UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

BALANCED AND APPROPRIATE WORKLOAD DISTRIBUTION

A GUIDANCE FRAMEWORK

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to set out broad principles to help ensure that workload distribution for academic staff is fair, transparent and justifiable within the context of the University's corporate goals and objectives and the operating environment in individual schools. This guidance document takes a principle based approach rather than setting maximum or minimum number of hours for certain types of activity and is presented as guidance rather than rigid procedures that must be applied in all circumstances. Individual schools retain the flexibility to interpret and apply the framework within the context of their own academic and business priorities. The guidance set out in this document does not in any way alter the content of the academic contract of employment.

The University values equally teaching, research and academic enterprise and recognises that academic staff should have an appropriate level of professional autonomy. The University also recognises that academic staff generally exercise considerable flexibility, dedication and goodwill in regard to workload distribution.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES WHICH WILL UNDERPIN SUCCESSFUL WORKLOAD DISTRIBUTION

The University recognises that the operating environment will vary significantly between faculties and within faculties and this will impact on workload distribution practice at school level. There are however a number of key principles which will apply irrespective of the individual operating environment within the school.

The principles include:

- a student-centred approach to workload distribution planning;
- a commitment to fairness in workload distribution;
- a commitment to achieving a 'balanced and appropriate' workload distribution;
- a commitment to openness, transparency and clarity;
- a commitment to giving due regard to the health and wellbeing of staff; and
- a commitment from all parties to flexibility.

2.1 Fairness in Workload Distribution Practice

The University is committed to achieving fairness in workload distribution practice. The Head of School must give due regard to all of the circumstances in determining an appropriate workload distribution for an individual member of staff. This does not mean that every member of staff in a particular school will have the same allocation

in regard to teaching, teaching related administration, research and academic enterprise. The Head of School must consider a range of factors including:

- the particular skills and expertise of the member of staff;
- student expectations;
- research funders' expectations;
- the School's strategic priorities;
- timetabling issues;
- teaching methodologies;
- class sizes;
- strategic conference presentations;
- research priorities, including REF timetable, grant administration, and grant proposal and completion deadlines;
- academic enterprise activities;
- pastoral duties;
- the time required to undertake formal roles such as course directorships and membership of committees; and
- any adjustments to working arrangements made through the University's suite of family friendly policies.

While the proportions of each of the three core activities will not be the same for every member of staff the Head of School needs to be in a position to explain and objectively justify the factors that determined the specific allocation for an individual member of staff. Guidance on how this can be achieved is outlined in subsequent sections of this document.

In line with legislative requirements the University will give due regard to requests from staff with a disability for reasonable adjustments.

2.2 Achieving a 'Balanced and Appropriate' Workload Distribution

The Head of School must give due regard to the need to achieving a balanced and appropriate workload distribution. It is normally expected that all academic staff will have a workload distribution which includes teaching and teaching related administration and most, but not all, will have a workload which includes research and/or academic enterprise activities. The proportion of time devoted to research, academic enterprise, teaching and teaching related administration will vary by member of staff however the following broad principles will apply.

2.2.1 All academic staff will have a teaching workload dependant on the nature and extent of their overall contribution across the core areas of Teaching, Research and Academic Enterprise.

2.2.2 All academic staff will make a contribution to teaching, assessment and associated administration.

2.2.3 The University values equally teaching, research and academic enterprise. In the context of achieving a balanced workload it is recognised that individual contributions to each of the core areas of Teaching, Research and Academic Enterprise will vary and in some cases staff will have a workload allocation that is made up exclusively of teaching and scholarship related duties and administration.

2.2.4 Workload distribution will not remain constant from year to year. Where for example a member of staff has been research active in the past but more recently has ceased to have a significant involvement in research or has been unable to attract appropriate research grant income there will be a proportionate re-balancing in the other core areas of teaching and teaching-related administration workload and/or academic enterprise. Similarly, for example, where a member of staff has not been considered research active but has demonstrated significant achievements in producing research outputs and gaining research income, there will be a proportionate re-balancing of their duties towards recognition of the research dimension.

2.2.5 Heads of School will have due regard to the particular training and the teaching and research development needs of early career academic staff in determining their workload allocation.

2.2.6 It is reasonable and appropriate for Heads of School to discuss with staff activities that are to be undertaken during the summer months across the core disciplines of teaching, research and academic enterprise.

2.2.7 Heads of School should give due regard to University corporate activities undertaken by staff e.g. time spent on University level committees.

In determining a balanced and appropriate workload distribution the Head of School will work in close collaboration with the Research Institute Director in respect of those staff who are Research Institute members.

2.3 Openness, Transparency and Clarity

Faculties and schools should ensure that their workload allocation practices are open, transparent and clear. Where practices are not open, transparent and clear it can lead to confusion, misunderstanding and resentment which will impact on motivation and morale. Guidance on how openness, transparency and clarity can be achieved is outlined in subsequent sections of this document.

