



Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) Handbook



Title of each row	Information
Created by	The Graduate School
Date of creation	August 2019
Last review	October 2022
Next review	October 2023
Contact details	Graduate School



Contents

Introduction	4
The GTA Role	5
GTA role, rights and responsibilities	5
Your PhD studies	8
Prioritising your PhD	8
Communicating with the Graduate School.....	8
Changes to your research degree registration.....	8
GTA annual leave and your PhD	8
Support in the role	9
Staff Resourcing & Payment Services (SRPS).....	9
International GTAs.....	11
Training	12
The Centre for Learning and Teaching	12
Staff development – Library & Learning Services	14
My Staff Development	14
Getting Digital Ready	14
Library & Library Services Wiki	15
Bespoke Support	15
Finishing your GTA studentship	16
Resources	16
PGR research and ethics (HRA).....	16
FAQs	17
Financial	17
Employment.....	17
Research Degree.....	17
Key Contacts.....	20



The Graduate School..... 20

Staff Resourcing & Payment Services team..... 20

Finance and Fees 20



Introduction

This handbook provides advice and guidance about the processes and procedures that frame your experience as a GTA. It outlines the GTA role and responsibilities, along with support available to you from HR and the Centre for Learning and Teaching.

While we have tried to be as comprehensive as possible in this handbook, we may update it throughout the year. It is essential that you regularly check your Edge Hill PGR e-mail, the Graduate School webpages and the Postgraduate Research (PGR) Blackboard for updates.

If you have any questions about the contents of this handbook, please contact Graduateschool@edgehill.ac.uk.

We wish you the best of luck in your studies.

The Graduate School

The GTA Role

GTA role, rights and responsibilities

This section outlines the rights and responsibilities of all GTAs at Edge Hill University. All specified parameters signify the upper limit of a GTAs workload. Those posts should not exceed any of the outlined limits. While such PGRs are classed as Edge Hill staff on a studentship, it is important to note that they are principally here to study for a PhD, therefore the research degree element of any GTA role should always be prioritised when a choice has to be made between it and teaching responsibilities.

Teaching

- GTAs will teach an *average* of 6 hours per week over at least 24 weeks of the academic year, or 144 hours in total over the full academic year.
- Teaching can exceed 6 hours per week in some circumstances, for example on undergraduate/postgraduate taught field trips, but this must be offset by a reduced workload at other times.
- Teaching can be less than 6 hours per week for given periods where this is agreed by the Head of Department, for example, to accommodate field-based research, or if the teaching year is longer than 24 weeks but will amount to 144 hours over the academic year.
- If GTAs are given duties other than teaching, for example administrative work, the number of hours they are allocated will reflect the time needed for preparation and marking in addition to each hour of teaching replaced by alternative activities. The GTA stipend is not paid on an hourly rate.
- GTAs who are in their first year as a PhD PGR will not be required to teach in their first semester.
- Teaching can include a range of activities depending on the nature of the subject area, and the background of the GTA, however, it is important to maintain a duty of care to both the GTA and other students being taught by them. These may include seminars, lab-based work, workshops, student field trips. Second and third year GTAs may be asked to deliver full teaching sessions involving both lectures and seminars under the guidance of the module leader or their teaching mentor.



- First year GTAs will normally teach only at level 4. Whenever possible GTAs should only teach on team taught modules and deliver seminars rather than lectures. Exceptionally, GTAs with appropriate professional qualifications and experience or Master's level qualifications in their subject area can be expected to teach up to level 7 subject to agreement and approval with their line manager.

