Graduate Teaching Assistant studentship shortlisting guidance

The Graduate Teaching Assistant studentship scheme involves a substantial financial outlay on the part of the University, so it is important that we adopt a transparent and equitable evaluation and scoring process when considering applications as one of the central ways in which we demonstrate financial probity. In addition, it is important that candidates can be confident that their applications will be considered fairly and in a manner that is consistent throughout. It is, therefore, extremely important that the process outlined in this document is employed in all cases.

Initial Graduate School administrative sifting process

The Graduate School will complete an initial sifting process to remove any applications from consideration that are incomplete or that demonstrably do not meet the criteria.

That process should remove applications that:

1. lack a proposal;

2. are from a candidate that already has a doctorate in the same, or a closely related, subject area as that in which he or she is applying;

3. are from a candidate that does not have *at least* a IIi bachelor's degree, or equivalent.[1]

4. do not meet the minimum English language requirements.[2]

The shortlisting process

A more rigorous shortlisting exercise will then take place, including three phases:

i. a second sifting exercise (this time conducted by the Graduate School Research Degree Contact for the research area)

ii. scoring

iii. shortlisting for each research area

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[1] The focus here is on the *highest* qualification, so if a candidate has a IIii bachelor's degree, but also has a masters degree, the application would *not* be removed in the sifting process.

[2] The Graduate School will consult with the International Office and the Language Centre to determine appropriate action in each case.

The academic sift

When the Graduate School sifting has removed those applications that do not meet the basic requirements around eligibility, the applications will then be made available to the Graduate School Research Degree Contacts for each research area. The Graduate School Research Degree Contacts should conduct a further sifting exercise to eliminate those applications for which the University lacks **supervisory capacity**. That may be the result of the University not having appropriate expertise among its staff to supervise a project on a particular topic, it may alternatively be because we do not have at least two staff with capacity to supervise the project and a further two staff with appropriate expertise to act as internal examiners, or it may be because we receive a number of applications that would require a particular member of staff to supervise, but that person has only limited supervisory capacity according to the supervisor directory maintained by the Graduate School. In cases where we receive a number of applications that would require the same person to supervise them, the staff concerned should be asked to select the best as part of this sifting process.

Research Degree Contacts should also use Turnitin to check all applications to be considered at the shortlisting for cases of plagiarism. There is no need to check those applications that are not going to be considered at the shortlisting. This should be done before the shortlisting is submitted because there won't be time to re-open the shortlisting process after the timeframe given.

Scoring

A group of 4 staff will be identified by the Graduate School. That group will include:

1. the Graduate School Research Degree Contact for the research area
2. the senior manager who will attend the shortlisting meeting representing the academic unit in which candidates would be based for teaching purposes
3. 2 academic members of staff

All will be research active staff eligible to supervise doctoral postgraduate researchers (PGRs). **Applications will be made available to these staff by the Graduate School Research Degree Contact.**

Each member of the shortlisting scoring group should consider all applications, scoring them independently, *without* discussing their scores with any colleagues, including other members of the shortlisting scoring group. The Graduate School will provide a spreadsheet via which scores can be submitted.

Please do not, under any circumstances, complete the scoring on the Stonefish system. The Graduate School will deal with that after all the shortlisting meetings have been completed.

It is very important that each individual should review all the applications independently and shortlisting scoring group members must not communicate with each other about the applications or their scores.

That will give 4 sets of scores from individuals who have considered all of the applications.

Scoring should be done on the basis of the scale used for staff recruitment by HR:

0 – does not meet criterion

1 – partially meets criterion
2 – fully meets criterion
3 – exceeds criterion

The proposal and project quality will be double weighted.

A score should be given for each of the following criteria:

a) The quality of the proposed research project

b) The quality of the research proposal (the document and written communication skills)

c) Previous experience of research: this could include experience of research in previous study, such as an undergraduate dissertation, masters dissertation, or previous research degree, but it could also include other experience such as working as a research assistant.

d) Feasibility, including an assessment of the financial planning in the budget (where possible)

e) Evidence of successful teaching experience or other evidence of the ability to be an effective teacher in higher education

The strategic and developmental needs of the Graduate School and/or research area will also be considered, but that will be done as part of the area shortlisting process.

