

## How are you measuring your teaching time in flexible learning?

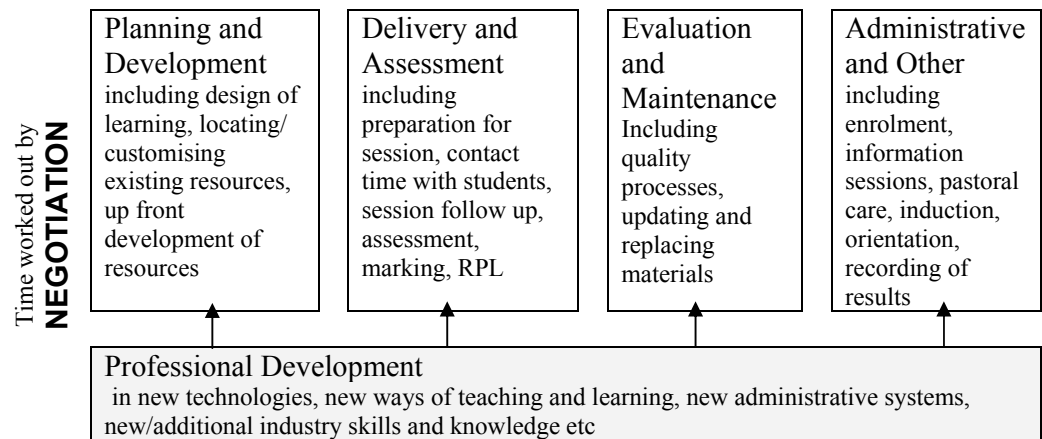
*How do you and your manager decide on your workload?*

*How do current awards and agreements affect the measurement of your time as a flexible learning teacher?*

These and other similar questions have troubled flexible learning teachers and their managers for some time. During 2002, several separate initiatives including an ANTA Policy Advice project, the project of one 2002 Flexible learning Leader, Laurie Fitzsimons, and an AEU national committee, have all been investigating this issue. This article outlines the considerations and conclusions from the 2002 VET Policy Advice Project on “measuring teacher time in flexible learning”. It describes a solution that recognises all teacher roles as valuable and relies on negotiating teacher hours using a set of guidelines, some best practice examples.

The first stage of this project looked at teacher roles, acknowledged that current teacher awards and agreements are based on the notion that teachers deliver in “classrooms” (the NSW “pocket research” project that forms another part of the 2002 VET Policy Advice Project provides further information on how current awards accommodate flexible learning), identified alternative ways of measuring teacher time and proposed an approach to measuring teacher time in flexible learning situations.

### Teacher's roles in flexible learning



There is a wide range of roles that teachers undertake in flexible learning situations. Teacher roles can be grouped into four major categories: Planning and Development roles, Delivery and Assessment roles, Evaluation and Maintenance roles and Administrative and Other roles. Each of these roles should be examined when a teacher’s workload is being considered. These categories are as relevant to teachers operating in ‘traditional’ classroom mode as for flexible learning teachers. One of the changes for teachers moving into flexible learning situations has been that the proportion of time they spend in each of the teaching roles has changed. No longer do all teachers perform all of these roles; different forms of flexible learning require differing emphases on each of the roles and some teachers work in teams, dividing the roles between team members. Within each of the roles there may also be significant differences in the ways the teacher operates; for instance the flexible learning teacher may facilitate, coach, moderate learning, manage the learning environment, rather than being the expert directing the learners.

The rapid pace of change in many industry skills and the knowledge needed, combined with all the changes resulting from the adoption of flexible learning highlights that professional development is often needed in order to satisfactorily perform these roles. The identification of teachers' professional development needs, eg for better technology skills, new pedagogical understandings and skills with new modes of learning, should be part of any consideration of teachers time.

It is no longer appropriate to measure teacher time solely in terms of their work in just the "classroom" role (the Delivery and Assessment role), with work in other roles being described as non-teaching time or "the equivalent of teaching time". Each role that the teacher performs is important to both student success and organisational outcomes, and should be counted towards total teacher time when workloads are being negotiated. A teaching award which allows teacher activity in all roles to be counted towards teacher time is needed. An award situation similar to that provided by the Tasmanian Memorandum of Understanding between the Australian Education Union (Tasmanian Branch) and TAFE Tasmania trial which began on 1 January 2000 is a suitable environment for this approach to measuring teacher time, as it does not specify the breakdown of hours between different roles, or between "classroom" and "non-classroom" activities, but simply proclaims a total annual teaching load (in hours) to be used for distance learning or workplace assessment activities.

Stage 1 of the project proposed that we abandon the search for the simple formula that will calculate teacher time in all flexible learning situations and accept that the many variations of flexible learning demand flexible policies and procedures with the ability to recognise and count many different pressures on teacher time. Negotiation between teachers and their managers is the key to this approach as it provides a way to acknowledge the diversity of roles and tasks that a particular teacher is undertaking. There is value in flexible learning teachers and their managers knowing about other practitioners' experiences with flexible learning workloads and how their time is measured. A set of Guidelines, some Tips on managing flexible learning workloads and some best practice examples will all contribute to successful negotiations of teacher time in flexible learning.

