

POLICY ON POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS EMPLOYED TO DELIVER TEACHING AND OTHER PAID WORK FOR THE UNIVERSITY

1. General principles

The University recognises that student involvement in teaching, research projects and other paid work at the University provides a career development opportunity for students and makes valuable use of their specialist knowledge and research training. However, we also need to be mindful of workloads and the impact on a student's wellbeing and on their academic progress and ability to complete their degree within the normal permissible timescales. The Research Degree Regulations state that full-time students are expected to spend on average at least 37 hours/week on their research degree. Students and supervisors should therefore discuss what paid work would be realistic, considering the student's wellbeing and the expectations of their research degree.

Full-time postgraduate research students may undertake paid work for the university when this is compatible with their degree studies and provided that all work is approved by all members of their supervisory team. The total time spent (including preparation and marking, where relevant) should not interfere with the progress of their degree. The amount of time is at the supervisory team's discretion, but, to limit the impact on a student's progress, it is strongly recommended that this is no more than six hours in any week. If the student wishes to undertake more than six hours per week, they must agree a research/writing plan with their supervisory team to ensure their degree remains on progress.

As part of the annual monitoring process, the Postgraduate Research Tutor or Head of Research Degrees will raise any progress concerns with the student and Director of Studies for further discussion.

The recommendation of a maximum of six hours per week does not apply to part-time students, but part-time students will need to ensure that any paid work does not impact on their ability to meet the normal timescales for completion of their thesis.

Restrictions on the amount of work undertaken for the University may be imposed on individual students if the Director of Studies or Head of Research Degrees has concerns regarding the student's progress.

All students who are engaged in an employment capacity should be paid at the appropriate rate. The School or Research Centre must follow all relevant HR policies and guidelines, including confirming eligibility to work prior to any paid work being carried out.

Students who receive a scholarship or other form of sponsorship must comply with any restrictions on paid employment imposed by their sponsoring or other relevant body. Students who receive a University PhD scholarship should consult the Sheffield Hallam Conditions of Award for University PhD scholarships for information on how paid work may impact on scholarship eligibility.

International students who are studying on a student visa must also ensure they comply with the limits on paid work imposed by their visa conditions.

This policy does not apply to students who are primarily employed as research or academic staff at the University and registered as staff full-time doctoral candidates.

Whilst the University aims to provide postgraduate researchers with opportunities to gain experience in teaching or research work, the availability and scope of opportunities varies between subject areas and the University cannot guarantee that such opportunities will be available.

2. Approval and monitoring of working arrangements

General principles:

- Any paid work should still allow students to meet the expectations for full-time study set out in the Research Degree Regulations (i.e. 37 hours per week on average)
- Work should not impact negatively on a student's progress and they will be expected to meet the standard milestones and completion timescales of their degree
- Work should not impact negatively on a student's wellbeing

Supervisors should assess the potential impact on the student's progress and wellbeing, considering the stage in their studies, upcoming milestones and deadlines, progress to date and plan for completion.

Supervisors should monitor the amount of paid work a student is carrying out for the University to ensure the student remains on target to meet the expected milestones and timeliness of thesis submission.

Supervisors should decline a student's request to undertake paid work for the University where they feel the student's academic progress or wellbeing will be affected.

3. Students employed to deliver teaching activities

This section of the policy outlines the key principles for the selection, training, support and payment of postgraduate research students employed in a teaching capacity at the University.

As above, it is recommended that students undertake no more than 6 hours per week of teaching-related activity over the course of an academic year and this includes all preparation, delivery and marking time. Students' supervisors should approve teaching allocations so that they maintain oversight of their students' workloads.

3.1 Duties

The nature of the teaching activities should reflect the individual's skills and experience, and are generally expected to be at the level of Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA). Activities which utilise the research experience or skills of the student are particularly encouraged.

Schools should give careful consideration as to whether research students should be involved in marking and assessment. Adequate guidance, including clear criteria and marking schemes where appropriate, must be made available to the student and their marking must be comprehensively monitored and moderated.

Assessment design must remain the responsibility of the Module Leader. Research students may assist academic staff in the design of assessments but this should be carried out under close supervision and guidance from the member of staff involved.

Module design should remain the responsibility of academic staff. However, research students may be involved in programme and module review by being invited to report back on the structure, level and content of modules on which they teach.

3.2 Selection of students

Schools may define their own criteria and processes for allocating teaching to postgraduate research students, but must have a fair and transparent process in place that is open to all PGR students and overseen by the relevant teaching lead.

3.3 Training and mentoring

Schools must ensure that postgraduate researchers complete all necessary training, including any equality and diversity training mandatory for teaching staff, before they are allowed to teach. The student's development needs should be assessed and students should keep a record of all training undertaken.

The University offers online and face-to-face training to prepare doctoral researchers for teaching and lecturing in higher education. Students are generally expected to take the face-to-face course before they undertake any teaching, but if this is not possible (due to timing or capacity issues) they may take the online course as initial preparation.

Schools must ensure that appropriate induction, guidance and support is provided by members of the University's academic staff who are experienced in teaching. Students should be assigned a mentor who will act as their first point of contact and provide advice.

3.4 Pay, contracts and access to resources

Students will be paid at the appropriate University rate for the hours agreed in advance with the teaching lead, including all teaching delivery time and hours as agreed for preparation and assessment. This is normally on an Associate Lecturer contract and arranged by the relevant teaching lead.

3.5 Monitoring and review of performance

Schools are expected to monitor the teaching performance of postgraduate students as part of the University's academic quality procedures. Teaching leads (or Heads of Research Centre) should monitor performance against the agreed duties and provide appropriate, constructive feedback to students. If a student's performance gives cause for concern, the student should be supported to improve through additional training, guidance and mentoring.

Schools should ensure there are clear routes for students to raise queries and concerns, and that these routes are communicated to students.

3.6 Graduate Teaching Assistants and Demonstrators

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and Demonstrators are PhD students whose University scholarship provides structured opportunities for development and experience in learning, teaching and assessment, usually up to 180 hours per year for full-time students. The University's Framework for University Scholarships with Teaching or Research Support sets out the principles under which these schemes are managed. GTAs/Demonstrators do not receive payment for the teaching-related activities that are carried out as part of their scholarship award as this forms part of their training and development. However, students should be paid for any teaching activity that is undertaken outside of their GTA/Demonstrator award.

Students should not undertake teaching or teaching-related activities for more than 6 hours/week. For GTAs and Demonstrators, the teaching-related activities carried out as part of their scholarship will count towards this figure.

Some areas may support GTA-style scholarships where the student gains opportunities and professional development in other areas of academic practice, e.g. research activities outside of the PhD. The above principles would also apply to such scholarships.

Version	3		
Original version approved by and date	Policy on Postgraduate Research Students Engaged in Teaching - with effect from 2010/11 Research Degrees Committee 2010/11		
Owner	Doctoral School, Research and Innovation Services		
Date for review	September 2026		
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Amendments			
Version	Detail	Date	Approved by
2	Policy expanded to include students undertaking any paid work at the university	September 2019	RDC
3	Amendments to the maximum number of hours of paid work that a full-time student can undertake, the approval process for paid work, and clarification of requirements on the GTA scheme	June 2024	RDC