Workload Planning Guidance

(approved 29 July 2021)

The Purpose of Workload Planning

The vision of the University is to be a global 100 research leader and create graduates of distinction within a community of the most talented and creative minds. To achieve this vision the University is working hard to build research power, deliver an excellent education, create impact, support staff and make the most of its resources. Therefore the way we support staff and plan the use of our academic staff time is key to achieving our strategies for education and research and impact and innovation, in line with our University values, and this should be the key driver for academic workload planning. In implementing this policy, it is essential that Heads of Disciplines, Directors of Research and Directors of Education work together to ensure that workloads are allocated strategically to maximise capacity and ensure a sustainable workload that builds on the strengths of all staff and supports their wellbeing.

Governance

The Academic Workload Planning Steering Group (AWPSG), chaired by Professor Tim Quine (DVC Education), oversees Workload Planning at the University. This Group meets once a term. Each college has its own separate Workload Planning Policy, developed by each college workload group and approved by the College Executive Group.

The Coronavirus pandemic has an impact on all staff and this is recognised with a set of principles and actions to support colleagues to succeed in their careers. More on adjusting for the differential impact of the pandemic is available here:
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/exeteracademic/probationpromotionprogression/impactc19/.

The SWARM (Simple Workload Allocation and Resource Model) tool is used to inform workload allocation and the pursuit of equitable workloads informed by a common basis for comparison. It is a management tool that is helpful in identifying both high and low workloads and provides a basis to manage workload across disciplines in a fair and equitable manner. While it is intended to provide a broad-brush view that reflects real workload, it is not, and cannot be, a precise record of actual hours worked. SWARM is also used as a key input for the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) return to Research England/OfS and so should give a broad representation of workload that staff can understand and discuss with their managers. Academic staff are asked to annually review their workload in SWARM and sign off that it is a reasonable representation of the proportion of their time spent on teaching, research and other income-generating activities.

Best Practice

1. Heads of Discipline or other senior academic leaders are central to allocating and monitoring workloads. Workloads will be planned in consultation with all academic staff as much as possible and should be available ahead of the start of term to allow for meaningful discussion and adjustment if necessary. Workload planning should also take account of workload peaks within the academic year to ensure that responsibilities can be undertaken in a timely fashion within the bounds of manageable workload.

Heads of Discipline or representatives are required to discuss with staff workloads that are 10% above or below the standard annual allocation of 1650h or 1600h (pro-rata for part-time staff). Staff

should be consulted as workloads are being planned and should not need to await publication through SWARM to have visibility of proposed workload. Discussions about overall load and deviation from the standard annual allocation should focus on overarching three-year trends.

It is recognised that 2019/20 and 2020/21 were exceptional years as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the reprioritisation of work to deliver Project Enhance was required. HoDs should take account of the variable impact of the pandemic on individual colleagues over the last two years when making decisions about allocation of workload amongst colleagues for the 2021/22 academic year.

2. Before the start of the academic year HoDs should report to their CEG that they, or their representatives, have held conversations all staff with planned workloads that are 10% above or below standard allocations (applied pro rata) and each College's workload model should not be signed off by CEG unless they are confident discussions around workloads have taken place and a sustainable and equitable distribution of workload has been achieved.

3. College Workload policies are to state that it is incumbent on the Head of Discipline to consider peak periods (e.g. high volumes of marking) when allocating workload and account for this where possible to support staff wellbeing.

4. If the total workload planned exceeds the total modelled capacity of the department, the Head of Discipline must draw this to the attention of the PVC to agree appropriate action, before the start of the academic year.

5. SWARM is not used for direct assessment of performance. However, SWARM can be a useful tool to aid discussion in the PDR as it provides a high-level view of planned activity.

6. SWARM is a high-level modelling tool and many activities will be captured in the broad categories of citizenship and S&S rather than in additional allocations for every activity. Planned workloads should provide a high-level indication of activity that is reasonably representative of the distribution of workload; it is not expected that they become a precise record of actual hours worked.

