

# **Report of a survey on workload and WAM at CARBS**

## **Executive Summary**

This report presents the findings of a survey of academic staff in CARBS who are members of faculty on the teaching and research (T&R) or teaching and scholarship (T&S) pathways and whose workload is allocated through WAM. The survey was designed by the CARBS Workload Group and the UCU Workload Health & Safety team. It provides evidence requested by the University Workload Governance Group to support staff claims of excessive work demands. The survey was administered on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2018 with support from the Dean and Management Board. The survey achieved 57 useable responses with headline findings on work overload, its effects on staff wellbeing and the organisational maintenance of work overload through WAM, the key feature of which is concealed work. Using questions repeated from the Staff Survey, responses are cross-checked for consistency. The consequences of work overload are explored as a set of risk factors for the School.

### **Work Overload**

1. Average weekly hours worked during the survey reference week were 47 hours, 12 hours above contract
2. For 95% of the respondents, the working week normally exceeds contractual hours: 60% 'almost always' and 35% 'often'. Only 15% can meet the requirements of their job without working unreasonable hours
3. A third worked outside the working time regulation (WTR) of an average 48-hour week
4. Long hours do not reflect academics preferring to pursue their subjects: 28% report satisfaction with hours of work and 23% with intensity of work
5. 81% 'often' or 'almost all the time' feel under time pressure, 79% have a backlog, 83% work intensively, 85% have to work extra hours.
6. Workload pressures affect safety, health and well-being: 73% feel exhausted after work 'often' or 'almost all the time', 65% worry about work when at home and 63% find it difficult to unwind after work
7. Work hours scheduled through WAM are above the WAM annual target (1500 full-time) for 42% with an average overshoot of 12%. 22% are under the WAM target with an average undershoot of 4%
8. 62% reject email etiquette policy: it fails to address the volume of work and imposes a restriction on the timing of work

### **Concealed Work (excluded tasks and understated tariffs)**

9. 89% indicate that they were involved in some academic activity that is not recognised in the WAM with a total of 47 excluded activities specified. The top three activities include:
  - i. reference writing over and above current personal tutees (88%)
  - ii. setting and marking resits (80%)
  - iii. setting exam papers (71%)
10. For seven core teaching activities, the WAM under-estimated the actual hours taken to fulfil them, often by a large margin. Preparation for lectures (new and old) and citizenship activities were seen to be the most highly under-estimated activities with an hours' gap of 133%, 63% and 76%, respectively

11. While many staff worked overtime or sacrificed research time to complete the different forms of concealed work others chose to 'work to WAM' completing only WAM-specified tasks and completing them to a quality standard dictated by the hours scheduled in WAM.

### **Operation of WAM**

12. There is limited opportunity for individuals to challenge their WAM allocation because
  - i. the information is available late (after their teaching has begun, sometimes after it has finished, usually after PDR)
  - ii. there are no formal feedback channels to raise difficulties in meeting work demands or to address the flaws in WAM
  - iii. there is culture which treats concerns about or admission of difficulties as unacceptable
13. PDR channel is used most often, equal numbers find it effective as ineffective.

### **Risks to the School and its Staff**

14. Five key risks from work overload are identified:
  - i. ability to protect employee health safety and well-being
  - ii. ability to achieve sufficient recruitment, retention and discretionary effort to sustain research and teaching quality (and vice versa),
  - iii. ability to manage working relationships to sustain goodwill and discretionary effort
  - iv. ability to contain student complaints in the face of variable and declining teaching quality
  - v. ability to sustain trust and confidence in management at School, College and University level.

# Report of a survey on workload and WAM at CARBS

Vicki Wass<sup>1</sup> February 2019

## Introduction

This is the report of the findings of a survey of academic staff in CARBS whose workload is allocated through WAM. The survey was designed by the CARBS Workload Group and the UCU Workload Health & Safety team and administered on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Its purpose is to provide more detailed data on workload than is collected in the university staff survey and to provide it at an individual level. This allows greater detail and flexibility in the analysis and reporting of results. The subject of the survey covers hours of work, the organisation of work through the Workload Allocation Model (WAM) and the extent to which staff respond to the increase in work demand either through additional hours worked or additional intensity of hours worked, and the effect of the increased effort on wellbeing. A third response emerged from the survey where some staff reduced their hours supply to match hours scheduled in the WAM allocation.

The survey, which was undertaken with the support of the Dean and the Management Board, is part of the evidence gathering that will feed into the University review of the management of workload and wellbeing in CARBS and into the Workload Governance Group

This is a small-scale and unfunded survey. The response rate and representativeness are uncertain.<sup>2</sup> By design the survey was distributed at a busy time of year (November 2018) and it was likely difficult for some staff to take time out to complete it. There is also the issue of research fatigue as a university survey about support services was distributed in the previous week and both the School and University were running focus groups on workload and wellbeing. The results should be viewed in this context, that is, as indicative. However, this survey provides the most detailed data available to the School on this subject and might be considered as a first stage in an ongoing inquiry into the management, extent and impact of current workloads for staff in the School.

The report is organised as follows:

1. Details of the administration of the survey and profile of respondents
2. Hours of work measured weekly in the reference week beginning 5<sup>th</sup> November and as an annual average over the academic year to October 2018, relative to contracted hours
3. The impact of work overload (long hours and high intensity) on staff wellbeing
4. The management of staff workload through WAM – process, accuracy and transparency
5. Concealed work: excluded work tasks
6. Concealed work: understated tariffs
7. Absence of effective feedback channels for staff to voice concerns in relation to WAM and workload
8. Impact of email etiquette on workload and management of workload

---

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to my colleagues on the CARBS Workload group for their suggestions and revisions on both the questionnaire and the report. Any errors of fact or interpretation are mine.

<sup>2</sup> I was unable to find a sampling frame of T&R and T&S faculty whose work is organised through WAM. The survey was distributed by sections and I cannot be sure that all the above staff were included. I know that non-faculty staff and research staff received invitations in error.

## 9. Risks for CARBS

Several questions in the survey asked for further comments to elaborate on the fixed responses that provide the quantitative (statistical) data. Respondents were forthcoming in their comments. Most respondents made at least one comment with 25 respondents providing comments on the email etiquette policy alone. Comments are reported in italics. They provide detail and depth to the statistics.

### 1. Response rate

The survey attracted 75 respondents; 57 responses were useable (Table 1).<sup>3</sup> This compares with 100 responses from CARBS T&R and T&S staff on the Staff Survey 2017.

**Table 1: Respondent Data**

	No of respondents	% of respondents
Responses received <sup>a</sup>	75	n/a
Responses excluded (Research staff & non- faculty) <sup>b</sup>	18	24
Useable responses <sup>c</sup>	57	76

*Notes:*

<sup>a</sup>Without a sampling frame (the number of faculty T&R and T&S staff in CARBS whose work is organised through WAM), the response rate is unknown.

<sup>b</sup>University Teachers whose work experience is outside the scope of this survey were excluded. Members of research staff whose work is allocated through WAM were also excluded because the issues they face (insufficient time allocated for travel, for example) were different and their numbers too few to analyse as a separate group.

<sup>c</sup>There was evidence of some questionnaire fatigue as the response rate declined on the later questions. Of the 57 useable responses at the start, 48 completed the survey.

The profile of respondents is reported in Table 2. There was good coverage by section, age, sex, tenure, career pathway, full-time/part-time contract and 23 protected characteristics were represented (some respondents had more than one). A quarter of respondents were female, 36% of respondents care for children and 3 (5%) care for a disabled person.

