Workload

Summary:
Over the last five years academic and teaching staff have taken on an ever increasing workload. Workload is a major contributory factor for work related stress and is a major H&S concern for UCU both at UCL and across the sector. At UCL contributing factors that have increased academic workload include the increase in student numbers, increased compliance requirements and a reduction in professional service support. UCL currently has a workload management policy for academic staff inherited from the IoE. This policy has not been agreed with UCL-UCU and needs to be updated to reflect and accommodate the diversity of practice at UCL.

Action required of HSC:

To consider the following actions to address the issue:

1. To initiate the set up a working group tasked with developing a set of model local guidelines for development of local workload policies.

2. Establish an ongoing audit process to ensure effective monitoring and management of workload is pursued across UCL.

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Academic and teaching staff have poorly defined working patterns, a (necessarily) light management structure and undertake work that is of an open-ended nature. In an environment where the amount of work is rapidly increasing they can easily become over-loaded and local managers are often unsympathetic when this happens. This can lead to high levels of stress which lead to poor health and can be life threatening (as in the case of a lecturer at Cardiff University who committed suicide in 2018 after being asked to mark 418 exam papers in a 20-day period).

A few recent instances of concern at UCL:

1. Compression of the exam period. Next year undergraduate and postgraduate taught exams are to run concurrently over six weeks; June timeline for exam boards to be retained, reducing marking time by one week. This will shorten the marking period for exams by one week massively increasing the workload for staff involved during this period.
2. Introduction of late summer assessments during 2017. This introduced extra work during the summer period for many staff.
3. School of Pharmacy MSc Research projects. The SOP now has almost 200 students on taught postgraduate courses and the *average* number of MSc students allocated to individual academic staff is five or more. The department is instructing visiting scientists to monitor safety in all PIs' laboratories and staff have been advised that these VSs must enter every PI's laboratory twice a day to monitor whether MSc students are being supervised and if they are wearing PPI.

Proposed Actions:

1. Initiate a working group tasked with developing a set of model local guidelines for development of local workload policies. We suggest that this would be a joint

management and UCU working group. The involvement of the Academic Board should be considered to facilitate input from the wider academic community. An important focus should be on developing guidelines for task specific workload tariffs eg. for marking, project student supervision, lecture preparation etc.

2. Develop a robust system for auditing and monitoring workload management practice to ensure stress management standards with appropriate risk assessments are met. This should include a staff workload survey and the requirement for a workload allocation to be included with all new initiatives and for delivery of compliance requirements.

References:

UCL Workload management for academic staff - https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/files/workload-management-academic-staffpdf

HSE Stress management standards - http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm