

JOINT GUIDANCE ON WORKLOAD AND WORKING TIME FOR TEACHING STAFF

Introduction

1. Both the Employer and Staff Sides of the Committee for Teaching Staff are conscious of the importance of the issue of workload for teaching staff. This is an issue that has previously been the subject of joint advice in December 1999 relating to 'Reducing the Bureaucratic Burden on Teachers'. This 2011 joint guidance builds upon and supersedes that earlier advice in the light of developments since 1999. This guidance and the separate joint advice previously issued on Work-Life Balance, form Appendices to the national agreement, the Conditions of Service Handbook.
2. It is clearly important to ensure that teachers are not required to work excessively long hours or subjected to excessive levels of workload. Discussions on this issue must necessarily balance the needs of sixth form colleges as employers and education providers; the work-life balance needs of teachers as employees; and the paramount needs of learners. Within the agreed contractual framework, it is equally important that teachers can concentrate on their key duties in relation to their learners and that time is not spent unnecessarily on non-teaching matters such as administrative/support functions and in meetings. Given that teachers undertake their duties under the "reasonable direction" of principals, it is also important that principals exercise reasonableness and flexibility in general in relation to the management and direction of their staff, allowing teachers to achieve a satisfactory balance between working time and time to pursue their personal interests.
3. This joint guidance aims to assist in discussions on this issue at college level, including between principals and teacher union representatives, with a view to helping to secure outcomes which operate in the interests of all concerned. Both Sides of the Committee for Teaching Staff expect that its contents will be discussed within colleges and where appropriate applied in seeking practical solutions to the issues it identifies.

General considerations – determining and monitoring working time

4. The Appendix to this guidance summarises teachers' contractual working time arrangements. These require teachers to be available for a specific number of days and for a total of up to 1265 hours of "directed time" in the course of the year. These constitute contractual requirements but also constitute contractual limits on directed working time.
5. Teachers are also subject to contractual requirements in respect of "undirected time". The national agreement's provisions have now been amended to specify that this commitment is to work "*such reasonable additional hours as may be needed*". The addition of the word *reasonable* is intended to reinforce the principle stated in the Joint Commentary on the national agreement (established in 1993/4) that "*colleges should ensure that...a proper balance is maintained between directed and undirected time*".
6. Colleges operate calendar arrangements for matters such as meetings, open evenings, parents/carers evening etc which require teachers' involvement and which therefore form part of their directed working time activities. Under the national agreement, any activities which are undertaken at the direction of the college principal – whether these are teaching activities or other activities which are part of

teachers' professional duties – must be defined as directed working time. While it is difficult to provide an exhaustive list of those activities which should be so defined, it would certainly be inappropriate for any working time activities which are undertaken at the direction of the principal to be excluded from this definition. This would include any activities which teachers are expected to undertake in co-operation with other teachers or with students.

7. Colleges also operate arrangements to plan the allocation of the totality of teachers' directed working time across the academic year. These will include allocations for teaching and other activities which form part of teachers' professional duties, and will usually include a contingency allocation in order that the principal can have some flexibility for unplanned needs. These directed time calendars have been found in practice to be of potential benefit to all concerned in terms of establishing and understanding teachers' working time commitments and avoiding dispute.
8. Principals may, therefore, wish to discuss with teacher union representatives the possible usefulness of such arrangements, where they do not already exist, in order to determine whether to adopt such arrangements and whether directed working time should be monitored in this way. Principals should in any case consult with staff and teacher union representatives, normally on an annual basis, about the allocation of working time within the teaching timetable as well as commitments to staff meetings parental consultations and other activities.

Components of teaching workload - teaching hours, numbers and sizes of group sizes and teaching hours per group

9. The total workload for individual teachers reflects a range of inter-related considerations including total teaching time, the number and sizes of the groups taught and the number of hours devoted to teaching each group. Teaching time, for the purposes of this guidance, also includes tutorial time spent in contact with students.
10. As the SFCF's survey of working time arrangements has over the years shown, individual colleges adopt different practices on all of the above areas with some giving greater importance to limiting total teaching hours and others to limiting group sizes or teaching hours per group. Principals are encouraged to ensure full discussion with teacher union representatives on the above issues which together determine teacher workload.
11. During the Summer term, teaching hours will reduce for many teachers. This gained time is then available to be used for professional purposes related to their teaching role at the direction of the Principal. This gained time should not be discounted in calculating total working time.

