

University of Galway Graduate Teaching Assistant Policy



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

Polasaí agus Nósanna Imeachta Policies and Procedures

Code	QA135
Title	Engagement of Graduate Teaching Assistants
Date	Approved July 2022, revised version approved July 2023
Approved By	University Management Team
Policy Owner	Director of Human Resources

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1. Policy Statement

The University recognises that academic schools require a range of working arrangements to employ an appropriate range of staff to ensure the highest standards of teaching and learning on a range of academic programmes, and to provide for innovation, and relevance in teaching. To ensure that the University meets these rigorous standards, the design, development, delivery, assessment and overall responsibility for modules and their quality lies with the College, Head of School or appropriate Academic Nominee to whom they are allocated. In some cases, the core teaching delivered by academics may be supplemented by Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) under the supervision of the relevant academic staff member and where such work is available. This policy outlines the guidelines and procedures to be followed when engaging GTA. A GTA cannot be engaged in place of an existing or planned lecturing or professorial position.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the policy and procedure for hiring Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) in accordance with the University's policies, employment legislation and best practice. It is also to provide a comprehensive, transparent, and fair approach to the engagement and employment of GTA.

3. Scope

This policy applies to Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) engaged on or after the 1st of August 2023.

4. Definitions

Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) is a registered postgraduate of an Irish University who can also be engaged as part of their postgraduate studies to provide teaching support, as a Tutor or Demonstrator, under the direction and guidance of a supervising member of staff. The supervising staff member will be a member of academic staff.

Module Owner: the member of academic staff with overall responsibility for delivery and assessment of a module in a given year. This can be the Head of School or an Academic Nominee.

Full time Equivalent (FTE) is determined by the number of hours worked by employees. For example, a person working a full week of 39 hours per week equates to 1 FTE while a person working 19.5 hours per week equates to an FTE of 0.5 as that person only works half time.

5. Graduate Teaching Assistant Description

Contribution to academic support, such as teaching support, by registered postgraduates develops their teaching and dissemination skills which enhances their career readiness and employability. A GTA is a training role offered to postgraduates to gain experience of teaching, through support of teaching, during their postgraduate studies. This is an important part of postgraduate training and therefore the University makes such work available to postgraduates as a priority where such work is available.

A GTA can be engaged for the duration of their graduate studies, subject to a maximum of four years for full-time PhD candidates or six years for part-time PhD candidates, or for one or two years for Master's candidates, and can be renewed on an annual basis for this period. Employment as a GTA will terminate when they cease to be a registered postgraduate.

Similarly, if a leave of absence is taken during their studies, they must also cease all GTA work related to same. A GTA is engaged on an hourly paid, part-time basis during the year while undertaking their postgraduate programme. A GTA who is a full-time registered postgraduate can undertake an average maximum of 20 hours per week, up to a maximum of 250 hours per year, and no additional work should be undertaken in the University. Where an individual is engaged as a GTA, all the work that they do in the University must fall within the scope of their GTA contract. Any work undertaken as a registered postgraduate will form part of the training and should form part of their contract.

A GTA may be employed up to an average maximum of 20 hours per week. However, a GTA will normally work considerably less than 20 hours per week, and the University relies on units to ensure that their workload, and the opportunity it presents for professional development, does not significantly interfere with their ability to study or conduct research. In no circumstances may the total hours worked in any one 12-month period exceed 250 hours.

Registered part-time postgraduates may work up to 820 hours per year, under the same conditions as above for a full-time postgraduate.

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A GTA is involved in one or more of the following activities:

- Demonstrating practical skills in laboratory/field settings
- Teaching support, including seminars, tutorials and essay/assignment corrections
Note: while a GTA may contribute to grading only with a rubric provided by the Module Owner, the Module Owner is ultimately responsible for all grades returned to students.
- Preparation, delivery and assessment of lectures, up to a maximum of 6 lectures of 1 hour duration in each of the final 2 years of a GTA's PhD programme. A full-time PhD programme is of 4 years duration and a part-time PhD programme is of 6 years duration. Delivery of lectures must be aligned to development of GTA teaching and dissemination skills seeking to enhance GTA career readiness and employability. Not more than one GTA can deliver lectures on an individual module. Delivery of lectures is voluntary for PhD candidates.

