

# Underpinning Principles and Guidance for Academic Workload Allocation/Distribution Models

*Approved by Academic Council 25 Oct 2018*

## 1. Introduction

Academic Workload distribution models have been evolving in NUI Galway for a number of years. Key reasons for the development of workload models is to aid academic planning and management, as well as ensuring transparency and equity in the distribution of academic work. The NUI Galway Gender Equality Task Force 2016 recommended that issues of equity and fairness would be enhanced by identifying a set of principles to underpin workload models in use across our schools and units.

As part of the consultation exercises on the identification and refinement of the principles which we wish to underpin our academic workload distribution across NUI Galway, colleagues have also sought some institutional guidance on the use of workload allocation models.

**Section 2** below focuses on basic principles and contains the Principles for Academic Workload Allocation document recently approved at AMT (AMT Strategic meeting January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018). **These principles should underpin all academic workload allocation models and approaches in use across NUI Galway.**

The **guidance** which follows in the remainder of the document is intended to be helpful to Heads of School, School Executive Teams and Heads of Discipline in planning and managing the academic workload in the school and disciplinary context; while recognising that significant differences and at times quite unique sets of circumstances pertain at school/disciplinary level.

**Section 3.1** below details the areas identified for the generation of an Institutional Guidance Framework for workload distribution/allocation. **Section 3.2** contains advice for the development of WAMS.



## 2. Principles for Academic Workload Allocation

### 2.1 Introduction

Workload distribution for academic staff in NUI Galway should adhere to the agreed framework of principles set out in this section.

### 2.2 Purpose

The purpose of an **Academic Workload Allocation Model** is to ensure that:

1. Resources are allocated in a manner consistent with school, college and institutional priorities.
2. Workloads are compatible with reasonable expectations of work-life balance and facilitate a healthy working environment.
3. Workload tools in place, or being developed, in schools and colleges recognise the principle of equity of workload and the principle of equality under the 9 grounds, including gender equality.
4. There is an appropriate balance of activities assigned to staff.
5. There is a transparent process of allocation with clear communication of the outcome.
6. The need for efficiency of staff deployment is balanced with ensuring quality of research, teaching and student support, and service.

### 2.3 Scope

All academic staff, i.e. staff who undertake teaching, research, administration/university service, external engagement and practice, will normally be included in a school's workload allocation model. Each school will have a documented workload allocation scheme that conforms to these principles.

### 2.4 Principles

- Workloads are compatible with reasonable expectations of work-life balance and facilitate a healthy working environment.
- Workload is allocated in a manner that reflects the School, College and University's mission, vision, values and strategic priorities.
- NUI Galway expects academic staff to be active in (i) research/scholarship, (ii) to teach and provide student support and pastoral care and (iii) to participate in university service and contribution to the community. Workload allocation models should ensure that, over time, all staff members can develop their profiles and contributions under all three headings; having due regard to the nature of the individual employment contract.
- Where a staff member takes on a leadership role in research, teaching or administration that requires a high commitment of time, other normal duties may be reduced commensurately, subject to resource provision arrangements agreed with the School. Where a staff member's workload in a particular area (research, teaching, contribution) falls below a School norm, other normal duties may be increased commensurately by the Line Manager within the School in order to work towards equity of workload for all colleagues.



- Teaching and student support is an expectation of all academic staff, this may include but is not defined by PGR student supervision.
- Gender equality will be considered in workload allocation, particularly with regard to teaching and administration/pastoral care roles.
- Any model used to produce a workload allocation (Workload Allocation Model) should be practical and should not require disproportionate effort to maintain.
- Any workload allocation model needs to be flexible to deal with internal and external changes that may necessitate changes in workloads in any particular semester/academic year.
- The responsibility for allocation of workload ultimately lies with the Head of School (HoS), with input from the Dean of College where relevant; however this can be delegated to a workload allocation committee or to an academic line manager such as Head of Discipline. In practical terms, workload allocation is a consultative process involving a number of actors including but not restricted to the following: staff member, line manager, workload committee and HoS.
- In this regard Heads of School must be guided by the fair and equitable distribution of administrative tasks (including school, college and university working group/committee work), recognising the necessity for colleagues to be enabled to get experience at all relevant levels for purposes of professional development and promotion.
- Workload allocation categories should align with, and should inform the development of, academic staff promotion criteria.
- Overall workload requirement is the same for all staff. At the same time, workloads are shaped by the experience and seniority of staff and the proportional allocation of work may allow for the reflection of these attributes.
- The workload allocation takes into account all areas of activity that are expected of staff and allows appropriate flexibility for unscheduled activities.
- There must be transparency in the scheme, to aid equality and equity of treatment of staff, and a full understanding of the scheme by all staff.
- The assessment of the impact of the introduction of a new policy on academic workload should be part of the development and introduction of any new institutional policy.



