Guidelines on the nature of teaching expectations and the process of allocating teaching opportunities to postgraduate research students.

It is recognized that teaching and learning activities delivered by postgraduate research students are invaluable for intellectual growth and transformation of our undergraduate students.

Postgraduate research students bring a fresh and dynamic perspective to learning. Their proximity to innovative research trends and academic debates infuses undergraduate teaching with a sense of reality and relevance and bridges the gap between theory and practice.

The opportunity to participate in teaching provides an important pedagogical experience for research students. By enhancing their communication, presentation, and time management skills, research students develop key competencies in preparation for diverse career paths after the PhD.

Postgraduate students make a significant contribution to the delivery of undergraduate programmes and in some departments their activities are essential for the continued delivery of the undergraduate curriculum.

Postgraduate research students, however, already grapple with the demands of their own research, writing, and presentations. Adding teaching responsibilities to this mix can lead to time constraints, potential burnout, and a dilution of the depth of their research.

Striking a balance becomes crucial. How can postgraduate students thrive intellectually, preserve the integrity of research progression and develop multi-dimensional skills without sacrificing their financial well-being?

The goal of this document is to **provide consistent baselines for what should constitute an appropriate teaching experience for postgraduate research students**, to ensure transparency across the University and to facilitate equal access to teaching opportunities while protecting and preserving the integrity of postgraduate research progression.

In summary, Schools are requested to:

a) Clearly outline the duties expected of each student involved in teaching and detail them in School or Discipline handbooks.

b) Communicate teaching opportunities clearly and offer these equally to all interested postgraduate research students within the School or Discipline.

c) Specify which teaching activities are covered in the hourly reimbursement and ensure prompt, direct payment for student teaching.

d) Appoint a designated staff contact who coordinates teaching opportunities and monitors postgraduate teaching workloads.

e) Support graduate teaching assistants and demonstrators through training, induction, and recognition of their teaching contributions.

1.1   Types of Teaching Activities

Practices vary widely across Schools or even Disciplines in part because of the needs and disciplinary norms of different areas. As a result, top-down prescriptions on the nature of teaching should be avoided and it is important to ensure autonomy and flexibility for Schools to provide postgraduate teaching appropriate to the disciplinary norms.

Schools must clearly define and categorise the range of duties expected for each student engaging in teaching activities within a specific School or Discipline. These guidelines should be outlined in School handbooks and communicated to the postgraduate community.
Schools should ensure that all teaching and learning opportunities offered to postgraduate research students have a clear pedagogical rationale, providing the chance to develop multidimensional skills. Such teaching and learning opportunities should be clearly communicated to all research students and directly paid for. Schools should appoint a designated member of staff to be the contact person for all such opportunities.

Table 1 outlines the proposed examples of activities that are considered appropriate or not appropriate for postgraduate teachers to engage in. These examples may need to be adapted by individual Disciplines to reflect the nature of the opportunities that are available and that are valued within that Discipline.

What is _essential_ is that students have access to clear information about what kinds of activities are considered appropriate within that context.

Table 1: Examples of activities postgraduate research students should and should not be encouraged to do.

Examples of teaching activities PG research students should be encouraged to do:	Examples of teaching activities PG research students should not be encouraged to do:
Giving tutorials/seminars for UG (or in some cases PG) students.	Having responsibility for regularly setting tutorial topics.
Assisting in lab/practical demonstration classes.	Developing essay questions.
Giving 'guest'/occasional lectures related to their area of expertise.	Regularly teaching at Master's level. Additional consideration is advised if/when allocating teaching opportunities at the Master's level.
Contributing to field trips.	Teaching if there are restrictions placed on teaching or paid employment by external funding bodies (students should not teach more than the hours mandated by the Revenue Commissioners to maintain their tax-free stipend i.e., more than six hours per week[1]).
Holding office hours where appropriate.	Delivering content that requires extensive preparation time that is not separately remunerated.
Marking assignments and/or in course exams	Co-ordinating, convening or teaching modules independently (at any level).

If a School is in doubt about the possibility of allowing a specific aspect of teaching and/or assessment by a research student, these cases should be discussed with the Dean of Graduate Studies.

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[1] The six hours do not need to be equally distributed across each week.

1.2   What defines a Teaching Hour?

Each School/Discipline must clearly define what aspects of teaching are covered in the hourly reimbursement (see Nature of Expectations below).

1.3   Limits on Teaching Time

Each School should ensure that any opportunities for teaching preserve the integrity of the research progression and do not endanger the prospect of a student completing their doctoral programme within the time set by the University and funding agencies.

