



ACADEMIC WORKLOAD MODEL : PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

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RELATED DOCUMENTS

UJ Documents	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UJ Conditions of Service • Resourcing Policy • UJ Policy on Sabbatical Leave • Code of Academic and Research Ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. • Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), Act 75 of 1997. • Labour Relations Act (LRA); Act 66 of 1997 as amended • Employment Equity Act (EEA), Act 55 of 1998. • A National Framework for Enhancing Academics as University Teachers, DHET 2018
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1. INTRODUCTION

This academic workload framework provides a set of principles and guidelines to inform the development of academic workload models in faculties and departments. A workload model within an environment is a reasoned decision to allocate work in some specified way. Because environments vary considerably, it is not feasible to adopt a single workload model across the University. The framework provides guidance for the application of workload models that promote transparent and equitable distribution of workload, taking into account that there are some models that are already in place.

The intention is not to impose a one-size-fits-all model, but to ensure that different workload models are. A sound workload model:

- a) Covers all aspects of academic work, including teaching, supervision, research, administration, and any leadership functions that may additionally be performed (e.g., Head of Department, Vice Dean);
- b) Assists managers (Heads, Deans) by providing an objective basis for fairly allocating work of whatever kind;
- c) Protects academic staff from overwork relative to peers (the “exploitation” problem), and from unwitting underwork that may count against them in performance appraisal or promotion (the “nasty surprise” problem);
- d) Assists in identifying the mutual expectations that the University and academic staff can reasonably have of each other;
- e) Serves the same strategic goals and ethical principles, in particular the principle of fairness;
- f) Enables the inter-Department and inter-Faculty comparisons that are necessary for resource allocation that is rational, strategic, equitable and fair.

In general, there are three broad academic workload models used by higher education institutions globally, namely:

- 1.1 **Informal Model** – the HoD allocates teaching, postgraduate supervision and academic administration, based on expertise and experience. This usually involves a two-fold process; an initial meeting between the HoD and staff individually to discuss and assign the staff member’s workload, followed by discussion of the assigned workloads at a staff meeting.
- 1.2 **Partial Model** – the HoD develops a time-table based template allocating teaching responsibilities based on expertise and experience and taking into account other responsibilities such as post-graduate supervision and academic administration, which is presented for discussion and finalisation at a staff meeting. It is partial in that the starting point is a formal allocation of teaching duties, with other responsibilities being informally factored in.
- 1.3 **Comprehensive Model** – individual workloads are allocated based on a comprehensive workload model, which calculates the amount of time that ought to be spent by staff on different functions – teaching, including preparation, marking, development of study guides, course co-ordination and course level; supervision of masters and doctoral students, including post-doctoral research fellows (PDRF); and management and administration, including attendance at departmental, faculty and senate meetings, co-ordination of tests, exams, marks and tutors, and other responsibilities such as library book orders and web co-ordination. This is discussed and finalised at a staff meeting. The calculation of the time spent is reflected either in hours or in units or points (based on a conversion formula).

The three models have advantages and disadvantages. The informal model is appropriate in small departments (6-7 staff) with specialist modules, a team built over time, and a Head of Department (HoD) committed to transparency and open communication. Its main disadvantage is that a change to an HoD with a different approach, including staffing changes which disrupt the team, could result in undermining

the model. Furthermore, there is no common denominator for comparing and assessing fairness and equity in the distribution of workloads.

The partial model provides partial transparency, but its focus on one, albeit critical, element, namely, teaching, makes it difficult to compare and assess fairness and equity in relation to other elements of the academic workload. And as with the informal model, there is no common denominator for comparing and assessing fairness and equity in the distribution of workloads.

The comprehensive model, in combining all elements of the academic workload and calculating the time spent on each either in hours or converting the latter into units or points, provides the basis for comparing and assessing fairness and equity in the distribution of the workload between staff members. However, although it is intended to be objective, it may fail to be so due to the inherent difficulty of comparing different responsibilities (e.g. comparing supervising a doctoral student with teaching a first year class). It is a blunt instrument and may hide as much as it illuminates. For this reason, even a comprehensive model requires fair-minded, reasonable application to achieve the goals of fairness and transparency, and can likewise thwart these through unfair or unreasonable implementation.

