Academic Workload Modelling

Simon Perks
It gives me great pleasure to introduce the first in what I hope will soon become a series of Sockmonkey guides, each one providing insight and guidance into issues faced by organisations across the public, not-for-profit and social enterprise sectors.

Academic workload modelling is one of those things that universities and other higher education institutions and providers frequently feel that they should be doing, without really being sure why. And when they have a model, they’re not always entirely sure what to do with it.

This guide seeks to lift the lid on the workload modelling process, to consider what a workload model can – and cannot – achieve and to explore how an effective workload model can be developed in practice.

It also, critically, looks at how institutions can use their workload models to improve what they do, to be more efficient in how they work and to bring about positive change for their people.

I hope you enjoy the guide. And if you’d like to share your own experiences of workload modelling, please do get in touch. You can reach me at hello@sockmonkeyconsulting.com.

Simon Perks
Director
Sockmonkey Consulting
Contents

1 Introduction
Workload modelling · About this guide · How to use the guide · Acknowledgements

2 Academic workload modelling
What academic workload modelling is · How academic workload modelling works · The golden rule of workload modelling · What it can do to help you · What it won’t do

3 Getting started
Setting clear aims · The scope of the model · Timescales and resources · The great ‘working hours’ debate · Identifying activities · Determining a suitable tariff · More about tariffs · The outputs from the model · Using technology · Measuring and monitoring effectiveness

4 Developing the model
Teaching activities · Research and scholarship · Management and administration · Other activities

5 Other things to factor in
Staff contracts and working hours · Academic pathways and career development · New responsibilities and activities · Staff leave and absence

6 Implementing workload modelling in practice
Ownership of the model · Setting up and implementing the model · Collating workload data · Managing the workload modelling process

7 Engagement and communication
Getting engagement and buy-in · Identifying and managing key stakeholders · Liaising with staff unions · Communicating effectively

8 Using workload data to make things happen
Using the workload model · Understanding workloads · Managing capacity · Improving fairness · Workload modelling and TRAC

9 Useful resources
Academic workloads and workload models · Workload models and equality, diversity and inclusion · What other institutions are doing · Providers of workload modelling software packages · What the unions think about workload modelling · Using workload modelling within the TRAC methodology
Chapter 1

Introduction

There has been a lot of talk about workload modelling in recent times. And there have been various claims about what it can do and how it allows institutions across the higher education sector to operate more efficiently and to create better places to work.

Where workload modelling has been implemented, however, it has not always lived up to the expectations placed upon it. And it has all-too-frequently left a trail of angry and disillusioned academics in its wake.

But academic workload models can be of great benefit to institutions and to the members of academic staff who work within them. They can provide insight into and appreciation of how members of academic staff spend their time. They can allow tasks and responsibilities to be allocated equitably. And they can help to ensure that staff workloads are balanced, realistic and fair.

This ‘how to’ guide seeks to cut through the hype around academic workload modelling and to help institutions to develop and to implement an effective workload model that works both in theory and in practice. One that meets their needs, that brings about positive change and that does not alienate the people that it is designed to help.

The guide is accompanied by a basic workload modelling template in electronic spreadsheet format, which institutions can use to get a feel for how a model might work. This is available online at sockmonkeyconsulting.com/insights/academic-workload-modelling/.

I would like to extend my thanks to all those who have assisted in the development of this guide, either directly or by allowing me insight into their institutions’ own academic workload models and processes. Thanks are due, in particular, to Stephen Avery, Mark Demmen and Dr. Natalie Fey for reviewing and providing feedback on the content of the guide as it developed.

Please note that the workload allocations and data set out in this guide, including the worked examples that it contains, and in the template workload model are for illustration only and should not be taken as recommendations.
Chapter 2

Academic workload modelling

The introduction of student tuition fees, the drive for value for money for students, and the increasing pressures on the funding regime are challenging institutions across the higher education sector to make ever more efficient use of their resources. And to be able to demonstrate that they are doing so. This includes how well institutions manage what is perhaps their most valuable resource: the experience and expertise of their academic staff.

What academic workload modelling is

Academic workload modelling seeks to understand how members of academic staff spend their time when they are at work, from teaching and research to management, administration, academic citizenship and other activities. It can be used retrospectively as an analytical tool, or prospectively as a planning tool.

Most universities already measure or monitor workloads in some way. Departments allocate teaching loads and management responsibilities, groups manage their research portfolios and individual academics juggle their responsibilities to their students, their department and their research funders.

Institutions are also required to collect academic staff time allocation data for the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) and, in many cases, to record the time spent by members of academic staff on individual research grants.

But the complexity of modern academic departments, together with the sheer variety of activities undertaken by individual members of academic staff (see Figure 1 below), means that a more coordinated approach is required to the management of academic workloads. And factors such as the Athena SWAN charter are placing a greater emphasis on ensuring that workloads are managed proactively and fairly.
Academic workload modelling uses an agreed framework of activities, encompassing the entire range of academic endeavour, to model the ways in which members of academic staff spend their time at work. This framework can then be used to plan, manage and monitor workloads at individual, departmental, faculty and institutional level.

**How academic workload modelling works**

An academic workload model identifies the different activities undertaken by members of academic staff, be they related to teaching, research, knowledge exchange, management, administration, academic citizenship or something else.

It then allocates a ‘tariff’ to each activity, which allows the workload implications of different activities to be assessed. The activities undertaken by individual members of academic staff can then be identified, and the tariffs for each activity determined, to provide an overview of each person’s total workload.

If this all sounds a bit abstract, it is because it is. There are many different ways of identifying activities and of determining suitable tariffs, some of which work well and some of which do not. The purpose of this guide is to help institutions to sort the former from the latter.

**The golden rule of workload modelling**

In order to be effective, a workload model should be objective, balanced and free from bias, providing an accurate measurement of the activities on which members of academic staff spend their time and of how much of their time they spend on these activities.

This act of measuring workloads should *not* seek to direct or to influence the workloads themselves or how members of academic staff report their workloads.

Consequently, the workload model should not seek to favour or to incentivise certain activities or behaviours, for example by weighting some more heavily than others. And it should include for all activities a realistic assessment of the workload associated with them.

This is not to say, of course, that all activities are equally valid. It is simply that, if the model is to measure staff workloads effectively, it must be value-neutral. Only once robust workload data is available can informed decisions about what staff workloads *should* look like be made.
If the institution wishes to direct the activities of members of academic staff, it should do so explicitly through its line management structures, rather than indirectly through the design of the workload model itself.

**What it can do to help you**

A well-designed approach to workload modelling can be of considerable benefit to institutions, to departments and to individual academics.

For starters, it can provide departments and institutions with a better understanding of the different activities that their members of academic staff undertake and of the impact that these activities have on individuals’ workloads. This in itself can help to improve the relationship between academic and professional services staff, by fostering a better appreciation of the nature, scope and scale of responsibilities to which members of academic staff are subject.

A workload model allows institutions to compare activities and workloads across individual members of staff, as well as across departments, schools and faculties. It can also help those with management responsibilities to allocate activities equitably, to ensure that workloads are balanced and to identify capacity issues before they become critical. And it can help individual academics to understand what is expected of them and to better demonstrate their contribution to their department’s activities.

Figure 2 sets out an example of one of the possible high-level visual outputs from a workload model, providing academic managers with an instant overview of staff workloads.

![Figure 2: Example of the high-level visual outputs from an academic workload model](image)

*Workload data is for illustration purposes only*
By highlighting the individual activities that make up the workload of each member of academic staff, a workload model can help departments and institutions to identify those activities or tasks that take up unnecessarily large amounts of academic staff time and can help them to consider how the burden of these activities or tasks on members of academic staff could be reduced.

It can also help to ensure that departments and institutions focus on those activities that add greatest value to their operations, so that staff workloads can be prioritised accordingly. And in these financially straitened times, when departments and universities alike are under pressure to demonstrate that they are using their resources efficiently, an effective workload model can provide them with just the evidence they need.

A workload model can also be used to provide staff time allocation data for use within the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) methodology, thus negating the need to undertake periodic time allocation surveys. This is subject to various requirements, which will impact on the design and operation of the model, and which are discussed further in Chapter 8 of this guide. In particular, it is a requirement of the TRAC methodology that the workload model is used primarily as a management tool, rather than solely for TRAC purposes.

These are all things that academic workload modelling can do. Whether or not it will do them, of course, depends on how well institutions design, develop and implement the model.

**What it will not do**

There are some things, however, that an academic workload model will not do.

