Review of policy and practice in supporting postgraduates who teach

Contents

Executive summary

This report provides a review of current policies and practice across the higher education (HE) sector to support postgraduate research students who teach, referred to in this report as graduate teaching assistants (GTAs). The project was commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) with the aims of:

+ supporting the development of Welsh universities as leaders in teaching and learning practice and policy

+ showcasing how institutions can effectively and systematically develop a consistent university-wide approach to the training, support and monitoring of GTAs.

Phase 1

The aim of phase 1 of the project was to undertake a comparative review of policies and practices for supporting and developing graduate teaching assistants across Welsh higher education providers (HEPs) with those in place in higher education institutes (HEIs) across the rest of the UK based on:

+ a review of recent research literature

+ an analysis of policies in place at 12 HEPs/HEIs in the UK, including the two public-facing policies available at Welsh HEPs

+ a survey of all Welsh[1] and other UK[2] providers who support graduate teaching assistants, exploring policy and practice

+ the Advance HE Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).[3]

The findings from Phase 1 provided a number of propositions for policy and practice which were then sense checked for their relevance to Welsh HEPs through discussion at the roundtable events in Phase 2.

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[1] The survey was distributed directly to key contacts provided by HEFCW in all Welsh HEPs

[2] The survey was also circulated via the Advance HE Accredited Scheme Leaders' Network, the GTA Developer Network and the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA)

[3] PRES is available at www.advance-he.ac.uk/reports-publications-and-resources/postgraduate-research-experience-survey-pres

Phase 2

The policy and practice propositions emerging from Phase 1 were used to inform discussions with institutional leaders and practitioners within the teaching and learning community within Wales, institutional postgraduate research directors, and current and recent postgraduate research students who teach within Wales. The purpose of the roundtables was to take feedback on the policy and practice propositions in the context of the research findings. The roundtables provided an opportunity for stakeholders from Welsh HEPs to reflect on policy and development practice and help consolidate and develop recommendations for Welsh HEPs.

This report provides the outcomes of the analysis, supplemented by vignettes illustrating good practice in the development of GTAs from across the UK and reflections from the roundtable discussions.

Key findings

1. Supporting the teaching practice of GTAs is critical to assuring the quality of teaching provision and the professional development of GTAs.
2. Support can be provided in diverse ways, broadly classified under training and development, and experiential learning.
3. Developing formal programmes to train and accredit GTAs needs to be adequately and equitably resourced.
4. At least three Welsh HEPs provide GTAs with opportunity to attain Advance HE Associate Fellowship through an accredited programme, one offers this provision in the Welsh language.
5. Innovative approaches to providing wider educational opportunities can be transformative for both the GTAs and the students they teach.
6. Evidence suggests that gaining professional recognition and/or experiencing wider educational opportunities can enhance employability prospects.
7. Institutions must ensure that equitable, accessible and inclusive approaches are taken to providing teaching and development opportunities for all postgraduate researchers who wish to teach.

Recommendations

Policy

The following recommendations on policy for Welsh HEPs have emerged from this research:

1. Provide equitable and transparent recruitment and selection processes for teaching opportunities.
2. Provide clarity on pay, terms and conditions.
3. Include GTA representation in committees with a teaching remit.
4. Review how policy and practices relating to GTA development are implemented when devolved to faculties, to share ideas on good practice and address any inconsistencies.

Practice

The following approaches to enhancing development practice are recommended for Welsh HEPs:

1. Undertake institutional Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) monitoring of engagement with development and outcomes in order to support strategic equality plans.
2. Consider facilitating an internal community of practice for GTAs and the staff supporting their professional development to:

   + compare and evaluate devolved implementation of policies relating to GTA development

   + explore wider educator/educational opportunities for developing postgraduate researchers as GTAs

   + share ideas on good practice

   + develop a shared understanding of the purpose of GTA development opportunities.

3. Consider the benefits and challenges of providing opportunities to gain professional recognition through an accredited programme.
4. Consider collaborating with other Welsh HEPs to offer opportunities to gain professional recognition using the Welsh language.
5. Consider building a GTA network for GTAs and staff supporting their professional development across Wales, explore potential opportunities for partnership projects within and between institutions, and engage with the wider GTA community to identify good practice.

1. Introduction

This report was commissioned from Advance HE by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), with the aim of:

+ supporting the development of Welsh universities as leaders in teaching and learning practice and policy

+ showcasing how institutions can effectively and systematically develop a consistent university-wide approach to the training, support and monitoring of postgraduate research students **(PGRs[4])** when they are engaged in teaching and assessment.

It provides an overview of current policy and practice in relation to postgraduate researchers who teach (**referred to hereafter as GTAs[5]**). It draws from data gathered from a number of primary and secondary sources between September and November 2021 as well as discussions with relevant staff and GTAs from eight Welsh higher education providers (HEPs). Its purpose is to provide the Welsh higher education (HE) sector with findings and recommendations to inform policy and practice.

1.1 Data sources

A survey[6] (henceforth referred to as 'Survey'), designed to capture a baseline of current policy and practice, was circulated within the UK HE sector via several relevant networks – Advance HE's Accredited Programme Leaders' Network, the Graduate Teaching Assistants Developers' Network, the Staff and Educational Developers' Association (SEDA) Network. It was also sent directly to all Welsh HEPs via contacts received from HEFCW.

Table 1: Demographics of Survey respondents

Origin	Count
England	14
Wales	5
Scotland	3
NI	1

[4] We use the term PGR to refer to the postgraduate research student community

[5] We use the term GTA when discussing policy and practice relating to postgraduate researchers in their teaching roles

[6] The Survey was reviewed by Advance HE Research Ethics Review Committee and complied with Advance HE's research ethics policy

As this overall study has been commissioned to explore policy and practices in Wales, Table 2 below summarises their engagement.

Table 2. Welsh HEP project participants and evidence base

Welsh higher education provider	Web-based information	Survey response	Policy access provided	PRES participant (years)	Roundtable participation
Aberystwyth University	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Bangor University	Yes			20,21	Yes
Cardiff Metropolitan University	Yes			20,21	Yes
Cardiff University		Yes		21	Yes
Swansea University		Yes	Yes		Yes
University of South Wales		Yes		20,21	Yes
University of Wales Trinity Saint David's	Yes			20	
Wrexham Glyndŵr University		Yes			Yes

Twenty-five[7] responses were received. These have been anonymised.

The Survey respondents across the UK represent a range of HEPs/HEIs drawn from various mission groups (Russell Group: nine; pre-1992: eight; University Alliance: four; Ancient: two; Guild HE: one) and with approximate total PGR numbers ranging from 68 to 7,000. The majority of responses were provided by staff who have responsibility for the teaching development of GTAs.

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) was used to gain insight into the recent GTA experience (Advance HE, 2021). PRES is a paid-for service offered to Advance HE members. It is the largest analysis of its kind; in 2021 PRES included almost 40,000

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[7] Two HEIs/HEPs responded twice

responses from postgraduate researchers studying at 94 institutions. Most, though not all, Welsh HEPs use PRES.

A scan of policies identified in the Survey and additionally through a search of HEI/HEP grey literature was also undertaken. A review of relevant published literature was also used to establish context. Additionally, to gain an understanding of the current postgraduate researcher experience, a review of recent PRES data was undertaken.

Invitations to participate in one of two roundtables were issued to all HEPs in Wales. These were attended by a total of 14 participants, from seven providers (Table 2).

Participants included institutional leaders and practitioners within the teaching and learning community, postgraduate research directors, and current and recent postgraduate research students.

The roundtable discussions addressed the following:

+ findings from Phase 1

+ enhancement discussions

   – reflections on policy
   – reflections on development practice

The report draws from the data and is organised in six sections:

+ context relating to GTAs drawn from current literature

+ student feedback

+ how policy is used to establish expectations and conditions around the engagement, development and quality assurance of GTAs teaching and employment

+ how GTAs are supported and developed as early-career educators

+ enhancement discussions

+ recommendations for policy and practice.

Figure 1. Summary of the research process and the development of recommendations
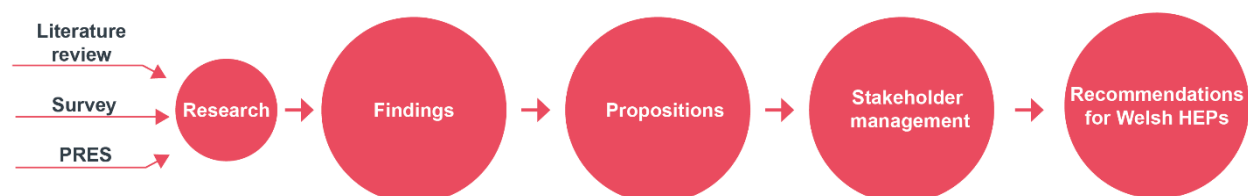
2. Context

2.1 Postgraduate researchers and educator development

Previously, undertaking postgraduate research study was perceived as a necessary apprenticeship for subsequent careers in academia (QAA, 2020). However, the last decade has seen a significant shift from the elite few achieving this highest-level qualification to the massification of global postgraduate researcher opportunities. Commensurate with this, early career opportunities in academia have become scarcer, more demanding in their expectations and often precarious in nature (Pitt and Mewburn, 2016). Regardless of this changing context, a significant proportion of postgraduate researchers (PGRs) continue to visualise themselves as career academics (Beaton, 2017; Chadha, 2013; Edwards et al, 2011).

2.1.1 UK quality assurance guidance

It is important to reflect on quality assurance from two perspectives. Firstly, how do HEPs/HEIs assure the quality of teaching that taught undergraduate and postgraduate students experience, particularly when this is provided by those with less experience than those in established teaching roles. The QAA Quality Code for HE (Learning and Teaching) (QAA, 2018a) sets out guiding principles and advice. Relevant to this report it states that:

> "Providers ensure that part-time and associate tutors, including graduate teaching assistants and visiting lecturers, have the necessary support for teaching and assessing students both formatively and summatively."
>
> (QAA, 2018a, 8)

Secondly, the QAA (2020) states in its Characteristics Statement for Doctoral Degrees that "doctoral graduates are able to prepare, plan and manage their own career development while knowing when and where to draw on support" (2020, 5). In the Quality Code, Advice and Guidance Theme: Research Degrees (2018b), Guiding Principle 4 states that "Research students are afforded opportunities for professional development". These provide a guiding framework for HEPs/HEIs and highlight the relevance and value in considering how best they can support PGRs to develop their educator skills and capabilities aligned with their aspirations. Winstone and Moore (2017) reflect on the third space that GTAs operate in as being "sometimes fish, sometimes fowl". Their study asserts that "an emphasis on the GTA role as part of an 'academic apprenticeship' journey might assist GTAs to conceptualise their own development more positively" (2017, 500). This is endorsed in the study by Greer, Cathcart and Neale (2016) of an award-winning Australian development programme for GTAs, designed to support self-efficacy as early career educators enter their first academic post.

Additionally, as the number of postgraduate researchers has increased, there has been increased use of them as part of the part-time, precarious teaching workforce (Raaper,

2018; UCU, 2016). This raises important questions around how we can quality assure the teaching they provide while also supporting their development as effective educators and for future employability.