Non-contact time within timetabled teaching time

12. The national agreement for sixth form colleges, unlike the arrangements for school teachers, does not confer a specific entitlement to allocated and protected non-contact time during normal teaching hours.
13. Since the inception of the national agreement, however, both Sides have recognised the important role of such time as part of directed working time. The Joint Commentary on the national agreement states inter alia that:

"The continued provision of quality education can only be delivered by teachers if they have adequate time to meet properly all the demands upon them arising from

the different elements of their responsibilities ... colleges should ensure that in determining the workload of individual teachers a proper balance is maintained between directed time and undirected time in respect of activities such as marking, preparation, administration etc. separate from student contact”.

14. Sixth form college teachers will generally have some time within the teaching week which is not allocated as teaching time. It is, however, important that an appropriate level of non-contact time should be allowed for purposes such as planning, preparation and assessment which would otherwise be carried out during the teacher's own time possibly to the detriment of work-life balance. Consideration should also be given to appropriate additional non-contact time for those with additional management or leadership responsibilities.
15. In setting individual teachers' timetables and the pattern of timetabled commitments, attention should be given to fair treatment of individuals and to achieving an equitable balance between the needs of the individual and those of the college as a whole.
16. Increased teaching hours necessarily bring with them increased time to be spent on associated activities. Where non-contact time already exists, careful consideration should be given before reducing it, as this will necessarily have adverse implications for work-life balance.

Evening teaching

17. With regard to evening teaching, the existing provisions of paragraph 21 of the Handbook state that:

As part of the 1265 hours teachers may be required to teach for up to 6 hours over two evenings per week. Any teaching in the evening beyond this level would be undertaken only on a voluntary basis. Such evening work would include any teaching after the end of the normal college teaching day. Volunteers should be used whenever possible for evening work. It is important to take equal opportunities considerations into account and for reasonable notice to be given of the introduction of such working arrangements. The timetable should, whenever possible, be structured to avoid disjointed teaching sessions for any teacher and to provide for a compensatory adjustment to an individual teacher's timetable.

Administration and meetings

18. It is important that teaching staff have satisfactory support in administrative and technical functions eg in relation to attendance recording, the administration of examinations and the preparation and copying of documents. Teachers should not have to spend time on tasks that do not require their professional expertise.
19. In relation to administrative and technical functions, the key tests should be:
 - a) does it need to be done at all?
 - b) is it of an administrative or clerical nature?
 - c) does it call for the exercise of a teacher's professional skills or judgment?
 If the answers to a) and b) are yes but the answer to c) is no, then teachers should not be required to carry out such tasks.
20. All colleges should keep under review the number of meetings that teaching staff are expected to attend. Colleges should ensure that teaching staff understand the need for meetings they are expected to attend and that only staff involved in the business being discussed being required to attend. Effective meetings are well-run, finish within any stated time and involve only those teachers who need to be involved. As

far as possible the dates and times and agendas for meetings should be communicated in good time. Colleges should also ensure that clerical support is made available to ensure that teaching staff are not required to carry out note taking and the production of agendas, minutes and duplicate papers needed for the meeting. It is important that colleges keep under review the amount of paperwork that teaching staff are expected to deal with generally.

21. These principles should apply also to directions to attend meetings involving students or parents/carers such as open evenings, careers evening and parents/carers evenings.
22. Most colleges seek to minimise teachers' involvement in examination invigilation on the basis that such time can be better spent on other activities which involve their professional skills and are related to their teaching role. Consideration should in all cases be given to means of minimising any requirement to invigilate.
23. Activities within this broad category of administration and meetings should, where undertaken as a result of expectations of the principal or other managers, always be defined as directed working time.

