



Results of the 2015 PGSA Survey on Teaching Assistance: Internal Report

September 2015

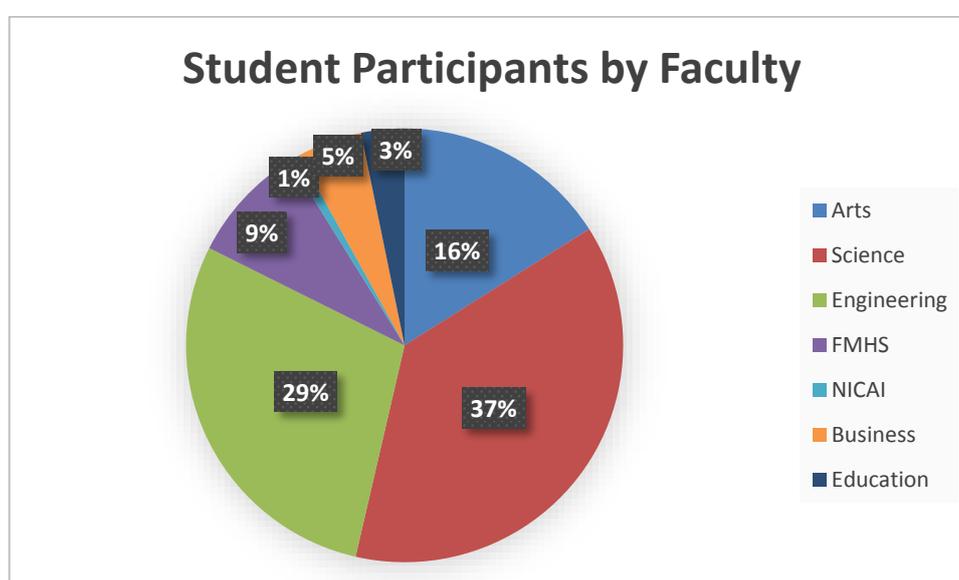
Prepared by	Mohamed Alansari President, PGSA The University of Auckland
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Survey Background

The purpose of this survey is to inform the University regarding student views of the employment opportunities for teaching. This includes exploring their current experiences of teaching in the University.

Participants

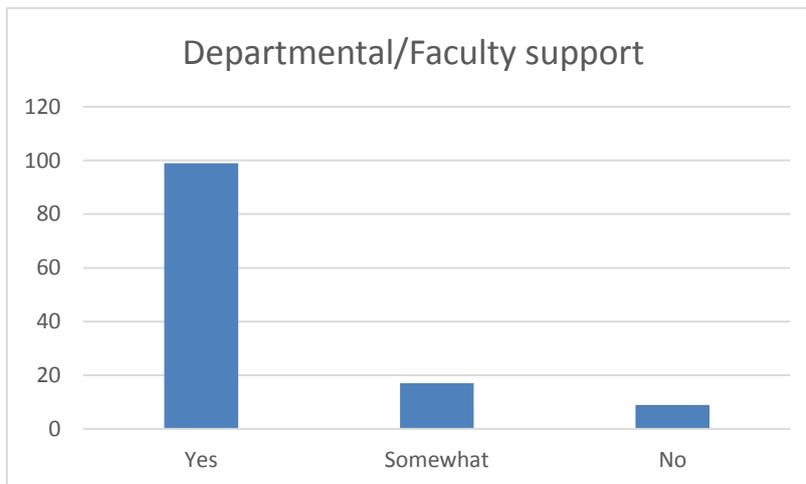
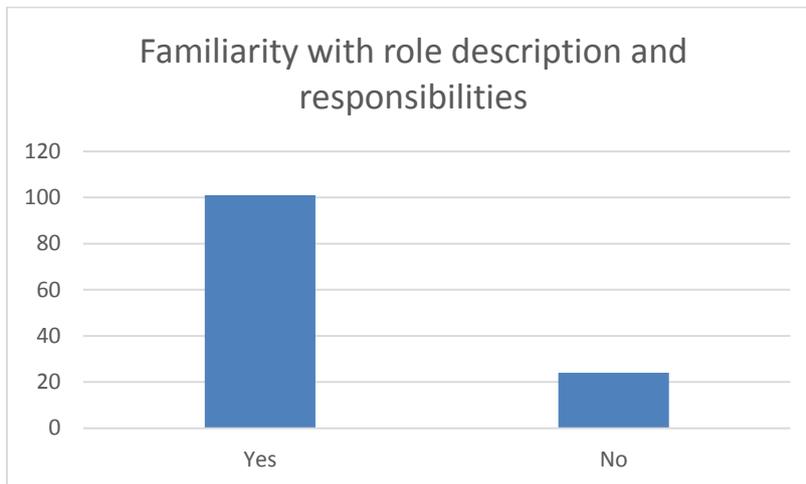
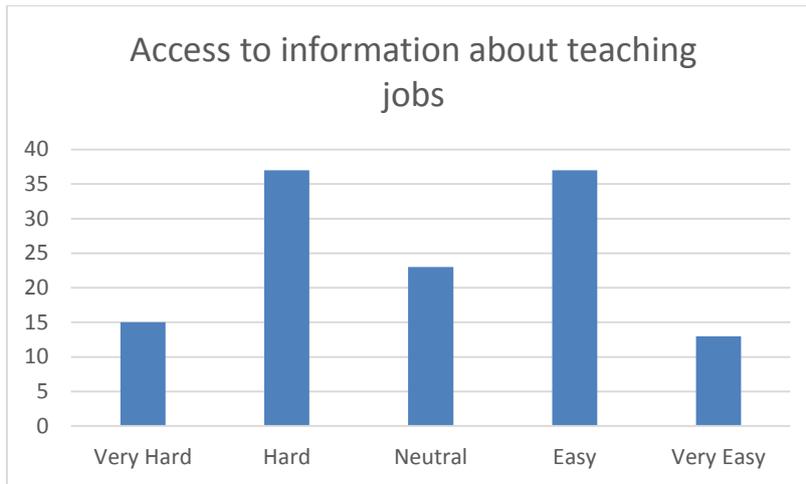
A total of 125 doctoral students completed an online survey within 2 weeks indicating they are currently employed as either Graduate Teaching Assistants ($n = 91, 72.8\%$), Teaching Assistants ($n = 32, 25.6\%$), or Professional Teaching Fellows ($n = 2, 1.6\%$). The teaching experience of these students varied from 1 month to 3 years.

