

Paid Training for Postgraduate Students who Supervise and Teach

Alessandro Ceccarelli, Graduate Union President
in collaboration with Cambridge UCU and CUSU.

Paper for STEC, 28 February 2020

Introduction: Framework for the fair allocation and support of teaching work

1. At the University of Cambridge, practices in the allocation and support of teaching work to hourly-paid teachers by faculties and departments vary wildly. Many areas operate non-transparent hiring and work allocation practices and fail to provide access to basic facilities such as teaching rooms or space in which to prepare teaching. Practice in providing mentoring, access to paid teacher training, and to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) also varies significantly (see [CUCU 2018](#)).

Background: the current situation

2. Undergraduate Supervisions (for Postgraduate students). The Senior Tutors' Committee (STC) and the General Board's Education Committee (GBEC) expect all postgraduate students who will supervise undergraduate students to engage in appropriate training. Postgraduate students can attend a face-to-face session either with their Department, or centrally with the CCTL.
3. It is mandatory for postgraduate students who teach and supervise at Cambridge to complete both a face-to-face session and the appropriate accompanying online module.
4. According to ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) and FLSA (Fair Labor Standards Act), if an employer requires a mandatory training course, then the employer is expected to pay the employee, who has the right to be paid for the time spent on the course.
5. At the GU Council meeting in March 2019, a policy on 'Fair Pay and Support for Teaching and Research Opportunities' and in October 2019 a policy on 'Support Fair & Equal Pay' were passed by the Cambridge Postgraduate Students' decision-making body. Both policies request that "[...] All postgraduate and mature undergraduate students, in the Collegiate University, who have teaching and/or research responsibilities, should be adequately remunerated". This should include recognizing the time spent for preparation, marking, administrative work associated with their teaching, and paid teacher training.
6. In 2016, c.23% of University supervisions hours were taught by Postgraduate students (CUCU 2019: 7). In 2017 and 2018, c.34% of undergraduate supervisions across the University were provided by postgraduate students or staff members constituted as 'other' by University HR, i.e. provided by staff without long-term contract. The lack of systematic paid training for postgraduate students who teach and supervise is expected to be having a major impact on the quality of teaching and standards, which represents almost a third of the University of Cambridge education system for undergraduate students.
7. This will also fall under the broader debate sustained by student's families and funding bodies, i.e. "How is the University of Cambridge using their fees for keeping teaching standards high and competitive?". Giving the increasing economic pressure of university fees on families and students, the way that the University and Colleges allocate their financial resources on teaching and supervising is likely to come under greater scrutiny than before, with an expectation from the families that the teaching provided is value for money.

Recommendations

8. Postgraduate students should be paid for the time spent on any teacher and supervisor training.
9. Undergraduate college supervisions and teachings, including paid teacher training, should be discussed with Colleges rather than the University, since Colleges are (a) *de facto* the providers of undergraduate supervisions provisions; (b) the entities to which supervisors or TAs report (see CamCORS); and (c) the payer organisations.
10. Irrespective of the potential impact of teaching opportunities on the future career progression of postgraduate students, teacher training should be considered part of the job that they are offered and should be regularly paid.

References

CUCU, 2018. Cambridge UCU anti-casualisation claim - November 2018. Available at:

<http://www.ucu.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Anti-casualisation-claim.pdf>

CUCU, 2019. Hourly-paid teaching Report. Available at:

<http://www.ucu.cam.ac.uk/hourly-paid-teaching-report/>