



QAA  
Scotland

# Postgraduates Who Teach – Key Issues for Discussion

**Focus On: The Postgraduate  
Research Student Experience**

## Introduction

The questions in this document are intended for discussion from each of the different perspectives involved in recognising postgraduates who teach (PGWT) as an active part of the academic community. The questions aim to stimulate debate and reflective discussion to ensure that PGWT are supported to make a strong contribution that is recognised within the University context. This document takes the view that all stakeholders – PGWT, colleagues in organisational units,<sup>1</sup> and institutions – are partners in this discussion and all are required to participate.

The questions below have been organised across several themes to aid discussion, and are indicative of the key issues arising from the scoping study and from previous research. We have suggested questions relevant for the major stakeholders: PGWT, colleagues in organisational units, and the institution. The themes for discussion are:

- Defining roles and responsibilities of the PGWT role
- Fair recruitment, pay and conditions
- Training, development and supporting PGWT as members of the teaching community
- Challenges
- Recognising and sharing good practice.

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<sup>1</sup> An 'organisational unit' is the term used in this document to cover individual departments/disciplines/schools/colleges within an institution.

## Defining roles and responsibilities of the PGWT role

PGWT	Colleagues in Organisational Units	Institution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you consider to be the role of a PGWT within your organisational unit?</li> <li>• What are the primary tasks that <b>you</b> have undertaken/currently undertake as part of your PGWT role?</li> <li>• What factors shape or influence your teaching role?</li> <li>• How easy is it to balance the responsibilities you have as a teacher with those you have as a student?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you consider to be the role(s) of staff supporting PGWT?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is this a shared responsibility across the organisational unit?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Who should take on these supporting roles?</li> <li>• What do you consider to be the role of PGWT within the organisational unit?</li> <li>• How are issues of equality and diversity addressed/considered in relation to PGWT?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the roles and responsibilities of PGWT within the institution?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How are these roles and responsibilities defined?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How is parity of PGWT roles/responsibilities addressed across the organisational unit and/or wider institution?</li> <li>• How are issues of equality and diversity addressed/considered in relation to PGWT?</li> </ul>

## Fair recruitment, pay and conditions

PGWT	Colleagues in Organisational Units	Institution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which roles and responsibilities are you paid for as part of your PGWT role?</li> <li>• Are there any other paid activities/tasks which form part of your PGWT responsibilities? If so, how are you paid for these additional activities?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are PGWT recruited?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is there a transparent and equal recruitment process? If not, what are the barriers to this?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Is PGWT recruitment affected by any other institutional recruitment policies?</li> <li>• Is the rate of pay for PGWT consistent across the organisational unit?</li> <li>• Who establishes the financial terms and conditions within the organisational unit for PGWT?</li> <li>• Are there any other activities/tasks for PGWT responsibilities? If so, how are PGWT paid for these additional activities?</li> <li>• What factors affect delay to payment and contract issuing for PGWT and how might this be avoided?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are PGWT provided with contracts prior to appointment? Is this the responsibility of the organisational unit or wider institution?</li> <li>• Are the financial terms and conditions for PGWT regulated across the institution?</li> <li>• Is the rate of pay for PGWT consistent across the institution?</li> <li>• Are there any other activities/tasks which form part of PGWT responsibilities? If so, how are they paid for these additional activities?</li> </ul>

