



**Negotiating Higher Education:**  
*Building confidence for Graduate Teaching Assistants an Institutional Approach*

*Dr Dawne Irving-Bell, Edge Hill University [belld@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:belld@edgehill.ac.uk)*

*Claire Moscrop, BPP University [Clairemoscrop@bpp.com](mailto:Clairemoscrop@bpp.com)*



*@belld17 @tigmoscrop*

# Introduction

Negotiating Higher Education can be a difficult and daunting experience, and this is of course is no less of an issue for GTAs than it is for any other category of student.

As those working to support GTAs know only too well completing the 'PhD' is only a very small part of the GTA story.

<b>GTAs challenges</b>	<b>Institutions challenges</b>
Workload	Ensure the well-being of staff
Imposter syndrome	Provide high quality developmental support
Teaching concerns	Assure quality of teaching



The significance that experience-related beliefs play in the construction of the GTAs professional identity. How approaches to learning are influenced by previous experiences and how in turn the meaning assigned to these experiences influence not only their approaches to learning, but also their approaches to teaching.

***The dichotomy of being a student whilst also being expected to exhibit expertise in the emergent role as a lecturer***

(Irving-Bell, 2018)



At Edge Hill University we appoint between 35-40 new Graduate Teaching Assistant's (GTAs) each year.

As they work to complete their doctoral studies each is also contracted to contribute to the wider of work of their department and engage in teaching activity for the equivalent of 6 hours per week

Following recent changes this commitment to teach does not begin until the second semester of their first year with us.



All GTAs attend and complete an 'Introduction to Teaching in Higher Education' programme

No teaching activity until semester two of their first year

At no cost, and with time allocated, all are able to undertake our PGCert in Teaching in Higher Education

In addition to their supervisory team, departmental line manager and mentor, while undertaking the PGCert each is assigned a Personal Academic Tutor (PAT)

Option to complete the first module of the PGCert only in order to gain AFHEA (D1)

Our PGCert is accredited and upon completion they gain FHEA (D2)



In addition to their PhD our GTAs have:

1. 3 years experience of teaching in Higher Education,
2. PGCert in Teaching in Higher Education
3. Advance HE Fellowship (FHEA).

Improved retention and hence PhD Completion, excellent employment outcomes and most importantly happier, more confident, competent and capable GTAs ready to embark upon their career in Higher Education:

***“Just a quick note with some good, but sad news ... I have accepted a job at XXX and I just wanted to say thank you for all of your help and support during my three years here. The PGCert and Fellowship have had a massive contribution to my development ... and contributed hugely to me being successful in securing the new job. I’m leaving EHU a completely different person”***

One of our GTAs, 2019

Thank you for listening



Dr Dawne Irving-Bell @belld17  
Claire Moscrop @Tigmoscrop