



GTAG @Glasgow

A New Campus-wide Peer-Support



Network for



Graduate Teaching Assistants

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The Concept



Inspired by a tale of revolution at the University of Edinburgh's School of Economics, where a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA), Dr. Sean Brocklebank, took charge of supporting his GTA colleagues in a way that the staff had not previously done, we realised that there was the scope, the desire and, with a little bit of investigation, even financial support from our own institution to set up a similar peer-support network here at home.

Thus, the Graduate Teaching Assistant Group (GTAG) at the University of Glasgow was born.



The Implementation



Funding was granted by the University of Glasgow's Skills Training Fund and an additional small grant came from a Higher Education Academy project, enabling us to provide a series of conference-style events targeted initially at GTAs within the College of MVLS, with a goal of expanding across disciplines and colleges.

Participants were recruited via a series of YouTube videos, email announcements and flyer campaigns, and presentations were offered by the Vice Principal for Learning & Teaching, Dr. Frank Coton; the Head of the School of Life Sciences, Dr. Rob Aitken; winner of the 2010-11 Student Teaching Awards for Best GTA, Alex McCabe; Senior University Teacher, Anne Tierney; as well as several senior GTAs on various aspects of becoming an effective GTA.

Since the aim of the network was to provide a forum for peer-support, there were also floor discussions where GTAs were given discussion topics ('Discuss a memorable bad experience you've had while teaching, how you dealt with it, and what you might do differently next time').

The Way Forward



Feedback was sought after the event which indicated that the biggest attraction to the GTAG event was the chance to reflect upon transferable skills, followed by the chance to improve teaching skills and the chance to network with other GTAs, opportunities which aren't typically provided at a college level. More than 80% of GTAs who attended also indicated that they'd like to see some level of interdisciplinarity at future events, perhaps reflecting the feeling that learning from people who do things differently can help us improve our own practices.

The current goals of the GTAG are to:

- hold similar events in the other colleges
- create a schedule of mixed college-specific and intercollege events
- raise awareness of the GTAG among both GTAs and staff
- ultimately, raise the standard of teaching delivered by GTAs across campus by encouraging reflective practice and peer-support

