

University of Warwick

PGR Teaching Survey 2021:

Initial report



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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 Background

The Warwick Postgraduate Teaching Community (WPTC) was established in 2021 as a university-wide community of practice for postgraduate researchers (PGRs) to share and support each other's teaching practice and continuing professional development, form a social nucleus, and improve student experience. One feeling from the WPTC founding members was that there is a lack of both quantitative and qualitative documentation about the experience of postgraduate researchers who teach – particularly around access and awareness of teaching and professional development opportunities and whether these issues are equitable across the postgraduate community at Warwick. This inspired WPTC to create the Warwick PGR Teacher Survey, discussed below. Existing surveys touching on PGR teaching experience, such as the national *Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey* (PRES), reveal something about the PGR teaching experience, but the PRES contains only three quantitative questions directly related to teaching. Warwick 2021 PRES results are discussed in the context of our survey findings later in this report. Although limited in number, there are other surveys from beyond Warwick about the PGR teaching experience, for example, the 2020 *Southampton University and College Union (UCU) survey of PGR and Hourly Paid staff* (1). This report follows in the vein of these surveys, focusing on the Warwick PGR Teacher Survey and institutional results only. Results are also discussed in relation to the Warwick Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) policy. Further analysis of the WPTC survey results is ongoing.

1.2 PGRs Who Teach: What Do They Do?

PhD students and postdoctoral colleagues are frequently called upon to teach across the Higher Education sector. In the 2020/2021 academic year, there were 1250 live GTA contracts at Warwick (source: HR) and whilst these account for most PGR teacher roles, additional temporary or voluntary teaching exists in the institution. Therefore, the number of PGRs working in teaching or supporting learning is likely to be higher. According to the PGR teacher survey, running seminars and marking were the most common teaching roles for PGR students- although it should be noted that many respondents (45.3%) were from the Faculty of Social Sciences, hence perhaps, a bias towards seminar leadership.

Table 1: Number and percentage of PGR teachers participating in type of teaching

Type of teaching	Number of responses (%)
Marking	36 (34.0)
Seminar – in person	34 (32.1)
Seminar – online	31 (29.2)
Individual student support sessions/mentoring – online	19 (17.9)
Laboratory (wet/dry) – in person	17 (16.0)
Individual student support sessions/mentoring – in person	15 (14.2)
Lectures – online	8 (7.5)
Lectures – in person	8 (7.5)
Other	6 (5.7)
Module convention	2 (1.9)

1.3 About the Survey

Ethical approval was obtained in Summer 2021 (ref: HSSREC 168/20-21) and the survey was open for one month, advertised via department mailing lists and WPTC social media. There were 59 questions about issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion characteristics and experiences; the visibility and accessibility of advertised teaching roles; professional development opportunities at the university, and the impact of teaching in higher education upon PGRs' future plans. The survey was open to all PGRs irrespective of teaching experience, as one aim of the survey was to elucidate why PGRs may not take up teaching roles. **Most respondents (61%) indicated that they had a teaching role at Warwick.** Useable responses were obtained from 106 PGRs: 45% were from the Faculty of Social Sciences, 33.0% from Science, Engineering and Medicine and 16% from Arts, with 6% not indicating their department.

The survey was designed by three experienced PGR teachers from across the Science and Social Science Faculties, and their mentor from the Academic Development Centre, bringing together expertise in quantitative and qualitative analysis. From this analysis, key, recurring themes of interest emerged which are discussed in turn in this report. These are:

- Access and awareness of teaching opportunities/professional development
- Discrimination and/or difference in the PGR teacher experience
- Precarity and pay

