

FE Lecturers

National Education Workforce Survey 2021

Analysis of open text comments



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

1. Workload

Overall themes from suggestions to make work more manageable open text question.

- reducing the number of contact hours;
- less administration/paperwork/meetings;
- recruiting/additional support to assist with workload;
- more time to prepare resources, or to be given access to a bank of resources which can be shared;
- improve access to the appropriate technology for all staff and students.

Total number of responses: 1,722

Total number of open text responses: 829

In response to:

4. *To what extent do you agree or disagree that you are able to effectively manage your existing workload within your contracted working hours? (select one) (when either disagree or strongly disagree was selected, the open text question was asked "Do you have practical suggestions on what changes would help to make your workload more manageable?"*

Analysis of comments relating to how to make work more manageable

1.1. Reducing the number of contact hours (384 comments)

- By far the most frequent suggestion in response to Q4 was a reduction in contact hours. Many suggested reducing teaching hours from 24 to 20 to create more headroom for planning, preparation and reflection;
- Similarly, there were some comments regarding raising the overall contractual hours to encompass planning, preparation and reflection.

Examples

24 [contact hours] is unrealistic with only 30 minutes prep time per lesson, an assignment takes easily 30 minutes per student to mark, followed by another 15 minutes for btec paperwork. Class of 30 with only 4 assignments which is on the lower end, is 90 hours a year, with 18 hours given to do it in. This is without other admin, tracking, support etc, not actually preparing for the class, generating notes etc.

If teaching hours were reduced then everything else would fall into place. In addition to this, having no-teaching days would help every week. I teach all day. So all administrative tasks have to be done between lessons, over lunch, during evenings, at weekends.

Increase the hours we are paid for especially marking. 40 students in one group to mark takes time.

Increased allocation of paid hours to better reflect increased time needed to prepare for, deliver and assess teaching and learning.

1.2. Less administration/paperwork/meetings (238 comments)

- Administration/paperwork/meetings accounted for a substantial amount of time for FE lecturers. It is felt that some administration is unnecessary and on occasions paperwork is duplicated causing additional workload.

Examples

Less admin work, as an example I had to get letters to my learners about a phase return to college. I have had to fill in 3 different documents when one document had all the information in already but they wanted it in a different format. We do registers but then have to complete a separate form about attendance each week. The duplication is the most frustrating part of the admin work.

Less bureaucracy. This can be achieved by having software that doesn't require duplication of work and also systems that are compatible with each other. It could also be achieved if all staff (teaching and non-teaching) embraced the same systems. Teaching staff have become very competent in using collaborative online software, yet non-teaching staff are still tending to use more traditional software, which, in many cases means that administrative documents created in one set of software then has to be adapted or re-created to send to non-teaching staff. There needs to be a complete overhaul of the administrative systems used in education as they are so dated

Reduction in admin tasks, including excessive paperwork attached to justifying every decision made, particularly surrounding assessment. If I have made an assessment decision, it is based on my professional judgement. I should not have to spend an extra 10-15 minutes per student, justifying it to someone else to save them the time of reading the work.

1.3. Recruiting/additional support to help with workload (93 comments)

- Additional suggestions were provided where administration was stated as a reason for increased workload. FE lecturers felt that some of their administration duties should be delegated to other areas;
- Suggestions included that aspects of their administration could be conducted by other areas of the college, or that additional staff should be recruited to assist.

Examples

If the college were to employ admin staff and coordinators who could help then it would allow the teachers to devote their time to teaching and supporting the learners in their learning.

Employ support staff to do administrative duties such as enrolling students, registering for exams, collecting consent forms, checking IT equipment, photocopying, sending out letters, printing letters.

To have more admin staff who could help lecturers with the day to day admin duties that take up so much of our time - phone calls to parents are usually made during our lunch breaks.

Using non-teaching staff for digital conversion of work.

1.4. More time to prepare resources, or to be given access to a bank of resources which can be shared (47 comments)

- Several suggestions for a national resource bank developed by awarding bodies or by experienced practitioners (especially useful for newly qualified teachers); including assessment and marking schemes which can be adapted.

Examples

A bank of resources and assessment materials available to avoid lots of time spent creating resources from scratch for many lessons and courses.

I do struggle as there is not a bank of resources available for essential skills.

Being given existing resources that you can alter to suit and update, where necessary, instead of creating new resources from scratch constantly.

To aid preparation time, purchase of ready made materials would be useful, and good timetabling that allows staff to deliver the same unit multiple times where appropriate would also be a good idea.

It is impossible to design and deliver high-quality teaching materials within the time I am paid to do so.

