



Postgraduate Research Code of Practice

APPENDIX 5

Policy and Procedures for PGR Students undertaking Teaching Duties

1 Introduction

This Policy sets out the generic requirements regarding Postgraduate Research (PGR) students acting in a teaching support capacity (as defined in section 3 below), whilst registered as a student at the University (hereafter referred to as 'UoL'). UoL offers a range of such opportunities for PGR students to develop valuable personal and transferable skills and this Policy primarily covers their activities in these capacities.

1.1 This Policy forms part of UoL's [Postgraduate Research \(PGR\) Code of Practice](#)

In addition to the PGR Code of Practice (PGR CoP) and Appendices, other UoL policies, procedures and documents which may be relevant to this Policy are as follows:

- PGR Handbook (see section 10 for web link).
- HR (see section 10 for web link) if engaged in a paid capacity.

1.2 This Policy covers activities of students registered on PGR programmes only.

An important reason for provision of the opportunity to undertake teaching activities (as defined in section 3) is to offer a PGR student an opportunity to acquire valuable professional and personal skills through practical work experience. Accordingly acting as a **Graduate Teaching Assistant** (hereafter referred to as 'GTA' as defined in section 3 of this Policy) is dependent on their continued status as a PGR student of UoL on their initially registered programme. Where a student acting as a GTA ceases to be a student of UoL on their registered programme, their engagement as a GTA will be terminated. If a student changes their programme of study this will lead to automatic termination of their activities as a GTA.

1.3 UoL engages a diverse range of individuals with specialist knowledge and skills to undertake and support its teaching. It recognises that PGR students are a valuable asset in this regard offering a distinctive and rich resource whether they are teaching assistants, tutoring or demonstrating in conjunction with their PGR studies. UoL encourages such students to undertake these activities to help them develop a broad range of personal and professional skills including conveying complex technical concepts and writing/communication skills. PGR students may also find that acting as a GTA will help them to improve their own technical abilities (both theoretical and practical), enabling them to broaden their knowledge base. As well as developing their long-term career skills, PGR students are often well-placed to assist in programme delivery, having recent experience of undergraduate learning. Finally, the work also may offer a valuable source of additional income to a PGR student.

1.4 If a School/Institute engages a PGR student in teaching support activities in a paid capacity they must ensure that they comply with UoL's relevant Human Resources policies and contractual obligations. See HR web link in section 10 below. This Policy does not confer any advice on those contractual obligations.

1.5 The Policy does not confer any visa immigration or employment advice for students requiring a visa to study in the UK. For further details regarding such matters see the web links in section 10 below.

1.6 The nature of the different opportunities across UoL Schools/Institutes for a GTA means that experiences will inevitably differ for each student attending UoL and that teaching opportunities cannot be guaranteed. UoL is under no obligation to engage PGR students in teaching. Equally, PGR students are under no obligation to undertake GTA duties, except where it is a condition of their studentship.

1.7 UoL must take due regard of the GTA student's personal research workload and ensure that any activities in a teaching capacity will not endanger the student's ability to complete their PGR programme within the time permitted by UoL in its Ordinances (and, where applicable,

within required deadlines of any funding agency). A PGR student should not be employed in a teaching capacity on a full-time basis (see section 5.2 below for further details).

2 Scope of this Policy

This Policy does not cover:

- 2.1 Those postgraduate students who are **primarily employees of UoL** and who subsequently are permitted to register, on a full-time or part-time basis, for a postgraduate degree.
- 2.2 A *Visiting Research Student* (as defined in Appendix 13 of the PGR CoP: PGR Policy and Procedures for Visiting Research Students) is not permitted to be a GTA, i.e. is not permitted to carry out teaching or demonstrating duties.
- 2.3 Postdoctoral Researchers.
- 2.4 Students registered for an MRes award.

This Policy does cover:

- 2.5 Individuals whose primary relationship with UoL is as a PGR student (whether full or part time) and who are subsequently engaged as a GTA to undertake some teaching support activities. For a full definition of the term 'GTA' see section 3 below.
- 2.6 A Graduate Teaching Fellow (GTF), as defined in the appropriate documentation relating to the Graduate Teaching Fellowship Scheme.¹

3 Definitions and Scope of Duties

Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy the following terms are defined as follows:

- 3.1 ***Teaching:***
Any interaction with taught students, whether in a teaching or research support capacity.
- 3.2 ***'Graduate Teaching Assistant' (GTA):***

A GTA may support research activity (providing expert support to research projects and other associated activities e.g. conference organisation), teaching activity (providing support for learning and teaching, assessment and feedback), demonstrating (applying subject knowledge to assist taught students in problem solving), or one-to-one student support sessions).