---

<sup>3</sup> As author of the survey and the report, I did not complete the questionnaire.

**Table 2: Respondent Characteristics**

Academic pathway	Teaching and Research		Teaching and Scholarship		
	90%		10%		
Grade	Professor	Reader/SL	Lecturer		
	38%	27%	35%		
Contractual hours	Full time		Part time (80%)		
	95%		5%		
Sections	A&F	M&S	LOM	Econ	MEO
	9%	18%	18%	25%	30%
Age group	30s	40s	50s	60s and over	
	30%	30%	30%	10%	
Length of Service	< 5 years	5 – 10 years		10 + years	
	33%	17%		50%	

Protection of respondents' identity was promised and was seen by respondents as important because:

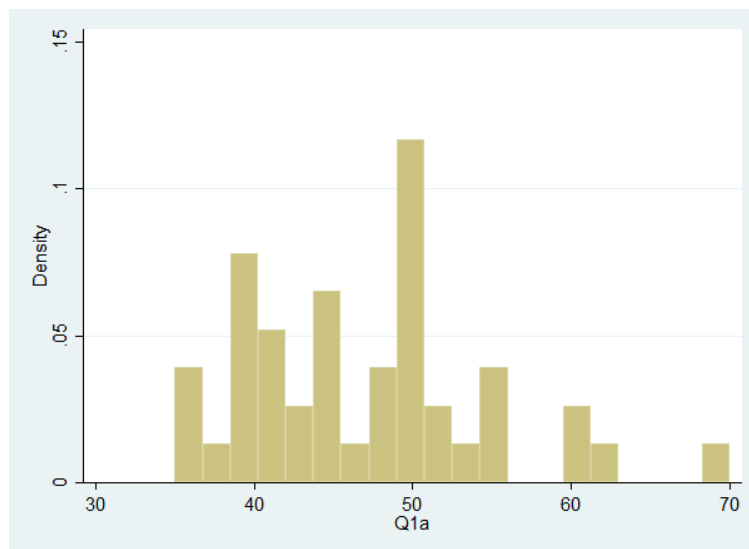
*I do not feel comfortable raising my concerns about this except for anonymous surveys, given the current climate and fear of redundancies.*

This, together with small numbers, mean that most analyses are conducted at the aggregate level and quotes are not linked to any staff characteristics. As might be anticipated in a study of work load and the experience of workload, male-female differences were found to be important. They are sufficiently complicated to require a supplementary report. A further supplementary report is planned for junior and senior staff. There are insufficient numbers to compare outcomes by section.

## 2. Hours of work relative to contract

The full-time contract is 35 hours per week with 37 days of paid annual leave. Respondents were asked to estimate their actual hours of work during the reference week beginning 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018 and 79% were able to do so. Of these, average (mean) hours across staff was 47 ranging from 35 to 70. The distribution of hours worked is reported in Figure 1 and reveals a positive skew. Median hours is 46. A bunching of observations is found at round numbers 35, 40, 45 with the modal value at 50. Average weekly hours are the same for men and women although the spread for women is lower. It is men who report weekly hours in both the upper and lower extreme tails of the hours' distribution in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Hours worked during reference week 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018**



The averages were robust to the removal of part-time staff whose average weekly hours in the reference week were 48 (that is higher than for full-time staff). This of course confounds the reason for wishing to work part-time.

*I have reduced my commitment to 80% but seem to be working as hard as ever.*

The average was also robust to those who indicated that the reference week was not a normal working week for them. For 74% it was a normal working week with roughly equal numbers working more (14%) and less (13%) than normal. For 4 staff (7%) hours were affected by leave. Nevertheless, this group worked an average of 40 hours. The weekly average excluding those whose hours were affected by leave was just under 48 hours.

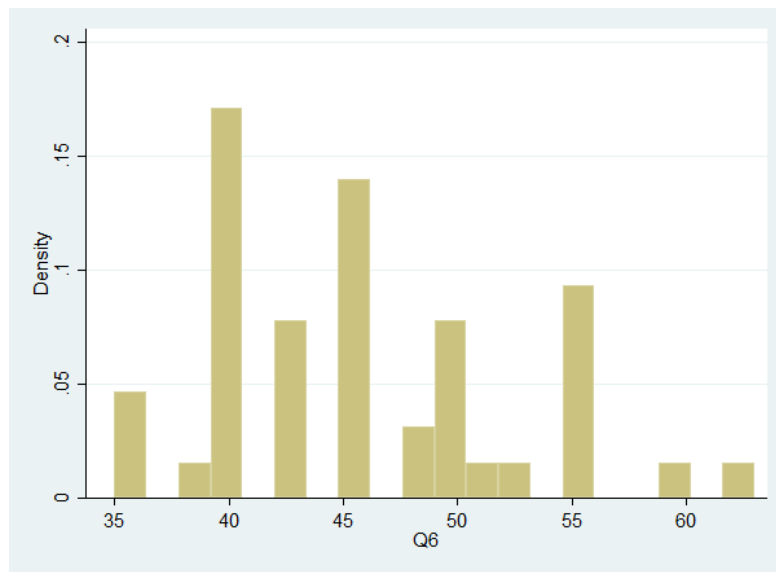
During piloting it emerged that some respondents were unwilling to estimate their hours because they don't think in terms of hours and they don't measure them.<sup>4</sup> These staff were provided with an alternative qualitative question where they assessed in broad terms the extent to which their working-time in the reference week was above or below their contracted working-time. A third of this group indicated that their hours were much higher than contracted, a third moderately higher, a sixth a little higher and a sixth were working at their contracted level.

Respondents were also asked to estimate their weekly hours when measured over the course of the academic year (Oct 2017-October 2018). For those able to do so, the average was 46 hours and the distribution is reported in Figure 2. It might be expected that the distribution of annual hours more closely approximate contracted hours due to the ability to adjust weekly hours over the course of a year. There is limited evidence of this effect with a lower mean (46 for men and 45 for women) and a smaller range. The bunching of estimates at round figures is the same as seen in Figure 1.

---

<sup>4</sup> They describe themselves as task-driven not time-driven so that they work until they have completed the task without reference to the time taken.

**Figure 2: Average weekly hours worked over academic year October 2017- September 2018**



For annual hours, all respondents were asked the qualitative questions about actual hours relative to contract: 84% indicated that these were higher than their contracted hours, 47% very much higher and 37% moderately higher.

When asked “how often did you work in excess of 35 hours a week?” 60% indicated that they worked above contracted hours nearly every week with a further 35% indicating that they often did so.<sup>5</sup> Respondents provide some detail in the following comments:

*In the w/c 5<sup>th</sup> November, 21 hours of class contact time alone and on Monday 7 hours without a break. Fortunately no boards or committees that week.*

*Last year I worked over 75 hours a week - working 7 days a week for 4 weeks in order to complete my marking and teaching. This is not an acceptable work demand.*

Table 3 reports distribution of staff at different weekly hours thresholds. Almost all staff worked on average more than contracted 35-hour week in the past year and in the reference week. Almost a quarter worked more than 50 hours per week. Intermediate thresholds at 45 hours and 48 hours are flagged by Cooper (2005) and the working time regulation (WTR).

**Table 3: Percentage of staff working over contracted hours, additional hours and WTR threshold**

%	Over 35	over 40	over 45 (Cooper 2005)	over 50	over 48 (WTR)
Reference week (w/b 5 <sup>th</sup> Nov)	95	77	52	23	43
Over academic year to October 2018	98	67	37	22	33

<sup>5</sup> Three respondents (men) indicated that they occasionally work more than 35 hours.

