

Engaging and Working as a Graduate Teaching Assistant

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) are doctoral (PhD, MPhil, EngD and MD[Res]) students who contribute towards learning and teaching at Imperial.

Doctoral students across the institute may be engaged 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 and is an important part of their research training.

GTAs are expected to maintain high standards of professional ethics appropriate for any member of academic staff and to embed the [Imperial Values and Behaviours](#) in their work.

This document outlines the terms and conditions for engaging GTAs and should be read in conjunction with, "GTA Activities, Remuneration and Training"

1. GTAs and their relation to Casual Workers

- 1.1 GTAs are trained and recruited in their role to carry out a specific set of activities which support learning and teaching at Imperial as set out in, "GTA Activities, Remuneration and Training."
- 1.2 GTAs are engaged with the organisation as casual workers. Casual workers may be students (undergraduate, Master's or doctoral) or external individuals who carry out work for Imperial. Operationally, GTAs submit their timesheets through the same application as all casual workers – the Casual Worker Management System – and are paid via the casual payroll.
- 1.3 In some cases, GTAs and other casual workers may carry out similar activities, such as lab demonstrations. Where this is the case, the rate of pay will be the same.
- 1.4 GTAs can undertake other casual work assignments across the organisation, as set out by HR in the casual worker webpages, provided that the work complies with any visa restrictions they may hold.

2. Recruitment

- 2.1 Before advertising for GTA teaching opportunities, departments are advised to review, "GTA Activities, Remuneration and Training."
- 2.2 Departments are reminded that on average, GTAs should teach less than six hours per week and that teaching should not exceed 10 hours in any given week.
- 2.3 Imperial recognises, however, that GTAs may sometimes be involved in teaching which is condensed over a short period of time, such as field trips, which exceeds the 10-hour weekly limit. Engaging GTAs as contributors to fieldwork is set out in section 5 of this document, which should be read in conjunction with any local departmental and/or Faculty guidance.

- 2.4 International Students with a student visa, are reminded that they should check their visa rules with respect to working during term time and in vacation periods: [Work rules during your studies | Imperial students | Imperial College London](#).
- 2.5 Before recruiting 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.
- 2.6 Any doctoral student wishing to apply to be a GTA must first seek permission from their supervisor, enrol for the relevant training and register with Imperial as a casual worker.

3. Registering as a Casual Worker, Right To Work Checks & Students with a Tier 4/Student Route Visa

- 3.1 GTAs must register with the organisation as casual workers prior to commencing work: [Hiring casual workers | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#). 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 for students with Tier 4 / Student Route visas which must be adhered to.
- 3.2 To engage a casual worker, departments will need to submit a request (Requirement Schedule) to the Casual Worker Team. A Requirement Schedule is necessary for all workers and submitted prior to work commencing. If the Requirement Schedule is for a new (prospective) worker, the Casual Worker Team 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 work can commence – work cannot begin until confirmation of successful onboarding is given. The Casual Worker Team will inform GTAs and their department if there are any restrictions with respect to the number of hours the GTA can work. Departments should be aware that the process of registering and completing onboarding of GTAs can take some time, especially during busy periods.
- 3.4 Departments engaging casual workers will have a dedicated section in the Casual Worker App, to manage their requests. Departmental staff can request access into the App via the Casual Worker Team.
- 3.5 Further guidance can be found here: [Hiring casual workers | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#) and advice 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. Remuneration, Holiday Pay Entitlement, Tax and Pensions

- 4.1 GTAs must be engaged on approved institutional GTA rates as set out in, “GTA Activities,

Remuneration and Training.” There are three tiers (rates of pay) depending on the type of activity being carried out. Departments should not set their own rates of pay.

- 4.2 Casual workers are entitled to the equivalent of 5.6 weeks’ annual leave during each holiday year (including all bank holiday entitlements), calculated on a pro rata basis dependent on the number of hours that they actually work. Holiday entitlement is therefore equivalent to 12.07% of the hours actually worked in each holiday year. The institution pays a monthly supplement to the issued payment which is equivalent to 12.07% of the basic hourly rate. At the end of each assignment, GTAs are expected to take the statutory annual leave accrued and been paid for as holiday.
- 4.3 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 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 App before the payroll deadline. Casual workers are responsible for submitting their own timesheets and any issues with their submission should be raised with the Casual Worker Team.
- 4.4 Departments are reminded that if 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.
- 4.5 Queries regarding tax, e.g. overpayment, can be directed to the Casual Worker Team in the first instance. Workers can access their payslips via ICIS Self-Service to monitor deductions and the tax code allocated by HMRC. Instructions on payslip access can be found on the casual worker pages on the College website.
- 4.6 Imperial automatically enters all eligible staff and casual workers into one of the organisation’s pension schemes – Imperial is required to do this by Law. Information on the pension schemes can be found on the Imperial website, and queries can be sent to the Casual Worker Team or Pensions Team: pensions@imperial.ac.uk

5. Field Trips and Preparatory Work

- 5.1 Departments should pay GTAs for preparatory work. Departments should set a maximum number of hours which can be claimed for preparatory work for any given activity which reflects the specifics and complexity of the activity being undertaken. The rate of pay for preparatory work should align with the rate of pay for the given activity for which preparation is being carried out.
- 5.2 Departments should pay GTAs for their contribution towards field trips. Departments should agree with the GTA the activities that will be carried out and the associated rates of pay ahead of the field trip, including any preparatory work. It is recommended that departments set a maximum number of hours which can be claimed by GTAs for their contribution towards field trips, again communicating this to GTAs ahead of the field trip.

