

Academic Workload Principles Global Policy Statement

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POLICY

HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY

Academic Workload Principles Policy Statement

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the principles which underpin the University's approach to Academic Workload management.

Heriot-Watt aims to be a university where all academic colleagues are able to thrive academically, develop their careers and deliver excellence in all that they do. As a values-led and purposeful organisation it is essential that, whilst delivering the strategy and mission of the university, all staff are able to commit meaningful time to all aspects of their academic endeavour and personal development and that the allocation of work is transparent and fair.

We value staff well-being and personal development and recognise that managing workload transparently and realistically is critical to achieving these outcomes. Ensuring staff feel they belong to a flourishing academic community of staff and students whilst maintaining a positive work-life balance is critical to our collective success.

2. SCOPE

This Policy Statement applies to all academic and research staff at all levels across all our global campuses.

Whilst the University does not operate a strict proportional allocation of time to the core activities of Teaching, Research/Scholarship and Leadership/Administration, all academic colleagues should have a balanced portfolio of work, commensurate with their contract type and experience. The mix of activities will vary over time and reflect both the needs of the University and the individuals' strengths and ambitions.

All colleagues, irrespective of contract type, campus, discipline or school, whether full or part-time, should have the opportunity to develop their academic careers and be able to plan their work in the confidence that the allocation of activities and roles is fair and transparent. We are committed to managing this within a positive culture of equity and inclusion such that all staff have the opportunity to thrive.

Academic work, by its very nature, is somewhat uneven across and within years, and there will be need to make adjustments and respond to changing circumstances. School Leadership Teams will strive to provide clarity where possible and sufficient notice of workload allocations to enable staff to operate with confidence, to deliver excellence in teaching, research and student experience and to contribute positively to the wider Discipline, School and University community.

3. KEY INSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES

All academic colleagues at Heriot-Watt University will be allocated workload equitably. Each year academic workload will be reviewed using University level principles and taking commitments to teaching, research and impact, engagement and the university community into consideration.

On that basis, the following are the Key Principles within which Schools should work:

Principle 1 - Staff capacity is a finite resource

Staff capacity is recognized as a finite strategic resource by the Schools and University. In practice, this means that Group, School and University level initiatives (including funded projects) should account for the impact on that resource in strategic planning. In general, the workplace culture and contractual arrangements should support staff by constructively managing workload, seeking efficiencies by ceasing unnecessary tasks and supporting longer term career development.

Backfill arrangements should always be made for planned absences such as family related leave following discussion with the individual. Workload shortfalls in relation to other staff absences (e.g., sabbatical, long-term illness) should similarly not result in other staff being obligated to work hours in addition to the annual limit. As with family related leave, formal backfill arrangements should be agreed and approved via the Executive Dean and Resource Management Group as required. Where practical, consideration may be given to enabling a brief overlap prior to and after the period of absence to support the returning individual and maintain workload cover.

Workload allocation should be adjusted to manage temporary bottleneck pressures – e.g. exam marking. The principle of an average working week of 35 hours should be used as a guide. In practice this may mean that additional support for activities such as marking is made available in the short-term even if the individual's workload has capacity in the longer-term.

Heriot-Watt University's approach to workload allocation will also contribute to wider consideration of opportunities for personal development in PDR and other formal/informal settings. Examples of this are where it would incentivise innovations in teaching or large-scale research initiatives. Staff and line managers will be expected to reflect on workload and consider the contribution towards strategic goals specified in the University Strategy.

Early career staff and those returning from periods of absence, most typically family related leave and long-term illness, will require an adjustment to the standard work allocation. This is to enable staff to establish/reestablish their research portfolio and update scholarship activities and for new joiners to develop their teaching practice.

Principle 2 - Workload allocation to recognise a full range of activity in roles

Workload allocation should recognise the full range of activity. Appropriate and meaningful time for research, impact, knowledge exchange and/or scholarship, will be embedded in workloads, and subject to an annual review using the data recorded in University systems such as PURE and Worktribe where applicable, as well as matters covered during individual PDR discussions and other relevant documentation.

As well as delivery of courses, work allocation for teaching should include appropriate time for leading developments in teaching and learning policy and practice across all modes of delivery and campus locations.

Administrative and leadership roles will be appropriately and consistently recognised within individual workloads with the expectation of an evaluation of the execution of such roles during PDR. University approved job descriptions and notional workload tariffs are generated for formal secondary roles, and honoraria¹ awarded on a consistent basis across Schools. Care should be taken to ensure that administrative and student support roles are shared equally and balanced over time to ensure all staff gain experience and share responsibilities.

