Managing your TAFE workload: issues and solutions

Keeping workloads down for members is one of our top priorities. TAFE members may have noticed instructions in their eNews lately as part of our campaign to reduce workloads and help ensure current entitlements are respected and implemented.

We've rounded up some common issues that TAFE members have reported, with our advice as prescribed by the Western Australian TAFE Lecturers' General Agreement 2019.

Excessive class sizes

Issue: Members are reporting that there are too many students in their classes to:

- Ensure safe work practices and duty of care.
- Deal with student needs.
- Guarantee quality learning outcomes for all students.

Further, large class sizes are leading to excessive marking loads.

The union is concerned that some lecturers are being told that the situation will be resolved when students drop out because they are dissatisfied with,
or disadvantaged by, their learning environment.

A class must be split if:

• The class cannot be practically supervised or accommodated in the teaching area or learning environment provided or for which equipment is considered unsuitable, inadequate or unsafe.

• The class exceeds any ratio specified in any legislation, industry standard or guideline.

• The students have disabilities or special needs, including literacy and language concerns, and will not get adequate support.

• Adequate lecturer time for effective participation and personal feedback and instruction cannot be guaranteed.

• There are specific behaviour management issues that can only be addressed in a smaller class.

If you consider a class size too large, approach your line manager (Director) to have the class split.

We urge you to work with your other team members and colleagues and to seek support from your campus union representative if necessary. Your intervention needs to occur as soon as possible after you have identified the problems to ensure a fair outcome for you and your students.

Managing emails

Issue: Members have informed the SSTUWA that the total number of emails received each week is excessive and that they are receiving a large number of emails outside normal working hours.

Members are instructed to only use part of their allocated Professional Activities (PA) hours to respond to emails as PA time covers a range of responsibilities. See Clauses 11.6 (g), 35.14, 35.15 and Appendix A of the Agreement.

Undertaking Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Issue: Members are reporting that they are not being allocated teaching hours or paid overtime to undertake RPLs.

Members are instructed to only undertake RPL when allocated and timetabled adequate teaching hours specifically to undertake RPL.

RPL students cannot be allocated to classes and must be dealt with on an individual basis.

- For full-time lecturers – this will mean allocating hours from the 21 teaching hours, or if already timetabled to teach 21 hours, approved overtime is required.
- For part-time lecturers – this will mean allocating hours from the teaching hours indicated for their fraction in Schedule L – Hours Chart of the Agreement, or if already teaching at the load indicated for their fraction, they must have their fraction increased to accommodate the RPL hours.

Using vehicles for college business

Issue: Members have indicated that the time taken to travel between sites is not being counted in their weekly hours of work. Members are also reporting the need to use their own vehicles for work purposes, including visits to students at workplaces, as college vehicles are not available. The class is too large for a lecturer to exercise duty of care or ensure safe work practices.The class exceeds the number for which the laboratory, workshop or teaching area was designed.

Members are not required to provide their own vehicles for college business.

The union is concerned that many lecturers are unclear of issues around using their own vehicle and that by using their own vehicles lecturers may be incurring costs that should be borne by the college.

If members are required to attend college business off campus, they should use college vehicles, be provided with taxi vouchers, or, if time allows, use public transport. Colleges have a system to book vehicles.

In the first instance, the college will endeavour to manage travelling time within a lecturer's ordinary hours.

The college may, at its discretion, reduce professional duties or lecturing duties to accommodate the travelling.

Where lecturing duties are reduced, Professional Activities (PA) time and Activities Related to Delivery time will be allocated in accordance with Schedule L –

Hours Chart of the Agreement, see Clause 41 – Travelling Time and Excess Travelling Time of the Agreement.

Where lecturing hours or professional duties are not reduced, the time would be considered excess travelling time to be paid at the rate of time and one half of the ordinary hourly rate of pay (see Clause 40.7 of the Agreement).

Reducing unpaid work

Issue: Members have contacted the SSTUWA regarding the increasing unpaid work expected of them and the negative impact it is having on health, well-being, and personal and family responsibilities.

Members are reminded that the maximum hours that they are paid to work if full- time is 37.5 hours per week.

Hours of work for full-time and part-time lecturers is prescribed in Clause 35 – Hours and Schedule L – Hours Chart of the Agreement.

• Managers cannot allocate unreasonable workloads to lecturers. See Clause 11.6 (g) of the Agreement.

• Managers should quantify the number of hours expected to undertake a task before discussing the work with lecturers.

• If work allocated will mean working unpaid hours, members are to negotiate the number of hours expected to complete the work.

• For full-time lecturers – this may mean reducing timetabled teaching hours, thereby increasing PA time in order to accommodate the additional work, or if already timetabled to teach 21 hours, approved overtime (PA) is required. See clause 40.5 of the Agreement.

• For part-time lecturers – this may mean reducing timetabled teaching hours, thereby increasing PA time in order to accommodate the additional work, or if already teaching at the load indicated for their fraction, they must have their fraction increased to accommodate the additional work.

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