ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE
30 November 2018   Agenda Item 8.2

Responses to the proposed updates to the Code of Practice on Tutoring and
Demonstrating by Postgraduate Students

COVER SHEET

Action is required of the Committee as indicated below.

To consider the responses.

Responses to the proposed updates to Code of Practice on Tutoring and Demonstrating by Postgraduate Researchers

V Davies
CHERP
Updated 22 November 2018

Responses and comments were received from three of the four Faculties:

- Ulster Business School
- Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment
- Faculty of Health and Life Sciences

All three Faculty responses were broadly in favour of the proposed changes to the Code of Practice, recognising the importance of having clear guidance for both academic staff and PG Researchers regarding their respective roles and responsibilities within learning and teaching.

Responses to the specific questions posed in the original proposal are as follows:

• Where PgTAs are marking and assessing (at any level and regardless of the contribution to the final award classification) should they be considered Category 3B and required to complete FST?	Clarification is sought on the following points: • would marking and assessment of work contributing to the classification of all exit awards would be covered by Category 3B (L&HS); • the validity of marks already awarded by PgTAs in the previous academic year which may be included in the classification algorithm for some students in the current academic year (L&HS, CEBE); • the role of PgTAs in the assessment of 2nd year UG work this academic year (L&HS,CEBE) • where PgTAs are part of a marking team (e.g. presentations) does their involvement constitute Category 3B (CEBE)

• The current Code of Practice implies that PgTAs only summatively assess and mark undergraduate work. Should this be expanded to include summative assessment and marking of postgraduate work?	In general responses indicated that PgTAs should not be involved in the marking of PG work, although this may differ according to circumstances, e.g. Level 7. However, the issue may be that new first year PhD researchers coming straight from an undergraduate course might be marking material at a level much higher than they have experience of and this could be problematic (L&HS).
• If the changes to the current Code of Practice are adopted, what are the implications for the training and development requirements of other part-time educators at Ulster (e.g. RUT, part-time sessional staff)?	**UBS**: • PT tutors and RUTs have their own essential criteria which applicants must meet. We continue to offer First Steps to the PT tutors (perhaps these courses would need to run more frequently though to afford the flexibility needed) but we cannot require them to do it in their own time. If there were one central University PT Register it may be easier to manage but every Faculty holds these and tutors are often required at extremely short notice.

Additional points of clarification

Faculty of Life & Health Sciences	
PGT involvement must receive sign off by the PhD Supervisor.	This is addressed in the Code of Practice, paragraph 1.1: *All postgraduate researchers MUST obtain permission from their supervisors before agreeing to carry out any teaching or demonstrating duties.*
Also, it is essential that the Doctoral College are involved in the review of the Code of Practice.	The Doctoral College has already been extensively involved in the discussion production of the updated Code of Practice, and has agreed the revisions.
The Code should take into account that PhD students are now known as PhD researchers.	All references to "students" within the Code of Practice pertain to those undergraduate students that may be taught by the PgTAs rather than the PgTAs themselves in their role as PhD Researchers.
Are there any issues with payment in relation to the categories which would lead to a dichotomy in pay amongst PGTs	These categories of payments have been developed by the Doctoral College and have been agreed by Senate.
Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment	
Does the term PgTA (postgraduate teaching assistant) covers both Postgraduate <u>Students</u> and Postgraduate <u>Researchers</u> (staff) such as Research Assistants?	The term PgTA refers to PhD researchers who primary role at Ulster is that of a PG student. Researcher Assistants are staff members: where they undertake teaching duties they should be encouraged to undertake the one day Orientation to Learning and teaching at Ulster offered to all new members of staff. They also have the option to undertake First Steps to Teaching if this is appropriate for their learning and teaching role.
Ulster Business School	
Potential need for an increased number of FST course over the academic year	In the current academic year two instances of FST are planned (November and March). Last academic year an additional course was run in May 2018 due to demand. However more frequent instances of the course would have resources implications which would need to be discussed more fully with the Director of CHERP, Professor Hazlett.