If a PGR student is appointed to undertake **demonstrating duties only** (as defined in section 3.6d) then sections 4 and 6 to 9 of this Policy will not apply. However, the Dean of School/Institute in which they are undertaking these demonstrating duties must ensure that:

- a) the PGR student's Primary Supervisor has been consulted and approved the appointment of their student as a demonstrator, in accordance with section 6.2

¹ In addition to the requirements of the GTF Scheme, a School/Institute and GTF are required to comply with a minimum level of support and training as outlined in this Policy to ensure that the GTF's activities are undertaken to an appropriate standard. Contractual matters of the GTF Scheme are outside the scope of this Policy.

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- b) the PGR student has received appropriate induction and training, in accordance with section 6.4;
- c) A risk assessment, as appropriate, has been carried out, in accordance with section 6.5.

A PGR student who has been appointed as a **demonstrator only** will not be permitted to engage in other wider teaching duties of the GTA (as defined in this Policy) without appropriate compliance with sections 4 and 6 to 9 of this Policy.

For a more detailed description of a GTA's potential activities (and also what they are not permitted to undertake) see subsections 3.5 and 3.6 below

Scope of duties

3.3 The School/Institute must ensure that the GTA has the appropriate level of skills, experience and knowledge appropriate to the level at which they will be teaching.

3.4 Every undergraduate or postgraduate taught module must have a member of UoL academic staff identified as the module co-ordinator, with whom responsibility for the overall content, co-ordination, setting and conducting of assessment remains. The module co-ordinator will determine how collaboration with the GTA will work regarding content and will also give guidance and advice to the GTA throughout the process of preparation, teaching, assessment and feedback, as necessary and appropriate.

3.5 A GTA is **not** permitted to:

- a) Act as a dissertation supervisor for Masters level students.
- b) Act as an assessor at Masters level.
- c) Design curriculum. Curriculum design should remain the responsibility of academic staff. However, the GTA may be involved in the design of teaching activities.
- d) Be solely responsible for the delivery of any module or designated as module co-ordinator. However, the GTA may be involved in programme and module review by being invited to report back to the co-ordinator on the structure, level and content of modules on which they teach.
- e) Design assessments. Assessment design must remain the responsibility of the module co-ordinator. GTAs may be involved in assisting academic staff in the design of assessments; however, such duties should be carried out under close supervision and guidance from the academic member of staff.
- f) Set examination papers and, therefore, cannot be a member of a Board of Examiners.
- g) Act as an Academic Adviser or provider of pastoral care to students.
- h) Write academic references for a student.
- i) Contravene any restrictions on their right to work in the UK as a requirement of their visa. See section 10 below for the links to the UK Visa and Immigration Service (UKVI) website and to UoL's Policy on UKVI Compliance (Student Route).

3.6 A GTA may undertake the following duties under the supervision of and in collaboration with relevant academic member of staff:

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- a) Providing students with guidance and technical support on course materials, study skills and Undergraduate and/or Masters projects.
- b) Feedback: providing guidance where appropriate including feedback on progress. Assisting in the collation of assessment and other programme data/information for review by the academic team, including monitoring of attendance.
- c) Delivery of seminars, tutorials, and other small group work to develop student skills, under supervision of or in liaison with senior colleagues. This may involve assisting in delivery of e-learning components, including reviewing a student's work and marking online.
- d) Demonstrating: undertaking laboratory demonstration and support activities during practical sessions. Acting as a technical demonstrator the GTA may provide practical laboratory classes to develop students' skills, (e.g. running samples and experiments and interpreting results for teaching, providing detailed skills and instruction).
- e) Marking: assessing undergraduate students work based on the published assessment criteria for that module and in accordance with the Code of Practice on Assessment (CoPA) and its Appendices. A GTA must not act as the sole examiner of any summatively assessed work. Section 4.3.2 of the CoPA specifically requires moderation of assessments marked by a GTA that contribute to more than 20% of the overall module mark. Assessment duties include providing formative feedback to the students according to prescribed deadlines.
- f) Additional duties **may** include:
 - Assisting on field trips.
 - Invigilation of examinations (arranged centrally or through the School/ Institute).
 - Providing guidance on the preparation of assignments based upon published assessment criteria.
 - Assisting academic staff with development or updating of learning materials in hard copy or online through gathering and collation of course materials.
 - Assisting in monitoring student progress e.g. completing short reports (e.g. laboratory reports) on a student for the supervising academic.
 - Supporting students by providing drop-in sessions to assist with the preparation of projects/presentations etc.
 - Providing occasional formal lectures on areas within their own specialist expertise.
 - Depending on the nature of the activity, to assist in conducting risk assessments and ensuring that health and safety precautions are adhered to.