It is not, for example, a miracle cure for all ills. It will not create order out of chaos. But it will, if approached sensibly, provide institutions with the data that they need to understand current staff workloads and to identify any issues that may need to be addressed.

A workload model will also not tell institutions what members of academic staff should be doing. It will tell them what members of staff are doing and how much time they are spending on different activities. And it can be used to model planned workloads for the future. But the idea of what members of academic should be doing is a policy or management issue for the institution.

An academic workload model will also, sadly, not help individual members of academic staff to find more time in the week. And it will not create additional resources out of thin air. What it can do, though, is create greater awareness of the activities that contribute to staff workloads, so that any opportunities to streamline activity can be identified and addressed.

And finally, an academic workload model is not a substitute for good people management. The model is a tool to aid management decision making. But it will not – and should not – make these decisions for the institution.
Chapter 3

Getting started

The design of the model will be informed to a significant degree by what the institution wants it to achieve. So before getting into the detail, it is necessary to think first about the aims of the model and the impact that these will have on some of the key design parameters.

Setting clear aims

A workload model can help institutions to achieve various things, but it is probably best not to develop a model, unleash it on academic colleagues and just see what happens. It is far better to start by thinking about what specifically the institution wants to achieve.

Things that an academic workload model can help institutions to achieve include:

- getting a better understanding of academic staff workloads;
- identifying activities that place an undue workload burden on members of academic staff;
- managing unrealistic workloads by reducing and redistributing responsibilities;
- promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in the allocation and management of workloads;
- ensuring that workloads are distributed fairly and equitably;
- creating clearer expectations for academic staff;
- informing the staff performance review process;
- standardising workload management across departments or faculties;
- providing workload data for course or module costing;
- making better costing and pricing decisions;
- promoting a greater focus on specific activities;
- aligning academic activities with the institution’s strategy; and
- avoiding the need to undertake a time allocation survey for the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC).

These are just a few examples of why institutions might wish to develop and implement a workload model. But it is important that institutions think about what they want to achieve. And they should set out their objectives as specifically as they can. And share these objectives with members of academic and professional services staff. Because the clearer institutions can be at this stage about their goals, the more likely they are to achieve them.
The scope of the model

The first decision to make about an academic workload model is what it will cover. Will it cover all faculties, schools and departments? Will it cover all members of academic staff? And what about postdoctoral researchers, teaching fellows and others in non-standard academic roles?

Faculty deans, heads of school or heads of department looking to gain a greater understanding of academic staff workloads across their faculty, school or department, may wish to focus exclusively on their own faculty, school or department and to develop a model for it and it alone.

Given the level of resources required to develop a workload model, though, it might make sense to develop the model at the institutional level and to then roll it out across different faculties, schools and departments as required. This avoids a situation where different faculties, schools and departments operate different workload models, which is inefficient and risks introducing an unnecessary level of variation in how staff workloads are determined and managed.

This is not to say, however, that all faculties, schools and departments need to operate an identical model. As will be discussed later in this guide, it is relatively simple to develop a standard framework for a workload model and to then tailor it to the specific needs and ways of working of individual parts of the institution.

For institutions intending to use their workload model to provide staff time allocation data for the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) methodology, it should be noted that it is perfectly acceptable to use different time allocation methods across the institution, although only one approach should be used within each academic department.

Timescales and resources

Developing and implementing an academic workload model is neither quick nor cheap. As a rough guide, developing the model is likely to take around a year. Ideally, it will then be piloted on a small scale in its first year of operation. And it is likely to take another couple of years for it to become embedded fully in the institution’s planning processes.

The work of developing the model can be undertaken in-house, provided sufficient staff resources are available. The actual development work is likely to require at least 2 full-time equivalents (FTE) of dedicated project management resource over the course of the year, and probably more if the institution is large or if the model is complex. It will require work to be undertaken by managers and administrative staff within individual faculties and departments. And it will also require input from senior academic management, members of academic staff and representatives of various professional services functions.

Institutions may choose to engage a consultant to develop the model on their behalf, or to purchase a customisable model from an external supplier. This relieves some pressure on internal resources, but does not remove the need for the institution to engage fully in the development of the model. Depending on the technology used to implement the model in practice (discussed later in this chapter), the institution may also incur costs in respect of the necessary software and software development. There may also be ongoing hosting or management costs associated with this.

The governance, management and staffing of the development and implementation of the academic model are discussed further in Chapter 6.
The great ‘working hours’ debate

It can be notoriously difficult to define ‘working hours’ for academic staff, simply because many do not have contracted working hours and are permitted considerable flexibility in how they fulfil their various responsibilities. This is not necessarily a bad thing – in fact, it could be seen as essential to the pursuit of academic endeavour – but it does make it difficult to determine what an academic workload ‘should’ look like.

This issue does not impact significantly on the development of the academic workload model itself, though, as by adopting a ‘bottom up’ approach – as will be suggested in this guide – the model is not constrained by any notion of working hours. When assessing staff workloads, however, it might be helpful to have an idea of what sort of workload is expected, so that those with unacceptably high (or low!) workloads can be identified.

It is standard practice in many parts of the UK higher education sector to regard a typical annual workload as 1,650 hours, when things like bank holidays and annual leave have been excluded. Unless institutions have their own approach to this, it may be useful to use this figure as a ‘target’ for a reasonable workload, or at least as a way of assessing whether the workloads of individual members of academic staff look reasonable.

Identifying activities

In order to be effective, a workload model needs to include all of the activities that a member of academic staff might reasonably be expected to undertake. This includes teaching and research activities, as well as pastoral responsibilities, faculty and departmental roles, committee memberships, the obligations of academic citizenship and the many other things that members of academic staff do on a day-to-day basis.

The TRAC guidance suggests that workload models should reflect only the time ‘managed by the institution’. This sounds simple in theory, but is difficult to translate into practice. Because of the unique nature of the academic profession, in which there is much less of a distinction between ‘work’ and ‘non-work’ activities, greater flexibility to manage one’s own time and much less reliance on ‘nine-to-five’ working, determining what does and what does not fall within the scope of the model can be particularly challenging.

I advocate adopting the broadest possible definition of academic workloads, to encompass all activities undertaken by members of academic staff in connection with their work. In this way, all members of academic staff are treated fairly, regardless of the specific activities that they undertake, and the institution is able to gain a full and complete overview of how members of academic staff spend their time.

The only realistic way of then identifying the specific activities to include in the workload model is to speak with members of academic staff across different faculties and departments about what they do. This could take the form of workshops with groups of academic, for example, or one-to-one discussions with individuals. But it is important that it is done. It not only helps to ensure that the model includes all relevant activities, but can help to ensure engagement with and acceptance of the model by academic staff, too.
If institutions wish to use the workload model to provide academic staff time allocation data for TRAC purposes, individual activities recorded within the model must also be mapped to specific TRAC activities, such as teaching, research, support, etc. This is not difficult to achieve, provided the ability to do so is built into the model as it is developed.

**Determining a suitable tariff**

Once the various activities undertaken by members of academic staff have been identified, the next step is to attach to each activity some sort of quantitative measure of workload. This is known as a ‘tariff’.

There are numerous different ways of attributing a tariff to different activities. Some institutions use a points system, by which each activity is allocated a specific number of points and it is the aggregation of these points that constitutes the workload for each member of staff. Others link activities to income generation, with those activities generating the most income being accorded a higher tariff.

Such approaches are, however, highly problematic, as they introduce a value judgement into the tariff-setting process. This makes the process less transparent, more subjective and somewhat divorced from the underlying activities. It also increases the likelihood that people will try to ‘game’ the system, thus rendering the results useless.

As mentioned earlier, the model itself should be neutral, providing an accurate reflection of how members of academic staff actually spend – or will spend – their time.

The most straightforward – and, in my experience, the least controversial and most effective – way to allocate a tariff to different activities is to use a time-based approach, so that the tariff reflects the actual time taken to undertake the activity. And the best balance between granularity and manageability, in my view, is to use **hours** as the unit of time. It is easy, it is simple and it is how we think about things in the real world.

The use of **percentages** of time as a tariff should be avoided, as this approach does not allow institutions to gain insight in to the absolute number of hours worked by members of academic staff, just the relative proportion of their time that they spend on different activities. This limits severely the usefulness of the model.

