

# UCL Computer Science

## Postgraduate Teaching Assistant Studentship Scheme

This document should be read in conjunction with UCL HR's Postgraduate Assistant Scheme Policy, which is available at

[http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/post\\_grad\\_ta\\_scheme.php](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/post_grad_ta_scheme.php)

### 1. Introduction

Postgraduate Teaching Assistants (PGTAs) are an integral part of the department's teaching team. They are highly valued by the academics they support and the students they are teaching.

Teaching can be a valuable experience for a postgraduate student. It can contribute to intellectual development and the individual's grasp of the subject. Experience of teaching hones communication and presentation skill and develops a range of other transferable skills. In return, the department's taught students gain from being taught by those who are closer to their own age and experience, often making them more comfortable with asking questions and seeking advice, whilst the department gains from being able to deliver small group teaching on a much wider scale.

### 2. Recruitment

In addition to meeting UCL Computer Science's PhD admissions criteria ([www.cs.ucl.ac.uk/prospective\\_students/phd\\_programme/entry\\_requirements/](http://www.cs.ucl.ac.uk/prospective_students/phd_programme/entry_requirements/)), fully funded PGTAs will be carefully selected for their suitability at application and interview stage. Alongside academic excellence they should demonstrate an ability to meet the person specification below. This will be assessed via an interview and assessment in which candidates are asked to deliver a short tutorial intended for a group of undergraduate students.

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| <b>Knowledge</b>  |
| Knowledge in key computer science <u>undergraduate topics</u> requiring teaching assistant support (e.g., Theory, Programming Languages and Software Engineering) |
| <b>Skills and/or Abilities</b>  |
| Clear verbal and written communication skills   |

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| <p>Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to liaise with a variety of people, including the ability to relate to staff and students in a teaching and learning context.</p> <p>Ability to manage time and work to deadlines</p> <p>Ability to work independently and as part of a team</p> |
| <p><b>Experience</b></p> <p>Experience of communicating academic and technical content clearly to a range of audiences</p> <p>Experience of giving poster or oral presentations at workshops and / or conferences</p> <p>Experience of using virtual learning environments e.g. Moodle</p>         |
| <p><b>Other requirements</b></p> <p>An interest in research-led teaching and UCL's connected curriculum</p> <p>An enthusiasm for developing teaching practice</p> <p>Commitment to working towards a nationally recognised teaching award</p>  |

### 3. Allocation of duties and hours

Fully funded PGTAs will be paid an additional 3,600 GBP per year on top of the standard EPSRC stipend. They will receive a total load of 180 hours per year with no more than 20 hours per week (mostly concentrated during Term 1 and 2), to include teaching preparation and training. This is in addition to being registered as a full-time research student. This is an enhanced stipend and the department believes that this should be sufficient without the need for further employment while giving appropriate time for PhD research. Taking on additional employment is not recommended; students considering taking on additional employment should discuss this with their supervisor.

PGTAs may be asked to deliver some or all of the below:

- Problem classes
- Tutorials
- Demonstrating
- Marking work
- Feedback sessions
- Leading seminars/small group teaching
- One of specialist lectures relating to your research area
- Input to syllabus development
- Input to course material and content development
- Editing and developing content on Moodle
- Open days and admissions activity
- Invigilating in class tests

Students are expected to be able to serve as a TA for any undergraduate topic, with a special emphasis in Theory, Programming Languages and Software Engineering.

The department recognises that PGTAs must be given adequate time to pursue their research and not be overburdened with teaching responsibilities which would be likely to limit capacity to complete a thesis on time.

The department does not expect PGTAs to function as full-time teachers; a transparent workload allocation system is used to ensure that PGTAs are not overloaded. Students are advised to discuss any workload concerns with their supervisors at the earliest opportunity.

#### 4. Professional development

It is UCL policy that all PGTAs (whether funded or employed) receive appropriate training and development via UCL Arena One. This includes attending an introductory, three-hour UCL Arena One Gateway Workshop and any departmental / faculty organised guidance sessions

A fully funded PGTA is expected to demonstrate additional commitment to their advancement of their teaching skills by registering for UCL's Teaching Associate Programme. On this programme they will join a cohort of postgraduate teachers to develop teaching practice and work towards a nationally recognised teaching award; an Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy.

#### 5. Performance Management.

Module Coordinator(s) will monitor the performance of any PGTAs assigned to them. They will keep a brief record of duties allocated and of satisfactory performance. PGTAs will receive termly, constructive feedback on their performance from the relevant Module Coordinator(s).

The Departmental Tutor will review teaching performance of PGTAs on a yearly basis. If teaching performance is not considered of an adequate standard after a period of support and training, the enhanced PGTA stipend may be withdrawn and the student asked to discontinue with their TA responsibilities.

Teaching assistant performance is a separate matter to academic performance on the research programme. Academic insufficiency is a matter for the supervisor and Graduate Tutor and will be dealt with in accordance with the Academic Manual ([www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/academic-manual/c1/agreements/academic-suspensions](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/academic-manual/c1/agreements/academic-suspensions))

PGTAs will also be subject to UCL's current arrangements for peer observation of teaching, which is available here <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/academic-manual/c6/pot>

In later years of their programme, more experienced PGTAs will be asked to mentor new PGTAs as part of their duties.