



Workload Guidance for Managers

Purpose

Workload has been a continual key area of focus highlighted in staff surveys and it is recognised that there will continue to be peak times throughout the year where workload may be slightly higher than normal.

Key principles have been agreed by the University Leadership Team to build on some of the excellent practices already in place and to help address some of the workload challenges that people face. While there is no 'one size fits all' solution for managing workload, this guidance has been designed to help you apply these principles by offering some practical suggestions that could be considered in supporting your team.

Please read this guidance in conjunction with the [Workload Guidance for Employees](#) and ensure that your team are aware of the potential solutions.

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Key Principles

- ✔ Proactively supporting health and wellbeing should be a key focus in all considerations.
- ✔ To reduce the number of competing activities, projects/tasks could be reviewed to establish if some can be paused or slowed down without impacting the delivery of critical services.
- ✔ To support the reduction of unnecessary time spent in meetings, it is suggested that the structures and frequency of meetings are reviewed to determine if any can be shortened, or frequency reduced.
- ✔ To support a fair and even workload across the team it is suggested that individual objectives are reviewed so as any spare capacity can be used to help the whole team.
- ✔ To reduce the feeling of needing to respond to emails outside of working hours, there should be clear expectations set in relation to responding to emails, acknowledging that most people are working flexibly and some are dealing with queries from different time zones.
- ✔ To recognise competing priorities at home and work a “no meetings” period between 12pm -1pm is being encouraged.

Management considerations

The following outlines some practical actions that may help teams with their workload. There is no one size fits all so not all of these considerations may be relevant, however they are designed to help conversations between you and your team. You may wish to implement some actions for a short period, establish the impact with your team and then act accordingly based on feedback.

- ✔ You could review all work activity that you are responsible for with a view to reducing the overall volume of activity wherever possible, whilst taking into account any potential impacts to students and other stakeholders.
- ✔ Take some time to determine real priorities – what is time sensitive, what can be paused, stopped, done more efficiently, or scaled back to reduce overall workload? What is the critical work that must continue?
- ✔ Support and empower your team to pause, stop or scale back items that are not deemed to be critical until more time becomes available again.
- ✔ Work with your colleagues to review the resource across the department/school to determine if there is any capacity that could be better utilised. Where this is the case, you could move work around where appropriate, freeing up some time for others.
- ✔ Ensure you check in regularly with team members to see how they are and help them to focus on their next steps.

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- ✔ Whilst allocating workload for the whole academic year is important, try and break down work activities into months so that key pinch points can be identified, and priorities determined.
 - ✔ Review the meetings / committees across your area and consider what is essential, for example could weekly meetings move to fortnightly, are all current attendees required etc.
 - ✔ Establish if there is anyone interested in increasing their part-time working hours on a short-term basis, or if there is scope to offer some voluntary overtime to create additional capacity. Any additional hours should be offered on an equitable basis agreed with the relevant budget holder in advance.

Ways of working

Everyone has their own set of personal circumstances that may be impacting how and when they are able to undertake work.

The My Contribution process is designed to facilitate a structured and supportive approach to agreeing outputs that can be realistically delivered. It is important to focus on outputs, rather than activity - what can be achieved, how and by when, rather than when it will be completed.

When agreeing realistic outputs, you may wish to consider the following:

- ✔ What is needed to ensure services to students and/or staff are maintained
- ✔ What is deemed as everyday must do activity as opposed to aspirational project work
- ✔ What could realistically be paused or postponed for the time being


Regular 121s provide an opportunity to 'check-in' with your team to discuss progress, address any changes to work priorities or home commitments and focus on next steps. Establish if any additional support, flexibility or reasonable adjustments to workload should be considered.

More objectives can be reintroduced when there is more capacity so try to be patient and understanding about what is realistically achievable at this time.

Communications Tools

Email and MS Teams

Many of us are experiencing an increase in email traffic and some people may feel under pressure to respond to emails quickly to show that they are working. Also, due to different working arrangements and working with international students, some people are sending emails outside normal working hours. Please ensure that your team knows that there is no expectation on them to respond immediately to emails and that this is not a sign of productivity.



MS Teams can provide a different way to communicate with people– it can help you to keep your team stay connected, informed and support collaborative working. Information Services have compiled extensive [MS Teams Guidance](#) comprising key guides and tips for effectively using MS Teams.