Most helpful would be if there were prepared teaching materials that could be used to deliver and assess teaching and learning.

1.5. Improve access to the appropriate technology for all staff and students (45 comments)

- Equipment provided for some are either not provided or not fit for purpose;
- Some administration requires input into several systems – improved technology and automation could help reduce the administration burden.

Examples

We need good IT systems, designed and managed by all stakeholders, IT staff as well as educational practitioners (teachers); rather than teachers just given them, then finding certain things do not work, or are repetitive and not logical etc.

Poor I.T. infrastructure in the college. e.g. copiers don't work. Internet slow and unresponsive. Laptop given for home working cheap and lacking in power.

Better systems which link to each other clearly so tasks are not repeated and I'm not answering the same questions to different people.

Improve processes/procedures and data management, increase automation and reduce multiple repetition of tasks to require the use of the same data.

Overall themes from why workload has increased due to blended learning open text question.

Additional work reasons

- insufficient time to cover the preparation aspects of the role;
- learners requiring additional support (one-to-one/pastoral/welfare);
- ICT - design and reliability of IT systems/lack of support available;
- administration requirements and / or paperwork - practical tasks such as chasing attendance;
- insufficient time to cover marking, feedback and assessment;
- challenges of online/blended learning delivery/hybrid learning.

Practical suggestions for improvement

- change to contact hours to allow for more preparation and marking time;
- a national resource bank developed by awarding bodies or by experienced practitioners;
- ICT improvements;
- additional training to be provided for staff and learners;
- expectations adjusted whilst blended learning takes place .

Total number of responses: 1,722

Total number of open text responses: 1,125

In response to:

8. How has delivering blended / remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic affected your workload? If "it's increased slightly" or "it's increased significantly", the following open text question was asked "If your workload has increased slightly or significantly, please explain what the additional work has been and any practical suggestions on how this could be improved"

Analysis of comments relating to why workload has increased:

1.6. Insufficient time to cover the preparation aspects of the role (690 comments)

- Significant challenges around developing or converting resources for online delivery;
- Lessons (in particular practical subjects) have to be adapted to suit blended learning.

Examples

To engage the learners, the resources must be more interactive and involve the creation of quizzes, research tasks (which need marking) and developing YouTube resources which engage them more effectively than a voice on a screen.

Converting handouts, question sheets and assessments into online resources and trying to convert from a pdf to a Word document format. Not easy when you haven't got the full version of pdf convertor unless I buy it myself. Also marking the students work is very difficult as they send a photo image of their work. Apps like "Forms" are not suitable for my subject at A-Level.

Ensuring all learners can access all materials for online sessions, whether they use smartphones, iPads or laptops. You have to always think of the accessibility an ease of use of worksheets/activities for learners. This can take several versions of an activity before its fit for purpose for all learners within the group.

I have been designing resources but not allowed any extra time to do so. I have been asked to produce resources for other staff.

I work in a practical area so filming demonstrations on my mobile and re-filming them as I'm not an expert in filming/lighting/editing is taking a very long time, sometimes up to 3 hours to film a short 5-10 min demo to ensure that the quality is sufficient... Bigger demonstrations have taken hours to film and days to edit and upload.

A lot of my content can be demonstrated practically, and suits working one-to-one or with small groups. Moving to online learning has increased the amount of support content I've needed to produce to enable independence, or altering content to suit working from home.

1.7. Learners requiring additional support (one-to-one/pastoral/welfare) (329 comments)

- Increased demand for pastoral and counselling support during the pandemic;
- Learners prefer to raise questions in relation to their studies outside of lessons;
- Queries can be received from learners at any time of the day;
- Additional support is necessary when learners have missed lessons due to technology issues.

Examples

Students seem to be struggling more and need more support and reassurance.

Students constantly bombard you with questions 24 hours a day, which increases pressure to respond. They wouldn't walk into your room if you were teaching a class but will ignore 'busy' message on Teams.

Working from home means work expands into the time available, previously the commute limited work to the workplace. Now teachers are 'on' almost 24/7. Students treat Teams like a form of social media and contact you at any time of day, when it is convenient for them. Expectations need managing.

Explaining to absent learners what they have missed in lesson to enable them to understand content delivered or tasks to be completed

Considerable additional one to one time with learners to support their emotional wellbeing and strategies to overcome hardships due to working online during lock down.

It has meant that learners have easier access to me. Also, they do not have access to others in college, so expect me to deal with everything for them. They have more issues to deal with and easy access to me via Teams.

