

Research Students Who Teach Policy: Follow up Discussion

Summary

Following discussion at Senate in July, it was agreed that Boards of Studies would report on compliance with the requirements of the current policy on research students who teach.

In this document, Appendix 1 sets out a response from Human Resources to matters arising from the report and Appendix 2 sets out those responses received from School Boards of Studies.

One action required.

Recommended Action

Senate is asked to **consider** the report, **comment** on it and to **require** the City Graduate School Committee to:

- **strengthen** and **update** the policy to respond to the report and the comments of Senate to provide greater clarity and specificity around the areas highlighted and to develop guidance to support the implementation, ensuring that it is more robust and better meets student expectations.
- **propose** changes for approval by Senate.

Publication: Open

Introduction

In 2013 Senate approved the 'Research Students Who Teach' policy. The development of this was in direct response to an outcome of the 2012 QAA Institutional Review which stated that the University must:

...introduce a requirement for postgraduate research students and/or teaching assistants in all Schools to undertake adequate and appropriate preparation prior to commencement of teaching by March 2013, and ensure that all postgraduate research students who teach have undergone such preparation by the start of the next academic year.

The intention of this recommendation was two-fold: (i) to ensure the quality of teaching delivered by doctoral students (and teaching assistants) and (ii) to enhance the experience of those who took on teaching responsibilities. A recent survey undertaken by the Students' Union highlighted a number of difficulties with both the implementation of the current policy and made suggestions for improvement. It is in this context that the University sees it as important to respond in detail to the outcomes of the City Students' Union survey into compliance with this policy and to do so has consulted with Schools and HR, as discussed below.

The following principles are key:

- Undertaking teaching (and related opportunities) should be a valuable, developmental experience for doctoral students
- Engagement with teaching opportunities must not jeopardize the normal progress of a doctoral student
- Information that is provided must be up to date, clear and accurate

Summary of comments on the Implementation of the Policy by Schools

The responses provided by Schools indicate their view of a broad compliance with most aspects of the published policy. However, a number of themes are evident from the responses:

- Clearer information is required by students on expectations and their employment status when undertaking teaching. For example, separate contracts are not issued to students who teach as part of their scholarship
- More flexible and timely training options are required to ensure the proper preparation of doctoral students before undertaking teaching duties
- There is no consistent process through which the supervisor gives consent for a student to teach or for this to be recorded (the approval of a supervisor is required to ensure that a doctoral student has met all necessary milestones). It has been suggested that, for consistency, this approval could be delegated to the Associate Dean for Research (or equivalent) for all the students in a School
- Doctoral students should receive feedback on their teaching and related responsibilities

It is important to manage better student expectations around teaching and to continue to have student feedback on their experiences, in order to improve this. Thus several recommendations,

listed below, will be taken forward by the City Graduate School Committee, in addition to comments and suggestions from Senate.

Developmental Matters to be Taken Forward by the City Graduate School

Several recommendations are suggested below to respond directly to the survey and the responses received from Schools.

1. It is recommended that the Policy for Research Students Who Teach is strengthened in the following ways to ensure the following:
 - i. Recognition that the primary status of doctoral students who teach is that of a student; therefore students not only are entitled to the full range of student services, but they can also have access certain staff benefits such as training which is relevant to their teaching responsibilities.
 - ii. Clear information is given on opportunities or any requirements for teaching e.g. as part of a studentship. Further, arrangements for employment and payment should be clearly set out. To support this, the recommendations from HR (Appendix A) will be developed and implemented.
 - iii. Clear information on the scope of the teaching required is given to ensure that these responsibilities are clear. It should be noted that the maximum allowed number of hours for teaching related activities (including preparation, delivery, marking and feedback) is 6 hours per week averaged over 12 months.
 - iv. Students will be supported by peer review and receive feedback from the students who have been taught.

2. It is also recommended that three new elements are added to the policy, as shown below:
 - i. Assess formally a student's capability and any prior experience before teaching begins – this could be done using a simple *pro forma* to capture any training expectations (including health and safety related issues) as well as support and mentoring. This would be based on best practice at other universities and inform the HR recommendation 2 (Appendix 1).
 - ii. Enhance the policy to include requirements for any doctoral students who are involved in:
 - a. Assessment
 - b. Personal tutoring
 - iii. Ask Schools to reflect annually on (i) the contributions of doctoral students who teach and (ii) to consider their feedback both from the students who teach and the students who are taught when planning for the subsequent period of teaching activity.

The City Graduate School will then take forward the recommendations of Senate, working with the Students' Union to modify and improve the policy, drawing from experiences in other Institutions.

Senate is asked to consider this report, comment on it and to require the City Graduate School Committee to:

1. To strengthen and update the policy to respond to the report and the comments of Senate to provide greater clarity and specificity around the areas highlighted and to develop guidance to support the implementation, ensuring that it is more robust and better meets student expectations.
2. To propose changes for approval by Senate

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November 2016

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A Response from Human Resources to Matters Arising from the Report

This paper, for consideration by Senate, outlines the current variable practice in relation to the arrangements for contracting with and paying students who undertake teaching. It recommends the adoption of a consistent practice to meet the requirements of the Policy on Research Students Who Teach.

