



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Review of FE lecturer workload

Update to Local Social Partnerships (LSPs), July 2023

The national FE lecturer workload steering group is a social partnership made up of Joint Trade Unions, ColegauCymru and Welsh Government. This update from the joint steering group chairs summarises the outcomes of the workforce survey undertaken in January-March 2023, and plans for the next phase of work on the review. We have circulated this update to principals and local trade union leads, and would be grateful if you would share it with staff at your institution through your usual communication channels.

Results of the 2023 workforce survey

The survey was commissioned by the steering group and undertaken on our behalf by the Education Workforce Council. It focused on workload and wellbeing issues, and was issued to registered staff in the categories of FE teacher, FE learning support worker, and work-based learning practitioner. For the first time, we also asked FE business support staff to complete the survey, in order to get a holistic view of workload concerns and any impacts of workload initiatives on different groups of staff. The survey ran between January and March 2023.

Survey response rates

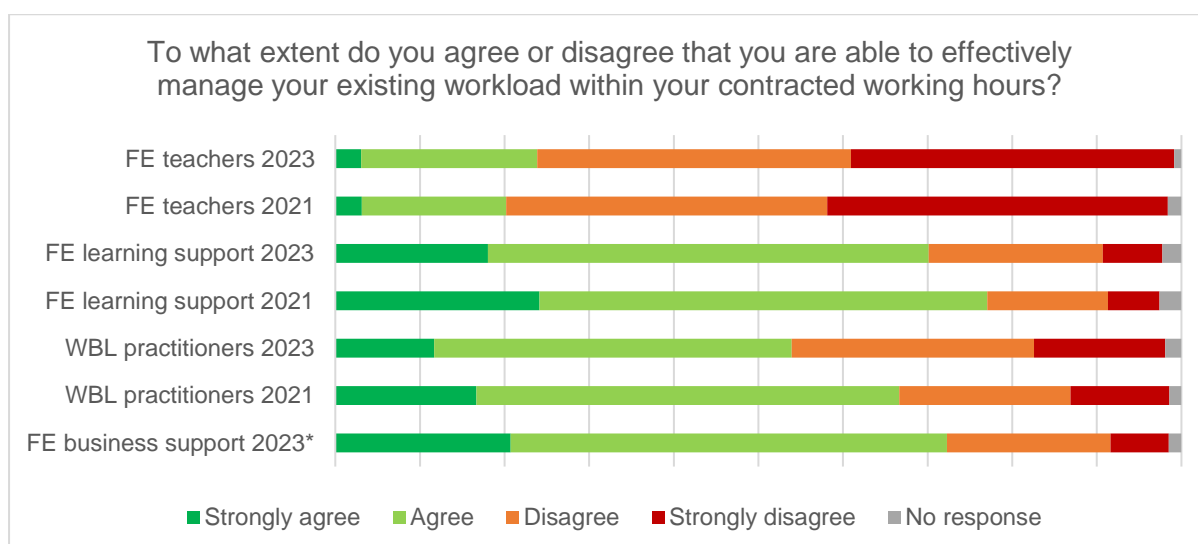
Category	Number of EWC registrants	Verified responses	Response rate
Further education teacher	5149	1413	27.4%
Further education learning support worker	2790	355	12.7%
Work-based learning practitioner	2745	419	15.3%
Business support staff [not registered with EWC]	N/A	931	N/A

We are really grateful to everyone who took the time to complete the survey, which has provided a rich source of information on the views and concerns of staff across the sector.

Main themes from the survey

You can read the EWC's full report on the survey responses [here](#). Each FE institution has also been provided with an individual, anonymised analysis of the responses from its staff, issued to principals and local TU leads. This includes, where possible, comparison with the 2021 survey findings, to help you to gauge progress over the last two years. We expect principals and their senior leadership teams to work with local TU leads to review the analysis, and to ensure that you take account of the feedback as you continue to implement and develop your local workload action plans.

The chart below compares the survey responses in 2023 to 2021, when respondents across all categories were asked about managing their workload within contracted working hours. FE teachers were by far the most likely to disagree or strongly disagree that they could manage their workload, with just under a quarter responding positively. However, the proportion of positive responses did improve slightly compared to 2021. Learning support workers and work-based learning practitioners felt much more able to manage their workload by comparison, but the positive responses for both groups decreased since 2021.



