

## **Out of hours**

### **Final Report of the project *e-Teaching leadership: planning and implementing a benefits-oriented costs model for technology enhanced learning***

**2012**

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## Executive summary

This project began in late 2009 with the aim of developing, planning and implementing a benefits-oriented costs model for technology-enhanced learning. As technology is increasingly supporting and facilitating learning, the demands on how teachers work within wholly online and blended environments has become a critical issue across the sector.

Hence this project (CG9-1242) was originally entitled 'e-Teaching Leadership: Planning and implementing a benefits-oriented costs model for technology-enhanced learning'. However, it soon became apparent that implementing a benefits-oriented costs model was impossible because of the lack of consistent sector information on real teaching costs in universities. What emerged early in the project was that most Australian universities do not have centralised procedures or guidelines for allocating academic workload which take into account the specific activities associated with online or blended learning. Generalised guidelines appeared mostly within collective workplace agreements or implicitly in other policy documents at school, discipline or faculty levels. We found a paucity of rigorous documented evidence which can be drawn upon to accurately state or even estimate workload associated with teaching online or in blended learning environments. Nor is a rigorous cost-accounting protocol applied at universities to detail the full cost (including staff time) of e-teaching: few universities apply Activity Based Costing (ABC) methods to accurately reflect real teaching tasks/activities. Unsurprisingly, the study found overload due to e-teaching was a significant factor in staff dissatisfaction. Moreover, staff believed that if they reduced their time on e-teaching, student learning would be seriously diminished. Workload models needed to change to accommodate the additional tasks of e-teaching

### Outcomes

The outcomes of this project provide a more nuanced understanding of the findings of Coates et al. (2009, p.15) on the relative dissatisfaction of Australian academics with their 'increasingly unmanageable workload'. The project team hopes that others will build on this work in the future, with one feasible direction being a sector-wide survey.

The project set out to achieve four key outcomes. These outcomes have been wholly or partially achieved:

Outcome 1: Analysis of international and Australian literature on the costs and benefits of online teaching, particularly related to costing models and staff workload implications, reported in part 2 of this report.

Outcome 2: Generation of data of workload implications for consideration in developing workload models as reported in part 4 of this report.

Outcome 3: Development of four case studies on staff perceptions of workload associated with teaching when using technologies as reported in part 5 of this report.

Outcome 4: Recommendations for stakeholders when considering workload, in part 6 of this report.

The project findings and the approach used to derive them should have applicability across the sector. From these findings, individual institutions should be able to distil guidelines for work in their own contexts, especially in regard to policy development and procedural guidelines when developing workload models for teaching online or in blended environments.

- The review of the literature for this project revealed that there is a lack of reporting



and a paucity of rigorous documentation of the impact on workload when teaching online or in blended modes.

- Data from our 88 interviews across the four universities revealed that these institutions had poorly defined policy frameworks for underpinning workload allocations related to teaching online or in blended modes, and staff had limited understanding of workload models.
- New technologies have without doubt enhanced opportunities for 21<sup>st</sup> century students to access education programs outside campus 'boundaries' and timetabled classes. Constructivist pedagogies which emphasise a focus on the individual learner have been adopted by the academics in this study at least, as they use interactive technologies to communicate with students, and encourage student-student interaction. However, new methodologies have increased both the number and type of teaching tasks undertaken by staff, with a consequent increase in their work hours.

Our conclusion is that workload is poorly defined when teaching online or in blended modes generally, and therefore requires more thorough auditing within specific contexts.

## Structure of the report

This report is divided into seven parts with Part 1 providing an outline of the project and its processes.

Part 2 consists of the literature review. Part 3 is an overview of the methodology, while Part 4 contains a summary of findings from the data.

Part 5 comprises the institutional case studies carried out by the project team. These case studies present a picture of staff perceptions of workload associated with using technologies based on the interviews and subsequent analysis.

Conclusions and recommendations of the project team for stakeholders in the higher education sector are contained in Part 6 of this report, while Part 7 is the bibliography.



# Part 1: Project outline and processes

## Introduction

Over the past decade, most Australian universities have moved increasingly towards online course delivery for both undergraduate and graduate programs. In almost all cases, online teaching is part of routine teaching loads. Yet detailed and accurate financial and workload data are not readily available. As a result, institutional policies are often guided more by untested assumptions about reduction of costs per student unit, rather than being evidence-based and teacher-focused, with the result that implementation of new technologies for online teaching intended to reduce costs per student 'unit' results in a 'black hole' of additional expense.

While academics themselves often show relatively little interest in cost or workload studies, the costs of various types of teaching delivery are particularly important in a time of increasing student numbers, declining budgets, pressures to maintain quality and introduce minimum standards of teaching and curriculum, and substantial expenditure on new technologies to support e-learning. Traditional distance education based on print materials, perhaps augmented by audiotapes and more recently CDs with multimedia elements, has generally been considered cheaper than face-to-face teaching (Bates, 1995; Rumble, 1997). There have been relatively few studies on the costs of wholly online teaching, and even fewer on the more ubiquitous 'blended', 'hybrid' or 'flexible' modes, in which face-to-face teaching is supplemented by online resources and activities.

Reliable and relevant cost information would assist universities to make better informed choices, particularly with regard to mixes of technologies, choice of programs for wholly online delivery, class sizes, and allocation of duties to staff members. Costs of online teaching are difficult to quantify for a number of reasons, including lack of agreement about which costs should be taken into account, lack of reliable data because key information is not collected in a systematic manner, lack of data on how costs vary over time, and because some data may not be publicly available on the grounds of confidentiality.

Three of the universities in this project are large, experienced and well-known distance education providers and the other, though smaller, is strongly committed to online modes of learning: one is nationally distributed, two are multi-campus, and all are distance education providers. Each has an established history of quality distributed and distance education experience. Finding new solutions for the increasing dissatisfaction of staff and administrators in allocating and understanding workload when using technologies is imperative not only for the partners but for all Australian universities.

With this in mind this project has attempted to answer the following questions:

- What data and insights currently inform Australian universities about the financial and staff costs in teaching online?
- How do the participating universities calculate staff workloads for online teaching?

## Rationale

Diffusion of innovation, according to Rogers (2003), is primarily a process of **social** change in which human motivations and practices are fundamental. Acceptance and 'diffusion' of online learning has generated a discourse on the sustainability of current uses of ICT in the tertiary sector:



In practice, many of the promised efficiencies have proven elusive. Economies from new administrative systems are perhaps real enough. Unfortunately, it is now clear that the use of ICTs in university teaching is inherently labour-intensive (at least if done properly). Web-based systems, for example, require significant preparation time, both in terms of the hours spent mastering new technologies and the time spent creating the actual teaching materials. This investment would be tolerable if it usually resulted in a reduction in total teaching hours. However, the reality is that the use of ICT usually involves an increase in teaching hours. These include the time reading and responding to emails, hosting chat sessions, and moderating bulletin boards. Too often, these activities are undertaken out of hours. ((Tynan, Lee and Barnes, 2008 p. 3558)

Yet Laurillard (2002, p. 3) notes that the higher education sector:

is being forced to change, and the pressures wrought upon it have nothing to do with traditions and values. Instead the pressure is for reduced costs, for greater scale and scope, and for innovation through technology... Academics are going on courses on management training and marketing methods. Reform of an education system might progress faster if they went on courses on how to teach better.

As Coates et al. (2009) report, increasing workload is a major source of dissatisfaction among Australian academics. Staff workload is calculated in a variety of ways, but generally includes teaching, research and service activities, although an increasing number of Australian universities are incorporating 'teaching only'/'teaching intensive' positions, and of course, sessional staff are by definition generally 'teaching only'. At the four universities involved in this project, the following broad ranges exist: teaching 30-40 per cent, research 20-30 per cent and service 10-30 per cent. These universities value teaching, while expecting staff to undertake more research. Each of the universities has, over the past five years, also moved from print/CDRom-based delivery to highly-varied distance education modes. Most noticeable at each institution is the increased level of online interaction with their students.

Effective online design is highly interactive, with consequential effects on staff time as staff-student contact increases. Students have also become more demanding and, in the new digital world, expect timely responses to their questions and assignments. This has had a consequent impact on staff workloads that is difficult to detail, as there are so many variables. Staff complain of the increased time required to manage students in the online environment and that teaching time is increasingly 24/7, which for many staff is competing with the requirement to undertake research and community service. Staff members are offered basic training in the use of the software for online teaching, but are not necessarily trained in managing or facilitating online teaching. They may in reality be creating a workload that is unnecessary. Administrators, who once thought online delivery would be a 'cash-cow', with decreasing 'per student unit' costs have to rethink their strategies and are now beginning to withdraw programs with low enrolments, as has been the case with programs delivered face-to-face in the past five years, for efficiency gains. Administrative gains are made with fewer units/subjects, and a narrower range of teaching staff is needed.

## Approach

The project was carried out in three stages over 24 months. In Stage 1 the project team was established, the project manager appointed and the initial documentation of the project and the detailed project plan established. An evaluator of the project was engaged but had to be changed due to workload commitments in Stage 2. A revised literature review and the gathering of 'grey' data were undertaken. The outcome of this stage was the identification of theory and practice in relation to current workload and sector models.



This information was then used by the team to formulate the questions for the interviews across the four universities on staff perceptions of workload. The interviews allowed the team to ascertain the impact of technologies and perceived workload associated with using technologies.

The interviews were undertaken in Stage 2 of the project. Eighty-eight staff at various academic levels were interviewed across the four universities once ethical approval was gained. Usable interviews (n=88) were analysed using NVivo. The analysis of data was used to both develop the institutional case studies and to support the projects' recommendations.

Stage 3 saw the development of the four institutional case studies and recommendations for use by the wider sector.

The Project Evaluator remained cognisant of activities and provided feedback at critical points.

### Factors critical to the success of the project

We had a small dispersed project team comprising three academics, an administrator and the Project Manager. The group met face-to-face three times and by teleconference. Teleconferences were held initially monthly and then at key points within the tasks allocated to partners. Team members made a point of meeting at other events when possible. Roles and responsibilities for all team members were adhered to and each stepped in where appropriate to lend expertise. For example, one of the academics and the project manager were critical in the analysis stage of the project as they had NVivo expertise.

The biggest impediment to the project was that the complexity of workloads revealed by data made it impossible to actually implement the possible workload scenarios initially proposed for the project. This was also in part due to changes in project team personnel and in some cases their university roles.

### Usefulness of findings to institutions and the sector

As technology changes so quickly and as more technology features within learning, workload is a critical consideration, and the project team argues the following:

1. Workforce planning including engagement, change management, professional development and performance management is a critical factor for institutions aiming to increase their use of and engagement with technologies.
2. Addressing current workload practices against aspirational and pragmatic organisational sustainability in the use of technology for learning and teaching (including support) is a recognised tension which limits possibilities for sustainable innovation and growth. This may be mitigated by re-thinking the models of delivery, pedagogy and the activities associated with e-learning, with a refocus on desired outcomes rather than input models of 'one-size-fits-all'.
3. All within the higher education sector need to accept that technology and the associated pedagogies, business processes and the new 'flexible' market are changing the work that they do. How these alterations to conceptions of 'academic work' are to be effected remains to a large extent the business of the organisation, but the work of academics is increasingly influenced by external drivers, such as the concentration of commercial LMS vendors, and the countervailing move to open source LMS systems, and social policy settings such as government base funding for universities' teaching costs.



4. We hope for prompt critical and deep consideration of teaching workloads and the additional tasks demanded by e-teaching.

## Evaluation

The independent iterative evaluation was undertaken by Professor Sharon Parry. Her advice was most useful in relation to data validity and findings beyond the local context.

### The evaluation approach

It was always intended that this project would include a formative evaluation as a way of informing the project team as they progressed through project stages and also as a way of ensuring that data collection and analysis were appropriate to the project brief. The evaluation is essentially an Illuminative Evaluation as described by Patton (1990), giving expression to Scriven's (1991) description of formative evaluation, which is intended to enhance a project team's understanding of models as they arise. The evaluation was also intended to build leadership capacity among team members and to illuminate the salient aspects of the four university contexts for technology-assisted teaching .

### Evaluation stages

Initially it was intended that the Evaluator would participate in monthly video/tele-conference meetings and attend at least one face-to-face meeting of the project team. The Project Evaluator was required to provide an interim report and to write a final report at the end of the project. The Project Evaluator was also responsible for developing the evaluation criteria matrix, to be agreed with the project partners. This was derived from the ALTC Evaluation Resource by Chesterton and Cummings (2007). Sources of data were identified as participant observation at meetings and some teleconferences; perusal of transcripts, the mid-term report to ALTC and all other documentation produced by the Project Team by way of an audit trail.

Because it was obvious in late 2010 that a change of intended outcomes was necessary, Project Team members agreed on an Illuminative Evaluation as the most informative and empowering way forward. This required the Independent Evaluator to attend as many face-to-face meetings as possible and to comment on data collection methods, data collection focus and analysis methods and techniques for reliability. Trustworthiness criteria as originally identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and now used universally in post-positivist research and evaluation methods were employed throughout.

## Evaluation stages and project meetings

### Project stages

Phase 1: Investigation: literature review, identifying the drivers of e-teaching

Phase 2: Eighty-eight of a planned 100 interviews with academic staff across four universities

Phase 3: Development of framework for decision-making

Phase 4: Evaluation (this was not conducted post hoc, but rather during the implementation stages and with the final evaluation report).

Professor Parry's independent evaluation report is available from <http://www.olt.gov.au/>.



## Part 2: Literature review

During the 1990s, there was no shortage of predictions from internet enthusiasts, commercial digital developers and technology companies that the advent of digital technologies presaged the end of the traditional university, and radical reduction in the costs of higher education, through re-structuring of teaching labour to contract positions, global use of standardised teaching materials, and cost-shifting to students through online 'delivery' (Cunningham et al. 1998; 2000). John Chambers, the CEO of Cisco Systems, opined in 1996 that e-learning would 'make email look like a rounding error'. Despite the intervening years of e-education failures, from NYUOnline and the many state-based e-learning consortia, and successes, including UoP Online and national online brokers such as Open Universities Australia, the Global Financial Crisis of 2008+ and the gradual transformation of university staffing structures, evidence of productivity gains and cost reduction due to e-teaching/learning is scant.

Synder, Marginson & Lewis (2007) argue in their summary of 15 case studies on e-learning in Australian universities, conducted in the early 2000s, that there are two paradigms which predominate in the deeper penetration of new technologies in education: the 'e-constructivist' (represented by Laurillard's work) and the 'e-corporate' — driven, they argue, by managers and technology boosters, and as a response to demands for reduced costs in education delivery and greater efficiencies. Yet, as they quote:

Teaching is affected by professional academic requirements and practices, disciplinary cultures, demographics such as the age of staff, institutional staffing policies, conditions of work and the balance of roles between academic and general staff. (Marginson & Considine, p. 190)

These factors are rarely considered in the plethora of literature on e-learning in universities, but as Synder, Marginson & Lewis argue (2007, p. 188), there is a need to examine "people's everyday professional experiences with ICTs" because the effects of new technologies are "not always benign or transparent". 'Everyday professional experiences with ICTs' are the focus of the present study, specifically, the workload implications of e-teaching.

Since the series of Australian 'borderless education' reports of the late 1990s/early 2000s (Cunningham et al. 1998; 2000; Ryan & Stedman, 2002; Ryan 2000; 2002), four broad and intersecting influences have intensified in their effects on human activities:

- further globalisation of human activity
- technological innovation
- macro- and micro-economic settings
- a renewed cultural emphasis on individualism.

Higher education — its utility, philosophical basis, organisational models, national systems, regulatory environment, professional tasks — has not been immune to these pressures. Within each of these four influences on higher education, sub-themes have emerged. Globalisation has spawned a body of literature on matters such as student mobility (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010); the establishment of satellite campuses in less developed nations (Altbach, 2011) or franchising of curricula (Weichold, 2011); quality assurance and international 'standards' (AHELO 2011) and the associated concern of homogenisation of curricula and universally convergent models of post-secondary education (Ryan, 2004).

Technological innovation has increased exponentially: since 2000, we have seen the emergence of 'disruptive technologies' such as Wikipedia (2001), with its profound impact on undergraduate research habits; YouTube (2005), with its massive capacity for file sharing and mixed media presentation via applications which enable use by non-



programmers; Facebook and Twitter (2006), with their enabling of worldwide and instant communication, and a world of 'friends and followers'.

Macro- and micro-economic settings have hastened moves to increasing privatisation of post-secondary education, either through explicit encouragement of for-profit and private providers, through World Bank policies for example (Bjarnason, 2011), or through national education policies that decrease public support and increase private contributions to study, as is occurring in England in 2011-12. Since the dot.com crash of 2000-2001, and the consequent demise of many digital ventures, Merger and Acquisition (M & A) activity has continued apace, not least in the education space, including major Learning Management System (LMS) suppliers (WebCT/Blackboard), and for-profits (De Vry/Sylvan, among many others). Hopes remain high that ICTs will deliver the efficiency dividends/costs savings afforded in other industries, and reduce the 60-70 per cent labour costs of most university budgets.

At the same time, 19th century emergent notions of the primacy of the individual have become an entrenched cultural imperative. For some, a sub-theme is a lamented societal 'narcissism' in the West (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Mehdizadeh, 2010) and increasingly in East Asia. For others, an individualistic ethos implies a commitment to 'personalised learning' (Laurillard, 2007), a conviction that constructivism is the only possible pedagogical response to learner-centredness, and allows each student to 'construct' their own personal interpretation of received 'knowledge', 'evidence' and 'facts'. This contrasts with the previously dominant behaviourist and teacher-centred paradigm.

At the national level in Australia, with a lack of stability in the federal department (*HES*, July 27 2011 p. 31), the past five years have been characterised by an ill-defined policy environment for higher education, with the result that university managers have scrambled to respond to uncertain policy signals in respect of quality, standards, research funding, and operational funding. The current state of flux may have only indirect effects on the work of front-line teachers, but it does have effects.

The perturbations created by the effects of these myriad influences have impacted strongly on all forms of human activity, but what is germane here is their effects within higher education, as to national systems of higher education, the consequent organisation of universities, learning and teaching modes, and the effects of these on staff working as teachers in universities. These issues will be discussed further below.

Consideration of the effects of new technologies in higher education in respect of teaching workloads, the main focus of this study, requires an understanding of many molecular elements, among them definitions of the various forms of digital technologies used in higher education, cost-benefit analyses, the functionalities of LMS and how academics use them, student use of new technologies, staff perceptions of the technologies they use, workload models, and the changing nature of the academic role generally, including the task profiles of the contemporary academic in teaching online.

This review cannot attempt a detailed examination of these elements, but it briefly considers each in the current Australian context.

### **Defining distance education, e-learning, online and flexible learning**

Various typologies and definitions of online learning have complicated the many issues associated with e-learning. The term 'distance education' has a well-recognised historical meaning, although the modes of delivery have shifted as new technologies have eliminated the print blocks and 'lecture notes' that characterised earlier forms. Even during the 90s, the predominant pedagogical paradigm was one-way transmission from lecturer to student, as CDs simply replaced print as a cost-cutting measure. In the first decade of the 21st century however, the potential of the internet to afford two-way communication and student-student communication was more fully embraced.



However, what constitutes 'online', 'e-learning' and 'flexible' learning has proved more contentious. Typologies such as that of OECD (2005) that delineate between 'web-supplemented' (classroom-based with unit outlines online and the use of distributed email through a Learning Management System, for example), 'web-dependent' (some internet-based activities such as online discussion, but no reduction in class time), 'mixed mode' (some replacement of class time with online activities), and 'fully online' without class attendance, are increasingly irrelevant. Some universities, such as CQU in this study, designate all units 'flexible', such that each unit can be taken either 'internally' or 'externally'.

Australian universities have progressively, with few exceptions, required some online element for all units over the past five years. Few on-campus programs are not web-enabled or web-enhanced in some way: e-learning materials and modes form a 'normal' component of on-campus teaching, and e-learning can be more usefully measured on a continuum, with very little at the 'no digital media' end of the spectrum. This has made clear delineation of the costs of e-learning even more complex, as will be discussed below.

### **Student demand or student expectation?**

Many commentators have echoed the exhortations of Oblinger and Oblinger (2005) that new generation students or 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001) will increasingly demand education that is as 'connected', instant and interactive as the social media they use. Other researchers (Ryan & Fitzgerald, 2009) report studies of Gen Y preference for 'their space' to exclude educational uses.

Nevertheless, the convenience aspect of access to education and resources is compelling. Students demand convenience in their de facto part-time study. As James, Krause and Jennings (2010) demonstrate, 61 per cent of first years have paid employment although their enrolment status is full-time. Further, they spend only just over 15 hours in class contact, and even less in private study (10.6 hours per week). This contrasts markedly with the generally recommended guide of 10 hours per unit, or 40 hours per week, suggested in many universities.

James, Krause and Jennings (2010) indicate that convenience of access is the predominant motivation for students' demands for e-learning, and Gosper et al. (2008) confirm this. James, Krause and Jennings (2010) also reveal the extent of student usage of technology among first years: 2009 students spent 6.5 hours online per week for study purposes, mostly via their university's LMS (which generally incorporates web links to external materials), compared with 9.1 hours for recreation purposes. Of particular interest to the present study, given the amount of time staff report on online discussion activities, is the proportion of students using online discussions as part of their study regime, and their perceptions of its utility: 64 per cent claimed to have used discussions, yet only 52 per cent of these found them useful. A high 61 per cent had used social networking applications for study, yet only 34 per cent of these found them useful.

These findings mirror those of other comparable studies both in Australia and in the United Kingdom where students are dubious about the utility of social networking software for learning purposes. They may use these technologies extensively in their personal lives but it appears that the jury is out on whether these can be successfully deployed on a large scale to support student learning. This is a fruitful area for further research and institutional investigation. It is a timely reminder that assumptions about the transfer of technologies from the personal to the formal learning and teaching domain should be tested and challenged. (James, Krause and Jennings, 2010, p. 46)

Nevertheless, students used an LMS regularly, and found it useful. Gosper et al. (2008) report that 76 per cent of students found 'web-based lecture technologies' frequently or



almost always a 'positive' learning experience, and 68 per cent believed they could learn equally well from web technologies as from class.

### **Staff attitudes to digital technologies**

Gosper et al. (2008) found that only 54 per cent of Australian academics perceived new technologies as positive, while 26 per cent had a negative perception. As the authors report (2008, p viii), perceptions of the learning outcomes for students of increasing technology in education indicate 'a clear mis-match': 67 per cent of students compared with 30 per cent of staff believed that student results were improved; 80 per cent of students but only 49 per cent of staff believed that such technologies 'made it easier for students to learn'. In the US, Benton (2009) quotes a study from the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities indicating that 70 per cent of the 10,000 faculty members surveyed believe that online courses are either 'inferior' or 'somewhat inferior' to face-to-face programs. Even 48 per cent of those who have taught online are unconvinced that online courses are as good as face-to-face teaching.

Further, staff perceptions of the utility of technologies in higher education are directly and negatively correlated with age. Perlmutter (2011), reports a University of Minnesota-Twin Cities study:

Minnesota's IT office concluded: 'When compared to their younger colleagues, older faculty members perceive greater barriers to their use of technology and are, in general, less attracted to using technology to enhance their teaching. In particular, older faculty members perceive themselves to be less technically skilled than their younger colleagues. This self-perception may explain why they feel more pressured by the time needed to learn about technology, by keeping up with technological changes, and by lack of standardization. And it may explain why older faculty members enjoy working with technology less than their younger colleagues do and are less inclined to use multimedia materials.'

Given that the Australian academic cohort is 'aged' (Hugo, 2008), and therefore 'digital immigrants' (Prensky, 2001), the UM-TC study may explain the negative perceptions of the Gosper et al. report, as well as the length of time reported by academics in the present study in learning new applications.

One striking feature of the Gosper et al. study is that 75 per cent of staff had not altered the structure of their unit to incorporate new technologies, despite the clear evidence of Laurillard (2002), Bates (1995) and Twigg (2003) that re-design is crucial in utilising the web.

### **The costs of online learning and teaching**

Determining valid costs of teaching activities has been a vexed question at institutional and sector levels. Do library costs pertain to the taught courses or to the research effort? In what proportions, if they are separated? How are IT costs to be apportioned? Does the increased use of student mobile devices on-campus have a marked effect on IT/electricity costs? Are these 'online teaching' costs? What proportion of desk top computing for an academic is 'teaching-related'? What administrative? What scholarship? How do academics account transparently for the 40:40:20 'traditional' division of their labour into teaching, research and community service? What are the consequences for costs of the move in many universities to 'teaching only' or 'teaching intensive' positions, in which staff time is wholly on teaching? Determining the costs of e-learning has made even systematic and authentic Activity-Based Costing (ABC) more of a conundrum.

The major studies on the costs of distance education were made in an earlier age before the blurring of boundaries between 'distance' and online applications now routinely used in campus-based teaching. Key studies in distance education were carried out by scholars including Blaug (1972), Johnstone (1986) and Selby Smith (1975), before the digital



revolution of the 90s and ever greater reliance on digital applications in the first decade of the 21st century. Bates (1995) identified five types of cost measures, each with a different purpose and stakeholder perspective on its value, but for him, the measure that provides the best comparison between costs of different technologies is the cost per student study hour (the average cost per hour of 'study contact'), since it accounts for both volume of activity and number of students. However, as can be seen in the data on student study time (James, Krause and Jennings, 2010), this approach is no longer valid, because the calculation of study time is made by academics, and does not mirror the actual effort of students. Further, as will be outlined below, student numbers in a subject are often arbitrarily determined by administrators, who assume a forecast attrition rate.

Rumble's (2001) study focused on the development, delivery and administrative costs of fully online education but not for the increasing amount of web-supplemented delivery. Bacsich et al.'s 2001 study acknowledged the need to account for all an academic's activities, and provided models for calculating various other expenditures in universities. A decade on, with even more penetration of new technologies in university life, including the costs of support services as student populations become more diverse and therefore require supplemental teaching, their formulas are inadequate to the situation in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In a recent article, Rumble (2011) acknowledges the additional workload that development of online teaching requires, but continues to argue that once materials have been developed, they may not be redeveloped for eight or 10 years, with an overall reduction in staff time. Rumble (2011) quotes US studies estimating 810 hours' 'development time' for a wholly web-based subject, and cites typical 'release time' of a mere 180-200 hours for the development phase.

In the hybrid units of most Australian academics, development time would not be as high, yet remains a major labour input. Moreover, it is clear from the interviews in the present study that academics are in fact using digital applications to interact with their students **during** the course of teaching a unit, gaining the 'affordance' of interactive communication, following Laurillard's recommendations for personalising learning.

Thus the economic argument for distance education has collapsed, as pedagogy has altered teaching tasks. Not only do academics commonly design and develop their own materials because institutions (even distance specialists like CQU and USQ) have cut back their education development teams, but teaching has become more labour-intensive as staff utilise communication technologies to engage students in learning dialogues. Rumble (2011) suggests that more student-student contact, and access to more fixed cost resources, may be the most cost-effective approach, since staff-student contact, while highly desirable, is labour-intensive.

More apposite to issues around e-teaching costs is the large project funded by the US PEW Charitable Trust at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and overseen by Twigg (2003). With a US\$ 8.8 million grant, and initial amounts from the project of US\$200,000 to each of 30 colleges, across a range of discipline areas, Twigg was able to demonstrate average cost savings of 40 per cent per subject with large enrolment first year units, using course teams for development of innovative learning materials and activities. However, Twigg's analysis was predicated on pre-existing subject 'content' and complete re-design of curriculum. Although similar projects have been undertaken in the 'proof of concept' e-learning phase of many Australian universities, such largesse has not been available here, although most online development effort has been put into large first year classes, where institutions could expect economies of scale.

UK studies such as that of Laurillard (2007) are also flawed: Laurillard assumes that curriculum planning and design costs are the same between online and class-based modes, yet this fails to take account of ever-changing applications and technical accoutrements. She also assumes arbitrary work-activity times, such as a fixed ½ hour to prepare for a one hour online tutorial, and a ½ hour of reading and contributing for each 'conference discussion' with students. Clearly this does not account for the variable cost



of larger numbers of students. Laurillard does however, point to the 'lessons' summarised by the 2005 OECD-CERI study. Cost reduction requires several approaches:

- substitution not duplication of online and traditional services within an institution
- greater re-use and sharing of resources
- increased peer learning
- more standardised production of materials.

Despite this lack of agreement on cost calculation, and the conditions under which savings can be achieved, proponents of online learning continue to argue the potential of huge savings. Microsoft's Bill Gates told the Technomy conference in 2010 that in five years, the best courses would be available for free. Burck Smith of Straighterline told the OBHE 2011 Forum that he could deliver large introductory courses for US\$ 39.00 to enrol, then \$99 per month of enrolment. Both scenarios are based on high volume, basic programs and casual staffing; Burck Smith's is based on Asian-economy tutors/markers.

The mild caution of Snyder, Marginson and Lewis (2007) regarding the human costs of e-teaching and the unintended consequences of new technologies of teaching should be coupled with studies on Australia's academic profession (Coates et al., 2009; Coates & Goedegebuure, 2010), which reveal a demoralised academic workforce. Coates et al. (2009) identified seven 'attractiveness criteria'. Among these are several that are pertinent here: workload defined in terms of hours per week; opportunity for research; contract conditions; and environmental support in resources and management. Theirs is the most recent comprehensive study of reported work hours which differentiates by appointment level (assistant lecturer to professor). Australian academics overall report amongst the highest workloads in the world: full time staff in 2007 averaged 50 hours per week over the entire year, not merely during teaching periods: 18.3 hours on teaching compared with 14.6 on research, the remainder on administration, community service and 'other'. This compares with ABS figures of 43 hours per week on average for all Australian employees (Lee, 2011). No data is given regarding types of teaching, or the influence of technology on academic tasks.

Snyder, Marginson and Lewis (2007, p. 201) comment only that technology effects are producing staff 'weary from increased work demands associated with the innovations'. Further, while the 2010 ERA exercise surveyed staff on the hours dedicated to research activity in an effort to quantify the costs of research in universities, no analysis of the same survey's data on time devoted to teaching or administrative activities has to date been released, and anecdotally, is unlikely to be released.

Yet for most staff, teaching is the major 'visible' component of their academic role, for the public at least. As will be seen in this study, the common adoption of online modalities has rendered much of this 'visible' effort 'invisible' as more activity occurs outside the bounds of the classroom. This lack of acknowledgement of the increased demands of teaching today, coupled with a continued valorisation of research over teaching (Chalmers, 2011) represents a direct threat to quality student learning outcomes.

The present study attempts to provide some measure of the additional time many staff claim as a consequence of the introduction of new technologies in universities. No claim is made to definitive or empirical data; like the research on which Coates et al. (2009) base their data, the study is based on staff perceptions, augmented by examination of the workload policies of the institutions involved. Since the 'e-corporate' paradigm emphasises the reduced costs and greater efficiencies that can be harnessed through e-teaching, staff perceptions of workload increase must be taken into consideration as institutions mandate the use of new technologies, and staff incorporate these into their practices as well as their pedagogy. Clearly, current efficiency gains are staff time losses.

The range of teaching activities required (ideally) in new online environments is large.



Approaches normalised in the class context are quickly recognised as inadequate. Podcasts of a 50 minute 'lecture', for example, cannot be substituted for a 'live' class, and demand shorter 'clips' of material – although it is apparent that traditional lectures are equally unengaging experienced first-hand. Re-thinking and then 'converting' even existing content requires time, a re-design of the amount and type of 'content', the development of authentic learning activities, and the acquisition of new skills.

The additional time required by 'flexible' modes is now recognised by quality agencies. AUQA's audit of Charles Darwin University explicitly recommends that workload allocation models be implemented to account for online education:

The Panel heard several times about high staff workload associated with flexible delivery. An appropriate University-wide workload policy that relates to the nature of work in flexible mode is urgently needed. *Traditional calculations based on classroom hours of teaching are no longer appropriate.* (AUQA Audit of Charles Darwin University, 2011, p. 24, our italics)

### **Work allocation models (WAMS)**

While all Australian universities have at least broad guidelines on workloads, few have comprehensive WAMs that take account of the variety of task profiles demanded by the use of new technologies in teaching. The literature on WAMs is scant and reports of evaluation of their effectiveness even scarcer. Although the available literature mostly provides descriptions of newly developed models (Bitzer 2006; Ringwood et al. 2005) or the development process for WAMs (Bitzer 2006) and associated workload policies (Paewai et al., 2007), the key factors would appear to be staff collaboration in model development, transparency, equitable loads and provision for regular review of the model (Houston et al., 2006; Stevens, 2008).

Detailed and accurate financial and workload data are not readily available for Australian teaching. Consequently, institutional policies on workload are often guided more by untested assumptions about reduction of costs per student unit, rather than being evidence-based, with the result that implementation of new technologies intended to reduce costs becomes a 'black hole' of additional expense and staff time. For example, the introduction of plagiarism detection applications such as Turnitin was touted in many universities not merely as a method for ensuring academic integrity among students, but for reducing the time-consuming manual checks that many staff conduct. However, learning to use the application takes training; unless students themselves submit their assignments to the Turnitin server, staff add this to work tasks.

Position descriptions (PDs) for academics in Australian universities are historically broad and general, and although those for exclusively online tutoring often include a brief list of duties, these are also generally broadly descriptive. Indeed, the multiplicity of tasks now required of academics is rarely documented. Nagy et al. (2011) in their study of PDs for Unit Coordinators, note that of four universities surveyed, only one specified the particular skills required for this critical leadership role. Their description of the non-disciplinary knowledge (management skills, comprehensive policy content, regulations and legal matters, technical skills) now needed in unit coordination is daunting (Nagy et al., 2011).

Drawing on PDs from exclusively online institutions from the US, such as the University of Phoenix Online, Capella University, Penn State World Campus, and Ragan's (2007) paper, as well as the online literature, a table of the discrete tasks required of an online tutor is presented in the left hand column of Table 1. The right hand column presents the tasks which need to be undertaken for web-enabled, web-enhanced or hybrid subjects using an LMS, even if at 'base functionalities' level.



**Table 1: Task profiles for online only and hybrid/mixed model/web-enhanced teaching**

<b>Online only tasks</b>	<b>Hybrid online/class tasks</b>
<b>Prepare for class</b>	
<i>design course for on-line presentation</i>	✓
<i>edit/revise material</i>	✓
<i>upload content to LMS/submit to QA staff before upload and respond to QA queries</i>	✓
<i>research for updated information</i>	✓
<i>ensure that ancillary materials are mailed (if required)</i>	x
<i>create discussion questions</i>	✓
<i>write netiquette</i>	✓
<i>set up CMS</i>	✓
<i>prepare students for on-line study (orientation)</i>	✓
<i>coordinate with instructional design/QA staff</i>	✓
<i>read materials</i>	x
<b>Present information</b>	
<i>monitor &amp; contribute to discussion board</i>	✓
<i>post material (if required)</i>	x
<i>post discussion questions</i>	✓
<b>Practice and guidance</b>	
<i>answer emails</i>	✓
<i>post to discussion boards</i>	✓
<i>online live sessions (if used)</i>	
<i>provide technical support</i>	✓
<i>provide practice quizzes</i>	✓
<i>deal with conflicts promptly</i>	✓
<i>model effective online interaction</i>	✓
<i>monitor progress &amp; encourage lagging students</i>	✓
<b>Testing and assessment</b>	
<i>grade assignments</i>	✓
<i>setup online tests</i>	✓
<i>grade tests (automatic)</i>	✓
<i>provide feedback on assignments</i>	✓
<i>develop test content</i>	✓
<i>develop exams</i>	✓
<i>assess messages in online discussions</i>	✓
<i>test online testing process</i>	✓
<b>Provide feedback</b>	
<i>email</i>	✓
<i>class announcements</i>	✓
<i>discussion question responses</i>	✓
<i>automated responses to study quizzes</i>	✓
<i>create feedback rubric for common questions</i>	✓



Clearly, the range and number of tasks associated with the introduction of online modalities in what are designated class-based programs/units, but are also web-enhanced or supplemented, are almost as large as those for online only. A generous assignment of tasks to 'online only' results in 31 of the 35 tasks also being required for web-supplemented units. For more advanced online functionalities, Sammons and Ruth (2007) quote Smith's (2005) list of 51 skills required for online teaching. Sammons and Ruth (2007) report on a Sloan 2006 study indicating that Chief Academic Officers agree on the greater time and effort to teach online. They also report:

An NEA survey (2000) similarly concluded that faculty members' top concern about distance education is that they will do more work for the same amount of pay. The study found that most faculty members spend more time on their distance courses than they do on traditional courses, and 84 per cent of them do not get a reduced workload.

Some US institutions additionally designate the number of 'provocative' entries an online tutor must make per week of the course (3-6 at Capella). Workload allocations in purely US online tutoring are generally based on a maximum number of students per class; at UoPOnline for example, in the late 1990s, numbers were capped at 12-15 per class 'section', although this has now increased to a maximum of 25. 'Instructors' are also limited to a maximum number of 'sections' per period of study. Moreover, online-only providers such as Capella and UMUC pay a fixed US\$3000 (in 2010) per class/semester, and monitor both facilitator time online and contribution to LMS activities, which is not routinely done for Australian academics, especially those using hybrid modes. UMUC for example, also has dedicated technology and administrative support staff for each program, another staff member for student advising, and embedded writing support (Porto, forthcoming). Such support does not characterise online or hybrid teaching in Australia, with the result that teachers are providing additional comprehensive student support to retain and engage students..

Class size research is important to educational policy development. Setting class-size limits is a budget-related matter for administrators (Parker, 2003), who must determine an optimal class size to balance the cost-benefit relationship, while maintaining manageable faculty workloads without impinging upon quality education. Little research has been reported regarding class sizes for online courses (Boettcher & Conrad, 2004; Simonson, 2004) and most of the class sizes recommended in the literature for distance education are based on anecdotal evidence (Simonson, 2004). Mupinga and Maughan's review (2008) of practices in the US found that the number of students in online classes varies with institutions. From sixteen colleges in Texas that supplied information on their workload policies, the majority (60 per cent) equated the sizes of online courses to traditional face-to-face courses (Virtual College of Texas 2004). Hence no distinction was made in their workload allocation models between online and face-to-face classes. Tomei (2004) compared the amount of contact time required for a traditional face-to-face class with that for an online class, and found the latter required 14 per cent more hours than face-to-face teaching. Although his findings suggest ideal class sizes for online (12) and face-to-face situations (17), his figures are simply an extrapolation from his measured workload to a full-time load situation and, therefore, would vary depending on the number of teaching hours expected in a semester. This includes taking care of content delivery and facilitation, counselling and assessment. His study only considers a subset of the many online teacher roles (no course design and preparation, management or administration included), clearly omitting the tasks that an Australian academic would also undertake today. By contrast, O'Hare (2011) reports a standard Curtin University B.Ed course with staff:student ratios of 1:75, to be undertaken by part-time online tutors within a 12 hour per week paid time allowance, less than 10 minutes per week.

Due to the perceived higher demands of student-teacher interaction in online courses, many (eg, Ko & Rossen, 2004; Sellani & Harrington, 2002) have argued that academic workload increases with class size. Overall, research findings, practical guidelines and standards, and anecdotal evidence suggest that productive staff-student interaction is



reduced by larger class size, since the critical element in online (as in face-to-face teaching) is constructive feedback (Boud and Falchikov, 2007; Espasa & Meneses, 2010). Administrative tasks obviously increase with class size. Discussion groups, for example, appear to function best with class sizes of 12–25, depending on the complexity of the issues canvassed, yet even establishing separate discussion groups for classes over that size takes time, while intra-class dynamics require customised responses to each group.

Orellana (2006) presents the evidence for students' experiences in large classes negatively impacting on student-faculty interaction. Instructors also believe that quality of online instruction is questionable for large class sizes (Olson, as cited in Olson, 2002; Parker, 2003). Orellana (2006) focused on different levels of interactivity in relation to class size. Results indicated no straightforward relationship between online courses' actual class sizes and their actual level of interaction. This suggests other factors are affecting interactivity, such as instructor time commitment and administrative and teaching workload, course content, student characteristics and technological limitations. The present study confirms these variables as major contributors to the quality of learning outcomes for students, and the professional satisfaction of teachers.

Vardi (2009) explores staff attitudes to the broad types of WAMs in one Australian university: contact-hours-based; actual hours-based; and points models, noting that 22 different WAMs were in use across the university. Similarly, Paewai et al (2007) report a New Zealand university with widely variable internal WAMs, including a range of 40-360 hours for distance education resource development. In the Vardi study, staff and Heads of School had complained of increasing workload, consequent on a number of factors, including lack of staff, increased administrative tasks, inefficient processes, change initiatives, and additional work such as offshore teaching. Only one of the factors for overload was technology. While none of the three broad models was without critics, the contact hours model was most preferred, although allowances needed to be made for different types of teaching (laboratories, lectures, tutorials). The present study would suggest a contact hours model requires amendment to accommodate e-teaching.

