

SCHOOL OF INFORMATICS

Strategy Committee

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Teaching Support Policy

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Background

As discussed at previous Strategy Committee meeting, School general meeting and with Directors of Institute, a review of our teaching support policy has been undertaken.

Action requested from the committee

1. To **approve** the amendments to the policy.

Main subject text

Two versions of the policy are attached for ease of reading – first (Appendix 1) a clean copy; second (Appendix 2) a version showing tracked changes for those who wish to track changes from current policy.

Summary of changes:

- Section 1: No change to the types of teaching support roles.
- Section 2:
 - 2.1: The manner in which teaching support is allocated to courses is changed providing flexibility to Course Organiser to spend their allocated budget on the roles they consider necessary to deliver the course as outlined in the course descriptor.
 - 2.2 to 2.10: Amended to remove the specific allocations for roles on which the previous policy was based.
 - 2.11: Editorial change - duplication of 5.3
- Sections 3-5: Editorial changes.

Next Steps

Communication of the new approach to teaching support has already been communicated.

A review of the end to end process for allocation of teaching support resource, recruitment, appointment and payment of teaching support staff is underway given the new People & Money systems due to be implemented later this year. This new policy will be incorporated into that process review to ensure processes are streamlined for all involved.

Equality and diversity implications.

There may be situations where the new allocation of resource disadvantages someone who has protected characteristics and needs greater support; this would normally be dealt with through an appropriate assessment of the individual's needs as occurs with all school and university policies.

Resource implications (staff, space, budget)

The new policy provides clearer monitoring of budgets and the new policy does not result in an increase in our teaching support budget for 21-22 (against 20-21) – unless our student numbers increase.

Appendix 1 – New Policy (clean copy)

Teaching support staff policy

1. Teaching Support Provider Roles

There are six main Teaching Support Provider (TSP) roles with specific job descriptions. The roles are mutually exclusive, but the same individual can be appointed to several of them. These roles are remunerated through a Guaranteed Hours contract at the UE06 fixed hourly rate, and managed by Informatics Student Services (ISS).

1.1 Course Tutor

Prepares and delivers tutorial sessions from existing material, reports student attendance, answers tutees' questions and provides oral feedback/ feedforward on tutorial material. Where tutorials are delivered online, the tutor records the session and manages tutorial activities e.g. in breakout rooms. For courses where asynchronous activities are planned instead of traditional tutorials, the tutor reviews material submitted by students, provides necessary clarifications and engages with students via Piazza, Learn, hypothes.is, etc. and provides feedback.

1.2 Lab Demonstrator

Hosts lab sessions and responds to student queries, providing oral feedback/feedforward during the scheduled lab session. Where labs are delivered online, the demonstrator records guided activities and manages interaction with students in breakout rooms.

1.3 Teaching Assistant (TA)

May perform some or all of the following tasks: Designs assessed and unassessed coursework, designing tutorial materials, preparing slides and lecture notes, creating and updating course information materials, answering course-related student queries, occasional delivery of or supporting role in delivery of lectures, and other similar support duties if mutually agreed. Where lectures are delivered online, TAs may be responsible for weekly engagement with students/handling Q&As during timetabled "office hours", following agreement with the course organiser. Such activities would not replace drop-in office hours for which the course organisers should be available at least 1h/week.

1.4 Marker

Marks assessed or formative coursework (including tutorial-style assessed coursework with periodic submission deadlines), provides feedback and responds to student queries on marks and feedback. Is provided with a detailed marking guide by the course lecturer, and submits initial marks for approval by the lecturer.

1.5 Exam Marker

Similar to Marker, but involves marking exams with the same provisions as under 1.4.

1.6 Engagement Tracker

Checks and records the level of engagement of individual students with the course throughout the semester. Works with the course organiser to implement course-specific engagement mechanisms, e.g. student submission of material ahead of tutorials, meaningful participation in online discussions via Piazza, etc. Is provided with clear guidance on course-specific engagement scale by the lecturer.

1.7 Other

Creation of any other role requires a precise description of concrete tasks and must identify a teaching or administration staff member who has duty-of-care responsibilities for the appointee.