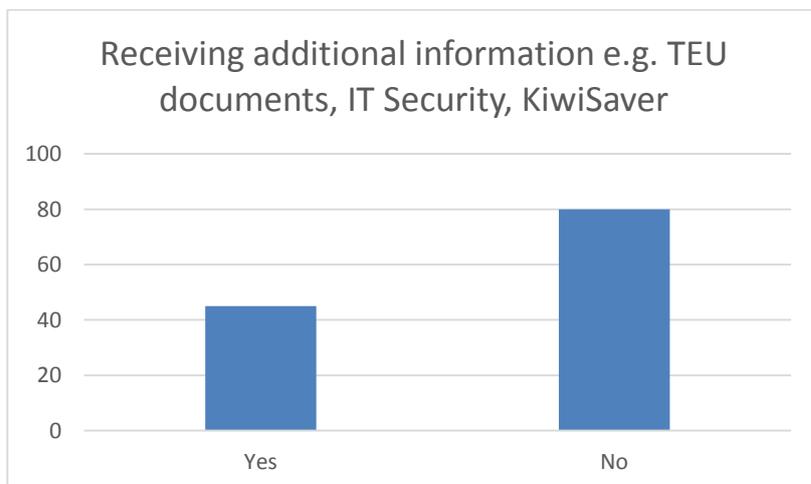
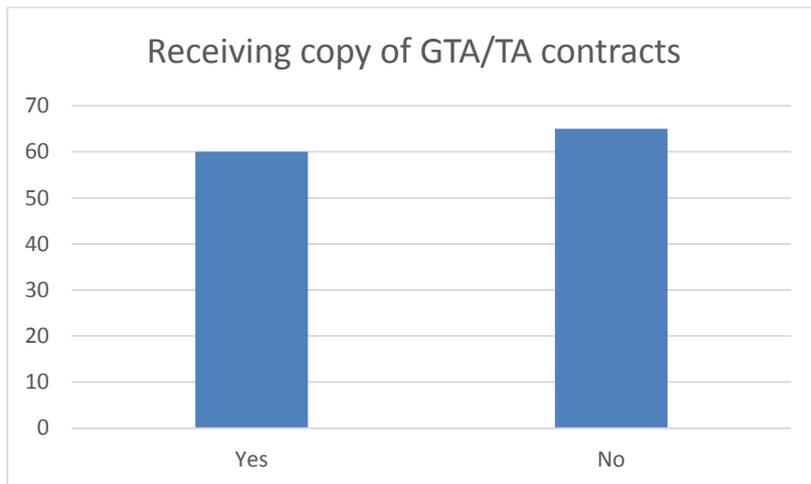


Measures and Procedures

In August 2015, an anonymous online survey was sent to all PGSA doctoral students, asking them to comment on their current teaching positions. In particular, students were asked to comment on a number of aspects related to their teaching roles such as the access to information around these jobs, signing contracts, and receiving departmental support. Students were also given the opportunity to include additional comments at the end of the survey. Responses were then collated and analysed for the purposes of this report. All students were invited to complete the survey on a confidential basis.

Summary of Results





Student General Comments

“I feel supported and appreciated in my work as GTA. My department always makes sure that I am aware of my rights and responsibilities as well. I worked very hard for this position and I am proud that I am invited to stay on board as GTA.”

“In the XXXXX department GTA's receive little or no training, no performance reviews and no performance based pay increases. This has led to a terrible standard of teaching across the board. Most GTAs are enthusiastic enough in their first semester but see how little effort others put into their teaching and so drop their standards accordingly. Why should I put more effort in than Joe when we are paid the same? The ultimate victims of this system are the undergraduate students.”

“I work between two schools, XXXXXX and XXXXXXXX, each of which has its own way of organising the TAs. I have answered the survey regarding the School of XXXXXX as I find the experience here to be worse than that of the School of XXXXXX which I cannot commend enough.”