## Summary

This brief review cannot encompass fully the many complex factors contributing to the additional tasks involved in the contemporary teaching role as a result of the increased reliance on technologies. The review has isolated key factors in considering 'the attractiveness of the academic profession':

- four over-arching themes impacting on higher education: globalisation, technological innovation, economic settings and an individualistic ethos
- definitions of e-learning, and the blurring of boundaries between 'distance' and 'on-campus' leading to hybrid delivery
- student demands for convenient access
- failures in determining the costs of e-teaching
- workload models and the tasks associated with digital applications in teaching.

These factors are central to the data reported in this study, on perceptions of the additional work hours consequent on the use of technologies in higher education. It will be argued, for example, that for most professionals, 24/7 technology has leaked work into non-work time, as media commentary laments (Lee, 2011). Or that academic work was never confined to a 40 hour week. However, this review has argued that teaching tasks have increased in quantity and nature as staff respond to student needs for flexible access, and that workload models rarely account for this.

The data reported here illuminate the need to re-assess workload models for teaching.



## Part 3: Project approach

### Issue being addressed

This project sought to assess the perceived workload associated with online and blended teaching, specifically via development of appropriate methodologies including task profiles for online and blended teaching, and for within-institution allocation of workload associated with online and hybrid teaching.

The main questions were:

- What data and insights currently inform Australian universities about the financial and staff costs in teaching online?
- How do the participating universities calculate staff workloads for online teaching?

### Research design

A Grounded Theory approach to this project allowed for the generation of data about the impact of technologies on workload when teaching online or in blended modes. Propositions were elaborated from an analysis and understanding of data located in a variety of data sources, including statistical data as appropriate, a literature review, review of grey data and interviews. Drawing upon both qualitative and quantitative data approaches, data were able to be analysed using deductive and inductive approaches to develop some propositions. A series of case studies was then developed.

### Method

#### Interviews

To better understand academic staff perceptions of their workload when teaching online, it was critical to seek their voice. The semi-structured interview schedule enabled each interviewer to draw out staff perceptions and ask for clarification and elaboration as required.

#### Interview questions

The interview began with the interviewer asking a number of demographic questions (eg, discipline area, years of teaching, what learning management system is used in your teaching). Two further demographic questions were embedded within the semi-structured interview concerning courses taught and interest in online teaching. The decision was made to include these in the interview schedule as they facilitated interview question flow.

The rationale for the interview questions is identified in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

Interview questions	Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do your EFTSL/hours/EFTSU accurately reflect your workload?</li></ul>	The opening interview question was posed to immediately gain an idea of whether or not the interviewee believes that their actual workload is equivalent to the amount of time calculated by their School as required for their teaching load.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why do you think that your academic workload allocation</li></ul>	This question allows the interviewee to explain why their actual workload does not equate with the



does not reflect what you do?	number of hours allocated by their School for their teaching, if this is the case.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you feel are the drivers to the use of online teaching in the higher education sector? In your university?</li> </ul>	The researchers were investigating the 'drivers' of increased workload of online teaching to ascertain if academic staff views on the factors which are driving the change to online teaching are the same or similar to those identified by the review of literature and grey data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your institution's policy on online teaching?</li> <li>• Does your school have a workload policy/guidelines to cover online teaching?</li> <li>• Does the workload policy/guidelines, or lack of them, reflect the amount of time you spend teaching and interacting with students?</li> <li>• If there is a mismatch between the actual and the allocated workload, what would you need to change in your teaching to make the actual work match the workload allocation?</li> </ul>	Three questions were asked, throughout the interview, to ascertain if the interviewees were aware of any policies in their institution or School in regard to teaching online. Although these questions appear to be quite repetitive, by placing them among other questions within the interview, the researchers hoped to gain a broad insight into the importance of policy direction in online teaching.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What sort of online teaching do you do? eg discussions, chat, podcasting, posting online content etc.</li> </ul>	The project researchers were interested in the types of resources and online tools being used by academic staff in their online teaching.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think would be an ideal standardised workload allocation for online teaching?</li> <li>• What would you like to see in the guidelines for Schools and their staff in achieving enhanced online teaching and in developing materials?</li> </ul>	As the project was seeking to make recommendations concerning online teaching policies/guidelines and workloads, two questions were asked that focused on staff perceptions on what should be included in workload allocations and online teaching guidelines.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much additional time do you spend learning to use any new technologies you incorporate in your teaching, or overcoming any problems with the LMS functionality?</li> <li>• How much time do you spend on preparation of your online unit/course before term commences? Is this considered in your workload?</li> <li>• How much time do you spend on maintenance of your online unit/course during term? Is this considered teaching?</li> </ul>	The project was endeavouring to quantify the amount of time which academic staff were spending outside of direct teaching in dealing with often unfamiliar technology and in preparation of course materials. The final two questions of the interviews address these issues.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many hours are you allocated for online teaching?</li> <li>• How many hours do you estimate you actually spend teaching, learning the technologies, and interacting with students?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there evidence that there is a tendency to not revise materials for online contexts, and if so, what effect does this have on course quality and learning outcomes?</li> </ul>	<p>One issue identified in the literature that the project sought to address was a perception that online teaching materials were not subject to the same level of constant review and development as traditional teaching modes. Thus one final question was included that asked for interviewees' thoughts on this.</p>

## Participants

Given time and resources, a purposive sample of twenty-five academic staff were to be interviewed from each of the four universities involved in the project UNE (496 FTE staff), CQU (309 FTE), USQ (419 FTE), ACU (498 FTE). A number of the audio recordings for the interviews from ACU and CQU were unavailable or corrupted; consequently fewer than the proposed 25 interviews from each of these institutions were included. Thus the final sample consisted of 88 interviewees.

While 88 interviews cannot in itself be reflective of the entire academic staff population, data could inform a survey to be developed and conducted as a next stage of research. The participants included:

- academic staff (Level A to D)
- academic staff teaching postgraduate and/or undergraduate students
- academic staff teaching on- and/or off-campus students
- sessional staff
- academic staff who have a perceived low to high use of technology
- support staff from enabling programs and specifically for the LMS in one institution.

The researcher in each institution approached potential interviewees either by telephone or email, to explain the research and request their participation. Ethics was sought and approved (UNE Ethics Approval No. HE10/033).

## Analysis techniques

Interview data were analysed using the QSR NVivo 8 qualitative analysis software tool. All of the interviews with staff in the four universities were digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim, as per the conditions of the ethics approval. All of the transcripts were checked against the audio recordings for accuracy and changes made as required.

An inductive thematic analysis using aspects of grounded theory was used as the analytic method in this project. One of the researchers did an initial open coding of all transcripts, coding each question from each of the interview transcripts in succession. For each question, descriptive and NVivo code names were used to capture the codes generated from this process and a code memo that included the code definition was generated for each code. Only data that was relevant to each question was coded.



This open coding was then checked by a second researcher using the Grounded Theory method of constant comparison. Here data within each code was checked for consistency with the code definition and with other data included at the same code and then for any inconsistency with data included at different codes. Any coding issues were identified and then discussed with the first researcher. The outcome of this discussion was either to move the data to another code, refine the code definition, or keep the data in the code.

The second researcher then searched for semantic level themes for each question using the thematic analysis process suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) where different codes were compared and considered for how they may be related to each other. The goal of this process was to combine codes into sub-themes and/or overarching themes. That is, some themes contained sub-themes whilst others did not. Each theme was then reviewed again by the second researcher and judged for internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity as per Patton's (1990) criteria for judging categories.

Once this process of identified and theme review was complete, the first researcher then reviewed the themes and sub-themes for inconsistencies and clarity. If the first researcher identified any issues these were discussed with the second researcher with the aim of further refining themes. After this refinement process the themes were again checked by the first and second researchers. Once agreement was reached the themes and data were presented to the other three researchers for validation. The results of the analysis were then compiled into a summary of the results presented in Part 4 of this report.



## Part 4: Aggregated results of interview analysis

### Introduction

Twenty-five interviews were conducted at UNE and USQ, 17 at ACU, and 21 interviews at CQU with a different interviewer being used at each institution. Although the questions given to the interviewers at each institution were the same, in some instances interviewers asked questions in different ways, resulting in some of the questions not being able to be analysed as different wording had changed the intent of the question. Transcripts of the interviews were de-identified before being entered into the QSR NVivo 8 software for analysis.

The following aggregated results from the analysis across all interviews are presented under each question asked in the interviews.

#### Question 1: Do your EFTSL/hours accurately reflect your workload?

Responses to this question were coded at three themes:

- Yes
- Unable to answer
- No

For this question, each response was coded at only one theme.

#### Theme 1 – Yes

A small number of participants stated that the workload they were allocated appropriately reflected their working reality.

#### Examples

“Because I’m only casually employed, I get hours based on the number of students I have in the class, so yes, I think it does.”

“I have a sense that they do.”

**Table 1: Theme 1 – Yes**

University	Frequency	Number of interviews conducted at University
ACU	2	17
CQU	2	21
UNE	3	25
USQ	2	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>88</b>

#### Theme 2 – Unable to answer

Perhaps surprisingly, three participants either did not know their workload allocation, felt that their work allocation did not fit into a EFTSU or hours model, or were unfamiliar with the workload model.



## Examples

“I’m not too familiar with the term EFTSL, I’m new to all of this. I don’t know how to answer that question.”

“As you know, that’s somewhat difficult to answer, because we’re not sure what our hours are at the moment.”

“Oh, look, that’s a difficult one I suppose. I can answer that in two parts. Currently like I’m in the (name of centre), as you know, and basically we haven’t got a workload hours per this or hours per that.”

**Table 2: Theme 2 – Unable to answer**

University	Frequency	Number of Interviews conducted at University
ACU	1	17
CQU	0	21
UNE	1	25
USQ	1	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>88</b>

## Theme 3 – No

The vast majority of participants perceived that either their allocated workload or certain parts of the allocation were an inappropriate reflection of their actual work time.

## Examples

“Because I’ve only ever really been either casual or part-time in the last instance, I had so many projects I rarely sort of thought about time except for when I didn’t have enough of it. So, in terms of marking and things like that yes. In terms of teaching one on one, yes. When it comes to things like taking care of questions, monitoring, consultations, no.”

“No, I don’t think they do actually, because a lot of work is done out of hours.”

“No. Definitely not.”

**Table 3: Theme 3 – No**

University	Frequency	Number of Interviews conducted at University
ACU	14	17
CQU	19	21
UNE	21	25
USQ	22	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>88</b>

## Analytical observations of question one

Using the NVivo software, attributes for each of the participants were established from the demographic information asked at the beginning of the interview. The following questions were asked of each participant:

- male/female
- disciplinary area



- academic level and role
- years of teaching (without and with computer technology)
- how long purely online/in blended form
- the perceived level of competence with technologies (low, medium or high)
- learning management system used.

Many participants did not answer these questions in a manner which allowed for consistent understandings across all interviews. Therefore, attributes such as 'academic level' had to be grouped into Junior Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Professor or Head of School, and Other, rather than by Level A, Level B, etc. Demographic information was also gained from question 5 – Which units/courses do you teach online? How many students are enrolled in each, in a normal semester/term?.

**Table 4: Replies to question 1 coded by academic level**

Answer to Q. 1	Junior lecturer	Senior lecturer	Professor or HoS	Other	Total	% of total interviewees
No	51 (96%)	19 (73%)	2 (50%)	4 (80%)	76	86.36%
Unable to answer	0	1	1	1	3	3.41%
Yes	2	6	1	0	9	10.23%
<b>Total</b>	53	26	4	5	88	

Of interest here is the number (6/9) and proportion of staff at Senior Lecturer level who believed their allocation accurately presented their work time, which might suggest that at higher appointment levels and presumably with more experience, staff were more adept at managing time demands. However, such a supposition is belied by the number of SL staff who did not believe that their load was within allocation.

**Table 5: Replies coded by academic level – individual universities**

ACU	Junior lecturer	Senior lecturer	Professor & HoS	Other	Total
No	6	6	0	2	14 (82.35%)
Unable to answer	0	1	0	0	1 (5.88%)
Yes	1	1	0	0	2 (11.77%)

CQU	Junior lecturer	Senior lecturer	Professor & HoS	Other	Total
No	15	3	0	1	19 (90.48%)
Unable to answer	0	0	0	0	0
Yes	1	1	0	0	2 (9.52%)

UNE	Junior lecturer	Senior lecturer	Professor & HoS	Other	Total
No	13	7	1	0	21 (84%)
Unable to answer	0	0	0	1	1 (4%)
Yes	0	2	1	0	3 (12%)



USQ	Junior lecturer	Senior lecturer	Professor & HoS	Other	Total
1: No	17	4	1	0	22 (88%)
2: Unable to answer	0	0	1	0	1 (4%)
3: Yes	0	2	0	0	2 (8%)

When the results of question 1 are viewed by individual universities (see table 5), the responses reveal a similar pattern across all institutions. That is, a high proportion of all participants perceived that their allocated work hours do not adequately reflect the actual time that it takes to engage in various teaching tasks. For some participants this was for all parts of their workload and for others there were aspects that did match but others that did not.

The responses to question 1 were also coded by gender to identify any difference between male and female academic staff members. However, no real difference was found, with 87 per cent of the females and 84 per cent of the males recording a 'no' response (see table 6).

**Table 6: Replies to Q. 1 coded by gender – all universities**

Answer to Q. 1	Female	Male	Total
No	48 (87%)	28 (84%)	76
Unable to answer	2	1	3
Yes	5	4	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>88</b>

When the responses to question 1 were coded by the number of years that the participants said that they had spent e-teaching, no relationship appears to have emerged from the data (see table 7). Increased experience with e-learning does not appear to correlate with greater 'efficiency' in terms of time spent e-teaching.

**Table 7: Replies coded by number of years of e-teaching**

Answer to Q. 1	<1	1–5	6–10	11 to 15	16–20	>20	Total
No	1	37	24	13	0	1	76
Unable to answer	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
Yes	0	4	2	1	1	1	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>88</b>

### **Question 2: Why do you think that your academic workload allocation does not reflect what you do?**

Responses to this question were coded into three themes, and seven sub-themes. Responses from each participant could be coded at more than one theme and thus sub-theme.

#### **Theme 1 – Underestimation of workload**

- Online environment
- Problems with the general principles or assumptions of the workload model
- Teaching tasks.



Theme 2 – No consideration of the work entailed in e-teaching

- Impact of technology
- Course aspects
- Work aspects
- Student assumptions or expectations.

Theme 3 – Staff choice to do more.

Nineteen open codes were coded under these themes. The open codes have been included in this question to allow the reader to see how open codes merged into sub-themes and sub-themes into themes. This was not done in other questions in order to keep this report within a reasonable word length.

### Theme 1 – Underestimation of workload

The theme ‘underestimation of workload’ acknowledges that overload comes from several sources. This was the most frequently referred to theme in this question.

**Table 8: Theme 1 – Underestimate of workload**

Sub-theme	Open code	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Online environment	Working in general in the online environment	21	4	2	6	9
	Comparable online activities	12	2	1	2	7
<b>Problems with the general principles or assumptions of workload models</b>		34	1	11	6	16
Teaching tasks	Discussion group interactions	19	4	1	4	10
	Email	3	1	1	0	1
	Course development and preparation	13	6	4	1	2

#### Sub-theme: Online environment

Rather than talking about specific aspects of e-teaching, some participants spoke in broad terms about how the digital environment of its very nature demanded more time. Other participants brought in specifics by suggesting that comparable face-to-face activities, such as responding to questions in class, when translated to the online environment, take more time to accomplish.

#### Open code – The nature of the online environment

##### Examples

“Operating in the online environment I think it actually increases workload. I think teaching online and learning online is meant to be – you know, less contact hours. I’ve found it hugely increases the number of contact hours.”

“So yes, you can imagine that we feel, I feel like I’m doubling up, that my online teaching environment is just a replica of what I used to teach thirteen years ago in the face-to-face mode. But now I’m teaching the face-to-face mode **and** the online mode in parallel, and it seems to be just an increasing workload and not an increase in benefit to the student.”

“My experience would tell me that demand and just the general time load required to teach online and when it’s done as well... and that’s the other thing: it doesn’t fit neatly into an eight to five working day; it just doesn’t translate.”



## Open code – Comparable online activities

### Examples

“Fully online is – you have to somehow accommodate every student individually, whereas if you’ve got 100 students in a classroom, you can deal with questions in that face-to-face mode much more from one person to a group, if you know what I mean. Rather than you can in an online setting.”

“That’s quite a lot of time I have to dedicate just to the off-campus students, because the on-campus students can see the solutions in real time in the tutorial. But I have to type up a formatted version of those solutions for the off-campus students and post them each week. That’s one activity that takes up a lot of time for the off-campus students.”

“One of the things about online is that people see it as a personal service. You say – yes, there’s the Blackboard discussions and so on. That means that every day you go into it and you service that Discussion group – every day. If I’m running lecture group – like face-to-face stuff – I’m not servicing those classes every day.”

### Sub-theme: Problems with the general principles or assumptions of workload models

The basic foundations of workload models were seen by many participants (34/88, particularly at CQU and USQ) to be flawed.

### Examples

“Because the way in which they’re computed. It’s just an arbitrary measure. I think it’s, you may as well turn around and say your workload reflects how many window panes you’ve got in your room. It’s about as relevant as that. The number of students that you’ve got doesn’t reflect the workload. They think it does, but I’ve got doubts about it.”

“I think is because the model that allocated those hours is often not undertaken in consultation with the academic and this has meant that quite often the workload that’s allocated to an academic is allocated on a basis of a perceived understanding of what that academic actually teaches, researches and gets involved with in terms of administration and human engagement.”

“The calculation of EFTSL is purely on student numbers and it doesn’t reflect the work that’s required to deal with the actual students.”

### Sub-theme: Teaching tasks

Participants also talked about specific e-teaching tasks (ie, discussion group interactions, emails, course development and preparation), where they perceived that the time taken to engage in these activities was the cause of disparity. Unlike the above theme, here participants are identifying specific e-teaching activities that are not considered in workload models.

## Open code – Discussion group interactions

### Examples

“So I find that I – some of the Discussion groups – well, one of the Discussion groups that I moderate – a fair bit of it happens on the weekend. So, yeah, my weekend I spend two hours at home moderating a discussion group.”



“When you’re communicating in an electronic medium, it is so easy to just dash off a note that can be very easily misunderstood, so I think that because I’ve got a large – or have been teaching a large course of students who do have a reasonably high level of anxiety – I tend to think very carefully about what I write. So that it’s not misunderstood.”

“The other thing is, because I mainly teach external and online – to facilitate the students’ needs I’m online at night, but I also work on-campus during the day. So my hours are effectively doubled.”

### Open code – Email

#### Examples

“I’m on email at nights and at weekends.”

“The amount of emails that we receive – that we have to filter through each day – wouldn’t get accounted for in the administrative component of our workload formula.”

### Open code – Course development and preparation

#### Examples

“Well, it’s not allocated actually in the right semesters. So you’re generally always doing this work on the run when you’re doing all these other things. So you’re always playing catch up with these units – the online units.”

“And there’s a lot more work involved say, in developing an online – running an online course – than it is to prepare maybe an hour or two of lectures each week.”

“In terms of online teaching I think that there isn’t an acknowledgement of the amount of time that is spent developing and loading teaching materials, which is a huge part.”

### Theme 2 – No consideration

A second frequent concern raised by participants was the perception that there are aspects of academic work which are not considered in workload models.

**Table 9: Theme 2 – No consideration of activities**

Sub-theme	Open code	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Impact of technology	Learning to use technology	7	2	0	4	1
	Technology failures or issues	5	0	0	3	2
Course aspects	Year level of course/students	12	1	2	5	4
	Using context-appropriate learning activities	7	1	0	3	3
Work aspects	Different academic roles	7	1	3	1	2
	Various teaching and academic duties and tasks	10	1	2	4	3
Student assumptions or expectations		7	2	1	2	2

#### Sub-theme: Impact of technology

A number of participants perceived that the need for staff and students to keep abreast of emerging and ever changing technologies was not considered in workload models, nor were technological failures requiring ‘go-arounds’.



## Open code – Learning to use technology

### Examples

“I felt like I needed to keep skilling myself and find other ways to skill myself. And that can’t happen in work hours, I think.”

“In terms of first – learning – working out the technology around it, because – you know whether I could stream it, capture it and stream it on – I’ve forgotten what it was – and I used Help here to try and work out how to do that. And that was problematic. Just the size of the files and working out all the logistics of how to use it – took a really long time.”

“The other reason it takes some time is partly when you’re relatively new to it is that there’s a lot to learn about the technology. And I found that rather frustrating at the beginning.”

