

Informatics Teaching Support Staff Policy

1. Teaching Support Staff Roles

There are six main Teaching Support Staff (TSS) 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 and 1.2 Lab Demonstrator

Prepares and delivers tutorial/lab sessions from existing material, reports student attendance, answers tutees' questions and provides oral feedback/feedforward on tutorial/lab material.

1.3 Demonstrator

Hosts lab sessions and responds to student queries, providing oral feedback/feedforward during the scheduled lab session.

1.4 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.

1.5 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.

1.6 Exam Marker

Similar to Marker, but involves marking exams with the same provisions as under 1.5.

1.7 Other

Creation of any other TSS 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

The School provides teaching support through allocations of Teaching Support Staff 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

Teaching Support Staff are responsible for monitoring their hours of work and for reporting the total number of hours worked to the ISS through weekly 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 lecturer who has a duty to report it to ISS. In this situation, TSS must not carry out any further work until permission to do so has been received from ISS. The online timesheet process will prevent TSS 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 TSS 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 decided by the Director of Teaching, taking available resources into account, and may vary from year to year.

2.4 Tutor and Lab Demonstrator allocation

Unless specified during the bidding process, the allocation of Tutor and/or Lab Demonstrator effort to a course is calculated automatically, based on an average tutorial size of 12 or the specified lab group size, the number of tutorial/lab hours delivered by a Tutor/Lab Demonstrator plus an equivalent number of hours for preparation.

2.5 Demonstrator allocation

The allocation of Demonstrator effort to 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), the number of lab sessions to be delivered by a Demonstrator.

2.6 Teaching Assistant (TA) allocation

The standard tariff for a TA is 30 hours for every 10 points of a standard course, 50 hours for a new course or for significant redesign of substantial course materials (coursework, tutorials), or if the coursework on the course accounts for at least 40% of the total mark, 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.

2.7 Marker allocation

The standard tariff for Marker allocation is 0.5 hours per student in the class, plus an additional 2 hours for each marking task (i.e. piece of coursework, midterm, exam, etc) to cover preparation for marking and liaison with the course lecturer.

2.8 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 TSS.

2.9 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.

2.10 Training

Payment for [training](#) provided by the School of Informatics is automatically approved for all students following attendance at 'Essential' and 'Advanced' sessions during the Semester, and paid at the regular hourly rate. Training from providers external to the School must be approved by the Director of Teaching.

3. PGR Student Employment Rules

3.1 PGR student engagement in teaching

Every PGR student is encouraged to undertake paid work in TSS roles in accordance with their skills. Permission from the research supervisor is required only when appointments to teaching support roles exceed a total of 100 hours work in a year. TSS and their principal supervisor will be notified once this limit is reached. Engagement with TSS 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. ISS monitors 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

TSS 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:

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

5. TSS support

5.1 Duty of care

The course lecturer has a responsibility towards all Teaching Support Staff 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 and the relevant School and University Committees have ultimate academic responsibility for courses. This cannot be devolved to TSS employees, for example by asking them to be the sole contact point for students, expecting them to represent the lecturer at exam board meetings, or determine final course marks independently.

5.3 Training

The School has developed a one-year long [training programme](#) open to all students and staff with current teaching roles including tutoring, demonstrating, marking or TA. TSS are required to attend the essential training sessions before commencing work, although more advanced optional sessions are also available. All TSS training attendance will be paid at the regular hourly rate.

5.4 Peer support networks

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

5.5 Complaints and grievances

TSS staff need to be provided with a clear escalation path for grievances and complaints. In the first instance, resolution of any problems should be sought with the course lecturer, but if this is not possible or does not lead to a positive outcome, they should contact the 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 Staff. 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 wider issue of these contracts and associated terms / conditions.

Policy Approved by: Teaching Committee 12/11/2014 and Strategy Committee 18/12/2014

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