A GTA is not responsible for the design of modules, module co-ordination and/or the design of associated assignments or examinations but may deliver teaching (demonstrating and tutoring) and undertake grading assessments within a framework of an agreed programme of contributions directed by the Module Owner. PhD candidates may also prepare for and deliver up to 6 one hour lectures in each of the final 2 years of a GTA's PhD programme. A Module Owner and Head of School must ensure that a GTA is properly prepared and supervised when undertaking teaching support duties.

6. Procedure for engaging a Graduate Teaching Assistant

6.1 Process for engaging GTA

1. Full college approval (including financial approval) must be sought prior to engaging a GTA for any duration/reason.
2. The engagement of GTA takes place at School and module level. It is the responsibility of the Head of School (or Academic Nominee) to ensure that the selection process is fair and transparent, and standards of best practice are adhered to when selecting postgraduates to work in this capacity. It is essential that any postgraduate engaged on this basis has the necessary level of skills and experience to carry out the required work.
3. It is important to note that the GTA role is a training role and therefore supervision/mentoring of the Graduate Teaching Assistant is required.
4. The GTA role needs to be aligned with the postgraduate's disciplinary/subject area. Other work, outside of their field of studies is not normally permitted.
5. Where a GTA position is offered as part of an appointment on a funded research project, the recruitment process must adhere to the relevant provisions of the funding agreement.
6. A postgraduate may only accept an offer to work as a GTA with the approval of their supervisor. Where a dispute emerges between postgraduate and supervisor in relation to the level of paid

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work which the postgraduate wishes to undertake, the Head of School will determine what level of work, if any, may be assigned to the postgraduate.

7. A GTA can be appointed on an annual basis and may be renewable annually for a period of up to 4 years for full-time PhDs, up to 6 years for part-time PhDs, up to 2 years for Master's candidates, or for the duration of their postgraduate studies, whichever ends first.
8. A GTA is provided with a part-time contract of employment which terminates automatically when they cease to be a registered postgraduate.
9. The number of hours of work per week should start at a basic requirement and may be renegotiated, if necessary, with the agreement of the postgraduate, at the beginning of any given semester. A contract adjustment form should be submitted by the Head of School or nominee prior to the end of the original contract to adjust the hours as required, up to a maximum of 250 hours (or 820 hours in the case of registered part-time postgraduate).
10. Where the GTA provides teaching support and associated duties, the average weekly hours worked, (teaching support and associated duties) may not normally exceed the lesser of 20 hours per week (up to a maximum of 250 hours per annum for full time postgraduates or 820 hours per annum for part-time postgraduates).
11. The GTA is paid an hourly rate of pay on the GTA salary scale, depending on the type of work carried out.
GTA Tutors - €29.49 per hour
GTA Demonstrators - €20.27 per hour
Rates are taken from a mid-way point between the lower and higher TSS rates and will be adjusted in line with adjustments to the TSS rates, to account for public pay awards etc. It is a matter for the Head of School (or Academic Nominee) to agree on the number of hours available for the GTA to be worked for any given semester in line with the guidelines in item 9 above.
12. The Head of School (or Academic Nominee) must, in all cases, ensure that any restrictions to the number of hours a worker is permitted to work, including Working Time Directive, Visa Compliance (e.g. Visa holders) or Graduate Teaching Assistant Policy, are adhered to without exception.
13. Where a postgraduate is in receipt of funding that specifically precludes them from engaging in teaching-related work, they are not eligible for employment as a GTA. Where funding conditions permit contribution to teaching support, but limit the number of hours contributed, the recipient is not permitted to contribute beyond this limit. The Head of School (or nominee) should check with funders prior to engaging such individuals.

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14. A PhD candidate may volunteer in an unpaid capacity for teaching support duties if their funding precludes them from employment as a GTA, **only** with prior agreement from the Head of School (or Academic Nominee) and where access to GTA activities is identified in the individual PhD candidate personal development plan. Such volunteering is up to a maximum of 12 hours of GTA activities per semester.
15. It is not appropriate to engage a postgraduate under the GTA policy if the work to be carried out is:
 - Not specifically related to the provision of teaching support, demonstrating and/or tutorial assistance;
 - Is of a once-off, limited and finite nature; *or* is infrequent, unexpected and/or not recurring (with the exception of covering the sick leave or other short term gaps of another GTA);
 - Administrative work unless appropriate to support the research of the postgraduate;
 - Is factored into the workload model of someone else (ie. that an admin or lecturer has already been counted for this admin/teaching/essay correction work);
 - Is not appropriate due to its nature or volume for assignment to a GTA.

