

Humanities Teaching Assistant Policy

This document aims to set out Humanities Teaching Assistant Policy aimed at improving the experience of Teaching Assistants and the experience of those students that they teach.

A Teaching Assistant¹ (TA) is a person employed on an hourly basis, or through a studentship contract, to provide teaching and learning support to academic staff. TAs will include PGR students at Manchester, those at other institutions, and others employed to teach on an hourly basis. Some of the principles within this policy apply specifically to TAs who are registered as PGR students at The University Manchester. This is to ensure that the Faculty of Humanities is able to ensure TAs are supported in the context of their PGR studies. The document aims to set out the responsibilities of the Schools and the Faculty of Humanities in ensuring that the quality of teaching and support provided by Teaching Assistants is of a high standard.

The policy is intended to complement the University guidance on Graduate Teaching

Faculty role is to:

- facilitate implementation where appropriate and where value is added
- provide resources of benefit to all schools and TAs – to include information and generic training (face-to-face and online)
- disseminate good practice
- facilitate the sharing of information across schools
- liaise with colleagues across the institution such as HR and STDU, to co-ordinate the provision of support and resources for schools and TAs

General Principles

- 1 TA roles will comply with the generic job descriptions agreed by the University. The Faculty's Guidance on the Role of a TA will be followed to ensure transparency, consistency and fairness for the TAs. It will also ensure that the students the TAs teach receive a consistent and high quality student experience.
- 2 Schools will recruit annually to create and maintain a pool of approved TAs that can be drawn upon for teaching.
- 3 Schools recruiting to studentships that include teaching obligations will ensure that the appointment involves an assessment of teaching aptitude.
- 4 Where TA work is being undertaken by a Humanities PGR student, Schools will adhere to a Humanities full time equivalent maximum of 180 hours of duties for a TA per academic year.
- 5 Allocation of teaching to TAs will be made in accordance with pre-determined and published criteria by each school. Each school will publish the allocation and selection process that will be used for TAs once they have been approved for inclusion in the pool. All TAs appointed to the pool must complete the required training.

¹ Teaching Assistant is the title used by the University in the role descriptors as agreed in a University review of Teaching Assistants in 2011. This title will be maintained in Humanities for consistency.

- 6 Schools must outline the specified work required for each course a TA is appointed to deliver when notifying TAs of their allocation to a unit.
- 7 Schools will ensure that all new TAs will complete the Humanities model of training as outlined in the TA Training Template.
- 8 Schools will consider Teaching Assistants to be part of the teaching team in relation to their teaching activities. Each School will have appropriate structures in place to support Teaching Assistants and those academic members of staff with responsibility for Teaching Assistants.
- 9 Each School will have in place an induction programme for TAs providing them with the information they will need to be able to undertake their duties. TAs will be required to complete the induction programme.
- 10 Course Unit Convenors have responsibility for the quality of teaching and student experience of their units, including that provided by TAs undertaking teaching/facilitation duties on their units.
- 11 TAs may assist Course Unit Convenors in marking (e.g. as first marker or part marker). If they do so, TAs will normally have attained the qualification above that for which they are marking.
- 12 TA teaching should be reviewed for the purpose of providing feedback to the TA and assuring the School of the quality of teaching.

Monitoring and review of the Humanities TA Policy

School and Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees will consider the impact of the policy as part of the continual monitoring process.

School and Faculty Postgraduate (Research) Committees will consider the impact of the policy on the experience of PGR students who act as TAs.

A Faculty TA Group will be established. The Group will meet once per year, preceded by a meeting with TA representatives. The Group will be co-chaired by the Associate Deans for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience and for Postgraduate Research (or nominees), and membership will consist of representation from each school, a PGR representative and representation from STDU. The remit of the Group will be to review the Humanities TA Policy and the impact it has on the experience of TAs and the students that they teach. Concerns related to the terms and conditions of employment should initially be raised with the TA's line manager (e.g. Course Unit Convenor or Head of Discipline as appropriate) and the School's HR Partner in the first instance.

A. Recruitment and Selection

1. **TA roles will comply with the generic job descriptions agreed by the University. The Faculty's Guidance on the Role of a TA will be followed to ensure transparency, consistency and fairness for the TAs. It will also ensure that the students the TAs teach receive a consistent and high quality student experience.**

The Guidance outlines:

- The University's generic person specifications for a TA. Additional criteria are provided for specific roles (e.g. PGT level teaching, co-delivery of a lecture)
- The different responsibilities a TA may be asked to undertake
- The minimum expectations of the TA when undertaking those responsibilities
- The expectations of the school in supporting the TA with such responsibilities (in accordance with this policy)
- In the context of this policy, TA work should exclude other work provided by the University which may be available to the PGR student but which does not relate to teaching and learning e.g. exam invigilation, help with open days etc.

