

Workshop – Safety Approaches

QMU Case study

Queen Margaret University (QMU) is a small Scottish post-92 institution with about 500 staff, half of whom are academic staff. Three unions are jointly recognised: UCU, EIS and Unison, with UCU being the largest. UCU membership density in bargaining group is around 45%.

As with all Scottish institutions, tuition fees for Scottish domiciled undergraduate students is paid from an annual government grant, distributed through the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). According to the [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#) (2023), the value of the grant has fallen by 19% over ten years and continues to fall. 40% of QMU's income is from the SFC. Falling public income is leading to increasing pressure on workload.

For academic staff, QMU operates an Academic Workload Allocation Model (AWAM), that was introduced with union consultation. The major point of disagreement between UCU and management lies in the expectation of 60% of time for teaching duties.

QMU has a Stress Management Working Group, established following union pressure on stress and workload. As a result of UCU pressure, the university also established a short life working group on Workforce Planning, which produced a Workforce Planning Approach for QMU, currently being trialled in one academic department. Unions participated in both working groups. The University operates an annual Performance Enhancement Review (PER), which is formally an opportunity for staff to raise workload issues with line managers, but is increasingly used for staff surveillance and micromanagement and remains an area for conflict between management and unions.

UCU conducted a workload inspection in February 2023.

Key points in QMU timeline:

Local Bargaining

Organising and Campaigning

Health and Safety

- ❖ UCU casework identifying stress and workload problems.
- ❖ Employer-led staff survey identified stress as problem and workload as significant contributor.
- ❖ UCU proposed conducting an institutional risk assessment using the HSE management standards.
- ❖ Employer produced risk assessments for individuals.
- ❖ UCU produced 'Shadow Risk Assessment' based on data available.

- ❖ Safety manager produced institutional risk assessment using different data with negligible control measures.
 - ❖ UCU disputed and launched local campaign on workload.
 - ❖ Employer persuaded to establish **Stress Management Working Group** with union representation.
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2019/20 National dispute on 4 fights – new Vice Chancellor agrees to negotiate on ‘non-pay items’. Negotiated ‘road map’ on which HR reports to JNCC.

Under ‘Stress and Workload’:

- Risk Assessment - Management Standard ‘Demands’. – not fall below
 - Academic Workload Allocation Model – UCU survey - recognition of scholarship.
 - Potential claim and dispute (right time)
 - Performance Enhancement vs Performance Management – ‘entitlement’ dispute.
 - Potential claim and dispute
 - **Workforce Planning (Working Group)** - enough staff to do the work needed.
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Stress Management Working Group – institutional risk assessment

- HSE survey (based on indicator tool)
 - Hierarchy of risks
 - Control measures – including Workforce Planning
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Workload inspection It’s Your Time

Workload reps (7) and workload inspection February 2023

- Month of interviews (all staff) + informal feedback (5% of all staff)
- Interim report for urgent action
- Contribution to Risk Assessment revision
- Priority for workforce planning

Related documents:



QMU Report of the
UCU workplace inspe



QMU%20Stress%20
RA%20and%20Action



QMU%20Stress%20
Management%20Wor



QMU%20Workforce
%20Planning%20App