2. Teaching Support Allocation Policy and Procedure

2.1 Teaching support allocations

- a) Each course to be delivered by the School will be allocated a virtual budget for teaching support, which the Course Organiser can allocate towards teaching support provider roles. This virtual budget includes tutorials undertaken by staff as part of duty allocation, and assumes the hourly rate for a staff member is the same as a teaching support provider would be paid¹.

A Course Organiser can determine how they will spend this virtual budget on teaching support provider roles and staff undertaking tutorials but they must not exceed the allocated budget without prior authorisation and the allocation can only be spent within the School. Where a Course Organiser underspends their allocated budget by more than 10%, they can request approval to use the savings to employ student interns to assist with their teaching or research commitments, however these interns must be employed and paid before the end of the financial year (31 July).

- b) Each course will have a Relative Weight which informs the virtual budget to be allocated. The Relative Weighting is designed to ensure that undergraduate students receive greater levels of support in their earlier years than those in later years and those undertaking postgraduate degrees given those in later years and postgraduate degrees are more independent learners:
- UG1 courses will be allocated a higher Relative Weight than later years, to allow the design and delivery of small tutorial groups;
 - UG2 courses will be allocated a slightly lower Relative Weight than UG1, anticipating that tutorial group sizes are slightly larger than for UG1 courses;
 - UG3/4/5 and MSc courses will be allocated a lower Relative Weight than UG1 and UG2.
 - Courses that have been designed to provide high contact hours (e.g. Practicals) will have a higher Relative Weight, as will courses that require a higher than average development or re-design in a particular year.
 - Courses that are taught voluntarily by a lecturer over and above their normal duties are not allocated a teaching support budget.

Relative Weights are reviewed annually through Teaching Committee and Strategy Committee, and are subject to final approval by the Head of School.

- c) The virtual budget to be allocated to each course is determined by the Relative Weight for the course and the Student-Credits (ie. the anticipated number of students that will be enrolled in the course multiplied by the course credit points). Where the actual number of students enrolled in the course is higher or lower, then the virtual budget will be adjusted.²

2.2 Responsibilities

- **The Course Organiser** is responsible for delivering the course according to the published course descriptor using the allocated teaching support resources and will use the teaching support provider modelling tool to model how they will spend the virtual budget allocated to their course .
- **Teaching Support Providers** are responsible for monitoring their hours of work and for reporting the total number of hours worked through weekly on-line timesheet submissions. If the hours worked reach the agreed limit for the position, but there is still work remaining, this must be raised with the course organiser who has a duty to report it to ISS (teaching-support@inf.ed.ac.uk). In this situation, TSP must not carry out any further work until permission to do so has been received from ISS. The online timesheet process will prevent TSP claiming more hours for a role than they

¹ For example, a virtual budget of (say) £10,000 may be allocated by the Course Organiser towards Tutors, Markers and a Teaching Assistant. Academic staff who have been assigned to take tutorials may fill the Tutor hours which uses part of the virtual budget; the remainder of the virtual budget is available for guaranteed hours teaching support provider roles.

² The total budget allocated for 2021-22 is the same as has been spent in 2020-21 and assumes that the delivery mode is similar to 20-21 and similar overall student numbers. If student numbers increase significantly across the School then additional budget will be allocated; if they decrease then the budget will decrease.

have been allocated. If necessary, ISS will escalate to the Director of Teaching to decide the course of action. In addition, ISS will monitor the total number of hours claimed by TSP and will alert lecturers if there is advance warning of agreed limits being exceeded.

2.4 Tutor preparation time

A standard overhead equivalent to 1 tutorial hour (2 paid hours) is added to all Tutor roles for coordination and course-specific training (e.g., a pre-course training session laying out expectations and needs for the course).

2.5 Demonstrator preparation time

A standard overhead equivalent to 1 demonstration hour (2 paid hours) will be added to all roles for preparation, asynchronous interaction with students who require additional hands-on support, coordination with the lecturer, and course-specific training. This overhead is built into the TSP modelling tool.

2.7 Marker preparation time

An additional 2 hours is included for each marking task (i.e. piece of coursework, midterm, etc) to cover preparation for marking and liaison with the course lecturer.

3. PGR Student Employment Rules

3.1 PGR student engagement in teaching

Every PGR student is encouraged to undertake teaching support provider roles to enhance their experience for career development.

