POLICY ON TEACHING EXPECTATIONS OF RESEARCH STAFF (PATHWAY 2 ACADEMICS)

This policy is focused particularly on the teaching expectations of early career research staff (Role profile levels A-C) but much of the policy will also be relevant to pathway 2 staff at other levels whose teaching role should be appropriately managed and supported. In particular, these staff should consider engaging in appropriate continuing professional development around their teaching, especially those who are new to the University of Bristol. Any questions around CPD opportunities can be directed to the Academic Staff Development team.

1. Introduction

1.1 The University of Bristol recognises and values the significant contribution that research staff make to teaching, assessment and supervision of our undergraduate and postgraduate students. The opportunity to teach is not only beneficial to research staff themselves in terms of career development but represents a valuable opportunity to Schools to make use of their skills, to allow more flexibility within the academic workforce and to enhance the experience for students by exposing them to a wider diversity of the academic community.

1.2 Teaching responsibilities are included within all of the individual role profiles at each level on pathway 2 and research staff are encouraged to engage in these where there is opportunity. However, it is important that these are managed appropriately within their wider workload and with reference to the terms and conditions of their funding. The University has an obligation to ensure that Research staff are appropriately trained, supported and mentored to carry out these responsibilities at all levels.

2. Opportunities to teach

2.1 All research staff should be made aware of any teaching opportunities open to them and the process for getting involved in these, although such opportunities will vary across schools, dependent on the subject and mode of delivery. These opportunities should be identified as soon as possible in the preceding academic year to allow for workload planning and training, if necessary.

2.2 The process and arrangements for selecting research staff to be involved in teaching should be fair and transparent. Selection will be based on teaching and assessment requirements and on the staff member’s relevant skills, knowledge and experience.

2.3 Schools must ensure that research staff are not pressured into undertaking teaching against their will or best interest whilst remembering that there is an expectation, depending on their School and on their role profile that they may be involved in some amount of teaching at all levels of the pathway. Teaching responsibilities should only be taken on after discussion and agreement with the staff member’s line manager and Head of School and should not take up an inappropriate amount of time in relation to the rest of their workload. Nor should teaching responsibilities contravene the terms and conditions of their funding.
2.4 A written agreement must be drawn up in advance to cover the expectations on the member of staff in terms content, activity, number of hours so that they can plan this into their workload and prepare accordingly.

3. Activities and responsibilities

3.1 Research staff may contribute to the following teaching activities, consonant with their role profile and appropriate to their knowledge, skills and experience:

- Seminars, tutorials and workshops
- Laboratory and other practical classes, including projects
- Field trips
- Lecturing
- Unit design
- Assessment and feedback, subject to clear marking criteria, suitable moderation and University Quality Assurance processes.
- Office hours
- Research project supervision (UG, PGT, PGR)

3.2 The teaching activities of research staff on pathway 2 should not exceed 6 hours per week (whereby a part-time researcher will undertake a lower number of hours, on a pro-rata basis) averaged across the calendar year (including all preparation, assessment, feedback and office hours), or less than 6 hours where this is a requirement of the funder. Exceptions to this requirement are:

- Where the length of their contract has been extended in order to specifically cover for a colleague on Pathway 1 (e.g. a period of maternity leave where the timeline of a grant has been extended accordingly) then it is acceptable to work more than 6 hours per week averaged across the calendar year.

- Where the Pathway 2 researcher is on a part-time contract and also engages in an hourly-paid teaching contract. In this case they can teach up to 6 hours on a pro-rata basis as part of their pathway 2 contract and the other teaching will be negotiated separately, whereby the sum of the work must not exceed 35 hours in total.

- Where the pathway 2 researcher is a postgraduate research student (PGR) student and also engages in hourly-paid teaching work, it is important to ensure that the sum of all teaching activity across the pathway 2 work, the PGR and the hourly-paid teaching work combined does not exceed 6 hours, averaged over the calendar year (whereby an individual working less than full-time will undertake a lower number of hours on a pro-rata basis) in order that such activities do not affect the progress of the PhD studies.

3.2 Research staff may contribute to both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. They may also act as an official co-supervisor for a PhD student, in agreement with the Faculty Graduate Education Director and in accordance with the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes (section 5).

3.3 The level and type of assessment that a member of research staff may be involved in should be consonant with their role profile and appropriate to their knowledge, skills and experience.

3.4 Research staff should not normally be expected to take on an academic personal tutor role. They should, however, be made aware of the University’s system of pastoral support, and know how to direct students to appropriate members of staff if the need arises. More experienced research staff
may also provide pastoral support in certain situations (for example when supervising a PhD student). In these situations there should be clarity around what their role is.

3.5 Research staff may be involved in the management and leadership of teaching within the School only so far as appropriate in relation to their role profile.

4. Training and support

4.1 All pathway 2 staff who teach must first attend either the University’s Teaching@Bristol for Research Staff development session run by Academic Staff Development (ASD) or an appropriate equivalent within their faculty/school.

4.2 Research staff must also receive an induction to School teaching practices within their area to cover information relevant to the kind of teaching they will be involved in. It will be the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure this is appropriately designed and delivered.

4.3 For some pathway 2 staff who have more significant teaching duties, the CREATE CPD scheme or other continuing professional development sessions offered by ASD may also be appropriate. These can be discussed with the ASD team. For those on proleptic contracts, please contact ASD to talk about your specific situation and how you may best be supported.

4.4 Each member of research staff should be assigned a more experienced colleague to mentor them in all aspects of their teaching (typically their PI, the programme or unit director or the co-teacher, depending on local circumstances). The mentor is responsible for providing guidance and support on local teaching and assessment practices and for giving them feedback on their teaching through peer observation.

4.5 Research staff should be involved in communications, discussions and planning around teaching they will be involved with. This includes relevant staff meetings and email lists so that they receive information directly and are considered an integral part of the teaching team.

4.6 A discussion about teaching opportunities and current responsibilities should be included within the annual Staff Review and Development process for each member of research staff.

5. Quality Assurance

5.1 Schools must include pathway 2 staff on records of all individuals involved in delivering their teaching programmes. Research staff should also be named on unit forms when contributing to the teaching and named as co-supervisors on PhD paperwork where appropriate.

5.2 The involvement of research staff in the delivery of teaching should be managed and reviewed within existing School processes, with the overall learning experience of the students in mind. The quality of this experience will be central to the decision making about the type, content and amount of teaching undertaken by any member of research staff.

5.3 As part of standard University quality assurance processes, the School (through the programme or unit directors) must evaluate the performance of research staff who teach in the same way they do for other staff (e.g. through peer observation or student feedback processes) in order to ensure that students receive teaching of the appropriate quality.