In such instances, and depending on the circumstances of the proposed engagement, the hiring of an appropriately qualified individual other than a registered postgraduate as Teaching Support Staff *may* be more appropriate.

6.2 Payment/Contracts for GTA

1. All GTA must be eligible to work in Ireland. Proof of such eligibility will be required prior to the commencement of their engagement. All offers of engagement are conditional on the individual satisfying the necessary legal requirements to live in the Republic of Ireland. Non-EEA registered postgraduates require a valid Irish Residence Permit card before a contract can be processed. These postgraduates are restricted by law to working a maximum of 20 hours per week.
2. A GTA is engaged on a basic set hours appointment, where the weekly hours of work are not fixed and may vary from week to week, depending on unit requirements. The unit should submit a base contract to cover the GTA basic hours and adjust the hours upwards where necessary. All work conducted within their unit should be included in their contract.
3. A GTA is paid per hour worked on the GTA salary scale.
4. There are also circumstances where a GTA is paid per item of work done, usually in relation to the grading of assessments. Where there is an agreed per item rate for assessment and grading, this should be used (see exam corrections process and timesheet) to compute the number of hours for

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payment, to be paid at the GTA demonstrator rate. Where there is not a per-item rate, the Head of School (or nominee) should agree in advance the number of hours to complete the work to be paid at the GTA demonstrator rate. See FAQs.

5. On the basis of information provided by the Head of School (or nominee) to Human Resources, Human Resources will issue the GTA with a specified purpose part-time contract of employment. The contract will detail the terms and conditions of their employment.
6. An annual leave entitlement of 8% of the total hours worked is provided to GTA. Holiday entitlement is calculated on the basis of 8% of hours worked and is paid automatically by HR/Payroll when the hours are paid each month in lieu of taking the annual leave. It is understood annual leave can be taken during the University's study weeks, Easter and/or Christmas closure periods and/or the summer months, depending on the nature and circumstances of the engagement.
7. GTA will be paid public holidays if they have established an entitlement to payment for same through their work pattern. At a minimum, 40 hours is required to be worked in the 5 weeks ending on the day before the public holiday.

If the GTA is rostered to work on a public holiday and has worked at least 40 hours in the 5 weeks before the public holiday, they are entitled to that day off as paid leave.

If the GTA is not rostered to work on a public holiday and has worked at least 40 hours in the 5 weeks before the public holiday they are entitled to one fifth of their weekly pay as compensation for the public holiday. This is calculated as follows: Pay for a public holiday is equivalent to the average daily earnings for normal working hours, calculated by reference to the earnings over the 13 week period ending on the day before the public holiday, divided by one fifth. The public holiday entitlement for the GTA should be entered on the Leaver's Timesheet by the School on the expiry of the GTA contract.

Contract Adjustment:

Where the GTA is required to undertake more hours than originally required, exceptionally, a contract adjustment form should be submitted for review and approval (including financial approval) to the College Office, bearing in mind the maximum number of hours is 250 per annum for full-time registered candidates/820 hours per annum for part-time candidates, as appropriate and adhering to monthly deadlines, in the month before the work is to be undertaken for those on monthly salary. The GTA will have these changes to their contract confirmed by the HR office by email once approved and processed.

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Garda Vetting:

Garda vetting: In accordance with the 2012 to 2016 National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts, *Garda Vetting is conducted in respect of any person who is carrying out work or activity, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children or vulnerable persons.* The Act provides a legislative basis for the **mandatory** vetting for such persons and it is now a criminal offence for organisations to fail to carry out the necessary vetting of such employees, contractors and volunteers. Appointees to roles that require such access are not permitted to commence employment until the vetting process is complete. Breach of this Act is an offence and attracts both imprisonment and a fine. Further details regarding vetting and the vetting process can be found [here](#).