Section 193 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (TCA) provides that income arising from a scholarship is exempt from income tax.
The scholarship must be held by a person receiving full-time instruction at a university, college, school or other educational establishment.

Mirroring guidelines from funding agencies, and in line with sectoral understandings of the guidelines from Revenue, the practice of permitting students to engage in no more **than 6 hours per week** of teaching under the terms of the scholarship is accepted as qualifying for the tax exemption. This amounts to **no more than 150 teaching hours per year.**

When allocating teaching to non-EU students, additional consideration should be given to ensure that the students' teaching workload does not compromise their visa status. Similarly, consideration should be given to the student's year of candidacy and progress on their research which can be provided by the student's Thesis Committee if there are any issues in relation to the student's progress.

1.4   The Nature of Expectations

Guidelines should be provided to research students by Schools at local orientation to clarify the expectations in relation to teaching activities. These guidelines may be published in the School Research Handbook and should include:

a) **Defining types of teaching activities that are undertaken in the School;**

b) **Overview of teaching commitments and expectations, including:**

   - The approximate number of hours expected for specific aspects of teaching and marking; these should not exceed 150 hours per year.

c) **Payment for the teaching / demonstrating work should be clearly outlined:**
   - Rates for teaching/demonstrating work (*Trinity Rates for Occasional Work* are available on the HR website: https://www.tcd.ie/hr/assets/pdf/occasional-lecturer-rates.pdf);
   - Rates for marking;
   - Number of expected hours per activity;

d) Payment for teaching / demonstrating work should be promptly processed.

Claim forms should be submitted to a designated individual within the School before the last working day of the month for students to be paid at the end of the following month – e.g. claims submitted by 31st October will be paid on the last working day of November.

Schools may operate their own internal deadlines and students are encouraged to consult with their School contact person to learn more.

Postgraduate research students who provide teaching or demonstrating activities can request access to itemised payslips via the CORE portal. To do so, students should contact HR directly at hr@tcd.ie.

e) Training opportunities

- Training should be made available to postgraduate research students before the student engages in teaching activities. Academic Practice offers two 5 ECTS credit modules for Graduate Teaching Assistants. More information is provided on the Academic Practice website.
- Additionally, Schools, through the most relevant individuals e.g., Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), or module coordinators are encouraged to provide an induction for all research students who are engaged in teaching activities in the School for the first time.
- Examples of training include but are not limited to:
  - Tutoring/demonstrating;
  - Health and Safety;
  - Assessment and academic misconduct;
  - Equality, diversity, and inclusion;
  - Marking 'practicals';
  - Overview of pastoral care services available at College level to enable signposting to relevant services if support is needed.

f) Monitoring and Recognising Performance

Schools, through the most relevant individuals e.g., Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) or module coordinators should monitor and provide feedback to postgraduate students on their performance. This can be achieved through:
- Feedback from undergraduate students via module evaluations;
- Teaching observation session and/or annual review;
- Second marking or moderating assignments marked by the postgraduate students;
- Postgraduate students should be encouraged to provide feedback on modules and the support they have received in their role; Schools should provide a way for students to provide their anonymised feedback to module leads.

- Teaching contributions should be recognized and rewarded. This can be achieved by promoting the [Trinity Certificate of Teaching Contributions](#) and Schools nominating students to the annual [Trinity Teaching Award for Postgraduate Research Students.](#)

2. The Process of Allocation of Teaching Responsibilities to Students

The opportunity to participate in teaching is a valuable experience for research students, allowing them to develop additional skills that will be useful in a wide range of careers.

Every postgraduate research student in Trinity College Dublin should have equal opportunity to participate in teaching activities within their School or Discipline.

Schools should ensure that all their research students are provided with information about the opportunities and process of allocating teaching responsibilities.

The guidance should outline the following:

a) Application and Selection Process

Schools should define and communicate the process in place for announcing teaching opportunities and selecting doctoral researchers as teachers. This process should be transparent, with specific selection criteria available for each role.

b) Dissemination of Opportunities

Teaching opportunities should be clearly communicated and made available to postgraduate students as they arise.
Schools should clearly outline the expectations and responsibilities of the opportunity, the approximate time demands required for teaching including class preparation, office hours and marking, and any skills required to teach on the module. The expected skills to be developed by teaching on a module should also be outlined.

c) Defining Selection Criteria

The selection process should be fair and transparent, and students should have fair and equal opportunities to teach if that is what they want.

d) Contact Person to Discuss Teaching Opportunities

Schools should also provide clear information to their students about whom to contact to discuss any concerns related to the opportunities to participate in teaching or their experience of teaching. This should include information about how students can access support if they experience any difficulties while teaching on a module.