Professor Cary Cooper reports ‘If you work consistently long hours, over 45 a week every week, it will damage your health, physically and psychologically’.<sup>6</sup> Over half of respondents reported working over 45 hours in the reference week and 37% as a weekly average over the previous academic year. A third of respondents reported working outside the WTR last year.

It is often suggested that long hours are chosen by academics who enjoy working in their subject area. This ‘hobby’ effect is tested below with satisfaction with hours of work.

Meeting increased work demands can be achieved either through additional hours or increased work intensity or both. There is clear quantitative evidence of working beyond contract. There is also evidence of increasing work intensity.

*The intensity of work over working hours is my biggest problem. I have experienced dealing a number of tasks with deadlines that can happen sometimes with a short "warning. The pace is very fast - limited time to "breeze" and reflect.*

This combination of working-time and work intensity above contract or expectation to meet work demand is called ‘work overload’.

In order to gauge the level of dissatisfaction with work overload respondents were asked about both the number and intensity of hours worked. Responses are reported in Table 4 and Figure 3. Although respondents are dissatisfied overall with long hours of work and work intensity, more are more dissatisfied with work intensity. Almost 60% are dissatisfied with work intensity while 47% are dissatisfied with long hours. In Table 3, the cell containing the median respondent is shaded.<sup>7</sup> The median respondent is fairly dissatisfied with work intensity and neutral about the number of hours worked. The same information is reported in Figure 3 adopting the traffic light system used in the staff survey where red is an indicator of urgency and priority. Red denotes dissatisfaction, green denotes satisfaction and orange denotes neither satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

**Table 4: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the intensity of your work and the overall hours of your last year (%)**

	Very satisfied (1)	Fairly satisfied (2)	Neither satis/diss (3)	Fairly dissatisfied (4)	Very dissatisfied (5)
work intensity	1.8	21.1	17.5	42.1	17.5
work hours	3.8	24.6	24.6	29.8	17.5

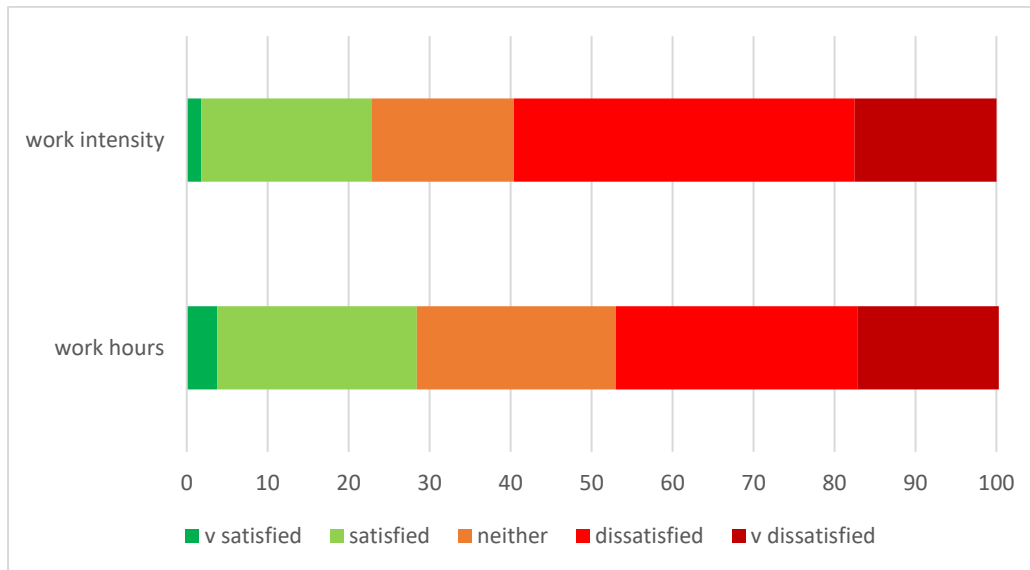
Notes: n= 57; shaded cell contains median respondent

<sup>6</sup> Interview in *The Guardian* October 20<sup>th</sup> 2005.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/aug/20/britishidentity.health>

<sup>7</sup> The median respondent is the one that sits in the middle of the distribution of responses which are ordered by value.



**Figure 3: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the intensity of your work and the overall hours of work last year (%)**



Some interesting differences between men and women are reported here and are developed in the supplementary report. Although men and women report the same weekly hours in the reference week and women report an hour less than men per week when measured over the course of the last academic year (not significant), women report greater dissatisfaction than men with both their hours of work and work intensity. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is very dissatisfied, and 3 is the mid-point of the range, the average scores for women are 4.00 (intensity) and 3.71 (hours) compared to 3.37 and 3.21 for men.<sup>8</sup>

Extreme hours and intensity at peak times was raised by a number of respondents with three-quarters finding the peaks a difficult aspect of their working hours (24% found this very difficult).

*Periods combining marking and teaching are a particular challenge.*

*I find student deadlines unhelpful.*

There were equal number of comments (unprompted) that increasing workload meant that the peaks were becoming a continuous feature of their working lives.

*Prior to 5 years ago there were discernible peaks around assessment periods or research writing. However, it feels that we are constantly working at peak and this means that assessment points have become practically impossible to manage.*

*My work has no peaks and troughs. As soon as one task is complete the next starts, even into the summer vacation.*

Failing to take annual leave is another indicator of work overload. Staff are entitled to 37 days leave including 4 days at the Christmas closure. Not everyone counted or recorded their leave reducing responses here to 42. Of these, only six people (14.3%) took their full leave

<sup>8</sup> The difference is significant at the 5% level for work intensity ( $p=0.03$ ) and at the 10% level for work hours ( $p=0.08$ ).

entitlement in the year 2017-8. Over a third, 36%, took 20 or fewer days. A majority, 61%, used part of their leave to undertake research or scholarship and, although not specifically asked, a respondent indicated taking annual leave as an alternative to sick leave.

*I teach through the whole academic year. This gives me no break, limited personal life and no chance to take a holiday.*

*I have never managed to take all my leave and every year carry forward the maximum amount.*

Faced with an opportunity to add detail to their responses on hours of work, some respondents described their long hours, others explained their long hours and others described the conflict with work demands in relation to teaching and administrative activities and meeting research expectations set out in PDR targets.

*I am about 200 hours over the WAM target every year (what happened to averaging out over three years?) and well over 1100 of teaching hours against a maximum of 900 what can be expected. Peaks in that due to large marking loads during the semester have been raised and disregarded.*

*The School/University adds to my workload through the introduction of requirements (mainly though not exclusively of administrative nature) which are unnecessary, time-consuming and mostly irrelevant to the tasks they refer to.*

*Preparation and delivery of teaching, repeated intrusion of demands from students, and more sporadic demands from administrators requiring response without delay have together destroyed my ability to work for sustained periods on research-related tasks. Every time I make any headway, it's soon lost. I need 2-3 days to get my head back into research material in order to move forward, by which time interruptions have usually put me back to square one. Weekends end up being the only time I can guarantee not to be interrupted, so they get sacrificed. Hence normally working 50-55 hours per week.*

*If I am to pursue meeting of the targets set at my Annual Performance Review, then I have to work much more than the hours specified by my contract. Quite worryingly, the School/University seems to have little appreciation of this fact.*

### **3. Impact of work overload**

Having established a situation of generalised work overload – most respondents are working above contract, this section seeks to uncover how this manifests in the management and experience of work (Table 5) and in terms of work-related wellbeing (Table 6).