2. **Schools will recruit annually to create and maintain a pool of approved TAs that can be drawn upon for teaching.**

The appointment of TAs to the **pool of approved TAs** and the initial allocation of teaching must be completed in accordance with the Humanities TA Recruitment Schedule to enable approved TAs to be trained (see Section B). It is recognised that some allocation may take place following this deadline.

The purpose of the pool is to ensure that a school has a supply of TAs that can be drawn upon to support teaching the following academic year. Appointment to the pool in advance of teaching will facilitate the provision of training to those TAs that will be undertaking TA duties the following academic year. Schools must allocate resource to manage the TA pool.

TA opportunities will not be restricted to PGR students at the University of Manchester. TAs should normally² have the qualification above that which they are teaching.

- 2.1 PGRs with a Humanities studentship that includes teaching obligations will be included in the pool and prioritised for teaching duties so that the requirements of their studentship can be met.
- 2.2 PGRs with a Humanities studentship should be notified which part of the studentship award is for teaching and should be offered a contract for those duties.

² Refer to 5 for exceptions applied to TAs supporting PGT teaching. Exceptions may also be made for TAs with industry or subject specific experience in lieu of academic qualifications.

- 2.3 Opportunities for appointment as a TA to a School pool may be available to applicants from outside of the school and the University. The Humanities TA Hub will direct potential applicants to information on school websites.
- 2.4 Applicants may apply to more than one school for a TA appointment. A standard application form will be used across the Faculty to facilitate multiple applications.
- 2.5 Schools will normally follow the Humanities TA Recruitment Schedule which includes common deadlines for submission of applications for TA pools³.
- 2.6 Once appointed to the pool, a TA need only indicate if they wish to remain in the pool for the following academic year. TAs will be given the opportunity annually to update the information about their experience and teaching preferences held by a School, to inform the allocation of duties. Provision of information by a School to Course Unit Convenors must be in accordance with data protection regulations.
- 2.7 Schools, in liaison with Human Resources, will ensure as much as possible that those TAs from the pool selected for teaching are provided with a Letter of Intent⁴ in advance of commencing their roles.
- 2.8 The Letter of Intent will be generated by the School. A contract will be issued by HR Services within 8 weeks⁵ of commencing duties. Schools notify HR Services of TA appointments at the start of the semester. The contract will contain information about general terms and conditions and will make reference to the letter of intent.
- 2.9 The assessment of hours required should take into account the fact that advising duties may continue after the teaching has finished. This should be reflected in the letter of intent.
- 2.10 TAs may be removed from the pool at the discretion of the school. The person with responsibility for managing the TA pool must be notified if a TA is to be removed and/or have access to relevant information. TAs must be notified of such action and provided with the reasons why. Reasons may include, but not limited to:
- Where a PhD progress review panel had recommended that the PGR should not teach in the next year.
 - If the student plans to be away on fieldwork for the whole of the next academic year.
 - Not undertaken the required training.
 - Previous failure to perform the role to a satisfactory standard and where it had been recommended that the TA should not be permitted to teach because providing support either has not resolved the issue or could not do so.
 - Disciplinary reasons.

³ Ad hoc appointments may be required throughout the year if there is no TA available in the pool to meet teaching needs.

⁴ Refer to 6.1 for what should be included in a letter of intent.

⁵ Subject to full documentation being received by HR Services. A request for such documentation will be triggered by the School's notification that the TA has been appointed.

- Visa issues that would prevent engagement as a TA.
- Withdrawal from the PhD Programme.

It may be appropriate to discuss potential removal from the pool with the TA in the first instance. TAs may also remove themselves from the pool at any time but will normally be required to fulfil existing teaching contracts.

It is possible that a TA is accepted to a pool but is not allocated any TA duties. In such cases, a contract would not be issued but that TA remains in the pool and available should an opportunity arise.

3. Schools recruiting to studentships that include teaching obligations will ensure that the appointment involves an assessment of teaching aptitude.

3.1 Assessment may take the form of an interview presentation, evidenced in applications, a teaching portfolio, demonstrated through training or a combination of these.

