Principles

There are several ambiguities about how much time academics work. Funding bodies assume a working week of 37.5 hours, for 44 weeks of the year (a total of 1650 hours). The University of Birmingham contract, on the other hand, specifies no fixed hours, and it is clear that most work much more than this. It is not unreasonable to suppose a typical working week of 40-45 hours.

Duties relating to teaching and administration are to be specified by the Head of School in an equitable manner.

We suppose that the core time of 1650 hours per year is divided between research, teaching and administration in the ratio 40:40:20. Any additional time worked is on activities to be decided by each individual. The Head of School can thus assign 660 hours for teaching and 330 hours for administrative work.

Special cases

- Birmingham Fellows: minimal teaching/admin for 2 years, then build to full load after 5 years.
- High admin roles: corresponding reduction in teaching to balance.
- Probationers: half load while doing PG Cert.
- Teaching-only contracts: all core hours on teaching and admin.
- Maternity leave: half load for one year on return to work.

Time on grants

Anyone with time allocated to a grant should have that time available. It is usually expressed as a percentage of the core time. The time available for grants is included in the 40% allocated to all staff. Anyone with more than 40% time on grants can expect a corresponding reduction in teaching and/or administrative work. Any time worked over and above core time can be used for additional research activity.

Workload process

It is recognised that numerical methods for assigning load to activities are never accurate. In particular, the same activity done by two different people may take different amounts of time and may be seen by one as a pleasure and by the other as a painful duty. Consequently, we have an iterative process by which a fair load is matched against the interests and aspirations of staff.
The process is as follows:

1. Estimate proportion of time for teaching/admin for each academic based on principles above.
2. Head of School meets with each academic to discuss what they would like to do (meetings take place in Spring semester).
3. A draft allocation is produced (by Easter) matching needs with people’s interests.
4. People have two weeks to reflect and feed back if they think they are under or over-loaded.
5. Allocation of duties, and any concerns raised, are discussed at a special management meeting.
6. If the meeting agrees that someone has an inappropriate load, Head of School commits to revising it accordingly.
7. Final allocation released (around May-June).

Examples

1. Academic on standard contract, with less than 40% time on grants. During the teaching semesters: 3 days teaching, 1 day admin, 1 day research. Outside of the semesters: 1 day teaching, 1 day admin, 3 days research. Teaching equates to two large modules, plus projects.

2. Academic with 50% time on grants. Gives 10% time reduction on core hours. Semester 1: 3 days teaching, 1 day admin, 1 day research. Semester 2: 1.5 days teaching, 1 day admin, 2.5 days research. Outside semesters: 1 day teaching, 1 day admin, 3 days research. Equates to one large and one small module, plus projects.

3. Academic with 80% time on grants. Gives 40% reduction on core hours. Semester 1: 2 days teaching, 0.5 days admin, 2.5 days research. Outside semester 1: 0 days teaching, 0.5 days admin, 4.5 days research. Equates to half admin load, plus one small module.