“We're not given any useful feedback and there is big discrepancy between GTAs and how they teach/ help students.”

“IMPORTANT: 1. I would like to receive payment schedule for all my contracts before signing it. 2. I would like to receive a copy of my contract.”

“From my own experiences as a GTA, as we gain experience we are given more and more responsibilities with fewer hours (reduced hours = less pay).”

“Pay is fairly low when compared to global standards (Australia, UK etc). Especially when the candidate has undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the specialisation. Similar roles pay well over three times as much at comparable universities in Australia.”

“Why are there even different kinds of contracts? If marking as a TA the wage is \$10/h less than when working "casual". That's not alright! :-/”

“I'm surprised there is no opportunity here to discuss wages or working hours - my main issue with GTA contracts is that the hours I am expected to actually work (esp. wrt marking) greatly exceeds the number of hours for which I am actually contracted/paid.”

“It would be great if you could clarify the difference between GTA and TA. I am a final year PhD student and given TA position. I understand that some other PhD student for of similar experience were offered GTA for the same level of work that I do. I would be thankful if you could let me know why I am not given GTA and why this difference. Many thanks.”

“The TA process is highly variable, even within faculties. In XXXXX, each department handles it differently, from the method of asking for TAs to the amount they are paid. This should be regulated, at least at the faculty level.”

“I think the payment for GTA works is not fair at all. Neither the rates nor the hours assigned to a GTA job are enough to cover the amount of time and effort a GTA-contract holder puts into the job. The salary does not cover the workload. Also, there are not any additional services offered by the university to support GTA/TA employees. Even if they exist, I am not aware of

them. In terms of the contract, this is the first time (second semester of 2015) that I received a copy of signed contract. I never received that before.”

“TA's are underpaid.”

“1) University should tailor training based on experience. 2) University should pay for training - especially if it is compulsory.”

“There were no formal introductions for the GTA/tutor space, only an email to arrange swipe cards in week 1 I think. No drama really, but I think a first time tutor might have appreciated that.”

“It is really unfair that PhD student from Department of XXXXXX and XXXXXX who are considered as TA not GTA. As I found in other departments or Faculties, based on the rules and regulations, they are considered as GTA, so they are paid higher (32\$ per hour) instead of 22\$ per hour in our case as TA. It is really unfair and kills the motivation in us as PhD student when you see obvious discrimination between us and others.”

“Great experience working in the XXXXXX and XXXXXX departments - I do think I've been lucky with the papers I have been tutoring though, as they are probably more supported than many of the others.”

“As a PhD student, I noticed that PhD students from other faculties and even other departments in the same Faculty got paid a much higher rate (~\$32/hr) on a GTA contract while we got paid a lower rate (~\$23/hr) on a TA contract (with graduate rate) for the same type of work: lab demonstrations, test supervision, exam marking etc. I think it would be fairer to the postgrad students if everyone got paid the same rate for doing the same job. The same goes for access to items like stationary, a telephone, and common room. PhD students in XXXXX and XXXXX are permitted to use staff coffee machines, fridges and even have their own milo supply, while PhD students in XXXXXX are not allowed on the 12th floor common room unless accompanied by a staff member. This is also unfair.”

“The only issue I have is that I have always got the TA contract whereas I should get a GTA contract according to my experience. That's all I want.”

“I just want to make a note that some people told me that the pay rate for GTA are not the same throughout the university, even though we're doing the same work. For example, two people doing exactly the same lab demonstrating job, but from different departments in the University, and they get paid different rates simply because they're from different departments.”

“TA can be a challenging role. Management and awareness of digital boundaries with students is often not understood well.”

“I've noticed that the pay rate is not consistent across departments at the university. Some departments (XXXXXXX) pay their PhD students \$30-35 per hour, whereas our department (XXXXXXX) only pays \$23.39 per hour. I'm not sure why there is this discrepancy but I think it is unfair to pay some students more and others less for similar kinds of work/tutoring (and based on similar levels of education and experience)! Is it possible to make sure that there is a consistent rate that postgrads are paid across the university?”

“It is good to know about the additional doc. I've never been aware of it.”

“I contacted TEU earlier in the year but did not receive a reply when I was experiencing a movement within our School of shifting students who were employed on GTAs to casual employment agreements.”

“The hours are the worst part of being a GTA, like set hours, when marking takes so much longer. Or on residential field trips you only get paid 8 hours, even though your day is much much longer.”

“I would like if university has a standard rules for TA and GTA. For the same responsibility, which I was doing some are paid under GTA and I was under TA. Please ensure that this doesn't happen.”

“It would be nice to have clarity in duties, pay rate and selection criteria with all the TA/GTA, and have the information easily available. Different departments seems to have different standards, standardization and some equity across the university will be nice as well.”

“This is a topic that deserves attention - different departments and Schools within my faculty organise their laboratory teaching sessions with different numbers of GTA and TA contracts. Employees (PG students) should know the difference, but few of us do.”

“I heard that at different faculties students get paid higher rates. Think this will be an interesting topic for further investigation.”