Figure 3 sets out an example of a breakdown of the workload of an individual member of academic staff, setting out the teaching, research, and management and administration activities for which he or she is responsible, together with the associated tariffs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>POL 102: European politics*</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POL 343: Politics of identity*</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pol 202 Module Coordinator</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal tutee pastoral support</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching support allowance</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total teaching</strong></td>
<td><strong>441</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Externally-funded research projects</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional research allowance</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supervision of PhD students</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total research</strong></td>
<td><strong>730</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management &amp; Administration</td>
<td>Admissions tutor</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff-student liaison committee</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journal editorship</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administration allowance</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total management &amp; administration</strong></td>
<td><strong>758</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total workload allocation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1,929</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes contact time, preparation and assessment

**Figure 3: Example workload for a member of academic staff**

*Workload data is for illustration purposes only*

It is also important to use as the tariff the actual number of hours that it is likely to take a member of academic staff to undertake an activity, taking into account their level of experience. So the development of a suitable suite of tariffs, like the identification of activities, will involve detailed discussions with members of academic staff, to understand how much time they spend on different activities.

Pragmatically, it is likely to be easiest to engage with faculty deans and heads of department to determine the tariffs that should be associated with individual activities. However, it is also beneficial to ‘test’ these proposed tariffs with individual members of academic staff across different faculties and departments, and with those who are at different stages of their academic careers, during the development of the model.

**More about tariffs**

Institutions should consider whether they wish to have an institution-wide scale of tariffs for different activities or whether they wish to allow for a certain level of variation across faculties, schools and departments.
A degree of variation will be warranted where different faculties or departments work in different ways, where they have different approaches to undertaking activities or where activities (legitimately) take members of academic staff different amounts of time.

In practice, it is likely that a hybrid approach will be the most successful, with a reasonable level of standardisation in respect of the principles of the model itself and a degree of flexibility in the allocation of specific tariffs to individual activities.

Where different tariffs are used across faculties and departments, however, these should be moderated and agreed at institution level, to ensure that all members of staff are treated fairly in the allocation of workloads.

It is also useful to consider the degree of granularity that institutions require in terms of the identification of activities and the allocation of tariffs. An excessively fine level of detail is neither practical nor necessary, so institutions may wish to include specific allowances within the model to capture small-scale activities in aggregate. The use of standardised allowances in this way is discussed later in this guide.

**The outputs from the model**

It is helpful to decide up front what the specific outputs from the workload model should be. These outputs should be linked explicitly to the agreed aims of the model. And they should be agreed in advance with those who will be using the model in practice.

For example, if the aim of the model is to provide heads of department with greater insight into the workloads of their academic staff, the outputs should provide sufficient information to facilitate this. This might include the ability to see a detailed breakdown of the workload of each individual member of staff, as well as a visual overview of the workloads of staff across the department.

On the other hand, if the aim of the model is to ensure the fair distribution of workloads across members of academic staff, it would be helpful for the model to provide the facility to view and compare workloads on the basis of characteristics such as gender, seniority, etc.

Either way, the success of the model will be judged on its ability to provide users with the information that they require. So it is especially important to ensure that the information needs of these users are met. Indeed, a ‘mock up’ of the model and of the information that it will provide can often be an effective way of securing buy-in to the development of the model.

Institutions should also consider who will have access to the results of the workload model. While members of academic staff should obviously have access to their own workload data, it can prove helpful for them to also have access to the workload allocations for their departmental or faculty peers. And faculty deans and heads of department will no doubt require access to workload data for members of staff within their faculty or department.

In all cases, though, the information needs of users should be balanced against privacy considerations and data protection regulations. Consequently, institutions should develop and implement a formal privacy policy governing the use of workload data and should communicate this to members of academic staff through a suitable privacy notice.
Using technology

The implementation of the workload model will necessitate the use of a suitable software package. This will essentially be a database with a ‘front end’ that allows data to be input and displayed in a suitable way.

It would also, in an ideal world, link directly to other software packages used by the institution, allowing some elements of workload data – such as time spent on externally-funded research projects – to be loaded automatically into the model. I suspect, though, that few institutions are in a position to do this.

Many institutions choose to develop this software package in-house, for example using Microsoft Access or its equivalents. Others use their information technology expertise to create a more bespoke solution. The advantage to this, of course, is that the package can be designed around the specifics of the workload model. Small-scale models can, of course, be developed in Microsoft Excel, or another spreadsheet package. However, while this is perfectly suitable for the development of the model, its implementation will probably require something a little more user-friendly.

There are also a small number of providers of workload modelling software, some of which can assist in the actual development of the model, too. This ‘all-in’ solution can be appealing to some institutions and, indeed, can result in an effective and highly useable workload model. But institutions should take care to ensure that they do not end up with a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach that is not tailored to their particular circumstances.

Regardless of the software package used, institutions should make sure that it is the model that guides the software, rather than the other way around. It is all too common for institutions to develop models around what the software will allow, rather than choosing a software package that will allow them to do what they want.

Measuring and monitoring effectiveness

With an institution developing a workload model with a specific aim in mind, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, it is useful at this stage to think also about how the institution is going to assess the extent to which this aim has been achieved.

One of the most common criticisms of workload models is that they devour significant resources but yield little in the way of tangible benefits to the institution or to individual academics. Having a clear idea of what the institution wishes to achieve and how it will measure the extent to which it has achieved it is, therefore, vital.

Depending on what the institution is trying to achieve, this may involve collecting relevant performance data before and after the introduction of the model, so that any changes can be identified. Ideally, institutions should develop and implement a formal evaluation plan, which could provide for a formative evaluation of the model as it is being implemented and a summative evaluation once it has had a chance to bed in.

Institutions may also wish to develop a workload model and then pilot it in a small number of academic departments, so that the operation of the model can be tested in a ‘live’ environment and its impact can be assessed. If it works, the model can then be rolled out across the rest of the institution. And if it does not, the institution has the opportunity to revise the model as necessary or to reconsider its approach at a more fundamental level.
Developing the model

Once institutions have an outline of what they want the model to look like, they need to identify the various teaching, research, management, administration and other activities undertaken by members of academic staff and to allocate a suitable tariff to each one. This chapter explores the main activities institutions are likely to encounter and suggests how they can incorporate them into the workload model.

**Teaching activities**

Teaching activities are likely to occupy a significant proportion of the time of most members of academic staff. However, it is not just the direct ‘contact time’ that needs to be included in the workload model, but also time spent preparing for lectures and tutorials, marking assignments and examinations, and undertaking other teaching-related duties.

The direct teaching activities associated with individual units or modules – such as lectures, seminars, tutorials, laboratory classes and practical sessions – are usually well-defined, so can be identified easily from departmental records and/or timetabling information, allocated to the relevant members of academic staff and incorporated into the model on the basis of the actual duration of each activity.

Preparation time for these teaching activities will depend on the individual members of staff concerned, so a pragmatic way of incorporating it into the model is as a multiple of the relevant contact teaching time. This multiplier may vary depending on the type of teaching. So a one hour lecture might be allocated an additional two hours of preparation, giving a ‘contact plus preparation’ multiplier of three.

**Worked example**

*Teaching on a module takes the form of 20 one-hour lectures and 10 one-hour tutorials. Lectures are given a preparation-to-contact multiplier of 3 and tutorials a multiplier of 2. There are three tutorial groups. So the total contact and preparation workload for each lecture and tutorial is:*

---
Lectures: 1 hour each x multiple of 3 = 3 hours
Tutorials: 1 hour each x multiple of 2 = 2 hours

And the total contact and preparation workload for the module is:

Lectures: 20 lectures x 1 hour each x multiple of 3 = 60 hours
Tutorials: 10 tutorials x 1 hour each x multiple of 2 x 3 groups = 60 hours
Total 120 hours

The total workload can be allocated to individual members of academic staff on the basis of the number of lectures and tutorials that they deliver, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Lectures</th>
<th>Tutorials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Cuthbertson</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Januszek</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Jenkins</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Mueller</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Paterson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60 hrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most suitable multiplier may also depend on whether the unit or module is being taught for the first time or by someone who has not taught it before. In such cases, a higher multiplier may be appropriate. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

An alternative approach is to allocate ‘contact plus preparation’ time on the basis of the number of credits associated with a unit or module. This is undoubtedly quicker, but it does assume that the teaching load associated with all units or modules of a given number of credits is the same. It probably should be in theory, but it is doubtful that this will be the case in practice.

Teaching delivered online or by distance learning may need to be treated in a different way, which is sensitive to how online and distance learning teaching is delivered in practice. While this will vary from institution to institution, the underlying principles are the same: understand the activities that are undertaken by members of academic staff, determine the time that these activities take them, and build the activities and tariffs into the workload model.

The other main activity associated with teaching is assessment. It is probably not practical to measure the specific workload associated with setting and marking assessments for all taught units or modules, so some form of formula-driven approach is likely to be the best way forward.

