



**UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM**

**CODE OF PRACTICE ON TEACHING AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROVIDED BY  
REGISTERED STUDENTS**



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## **1. Preamble**

### **1.1 This Code of Practice applies to:**

- (a) all teaching and academic support of undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students by Registered Students where the student providing the teaching or support is doing so in addition to their own programme of study;
- (b) Registered Students carrying out teaching or academic support duties as a condition of receipt of a studentship.

### **1.2 This Code of Practice does not apply to:**

- (a) those students undertaking teaching duties as part of their approved programme of study, for example those on teaching training programmes or those undertaking 'peer marking' as part of a module. Such duties are normally specified at the design stage of the module and indicated in the module and programme specification(s) and handbook(s) as appropriate. For these students separate provisions are made for their training and supervision and for quality assurance of their activities;
- (b) Honorary Lecturers or contracted staff of the University who may also be students. For these students the regulations and terms applicable to all academic staff apply.

### **1.3 This Code of Practice differentiates between postgraduate (taught and research) and undergraduate students in terms of the type, the amount and the level of the teaching or academic support that they may do. Please refer to the Guidance on Teaching and Support Provided by Registered Students for further details.**

### **1.4 Heads of Principal Academic Units (PAU) (or their designated nominee) or Heads of Service for Professional Service (where applicable) must ensure that appropriate procedures are operated throughout for determining the suitability of individual students to undertake any teaching or academic support requested of them. Module conveners (or Heads of Service for Professional Service, where applicable) are responsible for ensuring that Postgraduate Teaching Assistants (PGTAs) and undergraduates have relevant knowledge of the discipline and the subjects to be covered, a strong command of English (or the relevant language if undertaking activities in a foreign language) and/or the requisite computing or laboratory skills.**

## **2. Postgraduate (Taught and Research) Students involved in teaching or academic support**

### **2.1 A Head of PAU (or their designated nominee) or Heads of Service for Professional Service (where applicable) may appoint postgraduate students as PGTAs. PGTAs may be known by another name in some PAUs but the duties and responsibilities should be commensurate with those described in this Code of Practice.**

### **2.2 PGTAs may be involved in:**

- 2.2.1 The teaching and provision of academic support for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, following appropriate training and subject to



supervision by academic staff (for PAU appointed PGTAs) or Professional Service staff (for Professional Service appointed PGTAs).

- 2.2.2 The formative assessment of undergraduate students at all stages of an undergraduate programme and of postgraduate taught students.
  - 2.2.3 The summative assessment of undergraduate students at Level C of an undergraduate programme, where this assessment is subject to supervision and moderation by academic staff.
  - 2.2.4 Summative assessment for undergraduate students at Levels I, H and M that counts towards the degree classification, weighted mean mark and grade point average; and postgraduate taught students at Level M. At level I, H and M, each individual piece of assessment assessed by PGTAs should not exceed more than 10% of the overall mark for the module. PGTAs may be involved with a number of assessments in a module, but the total amount of assessment must not exceed 30% of the overall module. In all cases, this assessment must be subject to supervision and moderation by academic staff.
- 2.3 PGTAs will not be the sole or main supervisor of an undergraduate research project or dissertation, including undergraduate masters projects, or taught postgraduate research projects or dissertations. Postgraduate Teaching Assistants will not be module convenors, responsible for a module and may only deliver teaching as specified in this Code of Practice.
- 2.4 PGTAs may be involved in the delivery of laboratory or practical classes or the leading of seminars at all levels. However, in such cases they must not be the module convenor and the Head of PAU (or their designated nominee) or Heads of Service for Professional Service (where applicable) is responsible for determining and monitoring their ongoing suitability for their involvement in this form of teaching.

### **3. Undergraduate Students involved in teaching or academic support**

- 3.1 A Head of PAU (or their designated nominee) or Heads of Service for Professional Service (where applicable) may approve, in exceptional cases, the use of undergraduate students in the provision of academic support for undergraduate students where this academic support is subject to appropriate and documented supervision by academic staff. This does not apply to peer-assisted learning schemes, or the learning and teaching methods of a module that has been designed to incorporate a peer approach to learning, which normally should be approved via the appropriate University mechanisms. In such instances the undergraduate students providing the support would be at a higher level than those receiving it.
- 3.2 Undergraduate students may not be involved in the marking of assessed work, whether formative or summative. This does not include 'peer marking' where the purpose is to provide formative feedback.
- 3.3 Each PAU will provide an annual report to the College Quality Assurance and Approval Committee (CQAAC) (or equivalent) outlining the use made of undergraduates in



teaching, including the number employed, their duties, training they have undertaken, and the support that has been provided by the PAU. For Professional Services units this report should be made to University's Quality, Enhancement, and Standards Committee (QESC).