All staff should have time to dedicate to personal development in line with their PDR discussion. Typically this should not be less than equivalent to five days a year.

Principle 3 - Total workload hours to be spent efficiently and flexibility

Sufficient flexibility will be employed to recognise workload variations both within and across years in ways which ensure that staff contributions over the medium term are

¹ Where formal roles and secondary appointments attract an honorarium, this is co-ordinated by the Reward team within HR

appropriately recognised. Particular attention must be paid to temporal bottlenecks such as the workload that can come with exam marking.

Whilst it is recognised that workloads vary across and between years, average local workload allocations should not be allocated above the calculated limit of 1524 hours, with any exceptions being reported to the Global Operations Executive (GOE) as part of the Annual School Report. Recognising the need for flexibility, staff may however be under/overloaded by up to c.10% in a given year, this then being balanced out in the subsequent year, the aim being to smooth workload across and between years. It is important to recognise that some reductions may relate to personal circumstances and should not result in a future “overload”.

Teamwork should be used to smooth workload peaks in the longer term (e.g., by supporting sabbaticals; see Principle 1). Work allocated part way through a year, to cover absence for example, should be recorded and recognised but note that under Principle 1 the aim should be to plan and provide proper cover wherever possible including the use of temporary resources where practical/possible.

Principle 4 - Allocation to be transparent, consistent and equitable across the University

Based upon these principles, each School will develop and maintain a high-level workload allocation approach within which work allocations will be managed, taking local subject variations into consideration.

Formal leadership roles will also have a typical time allocation (tariff) as set out in the Appendix to these Principles².

Schools will provide an annual report, which will be considered by the GOE that specifies how these Principles are being applied and the broad tariffs that are set for particular duties within the School. In this way, over time, standard benchmark tariffs may be developed to enhance transparency across the University. The report should further highlight where there is workload deficit or surplus based on realistic allocations for particular disciplines. Any ongoing variances from these Principles should be highlighted and explained and the GOE will consider any recommendations or issues arising from these School reports.

The reports will also be discussed at the University Committees for Research and Innovation and Learning and Teaching and onward to Senate,

Data relating to staff workloads and the methodology used to allocate them should be available within cognate disciplines or departments to enable comparisons and should be used when making the case for new appointments.

All tasks (including course development) should be allocated on a transparent and consistent basis within cognate disciplines across the University. The expectation is that Schools (and campuses) will have a consistent approach and the School report should set out explanations for significant variations between disciplines recognising that the nature of teaching between different disciplines does vary.

Care should be taken to ensure part-time staff are closely consulted around work allocations and are not unfairly disadvantaged in terms of opportunities. The aim is to ensure that part-time staff retain a balanced workload and have opportunity to develop their careers. Workloads should be set in recognition of protected characteristics as well as issues relating to health, caring responsibilities and flexible working arrangements. These details should not be noted on any published data. Individual

² Currently under development

workload details will typically only be shared within discipline groups whilst allowing for sufficient transparency in relation to averages to promote confidence in any local model.

4. ALLOCATING ACTIVITIES

Workload allocation is managed at School and Discipline level based upon the Principles set out above. Tariffs for different activities may vary between disciplines but will be published to ensure transparency.

Individual workload should be discussed within the context of the annual Performance Development Review (PDR) between an individual academic and their reviewer/line manager. This discussion should support and record individual career development and workload priorities and be fed into the School/Discipline planning accordingly, balancing individual workload over the longer term with School priorities.

Using the underlying 35 hour week as a foundation, an FTE member of the academic staff has 1825 hours per year (52.14 weeks x 35 hours) less holidays (43 days x 7 hours), limiting the total workload hours to 1524 hours available for the formal allocation of activities. Workload should be allocated as a proportion of this and divided across the full range of academic activities.

The relative balance of these components will depend on the individual's specific career track and discipline and is approved in each School by the Executive Dean in consultation with the relevant School's line managers. Individual circumstances and career cycles should also be taken into consideration. The expectation is that all staff will have a mix of activities and whilst the University does not specify a precise mix it is recognised that there are norms which form a useful reference point.

Workloads will vary over longer periods of time, or in any given semester. Those on a Teaching and Research career track may typically expect to have a minimum of 40% of their overall time allocated for research and 40% for teaching. People on a Teaching and Scholarship career track may typically expect to have up to an average of 60% of their overall time allocated for teaching with 20% for scholarship. A highly active Research leader may spend well over 50% of their time focused on Research though, where time is recorded as funded via a grant, it is not typically applied as a direct percentage factor within the workload allocation³.