One way to quantify the workload associated with assessment is to identify the different activities involved in the assessment process and to allocate an evidence-based workload allocation to each one. This could include, for example, setting exam questions, reviewing exam questions, marking exam scripts, moderating exam marks, setting practical assessments, marking practical assessments, developing coursework questions, marking coursework, etc.
The workload allocations for some activities (e.g. setting exam questions) would depend solely on the number of exam questions set, while others (e.g. marking exam scripts) would depend on the number of questions marked by an individual member of academic staff and the number of scripts to be marked.

The assessment workload for each unit or module can then be determined from the relevant assessment profile and student number data. This workload can then be divided among the members of academic staff involved in the assessment process, on the basis of the specific assessment activities that they undertake. This information may already be available within the institution, in which case it can be input directly into the model.

---

**Worked example**

Workload allocations are assigned to individual assessment activities as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hours per unit or script</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting exam questions</td>
<td>4 hours per question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderating exam papers</td>
<td>2 hours per paper *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking exam questions</td>
<td>0.2 hours per question per script</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking laboratory coursework</td>
<td>0.5 hours per script per student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes associated moderation meetings

A 10-credit module with a cohort of 50 students is assessed through one piece of laboratory coursework and a written exam made up of ten questions.

The total assessment workload is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting exam questions</td>
<td>4 hrs x 10 questions = 40 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderating exam papers</td>
<td>2 hrs x 1 paper = 2 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking exam questions</td>
<td>0.2 hrs x 2 questions x 50 scripts = 100 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking laboratory coursework</td>
<td>0.5 hrs x 50 students = 25 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>167 hrs</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total workload can be allocated to individual members of academic staff on the basis of their involvement in the assessment process, for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dr. Grey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam questions set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderator?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam questions marked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam scripts marked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework scripts marked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And so the associated workload is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workload Activity</th>
<th>Time Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting exam questions</td>
<td>4 hrs x 2 questions = 8 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderating exam papers</td>
<td>= 0 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking exam questions</td>
<td>0.2 hrs x 2 questions x 50 students = 20 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking laboratory coursework</td>
<td>0.5 hrs x 25 students = 12.5 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>40.5 hrs</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Needless to say, this could potentially be a fairly time-consuming exercise, especially where units and modules have very different assessment profiles. So a more pragmatic – though less precise – approach may be simply to develop a standard assessment ‘workload’ per student for units or modules of a given number of academic credits.

This assessment workload could then be allocated to individual members of academic staff on the basis of an estimate of their involvement in the assessment process (or by using a proxy, such as the proportion of teaching contact hours delivered by each member of academic staff).

It is important, though, not to stifle innovation and improvement in assessment by attaching to it an unrealistically low workload allocation. Surveys\(^1\) show consistently that students value high quality feedback on their work. And this takes time to prepare and to deliver.

**Worked example**

An assessment workload of 1 hour per student is allocated to each 10-credit module. A module of 20 credits is allocated an assessment workload of 2 hours per student.

Using the module from the previous example, with a cohort of 50 students the total assessment workload for the module is 50 hours.

The assessment workload for the module can be allocated to individual members of academic staff as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Estimated % of assessment undertaken</th>
<th>Workload allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Ashburn</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>10 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Livingstone</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>10 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Patenaude</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>10 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Williams</td>
<td>40 %</td>
<td>20 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>50 hrs</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) e.g. Office for Students (2018) Value for money: the student perspective, London: Trendence UK.
A similar approach can be taken to the identification of the workload associated with the supervision and assessment of students undertaking a project or writing a dissertation, whether this is at undergraduate or taught postgraduate level. The different activities can be determined and a suitable workload allocated to each one. Workloads can then be allocated to individual members of academic staff on the basis of the number of student projects/dissertations supervised or marked in the academic year in question.

The same goes for other teaching activities, such as placement visits or exam invigilation, where an estimate of the time required to undertake such activities can be made with some reliability.

In the case of exam invigilation, though, it may be wise to allow additional time for members of staff to travel to and from the exam venue, especially where this is away from the main site, and to undertake any preparatory or follow-up activities. Simply multiplying the duration of the exams to be invigilated by a suitable factor would accomplish this easily and without fuss.

---

**Worked example**

Members of academic staff are required to undertake exam invigilation. This involves arriving 30 minutes before the examination, being in attendance throughout the examination, and remaining in the examination room until all papers have been collected and all students have departed.

Due to the use of certain examination venues that are away from the main University site, the workload associated with the invigilation of exams is determined by multiplying the duration of each exam by a suitable factor, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>Workload uplift multiplier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off campus</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consequently, a three hour examination that is held on campus would attract a workload allocation of 3 hrs x 1.5 = 4.5 hours and one held off campus would attract a workload allocation of 3 hrs x 2.0 = 6 hours.

For placement visits, where the location will vary depending on the student concerned, a standard allocation based on a typical placement may be more suitable, on the assumption that any variation will average out over the students to be visited.

Members of academic staff may also take on specific teaching-focused roles, such as those of programme director, module coordinator or course tutor. In such cases, a specific workload allocation will need to be determined. For modules, this may depend on the number of academic credits associated with each module.

It may also be pragmatic to weight module/course/programme management workload allocations in proportion to the number of students studying the module, course or programme, to reflect – if this is consistent with the institution’s experience – the additional work that a larger cohort of students can involve.
**Worked example**

The role of module coordinator is allocated a standard workload of 20 hours for 10-credit modules and 40 hours for 20-credit modules.

Where the cohort is greater than 40 students, an uplift multiplier is applied to this workload allocation as follows, to reflect the additional coordination work required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student cohort</th>
<th>Workload uplift multiplier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41 – 60 students</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 – 80 students</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81 – 100 students</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 – 120 students</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 120 students</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And so a 10-credit module with a cohort of 65 students would attract a workload allocation for the module coordination role of 20 x 1.4 = 28 hours.

Many members of academic staff will also have pastoral duties, whether as a personal tutor to a number of students or in some other capacity. Again, a standard workload allocation per student may be the most straightforward way to approach this, with an additional allocation for any other pastoral roles that a member of staff may take on.

Some members of academic staff serve as external examiners for courses or programmes at other institutions. In such cases, a suitable workload allocation should be determined, taking into account the level of work involved. It is probably most practical to determine this at institutional level, as it then also serves as a guide for members of academic staff to the level of commitment that such a role is likely to entail.

There will always be other teaching-related activities that cannot be readily identified in advance. Or those that do not take much time individually, but quickly add up when viewed in aggregate. The institution may also wish to encourage members of academic staff to take time to reflect on and to develop their teaching practice. To take account of this, it would be helpful to allocate to all members of academic staff involved in teaching activities a suitable ‘teaching support allowance’ that allows for at least a couple of hours a week of unstructured teaching-related activities.

**Research and scholarship**

Research is a more difficult activity to integrate into the workload model, as much of it will depend on the institution’s policy in respect of how much of their time individual members of academic staff are permitted to spend on research. This is especially the case when such research is not funded from external sources. It is important, therefore, that such issues are discussed and agreed at senior management level within the institution, prior to being integrated into the workload model.

There are a number of different aspects of research that need be included in the model. The easiest to include is research that is to be undertaken in respect of specific grant-funded projects, as this
time has essentially been ‘bought out’ by the funder and is usually set out explicitly in the relevant funding agreement. So this time can easily be identified, pro-rated for any projects that start or finish in-year and allocated to the relevant member(s) of academic staff.

Many institutions also provide research-active members of academic staff with a general research allocation, which is funded though the institution’s quality-related research funding or from other sources. Such allocations typically provide for one to two days a week of research time, though members of academic staff usually use this time at those points in the year when their teaching load is comparatively light, e.g. in the vacation periods. These allocations can, furthermore, be tailored to specific grades of staff or to particular academic pathways.

It may be tempting for institutions to deduct time ‘bought out’ through external grants from this general research allocation. However, institutions should consider carefully the potential for such an approach to reduce the incentives for members of academic staff to apply for research funding, as it would not increase the time that they actually have available for research.

The level of any general research allocation provided to members of academic staff will, in practice, depend on the institution’s strategy for research, the level of quality-related research funding available and a range of other factors.

It is also important that members of academic staff are provided with time to prepare and submit applications for research grant funding. This time could be included explicitly within the general research allocation or it could take the form of a separate allocation, which could either be standardised across all research-active members of academic staff or tailored to grades or individuals.