Proposed updates to Code of Practice on Tutoring and Demonstrating by Postgraduate Researchers

1. To seek approval for the updates to the existing Code of Practice on Tutoring and Demonstrating by Postgraduate Researchers
2. To discuss and clarify the areas detailed below in Table 2.

Background & Rationale

The current Code of Practice on Tutoring and Demonstrating by Postgraduate Researchers was approved by Senate in 2002, and is in need of updating to more accurately reflect current learning and teaching practice and policies at Ulster. The recently established Doctoral College and CHERP have been working closely together over the last academic year to clarify and streamline learning and teaching development opportunities for postgraduate researchers who are employed as teaching assistants and demonstrators (PgTAs). Recent statistics from the 2018 PRES survey show that Ulster postgraduate researchers are extremely positive about the teaching opportunities and training for teaching that is provided: 80% of respondents received formal training for teaching (UK average 67%) with 57% having taught during their postgraduate studies (UK average 46%).

The Doctoral College has recently identified three broad categories of learning and teaching responsibilities undertaken by postgraduate researchers at Ulster (Table 1), which have been agreed by Senate.

Table 1

Category 1	To facilitate student learning, typically in a seminar or tutorial setting, under the supervision of a member of academic staff **(includes the development of teaching materials).**
Category 2	To facilitate student learning, typically in a seminar or tutorial setting, under the supervision of a member of academic staff **using existing teaching materials**.
Category 3	**A:** To facilitate laboratory, workshop or fieldwork setting, under the supervision of a senior academic colleague. **and /or** **B:** To mark and assess scripts.

All prospective PgTAs are already required to attend the mandatory one day *Introduction to Teaching and Learning for Post-Graduate Teaching Assistants* provided by CHERP, and the updated Code of Practice will retain this compulsory element of training for all categories outlined above. An additional, optional, opportunity for further development is provided by the *First Steps to Teaching and Learning in HE* (FST) programme, accredited by Advance HE at Descriptor 1 of the UKPSF. Successful completion of this leads to HEA Associate Fellowship (AFHEA)

aligned to the following Areas of Activity as defined by the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)[1]:

- A2: Teach and/or support learning
- A3: Assess and give feedback to learners

Since its inauguration in 2011, the FST programme has seen an annual average of 50 postgraduate researchers gain AFHEA : for those who then go on to work in academia, this professional recognition has allowed them to demonstrate their engagement with learning and teaching both at Ulster and in other HE institutions. For those who subsequently gain academic employment at Ulster, the programme is fully aligned with the first module of the PgCHEP, and they can gain advanced standing for this programme which is linked to probationary requirements.

Under the current Code of Practice PgTAs are not permitted to assess and mark student work that contributes to the final degree classification, and this has meant that they have not been involved in final year summative assessment. The move in 2018-19 to the new degree algorithm, however, means that they would now be unable to assess/mark second year summative student work.

The updated Code of Practice proposes that where postgraduate researchers are employed under Category 3B , they should be required to enrol on and complete the First Steps programme to ensure that they receive appropriate training for assessment duties. The programme includes two opportunities for observation of practice, one relating to teaching and the other related to assessment and feedback. It is proposed that these observations should be successfully completed and submitted to the FST programme team within the first semester of the PgTA undertaking any teaching duties. The remainder of the assessment requirements for the programme can be submitted in the usual way at one of the three submission points over the year, but that final submission should not exceed 18 months from enrolment on the programme itself.
The FST programme will remain optional for other PgTAs who undertake Category 1, 2 and 3A responsibilities (Appendix 1).

In line with current arrangements, the Doctoral College will maintain records of all those who have undertaken mandatory and/or optional professional development opportunities. All Research Directors, Postgraduate Tutors and Faculty Administrative staff (or another designated person) could be given access to this information, which will be available on the new PhD Manager software system. The Doctoral College will also promote the opportunities available to both postgraduate researchers and all relevant staff to ensure that prospective/current PgTAs meet the requirements of the category under which they are employed.

