



University of Essex

**GUIDANCE FOR DEPARTMENTS WHO EMPLOY
POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS WHO
DEMONSTRATE AND SUPPORT TEACHING
(GLA)**

People and Culture

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Introduction

PGR students play an invaluable role in supporting the University's delivery of excellent teaching through their role as Graduate Laboratory Assistants (GLAs). In recognition of this, the University pays and contracts GLAs and Assistant Lecturers (formerly GTAs) in line with other employees to ensure they are treated fairly as part of our institutional commitment to an inclusive working environment to every member of our community (People Supporting Strategy Priority1:1). To support teaching excellence, it is important that Departments provide support and development throughout the role in addition to the core central training provided as part of our commitment to develop all staff (PSS Priority 4:25).

At Essex all staff are supported to develop and apply their skills and professional knowledge and expertise to educate and enable every student to realise their full potential, and graduates who teach are also developing the Education side of their own academic practice, which may be beneficial to those seeking an academic career.

The following information sets out clearly opportunities and expectations and covers recruitment, contracts, pay, expectations of the role and of the department, training and support, and lastly, opportunities for those who don't teach but are interested in developing the education side of an academic role.

GLA or Assistant Lecturer?

Departments tend to recruit either Assistant Lecturers (ALs) or GLAs dependent upon their needs, but what is the difference? Put simply, ALs teach, while GLAs support teaching. ALs can expect to be alone in a classroom (or online setting) with their students, leading the session. They may also be required to provide academic support hours for students. Whereas GLAs will mainly be supporting an academic in a practical setting such as a laboratory, PC Lab or fieldwork and wouldn't normally be expected to lead a session or be alone with students without academic support.

To reflect the differences in the roles, the training requirements and pay also differ between GLAs and ALs. A separate guidance document is available for ALs.



RECRUITMENT & SELECTION

To support excellence in teaching, Departments are expected to set out expectations for GLAs at the outset and provide support and development throughout the role.

The following documents set out guidance as to how departments should recruit their graduate teaching staff.

[Advertising roles](#)

[GLA appointment/ online engagement form \(Onbase\)](#)

[requires OpenVPN off-campus] - [Onbase guidance](#)

[AL job description template](#)

[GLA job description template](#)

[GLA/AL employment checklist](#)

1. All posts must have a job description setting out hours, the duties to be undertaken and the skills and experience required. Posts will be salaried, with the specified hours representing a reasonable allocation of the time needed to carry out all the required duties.
2. Graduate teachers (ALs/GLAs) will be placed on a fixed-term overarching employment contract until they complete or withdraw from postgraduate studies or enter further completion or an extension to the completion period. Although the contract will be in place for the duration of postgraduate studies, GLAs will need to apply for individual posts and will have no entitlement to future engagements beyond their initial post. Each job description will form part of and will activate the employment contract.
3. Departments must ensure that full consideration is given to what is required from the postholder before it is advertised.
4. Vacancies should be advertised on a University-wide basis.
5. Postgraduate research students are eligible to apply for GLA posts except when they are in further completion or an extension to the completion period. It may not always be appropriate for first-year students who are settling into their research to work as a graduate teacher. Research supervisors need to agree that progress is good and that students can apply or continue to apply for GLA roles and agree on the number of hours to be worked.
6. Any restrictions on hours set out in the University's [Regulations for Research Degrees](#), RCUK training grant or any other scholarship will apply.

7. There are additional restrictions on sponsored students under a Tier 4 visa and the University has a responsibility to ensure, as far as possible, that students are not employed under terms that breach their visa conditions. Students are required to inform their home department if they are undertaking other work in the University; HR is also required to do so. Departments are advised to seek advice if they wish to employ a sponsored student as a GLA.

8. All short-listed candidates should be interviewed by the module supervisor and one other member of staff engaged in teaching. They should be assessed against the person specification, in particular the ability to clearly communicate academic and teaching material.

9. One member of the interviewing panel should have completed recruitment and selection training.

10. Feedback should be provided on candidates' interview performance and suitability for the role once the selection process is complete. Candidates who are not selected on the grounds of communication skills should be advised on the support available to them to prepare for future applications, ensuring that every member of our community can benefit from the development and support available to them (PSS Priority 5:36).

For more information, contact: Your Department Manager or Staffing@Essex.ac.uk



CONTRACTS & PAY

Contracts for GLAs are fixed-term contracts that will come to an end when the student completes their studies. An umbrella contract is in place which is activated when the student begins a work engagement. All contracts must be accompanied by a job description.

- [GLA Role: Responsibilities and expectations](#) [Video - 30 mins. Moodle Log-in required]
- [Introduction to using HR Organiser](#)
- [University Salary scales](#)

Contact: Staffing@essex.ac.uk

EXPECTATIONS & SUPPORT

- **GLA co-ordinator or DM**

In most departments, there is an appointed AL/GLA coordinator who takes the lead on supporting PGRs who teach. In some departments, this role is taken by the Departmental Manager.

