

**Motion title:**

A fair deal for Postgraduates Who Teach

**Conference Believes**

1. Many postgraduates are engaged in the teaching of undergraduate and some postgraduate taught students, and the marking of their assignments within their institutions.
2. In 2012-13, NUS conducted a survey and associated report of postgraduates engaged in teaching ("Postgraduates Who Teach") to examine their perception of their conditions.
3. National Conference 2018 saw the passing of motion 'HE104 – Quality of Teaching' which, though focused on provision for undergraduates, resolved to "develop more effective support mechanisms for postgraduate students engaged in teaching activity".
4. How such teachers are trained in preparation for delivering teaching varies wildly between institutions, and often within institutions.
5. These postgraduates are often some of the most dedicated teachers at their institution, working hours long beyond those they are paid for.
6. Such postgraduates are frequently contracted on casual terms and lower rates of pay than other members of University staff delivering the same level of educational experience and of a similar level of expertise.
7. Income from teaching may make up a vital element of financial support for some postgraduates, in particular during long research degree programmes.
8. Whilst the University and Colleges Union (UCU) currently extends free membership to postgraduates who teach, union negotiations regarding their pay and conditions often fall outside of the scope of national pay bargaining.

**Conference Further Believes**

1. We know there are national and local issues with the pay and conditions of postgraduate teachers, but information on the scale of the problem is disparate.
2. The report created by NUS in 2012-13 and associated recommendations are helpful, but did not go far enough in critically examining case studies of practice at various institutions to see where best practice can be shared and problematic practices identified.
3. Access to opportunities for postgraduates to be able to teach are an important experiential element that can supplement a research degree programme, preparing the student to be an effective future academic and delivering unique personal development, in addition to being a sometimes vital income stream.
4. The practice of allowing postgraduates to teach should be lauded, but support for them improved in the interests both of the postgraduate and the students they teach (in keeping with motion HE104), and careful consideration made so as teaching does not to compromise the postgraduate's academic prowess.
5. UCU currently campaigns nationally on Anti-Casualisation in Universities, with the potential for direct impact to improve conditions for postgraduates who teach and are contracted for casual work – there is strength in collaboration with sector allies in this area.

**Conference Resolves**

1. To commission a national report into the pay and conditions of postgraduates who teach within Higher Education institutions, including in-depth case studies of practice at a diverse set of institutions, with specific focus on:
  - rates of pay compared across institutions and to employed academic staff delivering equivalent provision;
  - mechanisms for reviewing these rates of pay;
  - the contractual conditions on which postgraduates are engaged to teach;
  - the benefits and drawbacks to students and institutions in utilising postgraduate students in undergraduate teaching;
  - the use and appropriateness of studentships where funding is conditional on postgraduates being required to teach;
  - training, development and support provided to postgraduate students engaged in teaching;
  - mode of employment, whether outsourced or within the institution
  - unpaid labour in preparation and marking time; and
  - any discrepancies in how relevant policies are applied within a given institution.

2. To use the outputs from this investigation to identify best practice to be encouraged across the sector and the most appropriate methods of doing so, and to identify institutions where conditions for postgraduates who teach are particularly poor in the sector, for the purposes of NUS explicitly supporting the Students' Unions at these institutions to lobby for improved conditions.

3. To recommend Students' Unions collaborate with UCU on local implementation of their Anti-Casualisation campaign to secure better pay and stronger contractual conditions for postgraduates who teach in their institution.