## 2.1.2 Do you need a teaching qualification to teach in HE?

The traditional role of a university has long been viewed as one which embodies academic freedom and autonomy: academic staff are recognised as discipline experts and there has been no requirement for them to undertake a formal teaching qualification (Blackmore et al, 2010, 106). However, the last 20 years or so has seen a shift in the perception of what constitutes the role of a higher education institution (HEI), and the question of professionalism in the sector has come under closer scrutiny on several levels (Higher Education Academy and GENIE CETL, 2009, 23).

From a wider UK perspective there is evidence that professionalism in higher education has been identified as an important issue since 1987, when the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals[8] (CVCP, later to become Universities UK), called for lecturers "to maintain and enhance professional standards in teaching" (CVCP, 1987, 5). Ten years later, Dearing (1997) recognised that the future of higher education in the UK was dependent on the professionalism and commitment of its staff and recommended that "institutions of higher education begin immediately to develop or seek access to programmes for teacher training of their staff, if they do not have them, and that all institutions seek national accreditation of such programmes" (Dearing, 1997, Recommendation 13). Policymaking in UK higher education is now a devolved responsibility with separate decision-making responsibilities. However, it is clear that sector scanning to share and learn from each other and adopt good practice is valuable.

In 2003, the English UK Government white paper, The Future of Higher Education (DfES, 2003) – in anticipation of the professional standards to be agreed – expected "all new teaching staff to obtain a teaching qualification which meets the standards from 2006" and the development of institutional "policies and systems to ensure that all staff are engaged in continuing professional development to maintain, develop and update their skills" (DfES, 2003, 50). Although this white paper was not applicable to the other home nations, it has still influenced policy and practice due to the mobility of students and staff across the UK HE sector. This is illustrated by the relative proportion of staff who have achieved Fellowship in each of the home nations (Figure 2).

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[8] Now UUK from December 2000

Figure 2. Relative proportion of academic staff who have achieved Advance HE Fellowship in each of the home nations.

■ Northern Ireland ■ Wales ■ England ■ Scotland
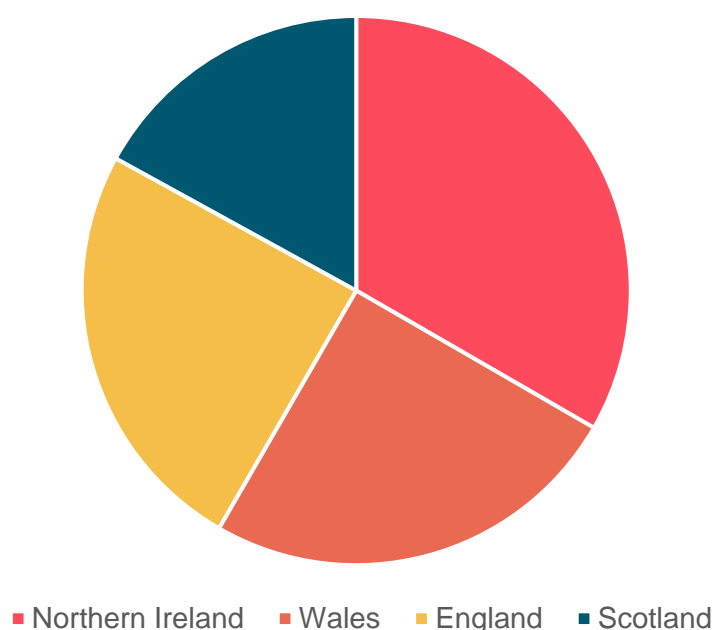
This was further endorsed in the 2011 UK Government white paper (BIS, 2011) and more recently in the 2016 UK Government white paper (BIS, 2016). In this iteration of English policy, it is suggested that there is a need to identify and measure teaching excellence and to redress historical imbalances in the status of teaching and research:

> "The quality of teaching should be among the key drivers of a prospective student's investment. Great teaching increases the likelihood of good outcomes. There are providers where employment outcomes are significantly above the sector-accepted benchmark and others that are significantly below the benchmark. Clearly, good-quality teaching makes a difference. But for too long, we have funded teaching on the basis of quantity, not quality. This is in sharp contrast to research, with its quality-driven funding stream allocated through the Research Excellence Framework. This has led to teaching being the poor cousin of research in significant parts of English higher education."

(BIS, 2016, 43)

The aim is that this is addressed, within England, through the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework.[9] These developments have clear and strategic implications for the professionalism of staff, as well as for institutions, as these achievements may not

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[9] www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/about-the-tef/

only be useful in supporting the development of excellent and effective pedagogic practices but may be used as a metric-based proxy for teaching quality. HEFCW has a commitment to preserve the sense of a UK-wide quality system and for Welsh institutions to participate in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework if they wish.[10] Therefore, building a narrative of its commitment to developing the quality of their educator workforce is key.

In the European context, the High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education (HLGMHE) supports this renewed emphasis on the importance of quality higher education teaching across Europe, recommending in its 2013 report that "Every institution should develop and implement a strategy for the support and ongoing improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, devoting the necessary level of human and financial resources to the task, and integrating this priority in its overall mission, giving teaching due parity with research" (HLGMHE, 2013). It further recommends that "all staff teaching in higher education institutions in 2020 should have received certified pedagogical training. Continuous professional education as teachers should become a requirement for teachers in the higher education sector." HEFCW makes clear that in supporting the quality of the learning experience of its students it is important to keep pace with international developments.

The advent of the UK Professional Standards Framework in 2006 (Higher Education Academy, 2011), developed in consultation with the sector, allows institutions to align their professional development programmes to a series of descriptors to ensure that teaching and learning standards are being met. A sector-wide understanding of the extent of the professional development needs of those new to teaching and learning is well established within the UK, leading to the establishment of postgraduate certificates in higher education teaching practice aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (Higher Education Academy, 2011). Co-terminus achievement of Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) is commonly achieved with successful completion of such courses. Currently there are approximately 200 taught programmes offered at UK institutions that provide opportunities for staff to gain Associate Fellowship (Descriptor 1) or Fellowship (Descriptor 2) of the HEA. There is also a growing international offer (Table 3).

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[10] www.hefcw.ac.uk/en/regulation/quality/

Table 3. Advance HE – Descriptor 1 and Descriptor 2 accredited taught programmes (at 3 December 2021)

Country	Descriptor 1	Descriptor 2	Total programmes
England	125	153	278
Scotland	16	16	32
Northern Ireland	5	2	7
Wales	15	12	27
UK	161	183	344
Overseas	16	15	31
Total by Descriptor	177	198	375

The predominant focus of such provision has historically been on developing current, inexperienced and usually permanent academic staff as educators during the early stage of their careers. However, shifts in many employment opportunities are now setting expectations for teaching qualifications and substantive teaching experience as a pre-requisite for shortlisting, let alone employment. Pitt and Mewburn's 2016 study of Australian academic job descriptions attributed the changes they identified to increased competition for jobs. They encapsulated the challenging requirements revealed in their analysis as "the new academic we see figured in the data is a multi-talented, always ready and available worker that we have started to label the 'academic super-hero', capable of being everything to everyone and leaping over 24 key selection criteria in a single job application" (2016, 99). Their study identified the primacy of research outputs in job descriptions with teaching being mentioned in the majority of adverts. They concluded by reflecting on the challenge to many applicants in achieving the "breadth of experience asked for in many of the adverts" (96).

Floyd and Davies (2019) reported on recruitment expectations for early career academics within the UK. Applicants were typically expected to have a proven track record of higher education teaching with a small number specifying this should include postgraduate teaching. Some also mentioned experience of curriculum development, quality management and enhancement in HE. Interestingly, a third of adverts reviewed had set desirable criteria for applicants to hold an HE teaching qualification or HEA fellowship. Heijstra et al (2017) also comment on the expectation for early career academics to "shine on all fronts of the profession" (2017, 770) in order to prove their place in academia. This often involves being prepared to take on more teaching and administrative responsibilities as well as meeting research output requirements. As evident in the Survey data gathered for this report, most respondents do provide opportunities for GTAs to undertake training and to gain a category of HEA fellowship. However, it is worth reflecting on whether the design of these is predominantly to assure that a GTA is prepared for the typical teaching roles allocated to them, or if it also supports them in their professional development and the requirements of an academic teaching post (Greer, Cathcart and Neale, 2016).

In response to the question posed at the top of this section: do you need a teaching qualification to teach in UK higher education? It would appear that whereas you don't yet 'need' to have a teaching qualification to gain a job in UK academia, you do need substantial teaching experience. This, together with a relevant qualification in your field, may make the difference when desirable criteria are used to shortlist large pools of highly qualified applicants. Many UK universities have an expectation that new academics will undertake a teaching qualification within their probationary period,[11] frequently aligned with FHEA. Starting to acquire teaching experience and recognition during their time as a GTA may ease the transition into academia.

3. Postgraduate researchers' experiences as GTAs

3.1 Quantitative analysis of PRES data

In 2019-20 there were 4,595 postgraduate research students studying in Wales, approximately 4% of the total UK PGR population (HESA, 2022). An analysis of PRES data from 2020 and 2021 shows the number of responses from the five participating Welsh HEPs and from the whole of the UK, indicating that approximately 3% of the responses were from Welsh HEPs (Table 3 and 3a). It was therefore considered that the PRES was representative of the Welsh student experience. Welsh students reported similar opportunities for being involved in teaching or tutoring as their all-UK counterparts (Figure 3). Despite a lower percentage agreeing that they had received formal training for teaching (Figure 4), Welsh students reported higher agreement with the statement that they had been given appropriate support and guidance for their teaching (Figure 5).

Table 3. Number of responses to the PRES from PGRs studying at Welsh and UK HEPs/HEIs

Responses	2020	2021
UK HEIs	8,432	39,895
Welsh HEPs	686	1306

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[11] nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/job-profiles/higher-education-lecturer

Table 3a. Number of responses to the PRES from PGRs by institution.