A similar approach can be applied to scholarship and personal development, with staff – particularly any who may not be eligible for a general research allocation – being provided with a specific allocation of time to maintain and develop their professional skills and knowledge. After all, if the institution wants its members of academic staff to stay at the top of their game, it needs to ensure that they have the time to hone their skills and to keep up-to-date with what is going on in their field.

Another aspect of research to be integrated into the workload model is the supervision of postgraduate research students. The most practical approach here is to determine a suitable per-student allocation at faculty or department – rather than institution – level, as the nature of supervision may vary across disciplines and so require varying amounts of input from supervisors. These allocations should, however, be moderated and agreed at institution level, so as to ensure parity of treatment of students across the institution.

Separate allocations will need to be determined for research masters and doctoral students, and for full-time and part-time students. Where students have a first and a second supervisor, the allocation should be shared between them in a way that reflects the contribution of the two supervisors.
**Worked example**

Members of staff with responsibility for the supervision of postgraduate research students are provided with a supervision allocation as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of student</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral student</td>
<td>100 hrs</td>
<td>40 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research masters student</td>
<td>40 hrs</td>
<td>20 hrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is the institution’s policy for all postgraduate research students to have two supervisors and for the supervision allocation to be shared between the first and second supervisors on an 80/20 basis. E.g. for a full-time doctoral student, the first supervisor receives an allocation of 80 hours and the second supervisor 20 hours.

So the postgraduate research student supervision allocation for an individual member of academic staff could look something like the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisory relationship</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Workload allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral student FT – 1st Supervisor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>240 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral student FT – 2nd Supervisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral student PT – 1st Supervisor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>64 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters student FT – 1st Supervisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters student FT – 2nd Supervisor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total supervision allocation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>372 hrs</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On a related note, allocations should also be determined for members of academic staff who act as internal or external examiners to postgraduate research students. This should include preparation time and should also take into account the fact that, for external examiners, the role is likely to include travel time, too. Where members of academic staff do not know at the beginning of the year if they will be undertaking internal or external examiner duties, their activity in previous years could be used as a guide.

A growing field for many members of academic staff is knowledge exchange, in which they seek to facilitate the understanding, use and impact of their research. This may include, for example, commercial ‘consultancy’ projects, other industrial collaborations, engagement with members of the public and the provision of advice to government. Because these activities are so diverse, and because the extent to which individual members of staff are engaged in them will vary, it is probably most practical to identify such activities and to determine suitable tariffs for them as the need arises.
Management and administration

In addition to their teaching and research activities, members of academic staff may well hold management or administrative roles at institution, faculty or department level. They will probably also undertake a range of ‘academic citizenship’ activities, such as participation in the peer-review process, which allow the institution – and, indeed, the wider academic world – to function smoothly.

Senior management roles may well take up a significant proportion of the time of individual members of academic staff. These include roles such as Dean or Associate Dean, Head of School, Head of Department and any deputies. The best way to approach these roles within the workload model is to agree at institution level the proportion of individuals’ time that such roles are likely to take up (which may be 100%) and to use this as the basis for the relevant tariff.

The same goes for management roles within schools or departments, such as Director of Learning and Teaching, Director of Research, Director of Studies, heads of section, heads of research groups, etc. In such cases, though, it is helpful to decide first whether such roles should carry the same tariff across the institution or whether a suitable tariff should be determined at school or department level. The answer will depend on the extent to which the content of the roles is consistent across the institution or varies from school to school or from department to department.

Similar considerations apply to other departmental roles that members of academic staff may undertake, such as admissions tutor, senior tutor, year tutor, examinations officer, equality and diversity officer, safety officer, etc. The range of such roles can be vast. And it can vary considerably between departments. As with management roles, the tariff applied to roles such as these should be based on a realistic assessment of the time taken to undertake each role. This can be best determined through discussion with the person or people undertaking each role.

Members of academic staff are also likely to be members of committees at department, faculty or institution level. The workload associated with membership of such committees can be incorporated into the model with a tariff based on the number of hours per year that the relevant committees meet, with an uplift factor to allow for preparation and follow-up work. Chairs of committees should receive a higher uplift, to reflect the additional work that they are likely to perform.

Worked example

Members of academic staff are provided with an annual time allocation for membership of departmental committees, which is based on the number of hours for which each committee usually meets, multiplied by an uplift factor to take account of preparation and follow-up work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Chair</th>
<th>Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uplift factor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consequently, for every hour that the committee meets, the chair receives a time allocation of four hours and other members an allocation of two hours.
And so the committee workload allocation for an individual member of academic staff could look as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Chair</th>
<th>Meeting hours</th>
<th>Workload allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning &amp; Teaching Committee</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Abroad Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-Student Liaison Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total committee allocation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>92 hrs</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Allowance must also be made within the model for administrative activities such as staff performance reviews, attendance at degree ceremonies, open days and staff meetings. The relevant activities should be identified through discussions with members of academic staff, who are in the best position to know which administrative activities they undertake. A suitable tariff will also need to be determined for each activity. To avoid unnecessary complexity in the model, it is probably best to determine a suitable tariff for administrative activities at institution level, especially if the institution has set out clear expectations for staff in respect of such activities.

A similar approach can be applied to broader academic citizenship activities, such as participation in research council panels, editorship of journals and the review of academic papers. A tariff for each activity can be determined at institution level, which can then be applied to the workload model for individual members of academic staff based on the activities that they undertake.

An alternative – and slightly more straightforward – approach to the inclusion of administrative activities in the model is to provide all members of academic staff with a standard administration allocation within the model. The idea is that this allocation covers all administrative activities, so that they do not need to be identified and included separately. It is important to ensure, however, that the allocation is indeed sufficient to cover fully the amount of time spent on administrative activities.

**Other activities**

This chapter has highlighted the main roles undertaken by members of academic staff and has set out how these can be incorporated into the workload model. These members of staff will, however, inevitably undertake other activities, which have not been discussed here.

For example, members of academic staff will be called upon from time to time to participate in sector-wide initiatives, such as the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and quality assurance processes, as well as activities within their own institutions, such as strategic initiatives and widening participation activities.

It is important that any other activities undertaken by members of academic staff are also included within the workload model. This can be done either by identifying the individual activities concerned and determining a suitable tariff, by including them explicitly within one of the standard allowances already discussed, or by adding specific ‘other activities’ categories within the teaching, research, and management and administration elements of the model.
In all cases, liaising directly with the members of academic staff concerned is vital to identifying the relevant activities and to determining a suitable and fair tariff. A workload model is not something that can be developed in isolation, because its success will depend on the extent to which it models accurately how things work in the real world.
Chapter 5

Other things to factor in

There are a number of other considerations that institutions should take into account when developing a workload model and applying it to individual members of academic staff. These include staff contractual requirements and working hours, academic pathways, staff taking on new responsibilities, and sabbaticals and long-term leave.

Staff contracts and working hours

While it is expected that all members of academic staff will have a contract of employment with their institution, the extent to which such contracts specify how many hours these members of staff should work and how they should spend their time will vary considerably.

Some institutions, for example, do not specify working hours for members of academic staff, stating simply that individuals should ensure that their responsibilities are undertaken to an appropriate standard. Some are more specific in setting out expected working hours, while others go further and set out how much of an individual’s time should be spent on teaching and other activities.

In all cases, the workload model should be consistent with the contractual arrangements to which members of staff are subject. This may need to be taken into account when developing the model. And it should also be borne in mind when the model is applied to the workloads of individual members of academic staff.

It should be remembered, though, that the aim of the workload is to accurately reflect academic staff workloads, not to direct them. Consequently, where staff workloads are not consistent with contractual arrangements, this is a matter for academic management, rather than for those working to develop the workload model itself.

Furthermore, some members of academic staff will not be contracted to work full-time hours. In such cases, their part-time status will need to be reflected when the model is applied to their workload. Most importantly, the total expected workload for individual members of staff must be applied pro rata to reflect their part-time status. In addition, any general allocations used within the model may also need to be reduced accordingly.
Academic pathways and career development

Many institutions now set out career pathways for members of academic staff, such as teaching-focused, research-focused or teaching- and research-focused. In developing and implementing the workload model, institutions should consider which activities and tariffs may need to be differentiated to account for specific academic pathways.

For example, a general research allocation may need to be set at different tariffs for members of academic staff on different academic pathways. And a general teaching support allowance may not be relevant to members of staff on each of these pathways.

It may also be beneficial to make particular allowances for members of academic staff who are in the early stages of their career. This might include, for example, more generous teaching and research allocations, additional time to prepare and submit applications for research grant funding, and time to undertake relevant training. Alternatively, a specific ‘early career research’ allowance could be included within the model and tapered down over a defined period of years.