In Table 5, the experience of excess work demand is reported across ten items each using a 5-point frequency scale from ‘almost never’ (1) to ‘nearly all the time’ (5). The percentage of responses in each category is reported. Five negative experiences are followed by five positive ones. Four of the five positive items are replicated from the Cardiff University Staff Survey 2017 and allow a cross-check of the results reported here against those at the School, College and University level. The cell containing the median respondent is shaded.

**Table 5: Thinking of the last few weeks, how much of the time has your job made you feel each of the following? (%)**

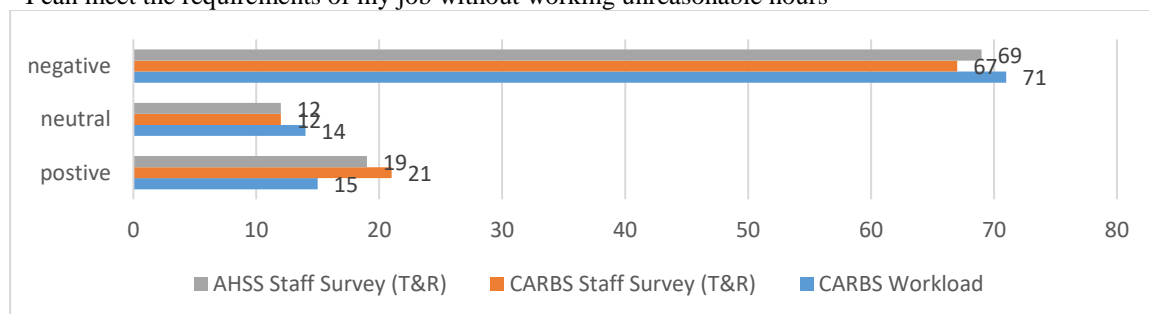
Negative outcomes	Almost never (1)	Occasionally (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Almost all the time (5)
I have to work extra hours to manage my workload	0	6.3	8.3	45.8	39.6
I work under time pressure	0	4.2	14.6	50.0	31.3
I have a backlog of work	0	4.2	16.7	29.2	50.0
I have to neglect tasks because I have too much to do	12.8	4.3	19.2	38.3	25.5
I work very intensively	0	8.3	8.3	39.6	43.8
Positive outcomes	Almost never (1)	Occasionally (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Almost all the time (5)
I find my workload is manageable	16.7	27.1	31.3	22.9	2.1
I have sufficient choice in how I do my work <sup>a</sup>	2.1	12.5	14.6	47.9	22.9
I have time to take sufficient breaks during the working day <sup>a</sup>	22.9	20.8	18.8	27.1	10.4
I can meet the requirements of my job without working unreasonable hours <sup>a</sup>	47.9	22.9	14.6	12.5	2.1
I feel able to cope with the pressure of work <sup>a</sup>	6.2	20.8	27.1	31.3	14.6

Notes: n=48, shaded cell contains median respondent,

<sup>a</sup> replicates question from the Cardiff University Staff Survey 2017

The median respondent falls into the ‘often’ category on all of the negative items and into a range of categories on the positive items. In order to form some sort of judgment in relation to these responses, there needs to be an agreed benchmark or target frequency. For example, if for the achievement of wellbeing, the target for time pressure is ‘sometimes’, then the 81% of respondents reporting that they are working under time pressure ‘often’ and ‘almost all the time’ is too much of the time to maintain their wellbeing. Similarly, if the target for meeting job requirements within reasonable hours is ‘often’, then the 85% of respondents reporting that they can do this less frequently than ‘often’ is too high. This question is replicated from the Staff Survey and the results of the Staff Survey (2017) at the College and School levels provide a useful cross-check for consistency.<sup>9</sup>

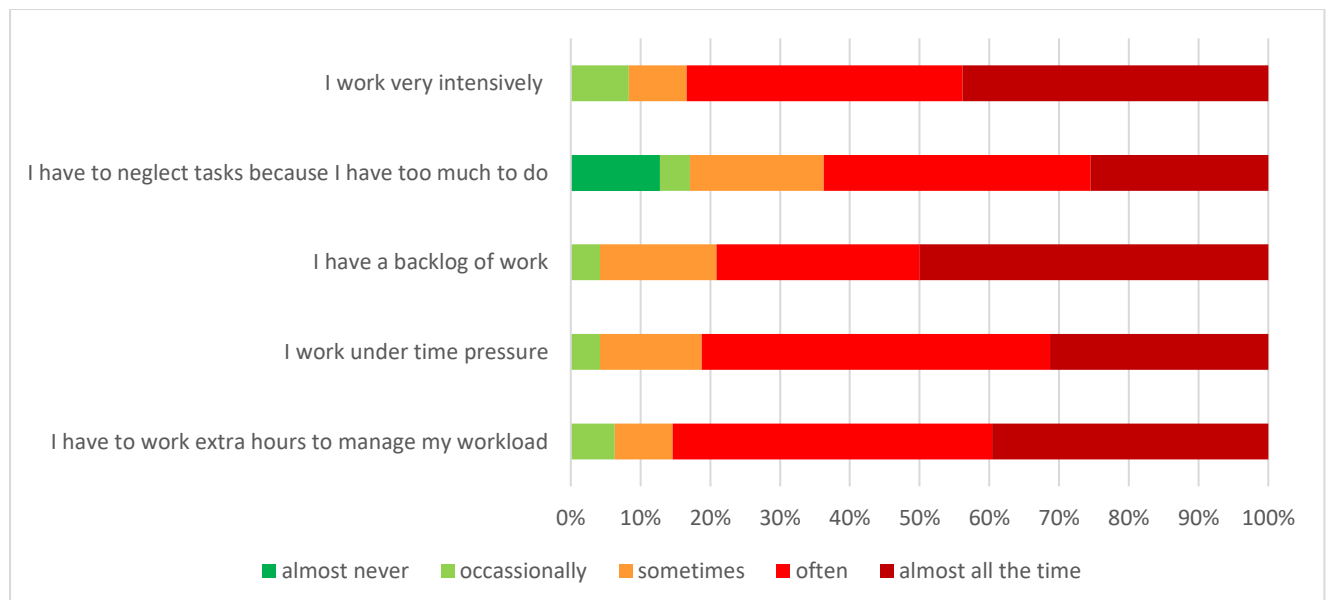
<sup>9</sup> I can meet the requirements of my job without working unreasonable hours

