

Employment Charter for postgraduate student academic and academic-related staff

Postgraduates who take on paid roles with a higher education institution (HEI) often experience a particularly unique set of circumstances in their employment relationship. This charter affirms that postgraduates who are employed at their place of study, even if for only a few hours per week, are undertaking a professional activity which is an important aspect of continuing professional development. Postgraduates are members of staff and must be integrated into the social and academic life of departments as valued colleagues and members of a professional community.

Postgraduate employees will range from those with no previous employment experience in teaching or higher education to those with extensive employment experience. The provisions of the employment charter and the good practice teaching guide should be applied accordingly.

All postgraduates who are employed to undertake paid academic or related work at the institution where they study have the right to:

- **Fair and equal access to employment opportunities.** All jobs should be advertised widely enough to ensure that all those who may be qualified to do them are aware of the opportunities.
- **Non-discriminatory appointment procedures.** Appointments must be made in accordance with clear selection criteria which are non-discriminatory and accord with equal opportunities policies and good practice, including the collection of data for the purposes of monitoring. The process must be an open one which does not just give some paid work to the favoured few.
- **A letter of appointment, definitive job description and a written statement of terms and conditions.** Together, these should set out the employment responsibilities, hours of work, an estimate of the time to be allocated to different responsibilities, the rate or rates of pay, the intervals at which remuneration is paid, the duration of the contract and the member of staff responsible for supervising the work and employment details required by law.
- **Adequate study time.** The main aim of postgraduate students is to obtain the qualification for which they are studying. Teaching duties in excess of fair limits would threaten study time and reduce completion rates within a satisfactory timescale.
- **Belong to a trade union of choice and take a full and active part in that union.** Postgraduates who are elected to a union position, which attracts time off, should be treated in the same way as other academic and related staff.
- **Full induction training.** Postgraduates should be entitled to the same induction and orientation training as other academic and related staff. This should include health and safety training and an opportunity to listen to a presentation from the recognised trade union.
- **Work related training and opportunities for continuing professional development.** Teaching is a skill, and as such requires to be learnt. Training in general teaching methods and in any specific skills or knowledge necessary is essential. For academic-related roles, training should be appropriate and adequate. Postgraduates should also have access to centrally provided development and training programmes on the same basis as other academic and related staff.

- **A fair rate of pay.** Pay should be calculated as a fraction of the appropriate full-time academic or academic-related grade at a point on the grade consistent with qualifications and experience and subject to annual incremental progression.
- **Pay for all employment responsibilities and hours of work.** This should include, for those employed to teach; preparation, marking, required hours of attendance including meetings, lectures, etc, office hours, communication with students, invigilation, administrative responsibilities and training associated with the job. The employer should recognise that payment based on actual hours worked is fairer than payment purely for contact time together with an inflexible formulaic calculation of preparation and marking time as each course taught will require different preparation and marking time.
- **Parity in terms and conditions of employment with other academic and academic-related staff.**
- **Access to university and departmental resources, facilities and support.** This should be on a par with other academic and academic-related staff and adequate to fulfill the employment responsibilities including access to library, computing, audio-visual, car-parking, photocopying, e-mail, telephone, stationery, social, technical and secretarial facilities and to office or desk space and staff common areas.
- **Adequate workplace accommodation.** Postgraduates must be given adequate office or other appropriate space to carry out such duties as individual tuition and on-site preparation and marking.
- **Transparent and regular assessment and review procedures.** It is not fair to the postgraduates or their students for postgraduates to be thrown into teaching with no support. They should have regular reviews to identify and remedy any problems early on.
- **Opportunities to participate in staff meetings and events.**
- **Representation on all appropriate departmental and institutional committees.** Postgraduates can often play a major role in teaching. They should have every opportunity to participate in Dept meetings.
- **Early payment of all appropriate expenses incurred in the performance of his/her duties.** This should include travelling costs *and* time. Although an apparently minor administrative problem, late payment of expenses for those on very tight budgets can be a major difficulty.
- **Parity of access to all collectively negotiated mechanisms for the resolution of disputes, including grievance procedures.** As employees, postgraduates should have exactly the same rights to air grievances through appropriate procedures. Similarly, if they face disciplinary, poor performance or similar allegations they should have every right to defend themselves through the agreed procedures and with the full support of their trade union.

All these rights are either lawful entitlements or standard good practice that HEI's apply to their other employed staff. Postgraduates deserve no less. For too long the major contribution, which many postgraduates make to teaching, has been taken for granted. That teaching deserves the same support as any other teaching and the postgraduates who deliver it deserve the same support as any other academic staff.

The University and College Union (UCU) has been formed by the amalgamation of the Association of University Teachers and NATFHE - The University & College Lecturers' Union. UCU represents further and higher education lecturers, managers, researchers, postgraduate tutors and many academic-related staff such as librarians, administrators and computing professionals across the UK. Join UCU today by completing and returning the application form available on the UCU website www.ucu.org.uk