Worked example

Members of academic staff in the early stages of their careers are provided with more generous research and teaching support allowances, which are tapered down over a period of five years to be consistent with the allowances provided to all research-active and teaching-active academic staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Early career allowance</th>
<th>Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yr 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Yr 3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard research allowance</td>
<td>800 hrs</td>
<td>650 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching support allowance</td>
<td>300 hrs</td>
<td>225 hrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a clear and generous policy in place as to which members of staff are eligible for the early career allowances, to ensure consistency of treatment of staff across departments and faculties. The allowances are also available to members of academic staff re-joining the workforce after an extended period of absence.

New responsibilities and activities

The tariffs associated with the various teaching, research, management and administrative activities assume that these activities are undertaken with a reasonable degree of efficiency. However, for members of staff taking on new responsibilities, such efficiency cannot – at least for an initial period – be taken for granted.

When members of academic staff take on a new role or new responsibilities, it may be worth uplifting the associated tariff by a pre-determined factor, to provide these members of staff with more time to get to grips with their new role in the first year.

The same principle applies when members of academic staff teach a unit, module or course for the first time. It will take them more time than usual to get to grips with the content and to prepare and deliver the teaching. Consequently, it may also be worth uplifting the tariff associated with taught...
units, modules or courses when they are being taught by a member of staff who has not taught them before.

Worked example

Members of academic staff undertaking teaching activities are provided with an allowance for preparation and delivery that is based on contact hours multiplied by a standard multiplier. Members of staff teaching a module for the first time are provided with additional time through the use of a higher multiplier as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching activity</th>
<th>Preparation multiple</th>
<th>Preparation multiple for first delivery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorials</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicals / Lab classes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So a member of staff teaching a module that consists of 10 one-hour lectures would normally receive a workload allocation of 30 hours, while a member of staff teaching the module for the first time would receive an allocation of 80 hours in the first year and 30 hours in subsequent years.

Furthermore, when members of academic staff are involved in the development of brand new units, modules or courses, or in the refreshing of existing ones, the time that they will be required to spend on this should also be reflected in their workload model. The tariff associated with this activity should be agreed on a case-by-case basis, following consideration of the work to be done and the likely implications of this on the individual’s workload.

Staff leave and absence

Members of academic staff may take leave from their usual activities for a number of reasons. This may be for professional reasons, such as a research sabbatical, or it may be for personal reasons, such as maternity / paternity leave or as a result of illness.

Where such periods of absence can be identified in advance, they can be integrated into the workload allocations for the individuals concerned. This might involve, for example, categorising a research sabbatical or a period of maternity leave as a specific activity and allocating to it a suitable tariff based on the proposed length of the period of absence.

The tariffs associated with other activities, such as general research or administrative allowances, may also need to be reduced accordingly.

For reasons of confidentiality and privacy, institutions may prefer to categorise certain periods of absence, especially those relating to an individual’s personal circumstances, as simply ‘other’ or something similarly discreet.

Some periods of absence may not be planned prior to the beginning of the academic year, or – indeed – planned at all, so it may not be possible to include them in the workload allocations for the relevant members of staff at this stage. The relevant allocations can, however, be updated at a later juncture, if required.
Chapter 6

Implementing workload modelling in practice

As discussed in Chapter 3, the development of a robust and evidence-based workload model can bring significant benefits to institutions. But these benefits can only be realised if the model is implemented effectively. This means securing senior management buy-in and putting in place appropriate management structures and processes.

Ownership of the model

The workload model cannot be initiated, developed and operated by any one individual or team alone. It is a significant undertaking that requires the support and participation of academic and professional services staff across the institution.

Three roles are of particular importance and should be filled before development of the workload model commences:

- **Academic Champion** – Is the overall ‘figurehead’ for the workload model and extols its virtues to members of academic staff, ensuring that they are supportive of the model and that they contribute to its development and implementation.

- **Project Lead** – Has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the workload model and ensures that the project team has the time, resources and support that it needs to see the project through to successful completion.

- **Project Manager** – Will manage the development and implementation of the workload model on a day-to-day basis, working closely with academic and professional services staff from across the institution.
In smaller institutions, the roles of academic champion and project lead could be combined, provided one individual is able and willing to fulfil both functions.

It would also be advisable to form a high level steering group – chaired by the project lead – to oversee the development and implementation of the model, bringing together senior academic and professional services managers whose engagement and support is required for successful delivery of the project.

The steering group is likely to include those with responsibility for planning, finance and human resources as well as senior members of academic staff, such as the pro vice-chancellor responsible for resources (or equivalent), faculty deans and a number of heads of department.

It is also helpful to establish an operational project team, reporting to the project manager, consisting of individuals from the relevant faculties, departments and teams involved in the development and implementation of the model. These individuals do not necessarily have to work on the project full time, but their involvement will help to ensure that the project manager has access to the information and resources required to undertake the project.

If the institution is using in-house expertise to develop the software that will be used for the model, then members of the information technology team should also be included in the steering group and project team. If an external provider is to be engaged, then they should be invited to send a representative to steering group and project team meetings. (A good provider will insist on this anyway.)

Figure 4 summarises an example governance structure for the development of the workload model.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4: Example organisational structure for the governance of the development process**

Once the model has been implemented, it is important to ensure that there is a suitable structure in place for its ongoing governance, management and operation. Ideally, the steering group that oversaw the development of the model will continue in its governance role after the model has been
implemented. The academic champion and project lead should also, if possible, continue in their roles, though now with a focus on using the workload model to inform decision making.

The project team may continue to manage the ongoing operation and use of the workload model. Alternatively, the management and operation of the model may be integrated into the activities of existing teams. Where the project team continues to manage the model, it may be helpful to review its membership, to ensure that it includes representation from all those involved in the operation and use of the model.

Institutions may also wish to form a user group, including representation from members of academic staff as well as users of the workload modelling data, which can provide input to the project team on how easy the model is to use in practice and help to identify areas for future development.

**Setting up and implementing the model**

In order to develop and implement the workload model successfully, the process needs to be approached in a clear, logical and transparent way. While the approach taken will depend on the individual institution and its ways of working, a successful approach is likely to include the following stages and tasks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1 Planning</th>
<th>Agreeing the aims of the workload model and putting in place suitable governance and management structures to support the project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seek and gain approval to initiate the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and appoint an academic champion and a project lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appoint members of the steering group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree the aims of the model and how success will be measured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree the key design parameters for the model, e.g. scope, approach to tariffs, software platform, key outputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engage with key stakeholders, unions and others in a position of influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree an evaluation strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 2 Research</th>
<th>Identifying the activities that need to be included in the model and exploring how they could be included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engage with faculty deans and heads of school/department – as well as relevant members of support staff – to secure their engagement with and support for the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use workshops and interviews to identify the full range of activities undertaken by members of academic staff and to get an indication of the amount of time that members of academic staff spend on them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and assess the information that is available at departmental level in respect of academic workloads, e.g. teaching data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engage with academic and professional services departments that 'own' the data that will be needed to develop and implement the model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th>Testing</th>
<th>Ensuring that the model is robust and that it meets the needs of the institution and of those who will use it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Populate the model with workload data for a small number of members of academic staff, ideally from different departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Review the model and make any necessary revisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Pilot the model on one or two academic departments, to ensure that it works as desired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Review the model and make any necessary revisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• If substantial revisions are made, go through the testing stage again</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 5</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Rolling out the workload model across the institution and its constituent faculties, schools and departments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Engage with key stakeholders, unions and others in a position of influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Roll-out the model across the remaining academic departments, either all at once or on a phased basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Engage proactively and effectively with members of academic staff, to secure buy-in to the model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide academic and other staff with appropriate support to facilitate their use of the model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Monitor the roll-out and respond promptly to any issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 6</th>
<th>Review</th>
<th>Reviewing the implementation of the workload model and assessing the extent to which it has achieved the agreed aims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Undertake a review of the design and operation of the model, once it has bedded in, to identify any potential improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Review the approach taken to the development and implementation of the model, to identify any opportunities for future improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Assess the extent to which the model has achieved its agreed aims, bearing in mind that this may not happen instantly, and make any necessary refinements to the approach taken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The project steering group should be kept updated as to progress on a regular basis and should have
the opportunity to review and approve key aspects of the model as it is developed. Regular checking
back with potential users of the model is also beneficial, as it can help to identify any issues early on,
when it is easier to address them.