4 Training and mentoring

Training

- 4.1 No GTA shall undertake any teaching duties without having first successfully completed an appropriate training induction programme, as defined by the School/Institute. The School/Institute must arrange for attendance at the training sessions by any PGR students whom they wish to use as GTAs for the first time. It is the responsibility of the relevant School/Institute to ensure that such training has been completed.

The training will comprise:

- a) Compulsory centrally-delivered generic core session(s) (see section 4.2 below), and also

- b) School/Institute-specific training that will be delivered at local level (see sections 4.3 and 4.4 below). This training will be defined by the School/Institute e.g. in relation to additional duties.

4.2 *Compulsory centrally delivered core training:*

This core training should equip the GTAs with the skills required to carry out effectively the teaching duties that they will be undertaking and should include advice on teaching, assessment and giving feedback/providing tutorial support, as appropriate. Relevant UoL Ordinances, Policies (e.g. the Code of Practice on Assessment), Health and Safety and Equality and Diversity procedures must also be covered. Reference to key Human Resource Policies, e.g. regarding expected conduct as a member of UoL, should also be included.

If the student already has achieved a HE teaching qualification, exemption from some elements of the core training may be granted on an individual case-by-case basis².

4.3 *Induction by the School/Institute:*

Induction into the School/Institute's specific approaches to teaching and the various other support activities should include:

- a) Specific training requirements (see section 4.4 of this Policy below) including an appropriate briefing by the module co-ordinator regarding any modules on which the GTA will be assisting with assessment or teaching.
- b) Details of the professional and personal support that will be offered to the GTA in the course of their duties and the role of the School/Institute's PGR Teaching Lead (see section 4.5 below). This is to ensure that GTAs are clear regarding with whom they can raise queries should they have concerns about their GTA activities.

4.4 *Training by the School/Institute:*

In addition to the core training referred to in section 4.2 above, GTAs should receive advice from a designated member of academic staff for each module or activity that they support; this designated member of staff will normally be the module co-ordinator. The designated individual should meet with the GTA to clarify the aims, learning outcomes and content of the programme and the specific modules, the method of assessment to be used, the nature of the teaching required and the support that will be offered by the member of staff. The GTA must be provided with details of the module specifications and any other relevant information relating to the module administration (including access to appropriate electronic resources).

The training provided by the School/Institute must also include, where appropriate, training in the use of any special equipment required for demonstrating or other techniques specific to that School/Institute. This will include informing a GTA of all risks and controls required as an outcome of any risk assessments. This training should also cover any discipline-specific professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements.

The PGR Teaching Lead (see section 4.5 below) is responsible for ensuring that such training and subsequent meetings take place and that the level of required support is provided; in each case they will require a statement to this effect signed by both parties (i.e. the student and School/Institute).

The GTA is required, where appropriate, to attend/observe teaching or demonstrations associated with their session, in order to familiarise themselves with the broad context of their duties.

4.5 *PGR Teaching Lead:*

² A GTA must complete training regarding matters specific to UoL.