## Training, development and supporting PGWT as members of the teaching community

PGWT	Colleagues in Organisational Units	Institution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe some of the support and training with which you have engaged from across the wider University or specifically within your organisational unit.</li> <li>• In what way(s) has it helped?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Of this training and support, what do you feel is/are the most valuable and why?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Is the training you received generic or discipline-specific? Which do you feel is more helpful and why?</li> <li>• What forms of support do you feel would benefit you as part of your ongoing development? This support may be directly related to teaching and learning (e.g. student engagement, active learning) or indirectly related (e.g. assertiveness, communication skills, handling difficult situations, working with others, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What training and/or support is available for PGWT within the organisational unit? If no training is provided at School level, what are the barriers to this?</li> <li>• Is the training and/or support designed in collaboration with PGWT?</li> <li>• Are PGWT encouraged to engage with the wider teaching communities in your organisational unit?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If so, describe some of the most effective ways in which PGWT engage with colleagues.</li> <li>○ If this is still an area for development, how can PGWT be encouraged to participate in the teaching community?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What training and/or support opportunities are available for PGWT across the institution?</li> <li>• Is there an institutional mandate for training or development?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, is this taken up consistently across the institution?</li> <li>○ If no, what are the barriers to instating this?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Is guidance provided to individual organisational units with regards to formal and informal means of training and support for PGWT?</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What types of informal development and support opportunities have you engaged with in your teaching? For example, peer observation, conference and networking opportunities, etc.?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Of these, what do you feel has/have been the most valuable and why?</li></ul></li><li>• What preparation or training do you think a new PGWT would find useful within your subject area?</li><li>• What ongoing development activities do you think a PGWT would find useful within your subject area?</li></ul>		
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## Challenges

PGWT	Colleagues in Organisational Units	Institution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you feel are the main challenges in your role as a PGWT?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do you feel that any of these are specific to your discipline? If so, in what way(s)?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you feel are the main challenges for PGWT within your organisational unit?</li> <li>• How are PGWT supported to overcome these challenges?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the main challenges to the institution (as a whole) regarding PGWT?</li> <li>• How does the institution provide support for PGWT to address these challenges?</li> <li>• What is the importance of having a clear policy around PGWT:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ recruitment?</li> <li>○ development?</li> <li>○ payment?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What do you feel the risks of <b>not</b> having and implementing a clear policy for PGWT would be?</li> </ul>

## Recognising and sharing good practice

PGWT	Colleagues in Organisational Units	Institution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is good teaching practice recognised within your School/discipline?</li> <li>• Are there opportunities for good teaching practice to be recognised:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ in a formal capacity? (e.g. end-of-course feedback and evaluation, accreditation from an external body, teaching award at institution)</li> <li>○ in an informal capacity? (e.g. positive feedback from mentors, peers, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Are there opportunities to share good practice:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ between PGWT?</li> <li>○ across the wider School/discipline/teaching team?</li> <li>○ across the institution?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is good teaching practice recognised within your School/discipline?</li> <li>• Are there opportunities for good teaching practice to be recognised:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ in a formal capacity? (e.g. end-of-course feedback and evaluation, accreditation from an external body, teaching award at institution)</li> <li>○ in an informal capacity? (e.g. positive feedback from mentors, peers, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Are PGWT encouraged to engage in sharing their practice/the practice of others? If so, in what way(s)?</li> <li>• How included do you feel PGWT are within the teaching community:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ between PGWT?</li> <li>○ across the wider School/discipline/teaching team?</li> <li>○ across the institution?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If possible, provide evidence of formal/informal activities where you feel each of the above has been successful at assimilating PGWT within the teaching culture.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If no evidence can be identified, how can opportunities be provided?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is good teaching practice recognised across the institution?</li> <li>• Are there opportunities for good teaching practice to be recognised:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ in a formal capacity? (e.g. end-of-course feedback and evaluation, accreditation from an external body, teaching award at institution)</li> <li>○ in an informal capacity? (e.g. positive feedback from mentors, peers, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Are PGWT encouraged to engage in sharing their practice/the practice of others? If so, in what way(s)?</li> <li>• How included do you feel PGWT are within the teaching community:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ between PGWT?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How included do you feel in the teaching community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ between PGWT?</li> <li>○ across the wider School/discipline/teaching team?</li> <li>○ across the institution?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If possible, provide evidence of formal/informal activities where you feel each of the above has been successful at helping you to engage with the teaching culture. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If no evidence can be identified, what would help you to feel included?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ across the wider School/discipline/teaching team?</li> <li>○ across the institution?</li> <li>• If possible, provide evidence of formal/informal activities where you feel each of the above has been successful at assimilating PGWT within the teaching culture. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If no evidence can be identified, how can the institution provide opportunities at each of the different levels?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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