Framework for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

This framework should be used by GTAs and academic staff wishing to appoint GTAs, to ensure that all are aware of the terms and conditions of employment, the training and support available to GTAs and to raise awareness of opportunities for teaching.

The Graduate School has created a website to ensure all information relating to GTAs can be found in one place, including departmental opportunities for teaching. The website also includes examples of best practice.

This Framework has been developed by the Graduate School and approved by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. The Graduate School will review the Framework annually and will report its findings to the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee.

1. Introduction

1.1 Many doctoral students across the College are involved with teaching, supervising and assessing (in the form of marking) both undergraduate and Master’s level students. Working as a GTA provides doctoral students with an opportunity to broaden their experience at Imperial College, and develop further skills. These include learning to teach, convey complex technical concepts, writing/communication skills etc. Further, doctoral students may also find that acting as a GTA helps improve their own technical abilities (both theoretical and practical), enables them to broaden their knowledge base and gain communication and task management experience. When considering a career in academia, teaching experience is important and working as a GTA will allow students to build up a teaching portfolio and even become aware of one’s own teaching style.

1.2 GTAs will primarily assist and support academic staff, Faculty members, or other professional staff members in the delivery of teaching or teaching related duties in a variety of learning environments. The GTA training programme, aims to enhance student progression and achievement whilst providing opportunities for doctoral students at Imperial to gain employment in a supported way within the University.

1.3 GTAs will work under the supervision of an academic member of staff and will not be solely responsible for teaching, marking assessments, giving feedback, developing online materials or pastoral care. GTAs are expected to maintain standards of professional ethics appropriate for any member of academic staff.

2. Recruitment, admissions and remuneration

Recruitment and admissions

2.1 Any doctoral student wishing to apply to be a GTA must first seek permission from their supervisor.

2.2 In October 2013, the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) approved a roles and responsibilities document for GTAs. Before advertising for teaching opportunities, departments are advised to review this document noting that
expectations for GTAs is not, and will not, be uniform across College. The roles and
responsibilities document sets out the minimum and maximum amounts of expected
teaching so that it is clear what is expected of students from the start. The roles and
responsibilities document also provides information about training and support for
GTAs and links to the HR website which sets out remuneration information. The
Graduate School’s GTA website links to appropriate departmental webpages which
advertise teaching opportunities.

Remuneration

2.3 Eligibility and length of appointment, recruitment & selection criteria will vary
between departments. However, this information should be clearly stated by
departments during the recruitment process. All GTAs have to register as Casual
Workers with the College and will have to re-register on an annual basis, even if they
have been previously employed by the College. GTAs will need to fill in the ‘Casual
Worker Joining Form’ [Pay 8a] and hand it to their departmental Postgraduate
Administrator, Finance Manager or other person responsible for managing
departmental GTAs.

Holiday entitlement

2.4 All GTAs are entitled to paid holidays in accordance with statutory rights. To avoid
the complexities of calculating accrued entitlement to paid leave, payroll have advised
academic staff with responsibility for signing off casual payroll forms, to enter the
hourly rate of pay which has been agreed with the casual worker, excluding any
statutory holiday component, in section C of the form. The payroll office will
automatically add 12.07% to this figure to provide for paid holiday. It is important
that the working pattern is such as to allow the GTA to take time off for their holidays
(but no additional pay need be given, since they have already received it during their
period of earnings). Further information is available at:

https://workspace.imperial.ac.uk/hr/Public/Procedures/casuals/Engaging_casuals.p
df.

International Students

2.5 International students on a Tier 4 visa can be employed on a temporary basis for
certain categories of work (see 2.6). It is important to keep in mind that students may
be doing several temporary jobs so the College needs to be sure that they are not
working more than 20 hours per week during term-time (although work can be full-
time during vacations). Departments are responsible for ensuring that GTAs will not
go over this quota before employing them. Further information can be viewed at the
Tier 4 Policy Guidance:

77366/T4_Migrant_Guidance_Nov_V1_0.pdf

2.6 In particular, paragraph 266 of this document states, “if you are following a course at
NQF 6 or QCF 6 or SCQF 9 or above with a sponsor which is a UK recognised body or
a UK HEI, or you are undertaking a short-term study abroad degree programme at an
overseas recognised body or HEI the following work is allowed:

• no more than 20 hours a week during term time;
• full-time during vacations;
• on a work placement as part of the course, providing the work placement does not amount to more than 50% of the course;
• as a postgraduate doctor on a recognised Foundation Programme, providing you are being sponsored by the UK Foundation Programme Office or Health Education South London.

