

Framework for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

This framework outlines the terms and conditions for employing GTAs, and the training and support available to GTAs.

This framework has been developed by the Graduate School and approved by the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee and the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. The Graduate School reviews the Framework annually.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Many doctoral students across the College are employed on a casual basis to teach and support learning on both undergraduate and Master's-level programmes.

Working as a GTA provides doctoral students with an opportunity to broaden their experience at Imperial College.

The [roles and responsibilities of GTAs](#) are outlined on the Graduate School's GTA webpages.

2. Recruitment & Remuneration

- 2.1 Any doctoral student wishing to apply to be a GTA must first seek permission from their supervisor.
- 2.2 In October 2013, the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) approved the [roles and responsibilities of GTAs](#). Before advertising for teaching opportunities, departments are advised to review this document.
- 2.3 Before employing GTAs, departments should ensure GTAs are aware of any local departmental caps on number of hours or rules governing the way in which GTAs are managed at a departmental level.
- 2.4 Departments are reminded that on average, GTAs should teach less than six hours per week and teaching should not exceed 10 hours in any given week during term time. For doctoral students, term time spans the whole academic year, except days taken as part of the annual leave entitlement. The College recognises, however, that GTAs may sometimes be involved in teaching which only lasts for a short period of time, but which exceeds the 10-hour weekly limit, such as fieldwork, lab weeks, etc. Separate guidance is available from the Faculties for such cases.
- 2.5 All GTAs must register as Casual Workers with the College. Guidance on hiring casual workers is available to view here: [Hiring casual workers | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#)
- 2.6 All GTAs are entitled to paid holidays in accordance with statutory rights. To avoid the complexities of calculating accrued entitlement to paid leave, payroll have advised academic staff with responsibility for signing off casual payroll forms, to enter the hourly rate of pay which has been agreed with the casual worker, excluding any statutory holiday component, in column L of the form. The payroll office will automatically add 12.07% to this figure to provide for paid holiday. It is important that the working pattern is such as to allow the GTA to take time off for their holidays (but no additional pay need be given, since they have already received it during their period of earnings). Further information and support are available from the [Payroll website](#).

- 2.7 GTAs must be employed on approved College rates. There are higher or lower rates depending on the type of activity. [The rates are determined by the College each year.](#)
- 2.8 It is good practice for departments to provide GTAs with a monthly deadline by which to submit their hours for approval in the Casual Worker Timesheet App. This deadline should allow sufficient time for any queries to be addressed by the department and for the department to complete Level 1 and 2 approvals of timesheets in the Casual Worker Application before the payroll deadline.
- 2.9 Departments are reminded that should they combine the number of hours a GTA works over several months into a single month payment, this could falsely imply an individual's annual earnings are more than they should be. This may affect that month's tax, NI and Pension contributions. If the hours are combined into one submission which would, if applied across the full tax year, take GTAs over their tax- free earnings threshold then PAYE may be deducted. If each month's submission is submitted and approved individually, then these deductions may not be made. Likewise, National insurance contributions are made on earnings of up to £190 a week but are made at a higher rate on anything between £190 and £967 a week, which again may be falsely represented by combining a longer period of work.

Where overpayments have been made as a result of a combined monthly payment GTAs can be directed to the [gov.uk site](#) if they need to reclaim either tax or overpaid NI. If the worker is allocated the correct tax code by HMRC, their tax rebate should be automatically processed without further action.