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Each School/Institute³ should identify a member of its academic staff to act as PGR Teaching Lead. This individual will take responsibility for all quality assurance issues concerned with the teaching activities of GTAs in that School/Institute including:

- a) Co-ordinating the selection, training and support of the GTAs in their School/Institute.
- b) Communicating on a regular basis with the module co-ordinators whom the GTA is assisting, to ensure appropriate support is in place.
- c) Communicating on a regular basis with the GTA to discuss any specific concerns arising from their duties.
- d) Facilitating ongoing support of the GTA through access to peer support opportunities.
- e) Helping to address any problems arising from their activities and refer any matters to the appropriate academic lead⁴.

4.6 UoL aims to broaden and enrich the academic experience of PGR students and may offer additional special events e.g. networking and professional skill courses centrally or within the School/Institute, which GTAs can access in order to enhance their professional development.

Mentoring and review of GTA activities

Mentoring:

4.7 The PGR Teaching Lead (see also section 4.5 above) will ensure that:

- a) The GTA has received and completed UoL's required central core and School/Institute-level training.
- b) The GTA has met with the designated academic member of staff to discuss the initial specific requirements of their teaching duties.
- c) The GTA has been advised of any reasonable adjustments identified as part of an assessment of need for a disabled student that they will be engaged in teaching.
- d) The GTA has received constructive feedback on their performance from the module co-ordinator or another member of the academic staff.
- e) Peer support mechanisms are in place e.g. regular meetings of GTAs are convened to pool ideas, discuss teaching methods, problems and solutions. (A member of academic staff could be present at such meetings to offer advice and facilitate feedback).
- f) A record of duties undertaken by the GTA is maintained.

Review:

4.8 By the School/Institute:

- a) There must be a clear procedure in the School/Institute for reviewing the professional development and performance of the GTA at least annually. This should include feedback forms from the module co-ordinator, evidence of the monitoring overview

³ Or Department if nominated by the School/Institute

⁴ If related to the GTA's studies then referral should be to the School/Institute in which they are a registered PGR student. If regarding GTA teaching activities referral should be to the School/Institute in which they are acting as a GTA

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by the PGR Teaching Lead and evidence of observation/supervision of the GTA's activities at an early stage of their performance.

- b) Feedback on performance should be provided to a GTA in a timely manner, in order to enhance their ongoing teaching and other GTA commitments. Constructive support regarding the provision of further teaching support, if required, should be included in the feedback.

4.9 By the GTA:

- a) The GTA must be provided with a mechanism (e.g. questionnaire) to provide feedback to the School/Institute Director of Postgraduate Studies (SDPR/IDPR) both on initial training received and also any issues arising from their GTA duties (including supervision and support of their activities). Issues arising from the feedback will be considered by the School/Institute as part of their annual review and also discussed by the Faculty PGR Committee on an annual basis with items forwarded for consideration by PGR Committee as appropriate.
- b) The GTA should also be provided with the opportunity to share ideas and resources, feedback on the module, teaching methods and assessment. Feedback from GTAs teaching within a School/Institute and any issues arising should be considered, as appropriate, through the normal module review procedures.

4.10 Activities undertaken by a GTA must be recorded appropriately. As a minimum, the GTA should receive from the Dean of School/Institute a formal statement of the work performed.

5 Supervision of a PGR student's studies if they are also acting as a GTA.

- 5.1 In accordance with the Policy on Research Student Supervision (Appendix 2 of the PGR CoP) during their time at UoL the GTA will study under the guidance of a Supervisor, who has been appointed in accordance with section 3 of Appendix 2.
- 5.2 UoL should show due regard to the student's personal research workload and ensure that any engagement in a teaching support capacity will not endanger the student's ability to complete their PGR programme within the time permitted by UoL (in its Ordinances) and, where applicable, any funding agency. Accordingly, a student's Primary Supervisor should confirm that the proposed activities as a GTA are appropriate and would not be detrimental to the student's studies. Funding agencies may also have more stringent requirements – see section 8.3c below for further details.
- 5.3 The impact on a PGR student's progress in their studies of their GTA activities will be monitored by the Primary Supervisor on an ongoing basis and included in the annual progress monitoring process.

6 Responsibilities of the School/Institute in which the PGR student is undertaking GTA activities

It is the responsibility of the Dean of School/Institute to ensure that:

- 6.1 The requirements of this Policy are observed, and usually a named, senior member of academic staff (e.g. PGR Teaching Lead) should be identified as having direct responsibility for this.
- 6.2 The PGR student's Primary Supervisor has been consulted and approved the appointment of their student as a GTA.