#### **4. General Provisions**

- 4.1 The terms and duties of engagement must permit the PGTAs or the undergraduate involved in academic support to complete the work for their own degree within the normal time period for that degree. Supervisors or Personal Academic Tutors respectively shall approve annually any duties undertaken by Registered Students.
- 4.2 The teaching hours of a full time Registered Student shall not exceed twenty hours per week, excluding approved holiday periods, unless a sponsoring Research Council specifies a lower limit. Training, preparation and marking time should be included in this twenty-hour period. The weekly maximum may be redistributed across the academic year with the prior agreement of the student concerned. This restriction does not apply to research students in writing up period. Further detail on employment restrictions can be found in the 'Guidance to Students on Paid Employment'. Students with visa requirements must comply with the relevant regulations regarding employment.
- 4.3 The rates of remuneration shall be as determined from time to time by the University, and may be subject to limit by research councils or other sponsors.
- 4.4 Neither PGTAs nor undergraduates involved in academic support and/or teaching shall attend Boards of Examiners.
- 4.5 Written communication with students by PGTAs or undergraduates involved in academic support must only be undertaken using the institutional Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), University email and/or other institutionally approved platforms. Communication must not be undertaken through social media, messaging apps or any other platforms that are not approved for this purpose and supported by the University.

#### **5. Responsibilities of the PAU or Professional Service in relation to Training**

- 5.1 It is the responsibility of the Head of PAU (or Heads of Service for Professional Service, where applicable) to ensure that Postgraduate Teaching Assistants and undergraduates involved in academic support receive appropriate training and support for the duties they are required to perform. This shall include attending generic training provided centrally by the University. This should also include discipline specific and module specific training provided by the PAU or Professional Services Unit who is employing the PGTA or student. Students may be exempted from this if they are considered to have relevant (documented) alternative qualifications or experience as agreed by the Head of School (or their designate) or Head of Service for Professional Service in consultation with the Educational Development Team.
- 5.2 It is the responsibility of the Head of PAU (or Heads of Service for Professional Service, where applicable) to satisfy themselves that appropriate procedures are operated throughout the School for determining the suitability of individual students to undertake



any teaching or academic support requested of them. Interviews or practical tests may be used to assess these skills and experience. Where practicable a probation period should be in operation.

- 5.3 The PAU should ensure that students involved in laboratory demonstrating have hands-on experience of the complete practical procedure (including common problems and equipment used) and have been fully briefed on the safety procedures for that experiment and those in force for the laboratory concerned; a note of such guidance given should be retained by the PAU. More generally, the PAU or Professional Service is responsible for ensuring students are aware of University Health and Safety and emergency procedures.
- 5.4 Students involved in marking should be given information and guidance on marking schemes, assessment criteria and worked examples where appropriate. A record of such guidance should be retained by the PAU or Professional Service.
- 5.5 Each PAU or Professional Service should keep a record of student names that are providing teaching and/or support on their programmes, along with the training undertaken. An overview of this information (collected via the University template) should be provided to the College Quality Assurance and Approval Committee (CQAAC), and, as appropriate, the University's Quality, Enhancement, and Standards Committee (QESC) (see section 7 for further information).

It is the responsibility of the PAU or Professional Service to maintain a record of all PGTA duties and the training they have undertaken.

## **6. Responsibilities of the PAU or Professional Service in relation to Supervision and Monitoring**

- 6.1 In each PAU using students to provide teaching and/or support there should be an identified member of Academic staff, 'the co-ordinator', responsible for overall co-ordination, monitoring and quality assurance (which may be carried out by different staff). This should include making provision for the observation of teaching sessions and holding review meetings for all students involved in teaching and/or support to discuss issues and techniques. Particular attention should be given to new appointments and a probation period considered.
- 6.2 For Professional Services using students to provide teaching and/or support, there should be an identified member of staff, 'the co-ordinator', responsible for overall co-ordination, monitoring and quality assurance (which may be carried out by different staff).
- 6.3 Each student providing teaching and/or support should have a 'mentor', an experienced member of staff who could provide advice and support as necessary. Where possible this should be someone in addition to the member of staff identified as the co-ordinator, but may be the research mentor. In addition the PAU or Professional Service should provide a support network for identifying and sharing good practice.



6.4 In all cases the module lead shall be responsible for the work of the PGTAs and for the module overall, both for the delivery of teaching and for assessment. For Professional Services this should be the Head of the Professional Service unit.

6.5 In addition to being accountable for the work of PGTAs and for the module overall, Module and Programme Leads should ensure that students contributing to teaching or academic support are appropriately supported in their practice, including access to guidance, relevant teaching resources, and details of any reasonable adjustments required by students as appropriate to their teaching duties. For Professional Services, this responsibility rests with the Head of the Professional Service unit.

## **7. Responsibilities of the College, Professional Service Unit and the University**

7.1 The College, through the College Quality Assurance and Approval Committee (or equivalent), will monitor the appointment, training, and supervision / monitoring of PGTAs and undergraduates involved in academic support. The College or, if more appropriate, the PAU will also monitor the academic progression of students who undertake these duties in order to ensure timely completion of research objectives.

7.2 The College through the College Quality Assurance and Approval Committee (CQAAC) (or equivalent), will report any concerns in relation to generic training, supervision or other concerns to the University's Quality, Enhancement, and Standards Committee (QESC).

7.3 Where the student is employed by a Professional Service Unit, that unit will monitor the appointment, training, and supervision / monitoring of PGTAs and undergraduates involved in academic support. The Professional Service will report any concerns in relation to generic training, supervision or other concerns to the University's Quality, Enhancement, and Standards Committee (QESC).

7.4 The University, through the Educational Development Team, should provide ongoing opportunities for the development and recognition of PGTAs involved in teaching and supporting learning.