Policy on Postgraduate Teaching in the School of Life Sciences (RAS, MQ, 03/06/2016)

Publication of Departmental Practices
The School of Life Sciences encourages all Y2-Y4 PGR students to undertake teaching duties, currently in the areas of wet laboratory demonstrating, dry laboratories (mathematical, bioinformatics) demonstrating, in workshop-led modules and in delivering materials in the Science 101. 1st year PhD students and MBio students who have permission from their supervisors will also be considered.

To ensure best practice the Y1 Laboratory Convener or the Science 101 convener, as appropriate, will support postgraduates who teach, and will provide liaison with the Learning and Development Centre.

Duties will be allocated wherever possible based on the experience of the postgraduate student. If required, specific training will be provided by the session leader.

Minimal anticipated hours are 3 6h sessions per annum.

Should an academic-in-charge be absent, then normally an appropriate member of staff will attend. If this is not possible, a suitably experienced demonstrator may be invited to oversee the session: failing that, a session may be cancelled and/or re-scheduled.

Deployment of Postgraduate Teachers
Postgraduates may be employed as teachers with roles as laboratory demonstrators, workshop facilitators and Science 101 session leaders, subject to supervision by the academic in charge and if an assessment has been made of the student’s qualifications and ability to teach at that level.

Such assessment may not be excessively formal, typically involving a review of the student’s Expression of Interest form submitted in the summer prior to the start of a new academic year. There may be an interview with up to two academics one of whom is the module leader. This form of assessment will be proportionate to the amount of teaching and a less formal assessment may be appropriate for very small amounts of teaching.
Postgraduates should not normally undertake the role of module convenors, except where given a contract.

Each postgraduate teacher will have access to a teaching mentor able to advise on teaching issues, to discuss problems and to provide feedback as appropriate, and to adequately brief the postgraduate teacher as to the expectations of the role: the session academic supervisor will normally take this role.

**Duties of Postgraduate teachers**

If a postgraduate teacher is unable to make a timetabled session, they should inform the laboratory support staff and/or the academic in charge in good time and, preferably, suggest a possible cover.

Postgraduates are expected to prepare for each session beforehand: if necessary, for practical skills, training can be made available. Reading materials will be provided by the Laboratory/workshop leader. Postgraduates who teach should arrive early for sessions to take part in the briefing provided by the academic in charge.

Postgraduates are expected to organize breaks amongst themselves with the proviso that there are a minimal specified number of demonstrators/facilitators to hand at all times: the session leader should always be informed.

Postgraduates are expected to mark Y1 laboratory scripts from laboratories they have demonstrated, and to mark Y1 assessments from dry workshops, subject to appropriate training, supervision and moderation of summative marks, if necessary, by the session leader. Marking of formative assessments will be subject to supervision but need not be subject to formal second marking or moderation.

Postgraduates are expected to tally the number of marked scripts, liaising with the laboratory support staff. Scripts for marking should be collected in good time and marked scripts should be returned within the deadlines specified for each session.

Postgraduates are expected to take responsibility for filling in their time-sheets, liaising with the laboratory support staff.
Review
The performance of postgraduate teachers will be monitored by module leaders and the teaching mentor using student feedback and other mechanisms which might include teaching observation.

Renewal of a teaching appointment will be subject to an informed judgment that teaching has been satisfactory and there should be no presumption that appointments will be renewed.

Concerns raised by students and/or mentors about the quality of teaching by postgraduate teachers, will be investigated and if necessary acted upon: the teaching role may be replaced if the situation is deemed to merit such action.

Engagement with the Academic and Teaching Community
Postgraduates who teach are invited to give feedback to their departments about the quality and effectiveness of the training, supervision and support which they receive.

Postgraduates who teach are respected as members of the teaching community and will have access to the facilities and resources necessary to fulfil their role.

Postgraduates who teach will have opportunities to observe more experienced teachers and will be made aware of, and able to take up, further training opportunities available through the Learning Development Centre.

SLS encourages postgraduate students to engage with teaching and learning development strategies, including PGA, facilitated by the LDC.

Postgraduates who teach have opportunities to share good practice, discuss matters of common interest and voice common concerns via the dedicated Demonstrator’s page on Moodle.