7. College Workload Policies may reasonably vary across Colleges where appropriate according to the specific requirements of the college and are determined by each College's CEG with respect to the overarching University policy. College policies are subject to annual review to ensure that as far as possible a similar amount of time is allocated to similar tasks; however they also take account of the very real differences between different disciplines. It is the responsibility of HoDs to cascade information regarding changes to workload policy. Academic staff can propose changes to their college's policy by raising this with their Head of Discipline; these changes will then be reviewed by CEG, and annually by the Academic Workload Planning Steering Group (AWPSG) to build consistency across Colleges where possible. Each College should review its workload policy regularly to check that it reflects current practice.

Transparency

1. It is recommended that in SWARM, the minimum visibility an academic should have is visibility of their own workload data and visibility of their discipline's Workload Summary only (anonymous distribution of individual workload totals). The discipline Workload Summary need **not** show colleagues names if the College so chooses.

2. Each College is to review its Workload Allocation Policy in the light of outcomes from AWPSG each term where appropriate. A short report is to be sent to the Steering Group to outline any changes to

College workload policy, with an assurance that workloads have been reviewed and discussions have taken place with staff whose allocated hours are outside ± 10% of target workload.

3. Each College is to ensure its workload policy is available online for its own members to access.

4. Each College should have a well-defined procedure for requesting discretionary hours for significant roles of strategic importance.

Standard Allocations

1. **PhD supervision** – Based on College workload policies, recognising variations in practice between Colleges. Hours should not be allocated for the supervision of PhD students who have exceeded the maximum period of study

2. **Hours for Mentoring a PhD student** should be based on College workload policies.

3. **APP (formerly known as PCAP)** – each College is to allocate 285 hours in total of 'Off the Job' Training in a classroom learning environment over two years. The remainder of the programme is 210 hours 'On The Job Training' through education delivery.

4. **Hours are allocated for field trips** equating to a normal working day for each day away, according to college policies. Preparation for field trips can be allocated separately.

5. **Dissertation supervision** is to be specified by hours per student per number of credits.

6. **Hours for setting summative assessment** to be on Workload policies as 'Hours per 15 credits per student'.

7. Hours for teaching should be specified in the form – **delivery time plus a multiplier of delivery time for preparation**.

8. **Hours for the preparation of a NEW or redeveloped module** or for first time delivery by a member of the academic team should receive additional preparation time as specified in College workload policies.

9. **ASPIRE Mentors**: colleagues taking on the role of ASPIRE Mentor, having completed training – would be given a nominal 30 hours or more based on college policies.

10. **Time should be allocated for travel between Exeter and St Luke's campuses** and Truro and Penryn campuses at the discretion of the Head of Discipline.

11. All staff are to be allocated **100% of the hours on the funded grant award**.

12. **Undergraduate Tutees** – Allocation to be aligned to standards for tutorial support for current academic year.

14. **Hours for Managing Postgraduate Teaching Assistants** are to be specifically included in the workload policy.

15. The workload of individual Post-Doctoral Research Assistants does not need to be managed but their teaching load should be included on SWARM for the purpose of course costing. In SWARM, to ensure this can be achieved efficiently, **PDRA teaching effort may be documented as a single**

composite entry[1]. Heads of Discipline should check separately to ensure PDRAs are not overloaded with teaching responsibilities, as this cannot be reflected by SWARM.

16. **COVID-19 Affected Workload Time: Education/Research/Other (new, temporary S&S category)** – this category has been added in response to TRAC regulator requirements for information to help assess pandemic impacts on the sector. All colleges are to add time under this category to staff workloads where staff were unable to undertake any University work due to the impacts of the pandemic.

17. **Leadership Roles** – a list of standardised Leadership Roles was agreed at the Academic Workload Planning Steering Group that represent activity which is either undertaken in more than one college, is strategically important to record consistently or which represents a material proportion of a standard 1650 hour contract
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/exeteracademic/probationpromotionprogression/academicleadership management/. These roles will be listed under the 'Admin & Other Roles' category in SWARM. Other roles which are college or discipline specific, or are not a material proportion of 1650 hours can be included under S&S in either college discretionary or the *Admin & Other Roles* category created under the SWARM S&S category where such admin roles will be listed. This should be clearly stipulated in all College workload policies for transparency. For more information go to https://www.exeter.ac.uk/ppbi/workloadplanningteam/colleges/

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[1] Work is ongoing to review PDRA workload inclusion in SWARM