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- 6.3 The GTA has been provided with the relevant agreement, which clearly sets out the terms of their activities (see section 8.1 below).
- 6.4 An assessment is made of the teaching capability of any GTA before they start teaching, including their ability to communicate clearly and effectively. The GTA must have successfully completed the required training prior to commencing any teaching or other support duties.
- 6.5 A risk assessment of laboratory and/or field-based activities is carried out in accordance with UoL and School/Institute procedures, where appropriate.
- 6.6 The GTA has been informed of the contact details of their PGR Teaching Lead.
- 6.7 The GTA has appropriate access to the relevant members of academic staff, whom they will be assisting.
- 6.8 The GTA is provided with the relevant resources, course materials, support and, access to electronic systems adequate to fulfil their teaching/demonstration responsibilities.
- 6.9 The GTA's performance has been monitored appropriately and that the GTA has been provided with the appropriate mechanisms for providing their own feedback (in accordance with section 4.9 above).
- 6.10 At the conclusion of their activities the GTA is provided with a statement of their achievements.

7 Responsibilities of a GTA

It is the responsibility of a PGR student who is a GTA to:

- 7.1 Become familiar with the various professional and specialist services for students, particularly in relation to health, counselling, finance, disability and immigration. See section 10 for sources of further information.
- 7.2 Be prepared to receive critical feedback on their work. They are entitled to expect, however, that any feedback will be provided in a constructive and supportive way.
- 7.3 Obtain initial permission from their Primary Supervisor to undertake these duties and on an ongoing basis to continue with GTA activities. In addition to ensure that any external funding agency supporting their PGR studies permits GTA activities to be undertaken. If the conditions imposed by a sponsor in relation to teaching activities are different from those set out in this Policy, then the sponsor's conditions or accepted practices should prevail, provided that the maximum of fifteen hours per week workload limit is not exceeded, in accordance with the relevant Ordinance governing their programme of study.
- 7.4 Complete the required training.
- 7.5 Ensure, if they are an international student, that they comply with any UKVI requirements regarding their student status.
- 7.6 Maintain an atmosphere which is conducive to the promotion of an environment for discussion and active learning. In carrying out their teaching duties, GTAs will have appropriate regard to UoL's commitment to equality and diversity. See Human Resources 'Code of Ethics' – web link in section 10.
- 7.7 Be up-to-date with module or research materials in order to be of appropriate assistance to students and keep abreast of current literature in the subject areas being taught.

- 7.8 Plan and prioritise their own workload, including preparation time for their GTA activities.
- 7.9 Consult with relevant academic colleagues concerning their duties and ensure that it is consistent with the requirements as detailed in the agreement (see section 8.1 below) e.g. regarding assessment, provision of feedback to students, demonstrating sessions.
- 7.10 Participate in the student feedback mechanisms that the School/Institute employs to monitor teaching. Report any concerns/issues regarding the module or laboratory sessions at the time to the relevant academic colleague.
- 7.11 Attend appropriate Boards of Studies and other meetings as specified by the School/Institute e.g. teaching away-days relevant to their teaching activities.

8 Engagement of a GTA

Agreement

- 8.1 Prior to commencing their activities as a GTA, PGR students should be issued with a letter of agreement, normally before the start date. The agreement will require the signature of the PGR student, their Primary Supervisor and the Dean of School/Institute in which the student will be undertaking GTA activities.

The agreement must include:

- a) Confirmation of the terms and conditions regarding the activities, including duration of the agreement and maximum and minimum hours of engagement. The actual hours of work may vary depending on the operational requirements of UoL.
 - b) A role description specifying their duties and those of supervising/mentoring academics.
 - c) Where teaching activity is on UoL property a GTA is not entitled to expenses for the cost of travelling to the campus.
 - d) Training requirements and support.
 - e) Quality assurance procedures related to performance of their GTA duties.
 - f) Right of both parties to revoke the agreement. If either party wishes to terminate the undertaking of the agreed GTA activities they will be required to give a reasonable period of notice to the other party.
- 8.2 No School/Institute may request that an appointed GTA should undertake any unreasonable amount of teaching or assessment activity, informally, outside of the agreement unless by mutual consent.

