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College and University Support Network

Work-life balance: supporting college lecturers

A survey conducted in April 2008, by the College and University Support Network (CUSN) and the University and College Union (UCU) found that class sizes are rising, but more time is being spent on administration duties than on students or research.

The survey revealed:

~ More than half of lecturers (53.9%) say they spend most of their working week dealing with administration

~ Over half of lecturers (53.6%) spend at least 15 hours a week on administration with a quarter (27.4%) devoting more than 25 hours of their working week to the task

~ More than a quarter (28.7%) said they deal with over 250 emails a week and those with 250 or more emails a week said they did just 0-5 hours of research a week, 5-15 hours of teaching, but 25 hours or more of administration

~ Over two thirds (71%) reported increases in class sizes at their institution in the last 10 years, but only a quarter (23.4%) said they now spend more time with students than they did a decade ago

~ Of the 71% who reported growing class sizes, nearly half (44%) said they were spending less time with students

CUSN works to help all staff members in adult, further and higher education and improve their health and wellbeing. Complementing the work of UCU, it provides free support services by offering information, advice, telephone counselling, online coaching and financial assistance. It is part of the Teacher Support Network, which has helped teachers for over 130 years.

Thousands of college and university staff members use CUSN's services to tackle personal and professional issues every year. The charity also uses the knowledge gained from interacting with its users to raise awareness of issues affecting them to improve education policies and practices which have an impact on the wellbeing of staff and, by extension, the educational experience of learners.

College and University Support Network Chief Executive, Patrick Nash, said: "An excessive workload is an increasingly troubling phenomenon for staff members in adult, further and higher education, particularly because of ever-greater bureaucratic tasks. In the last 12 months, 11 per cent of calls have been from those worried about their work-life balance; many struggling to cope professionally and emotionally with an unreasonable workload. "We can offer advice and coaching where it will help but we need a shift in culture that ensures staff members have the time to perform their core responsibilities: teaching, research and bettering standards of education."

The full survey results can be found at http://www.ucu.org.uk/stresssurvey08_rawHEresults