**Collating workload data**

The population of the model will require data in respect of teaching, research and other activities for
all members of academic staff who fall within the scope of the model. It is important, therefore, to
consider how this data can be obtained. Ideally, the institution will already possess data in respect of
staff teaching and research commitments, which can be input into the model. This data may be held
in central systems or within individual academic departments.

Departments may hold lists of the management and administrative posts held by members of
academic staff. And heads of department or departmental managers may also be able to provide
information in respect of other aspects of staff workload.

For some data, however, it is likely that members of academic staff may need to be consulted
directly. Depending on the software package used, it may be that they can input such data directly
into the model, subject to appropriate review and approval by their line manager or another
designated individual.

**Managing the workload modelling process**

In order to be effective, the workload model needs to be updated on a regular basis, probably each
term or at other suitable points in the academic cycle. Furthermore, the more data that can be input
centrally by management or administration teams (or even extracted directly from other systems),
the more efficient the process will be.

Ideally, the annual workload modelling process will look something like this:

| At the beginning of the academic year | • The workload model is populated by faculty/departmental management or administration teams, who also prepare workload allocations for individual members of academic staff *
| (or, preferably, prior to the beginning of the year) | • Provisional workload allocations are shared with individual members of academic staff and any issues are identified and addressed *
| During the academic year | • Workload allocations are updated to reflect significant changes to staff roles and responsibilities or to take account of extended periods of absence
| At the end of the academic year | • Members of academic staff confirm that their actual workload was broadly in line with the model or raise issues to be addressed *
| | • Issues regarding the workload allocations of individual members of academic staff are addressed
| | • The overall workload model is reviewed and any appropriate revisions are agreed and implemented |
The elements of the process marked with an asterisk (*) are mandatory if institutions wish to use the workload model to provide academic staff time allocation data for TRAC purposes.

It is crucial that suitable and sufficient resources are made available to faculties and departments to allow for the effective management of the workload modelling process.
Chapter 7

Engagement and communication

The successful development and implementation of a workload model requires the support of members of academic and professional services staff alike. The best way to secure this support is through proactive engagement and communication from the outset.

Getting engagement and buy-in

It is common for new management initiatives to be viewed with a healthy degree of scepticism by members of academic staff. And so it is vital that the institution makes every effort to engage members of academic staff in the project and to secure their support.

Institutions can start by setting out clearly what the workload model is designed to achieve and how this will benefit members of academic staff. Ideally, this will be supported by evidence as to why workload modelling is a suitable approach to achieving the desired aims and benefits.

Incidentally, if institutions are not able to set out clearly what the workload model is designed to achieve and how this will benefit members of academic staff, they may wish to defer the initiation of the project until they are able to do so.

A further way to secure engagement is to get members of academic staff involved in the development of the model itself.

Two common criticisms of academic workload models are (a) that they do not include all of the activities that members of academic staff undertake and (b) that the tariff associated with different activities is not a realistic reflection of the number of hours that it takes to do them. Consulting closely with members of academic staff during the development of the model will, therefore, help to counter such criticisms while also securing buy-in to the model itself. It will also, critically, result in a better model.

Another criticism of academic workload models is that they tend to be far from transparent, so that it is not possible to see how workload allocations have been determined. An obvious way to counter this, and to secure engagement with the workload modelling process, is to be completely open
about the different activities included in the model, the tariffs associated with these activities, and how these tariffs have been determined.

Institutions should also seek to ensure that the aims of the workload model are achieved and that the achievement of these aims – together with the associated benefits for members of academic staff – is communicated clearly to those involved. A new management process that yields no tangible benefits quickly becomes a chore. One that makes a positive difference to people’s working lives, however, is much more likely to be welcomed.

**Identifying and managing key stakeholders**

While it is important to engage with all members of academic staff when developing the workload model, and indeed with relevant members of professional services staff, there are likely to be some individuals whose support is particularly important.

This might include:

- senior members of academic staff, such as faculty deans and heads of department;
- members of academic staff with particular subject matter expertise in this area;
- chairs and members of certain academic committees;
- members of academic staff who carry particular influence amongst their peers as a result of their position, experience or other factors; and
- union representatives.

Institutions should make every effort to engage proactively with such members of staff and to secure their active support for the development of the workload model. Where such individuals express concerns about the model or the development process, institutions should seek where possible to address these.

**Liaising with staff unions**

In addition to working with members of academic and professional services staff, it is important also to engage with staff unions. The collection of personal workload data is a sensitive topic in most institutions, so it makes sense to ensure that representatives of the appropriate unions are content that the interests of their members are not under threat.

Indeed, the main unions active in the higher education sector have engaged heavily in the debate around workload models, so it is likely that their involvement will help to create a better workload model than would otherwise be the case, as well as one that better meets the needs of individual members of academic staff.

The institution’s human resources team may be able to provide advice on how best to engage with staff unions, including which unions are recognised, who the appropriate contacts are and how the liaison can best be approached.
Communicating effectively

There are many ways to communicate with members of staff, in addition to the focus groups and interviews suggested already as a way of learning about the activities that members of academic staff undertake and the amount of time that these activities require.

The aim of communicating with members of staff is two-fold. Firstly, it seeks to provide them with sufficient information about the workload model to allow them to understand how it will work and what it will mean for them in practical terms. Secondly, it seeks to engage them in the process of developing and implementing the model itself, so that the model is sensitive to their needs and to the ways in which they work.

Consequently, all communication should be a two-way process. And it should be done openly, honestly and effectively. Communication that is ‘broadcast only’ is unlikely to be effective.

Direct individual contact can be initiated by email or through staff newsletters. A short presentation at staff meetings can be helpful, provided the person presenting is in a position to respond to any questions that members of staff may have. And specific events with presentations and ‘question and answer’ sessions, ‘town hall’ meetings and drop-in sessions can be useful, as they allow members of staff to meet directly with representatives of the project team.

It is also advisable to take advantage of existing academic management structures to disseminate information and to seek feedback. This will allow the project team to engage with decision-makers in areas such as teaching and research, which is imperative if the workload model is to reflect accurately the institution’s policies and approaches in these areas.

Many institutions also choose to set up a dedicated project website, where information regarding the workload model and its development can be made available to members of academic staff. Such an approach cannot hurt, of course, but it should not be mistaken for genuine communication.

Regardless of the communications methods used, all members of staff should also be provided with well-publicised points of contact for the project, with whom they can get in touch should they have any suggestions, queries or concerns.
Chapter 8

Using workload data to make things happen

A common criticism of workload models is that they do not actually make anything better. In the worst cases, in fact, the model highlights a significant issue that then remains conspicuously unaddressed. It is not up to the model itself, though, to effect change. Rather, the role of the model is to provide information to allow decisions to be made and action to be taken. If nothing gets better, it is because nobody has taken action to make things better.

Using the workload model

The key to an effective workload model is to use the information it yields to make decisions that promote positive change. And to do so openly, transparently and fairly.

The best way to achieve this is to think back to the institution’s original objectives in developing the model, to analyse the results of the workload model in light of these objectives, to consider carefully what these results mean and to decide what the institution is going to do about it.

This is not, of course, something that can – or, indeed, should – be done by any one individual in isolation. The workload model and the issues that it raises should be discussed and addressed by senior academic managers at departmental, faculty or institution level, depending on the nature of the issues and of the action required.

If the information from the workload model identifies issues in respect of the nature or distribution of staff workloads, it is imperative that these issues are addressed. Otherwise, there is little point in having the workload model at all.
Understanding workloads

In order to understand what the model is telling the institution about academic staff workloads, there are a number of questions that institutions can ask. These include:

**Workload activities**

- What are members of academic staff spending their time on?
- Is this what the institution would expect?
- Which activities take up the most time?
- Are these the activities that the institution would like members of academic staff to be spending their time on?
- Do these activities contribute to the achievement of the institution’s strategic aims?

**Individual workloads**

- Which members of staff have workloads in excess of a reasonable maximum?
- What are these members of staff doing that others are not?
- Which members of staff have workloads below a reasonable minimum?
- What are these members of staff not doing that others are?

**Variations in workload**

- How do workloads vary from department to department and from faculty to faculty?
- How do workloads vary between more junior and more senior members of staff?
- How do workloads vary between members of staff of different genders?
- Where variations exist, are there genuine and acceptable reasons for them?

When reviewing the workloads of individual members of staff, it may be beneficial to discuss these with the members of staff themselves, or with their head of department or faculty dean. This will allow institutions to gain deeper insight into the activities undertaken by members of staff and into the impact that these activities have on staff workloads.