Notice Period:

A GTA is required to give at least one month's notice in writing.

Sick Leave:

All GTA are entitled to sick leave – Please refer to QA105 Sick Leave policy

Organisation of Working Time Act:

The Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 limits the maximum average working week to 48 hours. The maximum cumulative time per week that a Tutor/Demonstrator may work in any combination of employment is 48 hours. Weekly working time can be averaged over a 4-month reference period.

Residency:

All GTA must be resident in Ireland to discharge their duties.

Equality:

The University provides equality of opportunity and treatment to all regardless of a person's gender identity /expression (this includes Transgender and Non-Binary people); pregnant or maternity status; marital or civil partnership status; whether or not they have dependants (including caring responsibilities); religious belief or political opinion; race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, including Irish Travellers); disability; sexual orientation and age.

Workers with disabilities or long-term conditions will be encouraged to disclose this in the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form, and to the relevant school and discuss reasonable adjustments which may be required to support them in undertaking the activities.

7. Responsibilities

Name	Responsibility
Director of Human Resources	Policy Owner
Head of School/Unit	Engagement of the Graduate Teaching Assistant, Initial approval of application, submission of forms for processing. Further responsibilities laid out below.
Graduate Teaching Assistant	Submission of paperwork related to their engagement. Further responsibilities laid out below.
Human Resources Office	Processing of forms and providing advice to Heads of Schools on the engagement of Graduate Teaching Assistants. Facilitate Garda Vetting process.

7.1 Head of School/Line Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring that GTA are appropriately selected, trained, supported and supervised and that any necessary supports are provided, which may include, where appropriate, induction into the School, mentoring and training and development in line with University policies.
- Getting College approval (financial and headcount) for the engagement of a GTA **prior** to them commencing in post.
- Ensuring that any restrictions to the number of hours a worker is permitted to work, including Working Time Directive, Visa Compliance (e.g. Visa holders), or Graduate Teaching Assistant Policy, are adhered to without exception.
- Ensuring that contract request forms are submitted by the appropriate deadlines to allow HR to process the contracts in a timely fashion, adhering to the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018.
- Ensuring that the selection process for taking on GTA is fair and transparent, and standards of best practice are adhered to when selecting individuals to work in this capacity. It is essential that any individual engaged on this basis has the necessary level of skills and experience to carry out the required work.
- Ensuring that appropriate processes are in place to monitor performance and quality of teaching support and to offer feedback to ensure the highest quality of teaching support. The

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Head of School or appropriate nominee is also responsible for monitoring the duties performed by the GTA, as well as the number of hours and weeks worked to ensure that the work carried out is consistent with what is defined and agreed in GTA contract of employment.

- A GTA should not be engaged to take up additional work in another Discipline /School/Unit without the knowledge and advance agreement of both the Heads of School/Unit and Human Resources. (The Head of School or appropriate nominee, will liaise with the GTA in this regard).

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- Complete all paperwork required accurately and in full and submit same in a timely fashion to avoid delay in processing of same.
- A full-time postgraduate will not work more than 250 hours per annum as a GTA in the University. A part-time postgraduate will not work more than 820 hours per annum as a GTA in the University.
- Declare on contract set up form all other employment and advise of any changes.
- A GTA is liable for Pay Related Social Insurance and must provide a PPS number. Payment may be withheld if a PPS number has not been supplied with the contract or within 6 weeks of commencing employment.
- All GTA must be resident in the Republic of Ireland and must have permission to work in Ireland if they are non-national.
- A GTA on a work permit which specifies that the holder cannot work more than 20 hours per week should note that if they are already working 20 hours per week outside the University, they cannot take up extra hours within the University.

7.3 Human Resources

- Process forms, adhering to all relevant Employment law and the Public Sector 1.0 FTE rule.
- Will ensure that hiring managers responsible for engaging individuals are trained and supported to ensure that recruitment, engagement and payment of individuals in the extended workforce are in line with established procedures. Further advice and guidance is available to hiring managers from HR to help minimise the risks from potential breaches of employment law and tax regulations.
- Garda Vetting: Where vetting is required the Human Resources department will facilitate the process.

