Library services for Taught Postgraduates

**Brief description of the paper**
The paper looks at services for PGTs, under the headings of collections, help and support and study space; and highlights some particular issues in providing and enhancing services for PGTs. As we think about the services for PGTs we will be speaking to them to gather more information. Some of the enhanced services which it might be appropriate to introduce for PGTs may not be affordable for all groups of users.

**Action requested**
Library Committee is asked to discuss these issues raised in the paper and provide advice. The Committee is also asked to suggest other issues we should address and to suggest other ways we can gather information about the needs of PGTs,

**Resource implications**
Resource implications are discussed in the paper, where there are extra resource requirements

**Risk Assessment**
Does the paper include a risk analysis? No

**Equality and Diversity**
Does the paper have equality and diversity implications? Yes, the paper is looking at the service for one group of students and any decisions may impact on other students

**Freedom of Information**
Can this paper be included in open business? Yes

**Originator of the paper**
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Library services for Taught Postgraduates

Taught post-graduates (PGT) are increasingly important to the University of Edinburgh, and this paper looks at some of the issues around the provision of library services to this group. As Distance Education PGT courses are established, these will present other challenges. Library play an important role is recruitment, retention and satisfaction for PGTs, and we need to ensure that the services are as good as they can be. However, some of the enhanced services which may be appropriate for PGTs may not be affordable for all groups of students, and indeed may be in conflict with the needs of other groups.

The total number of PGTs and the number of PGT courses has risen in recent years\(^1\). This group has particular characteristics which we need to review as we consider the library services which they need:

- PGTs are keen to “hit the ground running” at the start of their course
- They continue through the full year of their course as a demanding set of users with high expectations
- Sometimes, they may be prepared to pay for services if they can’t get what they want for “free” within their course fee
- Some are returnees to education, often after a gap of several years, who may have library skills which now need updating
- They frequently bring experience of different (not necessarily better) library services which may colour their expectations
- Many are international students, again with differing sets of experience and expectations
- PGT students do not necessarily think of themselves as “PGTs”, they are more likely to think of themselves as historians or economists or chemists, which may mean that we need to ensure that messages meant for this group are correctly received.

The Library can call on its own experience in thinking about these issues. We are involved in the delivery of PGT courses in a number of areas, mostly to Schools in HSS (LLC, HCA, Education), so can bring this experience to bear. We also have a number of staff who have recently completed PGT courses in Edinburgh and elsewhere and who are very helpful in providing their views of the service as critical friends.

We also gather information through the PTES\(^2\) and other surveys such as LibQual\(^+\) \(^3\) and hold focus groups specifically for PG-Ts on various issues, and will continue to work with and talk to PGTs to carry input to the questions below.

The paper looks at services under the following categories: collections, help and support, and study space, and asks Library Committee for their advice in ensuring that the service

\(^1\) https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/govstratplan/Factsheet+Archive
\(^2\) http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/postgraduate-surveys/postgrad-taught-survey
\(^3\) Library Committee, February 2010
to PGTs is as good as it possibly can be—bearing in mind that any enhancements for one particular group may not be affordable for all groups of students. The Committee is also asked to suggest other issues we should address and to suggest other ways we can gather information about the needs of PGTs.

Collections
By and large, PG-T courses are in areas where UoE is good at research, so our collections should be quite good, but there can be issues:

- We are often not be told about new PG-T courses in time to purchase the necessary resources, even though there are approval processes for new courses in place.
- More basic resources may be in the HUB Collection or reserve collections in site libraries, with loan periods dictated by the undergraduate requirement which may not be appropriate to the PGT requirements.
- We may have the more advanced research resources, but not the basic materials required at the start of the PGT course.
- Some cross-disciplinary PGT courses (e.g. carbon finance) will have resources which are widely scattered across the library sites.
- These courses may have a faster turnover in resources than undergraduate courses, and we may not be able to respond quickly enough in keeping the collection up to date.
- DE courses need, and other courses wish, to have more digital resources—but sometimes there are not digital versions of texts, which means that we have to use the e-reserve service to deliver—this is probably a sub-optimal solution.
- Students may wish to start reading around their work before their course starts formally and before they have access to library resources.

Questions:
How do we ensure that we get information about library resources needed on new PGT courses (or new resources on existing PGT courses) in time to provide them for the start of the course?

Should we be setting aside a sum in the materials budget specifically to deal with this need, perhaps particularly the interdisciplinary courses, or can we rely on the existing College/School allocations to deal with this?

Should we develop a fast-track prioritised e-reserve service for PGT courses, perhaps particularly important for DE courses—and how would this be funded?

Should we have a more targeted set of loans policies for PGT, e.g. to loan HUB/Reserve books in vacation to PGTs for longer periods? Are there are other loans which might help PGTs without inconveniencing others?

Should we investigate licensing resources to provide access to PGTs, from point of acceptance but before formal registration, so that they can start using print and digital resources before the course starts?
**Help and support**

The Help and Support services available to all users are equally available to PGTs. There is no evidence that PGTs are less satisfied with the service than others. Some issues may be:

- Ensuring messages which are intended for this group are targeted and received
- Are there any circumstances in which we could think about providing the option of a premium based service if the PGTs are prepared to pay (e.g. for faster help)? At the moment our aim is for extended help 24/7/365, and excellent self-help for all users.

Questions

How do we get feedback from Schools on the quality of library service for PGTs?

How should we up skill returnees or those who are familiar with other libraries (who may think they know what they are doing)?

How do we ensure that messages to PGT are received by the intended recipients, when they do not necessarily think of themselves in this category. There will mechanisms for DE students but not for all PGTs. It is possible that Mobile Campus could help with this.

Should we have staff specifically devoted supporting PGTs, providing a mixed model of subject and user type support?

**Study space**

In some Schools, PGTs are provided with their own study and social space, in others they are not. The Main Library and site libraries provide space for all who need space. Particular issues may be:

- Opening hours in libraries tend to be set by the undergraduate dates, with longer opening hours in undergraduate semesters. In the Main Library, we have recently extended the opening hours to midnight in August, but PGTs may consider that this is not acceptable.
- We are planning to provide dedicated PG space in the Main Library from the end of the Main Library redevelopment. But there are currently no plans for such dedicated space in the site libraries.
- At times of peak UG demand, PGTs can find it difficult to get space in libraries.

Questions:

Are there specific times in the vacations when it would be helpful to PGTs to have longer opening hours?

What sort of facilities should we be providing in dedicated postgraduate space in the ML?

Should anything be done in the site libraries?

Is it acceptable to prioritise UGs over PGs at peak (pre-exam) periods?

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