## Open code – Technology failures or issues

### Examples

“And then combined with the fact that it just crashes and it’s slow and students can’t get on, the endless problems on it, I’m sure you know. That really adds to your workload. But also to your frustrations. So it’s a lot of hours, but it’s a lot of hours spent being very frustrated with it.”

“You’ve got students that aren’t familiar – sometimes if they’re students – say over 35 – they’re not really that comfortable with doing a lot online. They want to speak face-to-face.”

## Sub-theme: Course aspects

Participants also perceived that there were a number of course-related issues that were not considered in their workload models, in particular, student year level: how different student year levels required different levels of engagement. Customising teaching activities to match the online environment and developing pedagogically appropriate activities were not considered in workload models.

## Open code – Year level of course/students

### Examples

“Care for students that have just come into the study of uni for the first time in many many years, or those who have had failure at school – you know, unsuccessful learning at school – and those coming into us as brand new youngsters. And we do often have to tailor our teaching to suit those people. So we have to go back, examine the people that we have in our groups, and then decide how we’re going to approach them. Because if many of the students in the class are older or more mature – of course you’re teaching in one fashion. If they’re younger – like just school leavers – 18, 20, 21 years old – you have to apply a complete different teaching strategy and it’s a great dilemma when you have half half, so – then your workload is really heavy because – especially in the classroom – you have to teach and talk to two different types of people – two different sets of thinking – two different philosophies on how they’re going to work. A 20 year old does not speak the same language as a 40 year old.”

“Maybe EFTSL doesn’t capture very well the postgrads, because there’s a lot of work you’ve got to do with them. I don’t think that it takes into account whether or not you want to do something new.”

“I think that the amount of support that is required for first level courses – particularly first level service courses – is not really properly reflected. I think you know that with the service course students are taking it on not because they want to, but because it’s prescribed. And that itself creates a number of issues.”



## Open code – Using context appropriate learning activities

### Examples

“As well as that I’m fairly active on the online material so, the unit that I am running at the moment, before I came on it, had almost no online activity, so I could have just left it like that and not done it, but you know, once you start going down the online path it just becomes an explosion really.”

“Say you put podcasts in, that’s only the beginning of your work, because, especially I didn’t know much about them, you get all the queries about – ‘this doesn’t work; I can’t download this on to my computer; why isn’t it this way; I notice your podcast is not up for last week; the podcasts don’t tie in with the powerpoints’. So anything you put up is not the end of your work, it’s the beginning of the work, because that just generates more activity.”

“So I think that if the EB (Enterprise Bargaining (Agreement)) says – this is your load, but if you’re doing cool things, like this year I’m using Jing – do you know what they are – they’re where you, it’s screen capture with voice over, so I guess it’s a vodcast. But you have your computer screen and you can watch what you’re doing. So, I’m doing that for all of my calculations, which is taking me hours and hours to do. But that’s not taken into account.”

“So if you want to do extra things like podcasts and Wimba sessions and those sorts of things it’s hard to squeeze it in. And I think that’s probably where my workload gets out of control a bit.”

### Sub-theme: Work aspects

What was surprising is that a small handful of participants indicated that particular administrative roles or academic positions that they held were not expressly considered in workload models, although most models do cover additional formal administrative roles such as Unit Coordinator. Similarly, participants pointed to specific academic duties/tasks that have arisen in response to a new emphasis on student support, such as first year advisor or Study Abroad opportunities.

## Open code – Different academic roles

### Examples

“Because it’s this time of year and I’m advisor for first and second years, so you know, the kids have always got more questions than anyone else. I’m also advisor for the Statistics courses. And so there’s a whole range of issues around that and the selection of units for next semester and can they get – can they transfer into Bachelor courses – so there’s been a whole lot of – that takes up a lot of my day. So that’s when I end up doing a lot of work at home, because I have those sorts of student commitments.”

“Which is presentations, being on committees, being part of groups making decisions about program changes and program reviews.”

“Like one of those things would be I coordinate the Study Abroad Program – and there’s a lot of time in that – that doesn’t even feature on my workload at all. So there are things like that – that you’re kind of doing – as being part of a Department – that just don’t get captured.”



## Open code – Various teaching and academic duties and tasks

### Examples

“Because it doesn’t account for the things I do. Supervision at Masters level, Masters teaching supervision of research projects – that’s not counted. It wasn’t there at the beginning and you pick these guys up because they’re not being looked after and It just doesn’t get counted.”

“Without fail every week there’s a call to be involved in something else – which has not been calculated. And so not to be involved is not to engage with the School. And also too involved is then to increase your workload.”

“Because we are in a transition between a model which is about teaching a certain way, which is through transmission, and doing online activities. So because of that, the students themselves are not used to this new form of teaching. So there is resistance from the point of view of the students. This will probably improve over time. So because we are in transition, you have to do a lot of spoon feeding. And that takes more time. And then setting it up with the technologies, I’m sure it could be done more efficiently, but it requires more input from design experts than we are getting.”

### Sub-theme: Student assumptions or expectations

Student expectations of staff availability, access, and interaction were perceived by some participants as resulting in increased workloads: a 24/7 expectation that academic staff are always available.

### Examples

“When you work online, you’re available – they expect you to be available 24/7.”

“You need to be there for them. There’s this perceived idea that you’re there 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

“But access via electronic communications has made us much more, well has increased the expectations of students about the availability of staff.”

## Theme 3 – Staff choice to do more

This theme captures the informed choice made by some participants to spend more time on online activities.

**Table 10: Theme 3 – Staff choice to do more**

Sub-theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Staff choice to do more	8	1	1	3	3

### Examples

“So I do think it adds – I mean, how to quantify this – I mean I’d probably say it adds about 20 per cent. And if you’re trying something new – like I was trying with the blogging that was a huge demand. Because – it was self-created demand – because you’ve got to keep on top of what you’re doing there. You’ve got to visit their sites, their comments and so on and so forth. I can’t blame the university for that. That’s my own kind of creativity and desire to produce something that works for the students driving that. But still it takes a lot of time.”

“I guess there’s another reason as well – the first year I have has had an historically high attrition, and so I’m working to reduce that attrition, but that’s an investment. Where the



university gets the payback for it, but I don't get the payback for it. So, if I get an extra 20 students to stay enrolled, to pass, to continue, that's not reflected in my workload. It's probably reflected in the university's income in future years. But there's no reward for me. It's only to my disadvantage to do that."

"So I have actually recorded what I call video snippets of lectures. That takes time. So it's probably – part of it's my own fault in what I think is a standard that I need to produce."

**Question 3: What do you feel are the drivers to the use of online teaching (a) in the higher education sector? (b) In your university?**

Responses to this question were coded into five themes and thirteen sub-themes. Participants noted more than one driver, so responses do not sum to 88.

**Theme 1 – Student drivers**

- Enhances student learning
- Provides students with flexibility
- Student expectations
- Social justice and inclusion

**Theme 2 – Economical drivers**

- Increase revenue by increasing student numbers
- To be competitive in the marketplace
- Work practice efficiency
- Increase the viability of a discipline or program
- Cost saving

**Theme 3 – External drivers**

- Federal government policy
- Reflection of online world

**Theme 4 – Internal drivers**

- University directive
- Reputation building

**Theme 5 – Online is not cost-effective, despite the rhetoric**

**Theme 1 – Student drivers**

The 'student drivers' theme consolidates all of the responses given by participants where they indicated that one of the drivers for the increased use of technology in tertiary teaching and learning is student-centred concerns.

**Table 11: Theme 1 – Student drivers**

Sub-theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Enhances student learning	18	3	3	8	4
Provides students with flexibility	38	7	8	8	15
Student expectations	13	3	3	3	4
Social justice and inclusion	20	3	4	5	8



### **Sub-theme: Enhances student learning**

Twenty per cent of participants believed that the ability of online teaching to provide students, regardless of mode, with enhanced learning experiences is driving institutions to increase their online offerings, with a clear majority of these from UNE.

#### **Examples**

“The other driver is, well for us we looked at online learning, in terms of quality of teaching, and I think there’s an opportunity to actually improve the quality of our teaching through online learning.”

“It’s a vastly different experience and it provides for a far improved learning environment for students. So for me the main driver is the pedagogical one.”

“That it certainly allows us to engage in more interaction with students, so that the quality of what you can do at a distance is certainly different – and probably, arguably, better, in most cases.”

“It provides multiple ways – it accounts for a number of different learning styles.”

### **Sub-theme: Provides students with flexibility**

The most frequently mentioned driver, with nearly half of all respondents, was flexibility for students. Participants saw the drive to online teaching as reflective of changing student demographics and convenience of access.

#### **Examples**

“The students themselves are wanting more flexibility. They don’t necessarily want everything online, but they want a portion of it, because it offers them the flexibility that they need to be able to deal with the other pressures in their lives.”

“Well, convenience I think. People who want postgraduate education usually – they’ve usually got jobs and families. So they’re the ones who traditionally went for distance ed. before, I think. Many of them anyway. They’re older and they – they haven’t got a lot of time, and they don’t want to be driving out to a university in the middle of the day.”

“The students who are out there learning by distance education, and a greater desire for students wanting the flexibility of being able to work at home – or study at home, I should say – rather than coming into lectures every day. They may have family issues where it would be more convenient for them to have that class in the afternoon. Sick children. And oh, all sorts of things that pop up at you through life. And if a lecture was flexible so that they could have this online, then they would be able to easily still attend my class.”

### **Sub-theme: Student expectations**

Nearly 15 per cent of participants also believed that student expectations are behind the move to increased online offerings because students expect that there will be an online teaching presence regardless of study mode.

#### **Examples**

“I guess broadly the push to get into it has been – this is what’s required now. This is what the students want. This is what the sector requires. You need to have online.”

“But it’s what the students want. They want everything online.”



## Sub-theme: Social justice and inclusion

Interestingly, given the social policy agenda of the two Labor governments, nearly 33 per cent of staff believed that a major driver for online education was an inclusive move to redress disadvantage.

### Examples

“(My university) takes a view of social justice, so wanting to be able to offer education across the spectrum. So make it accessible to all.”

“So if a university can offer online study to students in rural and remote areas, then that’s a real bonus. That’s part of the incentive, I believe.”

“We also were considering Indigenous students at the time, who have a lot of trouble being away from family, and we were hoping that was a way of engaging with Indigenous students more in our unit.”

## Theme 2 – Economic drivers

Whilst student-based pressures were the most frequently mentioned broad driver, economic aspects were also perceived to be behind the move to increased online teaching in the sector and/or their institution.

**Table 12: Theme 2 – Economic drivers**

Sub-theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Increase revenue by increasing student numbers	14	1	3	4	6
To be competitive in the marketplace	28	1	3	11	13
Work practice efficiency	11	2	2	3	4
Increase the viability of a discipline or program	2	1	0	0	1
Cost saving	21	4	5	6	6

### Sub-theme: Increase revenue by increasing student numbers

Revenue raising was mentioned by some participants in all institutions as one reason for online expansion.

#### Examples

“But I would imagine that’s where we get all our money from and I certainly think that an increase in students is a desired effect and online learning on the surface allows that to happen.”

“And there’s also a financial incentive to actually increase student numbers. I know we don’t have space geographically and online learning is a way to increase numbers.”

### Sub-theme: To be competitive in the marketplace

The key economic driver for participants was their perception that institutions needed to move into the online teaching space in order to become competitive or maintain their competitiveness: nearly 32 per cent believed it was simply a competitive market response. This response was particularly marked in UNE and USQ respondents.



## Examples

“And probably the commercial imperative in that it’s the only way in some instances that we’re competitive.”

“I think competition probably, for students. Online can capture more students from far and wide.”

“I think the drivers will be the marketplace. As well as the student-teacher relationship we also have a customer relationship. And our customers are increasingly expecting better – our competition will start doing things better – and unless we pick up our game in the online area, we’ll start to drift towards irrelevance.”

## Sub-theme: Work practice efficiency

A small number of participants believed that institutions considered that online teaching could afford efficiency gains to be gained in terms of actual work practices – both academic and administrative.

## Examples

“Well – sigh – it’s – say for example in the program there are a lot of units to fit in. Sometimes those units might not necessarily have as many students as are required for a program to run it on-campus... So term by term it might have a fairly small enrolment. It still needs to be run as part of the Masters program. So – I think perhaps developing it you know once, as an online – the early development is time-consuming. But then to have that as something that can be maintained and upgraded over time, it is thought, I think that reduces – or that is a more efficient use of time (than in) face-to-face teaching.”

“It might be the fact that it’s easier for universities to actually do things. You know, it frees up more time for other stuff. They believe. And it sort of gives them this captured cohort of students that they don’t have to face, look at on a face-to-face basis. The money still comes in for them. But then they’re not particularly on-campus.”

“I guess second to that is – an academic sits back and sees some benefit – I can do this if I invest some time in it – and I can then save some time later.”

## Sub-theme: Increase the viability of a discipline or program

The move to online teaching was perceived by only two participants as a way to save a discipline/program area at risk of closure and thus the move to online teaching can increase the economic viability of a program/discipline. Both of these participants worked in disciplines that were under threat of closure: moving to online teaching has resulted in a stay of execution.

## Examples

“And it has maintained the viability of those units, so that’s been a good thing.”

“Otherwise we wouldn’t still be here. That’s our main thing. It’s that because obviously science was gone and said bye bye. And luckily the people here actually managed to build it back up again into the external mode. So we would not be here if it wasn’t for the external drive. And we do have now people coming into that. And I find the other driving thing is that (school) teachers don’t have flexibility to get onto campus to do the work. And we have a lot of teachers now enrolling in our classes. Because they’re trying to certify their science.”



### Sub-theme: Cost saving

Nearly 24 per cent of respondents believed a major driver was supposed cost savings, almost as many as believed the major driver was market competition, and this response was almost evenly divided across the four institutions.

#### Examples

“Another driver, I think, was cost cutting. Because like I said there were a number of campuses offering these smaller units and so they were paying for lecturers in each campus. Using rooms for only small numbers of students, so it made financial sense to combine these into units that could be online nationally.”

“Cost! It’s as simple as that. So pretty well – it’s as simple as that – it’s a cost – supposedly a cost-efficient way of delivering content to students.”

“That is the attitude I believe, of management, that it’s a cheaper way of teaching because the workload allocations suggest that there’s an allocation for the development of online materials – but I suspect that for the university or the institution, it is more about cost-saving.”

### Theme 3 – External drivers

The theme ‘external drivers’ reflects a perception that it is pressure from agencies and influences outside the tertiary institution’s control that is stimulating a greater use of technology in the higher education sector.

Table 13: Theme 3 – External drivers

Sub-theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Federal government policy	4	0	1	1	2
Reflection of online world	5	2	2	0	1

#### Sub-theme: Federal government policy

Given recent changes to the higher education sector, it is perhaps surprising that so few participants considered federal government policies had any influence on online expansion.

#### Examples

“The political agenda because we have to incorporate it. We have to incorporate it because there’s a big incentive financially.”

“I mean it’s all to do with, probably funding models based on how the federal government is funding universities to do teaching of students.”

#### Sub-theme: Reflection of online world

Very few participants considered that a digitally-saturated environment was a major factor in online expansion, surprisingly, when one compares this with the data in Table 8, in which almost one-quarter of participants believed that the online environment by its nature consumed time.

#### Examples

“But the other side of that is – one of the drivers of online teaching – I actually think that it does knit very, very closely with the way the world operates these days.”



“It’s becoming more part of my life and other people’s and I think different ways of learning need to be reflected in society’s expectations. So I think online learning is meeting the social and educational needs of younger people.”

“Well, I think that people are increasingly used to having access to everything from home. Right. I mean, use of the internet is very very pervasive. Shopping online. Talking to your friends online. Studying for a university degree online is just another part of that package, I suppose.”

#### Theme 4 – Internal drivers

The ‘internal driver’ theme reflects the perception that internal institutional pressures are affecting take-up of online applications.

**Table 14: Theme 4 – Internal Drivers**

Sub-theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
University directive	6	2	2	1	1
Reputation building	8	0	3	1	4

##### Sub-theme: University directive

This sub-theme reflects a perception that having an online presence is mandated or expected by the particular institution; of the small number of participants who mentioned this, there was a relatively even spread across the four universities.

##### Examples

“I think that there is a certain push by the university for everybody to get onto Blackboard and use it well, I gather a lot of people do it because they have to.”

“The drivers are the regulations basically that are laid down that you have to have your unit on Blackboard and that you have to teach particular units and yes, fully online. So you just have to work around that. They’re coming from above, essentially.”

##### Sub-theme: Reputation building

A small number of participants believed that for established distance education providers the continued drive to online teaching is a way to build, maintain or enhance reputation, which is a slightly different pressure than competitive forces (table 12).

##### Examples

“And I think online teaching if we can get a good online presence somewhere it will contribute to the publicity and international recognition of the university.”

“And also if you do it well, we’ve got a very good reputation at this university to do external teaching, and in other universities they do online stuff too, so unless we can do it very well, and in a very unique way, better than others, we will lose students.”

#### Theme 5 – Online is not cost-effective, despite the rhetoric

Whilst a small number of participants believed that there was a perception that online teaching was cost effective, this was actively questioned. Online teaching in their worlds results in increased spending.



**Table 15: Online is not cost-effective**

Theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Online is not cost-effective	9	3	1	2	3

### Examples

“So in terms of time equalling a cost saving, I don’t think it is. If it were accurately – if I were to jot down all the extra things that I do that I would not have to do individually if I did them all in a face-to-face meeting, I think it would be a lot more.”

“I think one of the drivers was the mistaken perception that it’s cheaper and more efficient. So, when I say it’s not a cheap way of teaching, that higher level interactivity has to be appropriately supported and that support costs money.”

“Although the cost is questionable and I think that’s part of what you’re trying to work out. We invest enormous amounts of money and we spend ongoing monies to maintain the digital infrastructure that allows us to communicate with students that allows us to deliver content very efficiently.”

In summary, in considering the drivers towards online delivery, participants nominated student needs for greater flexibility in accessing education (38 of 88), the competitive educational environment (28 of 88), and cost-saving pressures (21 of 88) as key drivers. It is striking that so few participants attribute the shift to online teaching as being driven by federal policy, an increasingly digital overall environment (table 13), or institutional directive or ‘reputation’ (table 14), since in the literature, these drivers feature strongly.

### **Question 4: What is your institution’s policy on online teaching?**

### **Question 5: Which units/courses do you teach online? How many students are enrolled in each, in a normal semester/term?**

### **Question 7: Does your school have the workload policy/guidelines to cover online teaching?**

### **Question 8: Does the workload policy/guidelines, or lack of these, reflect the amount of time you spend teaching and interacting with students?**

The above questions were asked of all participants. Unfortunately these questions were not able to be analysed across the data set due to a number of factors. Given that different interviewers were employed at different institutions, interviewers sometimes asked the above questions in ways that did not make it clear if the project team wanted to know about ‘institutional’ or ‘school/faculty’ policy, thus changing the intent of the questions and thereby influencing the response that was offered. Even if the questions were asked as written, the differences between school/faculty and Institution policy were often confused by participants. That is, in some responses participants merged both understandings in the one response or they did not clearly articulate which policy they were referring to, institution or school, when making comment.

It was therefore decided that these questions would not be analysed across the whole data set as the level of rigour associated with the analytic process would be compromised.

### **Question 6: What sort of online teaching do you do? eg discussions, chat, podcasting, posting online content etc. List all of these.**

A thematic analysis was not conducted on this question given its intent was to generate a



list of online teaching activities. Instead responses were placed into stand alone open codes. It should be noted that participant responses to this question could be coded at more than one open code. Across the entire data set 18 open codes emerged. This question indicates that a range of online teaching activities are being utilised at the four participating institutions (Table 16).

**Table 16: Types of online teaching**

Open code	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Announcements	18	9	3	4	2
Assessment	42	10	11	9	12
Assessment discussion forum participation	7	3	0	0	4
Assessment quizzes	23	3	4	9	7
Assessment submission and marking online	11	3	4	1	3
Blogs	5	1	1	3	0
Chat	19	3	8	6	2
Discussions	73	14	20	19	20
Internal email or direct email	14	3	4	3	4
Other	18	4	5	7	8
Podcast lectures	27	2	7	7	11
Podcasts	51	4	13	20	14
Social Media	3	1	1	1	0
Textbooks websites	4	0	1	2	1
Traditional learning resources	63	11	15	21	16
Tutorial either telephone or online	11	0	3	1	7
Weblinks	11	6	2	2	1
Wikis	8	1	2	3	2

Participants identified discussions as the most common teaching activity (73 of 88), followed by 'traditional learning resources' (eg, PowerPoint lecture slides, study materials – 63 of 88); podcasts (51 of 88) and then assessment (42 of 88). This is an interesting result, as discussion boards commonly feature as time-intensive and therefore likely to be avoided by those concerned to minimise load. It is also of interest that so few participants (14/88) nominated email as one of their teaching tasks when for many academics as well as other professionals, it the bane of their work lives. No clear differences between institutions emerged, except that podcasts were more commonly mentioned by UNE staff.