Permission from the Principal Supervisor to undertake teaching support providers roles is only required when appointments to teaching support roles exceed a total of 100 hours work in a year and the principal supervisor will be notified once this limit is reached. Only in exceptional circumstances would a PGR student be employed to undertake more than 414 hours per year; we would expect students to work substantially less than this in order to avoid an imbalance between PhD and teaching support provider workloads. Engagement with activities should be reported in the annual formal PGR progress reports. These restrictions do not apply to PGR students during their submission period, or for part-time PGR students.

3.2 Tier 4 Restrictions

For students on Tier 4 visas, constraints on employment set by the UK Home Office will apply. Postgraduate research students on Tier 4 visas are permitted to work a maximum of 20 hours in any given week. This workload limit includes employment external to the University.

3.3 Scholarship Restrictions

Students in receipt of any funding for their PhD must check if there are any restrictions or conditions on part-time work. Most funders allow some part-time work, particularly in areas relevant to the students' research, and encourage a common sense approach to other paid work.

4. Taught Student Employment Rules

4.1 Informatics School policy

Staff should refer to the School's policy on the 'Employment of UG and MSc tutors' to determine eligibility for teaching support work. Engagement Tracker roles are available to UG/MSc students.

Any requests to deviate from the eligibility rules should be sent to the

Studentships & Teaching Support Manager (teaching-support@inf.ed.ac.uk) who will liaise with the Director of Teaching if necessary.

5. TSP support

5.1 Duty of care

The course organiser has a responsibility towards all Teaching Support Providers on their course: in particular to provide them with appropriate guidance and support so that they can best fulfil their roles.

5.2 Academic oversight for courses

The course organiser has responsibility for the course as outlined in the relevant University Course Organiser: Outline of Role Policy:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/courseorganiserrole.pdf> .

This responsibility cannot be devolved to teaching support staff, for example by asking them to be the sole contact point for students, expecting them to represent the course organiser at exam board meetings, or determine final course marks independently.

The course team is expected to interact with the Teaching Office. An outline of the School's Teaching Office provision can be found here: <https://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/student-services/ito/admin/ito-service-provision>

5.3 Training

School training: The School provides a one-year long training programme open to students and staff with current teaching roles including tutoring, demonstrating, marking or TA. TSPs are required to attend the essential mandatory training sessions before commencing work; failure to attend may result in the TSP not being hired again in such a role in the future. More advanced optional sessions are also available. All training attended will be paid at the regular hourly rate.

External training: Training from providers external to the School must be approved by the Director of Teaching.

University training: All TSPs will be expected to have completed the University's online Information Security, Data Protection, Equality & Diversity Essentials and Challenging Unconscious Bias training before commencing work.

5.4 Complaints and grievances

In the first instance, TSPs should raise concerns with the Course Organiser, however if this is not possible or does not lead to a positive outcome, they should contact the Studentships & Teaching Support Manager.

Scope and details

The aim of this document is to provide a clear policy for how the School organises its provision of Teaching Support and supports Teaching Support Providers. It is not intended to address the processes for issuing of HR contracts to TSPs; the procedures for the recruitment and engagement of TSPs will be covered in separate procedures.

Policy Approved by: Strategy Committee August 2020

Appendix 2 – Amended Policy (tracked changes version)

Teaching ~~Support~~ support staff ~~Provider~~ policy

1. Teaching Support Provider Roles

There are six main Teaching Support Provider (TSP) roles with specific job descriptions. The roles are mutually exclusive, but the same individual can be appointed to several of them. These roles are remunerated through a Guaranteed Hours contract at the UE06 fixed hourly rate, and managed by Informatics Student Services (ISS).

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1.4 Marker

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1.5 Exam Marker

Similar to Marker, but involves marking exams with the same provisions as under 1.4.

1.6 Engagement Tracker

Checks and records the level of engagement of individual students with the course throughout the semester. Works with the course organiser to implement course-specific engagement mechanisms, e.g. student submission of material ahead of tutorials, meaningful participation in online discussions via Piazza, etc. Is provided with clear guidance on course-specific engagement scale by the lecturer.

1.7 Other

Creation of any other role requires a precise description of concrete tasks and must identify a teaching or administration staff member who has duty-of-care responsibilities for the appointee.

