

Code of practice for postgraduate researchers who support teaching

Academic year 2017/18

This Code remains active during 2018/19 until revisions are made and a revised Code published

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Context

1. This *Code of practice* applies to any postgraduate researcher involved in supporting teaching or demonstrating. It has been developed with reference to the [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B11: Research Degrees](#).
2. Use of the term “teaching” in this document includes any of the teaching support activities listed under paragraph 5.

Purpose

3. The University recognises that postgraduate researcher engagement in supporting the learning and teaching of others can provide them with an opportunity to develop a range of personal and academic skills and can help to reinforce knowledge of their subject area.
4. The primary purpose of this *Code of practice* is to establish the principles on which postgraduate researchers will be used to support the teaching and learning of taught students. The *Code of practice* seeks to ensure that, wherever postgraduate researchers are involved in teaching, appropriate measures are in place to safeguard their experience and that of the students they teach.
5. Postgraduate researchers **can** be involved in the following types of teaching support activity, subject to meeting any conditions as specified and completing the relevant training prior to undertaking these activities:
 - (i) Demonstrating at FHEQ¹ Level 4, FHEQ Level 5, and FHEQ Level 6: This activity is typically centred on facilitating workshops (including performance workshops)/laboratory sessions and demonstrating the use of practical equipment and processes (including computer equipment/software packages) and experimental design/statistical analysis.
 - (ii) Demonstrating at FHEQ Level 7: This activity is only available to postgraduate researchers who have **successfully completed** the first year of their programme and have **successfully completed** the confirmation examination.
 - (iii) Seminars/tutorials at FHEQ Level 4, FHEQ Level 5, and FHEQ Level 6: This is typically centred on supporting student tutorials and seminars with specified learning outcomes and fostering/stimulating discussion and debate amongst students. In order to be eligible for seminar/tutorial opportunities, postgraduate researchers must have **successfully completed their first year and successfully completed the confirmation examination**.
 - (iv) Formative assessment: A formative assessment contributes to the learning process by providing feedback, either written or verbal, to students on the strengths and weaknesses of their work but the outcomes do not contribute to any (aggregate) mark used for progression or award purposes.
 - (v) Summative assessment: A summative assessment provides a mark or grade that is recorded and will contribute to the overall mark for a module and to the requirements for progression. Where a postgraduate researcher has acted as primary marker, their marking must be carried out in accordance with the procedures set out in the [Code of practice for assessment and feedback](#).

¹ [QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#)

6. Postgraduate researchers **cannot** be involved in the following activities:
- Lectures: Delivery of an oral presentation to groups of students in order to convey the core content of a module.
 - Summative assessment at FHEQ Level 7
 - Project or dissertation work: Postgraduate researchers will not be involved in the supervision and/or assessment of project or dissertation work for a module carrying a value of 30 credits or more at any FHEQ Level.
 - Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) restrictions: Postgraduate researchers will not be involved in any teaching activity if prohibited by a PSRB.

Principles

7. This *Code of practice* is underpinned by the following principles, each of which is expanded upon in subsequent sections:

Principle 1: Postgraduate researchers are recruited to support teaching through a standardised recruitment procedure as specified in paragraphs 8 – 18 below. This is to ensure the fair, transparent and equitable appointment of postgraduate researchers to the support of teaching duties across the University. Where applicable, appointments to teaching support roles must be consistent with the terms and conditions of student visas;

Principle 2: All postgraduate researchers appointed to support teaching will be trained in all aspects, including assessment and health and safety (as appropriate), prior to taking on any duties. They will also be supported and mentored in order to carry out their teaching duties effectively;

Principle 3: Postgraduate researchers who support teaching are considered a part of the support teaching team;

Principle 4: Postgraduate researchers' teaching loads will be monitored to ensure that they do not interfere with their primary focus of completing their postgraduate research degree. To this end, the University limits the load to a maximum of 80 hours per semester (to include preparation, delivery and, if applicable, marking) or to limits which may be imposed by sponsors whichever be the lessor;

Principle 5: Postgraduate research students may provide support for formative and summative assessment and in doing so must adhere to the policies set out in the [Code of practice for assessment and feedback](#);

Principle 6: All teaching opportunities available to postgraduate researchers are optional.

Principle 1: Recruitment

8. Postgraduate researchers are to be recruited to teaching positions through a fair, transparent and equitable appointment procedure described in detail below. The contractual and payment arrangements will be managed through Unitemps.
9. A member of the Faculty staff, as determined by the Executive Dean, will be responsible for co-ordinating the logistics of the recruitment and appointment of postgraduate researchers to teaching support roles. Recruitment will take place at fixed points during the academic year, in advance of the semester in which the teaching is due to take place.
10. All teaching support opportunities will be advertised through an open call. In order to ensure that postgraduate researchers are furnished with sufficient information to judge if their skills and expertise are suited to the teaching opportunity and if they

have sufficient time to meet the demands of teaching alongside their research, the following information will be provided in the call:

- job description
 - the up-to-date module descriptor
 - the number of contact hours which the postgraduate researcher will be expected to teach
 - the anticipated preparation and marking time
11. Schools and Departments should consider if teaching support opportunities should be offered to postgraduate researchers in cognate subject areas.
 12. In responding to calls for teaching opportunities, postgraduate researchers will be asked to submit an application which includes an up-to-date curriculum vitae. If a number of opportunities are advertised in one call, then postgraduate researchers will be asked to rank the opportunities based on their abilities and preference.
 13. Applications will be shortlisted. As a part of the shortlisting process, applications will be assessed against the eligibility criteria set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 above. Any ineligible applications will be rejected at this point.
 14. The shortlisted applicants will be invited to attend an interview conducted by at least two members of staff, at least one of whom will be an academic member of staff. The Module Leader would normally be a member of the interview panel in order to ensure that the postgraduate researcher demonstrates the technical competencies and subject knowledge required to support teaching on the module.
 15. The supervisors of postgraduate researchers must be approached during the recruitment round as a referee to verify that the postgraduate researcher is making adequate progress with the doctorate (as evidenced by end of year and interim reviews) and has sufficient capacity to take on teaching duties.
 16. Where applicable, appointments to teaching support roles must be consistent with the terms and conditions of student visas.

