

Motion Name: SU Policy: PGRs as staff, not just students.

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Statement:

PGRs occupy a liminal space where they contribute to the research community and many also teach, whilst they are still technically counted as students themselves. The educational experience of the PGRs is compromised by this lack of clarity around their status. Likewise, for the students they teach, the educational experience is marred by the precarious nature of hourly-paid teaching contracts. Many PGRs who teach do not receive their contracts before the start of the teaching block and hence teaching is disrupted. Many are not on staff mailing lists and hence do not receive important teaching-related emails, affecting student experience.

Background:

1. The university values its postgraduate researcher (PGR) community and their contribution to the institution's core mission and values and wishes to ensure that PGRs are supported, trained, and enabled to fully participate in the university community.¹
2. Despite the above many PGRs must work unpaid hours beyond what is contracted to meet requirements²
3. The UCU campaign "PGRs as staff, not students" released a manifesto to tackle these issues by setting out demands. It can be found here³

Purpose:

1. There should be improvement and consistency in the way PGRs are treated in relation to their research work, and any teaching or research assistant work they undertake.
2. Precarious HOUR PAID TEACHING contracts and RA contracts impact equity, reproducing inequalities in relation to race, gender and disability, as well as impacting stress and wellbeing.
3. Bristol SU policy should support the plight of PGRs, in line with other SUs such as Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds, and others.

¹ <https://bristol.ac.uk/university/media/vision/university-strategy-2030.pdf>

² <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Early-Career-Researchers-Covid-19-report-.pdf>

³ <https://www.ucu.org.uk/PGRs-as-staff> .

Actions:

1. To lobby the University of Bristol to ensure that PGRs, in their primary research capacity, are recognised for their contributions by way of paid remuneration for attending and contributing to staff meetings, projects, and initiatives.
2. To lobby the University of Bristol to ensure that PGRs who teach are given fair and stable HOUR PAID TEACHING contracts. These contracts should include clearly stipulated conditions, an expectation that all teaching, marking, and related duties is paid, and are received before commencing work.
3. To lobby the University on behalf of PGRs to meet the demands of the “PGRs as Staff” campaign by way of the following: a dedicated budget for additional financial support as required (such as paid sick leave and maternity leave), the paid inclusion of PGRs at staff research events and meetings, and the inclusion of PGRs on relevant staff mailing lists.