2. Teaching Support Allocation Policy and Procedure

2.1 Teaching support allocations

d) Each course to be delivered by the School will be allocated a virtual budget allocation for teaching support, which the Course Organiser can allocate towards teaching support resource. This virtual budget includes tutorials undertaken by staff as part of duty allocation, and assumes the hourly rate for a staff member is the same as a teaching support provider would be paid³.

A Course Organiser can determine how they will spend this virtual budget but they must not exceed the allocated budget without prior authorisation. Where a Course Organiser underspends their allocated budget by more than 10%, they can request approval to use the savings to employ student interns to assist with their teaching or research commitments, however these interns must be employed before the end of the financial year (31 July).

e) Each course will have a Relative Weight which informs the virtual budget to be allocated and are designed to ensure that undergraduate students receive greater levels of support in their earlier years than those in later years and those undertaking postgraduate degrees:

- UG1 courses will be allocated a higher Relative Weight than later years, to allow the design and delivery of small tutorial groups;
- UG2 courses will be allocated a slightly lower Relative Weight than UG1, anticipating that tutorial group sizes are slightly larger than for UG1 courses;
- UG3/4/5 and MSc courses will be allocated a lower Relative Weight than UG1 and UG2.
- Courses that have been designed to provide high contact hours (e.g. Practicals) will have a higher Relative Weight, as will courses that require a higher than average development or re-design in a particular year.
- ~~2.3 By default, very small courses or e~~Courses that are taught voluntarily by a lecturer over and above their normal duties are not allocated a teaching support budget. The definition of "very small course", in this context, is defined in the academic staff Work Allocation Policy, and may vary from year to year.
- Relative Weights are reviewed annually through Teaching Committee and Strategy Committee, and are subject to final approval by the Head of School.

f) The virtual budget to be allocated to each course is determined by the Relative Weight for the course and the Student-Credits (ie. the anticipated number of students that will be enrolled in the course multiplied by the course credit points). Where the actual number of students enrolled in the course is higher or lower, then the virtual budget will be adjusted.⁴

~~The School provides teaching support through allocations of Teaching Support Providers in terms of a set of defined roles for a course and numbers of hours allocated to each role. The level of support allocated to a course is agreed prior to delivery of a course.~~

2.2 Responsibilities

- The Course Organiser will use the teaching support provider modelling tool to model how they will spend the virtual budget allocated to their course and is responsible for delivering the course according to the published course descriptor using the allocated teaching support resources.
- **Teaching Support Providers** are responsible for monitoring their hours of work and for reporting the total number of hours worked to ISS ~~the~~ through weekly on-line timesheet submissions. If the hours worked reach the agreed limit for the position, but there is still work remaining, this must be raised with the course organiser who has a duty to report it to ISS (teaching-

³ For example, a virtual budget of (say) £10,000 may be allocated by the Course Organiser towards Tutors, Markers and a Teaching Assistant. Academic staff who have been assigned to take tutorials may fill the Tutor hours which uses part of the virtual budget; the remainder of the virtual budget is available for guaranteed hours teaching support provider roles.

⁴ The total budget allocated for 2021-22 is the same as has been spent in 2020-21 and assumes that the delivery mode is similar to 20-21 and similar overall student numbers. If student numbers increase significantly across the School then additional budget will be allocated; if they decrease then the budget will decrease.

support@inf.ed.ac.uk). In this situation, TSP must not carry out any further work until permission to do so has been received from ISS. The online timesheet process will prevent TSP claiming more hours for a role than they have been allocated. If necessary, ISS will escalate to the Director of Teaching to decide the course of action. In addition, ISS will monitor the total number of hours claimed by TSP and will alert lecturers if there is advance warning of agreed limits being exceeded.