8. Other Relevant Information

Related documents/websites:

- [University Guidelines for Research Degree Programmes](#)
- [Teaching Assistants – University of Galway](#)

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Appendix 1

Graduate Tutor and/or Demonstrator tasks, skills & competencies

The list of tasks, skills and competencies outlined below relate to both laboratory and non-laboratory contexts and will vary according to the specific nature of the engagement.

The tasks can only be undertaken by a postgraduate who, at the time of the engagement, is registered to a postgraduate degree programme of the University of Galway, or other Irish Universities, and where there are no concerns over the postgraduate's academic progress.

Purpose: Tutor

A graduate tutor supports and contributes to student learning by undertaking teaching support activities and/or assessing students' learning and providing student advice and feedback in line with University of Galway expectations, as required.

A Graduate Tutor typically prepares, delivers, assesses, and provides student feedback for seminars or tutorials that contribute to a module, under the guidance, direction and support of an academic module leader.

A Graduate tutor may assess student work associated with such sessions where that assessment is formulaic and guided by clear model answers.

Note: while a GTA may contribute to grading only with a rubric provided by the Module Owner, the Module Owner is ultimately responsible for all grades returned to students.

Typical Key Tutor Tasks

- Lead seminars or tutorials with specified learning outcomes, within a clear and established teaching programme or framework set by the module leader.
- Prepare for, deliver, and assess up to a maximum of 6 lectures, each of one hour duration, within a clear and established programme under supervision and guidance in each of the final 2 years of the GTA's PhD programme. Delivery of lectures must be aligned to development of GTA teaching and dissemination skills seeking to enhance GTA career readiness and employability. Not more than one GTA can deliver lectures on an individual module.
- Where a PhD candidate delivers lectures as a GTA, they can also mark formative and/or summative assessments of that lecturing material with the support of an academic member of staff where that assessment is formulaic and guided by clear model answers. Note: while a GTA may contribute to grading only with a rubric provided by the Module Owner, the Module Owner is ultimately responsible for all grades returned to students.
- Marking assessments for formative feedback purposes, which do not contribute to exam results, from seminars/tutoring sessions, workshops, fieldtrips, projects, drop-in sessions or online courses with predetermined and/or formulaic responses with the support of an academic member of staff. Note: while a GTA may contribute to grading only with a rubric provided by the Module Owner, the Module Owner is ultimately responsible for all grades returned to students.
- Provide students with appropriate feedback for the seminars/tutorials given by the GTA.
- Respond to student queries relating to the content of the seminars/tutorials given by the GTA.

Purpose: Demonstrator

A graduate demonstrator contributes to the delivery of laboratory, workshop or other practical sessions, including field work, by demonstrating the use of equipment (including software packages) and overseeing experiments, and providing advice and feedback in line with the University of Galway expectations, as required.

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A Graduate Demonstrator typically supports the learning of students in a laboratory or practical workshop context, and may assess student work associated with such sessions where that assessment is formulaic and guided by clear model answers. Note: while a GTA may contribute to grading only with a rubric provided by the Module Owner, the Module Owner is ultimately responsible for all grades returned to students.

A Graduate Demonstrator may also be engaged to assist with student fieldtrips, projects, or to act as an online learning mentor, encouraging online discussion and answering queries.

Typical Key Demonstrator Tasks

- Assist in the delivery of laboratory sessions, workshops, fieldtrips, projects, drop-in sessions or online courses under the guidance of an academic member of staff.
- Offer assistance to students to encourage them to engage in the learning experience.
- Demonstrate techniques and equipment to students and assist with problems or questions.
- Contribute to the delivery of clinical sessions (where appropriately trained and qualified).
- Set up experimental systems and research equipment, assisting students in the use of equipment and tests.
- Provide advice and feedback to students on procedures and protocols.
- Marking assessments from laboratory sessions, workshops, fieldtrips, projects, drop-in sessions or online courses with predetermined and/or formulaic responses with the support of an academic member of staff. Note: while a GTA may contribute to grading only with a rubric provided by the Module Owner, the Module Owner is ultimately responsible for all grades returned to students.
- Provide students with appropriate feedback.
- Respond to student queries relating to the content of the demonstrating.