6. Doctoral students who Contribute towards the Supervision of Undergraduate and Master’s Level Projects.

- 6.1 Learning supervisory skills and contributing towards the supervision of taught students is considered an important part of the research training experience at Imperial College London and

as such, doctoral students are not normally remunerated for their contribution towards this.

- 6.2 Many doctoral students will be invited by their department to contribute towards the supervision of undergraduate and Master's level projects. For some departments this will be a requirement of the research training experience and for others this will be optional.
- 6.3 It is recommended that doctoral students discuss their supervision of taught students with their supervisor and agree an appropriate level of contribution. It is essential that their academic progression is not negatively impacted by an excessive supervisory workload which should be reviewed regularly between the student and their supervisor. Students wishing to raise concerns about their workload with respect to the supervision of taught students should talk to their Senior Tutor (PGR).
- 6.4 Departments should communicate their expectations with respect to doctoral students supervising taught students during induction and at other appropriate points. Departments should also include information about their expectations in their PGR handbook and when advertising their research programmes to prospective doctoral students so that expectations are clear from the start.
- 6.5 The Early Career Researcher Institute, through its GTA training programme, delivers a dedicated workshop for doctoral students who supervise taught students.

7. Supporting GTAs in their Role

- 7.1 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 engaged by the College as casual workers, departments are reminded that GTAs are subject to the College's HR policies and procedures in relation to this.
- 7.2 GTAs should work under the supervision of an academic member of staff but they should also be appointed a mentor with whom they can seek advice or raise concerns with respect to their role.
- 7.3 Where GTAs are engaged to carry out activities where no academic member of staff or the GTA's mentor are present to supervise, Departments must ensure that the GTA has undergone any relevant pre-requisite training or that the GTA has the necessary seniority to deliver that role.
- 7.4 If GTAs are engaged to carry out activities where young people are participating (under the age of 18), Departments must follow Imperial's policies and codes of practices with respect to young people on campus and where appropriate, that a DBS check on the GTA has been made prior to the activity taking place.

[Children and young persons on campus | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#)
[Policy and Code of Practice | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#)

Further, it is strongly recommended that Departments require any GTAs working with young people to complete the online safeguarding course, available at:

https://rise.articulate.com/share/a_rMPaQ_xctcixdtacubn--auCjvWLYr

- 7.5 GTAs may receive feedback from the students they support via local departmental surveys or through other routes. In the event of disciplinary concerns being raised, the initial approach will

be determined by whether the individual was primarily acting in their role as a GTA or as a student. If the former applies, the Department should first discuss their concerns with the GTA and agree appropriate support and training. Should the issue not be resolved, the appropriate HR process will be followed in relation to casual worker policies. Where the matter indicates that a student acting primarily as a GTA may also have contravened the [student code of conduct](#), the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#) may also be applied once the HR casual worker process has concluded. If the concern does not relate to their role as a GTA, the student discipline process will be followed and will take into account any impact on a student's ability to fulfil their GTA responsibilities.

- 7.6 Where departments have concerns about the quality of GTA teaching in their department, the Early Career Researcher Institute is able to work with departments to develop and facilitate additional bespoke provision to support GTAs in their role. Departments should contact the Early Career Researcher Institute's Head of Pedagogy & GTA Programme Leader, Dr Magdalena Jara, to discuss this option: m.jara@imperial.ac.uk

8. Recognition and Reward

- 8.1 There are awards to recognise the valuable contribution that GTAs make towards learning and teaching at the College. For example, the Faculty of Engineering has an award for "GTA of the Year" and the Business School has an award in which to recognise its GTAs. The Students' Union also has a Students' Academic Choice Award (SACA) in which to recognise the valuable contribution that GTAs make.
- 8.2 Departments are strongly encouraged to implement local ways in which to recognise GTA achievement. When developing schemes to recognise and reward GTAs for their contribution, it is recommended that departments consider the full range of activities that GTAs support and can be recognised for (see Appendix 1 of, "GTA Activities, remuneration and training.") It is important to note that some GTA activities will have greater visibility than others within the department, such as tutoring and supporting lecturing. Because of this, GTAs carrying out such activities are more likely to be recognised, as they are in direct contact with students and hence more likely to be highlighted in student evaluations for example. However, there are other equally important activities carried out by GTAs, such as marking, which have less visibility but should also be considered for recognition.
- 8.3 Imperial is a member of Advance HE, and the EDU has developed an accredited framework (STAR) which provides opportunities for GTAs to obtain HEA Fellowship.
- 8.4 Since 2018-19, the GTA training programme delivered by the Early Career Researcher Institute, is included as an accredited programme allowing GTAs who participate in the training to apply for Associate Fellowship of the HEA (AFHEA).

Date of document: 25.07.24