Response from Welsh HE providers	2020	2021
Bangor University	423	392
Cardiff Metropolitan University	126	129
Cardiff University		579
University of South Wales	137	84
University of Wales Trinity Saint David		122

Figure 3. Responses to Q17 of PRES. Percentage of PGRs who have taught (or demonstrated) during their research degree programme
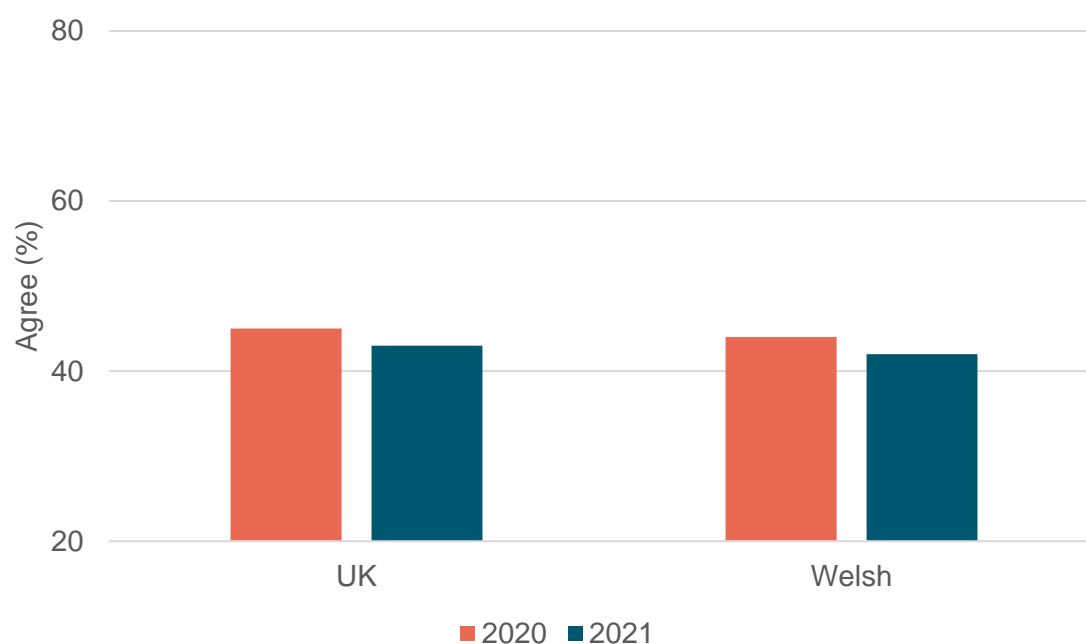
Figure 4. Responses to Q17b. Percentage of PGRs who agree they have received formal training for their teaching
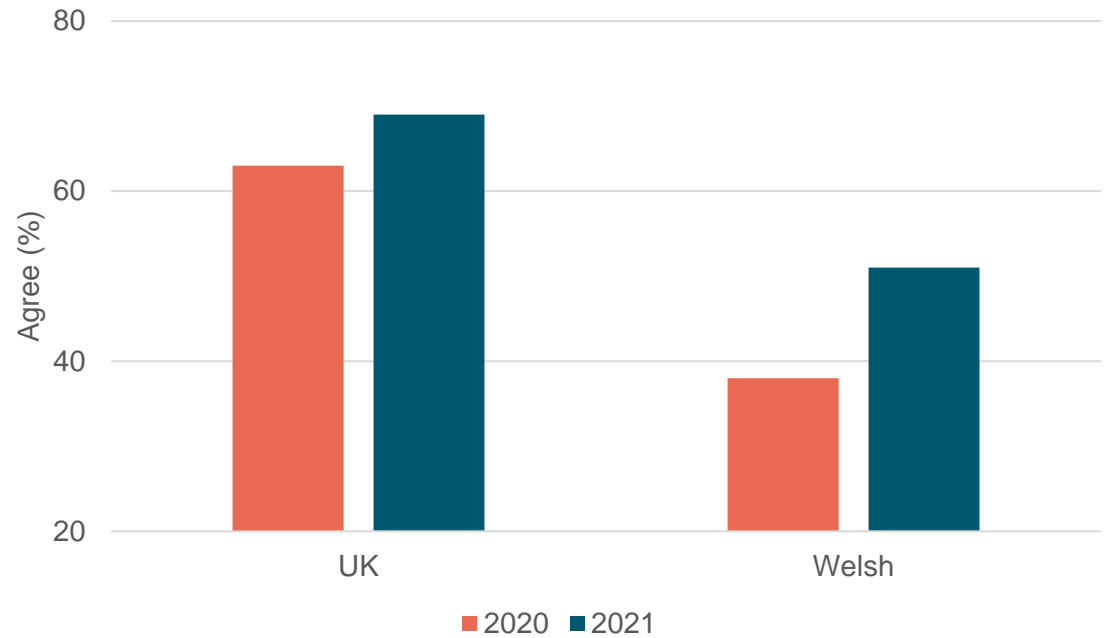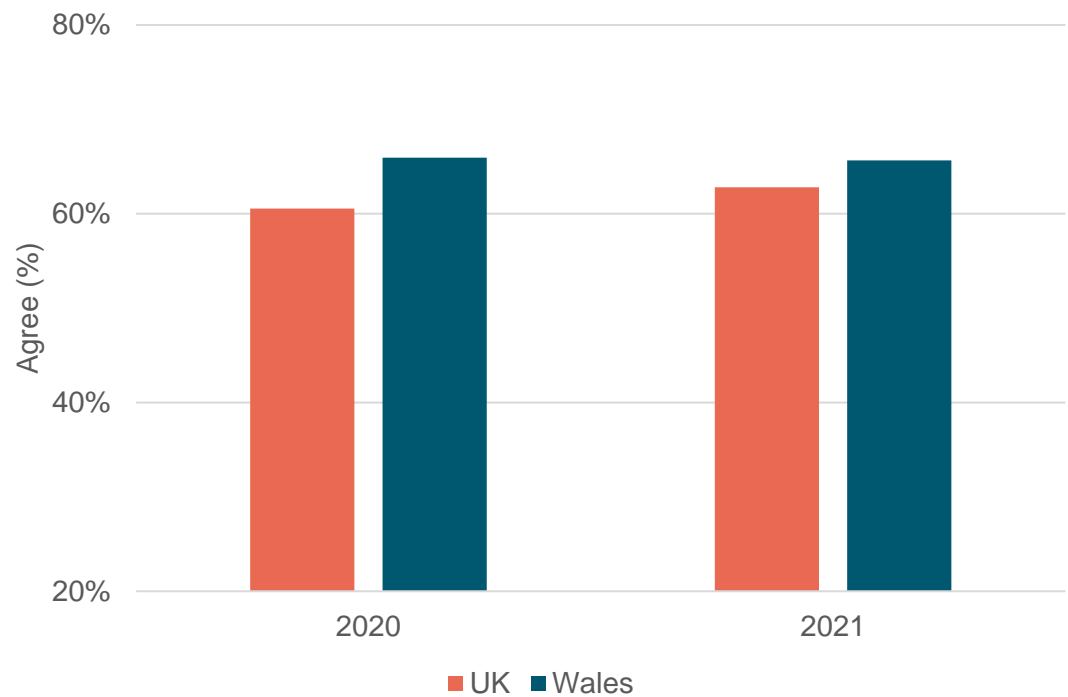

Figure 5. Responses to Q17a of PRES. Percentage of PGRs who agree they have been given appropriate support and guidance for teaching

3.2   Qualitative analysis of PRES data

Qualitative responses from all respondents provided further insight. The results from "Q22. What, if anything, is the one top area in which your experience of your research degree programme so far could be improved?" were classified as to whether they included the word stem 'teach*'. Approximately 2.5% of comments included the stem 'teach'. Of these comments, 4% were from Welsh HEPs, which meant that teaching was mentioned proportionately more often by Welsh PGRs than would be expected by their participation rate in the PRES (3%). These results were further analysed to look for words including opportunities, teaching load/hours, training, pay and support. The results are summarised below. While this is not an exact analysis, the data indicates the relative importance of these factors to improving the teaching experience of GTAs.

PRES respondents highlighted a number of concerns with the training and development they received to support their teaching roles. These are grouped by the following themes and cross-referenced to the mission group and host country:[12]

+   access to teaching opportunities

+   pay for preparation and assessment

+   training opportunities.

Responses were received from Russell Group, post 1992 institutions, University Alliance and the 1994 group from institutions across the UK. Broadly similar issues were being raised by students independent of the mission group or nation of the host institution.

This further reflection from a participant in the Wales roundtable discussion group highlights the particular challenge of GTAs, as distinct from early career researchers or other members of staff with limited teaching experience.

> "I found it particularly challenging going from being a postgraduate researcher to being part of the teaching team. I could be the same age, or younger, than some of the students that I was teaching, and I did not feel like I had the status of being a member of staff, despite being part of the teaching team."

(Postgraduate participant in discussion)

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[12] Only the country is provided for institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to limit the possibility of identification of institution.

3.2.1   Access to teaching opportunities

Several responses highlight the desire to get involved with teaching but there being limited opportunities and/or a lack of clarity around how to find out about them and the processes for applying.

> "…more teaching opportunities. It took me a while to understand how and where to look at the teaching opportunities and in my area are so few places that I wish I could have more or create a more organised system for everybody to get teaching experiences."
>
> (English University Alliance)

> "There has been no opportunity for teaching experience, despite requesting this several times. Each time I raise it as an issue I am told that they are looking into it. This has been the same answer for the past four years. Had I known I would not have been offered teaching experience (despite it clearly being stated in the Research Degree Handbook that teaching is a part of the course) I would not have signed up for the PhD with [this Welsh HEP]."
>
> (Welsh HEP)

> "There is also not enough opportunities for students to engage in other research or teaching, most of the teaching opportunities are not fairly recruited. Depending on one's supervisors, one can have a lot of opportunities or not. Sometimes, I wish I took up a PhD offer I got in [non-UK] where teaching was guaranteed, without any teaching here I feel I made the wrong choice of choosing UK over the [non-UK] PhD offer that I had."
>
> (English 1994 Group)

Figure 6. Analysis of Q22: Responses that included the word stem 'teach' were subjected to a word frequency analysis. The associated words 'opportunities', 'training', 'support' and 'pay' were observed with the highest frequency

■ pay ■ training ■ opportunties ■ support
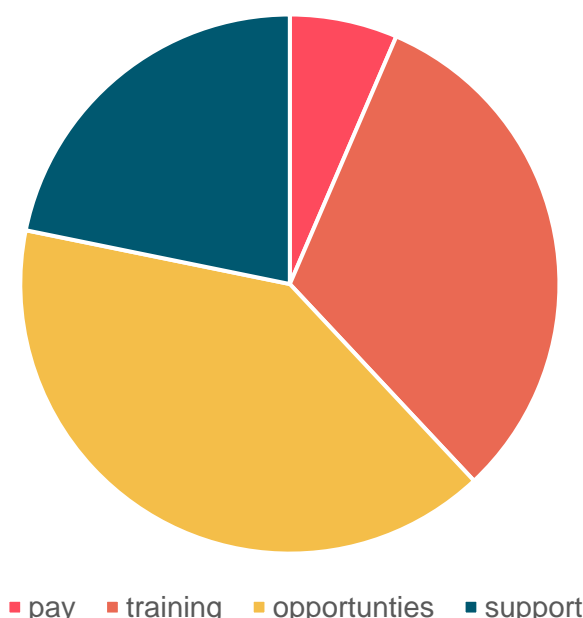
3.2.2   Pay for preparation and assessment

Several responses highlighted concerns around terms and conditions, in particular for hours spent on 'unseen' activities such as preparation and marking. There is a suggestion that there is a need for a system that provides equitable access to paid teaching opportunities, recognising the value of this experience for PGRs. There is a need to acknowledge concerns around casualisation of this workforce and how they are recognised for the work they contribute.

> "Unpaid teaching requirements in the first two years of the PhD programme [at Welsh HEP] are excessive and seriously affect PhD progress and work/life balance, particularly for those who self-fund and must spend additional time supporting themselves financially on top of teaching commitments. This work should be paid or voluntary (or better yet, both). On the other hand, there are departments in which students have no opportunity to teach despite being willing – areas of expertise will differ but it's possible that this is an untapped resource which could reduce strain on PGR cohorts."

(Welsh HEP)

> "There should be support and no PhD student should be required to prepare lectures etc without being paid properly and we shouldn't be left alone to deliver teaching without prior training/supervision/mentoring."