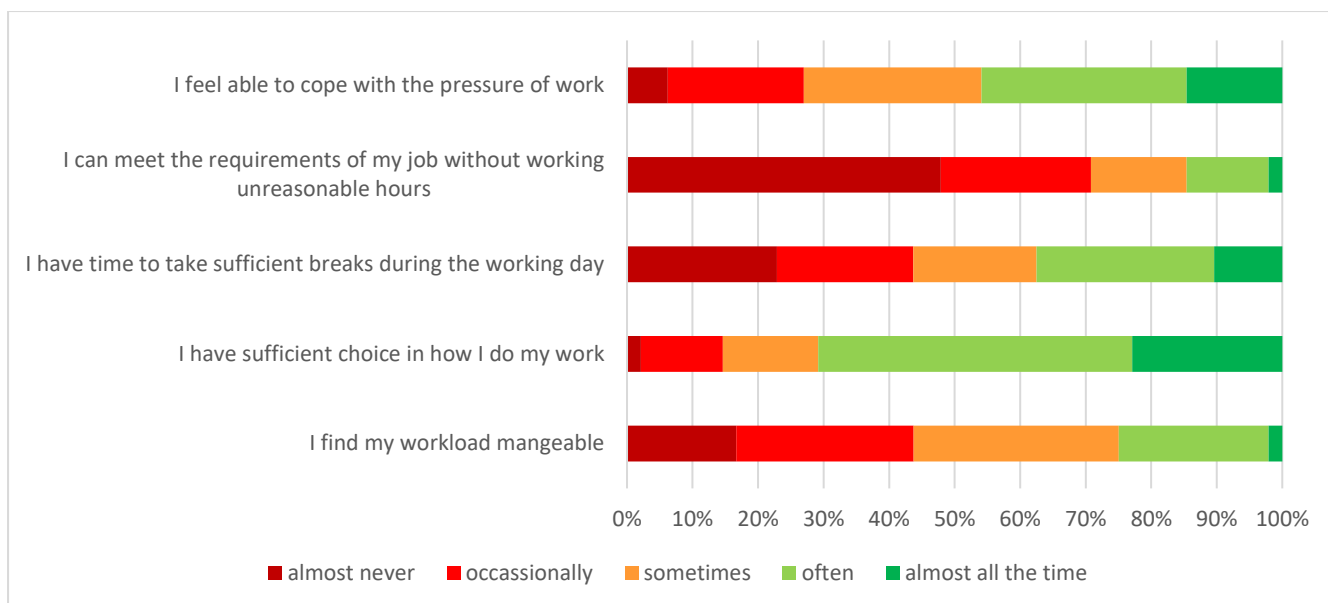


Again, there are some marked but complicated gender differences. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 represents experiencing the particular outcome almost all the time, women score higher than men on four of the negative outcomes indicating greater frequency. Women report having to neglect tasks less frequently than men. Women score lower than men on four of the positive outcomes and report equally on having sufficient choice in how to work. Given the small numbers, thresholds for statistical significance are difficult to achieve. Differences for finding workload manageable ( $p=0.10$ ) and having time to take sufficient breaks during the working day ( $p=0.01$ ) are statistically significant.

Using the traffic light system to identify priorities in Figure 4: these are working extra hours, working intensively, working with a backlog and working under time pressure all because staff are unable to meet job requirements in reasonable hours.

**Figure 4: Thinking of the last few weeks, how much of the time has your job made you feel each of the following? (%)**





The responses to the CARBS workload survey are comparable with those collected in the Staff

Respondents describe what work overload looks like?

*With young children at home, sometimes I work after midnight*

*There are periods of time (for example dissertation marking) where I just feel like I'm drowning. The rest of the time its more just a fight to stay afloat.*

*There are many weeks when I have no control over the demands on my time, in terms of both volume and variety of activity. It is very difficult switching attention from one type of activity to another in a packed day. I have to work evenings and weekends and have a migraine at least every other month.*

*They tell us that we are in control of our non-teaching contract hours, yet we spend all hours available in the typical day dealing with the multiple and completing demands they impose on us especially with regard to teaching large class sizes with difficult students and the ever-changing administrative requirements with less support than we had ten years ago. We then find that we don't have enough hours in a day so we often end up working into the evenings at home and over the weekends*

Work overload, whether managed through long hours or intensive hours, can undermine wellbeing. The Health & Safety Executive report published on work-related stress in the UK in 2018 found that the main work factors cited by respondents as causing work related stress, depression or anxiety were workload pressures, including tight deadlines, too much responsibility and a lack of managerial support.<sup>10</sup> To understand where work overload impacts staff at CARBS, Table 6 uses a shortened set of standard items to capture the frequency with which respondents' wellbeing is compromised by work overload. Sleep

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress.pdf>

disruption is included because it provides a useful marker for stress. It has some of the characteristics of an objective measure because it is not something that can be controlled through a determination to ‘tough out’ adversity. Good sleep forms one of the three pillars of health and is essential to wellbeing.<sup>11</sup>

Again, it is important to set a benchmark or target in advance with which to compare responses. Where the negative effects are more extreme in nature, and the potential for harm consequently raised, such as sleep deprivation, the target frequencies should be set at a lower level. For example, for 63% of respondents sleep is disrupted ‘sometimes’, ‘often’ or ‘almost all the time’. Finding it hard to sleep because of work issues at this frequency for this proportion of staff is too high. Other negative effects experienced at high frequency (often or more) by the majority of respondents include worrying about work at home (65%), finding it difficult to unwind after work (63%) and exhaustion after work (73%).<sup>12</sup>

**Table 6: Thinking of the last few weeks, how much of the time has your job made you feel each of the following? (%)**

Adverse impact of work overload	Almost never (1)	Occasionally (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Almost all the time (5)
I worry about work when I am at home	6.3	12.5	16.7	35.4	29.2
I find it difficult to unwind after work	10.4	14.6	12.5	33.3	29.2
I feel exhausted after work	6.2	4.2	16.7	50.0	22.9
I find it hard to sleep because of work issues	22.9	14.6	35.4	18.8	8.3
I feel anxious about what may be demanded of me	18.8	14.6	18.5	39.6	8.3

Notes: n=48

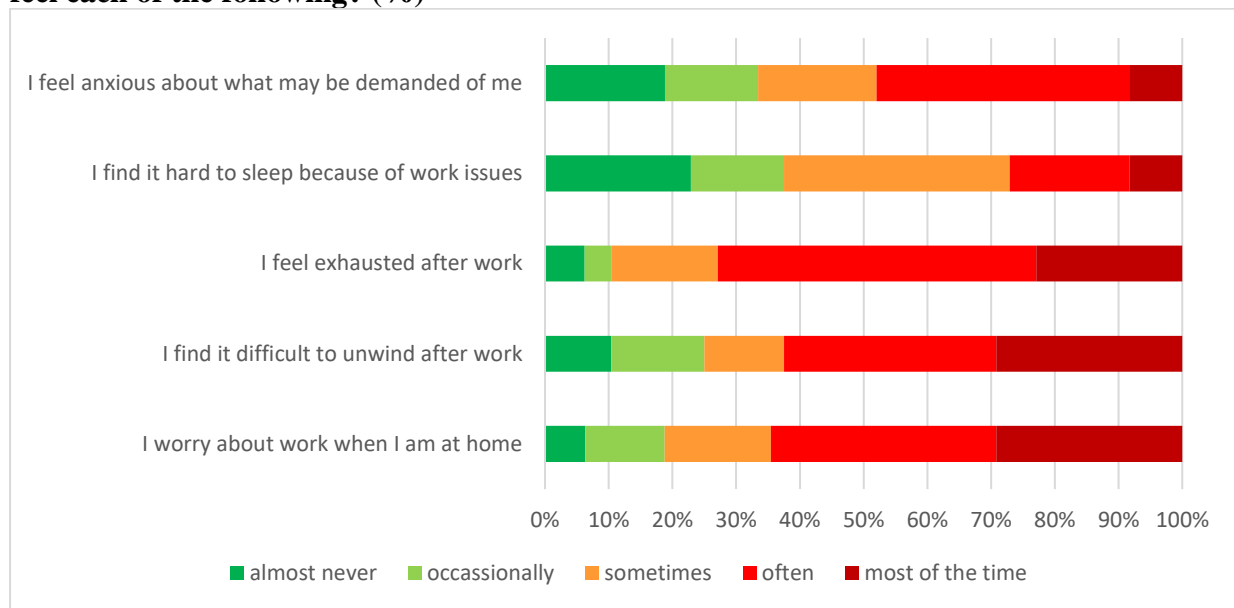
Shaded cell contains median respondent

The red lights here are around being exhausted, unable to unwind at home after work and worrying about work issues at home. Women are over-represented at the high frequency end of the distribution on all these outcomes, especially on feeling exhausted after work. All women fall into the ‘often’ and ‘almost all the time’ categories on this outcome compared to 60% for men (p=0.01). Given the serious nature of work-related sleep disruption, a prevalence rate of 27% counts as a red alert too.