1.4 Executive Summary

- There has been no systematic or specific research into the PGR teacher experience at Warwick, although some literature and similar surveys exist in the wider field.
- The current PGR Teacher Survey report is considered in the context of institutional policy regarding PGR teachers and GTA contracts and in relation to the result of the most recent Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey. This has revealed both potential deviation from standard contractual arrangements, but also consistency in issues raised by PGR teachers elsewhere, as reported in similar surveys at other institutions.
- There is evidence of inconsistency and lack of transparency in the PGR teacher recruitment process.
- Insufficient support with subject disciplinary knowledge and a lack of time are the chief reasons why teaching opportunities are not taken up at Warwick and/or are a cause for concern for current teachers.
- Centralised professional development opportunities are positively received, although not always regarded as sufficient and awareness of such opportunities is sometimes limited.
- Departmental mentoring and support opportunities may be lacking and are indicated by PGRs as an area for improvement.
- The Covid-19 pandemic provided some new opportunities for teaching in some areas, but also led to a decrease in PGR teaching more broadly and a lack of support for PGRs with the pivot to online teaching was in evidence.
- PGR teachers feel a sense of disadvantage, difference and/or discrimination in their teaching work, particularly in relation to the characteristics of gender and ethnicity.
- Older and/or more experienced PGR teachers may be marginalised and not recognised in recruitment and professional development.
- PGR teachers feel a lack of respect and, emphatically, that they are not adequately compensated for teaching work, including assessment/marking. Some teaching work remains on a voluntary basis, despite Warwick's commitment to GTA contracts.

SECTION 2: SURVEY FINDINGS AND RELATED DISCUSSION

Access and Awareness of Teaching Opportunities/Professional Development

2.1 Finding Teaching Opportunities

The first aim of our survey was to identify how and why PGRs obtain teaching opportunities at Warwick. PGR students mostly become aware of teaching opportunities via email (52% of respondents) or departmental advertisement (26%), followed by word of mouth from either supervisors or friends (26% and 24%, respectively). A very small number (6%) of those surveyed found jobs directly from Warwick's central GTA job advertisement page. GTA contracts were established at Warwick in 2019 to reduce the reliance on casual teaching contracts and offer improved employment rights to PGRs (2). Centrally advertised roles can also provide an equality of opportunity in teaching, and, where applicable, support teaching applications beyond PGRs' home departments. Institutional policy in relation to recruitment indicates clear responsibility on the part of departments to "publish a statement of practice relating to postgraduates who teach" and "establish a transparent procedure for recruiting postgraduates" (3). However, as shown from survey respondents' comments below, there is some lack of understanding about how recruitment is managed and possibly, some unfairness:

"The application process seemed like a lottery draw".

"I don't quite understand how UG TAs are chosen".

"I got my teaching jobs on a basis of 'who you know, not what you know'. While I feel like my experience was fairly successful, it feels like there is a light nepotism culture for PGR teaching."

2.2 Where teaching opportunities are not taken

Factors that prevent PGR students taking up teaching opportunities include PhD time commitments (50%) feelings of lack of subject knowledge (33%) and being unaware of opportunities (18%). Many PGRs had several of these concerns, demonstrating complex interactions between these factors – for example limited subject knowledge may be worsened by the fact that all PGR teachers strive to manage their study requirements alongside their teaching responsibilities and as result, they may not have sufficient time to develop adequate knowledge and skills needed to effectively teach their allocated subjects. Lack of choice in specific disciplinary work also presents an issue:

“I don't remember being able to tick exact modules I would have liked to teach in, rather the options were presented at a much more general level (e.g., 'microbiology', 'biochemistry',...), within which there is a lot of variation regarding the expertise required.”

In addition, there was a perceived lack of support with disciplinary materials and approaches by some:

“I would have liked to do more teaching, but the lack of subject-specific knowledge and training were big obstacles for me. I wish that in the future PGR demonstrators would be given the opportunity for a proper induction to the course content...”

“I don't feel like sufficient training or learning materials were made available to PGRs prior the modules they were supposed to teach in.”

2.3 Knowledge of professional development opportunities

Around a third (33%) of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that Warwick provides sufficient teaching-related development opportunities for PGR teachers. Half of the respondents were aware of the *Preparing to Teach in Higher Education* course, which is a mandatory introduction course required by departments (and built into the GTA contract) before teaching, while less than half were aware of any other courses run at Warwick, which are mostly voluntary (Table 2). PGRs predominately take courses to either improve their practice or gain experience (31%) or boost their CV (23%), with some taking courses because they were recommended by a supervisor or mentor (12%).