(Scottish HEI)

3.2.3   Training opportunities

PRES respondents highlighted a number of concerns with the training and development they received to support their teaching roles. These are grouped below:

Availability of training

Some concerns were raised around limited spaces being available on training courses and the timing of when these could be undertaken during their research studies and in relation to when they were teaching. There may also be a need to ensure PGRs are made aware of these opportunities and the benefits of engaging with them:

> "I think teacher training and qualifications should be more strongly emphasised and better recognised as part of the PhD training process. There were limited places on certificated teacher training programmes, and participation was not strongly emphasised. This would help the university and the PhD researchers."

(English Russell Group)

> "I had already taught a number of undergraduate seminars, and a postgraduate lecture in my first semester of my first year, and yet the programme refused my application solely on the basis that I was a first year. There needs to be an awareness that first year PhDs are asked to teach, do take it on, and need the structured training and help to ensure they are providing quality teaching to both undergrads and master's students."

(Northern Ireland HEI)

> "The xxx programme was useful to an extent, but the training came too late. Taking xxx alongside teaching doesn't make sense. It should be taken in advance of teaching, but the opportunities/schedule don't allow for this."

(English 1994 Group)

"I have recently put together an application for Associate Fellowship from Advance HE. Apart from the support of my supervisor who had been through the process there were no mechanisms for support in going through this. There is one session run by xxx but this gets booked up far in advance. Seeing as Associate Fellowship is often now a requirement for academic jobs, I think the school really needs to put in place more robust training and support for those doctoral students who are teaching at the same time. Other schools at the university run courses, put in place teaching mentors – things that I believe we are supposed to have as [GTAs] but that do not happen here."

(Welsh HEP)

Limited training

Responses highlight that training sessions were at times limited and didn't always cover areas or types of teaching situations that some were involved in eg where GTAs were delivering lectures. This was flagged as problematic for them in their role as GTAs but also an issue related to the quality assurance of the teaching students' experience:

"Formal training for teaching. We had one hour of training, which does not serve us or the students we teach effectively."

(English Russell Group)

"I was shocked by the lack of (and scope of) the initial training for PhD students who were then expected to run seminar groups with undergraduate and postgraduate students. In my view, this represents a lack of care in the way that the university maintains teaching standards. In three years of teaching, I have NEVER been observed."

(English Russell Group)

"The main area I feel could be improved is training for new PGR tutors in how to respond to distressed students, as I received no training in this area before starting to teach."

(English Russell Group)

Ongoing development

Some respondents highlighted a need for ongoing development as their teaching roles evolved. It is suggested that this might involve more local mentoring and opportunities for feedback eg through observations. It is apparent that, for some, the teaching they do is part of their plan and preparation to enter the academic profession:

"Having to develop lectures, teaching material and tutorial material without being trained to do so and the hourly pay does not reflect the time spend preparing the lectures/tutorials (this felt exploitative). A member of staff should be present for the teaching as support."

(Scottish HEI)

"I'm very interested in developing my skills teaching in higher education and pursuing a career as a lecturer. I'm very glad I was able to gain some experience. However, since the four-week PGR teaching course, I have not received any real support in relation to teaching. I would love the opportunity to do some front-led lectures and get feedback from the full-time lecturers... but in my first 2.5 years nobody offered, even though I did express interest. I have now had the opportunity to do this but only covering and without feedback. I have met some wonderful lecturers but it really does not feel like training new lecturers is a priority at all. It is also disheartening to teach with lecturers who obviously don't care about the material."

(English post-1992 university)

"I think it is important that PGRs who are teaching have a teaching mentor and there is a formal supervisory process attached to that."

(English post-1992 university)

4. Sector policy

4.1 Identification of institutional policies relating to GTA

In the Survey, respondents were asked if they have a specific policy relating to GTA teaching – 79% said 'yes', 17% were 'unsure' and 4% said 'no'. In the majority of institutions, responsibility for the policy lay with the teaching portfolio, with a small number of respondents indicating it was a shared responsibility between teaching and research portfolios or human resources. Among the five Welsh respondents, four had policies with one being 'unsure'. Most were the responsibility of their teaching portfolio with one stating that the policy sat within their graduate school, which took responsibility for all aspects of doctoral student development including that relating to GTAs.

4.2 HEI/HEP policy themes on GTA teaching

Twelve respondents, including two from Wales, were able to provide links to these policies and these, in addition to the wider Survey responses, enabled us to identify their coverage.

Table 4 highlights the key areas covered and similarities with the findings of a comparable review undertaken by QAA Scotland (QAA Scotland, 2018a).

Table 4. HEI/HEP policies on GTA teaching: key policy themes and coverage

Current survey 2021	QAA Scotland (2018a) survey
Recruitment, selection and pay	Clarifying pay and conditions
Scope of teaching	Expectations of GTAs
Development and support	Appropriate training and development
Faculty responsibilities	Research supervisor roles in supporting GTAs
Quality assurance	Providing feedback to and acting on feedback from GTAs
	Supporting GTAs as members of the teaching community

Most policies establish the importance and value placed by HEPs/HEIs on the contribution GTAs make to the educational experiences of students. Many highlight that engaging with teaching is a crucial development opportunity for GTAs but not an entitlement. Additionally, it is often highlighted that GTAs must ensure that their primary focus is their doctoral studies and that, for the university, assuring the quality of the taught student experience is critical. There was an example of a HEI/HEP where teaching duties and development were agreed between GTA, research supervisor and teaching lead to ensure that these worked for all parties, including the students being taught. Many policies make explicit a series of generic principles that should be enacted across the university. In addition, there is a statutory duty for Welsh HEPs to promote the use of the Welsh language, so some HEPs are considering how to support the provision of teacher development in Welsh.

These are now discussed in turn, highlighting approaches that may be beneficial both within Wales and the wider UK and respond to some of the PGR feedback in Section 3.

4.2.1   Recruitment, selection and pay

Most HEPs/HEIs operate recruitment of GTAs at a local level with devolved approaches to recruitment and selection of GTAs to teaching opportunities. However, there is regular mention of this being formally managed by a local member of staff with this responsibility and a need for teaching opportunities to be brought to GTAs' attention. Most policies highlight that this process should be transparent, but it is not always clear how this is done. There were a few examples of dedicated webpages for GTA recruitment. Some have stronger statements about equity and draw from HR procedures to support application processes and terms and conditions. It is less clear how this is reviewed at an institutional level to ensure parity of experience.

> "PGRs are invited to submit an application form for teaching opportunities with their application for postgraduate research study. This provides us with a database of researchers interested in teaching opportunities alongside their skills and experience and allows us to provide fair access to teaching opportunities."
>
> (Participant at roundtable)

Some policies stipulated pay scales, with some being dependent on the nature of the role being undertaken. Most highlighted the caps on teaching hours designed to prevent teaching from impacting negatively on doctoral study progress. These caps are typically informed by research funding body policies and set at approximately six hours per week or 250 hours per year, irrespective of funder.

Drawing from this, together with the student feedback provided in 3.2.1.and 3.2.2, there appears to be dissonance between the positive intentions of these policies and how they are implemented and experienced. To address this further for the Welsh context, the following propositions were addressed at the roundtables.

Policy proposition 1: Provide equitable and transparent recruitment and selection processes for teaching opportunities.

Policy proposition 2: Provide clarity on pay, terms and conditions.

Practice proposition 1: Undertake institutional EDI monitoring of engagement with development opportunites and outcomes.

4.2.2   Scope of teaching

Many policies stipulate the nature of traditional teaching that is appropriate for a GTA to engage with or not eg level of autonomy, nature of teaching (tutorial, laboratory, supervision), degree stage. These vary but, typically, GTAs are less likely to be involved in lecturing or coordinating/convening modules. A smaller number of policies make definitive statements about GTA involvement in summative assessment, restricting it to lower year undergraduate students' assignments.

There was little reflection in policies of the changing nature of HE and the use of more blended approaches to supporting student learning to which postgraduate researchers might usefully contribute. Equally, there may be scope to acknowledge and highlight how postgraduate researchers might be valuably involved in educational projects or initiatives that support student learning. Grimwood and Hetherington (2021) report on the lack of consideration of GTA involvement (formally or informally) in supervisory roles or research project mentoring in published literature around GTA experiences and development. This wider conceptualisation of 'teaching' would increase the availability and extent of experiences that might support postgraduate researchers' development and future employability.

An interesting example is illustrated in the way Warwick University harnessed the skills of its GTAs in supporting the acclimatisation of year 1 students to online learning during the global pandemic.

The Warwick Online Learning Certificate

The Warwick Online Learning Certificate (WOLC) was a five-week online course offered to all first-year undergraduates during the summer term 2020, during the lockdown and university closure. Sixty PGR teachers were employed as online tutors to support the 6,000 undergraduates through this programme, each leading a tutor group, communicating with students and giving feedback on forums, online tasks and reflective journals. This proved an effective way to enable the undergraduates to persist and supported the employment of PGRs when other teaching work was unavailable.

Sara Hattersley (Associate Professor, Academic Development Centre, University of Warwick)

A team-teaching approach to multidisciplinary learning for sustainability allows PhD students at Heriot Watt University to develop and practice a range of teaching skills within a supportive academic community.

Shaping Tomorrow Together: a multidisciplinary year-long course for first year undergraduates

Heriot Watt University offers a year-long course across the School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society (EGIS) designed to engage first-year undergraduate students from disciplines as diverse as civil engineering, biology, urban planning, architecture, geography and marine biology with issues around sustainability. This is one of the first courses a student will encounter at university and aims to build an academic community of belonging for new students. Central to the delivery of this extensive programme is the engagement of PhD students who join the teaching team alongside lecturers and research associates. This team-based approach to delivery provides opportunities for all team members to develop practice and confidence in:

+ setting open-ended assessment briefs

+ teaching beyond their specialist disciplines
+ working with students to co-create the syllabus and topics
+ assessing and moderating across a variety of media, based on process learning outcomes rather than product.

The PhD students were provided with opportunities to take on wider educator roles, which enabled them to develop and practice a range of teaching skills within a supportive team culture, including:

+ liaising regularly with student groups through synchronous and asynchronous channels
+ facilitating and scaffolding multidisciplinary small-group working
+ mentoring students to provide peer review and feedback using rubrics
+ facilitating debates and providing formative feedback on arguments.

The team-based approach to the delivery of this module met the central aims of building an academic community to engage new students but also provided a community for PhD students to develop their teaching skills and their confidence, as illustrated by the following quotes from three of the participants:

"Working on [this course] is different to working with other academics; [the course leader] encourages innovative assignments in a variety of media and encourages us to develop our own methods of teaching and interacting with the students within the structure of the course. I have learned a lot about myself as a teacher and enjoyed it too."

(PhD participant)

"This course gave me an opportunity to work with undergraduates that I wouldn't otherwise have had in my postgraduate school. I am able to share my work and passion for climate issues across a huge spectrum of disciplines, which is really inspiring. [Staff] supported me in providing safe and inspiring learning for students in the pandemic situation, growing my own confidence as a teacher."