2.7 It should be noted that the College stipulates that GTAs should not be working more than 10 hours per week and a total of 150 per year (see section five of this document).

2.8 If staff are unsure about the requirements of other visas they should contact Human Resources.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The roles and responsibilities document sets out what GTAs can and cannot do with respect to teaching and marking. GTAs are sometimes appointed as Assistant Examiners but they cannot be appointed as Assessors. Therefore, they are not entitled to set examination papers and therefore cannot be members of Examination Boards.

3.2 GTAs, as assistant examiners, may assist with the marking of scripts at examinations where there are large numbers of candidates and may attend practical examinations. They should act in accordance with the College’s policies and regulations relating to examination and assessment and in particular, the College’s Protocol for Marking and Moderation. GTAs can assess students’ work against published assessment criteria. GTAs should also be familiar with the Quality Assurance Agency’s Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and Recognition of Prior Learning.

3.3 GTAs may act as first markers for any written assessment which counts towards degree classification, in accordance with the College’s Protocol for Marking and Moderation. The assessment will then be second marked by a College Examiner. A clear process for determining how differences between markers will be resolved should be provided to GTAs in advance of marking. It is not always necessary to second mark assessments which do not count towards degree classifications.

3.4 Prior to carrying out assessments of students, GTAs must have undergone training. The Graduate School offers a workshop in assessment and feedback (see 4.3) but it is recognised that departments and Faculties may have their own training programmes. It is the responsibility of departments to ensure that any GTA employed in student assessment has undergone appropriate training.

4. Training, development, support and annual reporting

4.1 There are a number of GTAs who deliver modules outside of their home department. Therefore, it is the responsibility of Module Leaders who employ GTAs to ensure that no GTA is delivering material without having received appropriate training either via the Graduate School (see below) or via the student’s home department. The Graduate School provides regular reports to postgraduate administrators on professional skills courses which have been undertaken by students. This will include information on Graduate School GTA training courses undertaken by research students. There is also an online central register of trained GTAs which can be accessed by departments at any time to make checks. Departments are asked to note that the central register is updated on a termly basis.
Training and development delivered by the Graduate School

4.2 The Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) has agreed that the Graduate School’s Postgraduate Professional Development Committee (PPDC) should take responsibility for developing a suite of discipline independent, transferable, centrally run training and support for GTAs which will run in addition to (and not in place of), existing departmental or Faculty training courses where these exist. The aim is to ensure that all doctoral students obtain training of a particular standard and for the Graduate School to help departments to deliver that. If departments are already providing appropriate training then further training from the Graduate School will not be a requirement but departments must keep a record of training undertaken by their GTAs.

4.3 The Graduate School, together with the Educational Development Unit (EDU), has developed a suite of GTA training courses with no required entry level. These are:

- An introduction to teaching methods in higher education
- Assessment and feedback in practice
- Practical guidance for your application to Association Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy.

Course descriptions and further information about these courses is available at: http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/professional-skills/doctoral/shortcourses/teaching/

4.4 The College is a member of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the EDU has developed an accredited framework (known as STAR) that provides opportunities for doctoral students that teach to obtain Associate Fellowship of the HEA (AFHEA), a transferable and increasingly valuable qualification. Completion of the Graduate School’s GTA courses may lead to Associate Fellowship of the HEA under the College’s STAR Framework (http://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/star-framework/). Students who have completed the Graduate School’s GTA courses, are able to request a certificate of attendance from the Graduate School and all students who successfully complete these courses will have them recorded on their transcripts in the same way that other professional skills courses are recorded.