2.3 Very small courses

~~By default, very small courses or courses that are taught voluntarily by a lecturer over and above their normal duties are not allocated a teaching support budget. The definition of "very small course", in this context, is defined in the academic staff Work Allocation Policy, and may vary from year to year.~~

2.4 Tutor ~~allocation~~preparation time

~~Unless specified during the bidding process, the allocation of Tutor effort to a course is calculated automatically, based on an average tutorial group size of 12 (timetabling should reserve rooms that have the appropriate capacity to ensure physical distancing), the number of tutorial hours delivered by a Tutor plus an equivalent number of hours for preparation. A standard overhead equivalent to 1 tutorial hour (2 paid hours) will is be added to all Tutor roles for coordination and course-specific training (e.g., a pre-course training session laying out expectations and needs for this the course). Where tutorials are delivered online (or following a hybrid model), the size of the tutorial groups should be increased where possible (with no more than 12 students on-campus in the hybrid setting).~~

2.5 Demonstrator ~~allocation~~preparation time

~~The allocation of Demonstrator effort is calculated on a course by course basis, based on information provided during the bidding process (e.g. availability of kit, lab space, timetabling restrictions, etc.) and the number of lab sessions to be delivered by a Demonstrator. A standard overhead equivalent to 1 demonstration hour (2 paid hours) will be added to all roles for preparation, asynchronous interaction with students who require additional hands-on support, coordination with the lecturer, and course-specific training. This overhead is built into the TSP modelling tool will be allocated automatically and do not need to be requested explicitly with a teaching support resource bid.~~

2.6 Teaching Assistant (TA) allocation

~~For moderately sized courses, the standard tariff for a TA is 25 hours for every 10 points of a standard course, or 60 hours per 10 points for a new course or for significant redesign of substantial course materials (coursework, tutorials), plus 5 hours for coordination with the course lecturer. The increased tariff will be granted as a matter of course if substantial changes have been formally approved by the relevant committees. An additional 36 hours will be granted as standard for large courses, 72 hours for very large courses. For course size definitions, see the Work Allocation Policy. NB: This allocation model with higher tariffs applies to the 2020/21 session, accounting for the fact that TAs will have to provide extended support to students, and may be subject to review before the start of the 2021/22 academic year.~~

2.7 Marker ~~allocation~~preparation time

~~For classes eligible for marking support (see the academic staff work allocation policy for specifics), the standard tariff for Marker allocation is 0.5 hours per student in the class for a 10-credit class, and 1 hour per student for a 20-credit class. These figures are doubled for coursework-only classes. An additional 2 hours is included for each marking task (i.e. piece of coursework, midterm, etc) to cover preparation for marking and liaison with the course lecturer.~~

2.8 Exam Marker allocation

~~For classes eligible for exam marking support (see the academic staff Work Allocation Policy for specifics), the standard tariff for Exam Marker allocation is 0.4 hours per student in the class.~~

2.9 Exceeding approved allocations

~~A general allowance will be made to exceed approved allocations by up to 15% with appropriate justification. Course lecturers must send requests to ISS at teaching-support@inf.ed.ac.uk and receive confirmation prior to notifying~~

~~2.10 Exceptions~~

~~Course lecturers may request higher allocations for a course than those described above providing appropriate justification. These will be considered by the Director of Teaching on a case-by-case basis, giving priority to very large courses.~~

~~2.11 Training~~

~~Payment for training provided by the School of Informatics is automatically approved for all eligible TSPs following attendance at on-campus/online 'Essential' sessions as early as possible before the start of the semester, and is paid at the regular hourly rate. The "essential" training is mandatory for all TSPs new to a role type, and failure to attend may result in the TSP not being hired again in such a role in the future. Paid 'advanced' training sessions are optional, but highly recommended. Training from providers external to the School must be approved by the Director of Teaching. All TSPs will be expected to have completed Information Security and Data Protection training before starting any role.~~

3. PGR Student Employment Rules

3.1 PGR student engagement in teaching

Every PGR student is encouraged to undertake ~~paid teaching support provider~~work in roles in accordance with their skills to enhance their experience for career development.

Permission from the ~~Principal research s~~Supervisor to undertake teaching support providers roles is ~~only~~ required ~~only~~ when appointments to teaching support roles exceed a total of 100 hours work in a year and ~~their the~~ principal supervisor will be notified once this limit is reached. ~~Only in exceptional circumstances would a PGR student be employed to undertake more than 414 hours per year; we would expect students to work substantially less than this I order to avoid an imbalance between PhD and teaching support provider workloads.~~ Engagement with activities should be reported in the annual formal PGR progress reports. ~~(It would be useful for this to be automated through Theon.)~~

3.2 Workload Restrictions

~~Unless a PGR student has been allocated a higher allowance (e.g. in the case of PCD studentships), full-time postgraduate research students must work no more than an average of 9 hours per week across the academic year and must discuss any proposed employment with their principal supervisor. 414 hours per year is the absolute maximum limit, and we would expect students to work substantially less than this in order to avoid an imbalance between PhD and Teaching Support workloads.~~

~~Additional hours worked above allocation will not be remunerated and the issue will be escalated to Deputy Director of Graduate School and Director of Teaching, who monitor whether students are staying within this limit across courses.~~

These restrictions do not apply to PGR students during their submission period, or for part-time PGR students.