**Question 9: How much additional time do you spend learning to use any new technologies you incorporate in your teaching, or overcoming any problems with the LMS functionality?**

**Question 10: How much time do you spend on preparation of your online unit/course before term commences? Is this considered in your workload?**

**Question 11: How much time do you spend on maintenance of your online unit/course during term? Is this considered teaching?**

Participants were asked to give quantitative answers to the above questions. Across the data set almost all participants had difficulty in quantifying the time they spent on particular tasks. Further, the wide ranging responses that emerged made coding the data into meaningful themes and sub-themes impractical. The critical analytic observation that emerged across all three questions was that the perceived time spent on these activities



is wide ranging.

“So it’s almost a week by week – I may have to allocate some time to that each week for several weeks – maybe for half the semester. Till I feel I’m comfortable with it and ready to put it up.”

“Look it’s impossible to quantify in terms of time, I can tell you that since January this year, a huge amount of time in trying to get things to work, not just for myself but I hear from colleagues, but add to that, it’s not just the time, it’s the frustration that goes with it.”

“So initially when you start to use a new environment like that, there is a lot of time which is not really anticipated in coming to terms with its shortcomings and finding ways around it.”

“There is a nominal amount in our workload for setting up a Moodle site. It certainly doesn’t reflect the amount of time it has taken me to set it up and it doesn’t have any component in there for learning how to use the technology.”

“A lot of the set-up happens as the year continues – ideally I would have the unit all set up before I started, but because you’re working on other units, you don’t put your energy into it until your unit comes. I’m still writing material that I’m loading up for future weeks.”

“Once again, it’s just EFTSL. It’s like anything. It’s like you know, online, the hard copies, it’s just all EFTSL based so there’s no recognition of whether you’re doing more than the average in terms of online development or anything like that.”

“I mean the only way I could do teaching properly would be to spend every Saturday and Sunday on it. You know. It’s not on.”

“I can’t tell you. It might come under updating of materials which is a general line item in our workload policy. And if my Moodle site’s broken and I need to fix it, and I need to stay after hours to fix it, then I do. You know, they don’t pay us overtime. So, yes, it’s my job, and again, the students want me to be here 24 hours a day seven days a week – and so does the university!”

“Maintenance, I’m assuming you mean things like, fixing things that go wrong, adding things, making corrections, changes to your materials as you go through; I’d say that’s an ongoing process. In terms of quantifying, it’s very hard. I mean, you’re thinking about it all the time.”

“I’ve got a system where I can email all my students, so I do a weekly email. Which is a nice way to keep in touch. It’s part of the workload, but it’s that part of the workload that’s sort of appeared because of the requirements of e-learning.”

“Well, it depends what you mean by maintaining. All the time I’m running the course, I’m changing the materials.”

Clearly, participants do not specifically track their hours in teaching, or learning support (and from the nature of the comments, much of their teaching is in fact student support). Universities might go some way to understanding time on task if they were to analyse staff time on their web sites, although this would not take account of preparation time offline, or offline marking/reading.

### **Question 12: How many hours are you allocated for online teaching?**

Although question 12 was also a quantitative question, just over half of the participants said ‘none’. Just over 20 per cent gave answers about time-based allocations and others (about eight per cent) spoke of their allocation being based on student numbers. Thus whilst an exact number of hours was not calculable, it is clear that participants had either no allocation, an hour allocation or an EFTSL allocation. What is of most interest is that of the four universities, only ACU has a specific allocation for online only units, and at HOS



discretion, can be allocated more time allowance if they argue the case for additional load in a hybrid unit. Small numbers of participants in the other three universities reported workload based on hours or student numbers.

**Table 17: Hours allocated for online teaching**

Open code	Description of open code	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
None	Data was coded here if the participants replied that there was no allocation for online teaching	46	6	15	19	6
Other		2	0	0	1	1
Hours for online teaching	Data was coded here if participants said there was an hourly allocation for online teaching	18	4	4	1	9
Based on student numbers	Data was coded here if participants mentioned that hours were linked to student numbers	7	1	3	1	2

#### **‘None’ – Examples**

“I can’t recall it being considered a separate thing in terms of the online teaching.”

“And that doesn’t seem to be the way the workload is organised. It’s to do with having courses you’re coordinating.”

#### **‘Other’ – Examples**

“That being said, I have sort of done things, where it’s only taken me a few minutes each time and I’ve just gone ‘I’m not bothering writing that down or claiming that’. Which is silly, because I’m supposed to be but you have a tendency to go ‘I can’t remember when I turned on the computer to do that and do that and do that so it doesn’t matter, I’ll just forget about that’. Even though I’m sure there are lots of times when we do that and we don’t claim it.” (A sessional staff member)

#### **‘Hours for online teaching’ – Examples**

“20 hours (per semester) for being lecturer in charge, 10 hours marking because that’s for 10 students, 12 hours of teaching online which is the minimum sort of thing. So that’s one hour per week. And that’s the base, then teaching online per student, 10 hours, so I suppose you get like two hours per week for teaching.”

“We currently work off a 3.6 hours per student basis. So enrolments, it’s a really messy thing: enrolments still work off the EFTSL model but in terms of how we see or perceive students as the rank and file staff here is by the hourly basis. Now it used to be 4.1 hours. It shifted down to 3.5 at one point. It’s now 3.6. It was 3.8 at some other point; you know, it’s all over the place. And that’s on-campus where regardless. So again, we’re still stuck in terms of seeing teaching as an on-campus mode.”

“You get so I think it’s half an hour for every 20 students. I think that’s how it is. I should have printed it out for you. And that’s about it really. And then plus an allocation for marking.” (A sessional staff member)

“No online classes is 0.417 hours per student. So that’s 20 minutes. For online classes, it’s half an hour. And it’s – you think half an hour per student. I would easily spend half an hour on one student in one day.”



“I think it comes out to 20 minutes per student.”

“No, the figure is still one and a half hours for student contact and assessment.” (for online or classroom teaching)

“As Lecturer-in-Charge, I get 20 I think – for the whole semester. As lecturer I get 162 hours.”

“I get allocated 70 hours for online delivery.”

## **Based on student numbers**

### **Examples**

“The workload model is based on flex students and numbers of flex students so ... and then you get an hour allocation based on your flex and your internal students, so how you then manage that time within that framework is – is the issue. And the issue is that you don’t get as much of a load for flex students as internal students, when it – clearly it’s almost more work to manage flex students than internal students.”

“And of course it depends on the number of students – a high number then you can negotiate with the Head of School for ....”

“Well, there’s no allocations specifically for online teaching. You get allocations for the course under EFTSU, so it’s allocated on numbers, not on what you do or whatever.”

“I mean it’s an EFTSL and the Head of School has said quite clearly, EFTSL is EFTSL Doesn’t matter what you do, it’s the numbers of units whether it’s face-to-face, online, whatever happens.”

“The allocation that they have through Engineering is not done on hours. It’s done on the student number enrolments and the associated workload to do with the student enrolments in that particular course. Like a practical course is looked at in a different light to a lecture-based course. And then on top of that the problem solving courses are treated completely differently again, because they have an element of everything in them.”

Just over 52 per cent of participants stated there was no specific allowance for online teaching; just over 20 per cent responded that there was such an allocation – with staff from ACU and USQ more likely to nominate a specific allocation.

### **Question 13: How many hours do you estimate you actually spend teaching, learning the technologies, and interacting with students?**

Again the participants had difficulty in quantifying the number of hours in total that they spent in online teaching:

### **Examples**

“I think it’s very hard to give a single figure, because it varies from semester to semester and the situation. I don’t think I could do it justice.”

“Well, I think most people would spend their day at work mostly doing teaching and administration. And I think a lot of colleagues would have their nights and weekends and annual holidays as research.”

“Most of the work is actually involved in the (discussion) forums. Because there is such a large forum activity group on there. Yeah. We’re talking you’d spend an hour or two each day checking what’s on there, answering things like that. So, yeah. That is depending on class size.”



“But you know, I tend to monitor my StudyDesk every day. Every working day. I do set down that I will NOT monitor it outside of business hours or on weekends, which some people do.”  
“I’m a big believer that you know online students for the first five weeks really need constant 24 hour monitoring, just because they tend – because they’re on all the time.”

“I typically do it first thing after I get up in the morning. Answer any questions – throw a few new ones at them. If I were just teaching face-to-face, and if I already had my lectures prepared from year to year, I would be spending less time face-to-face than I currently spend.”

Unlike other professionals, it appears that participants at the participating institutions do not typically self-audit their tasks/hours.

**Question 14: If there is a mismatch between the actual and the allocated workload, what would you need to change in your teaching to make the actual work match the workload allocation?**

Responses to this question were coded into six themes and eighteen sub-themes.

Theme 1 – Decrease

- Decrease involvement in non-teaching activities and roles
- Decrease online engagement
- Decrease quality
- Decrease the number of courses having to teach into
- Decrease time spent on emails
- Decrease time spent on revision of course materials

Theme 2 – Increase

- Increase model allocations
- Increase number of academic staff available
- Increase use of electronic communication
- Increase access to non-academic support staff

Theme 3 – Change

- Set consultation times
- Adhere to the workload allocation
- Have technology that works
- Change when tasks are allocated in the model
- Change assessment
- Revise the model
- Better training
- Become more efficient

Theme 4 – Negative learning outcomes

Theme 5 – Couldn’t change

Theme 6 – Don’t know



## Theme 1 – Decrease

Half of all participants perceived that they would have to decrease the amount of work or effort they were putting into certain areas of their teaching in order to make their lived workload match their allocated workload. Some of these strategies had already been put in place by interviewees and were lived examples of how the mismatch had already been managed.

**Table 18: Theme 1 – Decrease**

Sub-theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Decrease involvement in non-teaching activities and roles	5	2	3	0	0
Decrease online engagement	15	2	3	3	7
Decrease quality of teaching	9	0	4	2	3
Decrease the number of courses having to teach into	5	0	3	1	1
Decrease time spent on emails	5	0	1	1	3
Decrease time spent on revision of course materials	5	2	0	0	3

### Sub-theme: Decrease involvement in non-teaching activities and roles

#### Examples

“Probably some of the extra things. By extra, I mean research projects. My online research project – they’re the things that you’d just have to say no to, because I can’t say ‘no I won’t be involved in the course review’, because I’m the course coordinator – I have to put my work on my ALTC citation that I won – I haven’t done any of that yet. I’ve got a \$10,000 project waiting to happen, but I haven’t had time to do it. Part of my difficulty is that I usually use my weekends and that to catch up.”

“We cut down on our research, we cut down on our community service.”

“Research. Yes! Laugh. I’ve got a PhD thesis that I still haven’t written. My PhD scholarship came to an end and I started work here.”

### Sub-theme: Decrease online engagement

Decreasing time spent in the online environment engaging with students was suggested by a number of participants to be a time-management strategy.

#### Examples

“Yeah, if you didn’t have much discussion, you’d be right, you could just do that one hour per week, because you could just go on and check some questions and answer some questions and that’s it.”

“Maybe provide a very minimalistic type approach to online.”

“I’d have to set up my discussion boards and say I will not take part in these discussions.”

“I probably – I probably take a lot of time to make sure that when I respond to students I probably go into a lot of detail and try and be really really helpful and – ‘did you get that or let me know if you didn’t get it, then I’ll explain it again’. I probably do – I could probably take a step back a bit. And just say – ‘see paragraph x’.”



### **Sub-theme: Decrease quality of teaching**

Participants also saw providing sub-quality teaching or services to students as a way in which their lived workloads could better match their allocation.

#### **Examples**

“To be honest, what I would have to do is to provide a sub-quality service.”

“I’d probably do less quality assurance. One of the things that I’m finding takes more time than I would like is checking materials, checking the assessments, to make sure it’s all absolutely correct before it’s available for teaching.”

“Reduce my standards. Reduce my standards of what I want the students to get. If I was not concerned about student outcomes, I could really reduce my workload substantially.”

“I’d have to compromise my quality.”

“Well, I have been told to spend less time on detail. I’ve actually done that before and the problem is I think detail is important. So you would have to sacrifice looking at the details to looking at the big picture, make sure everyone’s covered.”

### **Sub-theme: Decrease the number of units/subjects taught**

One alternative to decreasing course quality would be to reduce the number of subjects that they taught: a matter outside their control.

#### **Examples**

“I would probably need to stop teaching a couple of courses! Because I’m over-allocated in my – you know – in the number of courses that I teach. According to our EBA we’re not supposed to teach any more than five courses a year – which would mean I’d have to cut back on to maybe three or four courses a year. So two courses a term.”

“And for me it would be a reduction in the other teaching I may do, but then whether I would necessarily want that to happen is another thing. And there’s staffing implications that we have had in our discipline, that we’ve been understaffed.”

### **Sub-theme: Decrease time spent on emails**

A small number of participants saw emails as a particular area of concern in terms of increasing workloads and thus suggested that by not responding or not responding immediately they would be able to bring their workloads into better alignment with their allocations.

#### **Examples**

“And it’s that, when you do that, you get an email from a student, often you’re on at nine o’clock at night, and you get this plea for help from a student. What do you do? Say ‘look, I’m sorry, call me in the morning’?”

“Well, as I said on many occasions that I would have to change my teaching style to the traditional and draconian view of academics who see students as a nuisance factor and to be ignored as much as possible. I would really have to cut back on communications. I would have to ignore extensive emails and messages through the StudyDesk that ask what I would regard as typical dumb questions that have to be asked by new students every semester.”



### **Sub-theme: Decrease time spent on revision of course materials**

Making minimal course revision was a further strategy for a small number of participants.

#### **Examples**

“It wouldn’t get revised. It’d just have a few tweaks – you know, dates, maybe some stuff – but essentially it would stay the same. You’d just fix up the links. Like send the links to the library and make sure they all worked and that kind of thing.”

“Probably not update my materials as much. That would probably be the thing – you’d have to just travel with old out-dated materials.”

“If I was to teach to the workload, there would be minimal updating of the course, so they’d get very stale very fast and problems wouldn’t be dealt with.”

A clear sub-text emerging from these responses is the reluctance of staff to decrease the time and energy they commit to e-teaching because to do so would be to compromise quality and student learning.

### **Theme 2 – Increase**

In the theme ‘increase’ participants indicated that increasing allocations or resources attributed to online teaching needed to be considered within institutional policies in order for participants to be able to meet the working realities of online teaching. Whilst the question asked for what participants themselves could do to align their work to their allocation, a number of participants thought more broadly and suggested changes to factors or areas outside of their control were required.

**Table 19: Theme 2 – Increase**

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>ACU</b>	<b>CQU</b>	<b>UNE</b>	<b>USQ</b>
Increase workload model allocations	5	2	2	1	0
Increase number of academic staff available	6	0	0	4	2
Increase use of electronic communication	5	2	1	1	1
Increase access to non-academic support staff	4	0	0	2	2

### **Sub-theme: Increase workload model allocations**

Just under a quarter of participants considered that institutional responses were needed to reduce workload, with a very small number (5) believing that increasing electronic communication could decrease their load. Participants suggested that the workload allocation for online teaching should be increased. Here the issue was of realigning workload models so that they matched the working realities rather than realigning work to match the model.

#### **Examples**

“Either increase the workload allocation for marking – or two, get smarter with your marking.”

“Well, I guess there would need to be some understanding about development of resources – because that takes time. I think that’s where – the actual running of the unit itself I don’t see as an issue, but the development of resources – if you’re going to have something that’s decent and is going to engage students, then it’s going to take a lot of time to develop that.”



### **Sub-theme: Increase number of academic staff available**

A small number of participants also suggested that increasing the number of academic staff members available to teach online was needed.

#### **Examples**

“It’s easy, they need more staff, academics at the coalface. Far too many administrators. Here, in the last say three years, in this school, we’ve lost four and a half academic teaching positions. And we’ve had one replacement.”

### **Sub-theme: Increase use of electronic communication**

Very few participants considered increasing their use of electronic communication methods as a means to manage their identified load.

#### **Examples**

“But I find the other stuff – sending an email or sending a text message – is actually quicker and more efficient and the people will get the information and make a decision on it.”

“Well, I possibly, if I was going to make changes, I would need to – maybe not respond as quickly as I do. Maybe I could do just a bulk-type response a couple of times a week.”

### **Sub-theme: Increase access to non-academic support staff**

Increased access to non-academic support or expertise so that participants could focus on teaching rather than non-teaching tasks was suggested by a small number as a strategy to better manage load.

#### **Examples**

“But I need IT expertise working closely with me in parallel. And I need academic expertise, like tutor, like an academic tutor doing my marking, and then I need an IT professional helping me to be, I guess, innovative in that web environment. If it was available. I’m not able to trust the platforms at the moment enough for me to want to be innovative in the web environment. But I’d like to be. But in order for me to do that I’d need both academic help and, assistance like a tutor, and an IT professional, helping.”

“I think I would need much more support. I think administrative. I think a lot more high quality administrative support for the actual day-to-day loading of materials and checking of materials.”

### **Theme 3 – Change**

This theme summarises specific tasks and approaches where participants indicated that they would have to change their attitudes or practices in order to balance their lived workload with their actual allocation. Unlike the increase and decrease themes, the issue here was about adopting different or new practices as a means to ensure that allocations and lived realities aligned.



## Theme 3 – Change

Sub-theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Set consultation/availability times	5	2	0	1	2
Have technology that works	2	0	0	2	0
Change when tasks are required in the model	2	1	0	1	0
Change assessment	11	2	2	3	4
Revise the workload model	4	0	1	3	0
Better training	3	0	1	1	1
Become more efficient	5	0	0	2	3

### Sub-theme: Set consultation times

Small numbers of participants made reference to the lack of temporal boundaries when teaching online. Not surprising these same participants suggested that having set times when they would be available in the online environment would encourage a better alignment of allocation and actual load.

#### Examples

“In my teaching I think, as I’ve said, I think I need to block out time. And say that this is the time that I teach this unit, and let students know that this is when I’ll be available, and not be available other times.”

“I would say there comes a point where as part of the introduction to the course and the general course management, that it is clearly laid out the responsibility of students to make sure that they do access StudyDesk – that they are aware of when the tutor is available. And not to have unrealistic expectations that they will get an instant answer to any question.”

### Sub-theme: Have technology that works

A very small number of participants expressed frustration with having to spend additional time when teaching technologies simply did not ‘work’.

#### Examples

“Because much of the problems are dealing with technology that doesn’t work. And stuff like that. Which has very little to do (with me), I have no power over that.”

### Sub-theme: Change when tasks are required in the model

The need for prior semester preparation was one area of concern for several participants.

#### Examples

“I think the only difficulty is that stuff you do before your allocation kicks in. And that’s what I mainly hear from staff. That they probably have enough time to maintain the unit, because it’s not like going to class every Tuesday at 10 o’clock, but it’s that significant kind of preparation that you do in the middle of another semester to get ready for the following one. I think it’s the timing of all that. Like that’s all happening now, when we’re drowning in the current semester that we’re working in. And they’re trying to get the next stuff – if they were teaching face-to-face, they’re not actually preparing that now. They do that at a closer point to the actual delivery. It’s kind of the overlap of getting something ready to deliver at the peak work time of the previous semester.”



“One of the big problems is the amount of work we’ve got to do to prepare and copy stuff. If we were preparing contemporaneously as we were teaching it, we wouldn’t have this seven month mad lead time and, you know, you could develop your assignments in the here and now. Or your readings or something. And I feel the students would be getting a better deal, and you’d be probably more on the ball.”

### **Sub-theme: Change assessment**

The majority of participants who suggested change spoke about altering assessment practices in marking and feedback, and changing types of assessment.

#### **Examples**

“I would need to make the assessment task almost non-existent. You know, when you’re the only lecturer and you have – this coming semester I’m going to have 120 students – and if you give them two assessments to do – you know, you can’t spend 15 minutes on 2,500 words. So I think you’d need to probably almost cut out assessments.”

“To be honest, what I would have to do is to provide a sub-quality service. So you’re looking at no feedback on assignments – all those sorts of things. Yeah. So to me, that’s sub-quality service.”

“Some of the things I could do would be move to quizzes instead of assignments. That can be marked electronically. Other activities that would count toward assessment that could be somehow marked electronically. It seems to me, I think there are clever ways to use technology.”