Departmental training and development

4.5 The Graduate School can provide core structure, generic advice and materials linked to appropriate standards to assist departments with developing their own GTA training programmes allowing departments to add the discipline specific part themselves. This flexible approach would augment departmental training rather than attempt to replace it. Further, it will ensure that all GTA training is of a sufficient standard to allow individuals to achieve the appropriate professional membership of the HEA if they wish. Departments can seek accreditation from the Graduate School for their GTA training programmes which will allow students to receive credit towards their professional skills attendance requirement, will assure students that the training they receive is comparable to that offered by the Graduate School and will enable the course to be listed on their transcript. Departments wishing to explore this development opportunity should contact the Graduate School’s Head of Postgraduate Professional Development, Dr Janet De Wilde (j.de-wilde@imperial.ac.uk).

4.6 Should the results of GTA evaluations indicate that GTAs need further support and
training, the Graduate School is able to work with departments to develop and deliver additional bespoke training to GTAs. Should departments wish to make use of this, they should contact the Graduate School’s Head of Postgraduate Professional Development, as above.

4.7 Departments are reminded that question 17 of the Postgraduate Research Student Experience Survey (PRES) asks students to state whether they have taught or demonstrated at College and to what extent they have been given appropriate support and guidance for this. Departments will be expected to comment on this as part of their PRES action plan.

Support for GTAs

4.8 Academic staff wishing to appoint GTAs should remind students appointed to the role about the welfare and pastoral care services available to them in the department and also via the College. This is to ensure that GTAs are clear who they can raise queries with should they have concerns about their employment. Given GTAs are employed by the College Departments are reminded that GTAs are subject to the College’s HR policies and procedures.

4.9 GTAs may receive feedback from the students they teach via SOLE or other evaluation processes. Where the department has concerns that the GTA is not fulfilling their duties effectively, the department will make arrangements to discuss their concerns with the GTA and agree appropriate remedies. Where the GTA’s performance does not improve, the department should take advice from HR.

Annual report of training

4.10 Departments should report the names of doctoral students who have received departmental, or Faculty GTA training to the Graduate School. This will ensure that GTAs receive credit towards Graduate School course attendance and that a record of this training appears on their transcript. Additionally, the Graduate School will keep a record of all students who have undertaken Graduate School GTA training.

4.11 A template for this report will be circulated annually to postgraduate administrators in the autumn term. Where students have undertaken Graduate School GTA training, this information will be pre-populated in the template. Departments therefore need only add the names of students who have undertaken training delivered elsewhere i.e. training offered by the department or Faculty.

5. Maximum Hours of Work (please also see section 2)

5.1 On average, GTAs should work less than 6 hours per week and this should not exceed 10 hours in any week during term time. It should be noted that where GTAs are assisting with teaching as part of fieldwork, this quota will be exceeded but for GTAs on Tier 4 visa this must not exceed 20 hours during term-time. No GTA can work for more than 150 hours in total over the academic year. However, some sponsoring bodies (Research Councils, Charities, etc.) may impose a lower hourly or yearly limit for paid activities. All research students funded by such bodies are required to observe the limits imposed.

6. Recognition and funding for GTAs
Pay

6.1 Research students working as GTAs must be employed on approved College rates. GTAs are paid a higher or a lower rate depending on the type of activity. The rates are determined by the College each year and can be found at: https://workspace.imperial.ac.uk/hr/Public/Salaries/Job%20Families/studemorates.pdf.

Recognition

6.2 There are awards to recognise GTA achievement. For example, departments within the Faculty of Engineering have an award for GTA of the year with winners competing for the Faculty of Engineering GTA of the year. The Students’ Union also has a Students’ Academic Choice Award to recognise the valuable contribution that GTAs make. Departments are strongly encouraged to develop similar ways in which to recognise GTA achievement.
APPENDIX 1: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT (GTAs)

This document outlines the typical duties expected of the post holder, and may be subject to change.