1.8. ICT - design and reliability of IT systems/lack of support available (316 comments)

- IT issues arising from lack of fit for purpose systems/software and internet connection failures. This applies to both staff and learners (147 comments);
- Staff felt a significant amount of time was spent trying to identify the best methods/programs for digital learning and learning how to make full use of the different programs (143 comments);
- Uploading resources also proved to be time consuming for some (26 comments).

Examples

One of the main difficulties has been the lack of reliability with Microsoft Teams both in general and across different hardware and software platforms. It is far from a finished product and was never designed for this use. It fails to successfully record sessions, so they have to be delivered a second time to those unable to attend so as not to disadvantage anyone. The quality when a number of people attend a session can be truly appalling for students relying on Wi-fi. The add on features, and even some of the basics like sound, work only intermittently.

Technical issues have been prominent throughout and dealing with this has been lengthy.

IT systems that don't 'talk' with one another, transferring resources etc to different platforms. Learner's not having compatible software access.

Familiarising with the platforms and tools required to deliver the lessons. Being confident in delivering the sessions takes practice and time.

Having to upload resources to several different platforms - TEAMS and Moodle.

1.9. Administration requirements and / or paperwork - practical tasks such as chasing attendance (228 comments)

- Many comments about “unnecessary” form-filling, data entry and paperwork; duplicate requirements for similar information in different formats;
- Encouraging engagement and chasing learners regarding attendance and work also increased workload.

Examples

I am also expected to duplicate my students results on different paperwork (that cannot be cut and pasted) for the department/College. There is absolutely no reason for this and it creates yet more paperwork to complete.

Admin tasks have increased significantly as has extra meetings with colleagues/management.

There has been an increased demand on the already burdensome amount of tracking data/student evidence required.

Chasing down learners to ensure attendance, engagement and completion of assessment work.

There has been more time spent chasing up learners who have not been engaging or attending online lessons. I feel that there should be more consequences placed on learners and parents for engagement.

1.10. Insufficient time to cover marking, feedback and assessment (188 comments)

- It is felt that marking work digitally is more time consuming and that the amount of work that required marking has increased;
- Class marking or verbal feedback could no longer take place in a blended learning environment, leading to increased assessment.

Examples

Work for GCSE English must be handwritten, so learners write it, send as a photo - I then need to download it, convert to PDF, annotate it, save it and send it back. It takes three times as long as marking a typed response on Google classroom or a paper submission in person.

It has also generated more assessments requiring marking and feedback. If purely classroom based some of the feedback would be given verbally and I would be monitoring understanding by effective questioning.

Marking takes longer because work cannot be printed. Assessments need to be organised electronically and with different classes and units, it has become a mammoth task.

In a normal classroom situation you would be able to ask questions to assess progress and knowledge and wander around the classroom to check on students work and correct etc. However this is not easy to do in a virtual classroom, and therefore there is a greater need to check and mark classwork for all students.

1.11. Challenges of online/blended learning delivery/hybrid learning (124 comments)

- Challenges with hybrid learning where some learners are present and others remote. Preparation had to be differentiated;
- Delivery of lessons takes longer when compared to face to face teaching;
- Learners are struggling to engage with blended learning.

Examples

Online delivery along with classroom delivery is like teaching two groups at once. Classes should be one or the other not both. Delivery of lessons takes longer due to internet dropping in and out. Additional support needed by learners and staff which takes up time. Conversations that normally happen informally now need to be allocated a time as a meeting.

Adapting lesson plans and resources so that they work effectively during remote teaching and live streaming in the classroom

It is impossible to see vital cues such as facial expressions and body language to gauge learning, even if the learners left their cameras on. You have to engage in far more questioning to try to compensate for these problems, which slows the lesson further. The nature of the platform is a disincentive for less confident learners to ask questions. Overall, I would put the pace of learning through the platform at about 80% of that of face-to-face teaching.

Analysis of comments relating to practical suggestions on how workload can be improved:

1.12. Change to contact hours to allow more time for preparation and marking (83 comments)

- Due to the additional work created from preparation and marking, suggestions were raised in relation to teaching hours and that these should be decreased in order to compensate for the additional work;
- Similar suggestions were raised regarding providing staff with additional time to allow for the increased workload.

Examples

Allocate time on timetable to convert and re-plan lessons for online delivery.

Reduced timetable and contact time would help practitioners to try and "catch up" with marking and feel prepared for the following week.

Blended learning has increased my workload significantly: contact hours with learners has increased individually; individual assessment through Teams; discussing work with learners. Practical suggestion would be a reduction in the 24 hour teaching. Possible reduced to 18 or 20 hours.