Graduate Teaching Assistant General Tasks

- Foster and stimulate discussion amongst students on key subject area topics in order to develop further understanding of the subject matter.
- Monitor student learning and offer advice, alerting the module leader to any concerns about performance, attendance or pastoral issues.
- Complete necessary preparation prior to the session, ensuring familiarity with, and knowledge of, the learning experiences to be undertaken.
- Ensure that an understanding of the importance of confidentiality is applied when undertaking all duties.
- Abide by all relevant University policies, including policies on Code of Conduct, Health & Safety and Equality & Diversity.

Graduate Teaching Assistant Skills and Competencies

- Sufficient breadth and depth of knowledge in a relevant subject area.
- Ability to lead groups and stimulate discussion in the subject area.
- Appropriate technical skills.
- Effective communication skills to explain a subject area clearly and accurately, and be able to answer questions in a clear and understandable manner.
- Excellent organisational skills, including the ability to meet marking deadlines, and to plan and manage activities within set deadlines and without detriment to the student's progress on their own postgraduate degree, under the supervision of the Head of School/Academic Nominee/Module Owner.

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Additional Information

Must be prepared to:

- attend training relevant to the type of teaching support activity and/or assessment;
- attend any subject-specific or module-specific training required by the School/Module Owner;
- attend associated teaching skills development where required by the School/Module Owner;
- establish with the School a procedure for monitoring Graduate Teaching Assistant teaching support activities;
- attend any meetings requested by the Head of School/Academic Nominee/Module Owner.

The sum of all activities below cannot exceed 250 hours for full time postgraduates and 820 for part-time postgraduates

CLASS CONTACT		
Activity	Engagement	Remuneration
Delivery of seminars/tutorials/problem-solving classes	Graduate Tutor	Equal to the number of contact hours
Assist with laboratory classes/practical sessions (guiding other demonstrators), under supervision of the module owner or Academic Nominee.	Graduate Tutor	Equal to the number of contact hours
Delivery of up to 6 hours of lectures by a GTA registered in the final or pre-final years of a PhD programme	Graduate Tutor	Equal to the number of contact hours
Assist with laboratory classes/practical sessions	Graduate Demonstrator	Equal to the number of contact hours
Assist with student 'drop-in' support sessions	Graduate Demonstrator	Equal to the number of contact hours
Assist with the moderating and running of online course	Graduate Demonstrator	Equal to the number of contact hours
Assist with the project or fieldwork	Graduate Demonstrator	Equal to the number of contact hours, up to 7.4 hours/day Where attendance on fieldtrip or assistance with project is for development purposes or supports the GTA's programme, no payment will be due.

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PREPARATION AND TRAINING: if no preparation is undertaken, no payment is due		
Activity	Engagement	Remuneration
Preparation for lecture, if included in the agreed tasks.	Graduate Tutor	Up to 1 hour preparation for each of the maximum 6 contact hours for lecturing duties permissible for pre-final and final year PhD candidates. No additional payment if the class is repeated in the same academic year (i.e. 'double-delivered')
Generic training (e.g. small group teaching; laboratory demonstrating; assessment and feedback; equality and diversity)	Graduate Tutor/ Graduate Demonstrator	Unpaid
Subject-specific training/briefing (e.g. health and safety)	Graduate Tutor/ Graduate Demonstrator	Unpaid

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ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK		
Activity	Engagement	Remuneration
Marking assessments from laboratory sessions, workshops, fieldtrips, projects, drop-in sessions or online courses with predetermined and/or formulaic responses with the support of an academic member of staff. Note: while a GTA may contribute to grading only with a rubric provided by the Module Owner, the Module Owner is ultimately responsible for all grades returned to students	Graduate Demonstrator	Use the exam corrections timesheet to compute the number of hours, to be paid at the demonstrator rate, to provide payment equivalent to the per-item rate. Where there is not a per-item rate the number of hours to complete the work, to be paid at the GTA demonstrator rate, should be agreed in advance. Payment is only if marking is not undertaken during class contact hour(s).
Feedback sessions such as returning written assignments, if included in the agreed tasks.	Graduate Demonstrator	Equal to the number of contact hours, if not undertaken during class contact hour(s).
Required attendance at meetings where such meetings does constitute training, and the GTA is an active participant.	Graduate Demonstrator	Equal to the number of required contact hours