### 3. Areas for the Generation of an Institutional Guidance Framework for WAM

This document assumes development of a WAM based on the average 40:40:20 academic profile. However it is recognised that this profile does not fit all members of academic staff and WAM development at a local level may vary as a result.

Section 3.1 below indicates areas where guidance has been identified as useful and Section 3.2 identifies points of advice for WAM development.

#### 3.1 Identified Areas for Institutional Guidance

- 3.1.1 The University does not stipulate a particular workload allocation model that has to be adopted. Appendix 2 provides a series of suggested options which could be considered in developing a school-based approach to workload allocation.
- 3.1.2 Necessity to develop workload equivalences for positions and roles taken on by staff, e.g. leadership and management positions such as HoS (**0.5 FTE**), Vice Dean (**minimum of 0.2 FTE / day per week**), Head of Discipline, Programme Directors and school specific roles need to be considered at a local level by HoS in consultation with the Dean of College.
- 3.1.3 There are a variety of ways of considering equivalencies of activities and commitments, both quantitative and qualitative. For example using a 5 ECTS credit module equivalent in terms of credits or notional hours (as in the Cairnes School of Business and Economics), a notional hours unlinked with ECTS credits approach (as the School of Physics has previously used), a real hours approach (as the School of Physics is moving to), or a different type of credit based system (as in the School of Chemistry).
- 3.1.4 Many schools have categorised staff admin roles according to estimated commitment required – as portrayed for example in Appendix 1, Table 1.
- 3.1.5 Optimal WAM configuration: high-level or quantitative, or a compromise? There appears to be benefit in the Simple, Obvious, Short (SOS) approach. In some WAMs assigning workload is done on a very high level, and lacks the necessary granularity: lecturing a large class versus a small class; having labs associated with a module or not (as part of or extra to the module hours); if delivering a new module or revamping content significantly for a module versus delivering the same module many years in a row. Advice received from across the University suggests the following options:

Option 1: Initial counting of all timetabled commitments and assessment of admin roles in attempt to reach equivalency. Separate recording of research metrics (not just outputs) – some schools use a single sheet template for this, others use two files viewed in parallel but not combined – please see Appendix 2 for examples of WAM templates.

Option 2: High-level SOS approach, with quantification of teaching hours, may be preferable to some school executives, such as example presented from the Cairnes



School of Business and Economics (SBE) (Appendix 2). However, it must be clear to all staff how the model works and implementation of model is key.

In relation to large versus small class teaching, new versus continuing modules, lectures versus labs, attempting to equalise varying demands using metrics may be very difficult. Over time experience suggests that these varying demands tend to even out across staff. However, there must be an attempt to ensure that new/junior staff are not overburdened with more demanding tasks/teaching. It is also the case that new programme development may need to be incentivised within a school and weighting hours / credits in a WAM can assist in supporting this agenda. Some schools may also work on a nominal standard 5 credit module in terms of student numbers (e.g. 50 – 70 at undergraduate; 15 – 20 at PGT) and class sizes above and below this are weighted accordingly in terms of staff workload.

Some institutions work on a formula of the equivalent of 3 hours development time for each contact hour of new teaching at undergrad level and 5 hours development time for each contact hour of new teaching at PGT level. This type of formula is common for example in Scottish universities and is closely associated with their new programme costing model. A similar approach may provide a useful rule of thumb for assessing equivalencies, although schools may wish to develop their own guidance on this.