### **Sub-theme: Revise the workload model**

Few participants suggested that workload models need to be revised, which appears at odds with earlier data, but perhaps most staff felt they had already comprehensively treated the need for review.

#### **Examples**

“I don’t know how you overcome that. You’ve just got to find a new way of just saying – most of your workload, 80 per cent of it is involved in teaching and administration of that.”

“I think probably the workload formula needs to be looked at. We’ve debated this forever, ever since they bought in the EFTSL bands into the EB agreement. Some people argue that EFTSL is not appropriate. And there’re all sorts of reasons why that’s not appropriate.”

### **Better training**

Several participants were also cognisant of the need to provide staff with appropriate training opportunities as they felt that knowledge would enable them to better manage their workloads.

#### **Examples**

“So they’re telling us to do all these things, but not giving us any guidance or training to help us achieve whatever it is that they want us to do. I think that would make our workload more manageable.”

“I think I need better skills with just managing the online environment and knowing what’s the best way to deliver the kind of things that I teach. And more knowledge about how to make student interaction, or to encourage student interaction. And also I think I’d like more expertise



in encouraging students to work with each other in the online environment, because that's something we don't do, and I know I should. But I'm not quite sure how to manage that."

### **Sub-theme: Become more efficient**

Several participants suggested that working in ways that were more efficient would help reduce their workload imbalance although they were unclear about how to achieve such efficiency.

#### **Examples**

"So I think as academics we have to become more efficient."

"If we're catering for, if we want to get more students in, we actually have to make it more efficient. Efficient means less time interacting with individual students."

"Because I have to think ahead. To get the help in time to do the work. So therefore, better planning, better preparation, time management in that regard. Instead of trying to be flexible, being more prepared."

### **Theme 4 – Negative learning outcomes**

This theme captures participants' perceptions that some of their suggestions to ensure a match between what they experience in terms of workload and what they are allocated would most likely result in negative learning outcomes for students.

**Table 21: Theme 4 – Negative learning outcomes**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>ACU</b>	<b>CQU</b>	<b>UNE</b>	<b>USQ</b>
Negative learning outcomes	12	4	1	1	6

#### **Examples**

"So I've been wondering – and I've been listening to what other people do and I really would – I've been thinking about getting rid of discussion boards, as an assessable task. But then I'm really loathe to do that, because that's where the learning happens and that's where the students are supported by me. And questioned by me and challenged and challenged by each other – other students – if you can really get that happening well, that's really fantastic. And that's where they learn."

"However I think that for a really good learning/teaching experience from the students' perspective, they need to know that there's somebody there, teaching. Teaching them. And I think that, a lot of the things that you might do to make your teaching more efficient, will impact on its effectiveness."

"They probably wouldn't get as much out of the course. And they probably wouldn't engage maybe as much with the materials, because – I would feel that they would be thinking – 'well, she's not really engaging with me. So I'm just going to do the bare minimum to get by'. Yeah. I think by really engaging with them that I'm forcing them to be more interested maybe."

### **Theme 5 – Couldn't change**

This theme indicates an inability to change work practices because of the detrimental effect on student learning.



**Table 22: Theme 5 – Couldn't change**

Theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Couldn't change	6	1	3	2	0

### Examples

“So it comes back to the allocation. Because I can't change anything in my teaching. Because there is so much that needs to be done. Whatever I do. So my teaching is fixed because those things need to be done.”

“And to say how I would I change my work, I'm not going to change my work. I mean we're teaching online, we're teaching distance education students.”

### Theme 6 – Don't know

A few participants were simply unable to think of how workload could be reduced.

**Table 23: Theme 6 – Don't know**

Theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Don't know	6	0	2	4	0

### Examples

“I don't know how you'd fix this. I know every time the workload issue has been discussed in the School, where I've spent most of my time, it's just been so very, very difficult and that's why everyone has sort of settled on EFTSL. Because there's also the notion that you can fill out a job to take up the space you have to do it in. and people who are conscientious with their teaching will spend more and more time. It's just a very time consuming exercise. How you interpret that in workload, I'm not really sure. I do think though the bar is lifted, and has been lifted over the last ten, fifteen years I suppose. Expectations as to the quality of teaching, the type of materials you should produce, the way you should be available to students. Similarly it's been lifted in terms of what you must have as an output for research and the quality of that research, the type of journals you publish in, how often you publish. So the bars are lifting constantly in terms of expectation and in terms of how that relates to workload, it means that more and more people spend more and more of their nights and their weekends and their holidays doing that. Now that can't be factored into a workload, so I think it's just a very difficult situation. I do remember one particular occasion I was speaking to someone in the corridor, and he said he was working on something, he said – ‘oh, last night I was out here working on this till six o'clock at night’. And I said – ‘I know how it is, I was here till ten’. And a woman walked past and overheard the conversation, and she said – ‘I was here until four in the morning’. And that was just a peculiar circumstance of three people literally meeting in the corridor. But I don't think it's atypical in the sense that people do put in very long hours. How you factor that into a workload, I don't know.”

“I don't know how I could change my teaching, that would mean I'm not seeing students.”

In summary, no clear pattern of how participants would 'solve' their increased workload is seen from these responses, although 15 of 88 participants (table 18) indicated they would simply have to decrease their 'engagement' in online activities and 11 participants suggested changing assessment (table 20). Twelve participants expressed concern that reducing time or changing teaching practices would result in negative student learning outcomes. However, responses also pointed clearly to the need for professional development, more administrative support, and IT assistance.



### Question 15: What do you think would be an ideal standardised workload allocation for online teaching?

Across the data set, most participants had difficulty in responding to this question. Many participants made suggestions that repeated their responses to Q14, or they outlined the difficulties that they have with their **current** workload. Further, even if a participant made a response about their ideal allocation, the responses were so varied that no meaningful theme of 'X number of hours' or similar could be captured. Overall, responses strongly supported a change to current models.

"I don't know. I honestly don't know. Because it would vary – vary greatly – from whether you've got a unit that's blended or only online."

"It's a very complicated question and you'd have to look at all the variables. And try to define exactly what you mean by online teaching."

"Well, I don't know if I'd go down the road of having one size fits all. I think a lot of it depends on the disciplinary areas."

"I don't think you can do it, it depends on the unit you're doing. How long is a piece of string? It's that sort of thing. I don't know how you quantify that."

### Question 16: Is there evidence that there is a tendency to not revise materials for online contexts, and if so, what effect does this have on course quality and learning outcomes?

Responses to this question were coded into four themes, and seven sub-themes.

Theme 1 – Yes

- Why not revise

Theme 2 – No

Theme 3 – Don't know

Theme 4 – Outcomes

- Lack of currency in student knowledge
- Increases student confusion over content
- Decreases quality
- Disengages students
- No effect

#### Theme 1 – Yes

This theme captured participants' perceptions – nearly half – that there was a tendency for online material to not be revised as a timesaving strategy.

**Table 24: Theme 1 – Yes**

Theme	Sub-theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Yes		38	9	8	9	12
	Why not revise	38	6	8	10	14



## Examples

“So I would think that probably that’s one of the only ways staff can actually save some time. So there probably is a bit of tendency to not revise – or not revise all the time.”

“But I’ve seen examples where people will carry a unit over from the previous year, things are out of date, you know, there’s old material left available to students that’s not relevant for this semester, certainly it happens. And there is no checking system yet. It’s up to the individual to take responsibility for it.”

“Well, I’ve said it more than once. I can’t revise the units to my satisfaction because I don’t have the time. And when you might have a tiny opportunity, it’s past the period when you’re supposed to submit it.”

“Well, I could probably only say anecdotally that you do hear from students that a course is a little bit out of date or doesn’t look like it’s been updated in a long time. I probably do hear anecdotally from people that such and such hasn’t changed their course in five years.”

## Sub-theme: Why not

Although the question did not ask for participants’ thoughts on why online teaching materials were not being revised, many participants offered their thoughts.

## Examples

“Well, it’s just pressure, that’s all. Virtually – nearly every unit – as I’m going through the unit, inevitably – and it’s always more than once – I have moments when I think ‘damn, I didn’t check that as well as I should have – or I wish I had time to change that’. That always happens.”

“There would be some courses where – there is obviously a bit of a time lag between when you set readings and then when you do a complete overhaul of reading – and that would be a sort of annual course review – but one course might be run three times a year, so to do a full review every time that course is run – is impractical.”

“But that sort of level of renewal only happens probably every five or six years. There’s not the time to do it more often than that.”

“It’s a cultural issue in the workplace, it’s a skills issue in the workplace, it’s a resources issue in the workplace. Maybe the biggest area of that is the resources issue. If you don’t have the resources, and that’s in time, the computer programs necessary and especially the skills to put stuff online, and then if you put stuff online, there’s so many more things go wrong. And, unless you have a bit of knowledge, you could get someone in to help you to make your website fancy and put links in here and then you move stuff from one area to another, and you’ve broken all the links, and then how do you go about fixing that.”

“I dread putting something different in there, because I know it’s going to take me quite a bit of time to develop it. So what do I do? I just roll it over, change all the dates – and hopefully I pick everything up.”

## Theme 2 – No

The theme ‘no’ contains all of the responses where participants said that they did not think that online materials were any less revised than other teaching materials such as lectures.



**Table 25: Theme 2 – No**

Theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
No	31	5	6	15	5
	19	2	7	3	7

Thirty-five per cent of participants did not believe that there was a tendency not to revise online materials due to workload.

### Examples

“I would say no. Because it’s online and you can take it out and put new stuff in, whereas if it’s study materials and it’s paper based, there’s less of a – there’s more tendency for that not to be revised, because there’s more work involved there.”

### Examples

“I think people are far more likely – in my experience – only my experience – are more likely to review the content of a fully online unit when it’s rolled over, than they are to review face-to-face – the content of a face-to-face unit. Because there’s pressure to do so. There’s somebody watching you.”

“I think there is also the need with online to revise more often than there was when we just had printed material. I think the reason is that the world is moving much faster.”

### Theme 3 – Don’t know

This theme captured participants’ uncertainty concerning the likelihood of revision of online teaching materials as a workload management strategy.

**Table 26: Theme 3 – Don’t know**

Theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Don’t know	3	1	1	1	0

### Theme 4 – Outcomes of lack of revision

The theme ‘outcomes’ contains all of the responses from the participants which suggested that the consequences for failing to revise online teaching materials.

**Table 27: Theme 4 – Outcomes**

Theme	Sub-theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Outcomes	Lack of currency in student knowledge	13	6	1	2	4
	Increases student confusion over content	2	1	1	0	0
	Decreases quality	14	5	4	1	4
	Disengages students	4	0	3	0	1

A large proportion of staff, 37.5 per cent, directly correlated lack of revision with deleterious student outcomes; the concern for quality was high.

#### Sub-theme: Lack of currency in student knowledge

Lack of currency of teaching materials was a common concern raised by participants if courses and content were not regularly revised.



## Examples

“If you don’t go in and revise – the quality can be really poor because you’re there advocating something that’s now been refuted – laugh – you know, in practice. So there’s something that’s now not done. Or recently – like it was a recent sort of thing that happened and you’ve not got it in your unit. So it’s very embarrassing.”

“And the downfall of that – which I have seen in a couple of subjects – is the students are learning something that’s 10 years out of date. Or 5 years out of date, depending on how long it’s been since it’s been revised. And when they get into the profession, it’s useless!”

### **Sub-theme: Increases student confusion over content**

Two participants perceived that failure to update teaching materials caused confusion amongst students and that this resulted in increased interactions with students, and hence more work.

## Examples

“Well, you know they get very puzzled sometimes. They ask you – ‘why did you say this’, or ‘what did you mean by this. I need to ask you about such and such or whatever’. So there’s this confusion for them and they often think they’re missing something. Or otherwise it just turns them off because they’re there going – ‘this is not even correct or up to date or whatever’.”

### **Sub-theme: Decreases quality**

A common perception was a belief that failure to revise teaching materials would result in the lowering of unit/course quality with participants being acutely aware of the negative impact that this would have.

## Examples:

“So the effect of having the course quality – the students go – ‘this teacher hasn’t even looked at this’ and you know – yes – it does affect the course quality. It doesn’t present a very good front on our part – and students tend to not want to put in very much effort because the lecturer hasn’t put in much effort.”

“So the course quality definitely goes down. The graduate quality definitely goes down. The ability for them to be employed becomes very difficult and they end up resenting their university degree. Because they spent all the money. They spent all the time and then came out the other side with something that’s substandard.”

### **Sub-theme: Disengages students**

A few participants also perceived that students would lose interest in their courses/units if their learning materials were not up to date.

## Examples

“I think it alienates students a little because they can see that dates and things that are specific to one term don’t match up with other dates. You know when the material’s been used again.”

“And I think that it – the effect that it has on course quality is that it’s not meeting the needs of the students and those particular students who come in – and what effect does it have on the learning outcomes. And so it moves away from the learning outcomes. I think students will just disengage from it. And I think you might have a large attrition that occurs.”



More participants than not (38 of 88 vs 31 of 88) felt that non-revision/non-currency of materials was occurring in their institutions. For those that indicated that non-revision was occurring this was a likely consequence of time pressures on staff; they spoke of minimal ‘tweaking’ of unit outlines in respect of dates, and major revisions only when programs are routinely reviewed/accredited every five or six years. Of course, this pertains to on-campus revision as well. Conversely participants who indicated that revision was occurring spoke of how working online increases the opportunity for revision. Non-revision was perceived as having negative student learning consequences.

### Question 17: What is your level of personal interest in online teaching?

Participants were asked to rate their general interest in online teaching as high, medium or low. No thematic analysis was conducted on this question as responses fell into one of three open codes.

**Table 28: Level of personal interest in online teaching**

Open code	Description of open code	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
High	Data was coded at this node if the participants declared they had a high interest in online teaching.	49	10	13	12	14
Medium	Data was coded at this node if the participants said they did not have either a high or a low level of interest in online teaching.	25	3	6	7	9
Low	Data was coded at this node if the participants stated or insinuated that their interest in online teaching was limited.	8	0	2	5	1

### Examples of a high interest in online teaching

“Oh, I actually enjoy it. I didn’t when I first started, but I now am very interested and I’m interested in teaching quality.”

“I LOVE it. Absolutely love it.”

“But I’d have to say my interest is really in online teaching rather than in online technologies or online instruction. It’s that teaching relationship in online teaching that I find particularly interesting.”

“Yes, it’s my job. It’s what I do and I enjoy it because it is a chance for me to be, particularly in the distance ed students, is a chance for me to be closer to them.”

“I’m very interested in it actually because coming to it at the end of my career, it has re fired my interest in pedagogy.”

### Examples of a low interest in online teaching

“I hope I have an adequate level of interest in online teaching. I can see that it’s important and it needs to be done, and it needs to be done well. But my natural preference is for face-to-face teaching.”

“Not a great deal. I mean it bores me to the ‘nth’ degree.”

“It’s not as I envisioned when I started it as an academic. As I said, I come as a clinical nurse into what I thought was going to be more lab, clinical teaching – teaching, teaching, teaching.”



Most participants had medium (25 of 88) to high (49 of 88) levels of interest in online teaching: a total of 74 of 88. In this respect, they may not be representative of the total Australian academic cohort, if US academic staff attitudes are a guide.

**Question 18: What would you like to see in the guidelines for Schools and their staff in achieving enhanced online teaching and in developing materials?**

Responses to this question were coded into four themes, and 13 sub-themes.

Theme 1 – Training and professional development

- Access to appropriate professional development
- Communities of practice
- Access to online education experts

Theme 2 – Workload

- Reasonable allocation for online teaching
- Clear timeframes for the development of unit materials

Theme 3 – Technology

- Access to appropriate levels of technology and resources

Theme 4 – Institutional Issues

- Allow academics to choose to work online or not
- Templates for course structure and activities
- Easier use of copyright
- Quality assurance guidelines or practices
- University wide general guidelines
- Appropriate levels of institutional investment
- Encourage working with other areas in the institution

**Theme 1 – Training and professional development**

The theme, ‘training and professional development’, contains responses where the participant said that they would like to see more expert help with online teaching. Clearly, a major form of assistance would be various forms of professional development, ranging from specific training, to informal support groups, to educational developers, with approximately 67 per cent of participants nominating professional development variants as a way of enhancing online teaching.

**Table 29: Theme 1 – Training and professional development**

Theme	Sub-theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Training and professional development	Access to appropriate PD	19	6	8	2	3
	Communities of practice	23	4	5	5	9
	Access to online education experts	17	3	3	8	3

**Sub-theme: Access to appropriate professional development**

Specific training was nominated by 21.5 per cent of staff as a positive move to enhance e-teaching.



## Examples

“They need to go to workforce capability development sessions where they obtain those skills, and we up-skill our workforce by 2015 or 2020. Rather than adding it on and hoping that someone by osmosis will learn facilitating e-learning online, webinars or whatever it will be in 2020.”

“Well, I’d like to see staff do the training. And for it to be compulsory because there’s a fair number of staff who will resist it until the end of time.”

“But I also think that all academics that teach should have some basic skills with regards to online teaching. And things like the Graduate Certificates that are available in flexible learning or teaching education or whatever the other titles that are given to it – because there are many. I think it’s a great starting point for people to understand how different online teaching is from face-to-face.”

“One, I would like training in how to deliver material flexibly because we’re not. And even though there’s the request that staff go to the Graduate Certificate in online learning and teaching, most people just don’t have time.”

“I think staff need to be instructed in the differences between online teaching and face-to-face teaching. So that our online teaching is not pdfs. And there should be some time provision for staff to undertake that training. And I don’t just mean training in using the technologies, I mean training in the pedagogy of online teaching.”

## Sub-theme: Communities of practice

Twenty-six per cent of participants suggested communities of practice be established so peer support was available. Such informal learning was preferred by a slight majority over specific training, but both require central unit organisation.

## Examples

“And I think we could use our School meetings to talk about online teaching and unit preparation. I’m guessing here – but I don’t remember the last School meeting we had where we talked about online pedagogy or online preparation and development.”

“I think some exemplars are good. I think there’s not enough showcasing of the good things in online teaching.”

“And share. We don’t share what happens. What people have developed or done and share ideas. Shared good practice. So we work out what is good practice, identify it, make it visible, have support structures for making it happen, and making it open.”

## Sub-theme: Access to online education experts

Access to online education developers was perceived by about 20 per cent of participants as one institutional strategy for improving online teaching.

## Examples

“As far as guidelines go, we need to have – every academic needs to be provided with more support in that area and when they’re developing course material, when they’re developing online material, there needs to be a round table discussion, sit down. OK, the academic’s the content expert, then you’ve got the learning and teaching person and then you’ve got the web designer sort of person, and they’re all working to actually produce the course design and material and everything else. And I think that really that’s going to deliver high quality courses as opposed to what we’ve got.”



“And these people know what the best practices are, and they can show you far better on a one-on-one situation, when you’re developing your units. So you start doing material, and you get to a certain stage and you go to them, and you talk with them. They show maybe how you can structure your material differently, they show you how you can access different sorts of material, how you can use different sorts of resources. And they help put that package together, that becomes the online unit.”

“Therefore, you do need other people, as it were sitting with you, perhaps even reviewing your study guide. I mean, we put our study guides in, but nobody ever reviews them. In the sense of – on a pedagogical basis.”

“Certainly provide training in the technologies, but then provide lots of elbow support because people are not going to become whizzes with the technology overnight.”

## Theme 2 – Workload

Responses were coded into the theme ‘workload’ if the participants responded that guidelines should be captured in workload models.

**Table 30: Theme 2 – Workload**

Theme	Sub-theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Workload	Reasonable allocation for online teaching activities	20	2	7	5	6
	Clear timeframes for the development of units	2	1	1	0	0

### Sub-theme: Reasonable allocation for online teaching activities

This sub-theme captured participants’ perceptions that the changes to the workload allocation for online teaching activities need to be incorporated or at least acknowledged in guidelines.

#### Examples

“Just, if they’d have an actual policy on the workload allocation, that would be good. And an expectation that the Head of Schools should take that into account. I’ve noticed also, there’s an expectation that even if academics are away at conferences, they should be also accessing their online component and discussing that.”

“I’d like to see more time for development as well. I’d like to see a management who could go back to saying, ‘Ok, you need to have a semester at some point in the year off so you can go and do your research all those sorts of things, but also upgrade your own scholarship.’ You know, read, develop skills in the applications. Record materials, you know all that sort of stuff. So those would be the big wish things for me. Just that recognition of time. Institutional support for hardware and infrastructure. And then just that recognition that people need to be into the headspace to do good quality work.”

### Sub-theme: Clear timeframes for the development of units

This sub-theme captured a lack of development time for units.