During the second stage of the project, the proposed negotiated approach to measuring teacher time was discussed by the project consultative committee, a number of focus groups and many other individuals. These people provided feedback on the model as well as feedback on the wide range of roles currently being undertaken by teachers, the many different ways in which their time is currently being measured and other issues with their current situations. The feedback confirmed the usefulness of the model in providing recognition of the major roles of teachers and a framework for negotiating teacher time. The focus groups also indicated that a flexible approach to measuring the time needed by a teacher to perform their flexible learning roles could be described by a single formula or a "one size fits all" solution, that negotiated workloads are already a feature of flexible learning situations, and that informed negotiation between teachers and their managers may be the only workable solution.

As a result of these consultations a set of principles for measuring teacher time was developed. Accompanying the principles were

- a way of describing teacher roles
- practical Guidelines for allocating teaching hours to teachers of flexible learning
- a set of Tips on managing workloads in flexible learning and
- several Teacher Stories that illustrate the use of the Guidelines for a range of flexible learning situations and

all designed to assist teachers and their managers to achieve the Principles through informed negotiations.

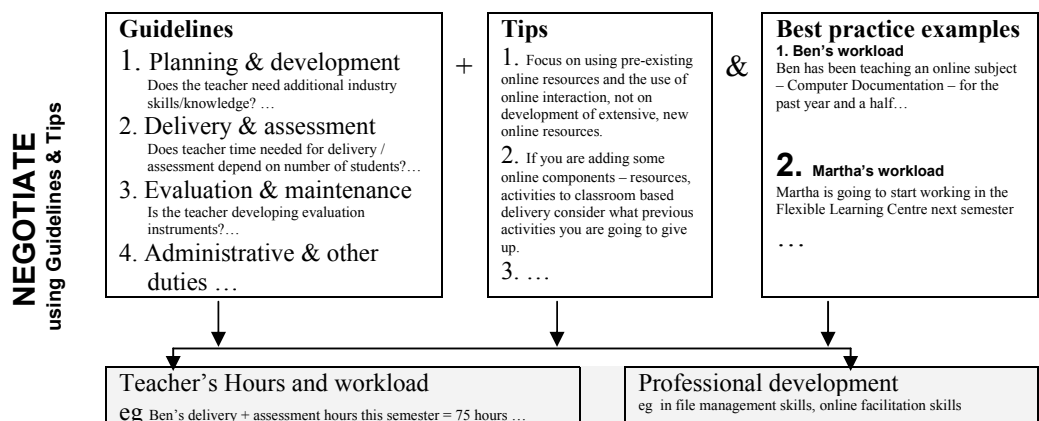
## Principles

The Principles developed for measuring teacher time were

1. All work undertaken by teachers, including planning & development, delivery & assessment, evaluation & maintenance and administrative & other duties, should be acknowledged, not just time in front of a class.
2. Individual teacher's workloads should be negotiated within an accepted framework which includes descriptions of teachers' roles and guidelines for allocating time.
3. An individual teacher will not necessarily work in all roles; they may work in teams.
4. The professional development needs of all aspects of teachers' roles should be factored into decisions about roles and workloads.
5. A review process should be included in any negotiated workloads situation.
6. Factors affecting the amount of time required for different teacher roles include:
  - a. learning and support needs of the students
  - b. pedagogical approach used
  - c. nature of subject matter
  - d. availability and support of technology
  - e. teachers' skills and experience (with subject matter, technology, pedagogy and mode of learning and institute's systems and culture)
  - f. learning mode
  - g. enrolment pattern (continuous or periodic)
  - h. location of learning and assessment (workplace, at institute, anywhere)

These principles can be implemented by teachers and their managers working through a set of guidelines that cover all categories of teaching roles. By considering each question in the guidelines and the associated comments and tips, a teacher and their manager can consider all aspects of their work, especially those that are different from the traditional "classroom" model of teaching. The discussions that occur during this negotiation can not only lead to a fairer and more realistic agreement on workloads but assist mutual understanding of the interrelationships between different learning modes, delivery methods, budgets, resources, pedagogical approaches and the impact of technology. These discussions can also provide essential links to the identification of professional development needs and solutions and can form part of any performance management processes.

## A negotiated approach to measuring teacher time



## Guidelines

The complete Guidelines will be available soon at <http://flexiblelearning.net.au/policies/year2002/home.htm>.

The Guidelines are designed for the teacher and their manager to work through the questions for each of the major teaching roles so that they can identify roles and tasks for which the teacher will need time allocated. Refer to Appendix A for some examples of the Guidelines.

## Tips for managing workloads in flexible learning

The complete Tips will be available in 2003 at <http://flexiblelearning.net.au/policies/year2002/home.htm>.