3.2 Schools may withdraw teaching obligations if the applicant is not considered suitable for teaching and substitute these with other duties.

4. Where TA work is being undertaken by a Humanities full time PGR student, Schools will adhere to a Humanities maximum of 180⁶ hours of duties for a TA per academic year.

4.1 The hours can be allocated across both semesters or concentrated in one semester.

4.2 There will be cases where the TA is able to take on more than the Humanities maximum. Schools must have appropriate and transparent processes in place for considering the case for TAs to work beyond the Humanities maximum. Such cases may include, but not be limited to, emergency or one off cover for exceptional circumstances.

4.3 The 180 hours allocation will include preparation, attendance at lectures, teaching, marking, feedback and office hours as required by the discipline. Training is not normally included⁷.

5 Allocation of teaching to TAs will be prioritised in accordance with pre-determined and published criteria by each school. Each school will publish the allocation and selection process that will be used for TAs once they have been approved for inclusion in the pool. All TAs allocated to the pool must complete the required training (see Section B).

Schools should decide how to do this but need to meet a minimum expectation that candidates' academic competence, communication and other relevant skills have been assessed in an appropriate way.

⁶ 180 hours is standard practice within Higher Education. The limit is intended to ensure that PGR students have sufficient time to complete their PhD studies. The ESRC recommendation is 1800 hours per year to be spent on the PhD. The AHRC makes no such recommendation.

⁷ Technical training for the delivery of specific course units (e.g. the use of specialist software) may be remunerated.

5.1 Selection/allocation will be managed by the school. It could include one or more of the following approaches:

- PGR students with studentship including teaching obligations
- Priority for those students from within the discipline.
- Having provided TA support for a unit previously and therefore demonstrated their suitability to the Course Unit Convenor.
- Identification by the TA of preferred units to work on.
- Mapping of knowledge and skills to units that require TA support.

5.2 Schools must be prepared to provide feedback to approved TAs who have not secured TA work.

5.3 TAs must have satisfied additional criteria for supporting PGT teaching if they are to be selected for such units, as specified in the Humanities Guidance on the Role of a TA. However, TAs may still assist academic staff in postgraduate laboratory work or fieldtrips.

6 Schools must outline the specified work for each course a TA is appointed to deliver when notifying TAs of their allocation to a unit.

6.1 This should be set out in a Letter of Intent. For TAs that are Humanities PGR students, a copy must be sent to their supervisor.

- Reference should be made to the Humanities Guidance on the Role of a TA which sets out the minimum expectations associated with the different duties a TA may be asked to undertake.
- An indication of the expected number of hours (and allocation of hours to the different duties) should be included in the Letter.
- Work required for each course is to be clearly stated and applied for each TA contributing, according to number of seminar groups taken, number of meetings, number of students, expectation of feedback provided as part of teaching duties etc.
- Information should be provided to ensure that TAs understand what work is required (and that they will be paid for), what expectations there are about preparation, attendance at lectures, office hours, marking and feedback, as well as leading seminars. Training requirements should be set out.
- Schools have discretion to specify the work required by TAs in line with the level, nature and requirements of the course. Schools will need to ensure reasonable consistency across courses and be able to explain different requirements.
- Administrative arrangements within Schools may require other offices to receive a copy of the Letter of Intent.

- 6.2 Significant changes to a TA's teaching responsibilities (e.g. additional course unit teaching or long term sickness cover) should result in the issue of a revised/new Letter of Intent.
- 6.3 For TAs that are Humanities PGR students, supervisors are responsible for ensuring that teaching duties will not impact negatively on their studies. Supervisors are required to indicate in the student's annual review, whether they should be permitted to undertake TA duties in the following year.
- 6.4 For TAs that are Humanities PGR students and are assigned teaching duties from more than one school resulting in more than the Humanities maximum number of TA hours, the supervisor has a responsibility to address this with the student.
- 6.5 HR will make reference to the Letter of Intent in the formal appointment letter to the TA contract.

B. Training

7 Schools will ensure that all new TAs complete the Humanities model of training as outlined in the TA Training Template.

The Humanities model will be developed to meet the requirements for HEA accreditation and therefore enable TAs to apply for HEA recognition. The model is intended as a template for Schools to use to develop, plan, and deliver training. Robust training models allow us to ensure that GTAs are well prepared and supported, and that undergraduates continue to get the best experience possible.