Table 2: Number and percentage of postgraduate research students who were aware of various teaching-related development courses available at Warwick

Which of the following courses are you aware of?	Number of responses (%)
Preparing to Teach in Higher Education	53 (50.0)
APP PGR - Academic and Professional Pathway for Postgraduate Researchers who Teach	38 (35.8)
PGA TLHE - Postgraduate Award in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education	22 (20.8)
TPiHE - Teaching Practice in Higher Education	6 (5.7)
Departmental courses/training	29 (27.4)
Academic Development Program	18 (17.0)
Other	3 (2.8)

PGRs did indicate a general feeling that support available for those who teach could be improved – the largest issue was related to remuneration, discussed in full below (pages 13-15). However, around

fifth of respondents (20.0%) indicated that they were unaware of teaching related development opportunities at Warwick, which highlights that not being aware of the courses on offer is potentially the bigger problem, rather than lack of opportunities. Of those that were unaware of teaching related development opportunities, 12/21 of these had had a teaching role at Warwick.

2.4 Experience of Professional Development Opportunities

Of those who took up professional development opportunities, over 66% indicated that this was part of central provision offered by the Academic Development Centre, with specific departmental development only accounting for 11% of opportunities undertaken. Most comments relating to opportunities provided in centralised provision were positive, indicating impact on practice and the value of learning alongside others:

"I was able to implement some of the teaching ideas into my seminar teaching. Also, it gave me a group of people to discuss teaching issues and brainstorm solutions which was very helpful."

"It made me more aware of how to make good choices while teaching and how to reflect on my practices. It also introduced me to pedagogical research."

However, some respondents felt that centralised provision was not adequate:

"The mandatory training...was not of sufficient depth and was too broad and too short to be particularly useful."

There was less recognition of informal support and/or mentoring and its contribution to professional learning, although two respondents mentioned:

"Individual mentoring with the module convenor..."

"I personally asked advice (of) more experienced colleagues who finished their PhD in Warwick."

According to University policy, mentoring is an expectation of the GTA contract (4) and 'All postgraduate teachers should have separate support and supervision linked to their specific teaching role'. Yet over 30% of PGRs surveyed felt that departmental mentoring/support was one of the ways in which the PGR teacher experience could be *improved*, suggesting perhaps that in some cases, this type of support is not currently occurring consistently. Furthermore, a sense of a lack of structure in departmental professional development opportunities was also mentioned more than once in the survey:

"I definitely had supportive colleagues and mentors, and I'm confident in what I do now...but there's a culture of "experience is the best teacher". Frustratingly, it is - but I wonder if anything can be put in place/offered to help this. The APP PGR course provided this...but that's not at a departmental level."

2.5 Impact of the Pandemic on Teaching

Unsurprisingly, 69% of respondents in our survey said that the COVID pandemic had in some way impacted their teaching. Some expressed enthusiasm about additional opportunities opened up by the pivot online (ability to teach in different formats, options to take development courses remotely). The *Warwick Online Learning Certificate* (an online course for all first year undergraduates in term 3, 2020), for example, offered unique online tutoring opportunities to selected PGR teachers. However, others noted a lack of opportunities:

“This issue was raised within the SSLC meeting and the response was that the department was on a budget freeze due to the pandemic and no work would be offered other than voluntary work. I feel the opportunity to give online teaching experience was missed here, PGRs could have benefited from leading small group seminars or helping students with the technical side of online lessons.”

The quality of support received by PGR teachers at Warwick and its impact on teaching quality, especially during the pandemic, is aptly summarised in the following statement made by a respondent:

“...my department [had not] taken adequate steps to ensure [that] the experience and the teaching was of sufficient quality during the pandemic, particularly when fully online. So, I felt a responsibility to try and give the best possible classes, despite no training or support on how to do this. [Nonetheless], this added... more stress. Altogether, I [will] say the pandemic had a huge negative impact, which I tried very hard to mitigate for my students, but which soared the experience for me hugely. I [have] come away with a quite cynical view that, at least for my department, the PGRs hold the teaching together and are crucial to the undergraduate experience, but receive nowhere near the required support or recognition for such a responsibility.”

Equality, Diversity and inclusion in PGR teaching experience.

Warwick PTC posed questions in this area to try to understand if PGRs experienced discrimination and/or differences in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion factors, in their roles as teachers. Data in relation to EDI characteristics and PGR teaching has not, thus far, been gathered at Warwick, but is an area of interest more widely in the institution (e.g. currently with the Doctoral College, which has an EDI working group).