The three models or variants are currently in use at the University in faculties, and departments within faculties, that utilise workload models as a management tool. This framework does not adopt a particular model as an institutional model. As indicated above, a “one-size-fits-all” model is not appropriate given different disciplinary requirements. The varying workload models adopted by faculties and departments should as far as possible be aligned with the principles and guidelines contained in this framework.

2 MEASURING WORK

It is difficult to measure academic work quantity. Two metrics are common: time spent on task; and output from the task. A fair academic workload framework incorporates elements of both time (which is fixed for all academic employees by the UJ Terms and Conditions of Service and does not vary per rank) and output.

In general the following principles apply:

- 2.1 Where time is mentioned in a workload model, it indicates the amount of time that ought to be adequate for a task; if someone takes unduly long they should not benefit from this;
- 2.2 Time taken to deliver a programme will depend on the nature of the programme;
- 2.3 Contact or blended/online teaching hours require substantial preparation the first time a course is taught and/or after it is significantly changed, and much less in subsequent rounds;
- 2.4 Consideration should be given in the model to class size and level of the module being taught;
- 2.5 Likewise consideration should be given to practicals, laboratory time, fieldwork, excursions, exhibitions and other forms of teaching and learning engagements;
- 2.6 Time allocated to research varies according to discipline, nature of the research undertaken, and the anticipated outputs;
- 2.7 Academic activities and responsibilities increase with seniority;
- 2.8 A new academic may require more time to prepare and deliver on teaching, supervision and research;
- 2.9 Leadership, management and administrative tasks need to be factored in and given appropriate weighting.

3 ACADEMIC WORKLOAD FRAMEWORK

The framework consists of two components; (i) a set of general principles to guide the distribution and management of workloads; and (ii) a set of principles relating to each of the core components of academic work, namely:

- a) Teaching, which refers to the development and delivery of courses/modules through lectures, seminars, tutorials, clinical supervision, practicals, including online and blended learning, and teaching-related activities such as preparation, assessment, marking, moderation and student consultation. It also includes the supervision of dissertations and theses, both undergraduate and postgraduate.
- b) Research and scholarship, which includes a range of activities, amongst others, producing peer reviewed publications, editing journals and books, presenting papers at conferences, knowledge transfer and managing funded research projects.
- c) Academic leadership, administration and engagement, which includes a range of activities, amongst others, participating in and contributing to faculty and University governance structures and strategic projects, participation in external bodies, including discipline-based networks and professional bodies, as well as engaging with the broader community both nationally and internationally. Academic mentorship and transfer of skills must be factored in where applicable.

Faculties and departments are advised to develop academic workload models specific to their contexts taking into account these principles.

3.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The general principles outlined below provide the framework to guide the development of faculty- and department-specific workload models:

3.1.1 The allocation of workloads should be consistent with, and enable the achievement of, the strategic objectives and goals of the faculty and the University.

3.1.2 Workloads should be allocated taking into account the core components of academic work, including providing a proportionate breakdown (in percentage terms) of the balance between the different components of academic work.

The allocation of workloads should be fair and equitable and should:

- a) be reasonable and consistent with the level of appointment of the staff member and take into account the staff member's stage of career development, for example, entry-level staff, including staff completing doctorates, should be allocated a smaller or lighter workload taking into account minimum times for completion of the doctorate or other postgraduate studies;
- b) take into consideration the preferences and/or abilities/performance of the staff member with regard to the core components of academic work, specifically teaching and research, and adjust as necessary and feasible the proportionate breakdown between the different components of academic work;
- c) recognise the importance of an appropriate balance between work and personal life, including ensuring that leave entitlements are taken in a timely manner.

3.1.3 The allocation of workloads should be transparent and should:

- a) involve a consultative process, which facilitates collegial discussion and inputs and enables agreement based on a fair and proper consideration of the workload needs and implications;
- b) be determined annually with provision made for in-year adjustments based on changing needs and context;
- c) be available for viewing at the departmental and faculty level. The workload should be based on the nominal 1760 hours allocated to a full-time staff member in terms of the University's conditions of service.

3.1.4 HODs are responsible for the management of workloads.

3.1.5 A dispute resolution process should be established to deal with and to resolve workload-related grievances.

3.1.6 Occasional well-motivated exceptions to the general principles may be accommodated.

3.2 TEACHING: PRINCIPLES

The calculation and allocation of workload must not include private work, teaching on non-subsidised programmes where applicable, or acting as external examiner/moderator for other institutions, for which staff are remunerated. Any work for which an academic staff member receives additional remuneration is excluded from workload allocation¹.