Current Policy

The Policy on Research Students Who Teach was approved by Senate in 2013. It is not a policy under the remit of HR.

The survey conducted on behalf of the Students' Union refers to the issuing of a 'formal contract' to the student. This has been interpreted in Senate's discussion of this issue as a contract of employment to be issued by HR. The report also references difficulties with the application of the Hourly Paid Visiting Lecturer provisions to Research Students who teach.

It is noted that the Policy states that it is not applicable those individuals who are on a contract of employment. This exclusion would, for example, pertain to PhD students who hold a contract of employment at City as a Research Assistant.

The wording under the Principles section of the Policy refers to:

Research students must be given clear information on their teaching duties, total hours and pay in writing before they may be employed to undertake teaching activity.

The reference to 'be employed' is at odds with the scope of the Policy which excludes those individuals who are on a contract of employment.

Notably, the Policy does not specify who is responsible for initiating the request, for issuing the written confirmation (of duties, hour and pay) or for authorising payments to the research student.

Current Practice

The lack of specificity has given rise to variable practice in the issuing of the written confirmation to the Research Students and the means by which the Payroll Office is authorised to make a payment to the Student.

The practices range from:

1) Use of the Visiting Lecturer employment arrangements. These constitute a contract of employment with an engagement schedule to stipulate the number of hours to be worked in advance. HR acts on the instruction of the Programme/Course Director to issue a VL contract and schedule of engagement.

Commentary:

The limitation with this approach is that hours and the payment schedule are fixed in advance and do not allow flexibility if the student should not undertake the teaching. Additionally, the Visiting Lecturer contract is a permanent, variable hours contract of employment; it is questionable whether this is the most appropriate contract type for research students who teach. The inclusion of research students who teach in the University's data on Visiting

Lecturer numbers (headcount and FTE) may be worthy of review.

2) Use of the Unitemps framework based on a request from the School. This would deploy these students as workers on the basis of a timesheet system.

Commentary:

These provisions comply with the requirements of the Policy in providing written confirmation of hours, rate of pay and a broad description of the duties. The Unitemps timesheet system allows for greater agility in dealing with situations where hours have varied. Unitemps records also provide a better means to try to ensure that students who are covered by the Tier 4 UKVI regulations do not breach the maximum number of hours to be worked during 'term time' (defined as 20 hours per week for all weeks of the year for P/G students).

3) A direct instruction from the School to the Payroll office (which would then be returned to HR for authorisation). This may or may not be paralleled by the School issuing the required written confirmation to the student.

This disparity of approach and treatment is clearly undesirable. It is likely that the lack of specificity in the Policy has contributed in a significant way to the difficulties around contracting and payments reported in the SU Survey.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The Policy should be reviewed by the Graduate School and HR to provide greater specificity on the various categories of Research Students who can be required or asked to undertake teaching and the specific processes for confirming this requirement and the authorisation of payment. The Policy currently excludes those PhD students who hold a contract of employment as a Research Assistant. It does not reference the separate group of PhD students in receipt of a stipend and for whom there is an expectation that they will undertake a very limited amount of teaching without additional remuneration.
2. All payments made to Research Students Who Teach (other than those covered by the PhD stipend provisions) should be initiated by the School, authorised and administered through the Unitemps system. Through the Unitemps framework, students can be provided with a short description of the teaching they will be required to undertake. This will ensure that City meets its obligations to this group of workers in an efficient and consistent way, whilst providing the agility to vary payments if fewer or more hours are worked than were originally stipulated.

Mary Luckiram

2.12.16

Appendix 2: Responses from School Boards of Studies

Cass Response regarding implementation of City's Research Students who Teach policy

1. Cass students only receive a contract for the teaching activities not covered by their duties; for those that are associated with their scholarship, there is no need to have a separate contract. For hours outside the scholarship duties, teaching contracts are issued via VT2000 by the relevant UG/PG administrator, who specifies the requirements and how much is being paid, just as it is done for VLs. The PhD Office is not involved in these activities, as they do not fall within the scope of scholarship duties.
2. The amount of hours required from each student as part of their scholarship is clearly indicated in the letter of acceptance.
3. Only few students are asked to be responsible for a module, and those that do are given a contract as a VL. The School is moving in a direction where an increasing number of students will be responsible for modules (to replace VL), in order to enrich their professional training and provide them with valuable class experiences. They would be paid for only the part that exceed their duties.
4. We do not apply the rule cited at page 5 ("Any teaching or teaching related activity that a research student undertakes must have the approval of the first supervisor, where appropriate, and/or Head of Department/Centre"), in order to i) avoid supervisors monopolizing their students, ii) allocate students who have a Cass bursary to the most valuable uses for Cass (not for the supervisor).

This rule makes sense for students funded by bursaries secured by their supervisors. At Cass, teaching duties are associated only with Cass bursaries. If we subjected allocation of teaching duties to the permission of supervisors, we could find ourselves in a situation where students cannot comply with the requirements of their bursary because the supervisors prohibit all proposed allocations.