The College automatically enters all eligible staff and casual workers into one of the College's pension schemes – the College is required to do this by Law. Students do not need to remain in the pension scheme if they do not want to, but students will need to “opt-out” by completing an [opt-out form](#) and sending it to: pensions@imperial.ac.uk

3. **IMPORTANT: Right To Work Checks & Tier 4/Student Route Visa Students**

- 3.1 GTAs must register with the College as Casual Workers prior to commencing employment. All offers of work are subject to a satisfactory [right to work](#) check by the [Casual Worker team](#). There are also strict stipulations about working hours of students with Tier 4 / Student Route visas which must be adhered to.
- 3.2 To engage a Casual Worker, departments will need to notify the Casual Worker Team who will carry out the following onboarding activities:
- Data collection for HR record creation and payment – via TalentLink
 - Right to Work check including any additional documentation required e.g. term date evidence which is required for students with a Tier 4/Student Visa
 - Issuing of Casual Hours Agreement
 - Creating the HR record
- 3.3 GTAs and their department will be notified when the registration is complete and employment can commence. The Casual Worker Team will inform GTAs and their department if there are any hours restrictions to be aware of when assigning work.
- 3.4 Departments engaging Casual Workers will have a dedicated section in the Casual Worker Application, to manage their requests. Departmental staff can request access into the Application via the Casual Worker Team. If the Department is not set up in the App, new Casual Work assignments can be requested via the [Ad Hoc Request form](#) on the webpages and sent to the Casual Worker Team (casualworkerteam@imperial.ac.uk).

3.5 Further guidance can be obtained from the [Casual Worker Team](#), International Student Support team, your local HR representative, Pippa Chalmers (HR Manager – Compliance & Information), or Dan Bowden (Staff Immigration & Compliance Adviser).

4. Training, Development, Support and Annual Reporting

4.1 The Graduate School has developed the GTA Programme (GTAP) with courses which are discipline independent. These are offered in addition to, and not in place of, existing departmental or Faculty training courses, where these exist.

4.2 The Graduate School provides two core courses, Introduction to Learning and Teaching, and Introduction to Assessment and Feedback for Learning. Additionally, there is a series of optional workshops which GTAs can select according to their own disciplinary teaching context. [Course descriptions and further information is available here.](#)

4.3 The College is a member of Advance HE/the Higher Education Academy (HEA), and the EDU has developed an accredited framework (STAR) which provides opportunities for staff to obtain Fellowship of the HEA. As of 2018- 19, the GTAP is included as an accredited programme, so that participants can obtain Associate Fellowship (AFHEA) status.

4.4 Should the results of GTA evaluations indicate that GTAs need further support and training, the Graduate School is able to work with departments to develop and facilitate additional bespoke provision. Departments should contact the Graduate School's Head of Pedagogy & GTA Programme Leader, Dr Magdalena Jara, to discuss this option: m.jara@imperial.ac.uk

4.5 Departments are reminded that the Postgraduate Research Student Experience Survey (PRES) asks students to state whether they have taught or demonstrated at College and to what extent they have been given appropriate support and guidance for this. Departments will be expected to comment on this as part of their PRES action plan.

4.6 Academic staff wishing to appoint GTAs should remind students appointed to the role about the welfare and pastoral care services available to them. Given GTAs are employed by the College, departments are reminded that GTAs are subject to the College's HR policies and procedures.

4.7 GTAs should be assigned a mentor within the department, to whom s/he can direct teaching-related questions and concerns.

4.8 GTAs may receive feedback from the students they teach via MEQ (MODES in the Business School) or other evaluation processes. Where the department has concerns that the GTA is not fulfilling her/his duties effectively, the departmental mentor should discuss the concerns with the GTA and agree appropriate action. Where the GTA's performance does not improve, the department should take advice from HR.

4.9 Departments should report the names of doctoral students who have received departmental or Faculty GTA training to the Graduate School. This will ensure that GTAs receive credit towards Graduate School course attendance and that a record of this training appears on their transcript. A template for this report will be circulated annually to postgraduate administrators in the autumn term.

5. **Recognition for GTAs**

- 5.1 There are awards to recognise GTA achievement. For example, departments within the Faculty of Engineering have an award for GTA of the year and the Business School also has an award in which to recognise its GTAs. Further, the Students' Union has a Students' Academic Choice Award (SACA) to recognise the valuable contribution that GTAs make. Departments are strongly encouraged to develop similar ways to recognise GTA achievement.

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