- 3.1.6 Crediting PhD supervision as part of (but not all of) a staff member's teaching workload allocation. This can be equated to a fraction of a 5 ECTS module (1/3, ½ and up to one 5 credit module equivalent are currently being used in schools across NUI Galway). In the normal context of a school, where PhD supervision is considered as part of a teaching rather than research workload commitment there was general consensus on the following: Max 4 PhD students (FT) to count (years 1-4 only) towards teaching commitment (0.33 to 0.5 to 1.0 x 5 ECTS per student), with recognition for remaining PGR supervision included in research workload commitment.
- 3.1.7 Currently norms for minimum classroom teaching vary across the University, and depend very much on the nature of module teaching modes in the different schools/disciplines (lecture/classroom vs. lab practicals vs. project work-sessions, etc.), SEM schools vs ABL schools, and the specific teaching requirements of the school/discipline. Local norms for minimum classroom teaching vary depending on the broad subject / disciplinary area.
- 3.1.8 Pastoral care of students forms part of normal academic workloads. In some Schools such care is delivered as part of a "Personal Tutor" model with identified "office hours" per week where a student can drop in knowing that the staff member will be available, queries at any other time are dealt with by email, phone or a mutually convenient time. Pastoral care may also be provided for specific student cohorts in a more concentrated, personalised manner through the identification of specified 'go to' personnel in a manner commensurate with a local WAM. The following approaches are currently in use in some schools in NUI Galway:



**A.** Not included separately. It is a requirement of all staff, as is participation in Open days etc. If everyone does something we do not include it as it is not part of the balancing workload process.

**B.** All staff should be required to provide ‘office hours’ and this should be the same across staff. Therefore, no need to be included in a WAM. In some schools there is an expectation of the provision of 2 office hours per week or equivalent incorporating email contact and so forth.

**C.** This is already taken care of as part of the role of year coordinator and course coordinator. In addition, one academic and one admin person has the role of “student welfare officer” as part of their duties.

There is a concern that if this is not included as a separate item in the WAM, and school expectations clearly articulated, the burden will be unevenly distributed: while it may be part of co-ordination duties, some staff are approached more frequently than others and the time commitment to pastoral care can vary from year to year, module to module and staff to staff.

- 3.1.9 Guideline on appropriate expectation of an early career academic (ECA) in first academic post: Normally a reduced teaching and admin workload in Year 1 and 2 to 75% of normal load, followed by normal duties in Year 3. The ramp-up in a role would be set out in the letter of appointment and probation documentation for that role.
- 3.1.10 Reasonable accommodations, as appropriate, will be made for colleagues returning from long term leave (illness leave/mat leave/carer leave - often defined as leave of 24 weeks or greater) to support their re-orientating / reintegrating in the school/discipline.
- 3.1.11 Definition of the working week: We work under the European Working Time Directive, which became Irish Law in The Organisation of Working Time Act 1997.<sup>1</sup> We

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<sup>1</sup> The Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 states that the maximum average working week for many employees cannot exceed 48 hours. This does not mean that a working week can never exceed 48 hours, it is the average that is important. The average may be calculated in one of the following ways:

Over 4 months for most employees. Over 6 months for employees working in the security industry, hospitals, prisons, gas/electricity, airport/docks, agriculture and employees in businesses which have peak periods at certain times of the year such as tourism. Over 12 months where there has been an agreement between the employer and the employees to this effect. The agreement between employer and employees must be approved by the Labour Court.

The calculation of 48 hours does not include annual leave, sick leave or maternity/adoptive/parental leave. The legislation also lays down rules for night workers, minimum breaks and rest periods. There are also special provisions in relation to Sunday working - see below.

Exceptions: The provisions of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 on working time and rest periods do not apply to all employees. They do not apply to the Gardaí, Defence Forces, employees who control their own working hours or family employees on farms or in private homes. The working hours of young people under the age of 18 are regulated by the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996. There are separate regulations governing the working time of trainee doctors (SI 494/2004), employees working in mobile road transport activities (SI 36/2012) and employees working at sea. Employees in certain categories of civil protection services (SI 52/1998) are currently exempt from provisions on maximum average working week and statutory rest breaks/periods.



understand flexibility can be expected at certain points in the academic year, for example increased work load around assessment turn-around times for progression and award boards, but this must be an exception, not a norm or it will have a detrimental effect on quality of life and work life balance. There seems to be a norm in some schools or colleges in terms of a notional total number of working hours per annum. Feedback included:

- A. Does not exist in some schools but does in others - many have identified the additional one hour per week. A number of schools have shied away from counting hours directly because it adds unnecessary complications.
  - B. Do not believe that matching work/tasks against hours would be useful.
  - C. Since many Lecturer type B staff are expected to work a 40/40/20 split, using an indicative total might give academic staff a useful indication of whether their assigned workloads are fair/equitable.
  - D. The notion of a specified working year is understood in the Discipline. The notion that work only requires 40 hr in a week for full-time researching academics is less well understood. It should be well understood that this degree of effort is notional and individuals will exceed this, particularly in their research, particularly if they wish to be internationally competitive.
- 3.1.12 Implementing the WAM at Discipline or School level? General emerging consensus is that school-level oversight is necessary via the HoS/School Executive. WAMS may be difficult to implement only at school level in some of the larger and more complex schools. In these units WAMs may be implemented/managed by HoDs or other line managers as appropriate, with oversight by HoS/School Executive. Implementing a WAM at the discipline level would potentially provide additional flexibility that may be useful to adapt to discipline specific features, but needs to reflect an overarching school model, and needs to be implemented transparently within disciplinary groups and to HoS and Executive, if not across an entire school.

- 3.1.13 There is a need to more accurately capture the research process and breakdown of time invested in the different steps of the process within the research 40% allocation of the current WAM.

While a focus on publication output is helpful, concentrating only on this measure is neglecting other critical steps in the research process (if you like, the actual work invested equivalent to contact hours in teaching) and other outcomes that feed into the university's strategic research plan.

Moving towards a structure that accounts for (1) peer-review publications, (2) consortia grants submitted, (3) grants won, (4) number of major research projects as PI, and/or (5) number and level of research staff supervised (outside of PhDs), e.g. research assistants, post-docs, etc., may be a more accurate way of capturing other processes and outcomes that are critical for building research capacity and achieving research performance indicators. Of course the steps in this process may differ across colleges and should be adjusted and articulated accordingly. However feedback to date suggests that a number of schools do not think there are effective ways of measuring research activity across all colleges and are of the view that this should be done at a local level. This is particularly the case, for example, in the Humanities where



there is little agreement in terms of effective metrics of research. In this context the splitting of PhD supervision between teaching and research does not seem to reflect practice in the Humanities.

- 3.1.14 Where a member of academic staff is heavily engaged in research activity, allocations under the other headings (teaching, contribution etc.) should be adjusted where feasible and appropriate.
- 3.1.15 If a member of staff is to have teaching or administrative duties reduced in order to engage in externally funded research that is of strategic importance to the institution then that external funding should pay for the replacement of those other duties.
- 3.1.16 Local norms around aspects of workload are needed given the unique nature of work activities in schools such as the schools preparing students for professional practice – e.g. School of Psychology, School of Education and so forth that may involve placement supervision throughout Ireland.
- 3.1.17 The process of developing norms needs to be iterative and developmental. The broad framework needs to be provided and then the systems that arise as a result of the customising process at school level need to be reviewed in an open and transparent way. We need to have a forum where Heads of School can take the operationalised models for review – maybe professional schools could work together in one team and other teams would work on different cognate areas.
- 3.1.18 In terms of professional schools, the formation of new professionals is a dialogic practice that needs time and commitment that extends beyond the academic into the professional work context. In the School of Education, for example, staff have a four hour per visit allowance on average as placements can be at considerable distances from the university campus. Pilot testing shows that a local school visit can take 1.5 hours approx., travel adds significantly to this. Supervision of 3 student teachers in the same school is a full school day. Such clinical and placement visits also have a relationship building component to the visit, which means it is not always a quick in and out. Again in the School of Education most staff have 8 students- 3 visits generally per student – this is the minimum number required by the Teaching Council, this equates to 24 visits per year - 96 hours - more than half an annual teaching load. This type of issue arises also in the School of Psychology and across most if not all disciplines the CMNHS.
- 3.1.19 From WAMs presented to date the time allocation per ECTS varies across disciplines and schools. For example in 1 WAM one hour of teaching = 1ECT. Is it possible to get consensus/guidance within and/or across colleges on ECT-to-hour equivalence for teaching as is provided for leadership and management roles (where equivalences in terms of a standard 5 ECTS module = 24-36 contact hours).
- 3.1.20 Continuous professional development: While allowance need not be made for attendance at occasional seminars, if there is a serious level of commitment to CPD required this should be encouraged/ facilitated/ recognised in some way. In some institutions where the PGC/D is a requirement (some institutions in England and Scotland) the equivalent of 30 hours / 0.75 of a 5 credit module equivalent is used to recognise the workload linked to PGD.
- 3.1.21 Following review of PMDS, links to the WAM will be considered in due course - with reference to both workload allocation and staff development.



