



## Academic Workloads 2008-9

### Introduction

Since 2002, SOPHI has had a points-based workloads policy that has served a valuable role in mapping and integrating workload policies across very disparate disciplines and departments. However in light of changed circumstances – among them major changes to the way research data is now managed and collected, changes to the composition of the School, and the need to constantly review and refine these kinds of policies – a new workloads policy is being developed.

One important aspect of our jobs that has been difficult to address in previous policies has been marking loads, and the new workloads policy will attempt to do this. Similarly, we have also struggled to address the demands of units with large enrolments as well as PG supervision. The new policy attempts to address these issues as well. It also comes with a new way of managing our part-time teaching budget through the use of an excel-based ‘template’, which was introduced in November 2007.

The main purpose of our workloads policy is threefold:

1. To ensure there is an equitable distribution of work within and across Departments in the School;
2. To put in place clear processes that ensure the Head of School, Chairs of Department and colleagues have the information and tools they require for decision-making about workloads, as well as for making strategic decisions for the purpose of achieving the strategic goals of the School, Faculty and University;
3. To signal the core activities of teaching, research and administration that are to be carried out by all academic staff

The policy therefore aims to combine transparency with flexibility and fairness. A difficult task, to be sure! The basic principle of an academic workload policy is **collegiality**. This remains the fundamental principle of our workplace. However, in order to sustain and promote collegiality we need a transparent way of mapping the complex demands on our time and provide some guidelines for distributing them as equitably as possible.

The policy was implemented in 2008. Feedback was sought throughout the year and revisions made in late 2008 and early 2009.

### Policy

The School’s aim is to be one of the leading centres for research and teaching in the humanities and social sciences in Australia and the world. We have a very strong track record in research performance across all the key indicators. We also teach a very large number of undergraduate, honours and PG students, and are committed to providing high quality teaching to our students. However, we face constant pressure on our budget, especially our part-time teaching budget, and we need to use our resources in the most efficient and effective way possible. So we have to balance our ambition to be a leading centre for research and teaching with the realities of a harsh fiscal climate.

From November 2007, Chairs have been provided with a new detailed **teaching template** that links each continuing or contract teaching and research staff member with the units they are coordinating and/or teaching, the expected enrolments in that unit (based on the previous time it ran + up-to-date enrolment data from FlexSIS), the number of tutorials required for each unit, as well as the number of PG students they are supervising. This will provide us with information about the teaching and marking load for each

unit of study as well as the associated costs. It will also signal the part-time teaching hours and costs required to cover the gap between the hours available from continuing and contract staff, and those required given enrolments. The template also aggregates total teaching and supervision hours onto a workload table for each continuing or fixed term member of staff.

The Faculty has a general policy of an adjustable **40-40-20** split between research, teaching and administration. This ratio is increasingly unrealistic, given the ongoing differentiation between academic positions and changes to curriculum and the way we conduct research. So we use it as a very general guide only.

The workloads policy operates on the basis of **hours** spent across the core areas of research, teaching and administration. There is no question of capturing literally every single minute you spend on academic related work. Rather, the aim is to set some specific guidelines and expectations about the time spent on our **core activities**, and to try and ensure these tasks are distributed as equitably as possible.

It is important that we set some basic principles and guidelines about the time we expect people to devote to teaching, research and administration. The guidelines provided below are informed by School, Faculty and University objectives (as well as our budget!) and what we can reasonably expect with regard to our financial situation in the near future. One of the important things a workloads policy can do is demonstrate how improving our performance across key indicators can make a difference to our daily working lives.

Very generally, assuming a **37.5 hour working week**, the **40-40-20** split, and **26 weeks of teaching**, we end up having around **945 hours** available for teaching and admin per academic year (adjusting for annual leave, public holidays etc.). Although I realize research now comes with admin too – especially with ARC grants and the dreaded Spendvision etc. – assume most of that admin goes on during the non-teaching period (even though I know it often doesn't).

## Teaching

**Teaching and Research academic staff should normally be engaged in 6-8 hours of face-to-face teaching per week over 26 weeks (with 8 hours as the ceiling)**, either giving lectures and/or holding tutorials, seminars, workshops, including any equivalent online teaching. Lying behind face-to-face teaching, obviously, includes preparation, consultation etc. The amount of preparation time will often vary according to nature of the units taught, the experience of the course-giver etc. As a general assumption, we assume that **for every 1 hour of in-class teaching** (including online equivalents) **we assume 1.5 hours of preparation, consultations etc.**

**Teaching and Research academic staff, as well research-only staff, should normally be engaged in 2-4 hours supervision per week over 26 weeks**, where this includes supervision of Honours, MA, MPhil or PhD students. Early career researchers will often not have PhD students and some colleagues might work in areas with low PhD or Honours enrolment for various reasons. These factors need to be taken into consideration by Chairs of Department when assessing and allocating workload. Needless to say, improving our Honours and PG load is a priority for the School.

## Marking

The new teaching template will link enrolments to teaching hours much more explicitly and thus make clear the consequences for marking loads for each unit and each staff member teaching it. It is very important that colleagues teaching units with large enrolments not be punished for doing so, and to ensure we are providing the kind of support these units require. It is also important to have a transparent way of

capturing the way colleagues increasingly teach across different units, given the increasing importance of team-teaching. So the amount of marking each staff member is required to do will be a function of:

- enrolment in each unit you teach,
- the number of students you supervise (which of course carries its own marking load) and
- the overall state of the part-time teaching budget.