The Tips are designed to assist teachers to learn from the experiences of other teachers and choose effective and efficient teaching and learning approaches to the implementation of flexible learning. Refer to Appendix B for some examples of the Tips.

## Recommendation

I recommend that training organizations revise their policies that affect the ways in which teacher time is measured, particularly in flexible learning situations, to

- recognise the full range of teacher roles as contributing to their workloads
- permit a negotiated approach to teacher time
- allow for team approaches and division of some roles between different teachers
- facilitate the identification of teachers' professional development needs
- provide for teachers' professional development needs in a timely manner and
- use a set of Guidelines, Tips for managing workloads and Best Practice examples to provide successful and fair negotiations of teacher workloads in flexible learning.

## References

The "pocket research" project *Measuring teacher time in flexible learning* was the ACT contribution to the ANTA funded 2002 VET Policy Advice Project. The first stage of this project resulted in a Discussion Paper which is available at <http://flexiblelearning.net.au/policies/year2002/home.htm>.

The resulting Principles, descriptions of teacher roles, Guidelines, Tips for managing workloads in flexible learning, and some teacher stories that illustrate the use of the Principles, Guidelines and Tips, will all be available in the final Project Report which will be available at the above website soon. The Report also contains a number of issues that need further consideration.

## Appendix A Examples of Guidelines

Is the teacher undertaking		Planning and development	If no, go to next section
Questions	✓ if time needed	Comments	Work load Tips
1. Does the teacher need additional industry skills/knowledge?		Consider whether this is a new or revised subject, whether the teacher has taught this subject before. Also consider how the skills are to be attained – for example return to industry, self study, course, team teaching with an experienced teacher, mentoring by an experienced teacher.	25,32
2. Does the teacher need professional development for a new mode of teaching/learning or a new pedagogical approach?		Consider the mode of delivery – for example, in a Flexible Learning Centre, online, workplace delivery, simulation, use of practice firm etc. Also consider whether a new pedagogical approach will take time to plan and develop. Consider how to identify the skills needed - for example, using Flexways - and how the skills are to be attained – for example, course, mentoring, buddy schemes, action learning, prior experience as a student.	3,4, 13,14, 23,24
3. Does the teacher need professional development in technology skills?		Consider computer skills – for example file management, use of word processing, presentation software, use of online learning software, skills in designing online learning interactions.	3,32
4. Do new/additional resources need to be developed or customised?		Consider whether existing resources have gaps or need work to be useful for the new subject or new mode of delivery. Consider also whether resources can be purchased. Resources might include text books, print based materials, online materials, CDs, videos, lecture notes etc.	1,2

Is the teacher undertaking		Delivery and Assessment	If no, go to next section
Questions	✓ if time needed	Comments	Work load Tips
1. Does teacher time needed for delivery / assessment depend on number of students?		Consider whether class size will be 'average', smaller than average, greater than average or fluctuating (continuous enrolment etc). In some instances class size may not affect delivery time eg a lecture or completely self-paced mode. Where interactions with students occur, practical tasks are supervised, and/or assessment is individually marked, time spent by teacher is affected by numbers of students. A formula that may be useful here is Delivery hours = Fixed hours + Group size ratio x (Normal delivery hours – Fixed hours)	26
2. Does subject matter and/or subject design require a high level of student-teacher interaction?		Student-teacher interactions may be face-to-face, online, by phone etc. Consider whether level of interactions is appropriate and whether additional time is required. For example, how much use will be made of email, moderated online discussions?	5,6,7, 10 to 18,23, 24
3. Are multiple topics / subjects / tasks / activities being conducted in the one session?		Consider whether teacher is facilitating learning across many subjects/topics at once; whether they are also conducting assessment and/or marking – for example in Flexible Learning Centres, practice firms, drop-in centres etc.	10,11, 17

Is the teacher undertaking		Evaluation and maintenance	If no, go to next section
Questions	✓ if time needed	Comments	Work load Tips
1. Is the teacher developing evaluation instruments?		Consider whether any existing evaluation instruments can be used or modified, whether evaluation instrument will be put online, how results will be processed.	1,31

Is the teacher undertaking		Administrative and other duties	If no, go to next section
Questions	✓ if time needed	Comments	Work load Tips
20. Is the teacher responsible for providing course information & advice and/or student enrolment?		Consider whether this is once a semester/term/year or ongoing for continuous enrolment. Consider roles for teacher and any administrative staff that may be available.	18,19, 20,22, 23

## **Appendix B Examples of Tips for managing workloads in flexible learning**

1. Focus on using pre-existing online resources and the use of online interaction, not on development of extensive, new online resources.
2. If you are adding some online components – resources, activities to classroom based delivery consider what previous activities you are going to give up. Bates (2000) says “If the use of technology to support classroom (activity) does not result in savings in other activities, then costs will inevitably rise.”
3. Use action learning to develop teacher skills in online facilitation and resource design and development.
4. Enrol in an online course to gain first hand experience of online learning.
5. Manage your students’ expectations about your availability eg tell them how often you respond to emails.