Marking and preparation

- Marking and preparation is not included in the 144 hours a GTA is expected to teach in total over the full academic year. The maximum amount of time a GTA can be expected to mark and prepare per week is 9 hours.
- There is the expectation that normally the majority of the workload of GTAs as members of staff will be spent on teaching, rather than preparation, which is part of their career development.
- The module leaders/subject specialists should be creating the majority of the teaching and learning materials for sessions and providing support as necessary to ensure the GTAs are supported with their transition to working in HE and to ensure that the students they teach are receiving a good quality experience.
- GTAs will not normally be module leaders or be asked to take on duties that are usually only undertaken by more experienced members of staff. Exceptionally, a GTA may take on the role of joint module leadership with a more experienced colleague. This will not be within their first year of study and must be approved by their line manager and the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning in their faculty. They will also be provided with a mentor for this role from their subject area.
- GTAs will not be personal tutors for any level of student.
- GTAs will not be permitted to take on internal employment in addition to their teaching duties or duties allocated in lieu of teaching. They should also normally be advised not to take on any external employment as this has implications on their tax status and, in the case of international PGRs, their status with the UKVI. In any of the above cases, HR, the Graduate School, and, for international registrations, the International Office, must be proactively consulted.
- GTAs may attend teaching related department meetings, programme boards, examination boards, departmental or faculty research ethics committees where they have a role to play, it is a part of their career development, and their line manager and Director of Studies are satisfied that it does not have a negative impact on their teaching and research. GTAs should not be required to attend such meetings in cases where they feel that doing so may have a negative impact on their ability to complete their research in a timely manner.



Mentoring and support for teaching

- The Head of Department/subject area, or an appropriate individual designated by them to undertake this role within the department where the teaching is focused, will be the line manager for GTAs for their teaching duties.
- GTAs will be allocated a named teaching mentor in their department/subject area. This will normally be the programme or module lead where their teaching responsibilities lie.
- GTAs will have annual appraisals with their Head of Department/subject and their teaching will be observed at least twice during their first year to monitor progress and thereafter on an annual basis. If observations raise concerns about their teaching these should be addressed in probation meetings with the line manager during their first year or annual appraisal meetings in subsequent years.
- If a GTA fails to demonstrate satisfactory progress in their teaching duties, or other duties allocated to them in lieu of teaching, their studentship will be terminated in accordance with University policies and procedures.
- Where a GTA has their teaching contract terminated but is making good progress in their research they may be allowed to continue to study for a PhD but will no longer receive a teaching stipend, PhD fee waiver or, for GTAs, or accommodation allowance. In such circumstances the PGR must submit a request to the Graduate School Board of Studies to be allowed to continue as a full-time PhD registration. They may also submit a request to transfer from full-time to part-time study. The final decision on whether they are allowed to continue as a full-time PGR or transfer to part-time study will be made by the Graduate School Board of Studies.
- GTAs will be provided with shared office workspace, a desk, PC, telephone and copying and printing facilities within their subject area.
- GTAs who are in their first year as a PhD registration will not be required to teach in their first semester under any circumstances.
- If a GTA submits for final examination before the end of their contract, they must contact Staff Resourcing (staffresourcing@edgehill.ac.uk) to confirm the end of their contract.



Your PhD studies

Prioritising your PhD

While GTAs are classed as Edge Hill staff on a studentship, it is important to note that you are principally here to study for a PhD, therefore the research degree element of any GTA role should **always** be prioritised when a choice has to be made between it and teaching responsibilities. If you have any concerns regarding your GTA workload please refer to the GTA roles and responsibilities above *prior to* speaking with your line manager in the first instance. If your line manager is unable to resolve the matter you should contact the Graduate School.

Communicating with the Graduate School

Research degrees at Edge Hill are organised and run centrally. The Graduate School is the mechanism by which the University does that. All communication from the Graduate School will be sent to your PGR Edge Hill email address, not your staff account or your personal email. This is to ensure you have access to your emails throughout your entire period of research degree study.

Changes to your research degree registration

Any changes made to your research degree registration, such as an interruption of studies or change of mode, will have implications on your studentship. For information regarding interruption of study implications, please refer to the [guidance document](#). Changing from full-time mode of study to part-time mode is a possibility for any postgraduate researcher, subject to Graduate School approval, but it is important to note that unfortunately you will not be able to remain as a GTA and the funding package will cease.

While the Graduate School will inform the necessary department of any changes to a PGR's registration, it is ultimately the PGR's responsibility to ensure records are kept up to date.

GTA annual leave and your PhD

As a staff member you are entitled to take annual leave as outlined below in the Human Resources section. When requesting annual leave from your role this *does*



not mean you are taking leave from your PhD and, therefore, you are still expected to work towards your next examination point. Annual leave absence does not justify the need for an extension to a deadline submission.