Each score will then be representable by a letter (a-e) plus a number (0-3; 0-6 for the weighted areas), giving a maximum possible score of 21. Any application with a score below 14 would be below the required standard for a successful GTA applicant, so no candidates with a score below 14 should be considered at the shortlisting.

The applications to be considered at the shortlisting should be determined by the Graduate School when it has received all scores from each of the four members of the shortlisting scoring group. No more than ten applications will be considered at the shortlisting meeting, all of which must score 14 or more.

When the Graduate School has confirmed the applications to be considered at the shortlisting meeting *the Research Degree Contact should identify full supervisory teams and two other staff who can act as internal examiners* for the project registration and final examinations for each applicant to be considered at the interim selection panel. The Research Degree Contacts should use the supervisor directory maintained by the Graduate School and consult with colleagues as necessary to identify supervisors and examiners. Proposed supervisory teams should conform to the requirements of the supervisor criteria.[3] Where Graduate School Research Degree Contacts are unsure who would be appropriate supervisors for a project, they should contact the Graduate School for assistance. It is important that Graduate School Research Degree Contacts consider the full range of staff eligible to supervise, regardless of the department or faculty in which a member of staff is based. The supervisor directory should not only be used to check eligibility and capacity, but also to identify the range of people who may be asked to supervise.

Two prospective supervisors from the identified team for each applicant should score the applications. Again, scoring should be done independently with no discussion with any colleagues.

It is important that prospective supervisors see the applications and express a view on them in communication with the Research Degree Contact. Please do not identify members of staff as

prospective supervisors without letting them read and evaluate an application.

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[3] http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/14165/

It is important that no one given access to any of the applications circulates those to anyone else, with the exception of the Graduate School Research Degree Contact, and he or she should only circulate applications to those with a specified role in the process as described in this document. Everyone involved in shortlisting should delete all material from applications after the shortlisting meeting.

There may be some cases in which the proposed project crosses resear area to such an extent that the Graduate School will deal with the application by asking staff from more than one research area to consider it.

Shortlisting

Shortlisting is normally conducted by staff from the area:

a. the relevant Graduate School Research Degree Contact;
b. a senior manager representing the appropriate academic unit for teaching purposes[4]

Decisions made should consider the strength of applications and the shortlisting should categorise applications as follows:

- Don't interview
- Reserve list
- Interview

Those which will be eliminated before the shortlisting meeting will be identified by the Graduate School after it receives the scores given by each of the six individuals on the shortlisting group.

Shortlisting meeting panels should shortlist up to three candidates per research area. Up to three further candidates should be placed on the reserve list.

The process may result in no candidates being shortlisted from a research area, depending on the quality of applications.

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[4] This will be the Head of Department, or alternate agreed with the Graduate School, in the case of FAS departments and the Associate Dean with responsibility for research, or alternate agreed with the Graduate School, in FoE and FHSCM.

Requests for extension of numbers shortlisted for interview

In some cases, there may simply be a high number of strong candidates. In such circumstances, the chair of the shortlisting meetings may agree at the meeting to move one or more candidates from the reserve list to an extended interview list, thereby reducing the number on the reserve list (no others will be added to the reserve list). In some cases, however, the chair may ask for a case to be made in writing to the final selection panel. Where that is necessary, the final selection panel will consider those requests and make a decision. If a request is unsuccessful, the candidate(s) in question will be placed on the reserve list.

Checking supervisory and examination capacity (conducted by the Graduate School)

- Proposed supervisory teams will be considered by the Graduate School.

- Only when all proposed supervisory teams and proposed examiners have been confirmed as appropriate by the Graduate School will the shortlist and the reserve list be confirmed.

- Departments normally provide a complete shortlisting checklist form for each candidate invited for interview.

Timeframe October 2023 entry

- **Applications** close **Monday 09 January at 123:59;**

- Applications will be reviewed throughout the recruitment opening by the International Admissions Office, sending the Graduate School a list of applicants to remove at the sifting level by **Tuesday 10 January at 12:00;**

- The **administrative sifting process** should be completed by the end of **Friday 13 January (am)**;

- From **Friday 13 January (PM)** research degree contacts should conduct an **academic sifting process** by reading applications, considering supervisory, and examination arrangements as agreed in the shortlisting document[5]. Applications to be considered by another research area should be sent to the Graduate School as soon as possible. A list of those to be considered for shortlisting should be sent to the Graduate School by **Monday 23 January at 12:00;**

- **Independent shortlisting** of the applications will take place between **Tuesday 24 January and Thursday 02 February**. Excels from staff involved in this process will be sent to the Graduate School by **16:00 at the latest**.