Hence whilst the starting point for PDR discussion and allocation for someone on a Teaching and Research track may sensibly be 40/40/20, there will inevitably be potentially quite wide variations from this both within and between academic years.

In line with Principle 3 above, all staff should have time to cover the full range of activities associated with their career track and significant variations, in any direction, should be agreed with Executive Deans to ensure such are justified and appropriate.

Those engaged in Research or Teaching only roles will typically have c.80% of their time allocated to one of these activities and the other 20% for Leadership/Administrative/Citizenship along with Personal Development.

³ It is important to note that this document does not take account of individual performance, rather it sets out how work is allocated to roles within academic areas. Individual allocations across the different activities are likely to be flexed up or down based on priorities and performance discussions with line managers, for example to recognize the securing of a significant research grant, but underperformance in a particular area will be managed within the relevant university procedures and not simply by an adjustment to workload allocations.

Guideline tariffs for leadership roles are contained in the Appendix⁴ and someone with formal leadership positions could, for example, spend 40 to 80% of their time on Leadership/Management activities.

Section 5 below sets out the main types of activities which fall under each of these broad headings. It is expected that all staff, including those taking on secondary leadership roles, contribute to teaching as well as having time for research and/or scholarship where applicable.

As noted under Principle 2 above, Schools are required to produce a summary report on workload allocation for the GOE which is also shared with the sub-committees of Senate (UCRI and UCLT) to ensure that comparisons and best practice can be shared between Schools and any issues considered. These reports will also be shared with HR and will feed into annual resource planning activities. Individual staff who feel their workload is not being allocated in accordance with this Policy Statement of Principles should raise this with their line manager in the first instance, and then with their Executive Dean. If a resolution is not reached, then this may be raised outside the School via the normal Grievance Procedures.

Care must be taken when agreeing allocation of activities for part-time staff, recognising that they are still expected to take part in some activities to the same level as full-time staff – e.g. open days, staff meetings, staff development and managing e-mails. Particular care should be taken to ensure that sufficient time for research and/or scholarship is maintained such that the individual has the potential to demonstrate the full range of academic activities aligned with the promotion criteria. Similarly, the task of specifying precise workload units should allow for consideration of any agreed reasonable adjustments relating to personal circumstances such as a temporary or permanent disability.

In all cases, time should be allocated for development activities.

5. CONSTITUENT COMPONENTS

This section sets out the key activities to be considered in the workload allocation. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list and may sensibly be read in conjunction with the Academic Career Track information. Aspects of all sections may be relevant to all academics irrespective of their formal career track. For example, those on a Research and Teaching track would carry out aspects captured here under Scholarship and Educational Leadership.⁵

These categories apply to all staff including part-time, probationary or returning staff, with the appropriate scaling to the FTE percentage.

Teaching activities (T)

1. Course Delivery (this should reflect the size of the class) - Scheduled teaching: lectures, tutorials, seminars, practical sessions, fieldwork including resourcing, preparation time, exam paper preparation and marking along with any tasks associated with Course Co-ordination.
2. PhD Supervision (an allowance should be given for each student noting that this may be considered Research activity where students are part of an extended research group)
3. Supervision of projects/dissertations (an allowance should be given for each student)
4. External examining of UG/PGT programmes (an allowance should be given)

⁴ Currently under development with Registry

⁵ Jan 2024. This section will be revisited once the current review of the academic career tracks is concluded to ensure the emphasis and nomenclature are fully aligned

5. Course and programme development and review
6. Internal teaching-related activities: surveys, quality assurance preparation
7. Student mentoring/personal tutoring
8. Teaching innovation initiatives
9. Global course delivery
10. Online course preparation

Teaching and course leadership allocations should reflect class size, assessment methods and the need to update materials. Similarly, staff managing large courses should be allocated adequate time for the task.

Research, Knowledge Exchange & Impact activities (R)

1. Research and experimentation time⁶
2. Preparation and submission of research grant proposals (from public and commercial funders)
3. Publication of research papers
4. Publication of other discipline-specific material (e.g., editing journals, popularizing articles, contributions to policy documents, response to consultations, other wide-distribution contributions, edited volumes)
5. Communication of research outputs- Including Creation of Impact case studies and input to teaching materials (see also Scholarship above)
6. Engagement/knowledge exchange with industry/policy makers and other external stakeholders
7. PhD Supervision (an allowance should be given for each student noting that this may be considered Teaching activity depending on the context)
8. Management and delivery of funded research contracts
9. Co-ordination of large scale (PI, co-I team 4+) proposals
10. Line management of PDRAs
11. External research-related activities: examining of PhD theses, scientific review activities, research grant assessment/review
12. Agreed visiting and honorary positions at other institutions