- 3.1.22 This underlying principles and guidance document will be reviewed within three years from first introduction.

### 3.2 Advice for the Development of WAMs

- 3.2.1 There must be transparency in the use of WAMs, to aid equality and equity of treatment of staff, and a full understanding of the WAMs by all staff. The main point here is sufficient transparency – there will be individual circumstances that must be treated confidentially (e.g. serious illness, personal circumstances). Therefore a real issue is how to balance the need for transparency with the need to at least occasionally protect privacy. GDPR must be adhered to. There is a crucial need for a full understanding of the WAM by all staff impacted by it. The responsibility for this should lie with the Heads of School and/or Discipline. In relation to individual circumstances, if all staff are made aware that this is part of the process and that there is a need for confidentiality in some instances, then this will likely be acceptable. Transparency should be set to protect individual privacy. The notion of “essential personal leave” covers a) that a leave has been approved and b) that it is due to personal circumstances. Those taking up the slack deserve to know something about the reason – essential personal leave is different from extended holiday or career break or other types of “non-compelled” leave.
- 3.2.2 Workload allocation categories should align with, and should inform the development of, academic staff promotion schemes. General agreement emerging on this statement. There should be an alignment without implying a formulaic step-by-step pathway to promotion. E.g. performance in the categories are necessary but not, per se, sufficient for advancement.
- 3.2.3 Annual leave should be aligned with the sector norm, and the sector norm needs to be determined (in the region of 6 weeks?). Seems useful guideline – as against a hard and fast position requiring contractual change.
- 3.2.4 Any workload allocation model needs to be flexible to deal with internal and external changes that may necessitate changes in workloads in any particular semester/academic year.
- 3.2.5 Expectation of when WAMs can be finalised in any given year – seems to be late summer out of necessity (staff changes, recruitment issues and so forth). Indicative teaching (and other workload) schedules can be developed in late spring/early summer. This is important for staff who may need considerable time to prepare a new course. Many teaching schedules are drafted in April/May, with changes made over the summer where necessary.
- 3.2.6 There are two main contracts in operation with different terms: Lecturer A (60% Teaching; 20% Teaching-related Research; 20% Admin/Contribution); Lecturer B (40% Teaching; 40% Research; 20% Admin/Contribution). Therefore workload allocation distributions across the main workload categories will have to vary somewhat given the different expectation of holders of these differing contracts.



- 3.2.7 Recommended to include an introductory section in (individual) WAM guidance documents clearly outlining the ethos/philosophy behind the WAM guidelines, which is to support academics in the context of Institutional/School/Unit work profile. This would align with the “Principles of Workload Allocation” document (Appendix 1). The language used in the document should reflect this philosophy.
- 3.2.8 Avoid requirement for excessive recording.

### 3.3 Additional feedback to the Working Group that may be helpful

Critiques of WAMs. The following points were raised by contributors:

- 3.3.1 Local champions and facilitative leaders are important to successful implementation.
- 3.3.2 Locally developed WAMs appear to work best, in the context of clear defined expected/ agreed academic workload.
- 3.3.3 Context of WAM introduction appears important. The purpose should be clear to all, agreed to or at least contributed to all, with agreed local principles, and used in conjunction with Unit/ School/ University aims and strategic plans.
- 3.3.4 WAMs should be cognisant of both personal academic work/life balance and personal development, AND Unit/ School/ University aims and strategic priorities.
- 3.3.5 The established WAMs considered appear to have adopted similar principles of transparency, equality and flexibility.
- 3.3.6 No explicit judgements (as opposed to PMDS) whilst there are individual and unit expectations.
- 3.3.7 There is a degree of “number crunching” initially to determine teaching allocation requirements, at a higher level. One could argue this is good managerial practice. There is a spectrum demonstrated in terms of detail required and hour counting at personal, discipline and school levels.
- 3.3.8 Definition of Contribution could be clarified. Avoidance of very prescriptive categorical definitions could be helpful as can be limiting, restrictive and de-incentivise.
- 3.3.9 Bidirectional flexibility appears key.
- 3.3.10 Avoid being prescriptive and consider flexibility in category definitions.
- 3.3.11 A consideration that the activity mutually benefits the academic and the unit/ school/ university could suffice.

