

Introduction to Issue 3

By Nicole Anderson, Kristyna Campbell, Lauren Clark, Jesper Hansen, Alex Hastie, Sarah Kunz, Thomas Lowe and Alex Standen

We are delighted to be introducing our third issue of the *Postgraduate Pedagogies* journal. When in 2018 we first began to have conversations about providing a platform for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) to share their perspectives and engage in scholarly debate about teaching, learning, assessment, and the wider Higher Education (HE) environment, we never imagined stretching beyond a first collection of essays. To see this third issue come to fruition five years later is thus a cause for both celebration and reflection.

Celebration because of the quality, variety and originality of the articles we have been able to publish. Celebration too because of the relationships we have built with our authors and – we hope – the opportunities we have afforded them and their readers to reflect on their educational practice in scholarly terms, to receive constructive and developmental feedback, and to be part of a cross-disciplinary community which values and amplifies their voices. And celebration for the ongoing growth and development of the journal: we have welcomed new GTAs to our editorial team, we will soon be publishing our first Special Issue, we have reached a broad

range of institutions, researchers and academics, and we have seen – firsthand – the ever more pressing gap our journal aims to fill.

Hence also the cause for reflection. In the foreword to our first issue, Professor Dilly Fung wrote that, ‘Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) are [...] almost as invisible as the air that students breathe. Institutions struggle, even when willing, to give GTAs voice’ (2021: 1). It is clear to us – through subsequent issues and the abstracts and articles that we receive – that this feeling of invisibility persists and – if anything – is becoming more urgent. We have published articles highlighting the on-going relevance of topics such as precarity, identity and liminality; articles which call for more support and recognition from institutions; and which have consistently demonstrated the enormous contribution that GTAs are making to the HE sector. It is also a moment of reflection for us as editors: three of the original team have now moved into full academic positions – fantastic achievements, but with that comes the busyness of academic life and an increasing distance from the lived reality of the GTA experience. And so, as we reach this milestone of our third issue, we reflect on the sustainability of the journal, and are considering ways to ensure it continues to be properly resourced, and fully representative of the GTA community.

However, for now let us return to celebration. This issue contains 10 engaging and varied essays which showcase the full range of the GTA experience:

- Ban takes as their premise that, in the UK, around 40% of postgraduate researchers are international.

Their paper explores the academic benefits international GTAs bring to the UK's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the academic rationales for UK HEIs' recruitment of international PGR students to work as GTAs.

- Warner's paper provides a rich account of seven funded academic initiatives carried out by Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) at King's College London, UK, over 2021-2022. The 'Enhancing Education Funding' enabled the GTAs to offer effective support to their students in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and granted them the opportunity to showcase engaging academic content, while developing their leadership skillsets.
- In a collaborative article by Campbell, Gurini, O'Sullivan and Trollope, they explore how an "ethic of care" was established in teaching sessions led by GTAs at a time when class sizes are increasing. In this reflective piece, they detail how students were supported through various pedagogical practices based on relationality and connection. Fostering caring teaching environments also enabled GTAs to reflect on the challenges of this work and come together to build a community of practice.
- Davies' contribution is a literature review, which explores the impact of Covid-19 on GTA working conditions, focusing on challenges faced by GTAs as a result of the pandemic as well as sector-wide challenges around precarity, job insecurity, overwork and mental health. The paper makes several suggestions based on the literature review, including

sustained research in this area to explore methods of supporting GTAs to ensure that they progress in their academic careers.

- Leavey's contribution explores the role of GTAs in disrupting cycles of toxic leadership and competition within academia. Drawing on their own experience in academia, Leavey suggests that as GTAs are still developing their academic identities, they may be in an ideal position to learn from poor leadership that they may have experienced to create a better working environment for students and GTAs in the future.
- Parry's paper, drawing on the author's personal experience, builds on previous scholarship around GTA identity to consider the dynamics of the transition from working in industry to being a GTA. Observing their own experiences through a Foucauldian lens, the author explores themes such as precarity, cultural difference, uncertainty, and the importance of 'Problematisation'.
- In Lowe, Venema, Aarnink, Boekhout, Leman and Osborne's article, the authors explore a learning activity, Postgraduate Spotlights, where postgraduate researchers presented their research methods to undergraduates. This was followed by critical discussion, which they argue fostered a Community of Inquiry. This activity ultimately allowed the undergraduate students to understand better how a range of methods are used by researchers.

- Slater's piece reflects on how graduate teaching assistants and instructors incorporate more collaborative teaching practices in hybrid classrooms. The article focuses on the hybrid learning experience during COVID-19 of a primary school teacher who transitioned into a GTA role.
- In Ionescu's article the author reflects on their experiences as a postgraduate teaching assistant teaching Global Health to medical students. Through dialogic pedagogy, the author frames theory as the beginning of knowledge to encourage productive classroom dialogue. This dialogue requires making space for emotion and exploration, which can result in transcending the boundaries of discipline to have a successful interdisciplinary dialogue that is meaningful, promotes active learning and critical thinking.
- Finally, Lawler's piece explores the role of GTAs in teaching critical thinking, from the perspective that this should not be limited to a set of intellectual skills but encompass emotional and social aspects of learning. The author argues for GTAs' unique positioning as to be of enormous benefit here and offers a framework (building on the work of Jenny Moon, 2005) which can support GTAs' lesson planning, formulation of learning outcomes and design of classroom activities.

In sum, these 10 articles offer insight into the diverse experience of being a GTA, and the varied contributions GTAs make to UK Higher Education today. We hope that you enjoy reading these articles as much as we have enjoyed editing them!