Table 3 below provides a summary of the characteristics of our study participants. Further work would be required to determine how representative this sample is of all PGR students at Warwick, but this study provides a starting point for gathering this sort of data and relating it to student experience.

Table 3 Descriptive characteristics of 106 study participants

Characteristic	Number of responses (%)
Age	
18-25	22 (20.8)
26-35	44 (41.5)
36-45	11 (10.4)
46-55	5 (4.7)
>56	5 (4.7)
Information refused	19 (17.9)
Gender	
Male	39 (36.8)
Female	48 (45.3)
Non-binary/third gender	4 (3.8)
Other	0 (0.0)
Information refused	15 (13.2)
Ethnicity	
White background	57 (53.8)
BAME background	28 (26.4)
Information refused	21 (19.8)
PGRs with a teaching role at Warwick	
Yes	65 (61.3)
No	28 (26.4)
Information refused	13 (12.3)
Mode of study	
Full-time	82 (77.4)
Part-time	12 (11.3)
Information refused	12 (11.3)
Year of study	
1	18 (17.0)
2	32 (30.2)
3	24 (22.6)
4	14 (13.2)
5 or above/completed PhD	5 (4.7)
Information refused	13 (12.3)
Caring responsibilities	
Yes	16 (15.1)
No	73 (68.9)
Information refused	17 (16.1)

Data related to EDI characteristics was gathered at the start of the survey and can provide more nuanced information about the relationship between such characteristics and the experience of PGR teaching. Further analysis of this data is ongoing. In addition, specific and direct questions were asked of respondents inviting them to reflect on whether they felt any of these characteristics had impacted on their teaching. Not all characteristics elicited a significant response, with less qualitative information to reach conclusions, for example, ‘disability’ did not seem to be a prominent feature, although one respondent remarked:

“I feel like there is a lack of understanding towards neurodivergent people”

Further studies or investigations would be worth pursuing in this area in the future. However, two broad themes of interest emerged relating to a) gender and ethnicity and b) to age and experience (as a teacher). These are explored in the following section.

2.6 Gender, Race and Respect

The survey asked: *‘Do you feel that interactions with more senior colleagues as a PGR teacher have been in any way affected by your gender, sexuality, ethnicity or (dis)ability?’*

We also asked variations of this question in relation to experiences with students and other interactions in the university. We asked more general questions regarding whether teachers felt respected by senior colleagues and students, with further plans to cross-reference this with data relating to EDI characteristics. Of those who had had teaching roles, some respondents indicated that their interactions with students were affected by their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or disability (12%). From the respondents who answered this question (54/65 PGRs who had taught), higher numbers of female PGRs and non-binary/third gender/other felt that their interactions with students had been affected by their gender, sexuality, ethnicity or disability (31% of female PGRs, and 67% of non-binary/third gender/other gender PGRs), and similarly were more likely to answer negatively on the amount of time they felt respected as PGR Teachers.

Table 4: Number and percentage of respondents to questions about feelings of respect as a PGR teacher by gender

Response	Male	Female	Non-binary/third gender/other
<i>Do you feel respected as a PGR Teacher?</i>			
Always	8 (36.4)	9 (31.4)	1 (33.3)
Most of the time	13 (59.1)	13 (44.8)	0 (0.0)
Sometimes	1 (4.5)	6 (20.7)	1 (33.3)

Rarely	0 (0.0)	1 (3.4)	0 (0.0)
Never	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Prefer not to say	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (33.3)

Do you feel that interactions with students as a PGR teacher have been in any way affected by your gender, sexuality, ethnicity or (dis)ability

Yes	2 (9.1)	9 (31.0)	2 (66.7)
No	19 (86.4)	20 (69.0)	1 (33.3)
Prefer not to say	1 (4.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

The comments left by respondents in relation to these questions were expansive and interesting. People pointed to a nebulous sense that as women, or as women of colour in particular, they were slightly less respected by their students. This came through in subtle ways, including in relation to perceptions of comments given in student evaluations and behaviours in class. One respondent said:

“It is difficult to pinpoint exactly, but it does feel that students react to me in a certain way as a young woman. Some students are always respectful, but there are always a few students that seem to be subtly but noticeably disrespectful - e.g. smirking, giggling, expecting quite a bit of my time. It is impossible to say if gender/race affect this, of course, but my sense is that this comes into it.”