Support in the role

Staff Resourcing & Payment Services (SRPS)

Annual Leave

Edge Hill University's holiday year runs from 1st September to 31st August. The holiday entitlement for GTAs is 30 days each academic year. GTAs are also entitled to 13 statutory, extra-statutory and concessionary holidays. The timing of holidays is subject to the agreement of their line manager and confirmation by a GTA's Director of Studies that it will not adversely impact on their PhD research. Holidays cannot normally be taken during periods of teaching. Further information can be requested by contacting Staff Resourcing & Payment Services (srpshelpdesk@edgehill.ac.uk).

Our online staff information system, MyView, has recently been enhanced to facilitate online request of annual leave. We hope to extend this functionality and process to Graduate Teaching Assistants in the coming months.

Other Employment

GTAs are not permitted to undertake any work for the University other than that required by the terms of their GTA agreement.

GTAs should not normally take up other engagements or appointments outside the University during the course of their GTA award. If a GTA wishes to do so, they must contact Staff Resourcing, the Graduate School, and, for international registrations, the International Office, regarding their notice period.

The period of notice which GTAs are entitled to receive is normally two weeks in writing. The period of notice of termination of their engagement as a Graduate Teaching Assistant that they are required to give in writing is two weeks.

If the agreement is terminated during a period when they would not otherwise be undertaking teaching duties for Edge Hill University, they will not be entitled to any payment during their notice period.



Edge Hill University may terminate this agreement without notice if a GTA is guilty of gross misconduct.

Sickness Absence, Maternity and Parental Leave

Subject to the provisions of the University Absence Policy, GTAs are entitled to paid time off if they are absent due to illness or injury.

GTAs are entitled to maternity and parental leave in accordance with University policies and procedures.

During periods of long-term sickness, maternity and parental leave their three-year fixed term award, comprising a stipend for teaching, PhD fee waiver, and, for GTAs, their accommodation allowance, will be suspended and there may be a requirement for interruption of studies. The latter would suspend the package and with it all academic deadlines – this would not be the case for shorter periods of leave unless approved by GSBoS. The stipend, fee waiver and accommodation allowance will resume when they return to full-time teaching and study. Their period of absence or leave will not be included in the time allocated for their award. Applications for an interruption of studies must be made to the Graduate School.

Policies

Copies of relevant policies can be accessed via the HR wiki pages. This includes the following:

- Absence Policy
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Maternity and parental leave Policies

Performance Review

As part of its commitment to good management practice, Edge Hill University attaches great importance to the development of its staff through appraisal and performance management. The focus of the Performance Review Scheme is to align the strategic requirements of the University's mission, values, aims and objectives with the performance, aspirations and development needs of individuals and departments.

The performance review is an annual process, which should provide you with:



- Feedback on your performance
- Clear direction on the focus of the role
- Agreed development support

Learning and Development

Information on the Learning and Development support available can be found on [Staff Learning and Development wiki pages](#). This includes HR co-ordinated sessions designed to support your personal development as well as sessions co-ordinated by the Research Office and Centre for Learning and Teaching, which are designed to support your Research and Teaching development.

Employees will need to complete mandatory training in the first 6 months of your post. The sessions are:

- Prevent (this will be Intermediate or Advanced depending on the level identified by the line manager).
- GDPR
- Fire Awareness
- Information Security Awareness
- Fraud & Irregularity
- Diversity in the Workplace.

Training relating to your role will be outlined to you by your line manager.

International GTAs

If you are an international postgraduate researcher with a GTA studentship and have a change in circumstance relating to your GTA role you should contact Staff Resourcing, the Graduate School, and the [International Office](#) to ensure that records are updated accordingly. In the event that you are unsure who to contact please speak to the Graduate School in the first instance.

Training

The Centre for Learning and Teaching

An Introduction to Teaching in Higher Education

This programme is **mandatory** for PhD PGRs who have a teaching role at Edge Hill University.

The University believes it is important for PhD registrations to be supported in developing their role as teachers in higher education. Support will, of course, be provided in departments however this programme, facilitated by colleagues from the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT), offers further opportunities to help PhD PGRs develop their teaching skills.

Broadly this course will cover the following topics:

Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching in higher education:

- Small and large group teaching: facilitating seminars, tutorials, workshops, laboratory/practical classes; developing study skills; collaborative learning. Student attention levels; organising and structuring lectures; presentation skills; use of activities, educational resources; managing disruptive behaviour.
- Asynchronous and synchronous approaches. Hybrid, blended and online, the use of virtual learning environments (VLEs) and other learning technologies.