- 7.1 The model includes University level training which will be provided by STDU (possibly as an online module).
- 7.2 Initial training of TAs will be delivered by each School. All new TAs will be expected to attend this training before they can teach.
- 7.3 Returning GTAs will also have some training provision at the beginning of every year/semester.
- 7.4 TAs may have 'equivalent' training or experience enabling them to miss sections of training. TA Co-ordinators will advise on core elements (such as those sections relating to assessment, or rules and regulations for instance).
- 7.5 TAs appointed to the pool for more than one School may be required to attend the initial training for each School. This should be negotiated on an individual basis with the TA Co-ordinator in the relevant Schools.
- 7.6 The Humanities TA Hub and Training Toolkit will provide TAs with ongoing sources of training and support. This will involve a mix of face-to-face and online delivered courses and seminars, including events intended for the dissemination of teaching and

learning practice. Sessions will be organised and delivered by individual Schools as well as the Humanities Faculty Team. Information about opportunities will be promoted via the Humanities TA Hub.

- 7.7 Initial and ongoing training ensures that TAs are part of a structure of continuing professional development (CPD) and hence considered colleagues and part of the teaching team. The latter should be emphasised in communication with TAs and is one of the reasons that this training will not be remunerated.

C. Integration of Teaching and Learning

8 Schools will consider Teaching Assistants to be part of the teaching team in relation to their teaching activities. Each School will have appropriate structures in place to support Teaching Assistants and those academic members of staff with responsibility for Teaching Assistants.

- 8.1 Schools must ensure that students understand TAs are part of the teaching team and that students are made aware of the rigorous selection and training processes followed when appointing TAs.
- 8.2 TAs must have a staff email address which can be used in relation to their teaching activities. This will ensure that TAs are included on communications to all staff about teaching and learning matters.
- 8.3 An academic member of staff must act as TA Academic Co-ordinator with overall responsibility for the development and support of TAs, including training within the School.
- 8.4 There will be a named PSS contact(s) within the School to support the implementation of the Humanities TA Policy.
- 8.5 There must be clear channels for feedback between TAs and Course Unit Convenors, TA coordinators and relevant Teaching and Learning officers.
- Schools should establish a forum for TAs to share good practice, discuss issues and provide peer support.
- 8.6 The Faculty of Humanities will provide a forum through which TA representatives can provide feedback to the Faculty Senior Management Team and through which the Faculty can monitor implementation of the Policy.
- 8.7 Schools will ensure that structures are established through which TAs can be represented at Divisional/Subject Boards and School level committees, as appropriate. It is good practice for Schools to invite TA representative(s) to committees with responsibility for teaching and learning.
- 8.8 TAs must be provided with information on School, Faculty and University structures, policies and practices in advance of them preparing for teaching.

8.9 Schools must facilitate the provision of a staff card to the TA where it is required for them to be able to undertake their role (e.g. to access equipment).

- TAs will not be able to have an active student card and active staff card at the same time. Staff cards will not be immediately available. TAs will have to wait until HR Services have processed the formal contract. Staff cards will become inactive at the end of the contract.

8.10 Schools must ensure that, if the TA is a PGR student, the TA's supervisor is made aware of the TA's performance in that role at the conclusion of the unit.

Schools may also wish to consider implementing the following good practices:

- A mentor scheme for TAs, using more experienced TAs or academic staff to provide advice and guidance. This could include peer to peer observation.

9 Each School will have in place an induction programme for TAs providing them with the information they will need to be able to undertake their duties. TAs will be required to complete the induction programme.

9.1 The induction programme can be at either School or discipline-level, as deemed appropriate by the School:

- Induction may be integrated into the required initial training provided by the School (refer to Section B).
- TAs can be integrated into academic staff inductions.

9.2 The induction should include:

- Named School PSS and Academic contacts for support and development (refer to 8.3 and 8.4 above).
- Access to resources and information outlining policies and procedures that they may need to refer to and be aware of in their role. This should include:
 - Information on the TA support and representation structures within the School
 - Information on relevant systems the TA will need to interact with such as Blackboard and Campus Solutions.
 - Early access to Blackboard for the course(s) the TAs will be teaching.
- Information on the Faculty resources available through the TA Hub. Schools must provide School specific material via their own intranets.
- Information on any School-specific or unit-specific training available to TAs, including training for marking.

10 Course Unit Convenors have responsibility for the quality of teaching and student experience of their units, including that provided by TAs undertaking teaching/facilitation duties on their units.