More paid hours required to manage work missed by learners' poor attendance and additional administration time.

Learning new skills, converting all existing resources to an online format. Assessment and marking takes considerably longer online. To improve this, more non-contact time built into timetables on a weekly basis would be useful.

1.13. A national resource bank developed by awarding bodies or by experienced practitioners (39 comments)

- There were suggestions for a national resource bank developed by awarding bodies or by experienced practitioners (especially useful for newly qualified teachers); including assessment and marking schemes which can be adapted;
- It was felt that this could reduce preparation time.

Examples

The College could provide a "bank" of resources in each area as we have learning and teaching mentors, so they could be used to gather this information and make it easily available online for teaching staff.

It might be possible to become more efficient if we had a bank of on-line resources and activities for the FE sector in Wales that we could use to share the workload.

This could be improved by having a bank of resources for any future online teaching and a better relationship with our partners abroad.

1.14. ICT improvements (37 comments)

- Learner and staff to have access to appropriate digital devices;
- Reduce the number of different IT platforms/technologies and ensure fit for purpose systems and software;
- Look at integration between systems. Involve staff in designing, testing and evaluating IT systems.

Examples

Lack of equipment means time is spent looking for alternatives e.g. having to work out how to use my iPad as "whiteboard" because I have no touchscreen computer and graphics tablets were only given to those teaching other subjects. Investment in suitable equipment and provision of better IT support.

Students having better devices would also help greatly.

Poor and failing college IT systems have meant simple tasks become huge problems and management, whilst experiencing the same problems, make no allowances for it... have not had support staff allocated which makes blended learning very stressful. Main suggestion would be for workable IT systems suitable for remote learning and AEN students.

Available technology needs to be improved, and home technology has been assumed and, personally, I have felt unsupported in this.

1.15. Additional training to be provided for staff and learners (26 comments)

- Additional training was suggested, with most suggestions relating to training in IT/digital learning.

Examples

Lack of digital competency - more time for training, upskilling, practising new ways of teaching.

More staff training and sharing of resources. There has been staff training on what is available but training staff in a practical hands on way, rather than show and tell by staff who already know how to use it would be more useful. Also better learner induction training is needed to show them how to access and use digital platforms at the start of their course (provided they have devices and internet access available.)

The delivery of distance learning is a whole different process from face-to-face teaching and active learning that takes place in the classroom, is far more difficult to enable remotely. Constant training is needed to stay apace of this challenge and learners are far less engaged than they are in a classroom.

1.16. Expectations adjusted whilst blended learning takes place (23 comments)

- Some staff felt that current expectations have not taken into account the increased workload and therefore expectations should be adjusted accordingly in areas such as assessment and administration.

Examples

Having to re-plan and re-create entire modules based around content to be delivered online rather than in class. Not factoring in the difficulty to work at home in the first instance. This could be improved by being given leeway in the original assessment methods, and allowing tutors to aid in the discussion of alternative assessment methods that could incorporate the ability to deliver content online.

Lecturers are given too much remote administration work during the COVID-19 period this should be reduced. Also allowances are not always made for other responsibilities employees have at this time such as children at home not having a designated room in your house to teach practical subjects therefore preparation is longer. Allowances are not always made for devices and systems not working efficiently, all these problems take extra time. Lecturers should not be expected to carry out duties at home the way they do when working on site because all of the above factors cause extra stress during an already very stressful time.

Chasing up learners who are not engaging, having several things open at once to cope, Teams, emails, lessons, bombardment of trying to follow a timetable but realistically not sustainable. Make it clear to parents that this is not the same as being in a classroom so we have to apply several strategies not just be expected to be sat in front of a screen live video calling every session.

2. Professional learning

Overall themes from open text comments - professional learning

- ICT skills including digital/blended learning;
- subject and/or industry knowledge;
- mental health and wellbeing;
- general comments regarding insufficient time to complete professional learning;
- assessment/marking and providing feedback;
- improving Welsh language skills;
- networking/shadowing/sharing information with colleagues;
- leadership and management.

Total number of responses: 1,722

Total number of open text responses: 1,002

In response to:

16. In which areas would you welcome further development to help you be a more effective education professional? (please list up to three areas)

Analysis of comments relating to the main professional learning themes

2.1 ICT/digital skills including digital/blended learning (401 comments)

- FE teachers would like additional training in order to successfully implement digital/blended learning;
- Some FE teachers felt that they have not had the appropriate training in deliver digital/blended learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Examples

To have time to develop remote teaching skills, using technology effectively to deliver digital learning professionally, effectively and efficiently.