(PhD participant)

"Working as a student mentor on [this course] has given me invaluable experience in teaching. Also, my confidence has grown exponentially as I am interacting with multiples of students on a variety of assignments. [Course leaders] structured the course in such an innovative style that I believe is encouraging both students and mentors to succeed. I believe that students

> *benefit to be part of smaller groups and have almost a face-to-face experience despite lockdown. [The course leader] inspires us to engage as a group of multidisciplinary doctoral researchers, enhancing my own community. She provides a structure for us to work from, but space to develop our own styles, and responds quickly to any issues: I feel very supported and have learned so much."*
>
> *(PhD participant)*
>
> *Alex MacLaren (Associate Professor, Heriot Watt University)*

Similarly, in another HEI/HEP, PGR students have the opportunity to become learning partners and work alongside academics on projects.

Toolkit on Social Justice Pedagogies

We are currently working with our learning partners (PGRs) to develop a staff Toolkit on Social Justice Pedagogies. This experience has provided them with rich opportunities to develop teaching resources, shape academic practices and build understanding of curriculum design.

Dr Sarah Floyd, PFHEA (Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice, Ulster University

Practice proposition 2: Explore wider educator/educational opportunities for developing postgraduate researchers as GTAs.

4.2.3   Development and support

Twenty-one respondents (91%) require their GTAs to undertake training before teaching or as soon as possible after they start, with 70% specifically requiring training on assessment to be undertaken, too. Compulsory training varies but usually includes a short introduction to teaching in HE. Typically, this involves between a half and two days of training workshops, which are provided centrally. A typical offering includes:

> "Three hours' introduction to learning and teaching before they start to teach; another three-hour course when they have started to teach eg small group teaching (seminars), small group teaching (labs), assessment and feedback, inclusive teaching."

(Institutional survey respondent)

Responses highlighted the growing shift to online delivery for these sessions, essential during the pandemic but many appeared to be retaining them as more efficient delivery approaches.

Moving from full day workshops to hybrid programme design

Our move to a hybrid solution was largely prompted by the pandemic and the emergency switch to online teaching. This came on top of the university moving to a new VLE at the same time. What we found was that these two factors in combination allowed us to completely rethink our programme, and redesign it as a fully hybrid model where the synchronous elements could be delivered online or in person depending on circumstances. We used the VLE to deliver pre-session short video lectures, reading lists and tasks for reflection. These were then the basis for discussion during shorter synchronous seminars. Alongside the VLE, each cohort had a space on Teams where we could keep participants engaged and on track with tasks throughout the programme and respond to questions along the way. The response from our participants has been very good, with much better engagement and attendance than we used to have in our full day workshops. In particular, we have had better engagement with the readings and wider resources, because these are now much more explicitly integrated into a programme rather than signposted at the end of a workshop. As a result, the portfolios submitted for assessment have also improved in quality (at least anecdotally).

Dr Eli Saetnan, SFHEA (The Academy, University of Liverpool)

In some cases, tailored versions of training programmes are provided to meet departmental needs and in some HEPs/HEIs this training was devolved to faculties:

> "Training for PGRs is carried out by faculty (and is slightly different for each one). For one faculty there is a series of workshops on key topics and, depending on the GTA role, they undertake different workshops. The training is generally provided by academic members of staff who volunteer to provide it."

(Institutional survey respondent)

> "PGRs must undertake a mandatory short course which is offered in conjunction with departments. The course is four hours taught with some online work and a short assessment."

(Institutional survey respondent)

Where policies focused on training for assessment there was greater emphasis on it being provided by schools/departments together with open access to institutional professional development sessions/resources on assessment.

Some HEPs/HEIs focused specifically on marking and feedback:

> "Training provided in assessment, grading and feedback, includes university assessment and feedback policies plus practice assessments to mark."

(Institutional survey respondent)

However, it is clear that devolving some of this training does mean it is subject to variability:

> "A brief element is included in the mandatory session. After that it's up to schools and module leaders."

(Institutional survey respondent)

First steps to teaching and learning in higher education

Ulster University has around 22,000 students, of which approximately 770 are postgraduate researchers who are located at one of the four campuses across the province. Of these, about a third are employed as PGTAs. Initial and ongoing development opportunities for those in this role have been in place for the last 20 years, and this is supported by the institutional PGTA Code of Practice (2004, updated 2018) which outlines the mandatory and optional development they can undertake, in conjunction with the Doctoral College's Researcher Training Programme.

A mandatory component for all PGTAs is the Introduction to Learning and Teaching at Ulster session (one day equivalent). The First Steps to Teaching and Learning (FST) module is then mandatory for any PGTAs involved in marking student work, and an optional undertaking for those PGTAs who teach and support learning only. Each participant on FST has an experienced educator (EE) from within their discipline assigned to them. The EEs hold FHEA (as a minimum) and act as a mentor and critical friend, and facilitate several observations of teaching (authentications of practice). To provide both development of assessment literacy and deliver a measure of quality assurance, an additional assessment moderation activity is a compulsory task

within FST. This calibration activity is led by the EE, they provide an overview of the assessment, the assessment brief, the rubric and the expectations regarding academic quality and feedback. In most cases, historic samples are used for this calibration exercise. Once the PGTA has completed their allocation there is a debriefing session with the EE. Within this they share their experiences and discuss the reasoning for their marks and feedback. After the moderation activity, formal feedback is provided to the PGTA by their EE on a proforma, articulating areas of praise and enhancements. The PGTAs then reflect on the moderation activity and write a brief narrative around what they learnt, including future development opportunities, which forms part of their final assignment. In general, reflections from PGTAs are very honest. They value the opportunity to enhance their assessment literacy and many state that it has increased their confidence and they will continue this moderation and calibration activity beyond FST into their professional practice.

Over the last four years the module has awarded AFHEA to an annual average of 70 participants, but numbers have increased dramatically with over 100 participants currently enrolled. Many of our FST participants continue their HE journey post PhD, giving them a sound foundation in effective learning, teaching and assessment practice, ultimately impacting across the institution at a grassroots level.

Vicky Davies PFHEA and Richard Beggs SFHEA (Ulster University)

Recommendations in relation to training will be drawn in Section 5.

Devolving training to faculty is important to provide meaningful, discipline-specific practice. However, this can lead to wide variability in quality, length and timeliness of provision.

4.2.4   Faculty responsibilities

Many policies detail key principles and responsibilities they expect to be implemented at local level eg recruitment and selection, local induction and training, and identification of a key contact to manage GTA experiences. There are significant benefits in GTAs having a localised and discipline-specific level of support from more experienced educators. However, as stated in the section above, it is less clear how these principles are enacted and monitored for implementation and consistency.

Some interesting examples are highlighted in the policies where GTAs are being encouraged to engage more fully with colleagues and developmental processes. For example, one HEI provides opportunities to shadow teaching and to be involved in team teaching as a first step. Another specifies that GTAs should have three hours of mentoring

and guidance as they start to teach. A third HEI encourages GTAs to get involved in peer observation and dialogue processes.

> **Policy proposition 3**: Review devolved implementation of policy and practices relating to GTA development and address any inconsistencies.

> **Practice proposition 3:** Explore partnership and/or devolved implementation of practices relating to GTA development, to share ideas on good practice.

4.2.5   Quality assurance

GTAs are expected to engage with normal QA processes in many HEPs/HEIs, eg peer observation and student feedback surveys. Additionally, they are expected to have opportunities to provide feedback.

One HEI showed how it values GTAs by recommending that there is a GTA representative on the departmental teaching committee to represent their experiences.

> **Policy proposition 4:** Include GTA representation in teaching committees.

Using PGR feedback to design a credit-bearing module for PGRs who teach

In 2017, feedback received from postgraduate research students via their elected student representative and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey indicated that PGRs at the University of Hull wanted more opportunities to teach and receive training in teaching techniques. Existing provision included an institutional policy, a mandatory one-day workshop, and optional access to a teaching mentor and peer observation processes. However, the university's Teaching Excellence Academy (TEA) and Doctoral College felt that further support could be offered alongside the existing provision, so the TEA was tasked with creating a new 20-credit module.

The new level 7 module – Professional Practice in Teaching and Learning in HE – was developed by the TEA in conjunction with PGRs, associate deans (Education) and the Doctoral College. It was validated by the university in 2018, became an optional module on the 60-credit Postgraduate Training Scheme run by the Doctoral College (which all PGRs complete as part of their studies) and in 2020 was successfully accredited by Advance HE at Descriptor 1 (AFHEA).

With two cohorts per year averaging 20 students each, the module is designed to support an experiential approach to teaching and supporting learning. Students undertake teaching and learning activities that provide them with practical experience to draw from when reflecting on their approaches to teaching and to evidence alignment with Descriptor 1. The assessment is via a synoptic portfolio of critically reflective case studies and supporting evidence, which also includes plans for their continuing professional development beyond the module.

Students are introduced to key concepts at the start of the module at a workshop day and then have a supported introduction to both practice (via a Microteach session) and the scholarly literature (through creating an annotated bibliography and discussing relevant texts at tutorials). They are supported by academic colleagues through peer observation and a panel discussion with academics at different career stages, which enables them to explore what is involved in practice and gain advice for their teaching challenges. They have access to a suite of resources on the VLE and an online community. The Professional Standards Framework underpins every stage of the module as participants build up their teaching practice, experiences and evidence.
To date, more than 100 PGRs have successfully completed the module and gained valuable teaching experience as part of the process. Feedback has been consistently positive with PGRs indicating that gaining AFHEA in addition to the academic credit is particularly beneficial.

Catherine Lillie, SFHEA (University of Hull)

There was less evidence of how the implementation of institutional policies for recruitment, selection, support and recognition of GTAs and their experiences are reviewed systematically. There would be merit in institutions monitoring implementation to ensure compliance, parity of experience and aspects of good practice for wider enhancement. This is particularly important in institutions where many aspects of the policy are devolved to local departments to implement.

4.2.6 Bilingual education

Following the introduction of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, higher education institutions have been required to comply with Welsh language standards since 2018. This has given them a framework within which to provide services in Welsh, promote the use of Welsh, and consider the impact of their policies on the Welsh language. It has been recognised that more needs to be done to address the loss of Welsh language skills when learners move into post-compulsory education, therefore the Welsh government

aims to increase and improve substantially the education and training workforce which can teach through the medium of Welsh. This aim is supported by the National Strategy for Educational Research and Enquiry (NSERE, 2021) which has identified pump-priming money to enable all HEPs in Wales to work together in collaborative research networks to develop Welsh language and bilingual education.

Bilingual support

Postgraduate students who teach at Aberystwyth University can apply for a place on the Teaching for Postgraduates at Aberystwyth University (TPAU). Those who complete the programme will become an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA). Students are able to get support and apply for all elements of their application through the medium of Welsh or English. The Graduate School also offers teaching support sessions in both Welsh and English, at induction, covering: An Introduction to Teaching in HE, Small Group Teaching, and Assessment.

