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Allocation of Academic Activities and Establishing Academic Staff Workload Policy

Last Modified	November 2020
Review Date	October 2021
Approval Authority	Executive Director of People, Culture and Campus
Contact Officer	Reward and Recognition Consultant - People and Culture

Introduction

This document provides a framework for the determining of academic workloads within the University.

Definitions

Campus – includes all University property, including vehicles, field stations, regional campuses and centres and applies to all activities under the general control of the University.

Employee – means a person or persons engaged for paid employment with the University by way of an employment agreement, personal contract, or through official arrangements with another organisation.

Staff or staff member – person/s engaged for paid employment with the University by way of an employment agreement.

Policy Statement

This Policy recognises that academic activities are variable and have distinctive characteristics that vary with time and context within the campus; and enunciates values and principles governing allocations and envisages processes that are collaboratively formulated at departmental/school level. This policy also indicates expectations of the University, of departments/schools and of individuals for the identification, allocation and accounting of academic activities.

While allocation and approval processes will take place principally at department/school level, University level decisions can impact on the workload experienced by individuals. A consideration of the implications for workload of compliance should therefore be a part of University decision making processes.

The purposes of this policy are two-fold:

- To ensure that every employee of the University on an academic agreement has an equitable, reasonable and safe workload that is regularly reviewed in consultation with the employee.

- To ensure that the University has processes in place that lead to the responsible deployment of academic expertise, which is the University's key resource.

Principles

The principles to be followed in identifying, allocating, and accounting for academic activities are as follows:

1. **Transparency** so that within each department/school the processes followed are clearly communicated and allocations of activities are notified to departmental/school staff and the University.

2. **Balance** over time in the academic activities undertaken by each staff member.

3. **Variations** are allowed for, to accommodate both predictable matters (such as annual and study leave and secondments of colleagues) and unanticipated matters (such as opportunities that may arise, and sick leave).

4. **Individual preferences** are accommodated to the extent that it is possible to be consistent with the needs of the department/school and the interests of colleagues.

   Individuals can expect to contribute both to the general work of the department/school as well as in a specialised capacity.

5. Both **quality** of outcomes and **quantity** of contribution are to be considered in assigning academic activities.

6. **Creative opportunity** is recognised as a necessary academic activity.

7. **Quantitative measures** to allocate duties are recognised as only a partial approach to accounting for the academic activities of a department/school, and the allocations need also to be accepted as reasonable and fair.

Characteristics of Academic Work

Academic work is made up of several categories of activity. Individuals are expected to perform in all categories, and the combined impact of all activities generates overall workload.

Academic activities arise from requirements to meet the University's obligations and from the initiatives of individual staff members. Thus each staff member will undertake activities

ranging from those that are required by the University to those that are personally generated.

Required and Approved Activities

With respect to this policy document, academic work is comprised of academic activities undertaken by staff that are either required by the University or approved of by the University. Further, each of the broad groupings of academic work (teaching, research, departmental service, University service, and professional service) can involve a mix of required and approved activities, as indicated in the following diagram.

	Required – Identified by Department/School	**Approved** – Initiated by Individual
Teaching		
Research		
Departmental Service		
University Service		
Professional Service		

Required academic activities (in the shaded part of the diagram) are those identified within each department/school and may include, for example, core components of teaching programmes, maintenance of key research programmes, and essential administrative and representational activities.

Approved activities (in the clear part of the diagram) are those initiated by individual staff to complement and extend departmental/school programmes, to develop new strengths, or to enhance personal capabilities. They may include specialised teaching or research and contributions to the wider university and professional communities. Individually initiated activities are approved through negotiation with an individual's Head of Department/School (HOD/S).

Academic work plans need to recognise both required and approved activities if they are to be realistic, fair and achievable.

Variability

Disciplines differ in their scholarly traditions and in the way they are influenced by professional groups and the wider society. Thus the detailed nature and mix of academic activities will vary across the University. Academic activities can also vary with time in response to changing departmental/school needs, developing personal interests, and to accommodate collegial support for study leave and other initiatives approved by the

department/school. Further, some aspects of work are amenable to advance planning while others are less predictable and more spontaneous.

For these reasons it is preferable to seek a balanced workload over time and a two or three year planning span is likely to be more useful than an annual basis. It is important to include contingency provisions in individual work plans so that unexpected events (including sick leave) can be accommodated and to take advantage of opportunities that may arise.

