explain marking scales used in the School, and how marks are reported (e.g. do tutors/demonstrators upload grades themselves, or submit them to the module co-ordinator?).
- Describe how feedback is provided for students (e.g., is it distributed via an online system, in tutorials?).
- Discuss the recording and reporting of attendance at tutorials/labs.
- Explain how extensions are granted; how penalties for late work and exceeding word count are applied.
- Explain self-certification of absence.

- Explain academic alerts (are tutors/demonstrators expected to issue them?).
- Provide a brief introduction to any software (e.g. Moodle, MMS) and *how* they are expected to use it.
- Provide general advice on appropriate pedagogical approaches for the subject and type of teaching the postgraduate teachers will be doing.

Schools may provide this information via a combination of face-to-face sessions and a Postgraduate Teacher handbook (see optional templates).

5. Ongoing support

School mentor

Every postgraduate teacher must be assigned a mentor to support them in their teaching role, who will:

- Provide a recognised point of contact in the School.
- Advise on subject-specific aspects of teaching and learning, including suggestions for how to engage students and structure tutorials or lab classes.
- Observe and comment constructively upon the postgraduate teacher's performance, or ensure that this is done by another experienced teacher.

How the mentor role is implemented may vary. It may be done by the Director of Teaching, by the module co-ordinator, or by individual academics leading lab classes for particular demonstrators. Postgraduate teachers must always have an experienced staff member who they know will be willing to answer their questions about teaching and marking.

Support for marking

All new postgraduate teachers that will be marking written work (e.g. essays, lab reports, short answer questions, exam scripts) must be given a clear explanation of the marking scale used within the School. They must be given guidance on timescales, rules on extensions, late work, etc. as noted in the *School induction checklist*.

They must be provided with a clear marking scheme and/or grade descriptors for each piece of work they are marking and be reminded of how to provide effective formative feedback. Postgraduate teachers who undertake marking should be supervised by an appropriate member of staff (e.g. module co-ordinator or Director of Teaching).

Before marking student work for the first time, all new postgraduate teachers must receive some form of **marking practical**.

- If multiple postgraduate teachers are used on the same module, they should all participate in the same marking practical (as far as possible).

- At minimum this might entail the module co-ordinator explaining in detail the kinds of responses to expect for particular questions/assignments and providing examples of previous work to review and discuss.
- Where possible, the practical should involve postgraduate teachers being given two or three pieces of student work from previous years of different quality (e.g. fail, 2:2, 1st), without being told what mark the work originally received. After marking individually, they should compare the marks they awarded and discuss any variation, and then discuss with whoever is facilitating the marking practical what marks were awarded originally, and why (i.e. how were the grade descriptors applied?).

Each School must have a designated point of contact who has overall responsibility for postgraduate teachers. Schools will be asked to share this information with the Education Policy and Quality team at the start of each academic year.

The Director of Teaching or delegate will put in place an administrative process to ensure that a comprehensive up-to-date list of postgraduate teachers is available at the beginning of every academic year to allow the designated point of contact to communicate with all postgraduate teachers in the School throughout the academic year. When compiling this list, Schools are requested to ensure that all doctoral students included have completed the requisite training.

6. Monitoring performance

Schools must formally monitor and provide written feedback on the teaching and marking performance of postgraduate teachers (the recommended postgraduate teacher feedback prompts template is available for this purpose). If possible, postgraduate teachers should receive feedback on their teaching at some point during the module as well as at the end of the module. They must receive feedback on their marking for each round of assessment.

If postgraduate teachers work with groups of students without an academic staff member present (e.g. leading tutorials), they must undergo at least one **teaching observation session** during their first semester of teaching. A more experienced teacher must observe a full teaching session, and provide constructive feedback either by email or face-to-face. (See [guidance on conducting teaching observations](#).) In many Schools this will be done by the module co-ordinator, but in some cases other members of academic staff may be appropriate. It is the responsibility of the Director of Teaching, or named delegate, to ensure that teaching observations have taken place for all new postgraduate teachers.

In cases where postgraduate teachers work alongside academic staff (e.g. demonstrating in lab classes), the academic should make a point of explicitly providing feedback on their teaching on several sessions.

Where appropriate, tutors/demonstrators must be included on the Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) so that undergraduate students have the opportunity to provide postgraduate teachers with feedback. A copy of this

information should be provided to postgraduate teachers as another form of feedback.

All marking undertaken by postgraduate teachers must be second-marked or moderated by sample (see the section on Marking and moderation in the policy on [Assessment: Marking and standard setting](#)). These arrangements must be explicitly brought to the attention of the External Examiners for review.

7. Evaluation by postgraduate teachers

Module co-ordinators must give postgraduate teachers the opportunity to provide their views on the modules on which they have taught (e.g. suggestions for what worked well and areas for improvement). The Schools must also give postgraduate teachers the opportunity to give feedback on the support and development they have received in their teaching role.

The Director of Teaching or delegate should facilitate a meeting at least once per academic year and invite all postgraduate students who have been involved in the delivery of teaching in the School after teaching has finished. The postgraduate teachers should be invited to comment on their teaching experience, on the support and development they received in their teaching role, and on their perception of how well the School met the standards and requirements outlined in this policy.

Feedback from postgraduate teachers can also be solicited in other ways, including written feedback, an evaluation form, or in conjunction with an informal social event (e.g., an end of year lunch where postgraduate teachers are invited to discuss their experiences during the semester).

The Director of Teaching or delegate should produce a short report (approximately one page) summarising the comments and feedback from the postgraduate teachers and the School's response which will be provided to the Academic Monitoring Group (AMG). The report should be made available to postgraduate teachers to ensure the feedback loop is closed.

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2.0	Updated to provide more effective oversight of training and support provided at School-level.	Approved	Emmy Feamster, Deputy Head of Education Policy and Quality	7/12/2023