Notifying central Departments about training needs

17. Departments and Schools must send lists of newly-appointed postgraduate researchers to teaching duties and their training needs to the Department of Higher Education and Researcher Development Programme team in order to facilitate the planning of the training provision.

Principle 2: Initial training and ongoing support

18. It is acknowledged that the type of teaching support activities involving postgraduate researchers vary from discipline to discipline. The training framework articulated in this *Code of practice* aims, therefore, to be sensitive to those disciplinary differences whilst assuring that postgraduate researchers are all trained to a minimum threshold standard.
19. It is a requirement that postgraduate researchers complete the requisite training below **before** undertaking any teaching or assessment duties.

Centrally delivered training

20. All postgraduate researchers undertaking teaching support duties are required to complete a training programme comprising of centrally-delivered workshops and discipline-specific training. The table below summarises which central workshops postgraduate researchers must successfully complete depending on the type(s) of teaching duties they have been employed to carry-out.

Type of teaching duty	Required training	Training provider
Demonstrating	<i>“Demonstration in Laboratories, Practicals and Tutorials”</i>	Researcher Development Programme
Seminar/lecture/tutorial based teaching	<i>“Introduction to Teaching in Higher Education”</i>	Department of Higher Education
Assessment of taught students’ work	<i>“Assessment and Feedback”</i>	Department of Higher Education

21. A register of postgraduate researchers who have successfully completed the central training will be maintained in SITS. The register will be accessible to Module Leaders and must be checked to verify that postgraduate researchers teaching on their modules have completed the requisite training.

Accreditation

22. The University will seek to integrate the training workshops into the Higher Education Academy-accredited programmes that currently exist so that postgraduate researchers could opt to 'top them up' by attending a small number of additional seminars and completing the assessment to allow them to gain Associate Fellow status.

Discipline-specific training

23. The centrally-delivered training will be complemented by discipline-specific training that will be delivered in-Faculty. The normal expectation is that this will be provided by the Module Leader although in some cases it may be appropriate for other members of staff to deliver the training. The format of the training will vary depending on the type of teaching support activity that the postgraduate researcher is engaged in and the discipline.
24. It is important that the training is provided in a timely fashion. In the case of demonstration duties this will be **at least 24 hours prior to the class**. In the case of seminar teaching, postgraduate researchers should receive training **at least one week prior to the class** to allow for adequate preparation time.
25. As a minimum, the discipline-specific training will cover the following:
- the content of the class
 - the learning objectives
 - what postgraduate researchers are expected to prepare
 - advice on how to convey any challenging concepts to students
 - frequently asked questions by students about the topic
 - information on any learning adjustments that need to be made for individual students
 - assessment requirements (see paragraph 31 - 33 below)
 - health and safety requirements
26. It is good practice to allow postgraduate researchers the opportunity to observe or shadow staff delivering teaching and/or undertaking assessment, where possible this should take place.

Ongoing monitoring and training

27. The University recognises the importance of ongoing training and support for postgraduate researchers so that they can reflect on their experiences, monitor their development and continually improve as professional educators. It is acknowledged that supporting the ongoing development of postgraduate researchers who support teaching also benefits the learning of students. Postgraduate researchers will be supported with their ongoing training and development by the Module Leader in the following ways:
- annual observation of their teaching;
 - feedback on their performance;
 - access to relevant student feedback.

Principle 3: The teaching support team

28. The University values the contribution that postgraduate researchers make to supporting teaching activity. In recognition of this, postgraduate researchers are considered part of the teaching support team. Programme Leaders are encouraged to integrate postgraduate researchers who support teaching into the wider teaching community by allowing them to be involved, *inter alia*, with the following: Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLC); discussions about annual programme reviews and external examiner reports; discussions about Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) scores and feedback; and Boards of Studies.

Principle 4: Teaching loads

29. Postgraduate researchers' teaching loads will be monitored by a member of the Faculty staff, as determined by the Executive Dean and through the end of year review process.
30. The purpose of monitoring teaching loads is to ensure that they do not interfere with the postgraduate researcher's primary focus of completing their doctorate on time. To this end, the University limits the load to a maximum of 80 hours per semester (to include preparation, delivery and, if applicable, marking) or to limits which may be imposed by sponsors whichever be the lessor.

Principle 5: Assessment

31. Postgraduate researchers are permitted to carry out formative and summative assessment only if they satisfy the eligibility criteria set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 above.
32. In order to ensure that the standard of assessment carried out by postgraduate researchers meets University expectations, it is **a requirement** that they successfully complete the training specified in paragraph 20 **before** undertaking any assessment duties. In addition to this training, Module Leaders are **required** to provide postgraduate researchers with clear written guidance on the assessment criteria and advice on how to use and apply those criteria.
33. All formative and summative assessment carried out by postgraduate researchers must be carried out in accordance with the policies set out in the [Code of practice for assessment and feedback](#).

Principle 6: Teaching support duties are optional

34. All teaching opportunities available to postgraduate researchers are optional. Postgraduate researchers cannot, therefore, be required to undertake teaching support duties as a part of a scholarship agreement.