<sup>11</sup> For those who are interested, the other two are diet and exercise.

<sup>12</sup> This information is not collected in the Staff Survey.

**Figure 5: Thinking of the last few weeks, how much of the time has your job made you feel each of the following? (%)**



#### 4. The allocation and management of workload through WAM

WAM is a workload allocation model which assigns ‘assumed’ or ‘scheduled’ hours’ to job tasks and fills up an employees’ contracted working-time with these scheduled hours. Staff were told that WAM would provide greater transparency and equity in the allocation of work across staff across sections and schools. The academic year 2018 to 2019 is the third year during which staff workload has been managed through WAM. The staff perception is that WAM was primarily introduced to obscure and to manage an increase in work demand.

*At the same time as WAM has been introduced in our section workloads effectively doubled. This is not something which has been officially recognised - even though most of us are teaching twice as many students, teaching on more modules and have doubled the dissertation marking. This has become normalised.<sup>13</sup>*

Most respondents, 94%, indicate that they have a WAM hours total for the most recently completed academic year, 2017-18, with 50% having received provisional and 44% having received their final. Two respondents indicate that they have not received their WAM total for 2017-8. Most respondents received this total between August and November 2018, i.e. after the academic year. Excluding the two without a WAM, 42% indicate that they are over their target with the average over-shoot being 12% (range 2% to 35%). Rather fewer, 22%,

<sup>13</sup> This perception of workload doubling is consistent with increase in teaching targets for the MEO section between 2007 and 2018, first under the Marriott hours calculation and under the WAM from October 2016.

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016*
310	-	345	350	360	360	390	435	-	600

\* The change from Marriott hours to WAM in 2016 represents a series discontinuity. Changes are relatively minor with hours for module co-ordination included in WAM but not Marriott.

are under target with the average under-shoot being 4% (range 0.5% to 10%). 37% don't know whether or not they are under or over their target.

Most respondents felt able to query their WAM but this was to correct mistakes rather than to reduce expectations. Very few respondents indicated that they had access to the WAM totals within their section (4 people all in the same section). A single respondent had access to WAM totals at school level. The absence of transparency, even among close colleagues, precludes any assessment of equity.

Only around half of respondents have signed off their WAM allocation for 2017-18. The reasons for not signing off cluster under three themes:

(i) they didn't have it, didn't know they had to do it or didn't know how to do it

(ii) not a priority

*Too busy to look or care.*

*Not relevant when issued mid-year*

*By PDR time I just give up and leave it as it is. There is no point at which the "actual" hours is put in...so picking up extra projects, dissertations etc is never counted.*

(ii) inaccurate

*I refuse to as I do not agree with the tariffs.*

*It did not show correctly my research students and projects.*

*It is never fully correct even after multiple iterations.*

*Because WAM does not cover all my daily activities.*

*WAM is a joke. Some provisions in WAM are simply insulting.*

*The WAM allocation does not cover key duties (e.g. the 100 hours it takes to organize a major student event that is integral to a teaching programme and its assessment).*

*Marking and feedback tariffs are utterly inadequate to cover the extensive and high quality summative and formative feedback that I have given to students.*

The reasons for refusing to engage with WAM due to inaccuracy of the hours allocated are explored further in sections 5, 6 and 7 below.

At the time of the survey (19th November 2018) around 10% of respondents had received a final WAM figure for the academic year 2018-19 with a further 40% having received a provisional figure. This leaves half of respondents who had not received any WAM allocation, three-quarters of the way into the first semester.



## 5. Concealed work: activities excluded from WAM

There are two types of concealed work: the performance of expected activities which are excluded from WAM and understated tariffs for activities which are included in WAM. The first of these is addressed in section 5 and the second in section 6.

Respondents were asked to identify from a pre-determined list of activities that are not included in WAM which ones they had undertaken in the last year. They were then asked to add to this list with further excluded activities. The performance of these activities is a form of 'concealed work'. This work is expected, indeed it is often requested by managers. Therefore this work is visible to managers. Mostly it is necessary work. It is called concealed work because it is not included in WAM. Its exclusion from WAM means that it is not counted in workload and is therefore undertaken in own time or in research time.

*As a process [WAM] doesn't work because we do not have conversations with line managers which are focused around our workload and what we actually do in practice. This of course suits management, because we are locked into a grand act of deception - as the system only records us as working 35 hours a week.*

*Difficulty is experienced when tasks that do not carry any hours acknowledgement need to be completed in addition to those that do.*

Table 6 reports the frequency with which respondents undertook each of the listed excluded work activities. 89% indicated that they were involved in at least one form of excluded activity. For teaching development, 40 out of 51 respondents (78%) undertook some form of teaching development which is not covered in WAM. There was an allowance for teaching development (200 hours) in the WAM model circulated for consultation before implementation. Its removal from the final model has never been explained to staff (see comments on p.20).

**Table 7: Indicate the activities that you undertook last year that are not included in your WAM.**

Excluded activities	No.	%
Teaching development	40	78.4
Exam paper setting	36	70.6
Setting and marking resit exams	41	80.4
Tutorial setting and co-ordinating	26	51.0
Moderation of exam setting	35	68.6
One-off expert lectures	24	47.1
Unfair practice investigation and prosecution	14	27.5
Support for students who fail including those who return as external re-sitters	34	66.7
Task switching and relocations	21	39.2
Managing research groups	20	39.2
Developing impact case studies	13	25.5
Developing grant application	29	56.9
Field trips	12	23.5
Editing and uploading Panopto lecture recordings	28	54.9
Writing student references	45	88.2

N= 51

Respondents were asked to identify any activities not included in WAM and not included in Table 7.

*If you update your module, write new tutorial material, change the assessment then the workload can be extreme but no-one ever knows you have undertaken those tasks.*

Other excluded tasks are listed in Table 7.

**Table 8: Activities excluded from WAM**

journal editing	mentoring	dealing with complex student problems or problem students
journal reviewing	dealing with student issues outside the classroom	responding to student emails
external examining	of external engagement (i.e. representing the School as judge for sponsored awards, meeting companies for potential projects, setting up visits from Cabinet Office delegation, etc)	additional citizenship burden on T&S because they teach on a larger number of programmes (eg multiple BoS/exam boards)
PhD examination	attending internal section meetings and preparation for those meetings	tracking and recording evidence for impact case study
chairing PhD viva	preparing for guest lectures	visiting research talks to other universities
organising the section seminar series	preparing time for and actual time devoted to media engagement	developing and maintaining relationships and links to external partners as part of the public value initiative (e.g., government, NHS, charities)
sitting on the school's committees	pursuing policy impact	covering staff absence
listening to presentations from new recruits	dealing with student appeals	pre-exam board meetings
liaising with external bodies to underpin school strategy	dealing with ISANs	Participating in annual "training" courses
supervising/first marking/second marking resit (re-submission) MSc and MBA dissertations	dealing with defects and irregularities in School and university processes	managing discussion forums for students in Learning Central
contributing to Government advisory panels	drafting /moderating coursework	teaching guest pupils from local schools

## 6. Concealed work: Understated tariffs

In addition to work tasks that carry zero WAM hours is the undervaluing of the tasks that are included in the model.

