**EXCLUSIVELY REVEALED: Students marked ‘unfairly’ for years as King’s demand ‘impossible targets’ in ‘nightmarish conditions’**

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**Work is “barely checked“ and “unfairly” marked**

* **Forced to cut corners to mark 9,000 words an hour**
* **Teachers pressured in “nightmarish” exploitation**

**KING’S are conning thousands of undergraduates by forcing teaching assistants to work at impossible speeds in “nightmarish” conditions – leading to “unfair” essay-marking and botched seminars.**

Some teachers are expected to mark 9,000 words every hour but they claim this is “impossible” and that “there is pressure to cut corners.”

One experienced teacher admitted he couldn’t even mark students’ work “fairly”, adding: “I can barely check if [their] calculations and results are correct”.

To give students proper feedback, teachers are forced to work unrealistically long hours – meaning they effectively earn less than the minimum wage. A survey of more than 450 graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) – obtained exclusively by Roar – has revealed the full extent of the College’s systemic “exploitation”.

**Generic feedback template**

One assistant said that if they stuck to their contracted hours they would only manage to give basic feedback on a third of their essays, adding: “I would prepare perhaps a quarter of the required reading per week.”

This has left many King’s students oblivious to their own academic shortcomings. “If I spent 90 minutes marking a bad paper then I end up getting paid £3.10 an hour,” one GTA said, explaining that he’s expected to glance over a paper in just 20 minutes.

“Since I can’t afford to work this way I compromise by spending less time, and offering less detailed feedback.”

However, seven in ten GTAs often work over their contracted hours – an act one person described as “charity”. Yet many teachers, caught between paying the rent and completing exhaustive research projects, have no choice but to drastically reduce quality –  at the expense of students.

One teacher said the pressure was so acute that he resorted to using a generic feedback template to cover the “basics”.

**‘I don’t even get through the required readings’**

The survey appears to explain the College’s dire student satisfaction ranking – 111th in the country – which drags King’s down in domestic leagues every year. Only 62% of King’s students were satisfied with “assessment and feedback” last year – 10% below the national average.

Half of them felt they weren’t trained very well, only receiving two hours of compulsory training per year. “[We’re] concerned we will be ‘found out’ as ‘not proper teachers’,” one admitted. Many worry that about whether their lack of experience gives students an “unfair deal”.

Others are left totally in the dark with no idea who their bosses even are, supervised by professors who don’t reply to their emails.
Many seminar leaders are only paid for one hour’s worth of preparation time per seminar. This means it’s almost impossible to both attend the lectures on which the seminars are supposedly based and then prepare for the seminar.

**‘You need to say we take this seriously’**

Departments have apparently claimed that it’s “not mandatory” to attend the lectures, but one teaching assistant pointed out: “The seminars we teach are about the lectures! Therefore in order to discuss the content we need to attend them.”

“We are also ‘informally’ obliged to attend the lectures,” another said. One teacher admitted that he doesn’t even manage the compulsory readings. But bosses have been dismissive when confronted with concerns.

One GTA said pay issues were always received “awkwardly” with claims that “GTAs do not need to work more than contracted hours”. Another said their Head of Department “trivialized” their concerns.

According to a PhD student: “If you bring up [marking rates or teaching] with the Head of Dept he threatens you with employing a teaching fellow to do all the current PhD work.”

A spokesperson from King’s refused to comment.

However, Vice Principal for Education Karen O’Brien then told Roar: “You need to say that we take these issues very seriously and that we have requested the full report and a meeting with the authors of the report before we can make an informed response.”