- **The Graduate School** will identify the top eligible applicants to consider for interview. This list will be sent to the research area contact by the evening of the **02 February.**

  o **If there are 6 or fewer eligible applicants identified**, the contact does not need to create a shorter list. All that is required from the contact is a shortlisting checklist for each candidate, detailing a proposed supervisory team and 2 possible examiners, to be sent to the Graduate School **by Thursday 09 Feb at 10:00 at the latest.**

  o **If there are 6 or more eligible applicants identified**, the contact will need to identify the top 6 applicants to interview/reserve and send through a shortlisting checklist for each candidate, detailing a proposed supervisory team and 2 possible examiners, to be sent to the Graduate School **by Thursday 09 Feb at 10:00 at the latest**.

- The interim selection panel to confirm supervisory teams will be held on **Thursday 09 Feb at 12:00**. Paperwork not received by this time won't be taken forward for interview.

- The following schedule of interviews (**between Monday 27 February and Friday 24 March**) has been prepared by the Graduate School and the relevant research administrators who will be arranging the interviews. These will be held using Zoom. Microsoft Teams should be used if closed captioning is required.

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[5] http://eshare.edgehill.ac.uk/15436/

Interview arrangements

- All interviews will be arranged by the Graduate School. The Graduate School will identify blocks of time for their department interviews in advance.

- The use of the 'emergency interview' slots are at the discretion of the Graduate School and must be approved before being arranged.

Interview parameters

- All interviews will be arranged by Graduate School admin staff.

- Each interview must have the following attendees

    o **Chair** – Associate Dean of the Graduate School

    o **Member of staff overseeing teaching in the area**

        • *normally* the HoD in FAS; AD Research in FoE/FHSCM1

    o **Research degree contact**

    o *At least* 1 prospective supervisor for the project; maximum of 2

- Interviews will not be held on Wednesdays unless approved by the Associate Dean of the Graduate School.

- Interviews will be held on Zoom between 10:00 and 17:30 (GMT).

- Lunch will be scheduled at 13:00 – 13:45

- Each interview will be allocated 1 hour to allow for 45 minutes per interview with a 15-minute buffer period.

- **At the beginning of each department block of interviews**, a 30-minute pre meeting with the Chair, HoD, AD and research degree contact will be scheduled.

- **At the end of each department block of interviews**, a 30-minute end meeting with the Chair, HoD, AD, and research degree contact will be scheduled.

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[1] If the AD (Research) in FAS is not attending as the member of staff responsible for teaching, they normally attend as a separate panel member.

Interview schedule as of 29 November 2022

Date	Faculty
Week 1	
Monday 27 February	Education
Tuesday 28 February	Health
Wednesday 01 March	Biology
Thursday 02 March	Business
Friday 03 March	No interviews
Week 2	
Monday 06 March	No interviews
Tuesday 07 March	Law, Criminology and Policing
Wednesday 08 March	English
Thursday 09 March	Performing Arts
Friday 10 March	Media
Week 3	
Monday 13 March	History
Tuesday 14 March	Social Science
Wednesday 15 March	No interviews
Thursday 16 March	Computer Science
Friday 17 March	Engineering
Week 4	
Monday 20 March	Psychology
Tuesday 21 March	Geography
Wednesday 22 March	No interviews
Thursday 23 March	Sport
Friday 24 March	SustainNet
Week 5	
Monday 27 March	Sport (match funded) GTA interviews
Tuesday 28 March	Computer Science match funded GTA interviews (09:00 – 13:00) Emergency interviews – Overflow (13:00 – 18:00)
Wednesday 29 March	Emergency interviews – Overflow (09:00 – 13:00) Deadline for final selection panel supporting statements
Thursday 30 March	Final Selection Panel
Friday 31 March	Outcome processing by Graduate School

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