Cover

24. Contractual requirements for cover by sixth form college teachers are set out in paragraph 8 of Appendix 4 to the Handbook.
25. Many sixth form colleges do not require their teachers to provide cover for absent colleagues, either in cases of short term or long term absence. In such colleges, solutions generally involve unsupervised study by students or engagement of external supply teachers where necessary. Other colleges do utilise teaching staff to provide cover for absent colleagues, either at the start of scheduled lessons or for their entirety.
26. Practice in schools has evolved in recent years towards the position whereby teachers in schools are now by the terms of their contracts required to cover "only rarely" and there is a considerable body of guidance and practice on other appropriate solutions which do not require their involvement. Whatever solution is adopted, discussions on cover policies should consider the impact of cover on teachers' other working time activities and on non-contact time; ensure that any obligation is distributed equitably among all teachers; and aim to ensure that, overall, teachers' workload and working time is not unreasonably increased by the imposition of any cover obligation.

Breaks from teaching

27. The Conditions of Service Handbook states that teachers shall be allowed a break of reasonable length either between college sessions or between the hours of 12:00 noon and 2:00 pm. If teaching in the evening as well as the afternoon, a reasonable break will also be allowed before commencing evening teaching. During such breaks, teachers should not be required to undertake other duties, attend meetings or remain on the premises.

Additional working days

28. In some cases, colleges may believe it is necessary for teachers to undertake additional working days in excess of the 195 days. Provision is made in the Conditions of Service Handbook for additional payment or time off in lieu for such additional working time. Clearly, however, since demands upon teachers to work at weekends or when the college is closed (other than on the 5 specified days) will obviously impact upon family and other obligations, such additional working time should always be by agreement with the teachers concerned.

Part time teachers

29. The Conditions of Service Handbook now includes provisions on working time for part time teachers which were agreed in 2009. These provisions should be read and applied in conjunction with the provisions of this joint guidance. The position of such teachers should be considered carefully in view of the fact that their individual circumstances may create specific difficulties in relation, for example, to non-teaching activities.

Conclusion

30. A healthy work-life balance for teachers is a key objective that is in the interests of both teachers and colleges. As the joint guidance on Work-Life Balance in the Conditions of Service Handbook states, *"It is in the interests of colleges to adopt policies that allow employees to balance their working lives with their personal needs and responsibilities"*. A positive approach to working arrangements will assist colleges in securing the best outcome for them as providers of education and, most importantly, for their students.

APPENDIX

Teachers' Working Time - Contractual Position

The **Conditions of Service Handbook** sets out the following provisions (which also appear within the SFCF Model Contract) in relation to working time:

Standard Working Time

20. *Subject to the provisions in the other paragraphs of this section, a teacher may be required to work for 195 days in any year of which 190 will be days on which the teacher may be required to teach in addition to carrying out other duties. Within this 195 days, up to 1265 hours a year will be allocated reasonably by the Principal. The balance between teaching and non-teaching duties and the length of the teaching day are all subject to the reasonable direction of the Principal.*

Undirected Time

22. *In addition to the requirements in paragraphs 20 and 21 above, a teacher will work such reasonable additional hours as may be needed to enable them to discharge their duties effectively including, in particular, the marking of students' work, the writing of reports on students and the preparation of lessons, teaching material and teaching programmes and such other duties as may reasonably be required. The amount of time required for this work and the times outside the 1265 specified hours at which duties shall be performed shall not be defined by the college, but shall depend upon the work needed to discharge the teacher's duties.*

The **Joint Commentary** to the Conditions of Service Handbook contains the following provisions:

Workload

The new [sic] contractual arrangements should be applied so as to ensure that no teacher is allocated an unreasonable total workload. The continued provision of quality education can only be delivered by teachers if they have adequate time to meet properly all the demands upon them arising from the different elements of their responsibilities. It is the clear intention of the Committee that colleges should ensure that in determining the workload of individual teachers a proper balance is maintained between directed time and undirected time in respect of activities such as marking, preparation, administration etc. separate from student contact. In determining the amount of actual teaching time which is allocated to individuals, consideration needs to be given to the level of work, number of students and the additional responsibilities, preparation and marking that accompany the actual teaching load.