Methods of using digital technology to improve the quality of teaching.

Become more proficient with on-line delivery.

IT training - we are shown how to use a piece of software, which looks wonderful, but then not given the time or support to actually use it in our teaching or guidance in actually producing it and ideas of how to implement it.

2.2 Subject specific professional development (244 comments)

- FE teachers believed that professional learning would be beneficial in the specific areas that they currently teach. This would enable staff and students to keep up to date with current industry;
- Types of professional learning desired ranged from specific courses to more formal qualifications, such as Masters qualifications.

Examples

I would like to see more subject specific training and learning opportunities. The main issue with the majority of training offered is that it is generic and does not add value to my portfolio of expertise. Too often we are asked to undertake training that has very little value and does nothing to enhance the teaching, learning and assessments of learners.

More access to be able to go into industry to update knowledge. Ability to offer more professional courses to update specific subject knowledge

I work in.....the lack of training or upskilling since I have been employed in the collegehas been about 4 hours. The staff development sessions are all one size fits all but should be tailored around the areas you work in to ensure that all staff are upskilled and feel confident with the developments in these areas. This also then allows you to develop your teaching and material accordingly.

To further my qualifications to a master's degree, to deepen my knowledge and expertise in the area I teach.

2.3 Mental health/wellbeing (73 comments)

- FE teachers felt that a considerable amount of time was spent dealing with mental health and wellbeing issues with students;
- Some felt that the pandemic has heightened these issues and therefore sufficient training is needed once students return to college.

Examples

Supporting my learners through the pandemic - emotional, mental and wellbeing support to enable them to come out of this unscathed and to help them adapt safely back to a 'normal' life.

Better understanding for mental health and counselling skills, as so much time is taken up in supporting students in life skills empathetically.

More support in how you can help student in a pastoral sense - particularly with mental health support as although we have counselling to offer student this is not always readily available or some student would prefer to speak to someone they know such as a subject teacher or personal tutor

2.4 General comments regarding insufficient time to complete professional learning (56 comments)

- Although not a professional learning suggestion, comments were made from FE lecturers regarding not having sufficient time to complete their desired professional learning;
- FE lecturers felt time should be allocated for professional learning rather than in their own time.

Examples

In offering training to staff, time is the big factor. Whether it be due to workload and time, this is one key issue for many.

Allowing time to develop professional practice throughout the year.

Identified time in the week to undertake professional development, this is currently a requirement for us to complete, but we have to do it on our own time on top of our full time responsibilities. I feel like it should be an opportunity rather than the burden it has become.

It's the balance of time. Having completed an MA recently, it was hard to balance both. While I would like to undertake a PhD to develop my skills, I don't have the available time to do so.

2.5 Assessing, marking and providing feedback (55 comments)

- A number of FE lecturers stated that they would like to obtain assessor qualifications;

- Furthermore, training in marking and feedback techniques was also suggested, including in a digital learning environment.

Examples

Marking and assessing more efficiently.

Assessment methods/delivery of feedback.

Assessments and feedback within a digital environment soft skills are lost in the online world.

Gain an Assessors qualification.

2.6 Improving Welsh Language (47 comments)

- There is a desire for FE teachers to either start or continue with Welsh language development.

Examples

I am desperate to learn Welsh but haven't found a course that I can access as a lecturer.

Continue to further develop my Welsh language skills.

Development of use of the Welsh language in my teaching.

I would like to improve my Welsh language skills and would like more courses to be available on a part time basis.

2.7 Networking/shadowing/sharing information with colleagues and/or industry (44 comments)

- FE lecturers felt it would be beneficial for their professional learning to have an opportunity to share knowledge with other professionals;
- Collaborating with employers who specialise in their subject was also suggested to improve their teaching.

Examples

Working with colleagues from other F.E. on same courses to share good practice.

Opportunities to observe good practice in other schools and colleges.

Opportunities to develop links with other educational institutions, including universities, for collaboration.

Peer review with colleagues and colleges across Wales- a more national approach to communities of practice and a wider network or steering group to collaborate on projects and develop initiatives with time to visit and engage with local employers.

2.8 Leadership and management (35 comments)

- Some FE teachers expressed a desire to have the training and development in order to equip them with the skills to develop into a management/leadership role.

Examples

Stepping up from Lecturer to middle Management without the requirement of experience, i.e. How can I get the role as Head of School if I cannot get the experience?

I have wanted to attend a middle management course for the past couple of years to support me in my role.

Training programmes that are beneficial to progression.