Assessment and feedback:

- Marking assignments and providing useful, timely feedback; second marking/moderation processes; marking group work; the use of peer- and self-assessment.

Managing the academic role and your career:

- Managing teaching, research, and service activities; making use of student feedback, peer observation, and staff development opportunities;
- Undertaking the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education; securing Fellowship of The Higher Education Academy (FHEA); identifying future development needs and career planning.



For more information, please contact Dr Dawne Irving-Bell (Belld@edgehill.ac.uk)

The Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education (PGCTHE)

The Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education (PGCTHE) is a part-time postgraduate programme commencing in January each year. This additional certification is optional in relation to your PhD and GTA studentship. The PGCTHE is an AdvanceHE accredited programme which provides an opportunity for staff involved in teaching and supporting student learning to improve their professional practice and therefore their own students' learning. This is achieved by promoting a reflective approach to practice drawing upon pedagogic theory and empirical evidence within a collaborative learning environment.

As an additional teaching support mechanism, all GTAs have the option of also undertaking the PGCTHE course alongside their PhD studies for free. Some GTAs do this due to the additional job prospects, as they will then leave Edge Hill with a PhD, teaching experience and a teaching qualification (that may also secure the award of Advanced HE Fellowship of The Higher Education Academy (FHEA). However, choosing to do both courses at the same time is not easy, and many GTAs choose just to do the first module, which can lead to the award of Associate Fellowship (AFHEA). The choice as to whether to take the PGCTHE at all is entirely up to individuals and their own time pressures, there is no pressure from the university to do it!

If you would like further details about the course and associated modules then please visit [our webpage](#) or email us: CLT@edgehill.ac.uk

Staff development – Library & Learning Services

This following information has been collated to inform GTAs at Edge Hill University about how Library & Learning Services can support you, with a specific focus on staff development and digital technologies.

My Staff Development

The My Staff Development offer is a collaborative initiative between Human Resources, Library & Learning Services, the Centre for Learning & Teaching (CLT) and the Regulation, Assurance and Governance Unit (RAGU). This new combined offer aims to ensure that your learning is easy to navigate and in one central place.

Depending on your job role and personal interests, you can choose to explore numerous pathways to further support your development. These pathways consist of:

- Grow My Skills
- Professional Excellence
- Leadership & Management
- Wellbeing
- Preparing For My Future
- Learning, Teaching & Research
- Connect, Chat & Collaborate

These pathways have been specifically designed to allow you to enhance your knowledge in that area in more depth, encouraging you to complete the sessions offered and utilise the online guides and resources available.

Getting Digital Ready

As we commence the new term, we understand that this year the transition to a blended/hybrid learning model may feel a little different. In response to supporting staff with their digital skills, we have developed the 'Getting Digital Ready' Wiki page, as part of the collaborative 'My Staff Development' offer. These pages include links to upcoming sessions, pre-recorded content, interactive guides and more.

Staff have the opportunity to gain support and training in a range of digital technologies such as:

- Microsoft Teams
- Using Blackboard Collaborate
- OneDrive
- Making Documents Accessible
- Digital Tools to Facilitate a Flipped Classroom
- Turnitin
- Assessment Submissions and more ...

To find out more, visit the 'Getting Digital Ready' Wiki page:

<https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/staffdevelopment/Getting+Digital+Ready>

Library & Library Services Wiki

We would also like to take this opportunity to direct you to the Library & Learning Services Wiki. The Wiki, which is only available to staff at Edge Hill University, contains lots of useful information, support and resources. For example, you can find out who your departmental contact is, who the LTD Team are, more about support for PGRs and support for you on using key platforms such as Panopto, Blackboard Collaborate and more.

Here is the link to our main landing page: <https://go.edgehill.ac.uk/display/lis/Home>.

Bespoke Support

In Library & Learning Services we also offer staff bespoke training and support. If you or your team would like to set up an online training session, then please get in touch.

We provide sessions in different formats for a variety of audiences, and also meet with staff looking to develop their courses and pedagogic use of technology. We offer a new staff induction in Blackboard/Learning Edge for Academics or Professional Support. You can put in a request for training or a consultation meeting through ltdsupport@edgehill.ac.uk.