- **GLA reps**

Departments are required to facilitate representation for PGRs who teach. GLAs should have a say in electing their representative, who should be invited to Student Voice and/or teaching team meetings/ away days to sustain an environment where decisions are informed by different perspectives (PSS Priority 1:2).

GLAs are also eligible to join the [UCU](#) for free while they are employed by the University

- **Module supervisor**

The Module supervisor who employs the GLA will be the main contact for support. They should provide guidance and content for teaching as well as discuss development opportunities and provide developmental feedback on performance.

- **Teaching observations**

GLAs are not required to be formally observed (as ALs are) but should still be provided with developmental feedback. This will normally be carried out by the Module supervisor whom they are supporting.

- **Supporting students**

In addition to the academic side of the role is an equally important pastoral care role. As such GLAs should familiarise themselves with the help and support available at the University. It is not your role to solve student's personal problems, but you should be prepared to signpost them to the appropriate supports. This video introduces the student Wellbeing & inclusivity Service (SWIS) and additional guidance on supporting the diverse range of student needs can be found on the [SWIS webpages](#).

[Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service](#) - [video 6:44 mins]

- **Marking**

GLAs should not be employed solely for marking and guidance on marking by PGRs is covered in section 4 of the [University Marking Policy](#).

Contact: Develop@essex.ac.uk

SUPPORTING YOUR GLAs

- Encourage GLAs to attend all induction events, both held by Organisational Development and within your Department. The Departmental event should cover Departmental teaching and assessment practices, student progress procedures, and guidance on academic content. Where GLAs will be supporting students in a laboratory, PC lab, and/or field settings, relevant departmental health and safety procedures should also be covered.
- Mandatory training for GLAs is currently 7 hours over the first year of teaching, for which they should be paid. This includes 4 hours for a central University induction, 3 hours for essential training (How We Work At Essex) and potentially an additional 6 hours towards the completion of their CADENZA application for Associate Fellowship (where relevant, see below).



Attendance at any lab, fieldwork or safety induction in the department should also be paid (as all compulsory training).

- An initial meeting between GLAs and their Module Supervisor(s) should be organised. Regular contact and/or meetings should then be maintained throughout the year as appropriate.
- Provide time for discussions with GLAs on timetables, classes and requirements for teaching.
- Ensure GLAs are included in Departmental information and communication networks, so they are consulted where appropriate, involved in away days etc. In short, they should be treated the same as any other member of staff.
- Provide opportunities for GLAs to meet their peers and share knowledge, ideas and reflections on their own teaching experiences. Such opportunities should be offered at least twice per year.
- GLAs have told us that they find written guidance from their Department invaluable. This may be in the form of a handbook and could include information about teaching arrangements, responsibilities and expectations.

- Example Departmental GLA Handbooks

[Life Sciences Handbook](#)

[CSEE Handbook](#)

- To support GLAs meet the expectations of their Departments and the University, all new GLAs must have a job description. It is also

beneficial for new GLAs to have a meeting with the module supervisor to set out what is expected of them and allow them to ask questions.

- GLAs should be given information regarding training and induction events. This should cover events organised by Organisational Development and the Department. Inductions and training sessions are mandatory for all new GLAs.

GLAs are not required to achieve Associate Fellow (D1) status with AdvanceHE (formerly the Higher Education Academy) through the University's professional recognition process, CADENZA, before going on to teach for a second year. But they should be supported and paid for completing an application, should their role and responsibilities allow this. Further guidance can be found in the [CADENZA Moodle pages](#).

If GLAs are considering applying for Associate Fellowship (D1), but are not sure if their role and responsibilities would allow them to be successful, they should contact the CADENZA team for further advice (Cadenza@essex.ac.uk).

Organisational Development (OD) run several support workshops and writing events to support Fellowship applicants. GLAs are also welcome to attend these and the wider education development opportunities offered by OD, such as the Education Insights series and the [Introduction to teaching in HE Moodle course](#) (Log-in required). GLAs should be paid for all compulsory training, but will not be paid for attending additional optional development activities not specifically required for their role.

Contact: Develop@essex.ac.uk

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

• Central induction

A role-based academic induction will provide access to a peer-learning community so all GLAs are required to attend a half-day central induction session totalling 4 hours. These events are held before the start of term in September and January each year. You will be paid for this time, so attendance is compulsory.

GLAs who have attended previously are welcome but will not be paid (again) and are not required to attend.

GLAs who hold contracts can book themselves a place by searching 'GLA' on [HR Organiser](#).

If you don't yet hold a contract the department should notify Develop@essex.ac.uk of the names of all those who wish to book.



