

What is the AT Rights campaign?

The UEA has higher levels of ATs providing taught content compared to other institutions, moreover, a significant amount of UG and MSc project supervision in laboratories is carried out by PGR students. PGR ATs at UEA feel underappreciated for the work they do. We want to change this and for UEA to appreciate the work PhD students, who teach, dedicate their time to. We want ATs to feel valued in their research community, make sure they are paid fairly, and are prepared for their role. We are currently conducting secondary research into the way other institutions treat their ATs. For this we have looked into: policies; recruitment; contracts; training and mentoring; and remuneration.

This issue has been brought up at numerous student meetings, including the postgraduate assembly. This issue permeates throughout the institution and affects not only PGR students but everyone who is taught by PGR ATs. Given the Union's priorities around mental health, student wellbeing, and cost of living, this AT campaign will become a priority as it will impact and affect all of these aspects across levels of study.

What do we expect to see from UEA during and after this campaign?

Policy

- Create a policy or robust guidelines that outline the expectations for PhD students who teach, recognising that they are often put in positions outside of their remit and there will be no ramifications for not going beyond what they are paid for.
- For UEA to incorporate ATs into their teaching strategies, including a focus on the impact PGRs have on the staff student ratio and the importance this has on league table positions.
- For the Executive Team to publicly sign the UCU postgraduate employment charter as a sign of respect and understanding of the impact they have on the overall learning experience at UEA.
- For the university to publicly state that no work should be undertaken which falls outside the remit of a contract and places a PGR AT (a non-salaried employee) under undue stress and pressure.

Recruitment

- Ensure recruitment is fair and transparent at all levels, ironing out any areas where improper processes are still being used.

Contracts

- For the university to move away from precarious styles of contracts for employees who are often employed over a longer period such as a full module.
- For the university to explore using separate types of employment contracts for different types of work that PGR students are involved with.
- Ensure PGRs who teach are comfortable saying no to certain types of work not defined via a contract.

- Ensure all PGRs undertaking supervision of projects are fairly remunerated for their time.

Training and Mentoring

- Ensure there is adequate training available which provides PGRs with associate fellowship of the HEA for all PGRs who want to teach.
- Enable faculties and schools to mandatory provide specialist training for PGR students who want to teach.
- Provide opportunities for mentoring and support throughout the teaching journey for a PGR.
- Ensure PGRs who teach are fairly remunerated for their time developing the skills to teach at the institution. Support the development of a PGR AT network focused on peer support and social engagement.

Pay

- Ensure all work is remunerated at all levels. This should include actual amount of time needed for preparation where extra is needed due to poor materials from module leaders, the emotional labour that PGRs who teach are often burdened with, and realistic marking expectations.