The following principles should inform faculty and department-specific workload models:

- 3.2.1 Teaching allocations at undergraduate and postgraduate level should be decided at department and/or faculty level.
- 3.2.2 All academic/research staff should teach at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
- 3.2.3 Associate Professors and Professors should teach at undergraduate level in at least a three-year cycle.
- 3.2.4 Research-only appointments (e.g. staff linked to Centres, Research/Distinguished Professors, SARChi Chairs) should teach or supervise at Honours, Masters (taught/research), and Doctoral levels. In a period of 3 years, there should be engagement in at least one undergraduate module;
- 3.2.5 Ideally, all staff should supervise postgraduate students, as appropriate to their specific discipline. Over the course of years, and as they increase in seniority, staff are expected to assemble a cohort of graduate students including Honours, Masters and Doctoral candidates. The fair allocation of students is determined by the HoD in consultation with staff, and the preferences of the student concerning who should supervise are paramount in this exercise.
- 3.2.6 Academic staff responsible for course co-ordination and/or teaching should be in office and available for consultation with students for a minimum number of hours per week (e.g. 2 sessions of 2 hours each). Times should be set and disclosed with a view to enabling students to attend (this may mean avoiding evenings or early mornings, depending on the course/environment).
- 3.2.7 In determining the annual workload, adjustments should take into account the following factors, which impact on the workload of individual staff:
 - a) Developing and teaching a new module or course;
 - b) Teaching an existing module or course, which was not previously taught by the staff member;
 - c) Course coordination;
 - d) Modules and/or courses with a particularly large/small number of students;
 - e) The level of a module or course being taught;
 - f) Teaching at multiple levels;
 - g) Repeats of lectures at different times or on different campuses;
 - h) Revising course curricula;
 - i) Significant changes in the delivery mode of a module or course, such as for example, the introduction of online and blended learning;
 - j) Practical sessions such as laboratory work, creative studio work etc;
 - k) Work-integrated learning and clinical placements, and fieldwork outside of normal teaching time, including the associated travel time;
 - l) Postgraduate supervision loads and completion dates;
 - m) Participation in national/international initiatives;
 - n) Additional factors like the academic's own postgraduate study or participation in a research project;
 - o) Any staff member may teach a full load, but junior staff may sometimes get relief (without buying out), for the sake of their careers.
 - p) Senior staff should take on more onerous classes, and should play a role especially with junior undergraduates, who are at greatest risk of dropout.

¹ Refer to UJ Conditions of Service

- 3.2.8 All staff should have agreed upon time free of teaching responsibilities, except for supervision responsibilities, as long as this does not impact on the operations of the department and/or faculty.
- 3.2.9 Professors with teaching obligations may reach arrangements for marking etc., in agreement with the relevant HoD.
- 3.2.10 All academic staff may request a partial “buy-out” from teaching and access to research grants or other university funding, on condition that:
- a) This is discussed and agreed as part of the annual workload consultative process;
 - b) this does not impact on the operations of the department and/or faculty and, in particular, if a postgraduate student is employed, it does not affect his/her completion date, and in the case of post-doctoral fellow, his/her publication completion rate;
 - c) The staff member concerned, where possible, retains overall responsibility for the delivery of the course, including ensuring that all compliance requirements are met;
 - d) The “buy-out” is reflected in the agreed upon workload schedule
 - e) Buy-outs by the individual concerned, even where that person has obtained funds, and even if the conditions of grant require a release from teaching, must be finalized in consultation with the department and the relevant approval obtained.

In all cases the approach is consultative. A mutually beneficial agreement must be reached such that it is fair and equitable.

3.3 TEACHING: GUIDELINES

Based on the principles above, the guideline for assigning teaching loads should take into account the following minimum allocations, departmental needs, levels of seniority and programme specifics:

The number of lecture periods should be calculated as indicated below.

- A minimal “full load” will typically involve either 2 semester modules or 3 term modules. Semester modules are typically 3 lecture periods per week; term modules typically 4 lecture periods per week.
- 7 weeks x 3 periods x 4 terms = 84
- 7 weeks x 4 periods x 3 terms = 84

Responsibilities for online/blended learning must be factored in for the above calculations.