Annette Edwards, Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit, Aberystwyth University

The review undertaken by QAA Scotland (2018a) led to a Statement of Expectations for the Support of Postgraduates who Teach (QAA Scotland, 2018b) identifying ways to support institutional development of provision in this area. At policy level these included:
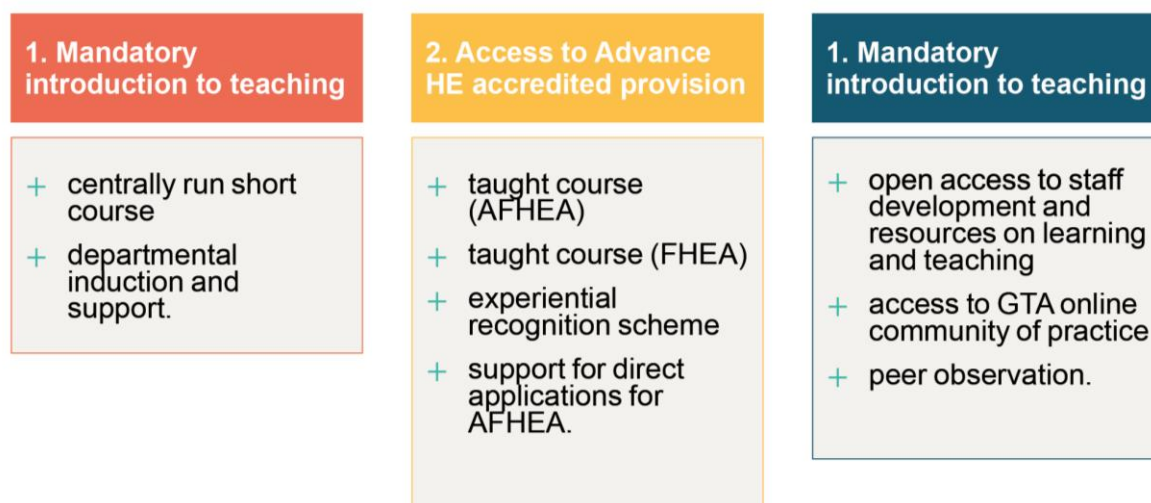
+ the development of institutional policy/strategy on supporting postgraduates who teach

+ clarifying pay and conditions

+ fair recruitment

+ defining roles and responsibilities

+ appropriate training and development

+ opportunities for professional accreditation (via Advance HE or other).

Much of this concurs with the more recent review of policies undertaken by the authors of this report together with PRES (2021) data indicating there is still scope for enhancements to be made at that policy level.

5. Sector development approaches and practices

In addition to the compulsory introductions to teaching reported above under policy requirements, most Survey respondents highlighted wider opportunities for GTA development. Options included Advance HE accredited courses[13] and access to wider development opportunities offered by the university for all staff involved in teaching (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Development options for GTAs

1. Mandatory introduction to teaching

+ centrally run short course
+ departmental induction and support.

2. Access to Advance HE accredited provision

+ taught course (AFHEA)
+ taught course (FHEA)
+ experiential recognition scheme
+ support for direct applications for AFHEA.

1. Mandatory introduction to teaching

+ open access to staff development and resources on learning and teaching
+ access to GTA online community of practice
+ peer observation.

5.1 Accredited provision

A progression opportunity from the mandatory introduction offering to a more substantive work-related course is offered by 83% of respondents. These enable GTAs to widen their understanding of teaching practices, providing opportunities to gain feedback on their teaching and complete assignments that lead to professional recognition. The majority supported achievement of Associate Fellowship (AFHEA) with a small number providing routes to FHEA. This was caveated with acknowledgement that very few GTAs would have sufficient work-related opportunities to undertake this.

The Professional Standards Framework (Higher Education Academy, 2011) highlights that AFHEA is particularly appropriate for "early career researchers with some teaching responsibilities (eg PhD students, GTAs, contract researchers/post-doctoral researchers

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[13] www.advance-he.ac.uk/membership/teaching-and-learning-accreditation

etc)". To achieve AFHEA, GTAs would need to engage with sufficient work-based experience, alongside the course, to demonstrate:

Associate Fellowship Descriptor 1 requirements

An understanding of specific aspects of effective teaching, learning support methods and student learning and demonstrate:

+ successful engagement with at least two of the five areas of activity
+ successful engagement in appropriate teaching and practices related to these areas of activity
+ appropriate core knowledge and understanding of at least K1 (the subject material) and K2 (appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme)
+ a commitment to appropriate professional values in facilitating others' learning
+ relevant professional practices, subject and pedagogic research and/or scholarship within the above activities
+ successful engagement, where appropriate, in professional development activity related to teaching, learning, and assessment responsibilities.

The content of these courses was typically focused on supporting tutoring, demonstrating, marking and feedback roles. Some used creative and engaging approaches to stimulate pedagogic understanding.

Using memes to support GTAs in self-reflection and achieving Associate Fellowship

Cardiff University has recently developed a range of Advance HE-accredited pathways to support all individuals with a role in teaching and supporting learning across the university. Support for postgraduate tutors is principally provided in the Associate Fellowship Programme and Scheme (both accredited at D1). The programme is a fully structured pathway with a series of compulsory workshops, aimed at new tutors with no prior teaching experience, while the scheme is a semi-facilitated route aimed at those who have taught previously. Together, these replace and augment the former 'Learning to

Teach' programme which was available for postgraduate tutors in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. There are currently approximately 100 postgraduate tutors enrolled with a further 60 due to start in January 2022.

In light of feedback from postgraduate tutors working towards Associate Fellowship, we have developed the ways in which learners on the programme and scheme are supported to engage in reflective practice. One of these steps has been to design and implement approaches and materials that promote reflection in fun and accessible ways. We have had particular success with "teaching memes", which we have introduced and trialled at key points throughout the course. Memes are pieces of digital content, chiefly comprising a still or animated image and accompanying text, which are shared and remixed, usually on social media, and which often make reference to significant social issues (Shifman, 2014). In each "teaching meme", we combine a famous quote (eg from a philosopher, film character or contemporary celebrity) with a visual image to represent an important pedagogical concept. For example, when we discuss Universal Design, and the importance of planning for inclusion, we use a meme featuring a photo of Sean Bean as Boromir from The Lord of the Rings, with the caption "One does not simply walk into a classroom…" Similarly, when we share strategies and good practice in asking questions, we use a meme featuring a photo of Albert Einstein, with his famous quote that that "the true art of questioning has for its purpose to discover what a [student]…is capable of learning" (cited in Benna, 2018).

The rationale for using memes was twofold. First, we hoped that identifying with the words of a famous individual or character would inspire learners to engage with the task. Second, research suggests that memes not only offer a familiar, accessible frame of reference, but are also highly memorable artefacts. As such, we hoped that learners would continue to think about these memes long after the workshops and, in turn, how the issues raised relate to their own teaching practice – in essence, to undertake reflection without explicitly realising they were undertaking reflection.

Overall, we have found this approach to be highly successful. The memes, which are met with smiles and nods of appreciation and identification from learners, have stimulated a range of interesting and engaged discussion of the issues raised. This has been consistent in both online and face-to-face teaching contexts. Moreover, several learners have referred to the memes in their reflective writing (including their portfolio assessments), suggesting that the representation of ideas in this way has had a lasting impact on thought processes, and, whether consciously or unconsciously, stimulated ongoing

reflection. We are proud to model good practice with and for participants enrolled on the programme and scheme, and that the range of active and engaging teaching styles is having a clear impact on participants' practice. One participant recently noted that "the course has changed my view of the lecturing role - although my supervisors want me to focus all the time on research, I'm loving the teaching and want to learn more about it so I can inspire my students in the same way".

In terms of advice for anyone considering this approach, we would underline the need to take care when using any kinds of cultural references to ensure learners are not left behind. We have found that memes relating to international blockbuster films and internationally famous figures have rarely presented any issues, but nevertheless it is always worth explaining the meme (for example, the source of the image/quote) to ensure all learners are able to follow along and appreciate its significance and relevance to the focus of the session.

References

Benna, S (2018) '25 quotes that take you inside Albert Einstein's revolutionary mind'. *The Independent*, 15 January.

Shifman, L (2014) *Memes in Digital Culture*. Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press.

Dr Michael Willett, Dr Ceri Morris, Dr Nathan Roberts and Professor Stephen Rutherford (Cardiff University)

Most were generic with some providing inputs that were more discipline or context specific, for example, teaching in laboratories or supporting international students. In all cases participants are expected to reflect on their development as an educator, setting the foundation for their future careers.
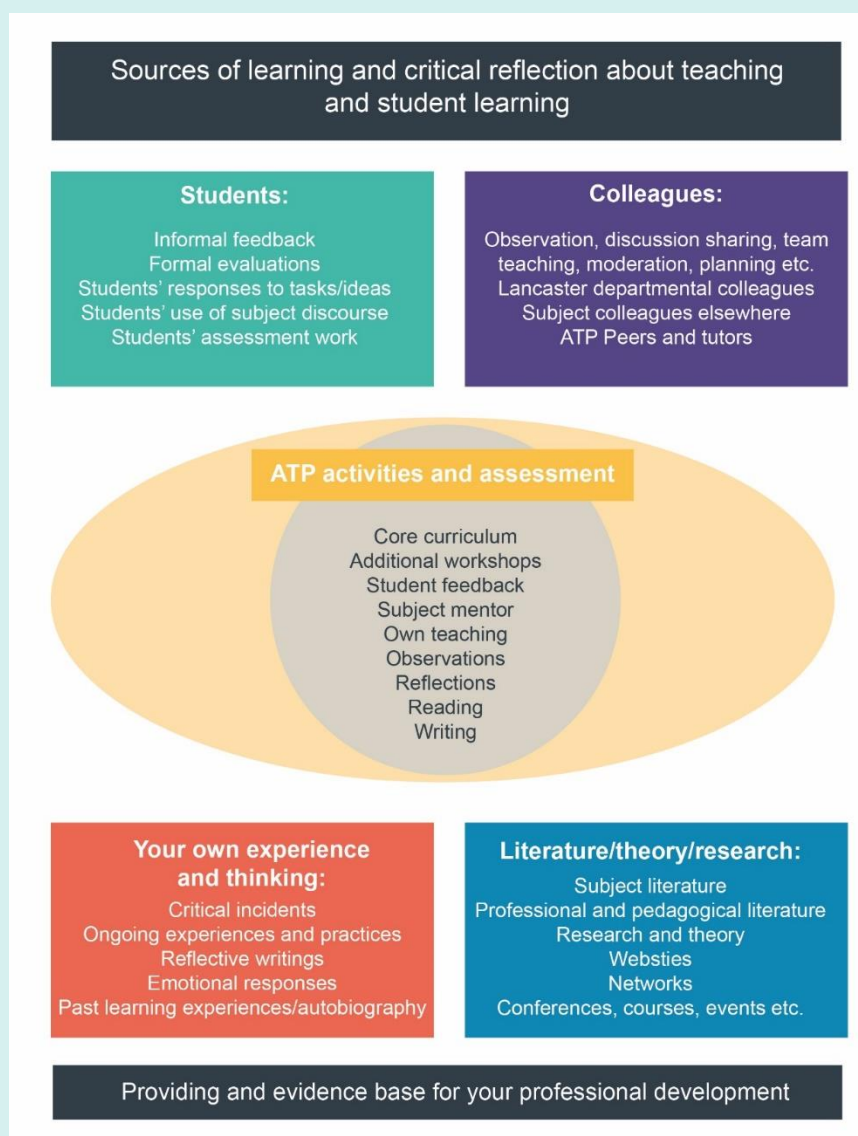
Creating foundations for reflective practice

Crucial to our recognised teaching excellence (TEF Gold (2017) University of the Year (2018) and International University of the Year (2020) from The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide) is the role played by the postgraduates (GTAs) who support teaching and learning. More than 350 GTAs are involved in some form of teaching including laboratories, field studies, online activities and seminars. Part of the development provision for

GTAs is a four-month Associate Teacher Programme (ATP), accredited by Advance HE at Descriptor 1.