5. Our first-year students have only a focused and light engagement in TA (marking and, occasionally, tutoring). There is no evidence that this duty interferes with their progress.
6. The vast majority of students who undertake TA work have attended the LTA module. The low frequency of LTA modules, however, interferes with a smooth allocation of students to TA opportunities, because the offered dates may conflict with other engagements of the students.
7. First-year students may be asked to perform some marking before they have had a chance to attend the LTA (during the first year, they are engaged full time in attending courses). Those who do so, meet with the module leader so that guidance is given. They also meet with Lorenzo Trapani Associate Dean for Education (Teaching and Learning).
8. More generally, results suggest that the training that City provides is not considered adequate by our students. We will consider forms of additional training. We will meet with our students before Christmas to receive additional feedback to see how we can help to improve training needs.
9. The name of our school is Cass, not CASS

Report on Research Student Teaching in the School of Health Sciences 2015/16

Introduction

This report summarises for Board of Studies the current situation in SHS in relation to research students who teach, it draws on and summarises the School of Health Sciences Research Degrees Programme Committee report to Graduate School on research student teaching, June 2016.

Outline and purpose of report

This report assesses compliance with University policy on research student teaching within the School of Health Sciences and makes recommendations for enhancing management of research student teaching roles and quality of experience for research students and those they teach. It is based on discussion and analysis by the Research Degrees Committee, utilising analysis of RAP records, reporting by Senior Tutors for Research and discussion at the School's Staff-Student Liaison Committee (research degrees).

Themes or Key Points

Data analysis indicates good overall compliance with University policy on research student teaching. Specifically:

- no students were identified as exceeding guidelines on number of teaching hours
- all students who reported teaching activities identified having undertaken the advised module Introduction to Academic Practice
- while in previous years some students verbally reported waiting lists to access the module, in the past year this has been reported as resolved

Areas for enhancement identified include:

- improve information exchange to ensure equity of opportunity for students to teach, where appropriate, and to match student skills and interests with teaching areas effectively
- develop practical guidelines for academic staff working with doctoral students teaching, including provision of developmental feedback and evaluation to the doctoral students
- School to agree guidelines on payment and terms and conditions for doctoral students who are teaching outwith the studentship requirements, to ensure clarity and equity across the school

Conclusion

The School of Health Sciences has good compliance with the University's policy on research student teaching. Student teaching is within maximum recommended hours and students who teach are appropriately qualified.

School information and communication systems around research students' potential contributions and opportunities to teach require development. Academic staff may benefit from practical guidelines on how to work with research students in teaching, including awareness of the University policy, approaches to feedback for students on their teaching and a system for 'matching' teaching areas with students' skills and knowledge.

Clear advice is needed on payment and terms and conditions for research students who are teaching (i.e. those outwith the guideline unpaid teaching contribution for those with university studentships*), to ensure consistency and to provide clarity for academic staff.

Recommendations

- development of practical guidelines for academic staff within the school on working with research students in teaching
- development of a straightforward system for information exchange about students' skills and potential contribution
- agree a School policy and guidance on payment, terms and conditions for research students who teach, in liaison with University wide proposals and developments

(research students who have University or School studentships are expected as part of their studentship to undertake a certain level of teaching unpaid, so this applies to other or additional research student teaching – see University Policy document)*

City Law School

Research students who teach policy implementation – Board of Studies assurance

I write in my capacity as Chair of The City Law School Board of Studies.

All members of the Law School Board of Studies have been asked for comments on the implementation of Senate's Policy on Research Students who Teach. In addition, I have consulted with the Director of Postgraduate Research Students and the Head of Department of Academic Legal Studies.

From the consultation, I am in a position to offer assurance that The City Law School is policy compliant. Comments have been raised, however, concerning a lack of clarity in the Policy. In addition, Board of Studies is looking into any other specific issues that have been raised around the tasks allocated to research students.*

I trust that this information will provide Senators with the assurance they require.

Professor Carl Stychin

Dean

The City Law School

City, University of London

*(Comments from the CLS BoS discussion will be provided in early 2017).

School of Arts and Social Sciences

The School has completed an audit using the pro forma below and is able to provide Senate with the necessary assurance that the Research Students Who Teach policy is being implemented within SASS.

A number of teaching observation sessions are outstanding and we will ensure that these take place in term 2 (this we believe falls outside the current peer evaluation process). In addition we will be speaking to LEaD about course places for some doctoral students.

One area we have not probed in the supervisor's permission to teach. We suggest that this be discussed in a meeting with the supervisor and be recorded in RAP.

SASS Students who teach record (sample)

Department of XXX

Student name	Year of PhD	Full time of part time	Studentship Y/N	VL Contract Y/N	Module(s) taught	Contact hours (total)	Total teaching hours	Course date (1)	Peer review date (2)	Teaching Mentor (name)
XXX	February 16 Entry End of First year/ and beginning of her second	Full time	Yes	No	JO1205	78	78	Term 1 2016/17	n/a	XXX

Notes

1. please include date attended or (in brackets) date nominated to LEaD
2. please include date last observed or (in brackets) date to be observed