2.4 Health and Wellbeing of Staff

While it is entirely reasonable to expect staff to work hard, workload distribution must be at a level which is achievable, recognising the contribution from individual staff across the core disciplines. The University has a well-established Health and Wellbeing Policy which includes detail guidance on avoiding unnecessary stress and procedures for conducting stress risk assessments.

2.5 Flexibility

Heads of School and academic staff should take a flexible approach to workload distribution. Heads of School should be willing to listen to suggestions from staff, either collectively or individually, and if the suggestions are appropriate, achievable, and fair and actually deliver on the University, Faculty and School objectives the Head of School should give appropriate consideration to the suggestions. Staff should also be flexible in regard to their workload distribution and must recognise that the dynamic nature of the operating environment necessitates a dynamic and

flexible response from staff. Any workload distribution made before an academic year commences may well change during the year in response to circumstances.

2.6   A Student-Centred Approach

It is important that workload distribution focuses on and delivers on a student-centred experience at the University. In the modern higher education environment students will have high expectations of their student experience. Heads of School and academic staff must be fully cognisant of and responsive to these expectations (particularly in the context of KIS, HEAR and NSS).

Heads of School should also give appropriate consideration to the demands of students on programmes delivered by distance learning when determining workload distribution.

3.   PROCESSES WHICH WILL SUPPORT SUCCESSFUL WORKLOAD DISTRIBUTION PLANNING

This section of the guidance framework sets out some processes which may help Heads of School in their annual workload planning cycle. It is recognised that each Head of School is entitled to vary these processes to suit their particular operating circumstances and strategic priorities.

The following processes are outlined in this section of the guidance framework:

- Schools should commence their annual workload distribution planning cycle as soon as possible after the Easter break each year and should be completed by the end of June each year.
- Heads of School in conjunction with their Dean should publish an annual statement setting out the principles used to determine workload distribution for the incoming year.
- Heads of Schools should publish information on the outcome of their annual workload distribution cycle.
- The Head of School should develop a communication plan in regard to the outcome from the annual workload planning cycle.
- Heads of Schools should discuss workload distribution principles as part of the Development Appraisal Review (DAR).
- Heads of School in conjunction with their Dean should publish a statement setting out their long-term objectives in regard to workload planning.

3.1   The Timing of the Annual Workload Distribution Planning Cycle

The Head of School should commence their annual workload allocation planning cycle as soon as possible after the Easter break each year. It is recognised that the plan will evolve and change as new information emerges but it is important that the process starts early so that appropriate consultation and preparation can take place. All School plans must be submitted for Faculty Executive consideration prior to publication in the interest of openness and transparency and to ensure that due diligence and good governance is applied. This will also assist Heads of School whose staff teach in more than one School. This process should be completed so

that all staff will know their respective expected workload for the incoming academic year by the end of June each year.

3.2 The Annual Statement Setting out Principles Applied by Each School

Heads of School in conjunction with their Dean should publish a statement setting out the principles which they intend to use to determine workload distribution for the incoming year. The objective of such a statement is to help remove the potential for misunderstanding or confusion in regard to how the Head of School determined workloads. It is envisaged that this will be a short high level statement condensed in one or two paragraphs. Some sample statements are set out in appendix one. The Head of School should issue the annual statement of principles early in the planning process.

3.3 Information on the Outcome of the Annual Workload Distribution Cycle

Heads of School in conjunction with their Dean should publish information on the outcome of their annual workload distribution planning cycle. While the level of detail published may vary by school, each school should publish information on the workload distribution for each member of staff and this information should be openly available within the School.

It is envisaged that the Head of School will publish this information as a spread sheet. Given the significant variations between schools in terms of the number of academic staff, class sizes and teaching methodologies the format of the spread sheet will not be uniform. The spread sheet may include the following columns (this list is not exhaustive):

- the name of staff member;
- the teaching hours allocated per semester;
- information on which teaching modules are allocated to individuals;
- comments on particular factors considered for individual members of staff e.g. if a member of staff is a Course Director;
- comments on general factors which apply to groups of staff; and
- information on whether the member of staff is research active and/or active in academic enterprise.

Not all of these columns will apply to every school.

In publishing a spread sheet it is important to note that the University has adopted a principle based approach to workload allocation planning rather than setting a maximum or minimum number of hours for certain activities and therefore not every aspect of the work will be covered in the spread sheet. A principle based approach focuses on the proportion of time devoted to particular types of activity rather than the numbers of hours.

Some schools may wish to define which teaching activities are included in their spread sheet but it should be noted that the spread sheet is not intended to document the totality of activity and there will be other activities which are common to all academic staff which are not documented on the spread sheet. A sample spread sheet is attached as Appendix two.