All programme participants are assumed to have plenty of valuable experience of learning and teaching in HE, possibly as teachers but certainly as students, from which many understandings and conceptions are formed. The teaching, learning and assessment strategy of the programme has been designed to explore and challenge this experience by asking participants to use and critically reflect on a variety of sources to develop their thinking and practice as part of a final portfolio assessment.

These sources fall into four broad categories, or lenses, as shown in the graphic below, based on the work of Brookfield (2017, 61). These lenses form the focus of the ATP induction workshop Tools for Reflective Practice.

Sources of learning and critical reflection about teaching and student learning

Students:
Informal feedback
Formal evaluations
Students' responses to tasks/ideas
Students' use of subject discourse
Students' assessment work

Colleagues:
Observation, discussion sharing, team teaching, moderation, planning etc.
Lancaster departmental colleagues
Subject colleagues elsewhere
ATP Peers and tutors

ATP activities and assessment
Core curriculum
Additional workshops
Student feedback
Subject mentor
Own teaching
Observations
Reflections
Reading
Writing

Your own experience and thinking:
Critical incidents
Ongoing experiences and practices
Reflective writings
Emotional responses
Past learning experiences/autobiography

Literature/theory/research:
Subject literature
Professional and pedagogical literature
Research and theory
Websties
Networks
Conferences, courses, events etc.

Providing and evidence base for your professional development

Brookfield, S D (2017) *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

This approach develops participants' foundational 'reflective practitioner' skills, enabling them to see the inherent complexity of learning in HE and where teaching and supporting learning fits into this bigger dynamic activity. Observing teaching and being observed while teaching is normalised. Gathering insight from the students' perspective in an ongoing way, so that responses and changes can be implemented for that cohort of students, is encouraged. This challenges reliance on end of module surveys, which inevitably are partial, reflect the module as a whole, and happen too late to do more than perform a 'fire alarm' function.

This model of reflective practice is also the underpinning approach for the PG Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP). We find that ATP graduates who go on to participate in the PGCAP demonstrably continue to build on this foundation for developing their practice in the full academic role. They clearly understand the value of a reflective approach, embedding the collection of a variety of perspectives throughout the PGCAP modules.

Our advice to others is to consider:

+ how the development of your GTAs feeds into your further development options as they continue their teaching development journey

+ creating stand-alone reusable objects to reinforce the underpinning philosophy of your provision eg a reflective practitioner approach, for use across all your programmes/CPD schemes.

We are currently paying attention in the PGCert to how we can introduce reflective practices to those who are new to this, while at the same time developing further those who have completed the ATP.

Susan Armitage and Dr Ruth Mewis, (Educational Developers, Lancaster University)

These accredited courses varied in extent and duration, with some running over a full year and others six to 10 weeks. Where courses are formally credit-bearing they ranged from 15-20 credits at either FHEEQ Level 6 or 7. Some had restricted numbers of places available on them, but it is clear from the completion data provided that these opportunities are popular with GTAs. It should be acknowledged that several noted more participants than

completers. This may reflect the challenges of balancing the workload required for courses of this nature alongside PGR studies plus difficulties in acquiring sufficient work-based practices ie teaching hours to fulfil the assessment requirements. Noteworthy is the fact that GTAs must fit this development into their schedules with no financial recompense.

Table 5. Numbers of PGRs who complete AFHEA* courses annually (on average)

Course completers	No of institutions
<40	8
40-79	4
>80	5

*Numbers achieving FHEA were very small

When asked about the staff resourcing required to support these courses, mixed responses were provided, with many highlighting that the work is absorbed across their educational development team but that it involves considerable time. One commented:

> "Currently one staff member supports this course, including the community of practice around it. This is likely to limit cohort numbers going forward, especially as PGRs …require mentoring and observation, ie greater staff support."

> (Institutional survey respondent)

There were examples where experienced academics from faculties were used to support the course participants providing discipline-specific advice and alleviating workload eg in mentoring and observing their teaching.

One HEI/HEP has made its AFHEA course compulsory for those GTAs involved in assessment at Level 5 and above – this has significant implications for cohort sizes and resourcing. Another respondent highlighted that the resourcing provided by the Educational Development Unit was charged back to the research area responsible for PGRs. The inequity that this created was highlighted at the Wales roundtable discussion. Not all faculty were able to bear the cost for training and resourcing GTA engagement with accreditation from their budgets while, in others, training costs were allocated as part of the scholarship funding.

In Welsh responses it was apparent that the number of spaces available on the Advance HE accredited provision were relatively small compared to overall PGR numbers. Typically, courses had space for approximately 3-7% of overall PGR cohort per annum. Most Survey respondents indicated that this was restricted by resourcing.

Practice proposition 4: Consider the benefits and challenges of providing opportunities to gain professional recognition through an accredited programme.

5.2   Other development opportunities

Most respondents emphasised that GTAs were able to attend development sessions or engage with resources that are offered to all staff involved in learning and teaching. Reflecting on comments from PRES, it would be interesting to understand better how this offer is promoted and taken up as it may provide a way of fulfilling GTA expectations for more sustained development.

Some interesting alternative approaches were reported. Two respondents highlighted how they run 'New to Teaching' communities of practice for GTAs.

Empowering PGR teachers to build a community of practice

University of Warwick is a large HEI employing hundreds of postgraduate researchers (PGRs) to teach every year. The Academic Development Centre offers programmes for PGRs and the opportunity to gain Associate Fellowship. But outside of this formal, centralised professional learning provision, support and development is variable, and there is evidence that PGRs can often feel isolated and lose confidence in their teaching work.

In recognition of this, the Warwick Postgraduate Teaching Community (Warwick PTC) was established in 2021 to build a community of practice reaching across the institution. I led a successful internal bid for project money (from the WIHEA) which enabled eight experienced PGR teachers from across the faculties to be employed and work together to establish an initial architecture for an ongoing, sustainable community of practice. These 'PGR teacher champions' were given agency to steer the initial direction of Warwick PTC, identifying the issues from their perspective and working together, bringing their cross-disciplinary expertise. The project team prioritised: the creation of a web and social media presence; a resource bank; a buddy system for peer dialogue; a short course dedicated to online and blended learning Teaching for Learning Online; a survey of the PGR teacher landscape at Warwick and a first issue of a new journal: the Journal of PGR Pedagogic Practice.

I offered a mentoring role, being a critical friend and supporting the team, particularly in areas that were new to them (for example, applying for ethical approval for the survey). I worked alongside them as a co-collaborator which was liberating outside of my usual role as programme leader in Academic Development Centre. The PGRs gained insight and understanding of project management, digital resource creation and Warwick systems and structures, as well as co-teaching; authoring papers, editing and proofreading for the journal and collaborative research through the survey. On the basis of initial outputs, the Warwick PTC has been awarded further funding for 2021-22 to enable a new group of PGR teacher champions to progress the work, therefore opening up further employment and development for PGRs. With the initial architecture in place, it is hoped that the Warwick PTC will now be able to offer well-publicised opportunities and support much more widely to benefit PGR teachers across the institution.
Project funding can provide empowering opportunities for PGR teachers to make their work more visible; giving them agency to steer this work ensures that it will be meaningful.

Sara Hattersley (Associate Professor, Academic Development Centre)

Practice proposition 5: Consider opportunities for building a GTA community of practice within the provider.

Practice proposition 6: Engage with the wider GTA community across Wales and the UK to explore potential opportunities for partnership projects.

A few of the 25 respondents to the Survey highlighted how they looked beyond the standard tutoring and demonstrating opportunities to provide additional experiences that support a small number of GTAs to work towards FHEA. These are often connected with considerations around future employment and helping GTAs 'stand out from the crowd'. One such example is explored in the vignette from Manchester University where GTAs who hold AFHEA are involved in mentoring other GTAs. Impact evidence highlights how this has supported these GTAs in their subsequent employment.

Mentorship pathway for GTAs applying for HEA Fellowships

44

The team supports GTAs across all departments in the Faculty of Science and Engineering. The faculty has around 850 GTAs with approximately 300 new GTAs a year who undertake training for this role. After completion of this training, around 80 per year choose to continue into the HEA mentoring programme and achieve an AFHEA (run as two cohorts per year). Application is via a mapping document to the UKPSF, reference letters and a presentation reflecting on their experience with links to pedagogical theory and the training sessions.

The mentors typically comprise four academic members of staff and six GTAs (who have already completed AFHEA) from across the faculty. The GTA mentors are then provided with the opportunity to engage with development and QA of the programme to help their application to FHEA (around five per year).

The GTA experience is enhanced due to interaction with others outside of their subject area and in discussions with their mentors, allowing them to reflect on their teaching and gain confidence. One of our mentors has commented, "as a mentee, the programme provided me all the support that I need in order to put together a successful application [to AFHEA]. Now as a mentor, I have been enjoying this experience, I feel trusted and joy every time my mentees have come through problems. I am also supported by a group of experienced colleagues/mentors, which makes me feel confident about my work."

One key area that GTAs have commented on is, due to the fact that we link our training courses and the mentoring to both the UKPSF and the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), they can link their practice directly to employability. Several successful candidates have highlighted that they have gained interviews and/or job offers, as the accreditation process has made them stand out from other candidates. Also, a former mentor was awarded a prize in their home country for their achievement of gaining Fellowship status. The keys to the success of this programme are:

+ having mentors who have passed through it already as then they really understand the issues being experienced

+ mentoring the mentors to both improve their skills and to give them opportunity to apply to the FHEA status with their extra experience over 'standard' GTAs

+ having close links with the training courses allowing these courses to be closely mapped against the UKPSF and RDF.

Thomas Rodgers, Claudia E Henninger, and Jennifer Slaughter (Faculty of Science and Engineering, The University of Manchester)

Similarly, the accredited programme designed at Heriot Watt University to support both research students and early career researchers had a significant element of mentoring and supervision to support individual development and the AFHEA award.

Learning Enhancement and Development Skills (LEADS)

Staff from the Learning and Teaching Academy at Heriot Watt University (HWU) used traditional in-person workshops to support learners in developing a basic teaching 'toolkit', including:

+ designing and facilitating sessions to support learning

+ understanding of diversity in student groups (culture, disability, etc)

+ formative and summative assessment

+ laboratory demonstrating

+ supporting site visits

+ research teaching linkages.

This was followed by personalised support through mentoring and supervision from an experienced university teacher from the learner's discipline. The programme provided GTAs with a good foundation in the theory of learning and teaching as well as practical guidance to support their teaching practice. Workshop exercises combined with teaching observations ensured that learners had opportunities to gain feedback on different aspects of their practice from peers and experienced teachers, as well as the opportunity to discuss current challenges they encountered in their teaching.

Successful completion of assessment tasks included a teaching observation and a lesson plan. A reflective account was required for gaining internal recognition, such as approved demonstrator and approved tutor, and an extended reflective account was required for gaining AFHEA. The programme

was designed to provide appropriate development for the broad ranges of teaching activities undertaken by HWU PGR students and to encourage PGRs who teach to achieve AFHEA.