Summary of post:

Many doctoral students across the College are involved with teaching, supervision and assessment of both undergraduate and Master’s students. Working as a GTA provides you with an opportunity to broaden your experience at Imperial College London, and develop further skills. These include learning to teach, convey complex technical concepts, writing/communication skills, etc. Furthermore, you may find that acting as a GTA helps improve your own technical abilities (both theoretical and practical), enables you to broaden your knowledge base, and gain communication and task management experience. When considering a career in academia, teaching experience is important and GTA work allows building up a teaching portfolio and even becoming aware of one’s own teaching style.

The Graduate Teaching Assistant will primarily assist and support academic staff, faculty members, or other professional staff members in the delivery of teaching or teaching-related duties to students in a variety of learning environments. The GTA training programme aims to enhance student progression and achievement whilst providing opportunities for postgraduate students at Imperial to gain employment in a supported way within the University.

GTAs will work under the supervision of an academic member of staff and will not be directly responsible for teaching, marking assignments, giving feedback, developing online materials and pastoral care.

GTAs are expected to maintain standards of professional ethics appropriate for any member of academic staff.

*Please note that anyone can apply to become a GTA, although you will need to complete a minimum amount of training before you are able to deliver or undertake any teaching activities*

Duties & Key Responsibilities

To assist academic staff and students with learning and teaching and performing defined tasks under supervision. As a GTA you will be asked to complete one or more of the following types of teaching under the supervision of and in collaboration with relevant academic member of staff.

- **Supervision** – Providing technical support to UG and/or Masters projects
- **Mentoring/tutoring** – Providing students with guidance and technical support on course materials, study skills and referring them to appropriate support for pastoral care, to groups of no more than 15 students
- Feedback – providing guidance where appropriate, including feedback on progress. Assist in the collation of assessment and other programme data/information for review by the academic team, including monitoring of attendance

- Marking – Assessing students work based on published assessment criteria

- Demonstrating – to undertake laboratory demonstration and support activities during practical sessions

GTAs are expected to prepare for any teaching by acquainting themselves with the core reading and ensuring they have the ability to contextualise and/or summarise the material. On occasion, you may be asked to complete other teaching duties specified by the member of academic staff responsible for those students.

**Additional Duties**

- Assisting on field trips
- Invigilation of examinations
- Providing guidance on the preparation of assignments based upon published assessment criteria
- Assisting academic staff with development or update of learning materials in hard copy or online through gathering and collation of course materials
- Complete short reports on the student to feedback to the supervising academic
- Replies to student emails
- GTAs have no responsibility for reference writing.

**Requirements**

The College requires that any student wishing to undertake any teaching must have,

- Permission from their supervisors prior to starting their teaching
- Appropriate departmental supervision and support in their role
- Completed or registered on departmental and/or Graduate School training as detailed in the training, support and development section of the GTA Framework document.

**Allocating Time**

On average GTAs should teach less than 6 hours per week and teaching should not exceed 10 hours in any week during term-time.

**Remuneration**

Doctoral students working as GTAs are reimbursed for their teaching duties.

GTAs are paid a higher or a lower rate depending on the type of activity. The rates of pay are determined by the College each year and can be found [here](#).

All GTAs have to register as Casual Workers with the College. This has to be done every year. This means that even if you have previously been a GTA you will need to resubmit all
You will need to fill in the 'Casual Worker Joining Form (Pay 8a) and hand it in to the Postgraduate Administrator or Finance Manager within your Department.

Payment is made on 24th of each month.

**GTA Training & Support**

All GTAs are required to undertake training in assessment prior to assessing students. Formal GTA training and support is offered in form of,

- Departmental/Graduate school courses
- Provision of core workshops on teaching, marking and giving feedback, which are crucial aspects of the student experience.
- Guidance and support provided to those wanting to apply for Associate Fellowship of the HEA, where sufficient teaching experience is evident.
- Bespoke workshops for GTAs which require further support, developed in partnership with the academic department.
- The Graduate School of Imperial College is focused on broadening and enriching the academic experience of postgraduate students in the wider sense. Offered are special events of networking and professional skill courses, which GTAs can use in order to develop in general.