The central induction includes sessions on preparing to support teaching in a lab, including classroom management, engaging students, questioning techniques, along with an introduction to Student Support and CADENZA. Additional sessions on health and safety, supporting students in a lab or fieldwork setting or undertaking marking and assessment should be attended where relevant. If attendance is compulsory for the role, then GLAs should be paid accordingly.

If you miss the relevant event for unavoidable reasons, they are repeated before the Spring term and you should attend the next available event. Departments should provide a local induction before students teach. This should include a meeting with the module supervisor.

- GLAs should be treated the same as all staff and as such are required to complete the Essential training required of all University staff titled '[How We Work At Essex](#)'.



• **Cadenza and Associate Fellowship**

GLAs are not required to attain Associate Fellow status with AdvanceHE (formerly the Higher Education Academy) through the University's professional recognition framework 'CADENZA' as ALs are, but are eligible to apply if they feel that their role allows them to demonstrate the relevant criteria.

• **Departmental induction**

Departments must ensure they provide effective induction, guidance and networking opportunities, including:

- Early in each academic year, a briefing meeting for new Graduate Teachers providing formal induction on the role, departmental teaching and assessment practices.
- Written guidance e.g. a handbook on teaching/demonstrating arrangements, responsibilities and expectations.

• **Meeting with Module supervisor**

Graduate Teachers should be provided with support and guidance from the module supervisor to enable them to carry out their teaching duties. This will include guidance on the teaching materials to be used and the preparation expected. If significant preparation is expected, it should be paid.

Teaching should normally be undergraduate practical class teaching or demonstrating, using existing teaching materials. Lecturing duties, and any delivery of teaching at Masters level, would not usually be undertaken by GLAs and must be associated with a student's research interest, and requires prior approval from the Deputy Dean

(Education) of the relevant Faculty in which the teaching will be conducted. Lecturing duties should be as directed by and under the supervision of the module supervisor.

- **Ongoing training & development**

Graduate Teachers must engage in professional development activity relating to teaching, learning and assessment responsibilities. All mandatory training time will be paid.

Module supervisors have a duty to ensure that they regularly discuss learning and development needs and activity with the Graduate Teachers they are supervising. They must also ensure that individuals have time to undertake training.

- **Opportunity to meet peers**

Departments should make every effort to ensure the integration of GLAs into course/module teaching teams for example: including them in Departmental information and communication networks, consulting them where appropriate on module development and review.

At the end of the Autumn term and at the end of each academic year, a Departmental seminar/workshop, aimed at sharing good practice and providing a preliminary induction for potential new Graduate Teachers should be held.

Graduate Teachers should also ensure they seek guidance where necessary and make a contribution to the work of the Department as part of the teaching team to the extent that time allows.

• Assessment & Feedback

Any marking duties should be in line with Section 4 of the University [Marking Policy](#).

- A graduate research student should be employed to mark examinations only when the individual has taught the whole or a significant part of the module.
- A graduate student should be employed to mark coursework only when the individual has taught/demonstrated a relevant part of the module in the current or previous academic year(s) or the relevant Dean has accepted a case made by the Head of Department on the competence of the graduate student, using the following form.
- [AL/GLA Exam and Coursework Marking Application Form](#)

Graduate teachers should be paid for marking based on a realistic assessment of hours, agreed in advance. Permission must be sought in advance from the relevant Faculty Dean, on the basis of a case made by the Head of Department.

Where marking is to be undertaken, a marking schedule and guidance should be provided or developed in conjunction with GLAs.

The [Marking Policy](#) also covers details of moderation requirements where PGR students undertake marking.

Contact: Develop@essex.ac.uk



SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES

GLA

- Engaging with the guidance provided by the module supervisor on the duties of the role including the use of teaching materials and preparation.
- Engaging in professional development activity relating to teaching, learning and assessment responsibilities.
- Undertaking training necessary for the role, including attending the relevant central and departmental inductions, completing the essential training in the first term.

MODULE SUPERVISOR

- Developing the job description, interviewing, and providing feedback.

- Guidance on duties of the role, including teaching materials and preparation.
- Discussing professional development needs and activity undertaken by the GLA.
- Supporting the students' delivery of material and development and moderating of criteria for assessment and feedback.

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

- Approving all job descriptions before release and ensuring affordability.
- Ensuring that selection is undertaken appropriately, including the development of a full job description.
- Integration of GLAs into the teaching team and department.
- Provision of effective induction, guidance and networking opportunities.
- Ensuring that quality and performance is monitored.
- Informing Organisational Development of any emerging training needs.
- Seeking approval from the Deputy Dean (Education) for any lecturing or marking duties to be undertaken.

FACULTY DEPUTY DEAN (EDUCATION)

- Approving the suitability of GLAs to undertake lecturing or marking duties.

For further guidance please contact Develop@essex.ac.uk

Guidance creator: People & Culture

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