Whilst one-off teaching requirements for developmental purposes may be agreed, requirements for systematic teaching engagements outside of the agreed GTA activity schedule should either be avoided or added to the GTA's agreed activities.

- 8.3 Maximum hours of engagement:

- a) In accordance with the relevant UoL Ordinances for PGR students, unless otherwise restricted to fewer hours by the terms of any sponsorship agreement, and subject to any restrictions on a student's visa, full time students whilst on a PhD programme may undertake other work for up to an average of 15 hours per week (including

- teaching and preparation duties, which are subject to approval by the relevant Dean of School/Institute or Department).
- b) For PGR students studying on a part-time basis the maximum hours of engagement should be agreed with the student's PGR supervisory team.
 - c) Some sponsoring bodies (e.g. Research Councils, Charities) may impose particular conditions regarding teaching activities. All PGR students funded by such bodies are required to make themselves aware of these requirements and observe the limits imposed.
 - d) The maximum number of hours permitted includes preparation time and marking of assessments.
 - e) When submitting their application to be a GTA, International students are required to conform with any UKVI regulations related to their student status.
 - f) Where some flexibility in the number of hours post-thesis submission may be granted this does not diminish a student's responsibility to complete modifications or make a re-submission on time. Pressures of GTA activities would not normally be sufficient reason to justify lack of progress in a student's study or failure to comply with (re-)submission deadlines.

8.4 Allocation of work to a GTA

The School/Institute should normally provide a GTA with a timetable for the forthcoming Semester or academic year and request the GTA to confirm acceptance of their allocated activities.

UoL is not obliged to provide any reason for not requesting an individual GTA to undertake specific activities.

- 8.5 GTAs are subject to UoL's Human Resources (HR) Department's Code of Ethics (see HR web link in section 10). A GTA is responsible for making appropriate declarations about any relationships which exist between themselves and students with whom they are involved in teaching, as any relationship may affect the nature and scope of the duties which it is appropriate for them to carry out. Under normal circumstances a GTA should not conduct an assessment of a student's work where they have a relationship with the student through kinship (whether by blood, marriage, civil partnership or common law), or a business relationship.

9 Procedures for engagement of a GTA

Appointment process

- 9.1 The appointment process should be undertaken having regard to the guidance provided by HR regarding normal selection good practice (see HR web link).

Approval of the written request

- 9.2 All GTAs must demonstrate an appropriate standard of English communication skills appropriate to the role.
- 9.3 As a GTA may be undertaking a variety of teaching support activities requiring high levels of face-to-face interaction with students, the School/Institute must satisfy itself as to the suitability of the student to undertake specific GTA activities.

Selection should include consideration of any associated access to specific specialist facilities

- 9.4 The PGR administration team in the relevant School/Institute must retain a record of a signed copy of the agreement along with the original request and any supporting documentation.

During the period of a GTA's activities

- 9.5 In the case of any dispute over the implementation of the agreement, the matter should first be considered by the Dean of School/Institute in which the teaching support takes place.
- 9.6 Where the School/Institute has concerns that the GTA is not fulfilling their duties effectively, they will make arrangements to discuss their concerns with the GTA and agree appropriate remedies. Where, following such meetings, the GTA's performance does not improve to the required standard, the School/Institute may terminate the GTA's activities.
- 9.7 If, following an initial appropriate investigation, the School/Institute considers that a GTA might have committed misconduct during the period of their activities as a GTA UoL will handle the matter under its disciplinary conduct procedures.

Conclusion of Teaching duties

- 9.8 UoL may discontinue the engagement of a GTA in the following circumstances:
- a) Where it is identified that their GTA activities are interfering with the PGR student's studies.
 - b) If the GTA regularly fails to carry out teaching activities, which they have accepted as part of their agreement, without providing prior notice.
 - c) If the standard of performance/conduct is deemed to be unsatisfactory by the Dean of School/Institute (or nominee) (see section 9.6 above).

In these circumstances the student will be notified in writing, giving the reasons for terminating their activities.

10 Sources of further information

- [The PGR Code of Practice](#)
- [Academic Quality Support Division](#)
- [Human Resources](#)
- [Guild of Students Advice Service](#)
- [UK Visas and Immigration](#)
- [International Advice and Guidance](#)
- [PGR Handbook](#)