*The main problems with WAM is that so many activities are not recognised but also totally under-estimated.*

Table 9 compares the WAM allocation and the average hours taken to complete a selection of WAM job tasks. So, for example, the allocated time to prepare and deliver a new one-hour lecture is 4.5 hours. The average across respondents for this task is 10.5 hours with a range from 3 to 65 hours. The figure in brackets is the trimmed mean which calculates the mean having first removed the two most extreme values. The difference between actual and allocated hours is the 'hours gap'. It is defined as follows:

$$100 \times (\text{Actual} - \text{Assumed}) / \text{Assumed}$$

For a new lecture, actual hours are on average 133% higher than allocated hours. This is the hours gap. A new lecture is the most under-estimated task of those measured here. The second most under-estimated is updating and delivering an existing lecture where the percentage hours gap is 63%. For dissertation supervision and marking the excess is around a third and similar for MBA Business Projects and MSc dissertations. Measured as an average, contribution to citizenship is understated with an hours' gap of 76%. Hours contributed to these tasks are also highly variable across staff and this variability is not reflected in the use of a standard uniform allocation of hours. Variation in contributions to citizenship is perhaps the most visible.

*I do a lot of citizenship activities, but my allocation for this is the same as colleagues who do very little.*

*While everyone gets the same amount of time allocated [for citizenship] if someone is organizing a seminar series it will consume more than 100 hours but tasks such as an occasional committee meeting will take significantly less.*

**Table 9: Comparison of WAM and actual hours for selected job tasks**

	WAM hours (assumed)	Average actual hours (trimmed)	Range	Hours' gap %
New lecture	4.5	10.5 (9.2)	3-65	133
Old lecture	3	4.9 (4.5)	1-20	63
MBA supervision of BP	12	16.4 (16.2)	9-25	37
MBA mark BP	3	3.8 (3.6)	2-10	28
MSc dissertation supervision	15	20 (19.6)	8-40	33
MSc dissertation marking	4.5	5.8 (5.4)	2-20	29
Citizenship	100	176 (16.5)	50-300	76

Respondents provided many other examples of tariffs which understate the time actually taken to complete tasks.

*A rather obvious problem with WAM is it's poor ability to measure time per task. For example, the quality of students if you are lucky and get good master students your supervision time is low, even lower than 15 hours. But if you are not lucky and you get a student who barely managed to pass the courses you have to tutor him or her on numerical methods which end up consuming more than allocated average.*

*I am given 30 minutes to correct computer codes of 6 PhD students (it takes me full day). I am given 6 hours to prepare, sit on and grade student presentations, which last 8 hours... All tariffs are way below reasonable estimates. Plus there are no provisions to innovate, no provisions to attend seminars, no provisions for conference travels, no time to switch between activities.*

*For a 1000 word assignment I am allocated 15 minutes for reading and providing feedback. The task takes an average of 40 minutes.*

*I had to teach a new module and write 5 new lectures - I had the allocation for this but in reality if it takes 2 weeks to write a new lecture then that becomes unmanageable.*

*There is a huge amount of administration associated with assignment and exam marking including co-ordinating with moderators, submitting marks and analysing performance. None of these activities are properly accounted for.*

*There is allocated time for module co-ordination but this doesn't reflect the realities of the work involved and the amount of bureaucracy we are expected to undertake.*

The hours' gap is the consequence of the generalised under-rating of included activities. It comes on top of the activities excluded from WAM. Both are a source of confusion for staff.

The first question for staff is:

- Are staff required to undertake activities for which there is no allocation given that the time taken for this will be own time (for which they are not paid) or research time (for which research outputs are expected)?

A further set of questions relate to understated tariffs.

- What quality of work is expected?
- Is it the quality that can be delivered within the WAM scheduled hours?
- If yes, is the quality of work possible under WAM sufficient to deliver the 'educationally outstanding' ambition of the Way Forward and Transforming Cardiff?
- Is it even at the quality sufficient to deliver the published module description?

*I have signed off WAM, but I still am not sure whether I should teach based on WAM hours or hours needed by the module description.*

There is currently a divergence in responses to the hours gap with some staff working WAM hours and providing a WAM-based quality standard and others working more than their

WAM allocation and producing a service at some perceived prior professional quality standard. **The inequalities generated here for staff and students are likely to be large and problematic.**

The first group of staff plan and deliver their work effort to match their WAM hours

*I keep to WAM hours but I do a **bad job***

*Sometimes the focus moves away from the quality, and "do just enough" to meet multiple deadlines.*

*Since joining Cardiff, I have worked to those allocations and therefore, if necessary, quality may have been impacted.*

*I do my best to work to those [WAM] hours and 'I work very intensively' and do a lot of multitasking.*

*This year I have proactively attempted to work to my contract hours and so last week is less than I used to do. This is to protect myself from further deterioration in my mental and physical health.*

*I just try to manage my time not to do more than contracted. I try to 'switch off' and avoid emails out of hours. I only really started doing this last year.*

The second larger group of staff plan and deliver their work effort to match a pre-conceived quality standard. It is this that determines their work effort (hours and intensity) and it is greater than the WAM allocation.

*To do the job to a minimum standard is vastly different from doing an excellent job, which I strive to do. I have no intention of ever standing before a class for which I have not prepared fully.*

*To care about work means going the extra mile. I take it that it is my choice to do the work to a high standard. Sustainability of this, however, is becoming an issue.*

## **7. Feedback channels on WAM**

WAM was implemented in October 2016 with little effective consultation with staff on the final model and no post-implementation review to date.

*A consultation process was arranged before the agreed WAM was launched but selective views were taken into consideration. For example, while exam-setting was raised as part of this process, no action was taken.*

*The model I was consulted on was very different from the one that was implemented.*

It was implemented without clear built-in feedback mechanisms.

*The College should make it as easy as possible for people to raise issues without worrying that the response will be a negative impact on their job.*

Consequently, staff have developed their own ‘voice’ channels as reported in Table 10. Here the number of respondents who indicate awareness or use of each channel together with an indication of whether or not it was found to be effective. There were missing values on this question because while staff might be aware of a channel, they were unable to say whether or not it was effective as a channel. The university-wide staff survey, PDR and direct approaches to Section Heads were the most commonly used channels. There was very little awareness of the role of the UEB, HR or the union/staff groups in receiving and delivering feedback. The most used channel was the university-wide staff survey with 80% of those using it regarding it as ineffective. The next most used channel was PDR with equal numbers claiming that this was effective and ineffective.

**Table 10: Feeding back on WAM<sup>1</sup>**

Channels for feedback	Awareness/use	Effective	Ineffective
PDR	34	16	16
Speak week	14	3	11
College PVC	14	4	9
School meetings	18	3	14
Meetings with UEB	5	0	5
Meetings with HoS or DSLT	26	9	13
University/college/school focus groups	12	1	8
Staff satisfaction survey	40	5	20
HR	8	2	5
PAC/Frontline/UCU	11	5	5

Note:

<sup>1</sup> Due to missing values on different parts of this question, numbers are reported rather than percentages

Additional channels used include a group feedback as part of a section initiative, a direct approach to the WAM officer (Julia) and advice from the union. The largely ineffective nature of the feedback channels is corroborated in respondent comments.

*I emailed directly the School’s WAM officer about a specific task. That was effective and recognised, though the WAM allocation proved far too small compared with the actual task requirements.*

*A workshop was held in our section but not much came from it. Shadow Management Board conducted a review but not much has come from it.*

*I do not feel comfortable raising my concerns about this in many of the above forums, except for anonymous surveys, given the current climate and fear of redundancies. I also feel that doing so would be unlikely to produce any meaningful response, so what is the point?*

## 8. Does the new email etiquette help manage workload?

The College responded to the problem of work overload reported in the staff survey for 2015 and 2016 with a policy on email etiquette. This question attracted the greatest number of comments to any single question. Of the 47 who expressed a view, 38% found the email policy to be helpful because either they receive fewer emails out of hours or they don't feel obliged to read them.

