

# Biology Training for Postgraduate Demonstrators

## Learning and Teaching Case Study

2014/15

Alison Graham, School of  
Biology

### What did/do you do?

School of Biology made training available for postgraduate demonstrators.

### Who is involved?

Dr Alison Graham applied to the Innovation Fund for money to run training for PG demonstrators working on modules in the School.

### How do you do it?

The School wanted to address both PG concerns about teaching experience and skills and UG concerns about the consistency of PG demonstrators in class and in assessment. It began by producing a report on how other PG demonstrators and TAs were trained across the University before deciding on its own provision. It established a contract between lecturers and module leaders, demonstrators and students to determine what was expected of each group and to ensure consistency. It established a spreadsheet of PG Skills and availability to ensure that teaching hours were fairly and efficiently shared out. It also organized an introductory session in which demonstrators were introduced to and worked with UG students, including a short amount of time in which each demonstrator could present on the Ph.D. work in order to give UG students an insight into what PG demonstrators.

### Coherent Curriculum themes:

- **Student skills and employability**
- **Assessment and Feedback**

### Other keywords:

Employability; Industry;  
Work Experience; Teaching;  
Assessment

# Newcastle Law School

## Using Industry Professionals in Core Teaching

### Why do you do it?

Many UG students had commented that they did not know who the demonstrators were nor what their place in the University was. They also mentioned that they felt that there were huge differences between each demonstrator's skills and that sometimes this was detrimental to their marks or to their understanding of a particular practical. PGs said that they felt unsupported in their roles, and were unsure about what their responsibilities were as demonstrators and often, were not given sufficient notice to prepare for sessions. The measures brought in by introducing the two groups, encouraging PGs to talk about their work and creating a series of spreadsheets and documents to log PG availability and to help them to keep track of their sessions helps to address these issues. Further training and information for PGs from academic staff also helps them to deliver better and more consistent assistance in practicals.

### Does it work?

Students, demonstrators and academic staff have gained enormously from the scheme. UGs have reported that they felt much more supported in practicals and have developed good relationships with PG demonstrators, adding to a sense of research community and to a greater understanding among UGs about the possibilities of a research career. PGs have reported that the training was 'very useful'. The project has now been taken on by teaching fellows in the School who will be further refining the programme for 2015/16. Details of the project have been passed on to the Schools of Education, Electronic Engineering, Civil Engineering and Geomatics and Computer Sciences.

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**Other keywords:**  
Employability; Teaching; postgraduates, undergraduates