Values

In assigning and approving academic activities departments/schools and staff are expected to adopt the following values:

Equitability	• By which staff members with comparable levels of appointment and responsibilities within the same type of work should have comparable workloads.
	• Casual, part-time and staff members with fixed-term appointments shall have workloads that are equitable relative to full-time staff in the same area of work.
Reasonableness	• So that in allocating the workload all practicable steps are taken to facilitate career progression.
	• So that allocated activities can be managed within the time frames and deadlines set for the performance of the activities.
	• So that allocated and approved activities allow staff to maintain a reasonable balance between their professional and personal lives.
Safety	• Which means that all practicable steps are taken to minimise physical or mental harm to staff.

Expectations

There are obligations for the University, for the department/school and for the individual in the allocation of academic activities.

There is an expectation that the University will consider implications for workload as an integral aspect of policy formulation and that University management has accountability for the impact of operational decisions on workload. The University will ensure that there are clear and agreed processes for the identification, allocation and monitoring of academic activities in each department/school.

Each department/school[1] is expected to establish the overall set of required tasks for the department that is necessary for it to meet its academic obligations. In doing so the department/school is expected to ensure that the quantity of required tasks is such that they can be undertaken without jeopardising quality. All staff are expected to contribute to this process, and to be informed of the resulting schedule of required tasks to be undertaken by the department/school.

Each department/school is also expected to develop general contingency plans to allow for predictable staff absences, such as study leave or agreed secondment, and unpredictable absences occasioned by illness or opportunities.

Each individual is expected to disclose the full range of his/her commitments and aspirations, as part of the process of distributing responsibilities. When establishing personal schedules of academic activities each staff member can expect

- to negotiate with the HOD/S;
- to contribute to an equitable portion of the required work defined by the department/school;
- regular reviews of personal circumstances, obligations and commitments; and
- support for approved developmental activities.

Requirements

In accordance with the above values, principles and expectations

1. The University charges the Pro-Vice-Chancellors of Colleges with the responsibility for ensuring that all departments/schools have processes in place for the identification and allocation academic activities and the monitoring of individual workloads.

2. Each department/school is required to develop processes for the identification of required academic activities for the department/school group.

3. Each department/school is required to develop processes to allocate academic activities to individual staff. Such allocations are to be undertaken at least annually.

4. Each department/school is required to make available to staff a schedule for the assignment of required work of the department. A copy of this schedule is to be lodged with the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the appropriate College.

5. Individual members of staff are required, as part of the determination of individual workload allocations, to consult and obtain the agreement of their Pro Vice-Chancellor and their HOD/S before personally initiated academic activities are finalised. This includes any proposed buying out of time which may be involved.

   Note: the Intellectual Property Policy (PDF, 502KB) relates to this requirement.

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[1] In some instances where there are identifiably distinct programmes within a department/school it may be appropriate to consider workloads at a Programme level. However, in such instances accountability for the outcomes of allocations and overall equity remains with the department/school.

6. Access to documentation: To assist in developing and identifying good practise, and monitoring capability within their school/department or College, staff are encouraged to talk with and request information from their Head and/or HR Advisor, or the Tertiary Education Union.

Related Documents and Information

UC Policy Library

- Flexible Employment Policy and Guidelines (PDF, 213KB)

- Intellectual Property Policy (PDF, 502KB)

If you have any further questions around this policy, please contact your https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/about/hr/hr-advisors/.

Document History and Version Control Table			
Version	**Action**	**Approval Authority**	**Action Date**
For document history and versioning prior to 2013 contact ucpolicy@canterbury.ac.nz			
1.00	Major review of document and conversion into new template.	Director, Human Resources	Jun 2013
1.01	Hyperlinks updated.	Policy Unit	Oct 2013
1.02	Hyperlinks updated and formatted.	Policy Unit	Jun 2014
1.03	Contact Officer title updated.	Policy Unit	Jun 2015
2.00	Scheduled review by CO, minor layout and formatting changes, definitions added	Approval Authority	Dec 2016
3.00	Scheduled review by Contact Officer, minor changes to hyperlinks and content layout.	Policy Unit	Dec 2018
3.01	Minor changes, including updating title of AA.	Policy Unit	July 2020
3.02	Change of Contact Officer	Policy Unit	Oct 2020
3.03	Minor changes to content	Policy Unit	Nov 2020

This policy remains in force until it is updated