Note: *The expectation as to the nature, quality and quantity of publications, number of PhD students, and grant income are benchmarked and hence vary between disciplines*

Leadership and Administrative activities (L&A) (loadings should reflect the scale of the task and the support available to those performing them)

1. University Leadership role including full or part-time secondary appointments
2. School management role (Director of Research, Director of Learning & Teaching, etc)
3. Department/Discipline/Research unit director role (Director of Studies, Year Director, etc)
4. Programme leadership including co-ordination of global teaching teams and task allocation
5. Course leadership including co-ordination of global teaching teams and task allocation
6. Work associated with Course Accreditation
7. REF / TEF/ Athena SWAN Co-ordination
8. Institutional committee membership
9. School committee membership
10. Student recruitment and admissions
11. Department/Discipline/Research group committee membership
12. Professional & Personal Development – attending courses and e-learning

⁶ It is important to note that where an academic's time/salary is recouped via a grant this does not necessarily equate exactly to the amount of time formally allocated to research.

All staff will have a range of administrative tasks to complete including e-mail management, attending meetings, preparing references etc. and it is important that some allocation is made to recognise this and other ad-hoc duties.

Scholarship and Educational Leadership activities (S)

1. Professional development activities, particularly to ensure that all teaching is research-informed and professionally relevant. Engagement with research centre and reading in subject area.
2. Publication of pedagogical or popular discipline-specific material.
3. Publication of other non-REF returnable discipline-specific material (e.g., popularising articles, contributions to policy documents, response to consultations, other wide-distribution contributions, edited volumes)
4. Preparation, delivery or novel use of professional development material
5. Preparation and delivery of outreach material
6. Contribution to learning and teaching networks within HWU and / or the wider sector.
7. Dissemination of scholarship activity through publication, reports, case studies, conference presentations and invited workshops.
8. Influence and impact on policy, partnerships and practice as evidenced by contribution to (and leadership of) relevant working groups, Boards and Committees, advisory roles, consultancy, external examining, leadership of learning and teaching projects and partnerships.
9. Contribution to / leadership of scholarship or learning and teaching enhancement projects, consultancy and development work, or appropriate knowledge exchange activity
10. Visiting and honorary positions at other institutions.
11. Professional or sector body recognition, editorial roles in relevant journals or books, track record of invited contributions to policy forum, conferences, etc

Citizenship activities (C)

1. Outreach activities in support of schools' liaison and student recruitment
2. Public Engagement
3. Active contribution to a collegiate research and teaching and learning culture
4. Active contribution to enhancing the institutional visibility and reputation
5. Support for the professional development of others
6. Enterprise activities on behalf of the institution

External discipline-specific committees and roles (e.g., contributing to the work of learned societies, professional institutions, research councils etc)

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Schools should establish a Workload Review Committee (WRC) to annually review workload allocation and ensure equity of allocation of workload and type. Committee membership should be diverse, and the WRC will ensure that all staff allocating workload have completed the University's *Diversity in the Workplace* training. This committee should report to the Executive Dean and assist in the preparation of the School report for the GOE and sub-committees of Senate.

7. RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND FURTHER REFERENCE

Policies

The University [Probation Policy](#) and [Academic Probation Policy](#) is available on the [HR Policy Web Page](#) under the Performance Management Section

Performance & Development Review (PDR)

Full details about the PDR process is available on the Staff Intranet at this link:

[PDR Guidance](#)

Further reference

Academic and Research Role Profiles may be found on the [HR Policy Web Page](#) under Reward and Remuneration – Role Profiles.

8. DEFINITIONS

Full Time	Contract based on a nominal 35 hours per week
Part-Time	A contract which is less than 35 hours per week
Open Ended	A contract which does not have a defined end date
Fixed Term	A contract which specifies an anticipated end date
Open Ended Fixed Funding	A contract in which the current funding is for a finite period of time with a commitment to continue to employ beyond the end of the funding where practicable
Compressed Hours	Where a standard 35 hour week is worked in fewer than five full standard days
University Leadership Roles	Roles such as Executive Dean, Directors of Research or Learning & Teaching; Department or Discipline unit Directors, Programme or Course Leadership roles. Such roles may be full or part-time secondary appointments, part of the substantive role.

9. FURTHER HELP AND ADVICE

For further information please contact the [HR helpdesk](#), identifying which location you are enquiring about.

10. POLICY VERSION AND HISTORY

Version No	Date of Approval	Approving Authority	Brief Description of Amendment
V. 1	November 2023	UE	Policy Statement pulling together in one document agreed Academic Workload Principles