3.3 Tier 4 Restrictions

For students on Tier 4 visas, constraints on employment set by the UK Home Office will apply. Postgraduate research students on Tier 4 visas are permitted to work a maximum of 20 hours in any given week. This workload limit includes employment external to the University.

3.4 Scholarship Restrictions

Students in receipt of any funding for their PhD must check if there are any restrictions or conditions on part-time work. Most funders allow some part-time work, particularly in areas relevant to the students' research, and encourage a common sense approach to other paid work.

4. Taught Student Employment Rules

4.1 Informatics School policy

Staff should refer to the School's policy on the 'Employment of UG and MSc tutors' to determine eligibility for teaching support work. Engagement Tracker roles [are](#) available to UG/MSc students.

Any requests to deviate from the eligibility rules should be sent to the Director of Teaching for approval, with teaching-support@inf.ed.ac.uk copied in.

5. TSP support

5.1 Duty of care

The course [lecturer-organiser](#) has a responsibility towards all Teaching Support Providers on their course: in particular to provide them with appropriate guidance and support so that they can best fulfil their roles.

5.2 Academic oversight for courses

The course [lecturer-organiser](#) has responsibility for the course as outlined in the relevant [University Course Organiser: Outline of Role Policy: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/courseorganiserrole.pdf>](#) ~~and the relevant School and University Committees have ultimate academic responsibility for courses.~~

This [responsibility](#) cannot be devolved to [employee-teaching support staff](#), for example by asking them to be the sole contact point for students, expecting them to represent the [lecturer-course organiser](#) at exam board meetings, or determine final course marks independently.

[The course team is expected to interact with the Teaching Office. An outline of the School's Teaching Office provision can be found here: <https://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/student-services/ito/admin/ito-service-provision>](#)

5.3 Training

[School training:](#) The School ~~has developed~~ [provides](#) a one-year long training programme open to ~~all eligible~~ students and staff with current teaching roles including tutoring, demonstrating, marking or TA. ~~Teaching Support Providers~~ TSPs are required to attend the essential mandatory training sessions before commencing work; ~~failure to attend may result in the TSP not being hired again in such a role in the future.~~ ~~although m~~ More advanced optional sessions are also available. All training [attended](#) will be paid at the regular hourly rate.

[External training:](#) Training from providers external to the School must be approved by the Director of Teaching.

[University training:](#) All TSPs will be expected to have completed the University's online Information Security, Data Protection, Equality & Diversity Essentials and Challenging Unconscious Bias training before commencing work.

5.4 Peer support networks

~~The School anticipates extending the current training programme to establish a "buddy network" in the future for Teaching Support Providers, to allow to obtain peer support, and to represent their interests towards the School and University.~~

5.45 Complaints and grievances

~~Teaching Support Providers need to be provided with a clear escalation path for grievances and complaints. In the first instance, TSPs should raise concerns with the Course Organiser resolution of any problems should be sought with the course lecturer, but however~~ if this is not possible or does not lead to a positive outcome, they should contact the [Studentships & Teaching Support Manager](#)~~Director of Teaching~~.

Scope and details

The aim of this document is to provide a clear policy for how the School organises its provision of Teaching Support and supports Teaching Support Providers. ~~It is not in parallel, ISS are working with Corporate HR on a University-wide review of all teaching support contracts, and will advise as necessary. The above policy is intended to capture local practice, and is not intended to address the processes for issuing of HR contracts to TSPs; the procedures for the recruitment and engagement of TSPs will be covered in separate procedures~~wider issue of these contracts and associated terms/ conditions.

Policy Approved by: Strategy Committee ~~August 202~~May 20210