Course Unit Convenors have a responsibility for ensuring that the teaching provided on their unit is of the highest quality. Where TAs are used to support the Course Unit Convenor, that Convenor has a responsibility for oversight of the academic standards for the overall course. Where there is a large number of TAs supporting a course unit, it may be appropriate to appoint a Senior TA to support the Course Unit Convenor. As such the Course Unit Convenor has responsibility to:

- 10.1 Brief the TA(s) on matters specific to the unit at an early stage, prior to the start of teaching.
- 10.2 Provide appropriate guidance to the TAs and ensure that the resources and materials necessary for the successful discharge of the TA's teaching responsibility are delivered in a timely fashion to the TAs.
- 10.3 Introduce the 'teaching team' to the students.
- 10.4 Oversee the TA's teaching activity and meet periodically with the Teaching Team for that unit to reflect on performance, student feedback and other issues relating to the responsibilities of the TAs.
 - This must include reflecting on the outcomes of peer review (refer to section 12).
- 10.5 Where appropriate, direct the TAs to opportunities for further development and support.
- 10.6 Ensure that there is a written record of the TA's performance in that role so that it can feed into future references.
- 10.7 The specific responsibilities for TAs will be at the discretion of the School and the academic member of staff responsible for the unit the TA will be delivering. However, those responsibilities must be within the defined guidelines provided in the Humanities Guidance on the Role of a TA, and recorded in the Letter of Intent (section 6).

11 TAs may assist Course Unit Convenors in marking (e.g. as first marker or part marker). If they do so, TAs will normally have attained the qualification above that for which they are marking.

- 11.1 TAs may mark undergraduate formative and summative assessment. However, TAs must not have sole responsibility for marking assessment that contributes to the final degree classification. If TAs mark such assessment, it must be moderated or second marked by the Course Unit Convenor.
- 11.2 Where there is more than one TA assisting with marking responsibilities, moderation by the academic lead should include an equal sample from all TAs involved. All borderline marks awarded by a TA should be checked by the academic lead.
- 11.3 Where TAs do mark work associated with the unit(s) they are contracted to teach, the hours for such activity will be included in the Letter of Intent. TAs may be assigned

additional marking activity, within their 180 hours maximum load, and will be informed of and paid for, the estimated number of hours that marking should take.

- 11.4 Where marking responsibilities are allocated to TAs, consideration must be given to the number of students on the unit, the length of the assessment and the type of assessment so that the requirements of the University Feedback Policy can be met.
- 11.5 TAs should provide feedback on the work they mark and be available to the students to discuss the feedback provided. The School must provide appropriate training and guidance for that activity.
- 11.6 Course Unit Convenors must ensure the quality of the feedback provided to students on their work is reviewed to ensure that the comments will be useful to the student. Schools should outline their own procedures for this activity as part of the School's marking policy.
- 11.7 TAs may provide facilitation/support for PGT classes as long as the academic member of staff is also present.
 - TAs may only have sole responsibility for teaching in PGT seminars if they can demonstrate additional criteria for appointment that is relevant to the subject that is being taught (refer to Section 5.4) via the appointment process.
 - TAs will not normally mark PGT summative assessment.

12 TA teaching should be reviewed for the purpose of providing feedback to the TA and assuring the School of the quality of teaching.

- 12.1 TAs should be named within the Unit Survey to ensure that the students have the opportunity to feedback on the teaching of the TA.
- 12.2 TAs should undergo regular peer review of teaching. Peer review may be co-ordinated by the School, discipline or by the Course Unit Convenor, as appropriately agreed by the School. Processes must be consistent across the School.
 - TAs must be reviewed in their first year of teaching. However, it is recommended that they are reviewed annually.
 - TAs may ask for a specific review during their final year of teaching for the purpose of informing a reference (see also section 10.4).
 - Peer review must include feedback to the TA on their teaching performance in a format that can be used by the TA to evidence the quality of their teaching (refer to section 10.6).
 - If peer observation is undertaken by another TA, that responsibility must be accounted for in the work allocation.
 - If peer observation is normally undertaken by another TA, there should be the opportunity for a TA to be reviewed by the Course Unit Convenor at least once in a three year period.

- 12.3 If not involved in the review of teaching, supervisors should be made aware of the outcomes of review so that they are in a position to support the development of their students' teaching competencies and to be able to provide a rounded reference for their students.

Document Control

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