*I receive less emails from colleagues during out of hours - In the past I would receive excessive number of emails that would be send on weekends and night*

*The email policy has helped me a lot. In the past the volume of emails and my perception that I should read them out of hours was my biggest pressure. Now the College and School have said they don't want anyone to send emails out of hours and hence I also don't go looking to read any.*

For the 62% who did not find the new email policy helpful, for some it was disappointing (even insulting) because in its focus on timing it failed to address the issue of work volume. For others, the email policy was actively unhelpful because it introduced a constraint on their ability to work flexibly.

*Addressing emails doesn't even scratch the surface and is insulting. Low staff numbers, increased numbers of students, increased demands from students, increased student failure rates, higher student expectations, more challenging standards for publications, these are the real issues that are ignored by the university.*

*We have such a high demand of emails I find that I can only respond to these outside of the assigned hours.*

*While this has been somehow effective in managing student expectations in regards to replying to their queries, it has little impact on the root cause of the main reasons managing workload is difficult (research pressures, teaching preparation, citizenship, engagement activities, etc.).*

*The issue is not the timing of the emails, but the volume. I actually quite like the ability to respond to emails in non-work hours so I can free up some time in the work day to do some proper work.*

*This just makes life more challenging. I don't mind people not emailing me back but emailing when it suits me is one of the only ways I can keep on top of my workload.*

*Emailing is fine. Expecting immediate replies is not. Teaching adult people etiquette is disrespect.*



## Summary and conclusion

Neither CARBS nor Cardiff University are alone in requiring ever greater work effort from its staff. CARBS is a large and successful school with continuing strong demand for its programmes and where past collegiality is a relatively recent experience.

*My experience since joining the School, has in comparison to my previous experience in other HEIs, been largely positive in terms of workload management.*

This may offer opportunity for a more co-operative approach and less extreme operational change than is found in other departments or universities. It ought to be possible to recapture cooperation and improve morale if we act quickly to manage down workload and reform/replace the WAM.

The opportunity for greater transparency, consistency and equity promised in WAM has not been realised.

*Inequality between section members have increased because the system is not transparent and it becomes too easy for section managers to ask the usual suspects to do more.*

This too has an obvious solution.

It is not the role of this report to produce recommendations rather it is to give voice to CARBS faculty who are struggling with competing work demands and confused expectations and who feel that, by design, no-one is listening to or acting on their concerns.

The tariffs in WAM are inaccurate, incomplete and biased such that a large part of workload is concealed.

*WAM as a system and process is ineffective - too much of what we do in practice is either not accounted for or, under-accounted, such that even though your assumed workload may not appear to be officially over the allocation this does not mean that your actual workload is manageable.*

WAM was implemented without meaningful consultation and has been designed to exclude feedback. There are no official channels for staff to provide feedback on unreasonable tariffs or excluded job tasks or to raise work overload and the personal and family pressures that this creates. No-one is listening when staff are suffering. Workload continues to escalate. Staff need a voice channel free from fear of being ignored, ridiculed or punished and managers need to listen and to act.

There are three types of employee responses to excessive work demand and its implementation through WAM. The first is the employee who seeks to meet existing professional standards in research and teaching and is working long and intensive hours to do so. Here the employee is at risk of physical and psychological harm and the employer at risk of absence, restriction and of placing added burden of cover for both on colleagues. The second is working contracted hours, maintaining research time and 'working to WAM' by cutting out all excluded activities and work hours not scheduled in WAM. The risk here is to teaching quality. The third response is the use of research time to supplement teaching preparation time. The risk here is to research quality. The practice for most people is a combination of these.

## Risks for the School and its staff

Five risks arising from work overload are identified:

### 1. Employee health safety and wellbeing

Staff report working on average 47 hours in the reference week, 12 hours above contract. The reference week was not a peak week. Annual averages last year were only one hour less. Only 15% indicate that they can meet the requirements of the job without working unreasonable hours 'often' or 'almost all of the time'. 60% of staff are dissatisfied with work intensity. Control is an important moderator of intensive work but high work demand limits control over the duration and pace of work. Staff also report an inability to take their annual leave which is likely to exacerbate the health impacts of work over-load. The consequences are reported in Table 6, 73% report feeling exhausted (often or almost all of the time), 65% worrying about work at home, 63% finding it difficult to unwind after work and 27% experiencing sleep disruption.

### 2. Quality of teaching and scholarship

The WAM does not support or recognise innovations in teaching and this is likely to have a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning leaving modules and programmes using outdated methods to deliver outdated material. A minority of staff have responded to the increased work demands in WAM by actively reducing service quality to match their scheduled WAM allocation. This is entirely reasonable and appropriate but will impact negatively on teaching quality. This response is variable as staff navigate competing pressures of work and home individually but is likely to increase. Such variability is likely to exacerbate inequities in staff workload and in student experience. This is the opposite of the high quality and consistent experience promised in *The Way Forward* and *Transforming Cardiff*. Student complaints will escalate and will surface at the Office for Students and on social media.

### 3. Quality of research

CARBS reputation as a leading research performing institution has been secured by its consistently high research rankings in REF and RAE over a twenty-year period. This research performance has had a positive impact on both staff and student recruitment. As increased and increasing work demands from teaching and administration squeezes staff time for research, CARBS's long-standing research culture and reputation for internationally recognised research is at risk. With 61% of staff using annual leave to undertake research and scholarship, staff demonstrate commitment to research but this level of commitment is not sustainable.

*We are short staffed in my section which means last minute I am given an unmanageable workload such as an unsurmountable amount of marking. This has severely jeopardized my R&R from a 4\* journal. This is not acceptable practice from a university that claims to be research intensive. It signals to me that Cardiff is not a good place to work for a research career.*

There are significant risks to the School of a diminishing research reputation including the impact on staff recruitment and retention.

#### 4. Working relationships, trust and confidence in management

The threats from work overload extend to the quality of working relationships between staff and management. Like many organisations CARBS relies on goodwill and the spirit and practice of reciprocity to function effectively. This has been undermined by concealed work: activities expected and requested by managers but which are not 'counted' under WAM, an hours' gap for lecture preparation and delivery of 133% and for citizenship, 76%. To provide a high-quality professional service across teaching, research, impact and engagement and to be an active citizen in the School means that staff must engage in concealed work. Reciprocity is one-way, from staff to managers, and the sense of an increasing imbalance and of not receiving management support is not sustainable for an organisation which requires high levels of discretionary effort for its effective functioning.

*So much goodwill is expended in the School with no reciprocity from management.*

The legitimacy of management is put at risk by the flaws in WAM. These revolve around inaccurate tariffs and excluded job tasks which facilitate a growing incidence of concealed work and a chaotic process in which some staff have their WAM allocation communicated in a timely and transparent way but most do not.

*The model is not sophisticated enough, or responsive enough, to make me confident that it is correct. Too many activities are missed or classed as citizenship, and thus the overall number is likely to be incorrect.*

Opportunities for employees to raise concerns and for flaws to be addressed are limited by the absence of a feedback mechanism (either built-in or add-on). WAM has no legitimacy within the School. In failing to capture the realities of academic work, it fails to measure, record and compare actual workload. If managers continue to rely on flawed information from a discredited WAM to manage employee workload, they put at risk their own legitimacy.