3.4 Communication Plan

The Head of School should develop a communication plan in regard to their annual workload distribution cycle. The content of the communication plan will vary by school but may include the following.

- Early in the planning cycle the Head of School should meet with staff to discuss their workload distribution.
- The annual statement of principles should initially be issued in draft form and comments should be invited.
- The spread sheet detailing the outcome of the workload distribution cycle should initially be issued in draft form and comments should be invited.
- The statement of principles and spread sheet should be presented at a meeting of the School Board.

3.5 Discussing Workload Issues at the DAR Meeting

The DAR meeting should be seen as a vehicle for a meaningful discussion in regard to future workload distribution plans. The Head of School will consider requests to allow time for developmental activities within a workload distribution and may allocate specific types of duty as a developmental opportunity. Workload distribution should be a standing item on the agenda of all DAR meetings.

3.6 The Statement of Long-Term Objectives in Regard to Workload Planning

In addition to publishing an annual statement on the principles applied in the annual workload distribution cycle the Head of School in conjunction with their Dean should also publish long-term objectives. This should be a short high level statement which should support the School's business plans. The objective is to give a context for the annual statement of principles.

4. RESPONDING TO INDIVIDUAL CONCERNS IN REGARD TO WORKLOAD ALLOCATION

It is recognised that staff may occasionally have concerns in regard to their personal workload distribution. As an initial step towards resolving these concerns the member of staff should request a meeting with their Head of School. The meeting will be an opportunity for the member of staff to explain their concerns. At the meeting the Head of School will explain how the workload distribution was determined and will listen to workable suggestions.

5. REVIEW OF GOOD PRACTICE

While workload distribution practice is handled at the School level it is important that good practice is shared across the University. The Human Resources Department will conduct an annual survey of Heads of School in regard to their workload distribution practice and will report to SET on the findings from the survey.

(Version control: 27 May 2013)

Sample Annual Statement of Principles on Workload Distribution.

As part of the University's workload distribution framework each Head of School should publish a statement setting out the principles which they intend to use to determine workload distribution for the incoming year. The objective of such a statement is to help remove the potential for misunderstanding or confusion in regard to how the Head of School determined workloads. It is envisaged that this will be a short high level statement condensed in one or two paragraphs.

Two sample statements are set out below. Please note that the samples below are hypothetical scenarios for **illustration purposes only**.

Sample One: School A

In the incoming year School A has filled all of its MaSN places and has recruited well to two new part-time programmes. Two courses are scheduled for revalidation during the incoming year and one new Lecturer has been recruited. The School aims to maintain teaching loads at broadly the same level as last year but will aim to reduce the teaching loads for the Course Directors on the two programmes which are due for revalidation and will focus additional resources on the two new part-time programmes. The National Student Survey results last year identified concerns in regard to the level of contact hours for students on Course R and additional resources will be devoted to address this in the incoming year.

The Z research group which is based in the school has been successful in securing a strategically important research grant and in order to facilitate the initiation of the project staff involved will have a lighter teaching load during semester one.

Sample Two: School B

School B was very successful in RAE 2008 however concerns have been raised in regard to the anticipated outcome from REF 2014. Some of the Professors who were included in the RAE do not currently have sufficient publications for the REF and there is no prospect of producing publications in time for the REF. A number of other staff have some publications but not yet sufficient for the REF but have some other publication nearing completion. In semester one those staff who have some but not yet sufficient publications will be given a lighter teaching load to allow them time to finalise papers for REF. Those staff who will not be included in the REF, including Professors, will be given an increased teaching load.

In regard to academic enterprise two of the School's Professors are engaged in a major strategically important collaboration with Company Y. These Professors will be given a lighter teaching load in semester one and two to allow them time to build the collaboration.

Information on the Outcome of the Annual Workload Distribution Cycle.

As part of the University's workload distribution framework each School should publish information on the outcome of their annual workload distribution planning cycle. While the level of detail published may vary by school each school should publish information on the workload distribution for each member of staff and this information should be openly available within the School. It is envisaged that the Head of School will publish this information as a spread sheet. Given the significant variations between schools in terms of the number of academic staff, class sizes and teaching methodologies the format of the spread sheet will not be uniform.

The table below shows **one possible format** for the spread sheet.

Name	(A) Time-tabled teaching hours in semester one	(B) Time-tabled teaching hours in semester two	(C) Time-tabled teaching hours in semester three	(D) Total teaching hours.	(E) Module Coordinator Yes/No	(F) Research active Yes/No	(G) Active in Academic Enterprise Yes/No	(H) Comments
Prof A								
Dr B								
Dr C								
Mr D								
Prof E								
Mrs F								
Dr G								
Dr H								
Dr I								
Prof J								
Prof K								
Mr L								
Mr M								
Ms N								
Dr O								
Prof P								

(Version control: 27 May 2013)