Finishing your GTA studentship

Resources

Once your studentship has ended and you have transferred from your GTA, it is important to note that you no longer have staff status and, therefore, the following resources will no longer be available to you:

- **All studentship funding including stipends and fee waiver**
- **Staff Edge Hill email address** – you *must* save any emails you need to your Edge Hill PGR account *prior to* the end of your studentship. You will not be able to access them once your staff account has closed. All Graduate School correspondence will be in your PGR email, as agreed in your research degree handbook.
- **Staff printing privileges**
- **Staff wellbeing opportunities**
- **Access to any staff spaces including desk allocation.**

Please take this into account and plan accordingly should you need to use any of the time beyond the period of your studentship that is available to complete the PhD. Should you have any questions about this please contact hrhelpdesk@edgehill.ac.uk.

PGR research and ethics (HRA)

When you have completed your research, it is essential that you notify the REC for any research under **HRA** approval, this must be done within **90 days of the end of study**. Further information on how to do this can be found [here](#). The [Graduate School and Research Office](#) must also be informed, please copy in the Research Contracts and Governance Manager to any messages regarding closing research sites/projects for their records.



FAQs

Financial

When will I receive my payments?

For any questions regarding your GTA funding, please contact the SRPS Helpdesk (srpshelpdesk@edgehill.ac.uk).

I am a GTA but have received a fee letter. What do I do?

Please contact the Graduate School with Tuition Fees cc'd in the first instance.

I haven't been paid – what do I do?

Please contact the Payroll team via payroll@edgehill.ac.uk and cc in your line manager.

Employment

Who is my line manager?

Normally a GTA's line manager is the head of their department. To confirm who your line manager is, please speak to SRPS in the first instance.

Can I change mode while on a studentship?

All GTA studentships are based on a full-time mode of study for three years. If you wish to request to change mode during this time you may do so, but you will not be able to remain a GTA and your funding will cease.

You can change mode once you have completed, or resigned from, your GTA studentship. Please contact Graduate School for further support to change your mode.

Research Degree

How are my hours monitored?

Prior to each semester, the Graduate School requests a breakdown of your GTA teaching allocation from your HoD. This is reviewed by our Associate Dean prior to the start of teaching. If you have any concerns about your hours, please contact graduateschool@edgehill.ac.uk.



Can I get a full-time job to go along with my GTA studentship?

GTAs are not permitted to undertake any work for the University other than that required by the terms of their GTA agreement.

GTAs should not normally take up other engagements or appointments outside the University during the course of their GTA award. If a GTA wishes to do so, they should discuss this with their line manager, Head of Department and the Graduate School.

Should my line manager be my Director of Studies (DoS)?

Normally a GTA's line manager is the head of their department, not their DoS, although occasionally the head of department may be a member of a supervisory team and may even be a DoS. To confirm who your line manager is, please speak to SRPS in the first instance.

I want to interrupt my studies during my GTA employment – what implications would that have?

If a PGR on an GTA studentship interrupts their studies their whole studentship package is also suspended. You will not carry out teaching, or other paid duties, and you will receive no payments – excluding statutory sick pay – and no accommodation allowance. Please contact the Graduate School should you wish to interrupt your studies.

Am I a member of staff or a student?

GTAs are formally classed as staff in their capacity as members of the University contributing to teaching, however, they are also registered as Graduate School postgraduate researchers to undertake PhD studies.

Why does the Graduate School only contact my PGR email account, not my staff account?

The Graduate School will only ever contact you at your PGR e-mail address so you must make sure you check that account regularly. This is because at the end of your staff contract your staff account will be deactivated and you will no longer have access to e-mails or folders associated with it. Our sending e-mails to your PGR e-mail address means we can be sure they will go to a live account until you complete your research degree.



Additional guidance for GTAs, and those supporting GTAs, can be found in the [Supporting Graduate Teaching Assistants](#) guidance.



Key Contacts

The Graduate School

Central inbox (graduateschool@edgehill.ac.uk)

Staff Resourcing & Payment Services team

SRPS helpdesk (srpshelpdesk@edgehill.ac.uk)

Payroll (payroll@edgehill.ac.uk)

Pension scheme enquiries (Payroll-Pensions@edgehill.ac.uk)

Maternity/parental leave enquiries (hradvisory@edgehill.ac.uk)

Finance and Fees

Fees (tuitionfees@edgehill.ac.uk)