#### Example

“It’s not because staff are not interested or don’t want to do it – it gets back to the timeframes again. You don’t have time to reflect at the end of term. Because if you think about it, our course



material – our course profile for example has to go up two weeks before term starts – and that’s essentially going to be – you know, at the end of our exam period. So who is going to have time in that period to reflect about what I did right – what did I do wrong – how can I make that better.”

### Theme 3 – Technology

**Table 31: Theme 3 – Technology**

Theme	Sub-theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Technology	Access to appropriate levels of technology and resources	2	1	1	0	0

#### Sub-theme: Access to appropriate levels of technology and resources

This sub-theme indicated that guidelines need to ensure that there is appropriate access to technology and resources to support online teaching.

#### Example

“And I would like to see certainly guidelines around support for loading material and managing the platform so that they are stable and of high quality and fast. So I’d like to see those sorts of guidelines, about, I guess, some sort of service commitment from us to students, and another service commitment within the organisation to us from our IT support people.”

### Theme 4 – Institutional Issues

The theme ‘institutional issues’ encompasses all of the responses to question 18 which related to institutional policy and practices.

**Table 32: Theme 4 – Institutional Issues**

Theme	Sub-theme	Total	ACU	CQU	UNE	USQ
Institutional issues	Allow academics to choose to work online or not	5	2	1	2	0
	Templates for course structure and activities	14	3	6	4	1
	Quality assurance guidelines or practices	13	3	4	3	3
	University-wide general guidelines	5	1	0	3	1
	Appropriate levels of institutional investment	4	0	1	1	2

#### Sub-theme: Allow academics to choose to work online or not

What was interesting is that very few participants advocated that guidelines should include choice for staff to opt in or out of online teaching, as is the case in some US universities.

#### Examples

“I absolutely think everyone should be given the choice as to whether they teach online or not. If you don’t want to be there, it’s not going to work.”

“So the guidelines, I think would have to be very gentle. I think it would have to be persuasion rather than compulsion. I think it would have to be couched in terms of the positives, and if that



could include rewards for doing it, that would be wonderful. But I don't think it can involve penalties for those who don't."

### **Sub-theme: Templates for course structure and activities**

About 16 per cent of participants believed templates would assist staff in structuring online units for better pedagogical outcomes. This relatively low number reflects the observation of many educational developers concerning staff resistance to constraining templates.

#### **Examples**

"I know that the online departments have a very strict template for their fully online units so that a student goes from one lecturer to another lecturer and knows where to go. And whilst I don't want every unit to be the same, I think it's important that the structure is the same."

"So some boundaries – but allow staff to be creative within the boundaries actually. I don't totally hold with everything should look totally the same very time."

"Standardisation of the layout of materials and the format of StudyDesk. One of the things that students have frequently commented to me about is that when they go into a new course it's like starting at another university again."

### **Sub-theme: Quality assurance guidelines or practices**

Almost the same number of participants indicated that more emphasis needed to be placed on quality assurance guidelines so that they became part and parcel of online material development and teaching.

#### **Examples**

"I think one of the guidelines would be to ensure that the material – as far as possible – is developed and available before term starts. I think it needs to be checked often – not just re-used from last term. I think there's – there's a lot of general quality assurance issues that should be in there."

"So I think there should be guidelines about quality and I guess, quality in terms of monitoring each others' units. Some sort of, what would you call it, like peer review. I think would be a really good way of assuring quality, but also supporting, giving staff the opportunity to support each other, to exchange ideas."

### **Sub-theme: University wide guidelines**

A few participants felt that the issue of guidelines was an institutional responsibility rather than a School or Faculty issue.

#### **Examples**

"I think that it comes down to there needs to be – within the guidelines right across – it needs to be much higher up than what we're talking about at School level. There needs to be a whole organisation project at the university."

"I really think it needs to be built into position descriptions."

### **Sub-theme: Appropriate levels of institutional investment**

A small number of participants also recognised the need for appropriate levels of institutional investment in online technology, training and staffing in any guidelines.



## Examples

“We perhaps need some more genuine institutional support in setting up the infrastructure to allow these things to happen.”

“And ease of tapping into the relevant funds for training needs to occur.”

## Summary

Staff overwhelmingly perceived that their workload allocation did not sufficiently account for the additional workload engendered by e-teaching, whether in fully online or web-supplemented modes. Consistent with other research (Coates et al, 2009), they believed they had excessive workloads. This study could not quantify work hours in teaching, but it provides a new insight into high hours as a result not only of increased pressure for research output and administration as is adduced in the Coates et al (2009) study, but as a direct result of the new technology tasks and communication modalities in teaching. The study also points to the inadequacy of Australian university WAMs to account for academic roles which routinely include more tasks and constant reskilling. It points to the lack of clarity around institutional WAMs among academics themselves. It also demonstrates that notwithstanding the valourisation of research over teaching (Chalmers, 2011), for these academics, deliberately reducing their teaching time to lower load would negatively impact on student learning. They accepted, albeit reluctantly, they would continue to teach ‘out of hours’.



## Part 5: Case studies

Four case studies that highlight workload perceptions are presented in this section of the report. The case studies were developed by the project leader at the partner institutions and drawn from data collected.

All of the institutions found that staff perception of workload associated with blended environments and when using online approaches to learning and teaching was not married to allocated workload formulas within their institutions. This study raises questions that will have to be addressed by universities as more universities take up the affordances that technology offers to enrich the learning experience of students. These cases aim to highlight the issues, in many ways similar across all four, but each with subtleties that are insightful for understanding the complexity of workload in online environments.



# Case study 1: University of New England

Workload Agreement available at <http://www.une.edu.au/hrs/eb/academic-agreement.pdf>

## Context

The University of New England (UNE) is located in northern New South Wales, two hours inland from Coffs Harbour, in Armidale.

The university is internationally recognised as a teaching and research university, undertakes fundamental and applied research in many disciplines, and has an established international reputation through contributions in areas such as rural science, agricultural economics, educational administration, linguistics and archaeology. Collaborative research with other institutions includes projects with the CSIRO and the high profile Cooperative Research Centres.

A further key focus is on community at local, national and international levels and UNE provides leadership in regional, state and international developments, supporting diverse intellectual and cultural perspectives, improvements in school education, development of the professions, industry and commerce, recognition of and solutions to social, health and welfare issues, and access to the university's resources.

Key areas of community engagement include:

- The sharing of knowledge between the university and its communities
- Contributing to the sustainable development of the New England region
- Strengthening incentives and resources for educational growth and development
- Taking an active role in enriching the cultural fabric and social life of the university and its communities
- Collaborative research and development programs with local, national and international industry.

UNE has a broad range of quality courses that it teaches in dual mode with more than 75 per cent of its students studying at a distance. With a reputation for research and a fine residential system, UNE has approximately 18,000 students in any given year. The blending of modality is a key feature of the learning experience of students and many students visit UNE to attend residential colleges which may be mandatory. UNE students include school leavers but most are mature age learners in their late twenties and thirties, re-skilling, studying for the first time and generally participating in the lifelong learning agenda. UNE promotes itself as the smart choice for students of the future, combining the highest academic standards and industry-valued qualifications with flexible modes of learning.

Since the 1970s UNE has moved away from the original 'New England' or correspondence+ residential model towards the integration of new and emerging technologies that have opened up the opportunities to enhance communication and interaction with students. While this shift has occurred slowly over time, technology outpaces many staff and in some cases students' ability to keep up. As new technologies have emerged they have been drawn upon. As is typical of many universities, at UNE cassette tapes were replaced by CDs, DVDs and more recently streamed podcasts. Video tapes were replaced by DVDs and streamed vodcasts. Packaged print materials have been on the whole replaced by more interactive approaches to learning in the online learning environment. The inclusion of social applications like wikis, blogs, RSS feeds, and virtual worlds to name a few, are also finding their way into the learning experience.



Few courses do not draw upon an extensive set of online tools to support student learning.

Workload is not a new issue within this context, and staff draw attention to the issues in a range of forums. Like all universities UNE has a workload policy agreed via the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. This is based on EFTSL and is interpreted to an extent by School-based allocations. There is no specific mention of work associated with online teaching. This is not unusual. In our desk-top review of twelve universities, only two mentioned allocation of workload to activities associated with teaching online.

### **Results from academic staff interviews**

Twenty-five staff at various levels were interviewed. Each of the interviewees represented a range of academic levels working as front-line teaching staff with varying years of university teaching experience. There were 13 junior lecturers, nine senior lecturers and two professors. Gender was balanced with 12 female and 13 male participants. Eleven had 1-5 years of e-teaching experience, 10 had 6-10 years of e-teaching, three had 11-15 years, and one had more than 20 years of experience. Nine staff rated themselves as having a high level of competence, 14 as medium and two as low. Twelve participants also indicated that they were interested in online teaching. Eight had medium interest and five had no interest. They were all interviewed by an independent interviewer about their perceptions of their workload associated with teaching when working online.

### **Perception of workload associated with working online**

On the whole, staff indicated that the current workload model based on EFTSL did not represent accurately the workload undertaken, nor were they always clear how workload was allocated or whether it was correct, stating “ I’m not sure whether it’s accurate or not”. Others felt that there was no actual differentiation for teaching online as indicated by responses like “Well it’s not included in the workload, there’s no allocation there for online teaching”. Quite often time and effort were mentioned as key factors in managing their workload: “We are always short of time. I wish I had more time.” “It’s just an extra dimension that’s not explicitly recognised” and “Since I’ve been doing online teaching there seems to be more work involved with providing and fixing up the online environment”. A further challenge was identified when online work was combined with other modalities, such as an intensive school.

### **Staff explanations for workload disparity**

When asked ‘Why do you think that your academic workload allocation does not reflect what you do’, three clear themes emerged.

#### **Theme 1 – Underestimation of workload**

Staff identified clearly that working online generated additional work especially in relation to the cascading effect of an input creating an effect: “So, anything you put up is not the end of your work, it’s the beginning of the work, because that just generates more activity” and “Then there’s the issue of, whenever you put more inputs into a thing, that generates more work in itself”. Some staff had unclear expectations about what was required of them, placing demands on themselves based on what they perceived as required of them by others. Comparisons were drawn on by a more experienced staff member:

“So yes, you can imagine that we feel, I feel like I’m doubling up, that my online teaching environment is just a replica of what I used to teach 13 years ago in the face-to-face mode. But now I’m teaching the face-to-face mode **and** the online mode in parallel, and it seems to be just an increasing workload and not an increase in benefit to the student.”



With the uptake of online environments, communication with students has created new workload that had not been required in the traditional correspondence (print-based) mode of distance education.

“Not only the online mode of teaching but also the ease of students contacting individual lecturers by email which was never really part of the teaching scene previously.”

### **Problems with the general principles or assumptions of the workload model**

As most of the courses and units at UNE are taught in parallel, there is a requirement from staff that the learning experience is equivalent regardless of modality. That is, whether students are on- or off-campus they are not disadvantaged and the learning experience is considered equivalent. This can cause additional work that is particularly acute in some disciplinary areas, for example:

“That’s quite a lot of time I have to dedicate just to the off-campus students, because the on-campus students can see the solutions in real time in the tutorial. But I have to type up a formatted version of those solutions for the off-campus students and post them each week. That’s one activity that takes up a lot of time for the off-campus students.”

Due to the availability of new tools within the learning management system, staff find themselves spending more time communicating with students than perhaps they might with on-campus students:

“Because I think that the amount of time that you spend working on BlackBoard discussion boards with students is far greater than if you were doing face-to-face teaching.”

Some staff interviewed felt that the workload formulas used were inaccurate for the tasks required:

“The way in which they’re computed. It’s just an arbitrary measure. I think it’s, you may as well turn around and say your workload reflects how many window panes you’ve got in your room. It’s about as relevant as that. The number of students that you’ve got doesn’t reflect the workload.”

Staff are able to identify what is causing additional workload. Clearly, interaction with large groups increases workload, especially with distance students. Student numbers do not seem to capture the time it takes to manage students.

“The EFTSL load, the workload that is based on EFTSL, is built around the notion of student numbers. And that does not equate to the hours that you put in, either in face-to-face teaching or preparation, or mixed mode teaching, online time, individual consultation with students. So the EFTSL number I don’t think really makes a lot of difference. Clearly if you’ve got huge numbers, the amount of time that you would spend with student assistance and individual consultation must inevitably increase, as would marking and those sorts of things. But it doesn’t alter things such as preparation, face-to-face teaching hours or online BlackBoard work. Where you would do the same amount of work for one student as you would for a hundred.”

Perception around problems with the workload also included a recognition that perhaps work is now different and that this is not captured by EFTSL. Old didactic models are still the basis of WAMs.

“Because I think it was premised on the old delivery styles where external students were seen and not heard and internal students used to come along for three hours face-to-face and that was it.”

Online discussion group interactions emerged as a key aspect of online work and appeared to be the main cause in regards to load. Many staff identified that they spend



more time on this kind of interaction than they might do with face-to-face teaching. 'Most of the stuff in term time ... is working the discussion boards. They are what take the time. And it varies, sometimes, without rhyme or reason'. Staff recognise and understand the value of the discussion boards "I think the discussion rewards the students, and those students that do get involved certainly are the students that end up doing better, in terms of their grades, but that's time consuming." "Students may have expectations that you will always be there and 'sometimes out of hours, so across weekends and things you'll often get emails, and students expect an instant response."

## **Theme 2 – The impact of technology, course aspects, work aspects and student assumptions or expectations**

Learning how to use technology, the robustness of the technology and supporting institutional architecture each contributes to the type of work being undertaken. "If you are new at it, what might take someone else two hours, might take another six." This is echoed by others:

"For teaching online, the problem is, from my perspective, lack of knowledge." "So you've got to sort of teach them how to use the platform to maximise their learning. At the same time as I'm learning how to use it. Like we're all novices together, and that's a lot of extra work." "When I was coordinating, because I was new to, particularly online learning, it was a learning process for me as well. And actually being able to get Blackboard up and running sufficiently for what I wanted for the units took a lot longer."

### **Robust technology**

Quite often the technology was not robust enough and this in itself created problems. UNE was in the process of changing LMS when these interviews were conducted, which undoubtedly influenced participants' negative responses, although workload concern was broadly similar across all institutions. Technological failures or issues with using the technology impacted upon their workload:

"The VLE doesn't work ... it just crashes and it's slow and students can't get on, the endless problems on it. That really adds to your workload. But also to your frustrations. So it's a lot of hours, but it's a lot of hours spent being very frustrated with it."

### **Year level**

The student year level being taught was not considered in their workload. There was some perception that staff felt there were differences.

"I deal with a first year unit and first year units are – you know people studying for the first time are a whole new set of extra demands – so there's a fair bit of educating them about dealing with the university – what are expectations, where to find things, how to solve problems. So there's a fair bit of time in almost say non-productive work, but it's just helping people settle in. They have their own special set of problems. If I compare the work I do on a first year unit to the ones I've done on postgraduate issues, the postgraduate unit hardly has any of, you know, some of these base issues that a first year unit does."

"So I put many more hours into teaching undergraduate units than I do to postgrad. Mainly because postgrad students tend to be a bit more self-sufficient, and tend to have different expectations."

"Because the full-time, the equivalent full-time load doesn't reflect the amount of hours that you put in to each different level. So first year, second year, third year, require different amounts of work put in per student. So for example in first year, where we have 300 students, you get a high concentration of students for a shorter period of time, and that gives you a higher work load, higher number of EFTSL, but there's a lot more support there with tutors and things and



also the teaching in first year is very much a standard way that you teach year in year out, because there's core things they have to do. But in second and third year, I spend more time updating materials to keep information online, but also I'm teaching students who actually want to be in my unit. So they're more enthusiastic, so I interact with them more. And also when it comes to Honours students and PhD students, they basically, you spend more time with them than you're given workloads. And then research isn't taken into account at all."

"I think it's a general rule. I think you generally find that as students get into more advanced, they are more inquisitive and they ask more questions. The type of assignments you give them are more in depth, so by virtue of becoming more knowledgeable in an area, they are putting more work into it and thereby assignments which are challenging them more."

"It's really because the large numbers in the first year units increase the EFTSL load in those units and really, in terms of lecturing and lecture preparation and, it varies too, the problem it's not straightforward, because I coordinate the first year, first semester Chem. unit, and the workload for a Coordinator in those big first year units is different to someone simply lecturing into those units, because then as a Coordinator, you've got overall responsibility of the entire unit, and that includes internal and external. So the online content is my responsibility and maintaining responses on discussion boards and getting staff to respond in their areas. And that's different when you get to second and third year because the students tend not to use the online content as much as they do at first year."

## Course design

Another area identified as a concern with e-teaching was course design. Some staff felt that it was the learning activities that created the workload.

"Say you put podcasts in, and, that's only the beginning of your work, because, especially I didn't know much about them, you get all the queries about – 'this doesn't work; I can't download this on to my computer; why isn't it this way; I notice your podcast is not up for last week; the podcasts don't tie in with the PowerPoints'".

"On distance teaching the different types of activities involved really affect what's required. What I do with my unit, I make it very interactive, and I know that other units which just have a repository of material to read and then an assignment are easy. I have one unit where I've got about 15 students, and they do some reading and they give me an assignment, it's very easy. But I've got other units which are very interactive, where half of the day I'm interacting, every day. As well as that there's an intensive school. So I think they're getting a good experience, but I'm concerned about the educational value for the student. So I'm trying to get them engaged in a constructivist framework, ok. We espouse these kinds of philosophies, we need to put them into practice, and it takes time. In the interactive methods I use I'm asking them to work in groups, this year I've got 260 students in two units, about four units actually, two big units, working in small groups of 6, and they do discussions and wiki groups where they're making wiki discussions on directed activities, to make sure they're engaging in the material. So they're reading material, they're discussing, they're producing the summaries of their discussions on the forums, and I'm engaging with them both on the forums and as groups, as well as individually."

## Drivers of online teaching in the higher education sector? In your university?

Responses to this question were coded into four themes and eleven sub-themes: Theme 1 – Student Drivers, Theme 2 – Economical Drivers, Theme 3 – External Drivers, Theme 4 – Internal Drivers.

### Theme 1 – Student drivers

The two main drivers for staff at UNE were the two sub-themes 'enhancing student learning' and 'providing students with flexibility'. Staff felt that learning online was



beneficial for students whether on- or off-campus. Some even felt that it was possible to “accelerate students’ learning by the tools we have available”. Others felt that being online would improve the quality of the learning: “well for us we looked at online learning, in terms of quality of teaching, and I think there’s an opportunity to actually improve the quality of our teaching through online learning”. There was also some “recognition of how wonderful the online technologies could be in changing the way that we teach, so that I think the opportunities to change teaching”. The online environment, creating a new “model based on sound pedagogical principles, is more about the collaborative thing” and “for me it’s been pedagogical. It’s very clear that online teaching isn’t cheaper”. Staff were very aware of the opportunity that was offered by the technology and the structure of the courses so that students could benefit from faster feedback. For example:

“When I first came to UNE and we were teaching through a distance mode through hard copy, you basically sent out printed materials at the beginning of the semester and students would work on their own with very little contact, possibly the occasional phone call, or half-way through the semester they submitted an essay, there’d be a four week turn-around time by the time it was marked and back to them, so the student had very little feedback. It was quite a lonely experience. And there was very little option for anything collaborative. And, pedagogically, the online teaching has really opened up the distance students’ experience in all sorts of really interesting and exciting ways.”

### **Provides students with flexibility**

Many students need more flexible higher educational opportunities where they can study when and how they choose without having to conform to an institutional determined day-to-day time-frame. Yet no-one really has talked about **staff** flexibility.

“There were certainly lots of complaints from our students about needing to be on-campus for long periods of time...And because a lot of students work, they need to be near where they can get work. And a lot of them like to be at home. ... But again I understand that giving the students their learning where they need it and when they need it, is a great benefit.”

### **Student expectations**

Students now expect online access as part of their educational experience. As one staff member indicated:

“It’s always the way, the more things you make available to them the more things they want as well. So for example, for the online students in particular, you start to, instead of giving them paper notes, you give them electronic notes, and they say, ‘oh why don’t we get the lecture materials same as the internal students’. So you give them the lecture materials and they say, ‘oh why don’t you give us the podcast of it’. And they say, ‘we want to be part of the tute as well, so why don’t you give it’. It’s always like a kind of a freeway, the more access they have to it, the more cars will take it, and even if it’s information they get in one form, they want as many forms as possible. Because they think it will help them. And then there is that, and it’s sort of, you basically have to, every time there’s a change in the technology, they want more. There’s the podcasting, and they want things in a particular format, and you have to. The thing with the student numbers, if they want it, they’ll go somewhere else or take another unit. So there’s always that divide between what I think is appropriate for them, to what they think’s appropriate, and they can easily walk on to somewhere else and take that.”