*Business support staff were not included in the 2021 workforce survey.

As part of the workload review, all FE colleges worked in social partnership with unions to put in place local action plans. We were particularly concerned to see that, despite these local action plans being signed off by union leads and principals in January 2022, only about a third of FE teachers who responded to the survey said they were aware that their college had an action plan to help tackle workload issues. Less than a quarter of respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the statement “My college considers the workload implications of any new processes or other changes it introduces”.

We strongly encourage any staff member who has not seen or been involved in their college's action plan to speak to their union representative or senior leadership team, and ask for better communication on the actions being taken. Some of the survey responses indicated that staff felt their managers were not listening to their concerns about workload or asking for their views, which is disappointing at this stage of the review.

We have analysed the “open text” comments in response to questions about practical suggestions on what changes would help to make workload more manageable, and any

additional comments about workload or wellbeing issues. Across all four categories of staff, the main themes related to:

- Working hours, including time to cover planning, preparation, marking and feedback, and recognition of duties associated with different roles and responsibilities;
- Differences in workload generated by variances in class/group size, caseloads, subjects and qualifications delivered;
- Administrative requirements including duplication of information, systems that are not user-friendly, email and meeting requirements, and frustration about requirements that are not perceived to add value for learners;
- Clarity on roles and responsibilities across teaching and support staff (such as pastoral support for learners, chasing attendance, organising educational visits, and exam/assessment administration), and recognition of the contribution and skillset of each profession;
- Leadership understanding of the workload pressures on front-line staff, and commitment to making changes that will result in genuine, sustainable improvements;
- Management and communication of changes to processes, systems, curriculum and timetables;
- Wellbeing support for staff, including the extent to which support meets staff needs; time to take part in activities; dedicated wellbeing space for staff; and flexibility to work from home during non-contact time; and
- Continued concerns about increased learner support needs and the demand this places on teaching and support staff, including wellbeing, behaviour and additional learning needs.

Next steps

The next phase of the workload project will include:

- Disseminating the outcomes of collaborative college-led projects on attendance management, systems integration and managing change;
- A pilot on workload allocation and monitoring in three colleges (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, Grŵp NPTC and Pembrokeshire College), throughout the 2023/24 academic year;
- A conference to disseminate case studies, good practice and practical solutions that colleges have implemented to help tackle workload, being planned for December 2023;
- The continuation of local workload action plan implementation;
- The ongoing rollout of the [Well Aware](#) project, which supports staff wellbeing in colleges; and
- Planning the transition to the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, which from 1 April 2024 will have oversight of the regulation of all post-16 learning in Wales and which we anticipate will be closely involved in the workload review.

Alongside these actions, the Welsh Government is also working with the FE sector to support a number of artificial intelligence pilot projects, which will explore the potential of these technologies to alleviate workload pressures and improve efficiency.

The survey results highlight similar issues to the previous workforce survey in 2021, and reflect the complexity of addressing entrenched workload issues. We fully recognise the impact this has on wellbeing and job satisfaction, and are committed to continuing to work in partnership to address the concerns raised by staff.

It's important to acknowledge that this review is taking place against the backdrop of an extremely challenging financial situation. The three-year spending review has [reduced the overall Welsh Government budget by up to £3billion](#) over the period from 2022-23 to 2024-25. This has meant some tough decisions in setting funding priorities. Realistically, it is unlikely that there will be additional funding to increase FE staff numbers and reduce teaching hours in the short to medium term. It is essential to manage staff expectations on this.

The budget situation also makes it more important than ever that FE institutions do absolutely everything they can to streamline processes, listen to staff feedback, and focus on practical changes that can alleviate workload pressures within their current budget settlement. The feedback from the workforce survey identified many areas where improvements can be made to institutional cultures and practices without any financial cost. In addition, we anticipate that the workload allocation and monitoring pilot will help to identify ways in which workload could be more fairly distributed amongst staff – a key issue raised by respondents to both the 2021 and 2023 workforce surveys.

Yours sincerely

Co-chairs of Social Partnership Steering Group