



University and College Union
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By email only

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Dear Principal

Re: Phase Three of Project re Workload

The Further Education Sector committee met on Saturday the 3rd July and I am writing to you to explain their decisions in relation to our workload dispute, which has been running since the last EWC and UCU survey in 2016.

I have also copied in the relevant government officials and the Minister for Education such is the level of concern about the FE sector being ready to respond to the needs of learners and the Welsh Government.

It was clear from the branch feedback that some principals do not believe that lecturers are working on average 51 hours a week during teaching weeks; effectively, they are saying that lecturers lied in their responses to the EWC survey. I find this quite incredible, given what we know your staff do to support learners and in addressing retention issues.

This has been even more pronounced during the last 18 months of Covid and already the funded projects that UCU are running on Professional Learning and Well-being are producing 'evidence' of the extent of support provided to learners.

The Welsh Government in their programme for government want to build an economy based on the principles of fair work, sustainability and the industries and services of the future, including taking the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill through the Senedd and they provide a clear statement on promoting parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes.

ColegauCymru's manifesto published in November 2020 is clear about the role further education should play:

"We argue that expanding Further Education's role beyond providing quality credentials and training services. FE can become a key Institutional support of a more ambitious project, as an enabler integrating those delivering Welsh economic and social renewal. At its educational core, this means helping citizens to flourish at all stages of their lives and enabling occupational coherence (and adaptation) as the nature of work changes."

In summary CC's Enabling Renewal document argues that-

"it is time for Further Education campuses to be resourced and empowered to play a critical role in enabling a wider array of parties to come together to help Welsh Citizens, occupations and business communities to flourish."

Interestingly what isn't covered in any significant detail in the report is the work of Caroline Lloyd and her international comparative studies, one of which considers FE and the role standardisation plays in limiting progress.

Using the following quote Lloyd and Payne argue that the audit culture is holding back the development of professionalism amongst the FE profession.

"In England and Wales, for example, it is increasingly difficult for teachers who work within the further education sector to even envisage a system where they are managed without targets, inspections and corresponding grading of colleges and departments." (p119) As Pasi Sahlberg argues in his Finnish Lessons 3.0 and In Teachers We Trust, the success of Finland in relation to their educational outcomes is linked closely to their socio-economic policies and the trust they place in their teaching profession. There is no standardisation, no codified professional standards, room in the working day for teachers to collaborate with colleagues on developing the curriculum in a way that addresses the needs of the learner and their interests.

If the principals' group are genuine about delivering on their Enabling Renewal manifesto, you can't pick and choose from educational research. Research over the past which addresses how to ensure that professional learning is front and centre in FE in Wales. All the research from those eminent in this field demonstrates that trust and the link to a fairer society is the route to growth in GDP and a healthy economy.

Lecturing is a profession which needs to be able to regain the autonomy that has been removed from it by the audit culture of the Welsh Government. We need to think very seriously about the future of FE and the role of Estyn within that future. Education research tells us that bodies like Estyn who re-enforce the culture of inspection and the externally imposed learning standards and the current move to codify them even further, are significant problem in moving to a place where lecturers are trusted and allowed the professional learning space to collaborate in delivering for the learner and the current Welsh Government stated objectives in relation to Building Back Fairer. There is evidence from Sahlberg of a correlation between professional autonomy and educational outcomes.

UCU are firmly of the opinion that in order to be able to deliver your manifesto then you must start by recognising that to create the changes that are needed in relation to digital learning and blended learning you must create the professional learning space for lecturers to engage collaboratively in professional learning.

That can only be done in our view if you work with us and government to get a maximum teaching week of 21 hours, introduce flexible tutorial time to 3 hours for every lecturer to use in support of the learning that takes place in the classroom, finally to increase the preparation and marking time from 20 minutes to 30 minutes, subject to funding support from the Welsh Government. This could be easily costed and delivered in the short period of time and the work on administration could then be worked on next academic year with a view to implementation from September 2022.

We would urge you to agree to that as a first step in the move to align the post sixteen sector more closely with HE. The CETR bill is very clear about the role FE will have in the future, some colleges will need to align themselves more closely with HE quality practices if it is to be delivered.

We cannot wait for the introduction of the new Commission on Teaching and Research, we must act now and make the necessary changes to the National Workload Agreement and the

maximum contracted hours. Failure to do so will place the further education sector at a distinct disadvantage and will prevent it from addressing the needs of learners and the Welsh Government.

For the sake of clarity this is what the JTUs have proposed in the steering group.

1. For the coming academic year, all lecturers are given a maximum of 23 teaching hours, the current average according to the survey is 21, so costs will be small.
2. Add one hour of a flexible tutorial time to allow the lecturer to do what is needed to reinforce the learning from the formal scheduled teaching time, subject to funding from Welsh Government.
3. Increase the preparation and marking time to 30 minutes in the coming academic year, one of the areas from the survey where staff said they didn't have enough time to ensure that they could deliver a quality session or allow time for staff to collaborate.

The proposal from the steering group which asks colleges in consultation and agreement with their campus unions to look at the bureaucratic burden will not and does not address the need to reduce the teaching time within the national contract, this must happen if the sector is going to be ready for the challenges it faces. I know that some of you can see those challenges coming and want your staff to be ready to deliver for learners and help deliver on this governments' agenda.

Please persuade your colleagues of the need to make these changes for the benefit of all.

Yours sincerely



Margaret Phelan
UCU Wales Official