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[1] https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/uk_professional_standards_framework.pdf

The proposed revisions to the current Code of Practice relate solely to the mandatory/optional training required of PgTAs in the light of Ulster's new degree algorithm.
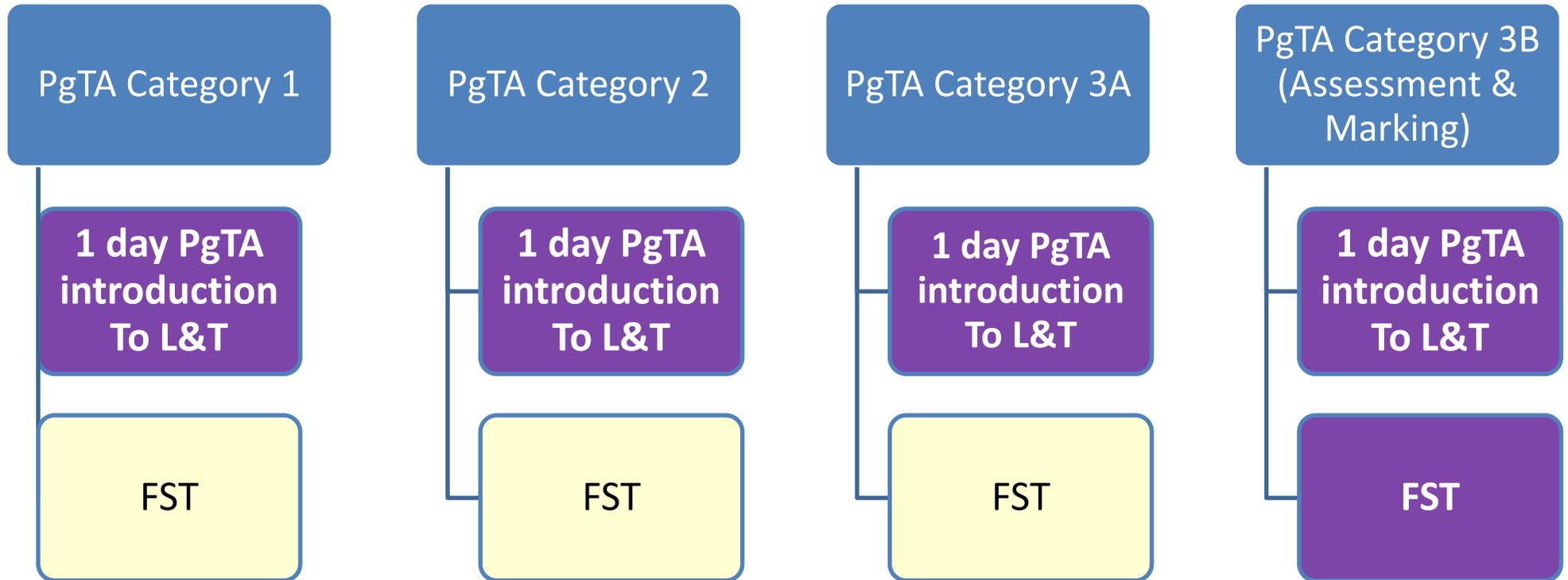
Table 2

• Where PgTAs are marking and assessing (at any level and regardless of the contribution to the final award classification) should they be considered Category 3B and required to complete FST?
• The current Code of Practice implies that PgTAs only summatively assess and mark undergraduate work. Should this be expanded to include summative assessment and marking of postgraduate work?
• If the changes to the current Code of Practice are adopted, what are the implications for the training and development requirements of other part-time educators at Ulster (e.g. RUT, part-time sessional staff)?

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Updated 22 November 2018

Appendix 1

PgTA Category 1	PgTA Category 2	PgTA Category 3A	PgTA Category 3B (Assessment & Marking)
1 day PgTA introduction To L&T	**1 day PgTA introduction To L&T**	**1 day PgTA introduction To L&T**	**1 day PgTA introduction To L&T**
FST	FST	FST	**FST**

Key

Mandatory
Optional