

GUIDANCE ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENTS IN ACADEMIC-RELATED ROLES

Introduction

1. This document provides guidance on employing postgraduate research degree (PGR) students in part-time academic-related roles (for example learning and teaching, research or enterprise-related activity). It does not apply to members of University of Suffolk academic staff who are undertaking a research degree programme alongside their substantive academic role.

2. Reflecting the University's commitment to excellence in learning, teaching and research, this guidance is intended to ensure that PGR students employed by the University in academic-related roles:

- are treated fairly and appropriately whilst working at the University
- have sufficient time to complete their PGR programme
- have clear expectations about their employment role and responsibilities
- receive adequate guidance and support in relation to their employment role
- have access to training and development opportunities to support their ongoing personal and professional development.

Employment expectations and working patterns

3. PGR students employed by the University should have a job description which clearly outlines their employment role and responsibilities.

4. Learning and teaching, research and enterprise-related activities represent a valuable career development opportunity, but must not detract from the student's main goal of completing their programme of research within the prescribed period of registration, as outlined by the relevant awarding body.

5. It is recommended that PGR students are not employed in academic-related roles during their first year of study, to allow them time to settle into their research work. It is also not normally permitted to be employed during any extension to the completion period.

6. Suitable learning and teaching activities for PGR students include:

- delivering lectures
- leading seminars
- leading practical workshops
- supporting learners in assessment tutorials at group and individual level

- co-supervision of undergraduate research projects
- marking or moderation of assessed work.

7. Where appropriate, PGR students should be encouraged to develop their own learning materials, and to evaluate their pedagogic practices using formal and informal feedback mechanisms, in line with the requirements of Descriptor 1 (Associate Fellow) of AdvanceHE (see <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/fellowship/associate-fellowship> for more information).

8. Any delivery of teaching at Master's level should not normally be undertaken by PGR students. Where this does exceptionally take place, it should be associated with the student's research interest and be subject to approval by the Associate Dean of the relevant academic school in which the teaching will be conducted.

9. PGR students should not have sole responsibility for marking any summative assessment. Marking by PGR students must be subject to full moderation, in accordance with the University's Assessment Moderation Policy.

10. The number of hours to be worked should be approved by the student's supervisory team, based on an assessment of the student's progress. Working hours should normally adhere to a maximum of 12 hours per week for full-time students, and may be further limited by restrictions imposed by funding bodies, research councils, sponsors and/or the UKVI. The limit is intended to ensure that students have sufficient time to complete their research degree programme and meet associated progression milestones.

11. There are additional restrictions on international students sponsored under a student route visa. The University has a responsibility to ensure, as far as possible, that students are not employed under terms that breach their visa conditions. Schools and directorates are advised to seek advice from the University's UKVI Compliance Manager if they wish to employ a sponsored student.

12. A PGR student on a break in study (intercalation status) may be employed, subject to any visa restrictions, but the school or directorate should ensure that this is in the student's best interests and that it does not conflict with the reason for which they were granted a break in study.

13. Contracted teaching hours should allow time for preparation, delivery and marking. All hours count towards the weekly maximum outlined in paragraph 10, and schools should check

that PGR students are not going over the weekly limit by undertaking paid work outside the school.

14. PGR students should be paid for the hours worked, including any time spent undertaking mandatory training associated with their role. The amount of time required for tasks such as preparation, lecturing, tutorial support, marking and moderation should be in line with the University's Workload Allocation Model.

Support and development

15. All PGR students employed by the University should have an identified point of contact, which is normally their line manager. The line manager (or equivalent) should provide an induction to their role and to the relevant academic school or directorate, setting out what is expected of them and giving them an opportunity to ask questions.

16. The line manager should offer ongoing guidance and support to enable the student to carry out their employment duties, including:

- providing guidance on the teaching materials to be used and the preparation expected
- providing guidance on marking schemes and assessment criteria
- overseeing the completion of mandatory training requirements
- supporting the student to reflect on development needs, and promotion of development opportunities relating to teaching, learning and assessment responsibilities
- consultation with the student and their supervisory team to ensure that there is no negative impact on their research and academic progression
- signposting to appropriate staff support services as required
- acting as a first point of contact for any concerns that the student may have about any aspect of their employment role, escalating to the school or directorate management team where appropriate.

17. The line manager should undertake regular assessments of performance (for example through teaching observations and, where relevant, moderation of marking) and provide developmental feedback. PGR students employed in learning and teaching related roles should be encouraged to take part in the University's Peer Review and Enhancement of Learning and Teaching scheme, providing an opportunity to reflect on their practices and the underpinning knowledge, skills and professional values.

18. PGR students employed in learning and teaching related roles should be invited to engage with Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) CPD training and be

supported to achieve AdvanceHE Associate Fellowship status where appropriate, for example through the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice or via the PASSPoRT scheme. This type of activity does not normally count as mandatory training for the purposes of determining paid hours as outlined in paragraph 14.

19. It is good practice to involve PGR students employed in academic-related roles in school or directorate information and communication networks, meetings, away days, development events, mentoring schemes and other staff-focused opportunities and events. They should have opportunities to meet their peers and share knowledge, ideas and reflections on their own employment experiences. In essence, they should be viewed as an integral and valued part of the staff community and treated the same as any other member of staff.