Dr Rob Daley, Learning and Teaching Academy, Heriot Watt University

Practice proposition 7: Consider if development opportunities are designed to support the self-efficacy of GTAs for current teaching, to build their capabilities for future employment, or both.

5.3   Provision of tailored development

QAA Scotland (2018b) highlights the benefit of development being provided through partnerships between central and more local units. They suggest mentoring plus peer networks can be useful approaches. In the current Survey, respondents were asked about any discipline-specific support provided for GTAs. There were examples of:

+ skills training for laboratories and field courses

+ discipline-specific inputs on marking

+ induction to course/discipline expectations

+ local mentoring programmes

+ allocation of experienced educators to support engagement with central AFHEA course eg guidance and teaching observation

+ tailored offerings of generic courses to faculty/discipline cohorts.

> "Discipline-focused and collaboratively developed teacher development programmes can be extremely effective. Enabling detailed consideration to be given to specialist areas of teaching practice, there is also a valuable transactional benefit for teams supporting related programmes."

(Institutional survey respondent)

Most respondents thought these types of approaches might happen within their institutions but were less clear if it did or the nature of what was involved. This highlights an area that may benefit from further investigation within institutions.

Drawing from the Survey findings and the examples of practice together with the PRES (2021) data, the policy and practice propositions identified were taken to the roundtable discussion to identify the relevance and application to Welsh HEPS and consolidate recommendations.

6. Enhancement discussions

6.1 Policies

To gain the perspective of Welsh HEPs, the policy propositions were discussed at the roundtable events.

Policy propositions for roundtable enhancement discussions

1. Provide equitable and transparent recruitment and selection processes for teaching opportunities.
2. Provide clarity on pay, terms and conditions.
3. Review devolved implementation of policy and practices relating to GTA development and address any inconsistencies.
4. Include GTA representation in teaching committees.

A snapshot poll on the four policy areas was conducted at the start of each roundtable discussion to provide insight into whether policies were in place and to stimulate the discussion (Figure 8). Knowledge or awareness of policies covering the following was then discussed.

Figure 8. Policies to support GTAs

Legend: ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Don't Know
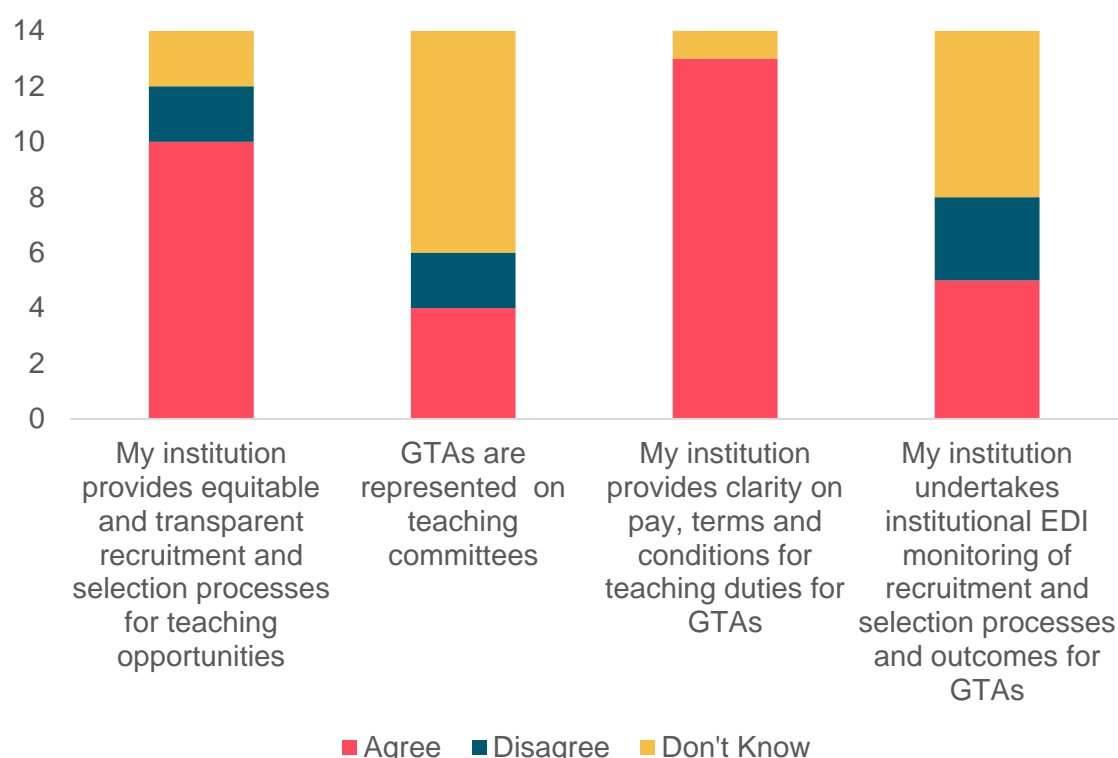
The issues identified in the discussion highlighted differences in awareness of the policies and how well they were devolved and implemented across the institution. It was clear there were differences in implementation of policies that arose because of different needs and expectations of subject areas. There was, for example, strong agreement that policies were in place for pay, terms and conditions. However, there was also a tacit understanding that the amount of time for preparation and marking did not reflect the actual time these activities took and were compensated for. This might not have been fully appreciated by GTAs that were new to teaching and would also vary depending on how much support and training they were given in advance. Similarly, while there were policies for equitable and transparent recruitment and selection process, there was less evidence that these processes were monitored.

6.2 Practices

Similarly the practice propositions were examined at the roundtable.

Practice propositions for roundtable enhancement discussions

1. Undertake institutional EDI monitoring of engagement with development and outcomes.
2. Explore wider educator/educational opportunities for developing postgraduate researchers as GTAs.
3. Explore partnership and/or devolved implementation of practices relating to GTA development, to share ideas on good practice.
4. Consider the benefits and challenges of providing opportunities to gain professional recognition through an accredited programme.
5. Consider opportunities for building a GTA community of practice within the provider.
6. Engage with the wider GTA community across Wales and the UK to explore potential opportunities for partnership projects.
7. Consider if development opportunities are designed to support GTAs' self-efficacy for current teaching, or additionally, to build their capabilities for future employment.

A second poll was also conducted to prioritise areas of enhancement practice (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Priorities for practice enhancement
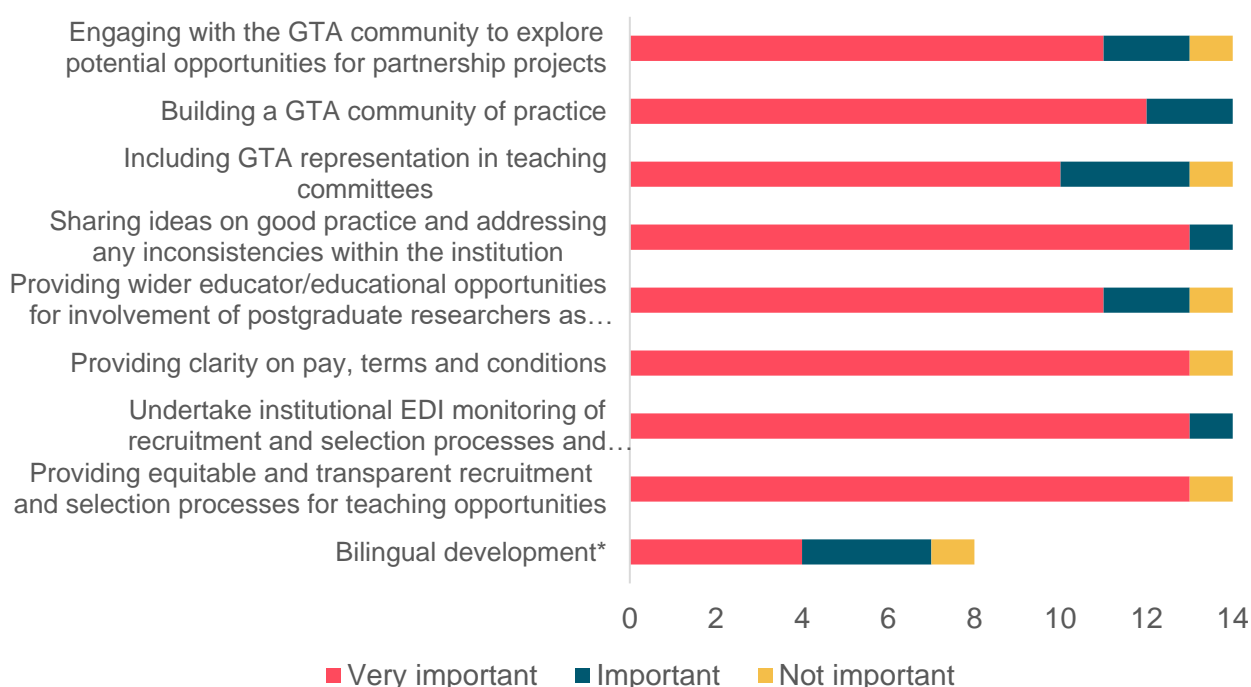
Only included in second roundtable following recommendation in first roundtable

The poll and subsequent discussion of practice reinforced the importance of ensuring awareness of policies and monitoring their impact across the institution. Opportunities for enhancing practice, whether through building a community of practice for GTAs, engaging with the GTA community beyond the institution or providing wider educational opportunities for GTAs were discussed. Opportunities to develop Welsh teaching practice were also raised in the first roundtable and added as a question to the second discussion.

7. Recommendations

The following recommendations on policy and practice emerged from the propositions following sense checking through discussion with stakeholders from Welsh HEPs at the roundtables.

7.1 Policy recommendations

The four policy recommendations were confirmed from the propositions by the stakeholder group:

1. Provide equitable and transparent recruitment and selection processes for teaching opportunities.
2. Provide clarity on pay, terms and conditions.
3. Include GTA representation in teaching committees.
4. Review devolved implementation of policy and practices relating to GTA development and address any inconsistencies.

7.2 Practice recommendations

The practice propositions prompted more debate than the policy propositions. Discussion focused on how to ensure that policies were enacted equitably within institutions and how to enhance GTA support and development with a limited resource. The discussions also revealed the opportunity and benefit for greater collaboration between Welsh HEPs to share practice and avail of government funding to develop Welsh language provision. The propositions were consolidated into the following recommendations for enhancing development practice:

5. Undertake institutional EDI monitoring of engagement with development and outcomes in order to support strategic equality plans.
6. Consider facilitating an internal community of practice for GTAs and the staff supporting their professional development to:

    + compare and evaluate devolved implementation of policies relating to GTA development

    + explore wider educator/educational opportunities for developing postgraduate researchers as GTAs

    + share ideas on good practice

    + develop a shared understanding of the purpose of GTA development opportunities.

7. Consider the benefits and challenges of providing opportunities to gain professional recognition through an accredited programme.
8. Consider collaborating with other Welsh HEPs to offer opportunities to gain professional recognition using the Welsh language.

9. Consider building a GTA network for GTAs and staff supporting their professional development across Wales and explore potential opportunities for partnership projects within and between institutions and engage with the wider GTA community to identify good practice.

8. Acknowledgements

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