

Workload Strategy for 2016/17

Summary

All the available evidence - local and national - suggests workloads for our members are running dangerously and unacceptably high. Yet workload does not feature currently in the new University Vision and Strategy. The difficulty is how to **collectivise** and **act** upon the problem. As experiences in FE and post-92 HEIs shows, workload models can play a crucial role in measuring workload, collectivising the issue and providing a basis for negotiation and contestation. Clearly, however, they are necessary rather than sufficient to address the workload crisis. They should, therefore, be part of a series of **demands** that UCU should make. We need, however, to work with members to formulate the most appropriate set of demands, and to build support towards a campaign around those demands. I suggest we aim to spend TB1 working with members, through a number of means, in order to identify and build support for specific demands. I would suggest we aim at March for raising specific set of demands that can act as a reference point. The initial wish list should accommodate the potential for negotiation, but if a satisfactory settlement is not reached, we should consider recommending to the membership that we enter a dispute with the University. The goal is to secure real change for the 2017/18 academic year.

TB1 of 2016/17

Using the current Workload Model

1. Contact staff reminding them of WLA (Workload agreement); ask for breaches to be brought to our attention. Analyse and raise with UoB through JCNC, and JTUs.

Engaging with the University Vision and Strategy

1. Currently the University Vision and Strategy says nothing about workload. While it is still developing, we will push in all available fora for the University Vision and Strategy to acknowledge and address the workload issue.

Building support and engaging with members

1. JT as UCU Bristol lead on workload campaign to visit key faculties in November and December (drawing on UCU workload survey) for meetings with interested staff to find out more about drivers of high workload, and to ensure these are fed into Faculty JTUs, as well as our broader thinking about workload strategy.

2. JT engage with smaller groups of interested staff where Faculties lack a WLM but members desire one, or where members desire modified WLMs. The aim is to generate a proposed framework for modelling, or modifying the model, that can then be taken to relevant Faculty JTU.

3. Explore potential campaign goals with staff in meetings, and via email - JT write workload blog to initiate process. We need to know more about which goals appeal to staff. Potential concrete campaign goals include:

a) Workload Models: as previously discussed, this would most likely be 1 WLM per Faculty: this should be a central aim, as collective bargaining requires a collective measure of workload. There should be **union involvement** in the creation, or refinement, of models.

b) Staff Student Ratios: there is clearly some appetite amongst senior management for addressing SSRs (Staff Student Ratios) where these are especially distant from the Russell Group mean. Could we build on this, by seeking to establish a policy that - if workload modelling reveals excessive workload - SSRs will immediately be reviewed, and if high workload is matched with high SSRs, hires will be made?

c) Workload-neutral policy-making: the principle here is akin to budget-neutral policy-making. No proposals that increase workload are acceptable unless linked to corresponding savings in workload elsewhere. There are some obvious challenges in terms of implementation, and this could be considered a maximalist demand. But why shouldn't proposals be so scrutinised? At least this potential demand recognises and responds to the seriousness of the situation. It places the onus on management to explain what, if any, measures they propose to undertake to address workload creep.

d) Link the workload question to gender and equalities issues. The idea would be to link data on excessive workload to the University's stated aim in the Vision and Strategy of eliminating the gender pay gap. In identifying the impact of excessive workload on, for instance, those with caring responsibilities, the aim is both to address the needs of those staff in particular and to benefit all colleagues working in areas with excessive workload.

e) Bring back lunchtime: restore a fixed hour (most likely 1-2) in which teaching is not scheduled. Concerns: UoB might seek to tie this to extension of teaching day (Bath already has 8-7, compared to our 9-6). There could be knock on effects for timetabling. However, this could be popular with students. The key question is whether members feel this is a worthwhile aim.

f) Teaching Day: as far as I am aware, UCU never agreed to the extension of the teaching day till 6pm. More students means more classes, but is it really impossible to schedule classes in 9-5? We need to talk to members to test views. Would there be strong support for demanding the restoration of a shorter day in terms of hours allotted for scheduling teaching? Obviously, changes here do nothing to reduce actual workload.

g) Email Policies: one driver of excessive workload is the increase in student numbers. The effects of this are amplified by changing expectations. One aspect of this is the volume of emails from students colleagues receive and the enhanced expectations of a rapid response, which often then leads to further emails...As far as I can tell, currently UoB offers no guidance to students on what is acceptable in terms of email demands on staff. We could, therefore, demand such a policy, insisting, for

instance, that staff cannot be expected to email students outside of the normal teaching day. Indeed, *we might ask for institutional email policy which "bans" the sending of work emails outside of working hours*. An obvious danger here is that any such policy would be tied to specified expectations from staff in terms of response time to student emails [these exist at other institutions, and at the most extreme require colleagues to email back to a student within 20 minutes if you are not in a meeting.]. On the other hand, this is a small concrete proposal that addresses a known driver of excessive workload, and one that has a particular impact on colleagues' work/life balance, and sense of the manageability of their jobs.

TB2 of 2016-17

1. Drawing on work done in TB1, table a series of demands through JCNC.

James Thompson,

Vice President

October 2016