Other students noted more explicit othering in the classroom, for example:

“Having an Asian female tutor is a novel experience for many students which several have commented on.”

“Some students may address female staff in a less formal/respectful way. I also remember a couple of comments in the evaluation form being awfully rude.”

Another respondent pointed to a sense that their gender undermined their feelings of authority in relation to students, stating that

“Some students seemed much more likely to listen to fellow PGR teachers who were male. This was a rare occurrence, but it was always a bit jarring when you are an expert in a particular area that the student is asking about, but students are more likely to actually listen and learn from a fellow male PGR teacher who works in a different field.”

In the comments, several male and non-racialised respondents seemed to reflect on their own relatively privileged positions in this regard and noted instances in which they had observed racialised and/or women colleagues passed up for opportunities or disrespected in some way. For instance, one respondent noted:

“I was chosen for a position of responsibility (sort of spokesperson for the PGR teachers in my dept) where the choosing criteria was ostensibly how many years of teaching experience I had. However, there was a female student of Asian-British ethnicity of identical experience who was seemingly not considered. Could have been coincidence of course, so I wouldn't go so far to point a finger, but it did strike me as odd at the time.”

2.7 Age and Experience

Respondents in the survey are mostly younger people: 62% are aged 35 or younger and a fifth (21%) under 25 years old. This is largely representative of the PGR community, many of whom move from undergraduate degrees (taken soon/immediately after school education) directly into Masters and PhD courses. Most were in full time study (77%) while many had no additional caring responsibilities, such as children or elderly relatives (69%). The majority of the respondents have two years or less PGR teaching experience. That notwithstanding, a small but significant amount of data in the survey would seem to indicate that prior teaching experience, perhaps gained outside of Warwick, is not acknowledged in current teaching work, recruitment, or professional learning opportunities. This is evident from the following responses:

“I have prior teaching experience, yet the opportunities are not available to utilise these skills...”

“I have 20+ years of experience of teaching and teaching related admin as a FT senior lecturer. The teaching related development opportunities of which I was aware were (understandably) not aimed at people with my experience.”

“Despite making it clear on multiple occasions my enthusiasm for teaching opportunities, explaining that I have lived experience and professional experience of the areas I am researching and motivated to teach, I was unaware of the teaching opportunities when they arose...I felt overlooked...”

It is true that much of the central professional learning opportunities offered by ADC currently prioritises early career researchers/academics and teachers with less experience, and one key recommendation might be to increase acknowledgment of PGRs who are already qualified and/or experienced in teaching.

Precarity and Pay

Issues relating to low pay and the precarity of hourly paid/fixed term teaching came through in responses to many different types of questions. In response to a question asking about the biggest barriers to providing effective teaching as PGR teachers, the comments included:

"Money"

"Oversized classes and the constant, all-encompassing financial pressure the state exerts on higher education"

"Low pay"

"Preparation and marking hours are greatly underestimated"

"Excessive marking"

"Time consuming non-teaching administration required (application and initial set-up, problems with university payroll, etc.)"

"Insufficient opportunities, time and space, to develop effective learning relationships between students and tutor"

Our survey found that only 23% of those who had held a teaching role felt that they were fairly compensated for their work as PGR teachers, 32% felt that they were somewhat fairly compensated, and 20% of respondents felt that they were not fairly compensated for their work as PGR teachers. Worryingly, 11% of responses to the question *'If you have not undertaken teaching related development opportunities, why is this?'* were *"They are unpaid"* (which can perhaps, in part, be attributed to a limitation in the answers we offered (unaware of opportunities (20%), lack of time (10%), courses not recommended as useful by supervisor/mentor (5%) - i.e. we did not provide the option to state that the opportunities were underpaid, rather than unpaid). However, there was evidence elsewhere in the survey of teaching taking place uncompensated: e.g., in response to the question *'What are the biggest barriers to providing effective teaching as a PGR teacher?'* one respondent said:

"The department has offered no teaching opportunities this past academic year apart from voluntary sessions"

In response to another question, one student added the comment that

"There have been no opportunities to undertake any teaching due to Covid. We were asked to voluntarily teach Research Methods sessions."