**Managing capacity**

One of the issues highlighted frequently by workload models is the high workloads experienced by members of academic staff. While some members of academic staff are content to work long hours, it is important to recognise that not all members of staff wish to do so, or indeed are in a position to be able to do so. And so a culture of excessive workloads and long hours should be combated as a matter of priority.

At issue, however, is not so much the number of hours that members of academic staff work, as many may wish to pursue their research or other interests outside regular working hours. What we are interested in here is whether the teaching, research and other activities that members of academic staff are expected to undertake can be accomplished without working excessively long hours.
A related issue is the *profiling* of workloads, i.e. when in the year the different activities are undertaken. It is common for there to be certain periods during the year when workloads are especially high, such as during marking periods or in the run-up to deadlines for the approval of new courses or modules. Where members of academic staff undertake activities with ‘peak’ periods like this, it can easily create excessively high workloads at certain points during the year.

Where staff workloads are excessively high, either in general or at particular points during the year, action should be taken to reduce or to reprofile the workloads of the members of staff affected. This does not mean, however, simply reducing the time available for research or cutting general allocations to reduce the overall workload. It means reviewing the activities undertaken by individual members of staff and identifying what can be done to reduce, redistribute or curtail these activities.

In times of financial pressure, it is always tempting to seek to achieve more by placing greater responsibility on individual members of academic staff. This can include asking them to do more teaching, to mark more assessments or to prepare more applications for grant funding. It can also include asking them to take on greater administrative responsibilities, so that administrative staff roles can be streamlined or reduced.

However, where members of academic staff are asked to take on additional responsibilities or to do more within their existing responsibilities, it is important that they are provided with the time and the resources to do this. The workload model is a way of enhancing efficiency and managing financial and other pressures *without* subjecting members of academic staff to excessively high workloads.

**Improving fairness**

The flipside to excessively high workloads is members of academic staff who are perhaps not pulling their weight as much as they could. This is not to say that they are not doing anything, but that they are able to spend more of their time on research, because other members of staff are picking up the slack by undertaking more teaching, management and administrative activities.

This can mean, among other things, that female members of staff and those in more junior positions spend a greater proportion of their time working on pastoral and administrative activities. This inhibits their ability to develop their own portfolios of research, which can have a negative impact on their career prospects in the longer term.

Furthermore, because teaching and administrative activities usually have to take place within the working day and generally have specific timescales or deadlines, it is these activities that get scheduled first. And when workloads are tight, it is inevitably time spent on research that falls by the wayside or gets done outside normal working hours. This penalises those research-active members of staff who are not able – or simply do not wish – to undertake research outside their normal working hours, such as those with family or caring responsibilities.

Workload modelling data allows the institution to ensure that all members of academic staff have a suitable workload and that this includes, for research-active members of staff, adequate time for research activities and for the preparation of research grant applications. It also provides the institution with the ability to identify those members of academic staff who could realistically take on a greater workload.
This can go a long way towards creating a fair working environment, where all members of academic staff have the opportunity to fulfil their teaching and administrative obligations while also pursuing their research interests.

**Workload modelling and TRAC**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, a workload model can also be used to collect academic staff time allocation data for the purposes of the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) methodology, thus removing the need to conduct time allocation surveys.

This is dependent, however, on a certain number of requirements being met. Firstly, the workload model must be updated annually and should include all members of academic staff whose time is not allocated directly to teaching, research or other activities within the TRAC methodology.

It should be noted, however, that it is not necessary for the model to be used across the entire institution. It is perfectly acceptable within TRAC for different academic departments to use different approaches to academic staff time allocation, as long as each department uses only one approach that covers all academic staff within that department.

The model should include only time ‘managed by the institution’, which is usually interpreted to cover all time during which members of academic staff are undertaking activities that fall within their academic role within the institution. And so it excludes, for example, holidays or periods of non-work-related absence.

Activities included within the model should be mapped to the specific activities used within the TRAC methodology. And time spent on research should be recorded, as a minimum, at the level of research sponsor type, e.g. institution own-funded, research councils, UK government departments, EU institutions, etc. Furthermore, workload data should be converted into percentages, i.e. the percentage of total working time spent on the different activities.

When updating the workload model at the start of each year, the overall workload allocation for each member of academic staff must be agreed with that member of staff. Furthermore, members of academic staff must be asked to confirm at the end of the year that their activities over the course of the year were broadly in line with their workload allocation or to suggest such revisions as to ensure that the workload allocation reflects their activity during the year. In academic departments with fewer than fifty members of academic staff, a confirmation rate of 75% must be achieved. For departments with fifty of more members of academic staff, the confirmation rate must exceed 50% or 38 returns, whichever is the greater.

The use of a workload model to avoid the need to conduct time allocation surveys for TRAC purposes can be a major selling point when considering whether or not to develop an academic workload model. However, it is not in itself a sufficient reason to develop and implement such a model. The main power of a workload model lies in the way that it allows institutions to understand academic workloads and to ensure that these workloads are allocated efficiently, effectively and fairly. And it is this that should be its primary purpose.
Chapter 9

Useful resources

There is a growing range of resources upon which institutions can draw when developing and implementing academic workload models. This final chapter sets out some of the publications and other resources that institutions may find useful.

Academic workloads and workload models

There is a fairly decent amount academic literature on the development, management and effectiveness of workload models. And while some of it is perhaps slightly dated now, the underlying issues remain the same.


Workload models and equality, diversity and inclusion

Academic and practitioner research is focusing increasingly on the role of workload models in helping to improve equality, diversity and inclusion within higher education institutions. This is driven, at least in part, by the Athena SWAN accreditation process.


What other institutions are doing

While some institutions have been operating workload models for a while now, many are just starting on their journey. And some institutions that have hitherto operated devolved models across different faculties and departments are now working towards a more joined-up approach.

The level of publicly-available information in respect of workload modelling varies from institution to institution. Some that have made available a useful amount of information include:

University of the West of England: https://www1.uwe.ac.uk/about/departmentsandservices/professionalservices/strategicprogrammes/offices/innovationandtransformation/academicworkloadmodel.aspx

University of South Wales: https://www.southwales.ac.uk/about/policies/academic-workload-model/

University of East Anglia’s Faculty of Arts and Humanities: https://portal.uea.ac.uk/faculty-school-intranets/hum-intranet/workload-management-model

In my experience, though, most institutions engaged in workload modelling are more than happy to share with their peers the approach that they have adopted and the challenges that they have faced. Consequently, a quick phone call or email may prove productive.
Providers of workload modelling software packages

I have a suspicion that the most common software package used for workload modelling is Microsoft Excel. Followed by bespoke applications developed within the institution, which can be very good but can also vary considerably in quality and functionality.

There are also several commercially available workload modelling packages, including:

- Simitive’s Workload Allocation Management System (WAMS), which arose from the workload management system developed by the University of the West of England (http://www.simitive.com/workload-management.html);
- The Simple Workload Allocation and Resource Management (SWARM) application operated by Switch Systems (http://www.switchsystems.co.uk/software/swarm/); and
- Scientia’s Staff Workload Planner (SWP) application (https://www.scientia.com/product/staff-workload-planner/).

Professor Colin Turner at Ulster University has also developed a free, open source Workload Allocation Modeller, which is available at https://github.com/profcturner/WAM/wiki.

These software packages are listed for information only and their inclusion here should not be regarded as a recommendation. Other software packages are also available.

What the unions think about workload modelling

The staff unions active in the higher education sector have a keen interest in workload modelling, given its impact on the workloads of individual members of academic staff and its potential to ensure that these workloads are allocated transparently and fairly.

The University and College Union offers advice to its members on assessing workload models:


Local union branches also offer their thoughts on workload modelling. This contribution from the UCU’s local association in Bristol is particularly helpful:


Using workload modelling within the TRAC methodology

Detailed guidance in respect of the requirements of the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) methodology is available online at https://www.trac.ac.uk/tracguidance/. The most pertinent sections for workload modelling purposes are 3.1.4.19 and 3.1.4.26c.
About the author

Simon Perks is the founder and director of Sockmonkey Consulting, which helps organisations in the public, not-for-profit and social enterprise sectors to make better decisions, to improve their performance and to achieve better value for money.

He has twenty years’ experience of working across the higher education sector and has worked with sector bodies and individual higher education institutions on workload modelling, course costing, organisational strategy, value for money and a range of other issues.

He is married to Natalie, a senior lecturer at a well-known research-intensive university, and lives in Somerset with her and their two Labrador dogs.

You can contact Simon at hello@sockmonkeyconsulting.com