

Thinking about what to do next? You may have considered teaching in Higher Education (HE), especially if you'd enjoyed demonstrating, delivering tutorials or supervising project students, but you may be unsure as to whether this is a possibility as a career and, if yes, how you would go about it. This Short Guide is intended to provide an overview of the role and the career path of a Teaching Fellow.

Job description

Teaching Fellows, also referred to as University Teachers, are academic members of staff whose role is to enhance the learning experience for students and design, deliver and assess courses/modules and programmes. They teach academic or vocational subjects to undergraduate and taught postgraduate students using a wide range of methods, including e-learning. Administrative tasks, such as curriculum design, development and coordination of modules and degree programmes, take up a significant amount of time, and many Teaching Fellows also take on a pastoral role. There may also be an opportunity to pursue discipline and/or pedagogic research. As teachers in HE institutions progress along their career path, they may be expected to undertake a managerial role, such as Director of Teaching.

Typical Work Activities

Work activities will vary but typically involve:

- course/module/programme coordination;
- developing (innovative) teaching materials;
- designing, delivering and evaluating lectures, seminars, tutorials, practicals and fieldwork;
- assessing students' coursework;
- providing feedback to students;
- setting and marking examinations;
- supervising students' projects;
- supporting students through a pastoral/advisory role; and
- undertaking administrative tasks, such as student admissions.

Entry Requirements

- a relevant undergraduate degree and usually a relevant postgraduate qualification;
- ability to enthuse and sustain an interest for the subject area and to impart this to students;
- potential to expand their knowledge in order to teach a broad curriculum;
- excellent oral and written communication skills and good IT skills;
- confidence in dealing with a wide range of people;
- ability to organise own workload with competing demands;
- ability to work both independently and as part of a team;
- a flexible approach to work; and
- commitment to the profession and to continuing professional development.



Training

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (www.qaa.ac.uk) recommends that all staff involved with teaching, as well as postgraduate researchers, should receive a minimum level of training and support for their teaching role. Universities run workshops and courses on teaching, learning and assessment, and in recent years formal postgraduate teaching qualifications for teaching in HE have been introduced. In many universities, teaching qualifications, for example a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Learning & Teaching, can now be compulsory for new teaching staff. Universities often run their own courses which are completed alongside normal working duties. Such courses generally cover theories of learning, practical skills and principles of learning. They are usually targeted primarily at new teaching staff, but researchers are often eligible to enroll if they fulfil the application criteria. Sometimes universities also offer programmes specifically for research staff or postgraduate researchers that teach.

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) accredits a number of courses and also offers recognition to individuals following completion of an accredited course, usually a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education. HEA recognition can also be obtained via a route that accredits prior experience. Research staff that teach are eligible for Associate membership status if they meet Level 1 of 'The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education'. HEA thus provides access to professional recognition, advice and support, as well as networking and development opportunities - see www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingindividuals

It is important to plan in advance and try to fill any skill gaps with training and other development opportunities. If possible, talk to Teaching Fellows and other members of academic staff to get further advice on teaching roles within HE institutions. The HEA provides an extensive database of case studies on aspects of teaching, learning and assessment, and the UK Centre

for Bioscience provides support and resources for teaching staff. There is also information on teaching, such as lecturing, lab classes and marking, on the Vitae website.

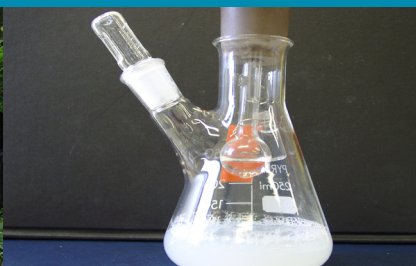
Career development

Academic teaching posts normally start as 'Tutors' and 'Teaching Assistants' with promotion to 'Teaching Fellow'. As their career progresses, Teaching Fellows can expect to take on further responsibility in teaching, administration or management and, in some cases, a combination of all three. Promotion to more senior levels will often depend on a willingness to undertake additional duties and responsibilities. These senior levels may include the posts of 'Senior Teaching Fellow' and 'Principal Teaching Fellow'. Progression to very senior levels may be possible for candidates who continue to build up expertise in these areas; this could be to posts such as 'Professorial Teaching Fellow'. The career paths in academic teaching may vary between HE institutions and it is advisable to check the web pages of the Human Resource departments of HE institutions for further information.

Gaining teaching experience as a postgraduate researcher and postdoctoral research fellow is important. The European Charter and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (2005) states that teaching is a valuable activity for researchers to be involved in, but it should not be excessive and training should be provided. Research Councils also encourage postdoctoral research fellows to teach as long as they do not teach more than an average of six hours per week including preparation, marking and training.

Salaries

- Salaries for Teaching Fellows range from £27,428 to £35,788 (salary data collected April/ May 2011).
- Salaries for Senior Teaching Fellows range from £35,557 to £44,016 (salary data collected April/ May 2011).
- Salaries normally depend on experience and are generally higher in London due to the 'London Allowance'



Case Study 1

Dr Sarah Dalrymple
Teaching Fellow
University of Aberdeen



During my PhD at the University of Aberdeen, I gained a wide range of teaching experience, including fieldtrips, laboratory and computer practicals, and tutorials, and I applied to be a Teaching Fellow as I found my teaching an enjoyable experience. Initially my contract was for 12 months but it was extended to 3 years, and then I was made permanent. My first year of teaching was challenging as I was given a busy teaching schedule, which included lecturing, practicals, tutorials, as well as setting and marking course assessment and exams; the administration load involved course coordination, such as collating marks. In my second year I enrolled on a PG Certificate in HE Learning and Teaching, which I undertook in parallel with my teaching duties. Whilst it was hard work, it had instant benefits for my teaching practice and confidence. I've since been nominated by my students for an Excellence in Teaching Award and I think this is as a direct result of me trying innovative teaching approaches. Recently I was promoted as a result of taking on further teaching duties, including the coordination of a BSc degree programme, as well as pastoral and academic support responsibilities.

