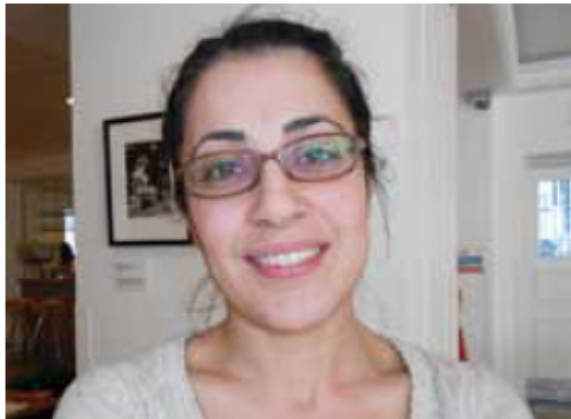


The Department of International Relations' internal examining was described as "second to none", it has trialled some innovative ways of engaging and supporting students (including podcasts to help with module selection and effective dissemination of SSLC reports), and it operates good diversity of assessment and feedback practices at MSc level. But it won particular praise for its support of graduate teaching assistants, one of whom – **Zeynep Kaya** – shared her experience of working in the department with us.



"I first arrived at LSE six years ago to do a PhD and began teaching almost straight away," says Zeynep, "partly because I needed the money, but mostly because I wanted to learn how to teach." Despite the huge juggling act that her life has been since then – she has worked in two departments, finished her PhD, almost completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education and had a daughter – she feels that she has gone a long way to fulfilling that wish, thanks in great part to the support her department, the course convenors and LSE in general have given her.

An early indication of the department's engaged approach to teaching were some of the questions on the GTA application form. "They asked why I wanted to teach certain courses, which made me think carefully about what I thought I could offer students at particular levels in their studies and in particular topics," Zeynep recalls. Her preferences – for two of the department's core undergraduate courses, IR100 (The Structure of International Society) and IR200 (International Political Theory) – have stuck, and she continues to teach on IR200, as

well as on a course in the Department of Government and with LSE100.

"It's a heavy load, but I've had lots of help from the department," Zeynep says. "The course convenors are very hands-on and always available to talk if necessary." As well as producing a comprehensive GTA handbook, the department runs a long meeting for GTAs at the start of the academic year where lots of information is provided and there is space to raise concerns and discuss possible solutions to teaching "problems". Zeynep has also appreciated the convenors' encouragement of GTAs to do exam marking: "I have learned a lot from doing that, especially about LSE's expectations of its students, which in turn helps my teaching." Last but not least, there is recognition from the department of the benefits of social interaction: the Head of Department hosts a GTA dinner at the beginning of each year, and there are funds provided for GTAs to take each class of students they teach out for an evening.

Much of Zeynep's learning about teaching has been embedded and extended through participation in the School's Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education programme. "I have definitely become a better teacher because of that. The teaching observations are really useful and I like the opportunity to self-reflect – to think about what went well and not so well in a class. Mostly, I like the fact that I can see the students making progress in their learning as a result of the progress I've made in my teaching. That's a big reward!"