In comments, respondents noted what is likely a widely (if unofficially) understood truth of entry level labour in the university: that working time often exceeds hours paid. For instance, we invited students to tell us about how their roles as PGR teachers impacted their research. Though many said that they enjoyed and found value in their work (as a respite from research, as an opportunity to develop

teaching skills, and as an opportunity to interact with students), the time commitments involved were an issue, with one respondent noting:

“Teaching requires a great deal of preparation, far more than the preparation time allocated.”

In response to our request towards the end of the survey that respondents state any other ways they felt that Warwick could improve support for PGR teachers, one comment noted

“ Time allocated for teaching should be written into the contract to be done in office hours, so that realistic expectations can be set on how much time will be spent on research and so the PhD isn't hurt by the teaching, and so a work-life balance can be kept.”

A number of other comments point towards a wide feeling that the labour of precariously employed teachers is not valued in the same way as other academic contributions in the institution. Other comments included:

“Well, it all begins with a little respect, doesn't it? Make us feel like we're actually an important part of the university, with the payment and benefits that come with it. I'm sure that it would go a long way.”

“Take us more seriously and less as a cheap labour source.”

“Finding a way to make more senior staff take a better attitude towards teaching and, particularly, teacher training”

“Without clear and physical improvements to this ([that is] serious training, feedback, teaching time written into contracts along the same lines as [my] research) I [will not] be teaching again.”

SECTION 3: SUMMARY REMARKS

3.1 Warwick PRES results

The *Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey* was carried out in 2021 with a 47% response rate at Warwick, which was above the national average. Only three quantitative questions relate directly to PGR teaching:

- Have you taught (or demonstrated) during your research degree programme?
- Have you been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching?
- Have you received formal training for your teaching?

Although these questions are limited in scope, they do offer an overview of PGR teaching at Warwick related to areas explored in the WPTC survey, notably the availability of support and guidance for teaching and access to formal training. The results for each of these questions, per department, are listed in Table 5 (page 17) and show a variety of responses and clear disparities in relation to teaching, support and training. Department names are redacted for the purposes of this report.

There was no opportunity for qualitative responses or comments in relation to these questions, in the PRES survey. However, analysing the institutional data via a basic key word search (e.g. 'teaching', 'training', 'teach', 'learning', 'opportunities', 'professional development') and looking broadly at data relating to PGR continuous professional development within the questionnaire does reveal a range of issues which mirror the findings of the WPTC report, namely:

- The desire for more opportunities to teach
- The lack of support for teaching within departments, particularly during the pandemic and the pivot to online learning and teaching
- Precarity and pay issues; feelings of being under-valued and over-worked.

A small sample of the qualitative comments relating to teaching, from PRES, are here:

"The department does not offer adequate teaching opportunities to PGR students."

"Properly ensuring good working conditions and appropriate pay for non-research activities such as teaching and supervising."

"More training in preparation for teaching, especially for marking."

"Teaching contracts were cancelled last minute with committed hours cancelled, again cutting student income instantly."

"I think the lack of engagement in interacting with us about the teaching during the pandemic and how the pandemic has impacted our well-being has been a big notable issue."

Table 5: Number and Percentage of Respondents (by departments: anonymised) who have received teacher training and support for teaching: colours highlight low agreement (red) and high agreement (blue) to illustrate some departmental differences.

Number of responses from department	Have you done any teaching?	Have you been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching?	Have you received formal training for your teaching?
35	40%	77%	50%
13	31%	25%	75%
5	20%	100%	100%
9	33%	100%	67%
3	33%	100%	100%
95	45%	60%	63%
9	67%	100%	67%
51	88%	74%	86%
38	89%	68%	85%
41	13%	100%	100%
13	54%	71%	100%
13	38%	100%	100%
43	47%	45%	85%
4	25%	100%	0%
9	11%	0%	100%
19	37%	57%	57%
62	82%	65%	80%
23	48%	73%	64%
84	65%	62%	78%
37	51%	68%	68%
25	48%	82%	73%
49	63%	72%	93%
85	68%	60%	67%
10	70%	57%	86%
14	57%	75%	38%
39	79%	81%	81%
4	33%	0%	100%
64	61%	71%	95%
104	32%	67%	88%
6	67%	50%	50%
109	22%	54%	46%

3.2 Conclusions/recommendations

The PGR teaching survey is the first of its kind at Warwick and offers an insight into the current state of teaching work for this specific group of colleagues. It highlights discernible patterns of PGR teacher experiences at Warwick, especially as it relates to the availability and accessibility of professional development opportunities, EDI experiences, precarity and pay, and the availability of institutional support. Ultimately, it reinforces the fact that PGR teachers provide indispensable but precarious labour and should be given the opportunity to influence the structures that impact on their development and efficiency as teachers.