As a very general guideline, normally T&R staff should be expected to mark between 600,000 and 1,000,000 words per year (!), depending on the amount of Hons and PG supervision they have.

## Research

SOPHI has a very strong reputation for its research performance that we must constantly seek to maintain and improve. **At a minimum all academic staff are expected to be research active according to the definition used in whatever national research assessment exercise** eventually emerges. Research data will be compiled through the University's Research Information Management System and the PM&D process. Staff will no longer be required to provide research data for workload purposes, although research active status is still relevant to workload. We expect SOPHI academic staff to publish regularly in the best places and to apply for major research grants on a regular basis. Academic staff should normally, **on average and at a minimum, publish 1 peer-reviewed publication per year**. Quality of publication is always to be preferred to sheer quantity.

## Administration

**(other than that associated with normal teaching and research activities)**

All academic staff, both T&R and Research, are expected to be willing to take on administrative roles within the Department, School and Faculty at different points in their career. The expectations are lowest for ECRs and those between Levels A-B, and grow as one moves from Levels C-E. As far as possible, this should be subject to negotiation between the staff member concerned and the Chair of Department, HoS and Dean.

### Teaching & Administrative Guidelines and Loadings

As stressed above, workload policy should address the equitable distribution of the **core activities** of our work. Many of us obviously do far more than the norms and expectations set out above. People deserve to be recognized for their outstanding performance and there are processes in place to do this, ranging from the prestige that comes from high quality publication and the recognition by our peers in the discipline, to promotion, awards and various university incentive schemes (performance bonuses etc.).

Following are proposed 'loadings' for core administration related activities that should be incorporated into decision-making about workload. Once again, it is important to emphasize that this is not intended to capture **everything** we do, but only those core activities we are particularly concerned to see distributed equitably within and across Departments. And once again, it will also be a function of **the extant part-time teaching budget**. Less part-time teaching funds means everyone teaches more.

### New Staff and New Units

- New T&R staff member (Levels A-B)= [normally .25 reduced load]
- New unit of study taught for the first time = 1 hr pw  
-ie. a *genuinely* new course requiring more than usual preparation.

## Career Development

- Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies (Higher Education): 2hrs x 26 (if ft over two semesters)

## Supervision

- PhD supervision= 1 hr per FT candidate pw [x26]  
-Normally this includes only those students within 5 years of candidature. Where you are supervising a student because of a colleague being on leave, then you should receive full credit for that year or semester.
- MPhil supervision= 1 hr per FT student pw [x26]
- Honours supervision= 30 minutes per student pw [x26]
- MA Dissertation/MA research=30 min per student pw [x26]

## Administrative Tasks

- **Chair of Department**  
= Dept with 10-20 FTE: 1/2 load (ie. half of the normal department load of face to face teaching and marking); >20 FTE= 1/3 load.
- **PG Research Coordinator**  
Dept with <15 students= 1hr pw; 15-40 =2hrpw; >40= 3hrs pw  
**-normal duties include:** handling of PhD application process; student reviews; monitoring progress; promoting best practice; liaising with Faculty and School Office; handling email correspondence from prospective and existing students; managing submission process; promoting PhD research culture in department more generally.
- **PG Coursework Coordinator**  
<15 students=1 hr pw; 15-40= 2hr pw; >40 3hrs pw  
**-normal duties include:** handling PG coursework admin; monitoring student progress; working with CoD/HoS to improve/promote coursework program; liaising with Faculty/School Office
- **Honours Coordinator**  
<10 EFTSU= 1hr pw; 10-30=2hr pw; >30= 3hrs pw  
**-normal duties include:** handling Honours admission process and admin; monitoring student progress; promoting Honours student research culture; helping to manage distribution of Honours supervision & marking; working with CoD/HoS to promote Honours programs.
- **UG coordinator**  
(where it is coordinator for the **whole department**, or for all of first year or all of II/III): 2 hr pw  
**-normal duties include:** managing student queries, complaints; working with CoD to manage UG curriculum in dept; helping to coordinate dept results at end of each semester; coordinating distribution of marking; liaising with School T&L team.
- **Lab Manager** (who is currently an academic staff member): 2hrs pw x 26
- **Associate Dean**  
Dependent on compensation provided by Faculty (usually .5 of teaching load).
- **Centre Director**  
Dependent on University, Faculty, School or external funding available for the unit.
- **Degree Director**  
Dependent on compensation provided by Faculty.

- **Member of Faculty/University Committee**  
= UGMC/Research/T&L/PGMC= 30min pw

## Conclusion

The actual hours any staff member may teach or supervise will vary according to a range of factors, including the amount of part-time teaching funds available to the Department (which in turn is affected by SSR, ARC income, Departmental fee income, staff on LSL, salary savings etc), and whether or not they are undertaking an administrative position. Staff may also, subject to approval by the CoD and/or HoS, arrange their teaching so as to be heavier in one semester rather than another. Staff who are research inactive may also have a higher teaching load.

It is very important to note these are guidelines informed by (1) our current capacity to fund part-time teaching and marking support; (2) our ambition to be a research-intensive School equally committed to high quality teaching. The better we perform across all of our key indicators – research performance, teaching and learning (including Honours and PG), and fee income – the greater capacity we have for providing more and better academic support.

Please don't hesitate to pass along comments, suggestions, complaints (constructive...please!) regarding any aspect of this policy: [duncan.ivison@usyd.edu.au](mailto:duncan.ivison@usyd.edu.au)

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**Approved by:** SOPHI School Executive Committee and Professor D. Ivison

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