Each department should ensure that the guidelines take into the account the nature and demands of the discipline with motivated exceptions that may be accommodated. These parameters may be variably applicable in departments where there is substantial practical teaching, blended/online teaching and/or development responsibilities, observation, work integrated learning, laboratory work, studio sessions, or where lecturing is not the main mode of instruction, etc. However, the guidelines will permit for an assessment of parity between departments (whether in same or different faculties) teaching comparable subjects via comparable media of instruction.

3.4 RESEARCH: PRINCIPLES

The following principles should inform faculty and department-specific workload models:

- 3.4.1 All staff should be research active. In determining the annual workload allocation, the following factors should be considered in relation to the research component of the workload allocation:
- Staff preferences – decrease the proportionate allocation for research in the individual workload allocation for staff who express a preference for carrying a higher teaching load;
 - Staff productivity – increase the proportionate allocation for research in the individual workload allocation for staff whose research output is above the average in relation to the norm linked to

the performance management framework for research and who express a preference for a higher research allocation.

- 3.4.2 All staff should have agreed upon time free from teaching responsibilities, except for supervision responsibilities, to pursue research, as long as this does not impact on the operations of the department and/or faculty.
- 3.4.3 All staff should be entitled to one day per week during term-time to pursue research, subject to operational requirements of the department and/or faculty.
- 3.4.4 All staff may access regular sabbatical leave based on the conditions of service to pursue research. Managers (Head, Dean) may additionally approve relief from other duties as and when it seems appropriate and fair for the sake of the staff member's career and/or specific goals (e.g. completing a book).
- 3.4.5 All staff should be required to account for the time, including the mid-year research break and sabbaticals, allocated for the pursuit of research².

3.5 RESEARCH: GUIDELINES

Based on the principles above and existing practices and expectations, an approximate guideline for research expectations (taken over a three-year period)³ is as follows.

Rank	Accredited Units per year	Impact
P	2	Majority of publications should be well-recognised (typically meaning internationally recognised), with efforts to achieve high-impact publications
AP	1.5	Publications generally in well recognised outlets
SL	1	Publications may be less recognised, with efforts made to improve
L	0.5	Publications may be in less recognised outlets

Satisfactory progress on doctorate or masters (or any other relevant qualification) should also be an expectation where relevant. If a staff member finds him/herself unable to meet these targets, or where these targets are consistently not met (taken over a three-year period), the Head may, in discussion with the staff member, reduce the research time available to the staff member and increase teaching load, in favour of more research-active staff members. Such action should not serve to penalise staff, but should rather make available an alternative teaching-focused career route.

3.6 LEADERSHIP, ADMINISTRATION AND ENGAGEMENT: PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

The following principles should inform faculty- and department-specific workload models: All staff should engage and participate in, and contribute to, academic leadership, administration and engagement both internally in department, faculty and University-wide structures, as well as externally in professional bodies, disciplinary networks, and in building and strengthening links with the broader community.

- 3.6.1 The allocation of the workload should be consistent with the level of appointment of the staff member and take into account the staff member's stage of career development and experience. For example, it would normally be inappropriate for a junior staff member to chair faculty committees such as the Higher Degrees Committee or to represent the faculty on Senate committees etc.
- 3.6.2 Due account should be taken of significant academic leadership and service contributions at the department, faculty or institution-wide level.

² UJ Policy on Sabbatical Leave

³ Creative outputs should be defined as per the DHET policy

3.7 HEADS OF DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL

Heads of Department/School are entitled to a reduction in teaching load. The amount may vary considerably depending on circumstances but 50% is typical. Deans are responsible for supporting Heads to maintain their academic standing through research and postgraduate supervision, and to intervene to relieve the load on Heads where this appears to be a risk. It is imperative that the Head's academic career not be interrupted by appointment as Head, because at the end of that appointment (typically three years) the Head will be expected to resume their academic roles.

3.8 VICE DEANS

Vice Deans are entitled to a reduction in their overall duties to their department. However, because they are expected to return to academic work after their appointment (usually for three years), it is imperative that they retain their research and postgraduate presence. The Vice Dean role exempts a staff member from all undergraduate teaching and departmental administration, except where the Vice Dean specifically agrees to teach and/or administer. The Vice Dean is expected to maintain postgraduate teaching and supervision and research activities as usual.