Meetings

Where it is considered that activities can be reprioritised, this will provide an opportunity to postpone or cancel some meetings to free up time. Wherever possible try and avoid scheduling meetings between 12pm -1pm to help ensure people have an opportunity to take a proper lunch break, go for a walk, have some uninterrupted working time or tend to family/home matters.

- ✔ See the [appendix](#) for email and meeting practices that may help to reduce workload and remove some perceived pressure in this area.

Taking a break from work

While it may sound strange promoting taking a break to help you with your workload, our current way of working has shown that some people find it hard to switch off, especially if you are at home where your laptop or mobile device may always be connected.

Taking a break from work not only has positive impacts for your own wellbeing, it also has positive impacts on your productivity.

- ✔ Ensure you take regular breaks away from your laptop/mobile device throughout the day.
- ✔ Try to get outside for some fresh air during the day to recharge your batteries.
- ✔ Ensure you maintain as much of a routine as possible based on your personal circumstances, turning the laptop/mobile device off at the end of each day.
- ✔ Ensure you book annual leave to get a good break away from work.

Resources

- ✔ [Homeworking Guidance for Managers](#) - guidance to help managers' support teams remotely.
- ✔ Information about the current online workshops that the L&D team are running can be found [here](#)
- ✔ The University's [Health and Wellbeing](#) pages contain a range of information, advice and support.
- ✔ The University provides staff with free access to [Workplace Options](#) and [togetherall](#) - independent and confidential support services to help employees balance their work, family and personal lives.
- ✔ [My Contribution](#) intranet pages.

Appendix – Email and meeting practices to help reduce workload

Email practices

- ✔ Include the purpose in the subject line of an email so it is clear to people which ones require **Action** and which ones are **for information only**. Consider who needs to receive the email and only copy in others when it is appropriate to do so.
- ✔ When sending an email use as few words as possible. If you need to include a lot of detail, ensure that you add a few bullet points at the start to highlight the key elements that you need to be actioned or understood to save the recipient time.
- ✔ Consider if sending an email is the best communication method and whether it would be more effective to have a quick telephone or video call to discuss the matter, or if you require a quick short response, a message sent via Microsoft Teams may be more efficient.
- ✔ Due to flexible working arrangements and supporting partners and students internationally, people are sending emails outside of what some may deem normal working hours. If this applies to you, you should make it clear to people that there is no expectation for an immediate response, you could perhaps raise this at your next team meeting. Including a standard phrase such as **'I am working flexibly so there is no expectation to respond to this email outside of your own working hours'** within your signature may help to remove pressure for people who may feel they need to respond at all times of the day.
- ✔ You can also delay the sending of emails (Options/Delay Delivery) when you send an email so that they send during normal working hours.
- ✔ For some people, email notifications can be distracting. If this applies to you, you may find it helpful to deactivate the notification message for incoming emails. You can do this via email view in Outlook, then File, Options, Mail in the left pane and uncheck the alert options in the Message arrival section.
- ✔ It may also be helpful to block out time at set times of the day to deal with emails, as opposed to dipping in and out throughout the day.

Meeting practices

- ✔ Try to block out slots in your diary to give yourself regular breaks; dedicated time to focus on tasks/actions and to stop your diary getting too filled up with meetings.
- ✔ Consider whether all your meetings are actually needed and decide if you could shorten or postpone any. Reprioritising your activities may provide an opportunity for this.



- ✔ Review meeting attendees – could fewer people attend and collate wider views in advance and report back to others? Smaller cohorts in meetings supports quicker decision making and progress.
- ✔ Try to keep your meetings as short as possible with a set agenda to ensure that everyone in the meeting gets what they need from the meeting.
- ✔ It can be helpful to people if you schedule your meetings to finish a few minutes early to give people a short break between meetings. You can do this via calendar view in Outlook, then File, Options, Calendar and enable 'End Appointment and Meetings Early'. It is suggested that the default should be 10 minutes shorter for meetings lasting an hour or longer and 5 minutes shorter for meetings under an hour.
- ✔ Consider if any of your calls/meetings could be conducted whilst walking to facilitate exercise and time away from the screen.