When asked if teaching work had been enjoyable, most respondents indicated that it had (72% of those who had held a teaching role agreed, or strongly agreed that it was enjoyable), with many PGRs who had taught also considering careers in academia which would involve teaching in the future (66% would apply for teaching fellowships). In spite of these positive quantitative indicators, the majority of accompanying qualitative comments in the survey raised issues with PGR teaching at Warwick related to fairness in recruitment, access to support and guidance, awareness of professional development, equitable treatment of teachers and issues relating to precarity and pay, as described in this report. Further analysis of the WPTC survey results could offer even more nuanced, departmental perspectives and trends, particularly if correlated with PRES departmental data.

However, on the basis of these initial findings, WPTC recommends:

- **Increasing awareness of teaching development and current teaching-related support networks at Warwick.** Our survey highlights that PGRs value support where it is available, but there is some inconsistency in availability of support and awareness of how to obtain it. Where PGR teachers had attended courses, many comments were positive and indicated the value of working alongside others to improve practice. Ongoing, professional learning opportunities for PGRs (formal and informal) should remain a priority, as well as working to improve equitable access to these by increasing awareness through different routes.
- **Ensuring transparency around the PGR teaching 'offer' in departments.** Teaching opportunities are clearly sought-after by PGRs although as is stated in Warwick's policy document, this is not an automatic right. Availability of opportunities therefore should be clearly stated and processes relating to recruitment and terms and conditions made transparent.
- **Investigating current levels of support for PGR teachers in departments.** Mentorship and support with teaching are contractual requirements but the experience of this seems variable across the institution, at departmental level. An examination of what support looks like on the ground, alongside the sharing of models of good practice in support and mentorship would be desirable.

- **Adopting pragmatic initiatives to help address the current disparities in teaching experiences, particularly in terms of student interaction with teachers at department level.** Some PGR teachers appear to experience or witness different treatment in teaching roles, related to gender, ethnicity and/or age, which is more pronounced in their relationship with students than staff. Warwick's strategic commitment to inclusivity (in one recent example, in the roll out of the *Tackling Racial Inequality at Warwick* programme) should include recognition and support for PGRs who teach.
- **Examining contractual and pay arrangements across departments to ensure fairness and reasonable working.** Compensation needs to reflect hours worked and preparation time should be taken into account. Lack of preparation by PGRs likely impacts on teaching quality, confidence in delivering disciplinary material and ultimately impacts the student experience. PGR teacher representatives in departments should have a strong sense of what is reasonable and achievable for these colleagues.
- **Establishing consistent departmental representatives for PGR teaching.** Although not a question in the survey, organisation and leadership of PGR teachers at Warwick is inconsistent across departments, something which has become apparent as WPTC have tried to communicate messages across the institution, like the invitation to complete the survey. A stronger commitment to managing the PGR teacher experience with specific, named members of department staff with a remit for this role would be desirable.

These recommendations are based on the findings of the WPTC survey, contextualised within wider PGR teaching concerns at Warwick, including contractual arrangements and the PRES results. PGR teachers are a valuable group of colleagues, relied upon by Warwick every year for a substantial amount of teaching work. Many represent the future of academia: both research and teaching. However, they occupy a 'liminal space' between staff and student, and as such may lack access to channels of communication and support available to more permanent, senior teaching colleagues. The Warwick Postgraduate Teaching Community was established to support this group specifically, recognising that unique space, but it also relies upon good relationships and channels of communication across departments and professional services directly involved in teaching and supporting learning. Departments, Student Opportunities, the Library, Human Resources, the Doctoral College and the Academic Development Centre in particular have roles to play together with WPTC to improve the PGR teacher experience. It is hoped that this report will help to highlight issues and opportunities present in PGR teaching at Warwick and seek ways forward to support these colleagues in a fair and developmental manner.

References

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3. Warwick Policy on the Engaging of Postgraduates as Teachers:
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