Consider bottom up approach:

- 3.3.12 Where unit leader has a strong vision of Institutional/ School/ Unit priorities.
- 3.3.13 Consider having guidance on developing a WAM in a unit first.
- 3.3.14 Explicitly stating academic workload expectations.
- 3.3.15 Promoting Facilitative (Distributive) Leadership.
- 3.3.16 Unit leader feeds up to macro level (School/ University).
- 3.3.17 Promoting WAM Development locally and organically.
- 3.3.18 Unit team exercise – create/develop unit philosophy; strategic plan; collective expectation setting; local principles of WAM; personal reflections and meetings; review and dynamic iterations annually.



Guidance on principles:

- 3.3.19 Consider including agreed themes a unit may wish to consider when creating their local WAM principles such as: transparency, bidirectional flexibility, personal empowerment ownership, consultative style, iterative.

Other considerations:

- 3.3.20 Give consideration to sabbaticals in guideline development.
- 3.3.21 Any guidelines should be supported by an “awareness event” in schools – Directed at unit heads/ nominee.

## Appendix 1

**Table 1: A composite example of some role equivalencies used in one or more schools in NUI Galway**

Staff role/position	<u>Examples of some equivalences in terms of a standard 5 ECTS module (24-36 contact hours).</u> <i>Actual roll-out will very much depend on size of school/discipline, and the specific teaching requirements of school/discipline.</i>
<b>Vice-Dean</b>	Very variable individual consideration as roles classed as VD are not equivalent – however perhaps 1-2 standard 5 ECTS depending on VD role and the specific teaching requirements of school/discipline.
<b>Head of School</b>	0.5 core workload
<b>Programme Director</b>	0.5 – 2 standard module (5 ECTS) depending on nature, type, size of programme, and the teaching requirements of the school/discipline.
<b>Module Coordinator (versus direct module teaching)</b>	Large class co-ord ~0.5 x 5 ECTS, small class co-ord 0.3 x 5 ECTS; Large class with large organisational load e.g. practical schedule etc. 1 x 5 ECTS
<b>Institute Director, Institute Scientific Director, Research Centre Director</b>	
	<b><i>Groupings below provide an example of a more finely differentiated approach:</i></b>
<b>Group 1 (0.5 full workload)</b> <b>Head of School</b>	0.5 full workload, 2-4 standard 5 ECTS modules depending on size of school/discipline and teaching requirements of school/discipline.
<b>Head of Discipline</b>	1-2 standard 5 ECTS depending on school/discipline size and teaching requirements.
<b>Group 2 (1 x 5 ECTS)</b>	First Year Course Coordinator: e.g. 1BS lectures; First Year Practicals (incl. CH120 practicals)
	Safety Officer
<b>Group 3 (0.75x 5 ECTS)</b>	Course Coordinator e.g. CH120/CH130/CP102(1EV)
	Coordinator MSc (Chemistry Research)
	Coordinator Biopharmaceutical Chemistry
	Placement Coordinator
<b>Group 4 (0.5 x 5 ECTS)</b>	Course Coordinator CH140/CP102(1MR, 1HF)
	Course Coordinators CH202, CH203, CH204 and CH205b (Second Year Coordinator: 12)
	CH3101
	CH506/CH5102
	Outreach Officer
<b>Group 5</b>	All other Third Year and Fourth Year Course



<b>(0.5 x 5 ECTS)</b>	Coordinators (Year Coordinators: 6)
	Graduate Research Committee
	Section Coordinators
	Convenor Staff Student Committee
	School Executive Committee
	Placement supervision
	College Committees
	MSc/PhD Course Co-ordinator
	University Committees

## Appendix 2

**Examples of WAM Templates currently in use in NUI Galway appended in original Excel format:**

School of Psychology

School of Business & Economics

School of Geography

School of Chemistry