Personally it has been incredibly important to keep my research in plant ecology going as this makes me more knowledgeable and experienced in my subject area and allows me to maintain my research profile, as well as it benefiting my teaching. However, it can be difficult to juggle the different work activities and, in my experience, Teaching Fellows put the needs of their students first and work long hours to get through their teaching and administrative loads. The best bits about my job are working with interested and committed students. I love the process of creating learning environments where students are given the opportunity to discover new skills and contribute their ideas to the class. Even though I value my research activities, I'm pretty sure that I have much more impact through teaching.

Case Study 2

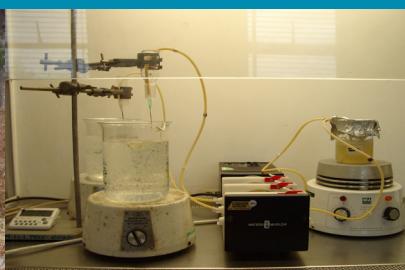
Dr Morven Shearer
Principal Teaching Fellow
University of St Andrews



I've been involved in bioscience HE teaching for almost 10 years; most recently as Director of Teaching for the School of Biology at the University of St Andrews. My first experience of teaching was during my Masters at the University of Iowa, and I really enjoyed the break that it gave me from the lab, as well as the chance to think about new material and the best way to explain it to others. During my PhD at the University of Cambridge, I was involved in teaching, and again I liked the contrast between solitary laboratory-based science and the interactivity of teaching.

At the end of my PhD I started a temporary Teaching Fellow post at the University of St Andrews which became permanent. St Andrews has an established teaching track, and you can progress from Teaching Fellow, to Senior Teaching Fellow, to Principal Teaching Fellow as your role and remit develops. I gradually undertook more responsibility, e.g. coordinating modules, being an advisor of studies, acting as disabilities coordinator. I also completed a PG Certificate in HE which is becoming a qualification more universities are asking for. As well as being involved in teaching and administration at St Andrews, I established links nationally with academics interested in teaching and we've written papers, presented at conferences and delivered joint projects/workshops. Not only is working with colleagues from other institutions great fun but it is helpful to hear what goes on at other universities and to discuss ideas.

The best parts of my job are the interaction with students and the freedom to develop new courses and material. For anyone considering a career teaching in HE I would recommend that you first make sure you enjoy your subject, second that you enjoy students (your life will become filled with them and all of their emails, visits, problems and stories!) and third that you have a thirst for learning as it's crucial your teaching is creative and fresh and develops as you try out new ideas!



Vacancies

[Jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk) is the main website used by UK institutions to recruit for teaching positions, and individual HE institutions also list vacancies on their websites. Teaching opportunities are also available overseas and, for example, the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) website has details of HE institutions in the Commonwealth countries.

Networking, for example through conference attendance and membership of relevant associations, is important for finding out about vacancies, and informal enquiries are generally encouraged.

Useful websites

jobs.ac.uk website. www.jobs.ac.uk

Nature journal. www.nature.com/naturejobs/science/welcome

Science journal. <http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org>

career.edu is a non-profit job board for the academic community. www.career.edu

WouldLikeToTeach helps postgraduate researchers and research staff to find opportunities to get teaching experience in HE. www.wouldliketoteach.org

Times Higher Education is a good source of HE jobs, news and resources for teaching and research staff. www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/jobs_home.asp?navCode=84

EURAXESS offers information on vacancies and other background information. <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/general/index>

Chronicle of Higher Education is the US version of the Times Higher Education. <http://chronicle.com/section/Jobs/61/>

HigherEdJobs.com is a source for jobs and career information in academia, especially in North America. www.higheredjobs.com

Vitae is an organisation championing the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in higher education institutions and research institutes.

www.vitae.ac.uk

Association of National Teaching Fellows (ANTF). www.antf.ac.uk/index.html

Useful Resources

Resource list for postgraduate and postdoctoral teachers www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/ftp/events/aber170111/resources.pdf

Suggestions for Enhancing a Teaching or Scholarship Focussed CV - a document developed from discussions at an event on 'Exploring promotion and CV enhancement' www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/ftp/events/leeds070110/CV.pdf

Lucky 13 - 13 ways to get you up that ladder. www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/ftp/resources/13wayslt.pdf

Bioscience Education - an online, bi-annual journal containing a range of original articles on tertiary level bioscience education. www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/journal

UK Centre for Bioscience Bulletin - a newsletter containing short articles relating to bioscience education. www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/bulletin.aspx

Acknowledgements

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www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk

UK Centre for Bioscience
The Higher Education Academy
Room 9.15 Worsley Building
University of Leeds, Leeds, LS2 9JT
Tel / Fax: 0113 343 3001 / 5894
Email: heabioscience@leeds.ac.uk

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