

UCU Workload Survey 2016

Executive summary

This is a summary of the results of the 2016 UCU workload survey. It reveals how working hours and workloads have increased; how our members' jobs have changed and how they are expected to do more in less time.

The main aim of the survey was to investigate members' workloads in the further education ("FE") and higher education ("HE") sectors in the UK by asking the following research questions:

- What are members' current workloads in both HE and FE, in terms of actual hours worked and allocation of duties?
- Has the size or intensity of workloads changed over the past three years?
- How has the composition of workloads changed over the past three years across different categories and types of employment?
- What are the main contributing factors that lead to increases/decreases in workloads and their intensity?

5 Key findings

1. Staff in both HE and FE are working an average of more than two days unpaid every week

Staff working in FE colleges work a mean average of 51.6 hours per week, and in HE institutions, academic staff working across all disciplines work 50.9 hours per week on average.

2. Workload is unmanageable and unsustainable for the majority of academic staff and lecturers

The vast majority of staff reported that the pace and intensity of their workloads have increased in recent years. In HE, 83% of academic staff reported that the pace or intensity of work has increased over the past three years and in FE nearly all staff (95%) reported that it has increased with the vast majority, 81%, reporting it had increased significantly in this time.

In FE, more than three quarters (78%) reported that their workload is unmanageable at least half the time. Within this, one third of all staff (33%) reported that their workload is unmanageable most of the time and one in ten (10%) reported that their workload is entirely unmanageable. In HE, two thirds of staff reported that their workload is unmanageable at

least half of the time and more than a quarter of respondents (28.8%) said that their workloads were unmanageable all or most of the time.

3. Staff are taking on more responsibility and administration

In both sectors the most frequently reported and highest ranked contributing factors to workload increases were the increasing administrative burden and the widening of duties considered to be within members' remit. These were closely followed by the impact of restructuring and reductions in staff numbers. Academic staff and lecturers are expected to perform more administrative and departmental tasks and present themselves as more available to students to meet rising expectations, on top of core teaching activities including developing and delivering courses, programmes and research objectives.

4. Student expectations have increased

Rising student expectations caused by policy changes aimed at shifting the focus towards students being treated as fee paying consumers, have increased the workloads of academic teaching staff and FE lecturers.

More than 70% of FE staff reported that the demands of student administration have increased and 50% indicated that time spent on student consultations has increased. Marking, and in particular marking exams, accounts for a much larger proportion of the FE workload than it did three years ago, with 46% stating that the amount time spent marking exams has increased significantly.

In HE, more than 75% of teaching staff said that student administration has increased and more than half indicated that student consultations and pastoral care has increased. Around 33% of HE teaching staff stated that the time they spend marking assignments has increased significantly when compared to three years ago.

5. Professional and career development is suffering as a result of increasing workload

When asked whether the proportion of their time spent on certain activities had increased or decreased over time, both teaching and research academics in HE and FE teaching staff uniformly reported a significant decline in time spent on development activities including attending and presenting at conferences and networking, research and reading, self-directed study or scholarly activity.

Next steps

We call on employers in both FE and HE to recognise their responsibility to take the issue of unsustainable workloads seriously. Not only are excessive workloads bad for our members; they are also detrimental to the delivery of a quality educational experience.

This report will be used to inform revised bargaining guidance for branches.

Summary of findings: Further, Adult and Prison Education

A total of 4,364 responses were received from members working in further education from across all subject areas. 235 were from adult community education (“ACE”) and 110 were from prison education. Responses from the adult and community education and prison sectors have generally incorporated into the overall results for FE and separated out where appropriate.

The majority of respondents were women (58.3%), identified as being white (93.7%), are employed on permanent contracts (89.9%) and are employed full time (64.7%). Two thirds of respondents were employed as lecturers, with the remaining employed as course leaders (14.9%), Tutors (7.2%) and non-teaching managers (5.3%).

The key conclusions that can be drawn from the survey results in FE include:

Working hours:

- All staff work a mean average of 51.4 hours per week. Staff working in FE colleges work a mean average of 51.6 hours per week. This equals more than two days of unpaid work per week
- The gender analysis has revealed that across the sector women work on average 2.4 hours per week more than men. Women work 52.6 hours FTE hours per week and men work an average of 50.2 hours FTE hours per week
- The vast majority (83.8%) of staff working in further education work more than 40 hours in an average week and more than a third (34.9%) work in excess of 50 hours per week
- A culture of long working hours exists amongst staff in the early stages of their careers. One in five FE teaching staff with less than 2 years of experience working in the sector works in excess of 60 hours per week
- Across the sector more than four in five people stated that their workload has increased over the last 3 years with more than half saying it had increased significantly. The most severe increase was seen for those working in FE colleges

Workload increases and intensification:

- Nearly all staff (93.9%) reported that the pace or intensity of work has increased over the past three years with 80.6% reporting it had increased significantly
- Most notably one third of FE college respondents reported that their workload is unmanageable most of the time. Staff working in prison and adult and community education were slightly less likely to report that workloads were unmanageable most of the time (24.5% and 26.1% respectively)

Changing composition of workloads:

FE Colleges:

- Based on the average FTE working week of 51.6 hours, teaching staff spend 46.2% of total time or 23.8 direct contact hours per week teaching, in student consultations and giving personal tutorials
- Departmental and general administration was the workload component most cited as having increased in demand over the past 3 years, with 62.2% of teaching staff saying that it had increased significantly. A very high percentage of FE staff also reported that time spent on student administration (50.3%) and marking exams (45.8%) had increased significantly
- More time is being spent by teaching staff on administrative tasks than on lesson preparation. On average, FE teaching staff spend less than 2 hours per week on research and reading
- Time spent by teaching staff on recruitment activities has increased for more than 50% of staff

Prison educators:

- Departmental and general administration is cited by a huge number of prison educators as having increased significantly over the last three years. 70.0% stated that it has increased significantly and 15.0% stated that it had increased slightly
- Cuts to funding, resulting in increased administration demands and a widening of duties, are driving workload changes for prison education staff, and changing funding requirements were also seen as much more important for prison educators

Adult and community education:

- Restructuring and resultant reduction in staff numbers were reported by ACE staff as driving factors for increased workload

Contributory factors:

- The top five contributory factors for all staff working in further education included, in order, increased administrative work, widening of duties considered beyond my remit, student expectations of staff availability, increased student numbers and the impacts of organisation and restructuring. The two most frequently cited and highest ranking factors are increased “administrative work” and “widening of duties considered within my remit”

Key Findings: Higher Education

A total of 12,113 higher education members participated in the survey. The overwhelming majority of respondents were employed on permanent full-time contracts (85.4%), were spread across all academic disciplines, and 93.1% identified as white. The gender analysis revealed a fairly even split of responses between men and women. Survey responses from academic related, professional staff working in HE, whilst low in relation to the overall HE response (12.8%), was a good representation of staff in the sector. Academic related, professional staff cover a wide variety of skills, specialisations, roles and level of responsibility, therefore it is difficult to measure changes in workload related to specific tasks/activities for this group.

The key conclusions that can be drawn from the results in higher education include:

Working hours:

- Academic staff working across all disciplines work an average of 50.9 hours FTE per week. There is only minor divergence between post and pre-92 institutions
- Nearly four in ten (39.0%) of academics work more than 50 hours per week and a staggering 28.5% of academic staff work an average of more than 55 hours per week
- Professors (56.1 hours), principal research fellows (55.7 hours) and teaching assistants (54.9 hours) reported the highest average FTE hours per week
- A significant proportion of academic staff are working unreasonable, unsafe and excessive hours (12.8%)
- A culture of long working hours exists amongst early career academics. 26.9% of all teaching assistants reported that they are working more than 60 hours FTE per week on average and 13.4% work more than 95 hours FTE. One in six academics aged 25 years or under work 100 or more hours per week when part time appointments are adjusted to their full time equivalent
- Academic related, professional staff work on average of 42.4 hours per week
- The majority of non-academic professional staff without management responsibilities work within 40 FTE hours per week, above the standard working week. Non-academic managers work significantly longer hours than non-managers. More than half of non-academic managers work in excess of 50 FTE hours in an average week
- There is little difference in weekly hours worked between women and men for full time staff. However, women who work part-time with small fractions (one to two days per week) have significantly longer FTE adjusted average weekly working hours than men employed on the same fraction
- The vast majority of all staff (83.1%) reported that the pace or intensity of work has increased over the past three years
- Most notably, more than half of faculty managers reported a significant increase in the pace or intensity or workload over the past three years. They also reported the highest level of “entirely unmanageable” workloads at 9.3%

- Academics engaged in teaching reported a severe increase in workload over the past 3 years. Nearly half of responses from those employed on teaching focussed and teaching and research contracts reported that their working hours had increased significantly over the past 3 years
- Over half of academic related, professional staff stated that their working hours had increased in the last three years, signalling a possible creep towards longer working hours
- Across all staff working in HE, More than a quarter of respondents (28.8%) said that their workloads were unmanageable all or most of the time. Two thirds of staff (65.5%) stated that their workload was unmanageable at least half of the time

Changing job profiles:

- *Teaching and research staff* spend more than double the amount of their time on teaching specific activities than they do on research. A large proportion of respondents reported that the level of departmental and general administration had increased with over half stating that it had increased significantly. Overall, the results suggest a move away from a generally accepted even split between teaching and research, tipping the scales towards more of a teaching focussed contract
- *Teaching focused staff* spend an increasing amount of time on administrative tasks, student consultations and marking assignments (less on exams). Teaching activities (including teaching and preparation for lectures and tutorials, marking and course review and development) account for over half of the time spent working
- *Research staff* spend a greater proportion of their time on core activities than teaching focused or teaching research staff do. Overall 25.2% of time is spent on research activities (including reading for literature reviews, data analysis and conducting experiments). Departmental demands are taking up more time with half of research staff saying that they have increased. Additionally, for nearly half of respondents, the demands associated with applying for funding have increased
- All staff reported that the proportion of time being spent on professional and career development activities (including training and professional development, networking, attending and presenting at conferences and self-directed scholarly activity) has decreased

Contributory factors:

- The top five contributory factors for all staff working in higher education included, in order, increased administrative work, widening of duties considered beyond my remit, student expectations of staff availability, increased student numbers and the impacts of organisation and restructuring. The two most frequently cited and highest ranking factors are increased “administrative work” and “widening of duties considered within my remit