### **Social justice and inclusion**

Some staff also saw teaching online as a way to increase a particular student population’s access to higher education opportunities.

“And I suppose not only economics from the point of view of the university, but also from the point of view of the student. To make higher education more economically viable for them...”



Whereas say, in my day when I went to university, there was no choice. If you lived in the country, as I did, you had to leave home and move to the city, and find all the costs for living away from home, and whatever university costs were involved. That was just how it was. And if you were living in an area that did not have a university, as most kids in the country did, that was the cost you bore. So I think, when I say the economics, it's from the point of view of making university education both economically viable for the university and economically accessible for the student."

"Well, Australia's a huge country and it's not feasible for people in a regional university particularly, for them all to be present, so there is a tradition of distance learning, which is practical, which makes sense, and it's essential for a university like this."

## **Theme 2 – Economical drivers**

### **Increase revenue by increasing student numbers**

Staff also mentioned that online teaching is seen as a way to improve the financial situation of the institution through reaching more students.

One staff member said "Our market, because they're not here, we've got to go to them, and the only way to go to them is through electronically – it's financial" and "Economics. So that you can reach more students and therefore bring more in and therefore increase the economic viability of the university". Staff commented on competitiveness with other providers:

"I think the drivers will be the market-place. As well as the student-teacher relationship we also have a customer relationship. And our customers are increasingly expecting better – our competition will start doing things better – and unless we pick up our game in the online area, we'll start to drift towards irrelevance."

"There'd be no university here without online teaching. Or external students, which is online teaching. But then again, we're no different from any other university. Everybody's doing it, I mean UNE had its own little niche and now we've got a lot of competitors. And because it's a global market people are out, I mean anyone is a viable student now for a university."

"So, we're just changing our strategies to accommodate these students. And, also, these can also be explained through marketing, we're competing, that the market is becoming very tight for future students, referring to 2012, what's going to happen in 2012. We're going to have to compete with the universities in the metropolitan areas, and one way of doing that is bumping up our e-learning delivery, for sure."

### **Cost effective**

Some staff made reference to e-teaching as being a supposed cost effective way of delivering education or as a way of the university saving money:

"Everybody thinks it's cheaper to just throw things on the internet and therefore everybody learns."

This was reinforced by another:

"Senior managers are looking to save money – who were attracted to the idea of online teaching. They think we can have large numbers of students taught cheaply."

"If I am honest, I think a lot of it has to do with cost. So efficiency in terms of getting information at the cheapest possible cost to students and reducing the production of hard copy material."



“I think one of the drivers was the mistaken perception that it’s cheaper and more efficient. Well, I’m unsure of that. If I was sure that it was student needs, I’d be happier. But I’m not sure it’s student needs. As you know we’ve always taught, at UNE we’ve always taught from the distance education mode, and I’ve had an association with this university that goes back thirty years. I was an undergraduate student here back in 1981. And I was working in Sydney at the time and doing external studies. And I found that very inspiring, because I’d come up for residential. And because you were working in Sydney, it was one of the few universities that offered that form of external study mode. So it was sort of innovative and unique to this university back in those days, thirty years ago. But that’s not the case now and I think, because I’m a sociologist, and, you know, Michael Pusey wrote a book in 1993 about economic rationalism in Canberra. I’m a little bit jaded when it comes to analysing perhaps what might be the drivers for this type of educational delivery. Because I feel that it could partly be because of economic rationalism. And that would be a shame. But again I understand that giving the students their learning where they need it and when they need it, is a great benefit. So it’s a bit of a dilemma in terms of that. Is it purely, are the drivers purely positive, or are they sometimes economically rationalist in their approach. And is that devaluing the student experience. The jury’s still out for me on that one.”

### **Changes to make the work fit the allocation**

Responses to this question were coded into six themes and eighteen sub-themes. Staff were pragmatic in their answers.

#### Theme 1 – Decrease

- Decrease involvement in non-teaching activities and roles
- Decrease online engagement
- Decrease quality of interaction
- Decrease the number of courses having to teach into
- Decrease time spent on emails
- Decrease time spent on revision of course materials

#### Theme 2 – Increase

- Increase model allocations
- Increase number of academic staff available
- Increase use of electronic communication
- Increase access to non-academic support staff

#### Theme 3 – Change

- Set consultation times
- Adhere to the workload allocation
- Have technology that works
- Change when tasks are allocated in the model
- Change assessment
- Revise the model
- Better training
- Become more efficient

Theme 4 – Negative learning outcomes would result if staff reduced their teaching activities



### **Sub-theme: Decrease involvement in non-teaching activities and roles**

Data was coded here if the participant suggested that decreasing time spent on non-teaching activities or roles was a strategy to manage the mismatch. A staff member said “I would have to stop teaching online really” or “I think I’d probably have to be less accessible, have less of an online presence” and “The type of things that I would have to do is, I would probably have to pull back in terms of my online presence”. Others identified that ‘presence’ was having the most impact, so that would need to be reduced.

“Reducing the amount of workload online, is basically reducing the interaction with the online component. That’s, the more interaction you have with it, the more time you spend administering it, and the more time you spend monitoring it. The more you minimise it, the more time you get free of it.”

“Efficient means less time interacting with individual students.”

Other participants suggested decreasing time spent on ensuring a quality product was being delivered was a strategy to manage the mismatch.

“Reduce my standards of what I want the students to get. If I was not concerned about student outcomes, I could really reduce my workload substantially.”

“Yes. I’m sure many people make that decision. Probably as my enthusiasm burns out there will be decisions that I will make as well.”

“I think I’d probably have to drop the quality of the stuff I have to give to students. In terms of the quality of the stuff we can put up. That would be hard. I think when you know how well it can be done, it’s not as, it’s no joy pulling back to doing as little as you can”.

### **Increase number of academic and support staff available**

Many UNE participants suggested that increasing the number of academic staff members was a strategy to manage the mismatch.

“I think it’s getting to the stage where we really need two staff members allocated to the unit rather than just one. We should have one staff member handling the off-campus online activities and another staff member handling the on-campus teaching. And then I think that would be, of course balanced with other duties and other units, that would be a reasonable way of ensuring that the entire cohort of students is well serviced. At the moment I do feel very stretched managing such a unit as the sole Coordinator and lecturer.”

Having other professional support was also a recurring theme.

“I think I would need much more support. I think administrative. I think a lot more high quality administrative support for the actual day to day loading of materials and checking of materials”.

“Also having somebody that I can readily access who can help me with problems, if I can’t remember how to do something, or I’m not sure if this is the right way.”

“So if you had much more responsive support and you had administrative staff who, in the past, used to manage and monitor the unit templates and the materials, now we’ve moved to online they play no role in the online teaching. And I think they should be playing a role in some of that core content that goes into every unit. Checking, proof-reading, and having the ability to upload things so that as an academic staff member you could give people things and say, ‘look can you load this into that module’. And expect for it to be done. But at the moment our admin staff don’t have those skills and so we do that all ourselves. So that would help. The stability of the platforms would help significantly with workload.”



One staff member was also very unsure how they would change what they did.

“I don’t know how you’d fix this. I know every time the workload issue has been discussed in the School, where I’ve spent most of my time... So the bars are lifting constantly in terms of expectation and in terms of how that relates to workload, it means that more and more people spend more and more of their nights and their weekends and their holidays doing that. Now that can’t be factored into a workload, so I think it’s just a very difficult situation.”

### **Revising materials for online contexts**

Responses to this question were coded into four themes, and seven sub-themes.

Theme 4 outcomes were:

- Lack of currency in student knowledge
- Increases student confusion over content
- Decreases quality
- Disengages students.

Data was coded here for UNE interviewees who felt that there was a tendency for online material to not be revised. Most referred to this question in regard to what others were or were not doing. For example:

“I’ve heard of examples where material is being put up online, and because it’s not going through the old system, it’s not being checked by anybody else. I’ve heard that that happens.”

“I’ve seen examples where people will carry a unit over from the previous year, things are out of date, you know, there’s old material left available to students that’s not relevant for this semester, certainly it happens. And there is no checking system yet. It’s up to the individual to take responsibility for it.”

Others indicated that time or lack of skills prevent adequate revision:

“Well, I’ve said it more than once. I can’t revise the units to my satisfaction because I don’t have the time. And when you might have a tiny opportunity, it’s past the period when you’re supposed to submit it.”

“I think sometimes, what happens, is that the online material sometimes it’s difficult to revise. What happens is, I don’t know if people know how to revise it, or know how to work in to it, particularly if it’s been set up, often if it goes through an academic developer it looks nice, and sometimes there’s a hesitancy, and often there’s been a fair bit of programming behind that to make it look nice, and sometimes there may be a hesitancy on the lecturer’s behalf to muck around with that, because what happens is you’ve had someone who’s a specialist in setting up the content, and then you’ve got someone who might not necessarily be a specialist in revising the content, in terms of the technical side.”

Skills, resources and discipline culture emerge clearly for some as a factor.

“I think the answer is, yes, (there’s a lack of revision) but I don’t think it’s due to any laziness on the part of those offering the units, it’s rather a lack of understanding as to what online actually means. And I’m still struggling with what that means. I imagine there would be discipline differences, however. Typically in the Management discipline, a unit is often arranged around a particular text book, for example. And so the level of online-ness maybe determined by what bells and whistles the text book company is offering. And if that’s the accepted practice in a discipline I’m not going to make a value judgement about whether it’s a good thing or bad thing. There’s a tendency to go with what’s provided. If you’re in a discipline area where you’re building everything from scratch, I think there’s a lot more scope to start with to do lots of things.



There may also be more colleagues around you who are making use of the technologies and so there's, I think, you know, it's getting synergies going. One person's doing something fabulous, so everybody wants to do it. On the other hand there's also a down side because if a student has studied a unit with all the bells and whistles and then comes into the bog basic unit, expectations have been built up, and so they want to know where the podcast is, why isn't there a chat room. And again it's how the member of staff has decided to balance their time. I think that sort of comes back to your question, how much, you know are there materials that haven't really been developed for online. Yes definitely, but the reasons are, there are lots of reasons why, but at the top of the list, is people don't necessarily understand what it means to make materials online."

UNE staff offered many suggestions for training and support, and the need for access to online educational developers, and more training in teaching online were prominent:

"I think staff need to be instructed in the differences between online teaching and face-to-face teaching. So that our online teaching is not pdfs."

"I think that where I personally have made, have been able to make significant progress in developing my skills with online teaching. It's been because people have been available as facilitators and trainers in a sense."

They also felt that the development of communities of practice would be beneficial:

"Shared good practice. So we work out what is good practice, identify it, make it visible, have support structures for making it happen, and making it open."

UNE academic staff also felt that the workload allocation for online teaching could be reviewed:

"Definitely it needs to be made apparent that it's a lot more time that is needed for teaching online."

A surprising number of staff felt that templates for online units would also be beneficial:

"So I think we can a little bit more, in terms of better frameworks, so we can get some consistency. I think that would help. We've also looked at probably different sets of minimum standards, not necessarily in terms of the technology, but in the, I'd like to think of it more in terms of the activities that you would do."

### Interest in online teaching

Nineteen of the 25 interviewed declared a medium or high level of interest in online teaching.

**Table 1A: Level of interest in online interest**

Node	Description of node	Total	UNE
High	Data was coded at this node if the participants declared they had a high interest in online teaching	49	12
Medium	Data was coded at this node if the interviewees said they did not have either a high or a low level of interest in online teaching	25	7
Low	Data was coded at this node if the interviewees stated or insinuated that their interest in online teaching was limited	8	5



## Conclusion

This case study has attempted to portray the perceived experience of staff at UNE. Overall they present a very positive outlook towards online teaching and are cognisant of the change required in their own and others' practices. They have made suggestions of what might help them as they transition towards increased online work. It is clear that they perceive their allocated workload and what they actually do as being different, not understood nor adequately recognised within workload models. Most of the UNE staff represented here were proud of the work that they were doing and wanted to do it better and were seeking support from a range of experts. Not least they expect a robust institutional architecture. As with the other universities in this project, it is clear that the academic role has changed in terms of expectations for teaching modes, and this is not yet reflected in institutional workload models.



## Case study 2: Australian Catholic University

Workload Agreement available at:

[http://www.acu.edu.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/380984/Academic\\_Workloads\\_Guidelines\\_October\\_2011.pdf](http://www.acu.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/380984/Academic_Workloads_Guidelines_October_2011.pdf)

### Context

The Australian Catholic University (ACU), a public university, was established in 1991 in an amalgamation of Catholic colleges in each of Brisbane, Melbourne, Ballarat, Canberra, with two campuses in Sydney. Its mission is explicit:

The university's inspiration, within 2,000 years of Catholic intellectual tradition, summons it to attend to all that is of concern to human beings. It brings a distinctive spiritual perspective to the common tasks of higher education.

Through fostering and advancing knowledge in education, health, commerce, the humanities, the sciences and technologies, and the creative arts, Australian Catholic University seeks to make a specific contribution to its local, national and international communities. The university explicitly engages the social, ethical and religious dimensions of the questions it faces in teaching and research, and service. In its endeavours, it is guided by a fundamental concern for justice and equity, and the dignity of all human beings.

Australian Catholic University has a primary responsibility to provide excellent higher education for its entire diversified and dispersed student body. Its ideal graduates will be highly competent in their chosen fields, ethical in their behaviour, with a developed critical habit of mind, an appreciation of the sacred in life, and a commitment to serving the common good.

Its primary focus was the education of teachers and nursing staff for the Catholic sector, as part of its social justice goals; it has since diversified into allied health and public policy areas.

Following the Bradley Review, ACU embarked on an ambitious strategy to increase its research capacity and its student numbers. As a result, it is the fastest growing university in Australia in student numbers over the past two years, with 22,000 students.

One consequence of this growth has been severe pressure on both classroom space and facilities, spurring the development of a renewed interest in online teaching to reduce and in some cases replace face-to-face teaching. Historically, ACU offered only a small distance program, so for the purposes of the present study it offers a contrast to the other three universities. The majority of programs are however, still blended, not 'fully online'.

ACU has one of the oldest staff demographics of Australia's universities, with 56 per cent EFTS being over 50, and given its historical focus on teaching and nursing, it has a predominantly female teaching workforce. The rapid increase in student numbers, new strategic directions, and a new focus on research, has placed pressure on staff resourcing, and a new workload model was being developed at the time of interview to specify research expectations. A decision in 2010 to adopt a new learning management system (LMS) led to staff consultation and discussion during the year of interviews, placing further pressure on staff.

Many Australian universities were also undertaking reviews of their LMS during the period 2009-2010, and this created a heightened awareness of the role and quality issues associated with online learning more generally. ACU staff were anecdotally reporting higher workloads, and concerns about the effects on their teaching and pastoral care, a traditional strength. ACU's 2011 over-enrolment exacerbated the pressure on staff over the past two years: it is over-enrolled by just over an estimated 41 per cent on 2010



numbers, the highest over-enrolment of Australian universities, placing further strain on staff resources.

ACU's workload policy had been under discussion for two years before the introduction of a new policy in January 2011, after the date of interviews. In brief, at time of interview, it allowed for specific allocation of workload for 'fully online' units at 12 hours per semester (of 12 weeks) or one hour per week + one hour per student in the unit. Notional teaching time includes preparation of materials/lectures. An additional 20 hours per semester is available for a Lecturer-in-Charge of a unit, and 30 for LICs over several campuses. A total marking time for the semester is also specified at one hour per student, whether face-to-face or fully online. Small classes (under 20) have reduced hourly allocation.

Development of a new or revised unit is separately treated in the policy as follows:

**Table 2A: Other teaching-related workload**

B1	New face-to-face unit development approved by Executive Dean or nominee	80 hours
B2	New fully-online/distance unit development (in the year/semester before offering)	200 hours
B3A	Significant revision of a fully online/distance unit in exceptional circumstances as approved by the Executive Dean or nominee	20–80 hours
B3B	Revision of an online unit (not under category B3A)	20 hours

Clearly, the intention of B2 is in recognition of the fact that completely new online units require significant development time prior to offer, although the need for a Dean's approval for revision can only suggest that policy discourages revision, and the range of hours allowed (20-80) seems arbitrary: "Time for significant unit revision will not normally be allocated when a lecturer takes over teaching a unit that has already been prepared." Further, there is no specific allowance for the hybrid or blended units widespread today.

## Results from academic staff interviews

### Introduction

Seventeen staff at various levels were interviewed, 15 being 'front-line teachers', and two support staff. Teaching interviewees represented the bulk of ACU academic levels (junior lecturer and senior lecturer). There were seven junior lecturers, and seven senior lecturers. Females comprised the bulk of interviewees (13, vs four males), reflecting the overall ACU profile. Seven had 1-5 years of e-teaching experience, nine had 6-10 years, one had 11-15 years. Eight staff rated themselves as having a high level of competence, five as medium, with several non-responses to this question. A part-time independent education developer conducted the interviews.

### Perception of workload associated with working online

Fourteen of 17 staff indicated that actual workload could not be contained within the broad workload guidelines. Only one agreed that her allocated work was 'doable' within work hours. One reported that preparation of online materials had been time consuming – "a couple of days for each lecture" – in terms of learning the various applications used, and then aligning those with 'content'.

### Staff explanations for workload disparity

Three clear factors dominated the ACU responses to the issue of load disparity: simply working in the online environment (4); the amount of time taken in discussion board activities (4); and course development and preparation (6).



## Course development and preparation

As ACU lacks the traditional institutional infrastructure/resources long associated with distance education (unlike the other universities in this study), it is generally accepted that staff will individually undertake all online development, and this may explain the higher proportion of ACU staff concerned with development time: of 13 total interviewees who mentioned this factor, almost half were from ACU.

“Well, development of resources. For example, this semester, in one of my units, I put my lectures online but unlike what I think a lot of people are doing – just recording it and doing the face-to-face lecture and having that available – I did away with the face-to-face and had a series of PowerPoints and audios to the PowerPoints and I linked the two. So in fact they can just run the PowerPoint show and start the audio – and it’s a whole lecture ... and that took an enormous amount of time.”

“In terms of first – learning – working out the technology around it, because – you know whether I could stream it, capture it and stream it on – I’ve forgotten what it was – and I used Help here to try and work out how to do that. And that was problematic. Just the size of the files and working out all the logistics of how to use it – took a really long time. And then probably in order to get a lecture prepared probably took me a couple of days each time.”

## Online environment

Simply operating in an online environment was an issue:

“I think teaching online and learning online is meant to be – you know, less contact hours. I’ve found it hugely increases the number of contact hours. Dual responsibilities for on-campus and online cohorts were a real issue: for that unit, as well as there being lectures and pracs and self-directed and the online tutes and all those different things. So for new units, I think it’s really under-weighted. I think if the unit had been taught – you know, had been running for a couple of years, then it probably would (be easier).”

Several comments indicated that students’ individual questions via online interactions were problematic:

“Fully online is – you have to somehow accommodate every student individually, whereas if you’ve got 100 students in a classroom, you can deal with questions in that face-to-face mode much more from one person to a group.”

In strong contrast with other institutions’ responses (34 of a total of 88 interviewed), only one ACU staff commented on the workload model specifically, indicating that there was a gap between those who allocated load and the reality of those ‘doing online’:

“I think some of it is possibly lack of knowledge on behalf of the workload allocators. If they’re not familiar with it themselves, they don’t really understand how long it takes.”

## Discussion board interaction

Maintaining constant communication with students via discussion activities was a clear issue for ACU staff:

“I mean it depends on how you operate the unit, I’m sure, but if you want to actually give the students a really good experience and actually have interaction in your unit between the students and yourself and between students, then you really have to put in a lot of hours with discussions and things.”



“A fair bit of it happens on the weekend. So, yeah, my weekend I spend two hours at home moderating a discussion group. And it’s out of hours work, yeah.”

### **Impact of technology**

The new skills required and new teaching tasks associated with online teaching are a factor for two staff:

“I would guess that every night I would spend at least an hour on the email. And on the weekend I normally spend probably two or three hours just sitting and actually culling the emails and sorting them and making sure I’ve dealt with everything.”

“So I do think it adds – I mean, how to quantify this – I mean I’d probably say it adds about 20 per cent. And if you’re trying something new – like I was trying with the blogging that was a huge demand. Because – it was self-created demand – because you’ve got to keep on top of what you’re doing there. You’ve got to visit their sites, their comments and so on and so forth. I can’t blame the university for that. That’s my own kind of creativity and desire to produce something that works for the students driving that. But still it takes a lot of time.”

Assessment and marking were another source of workload for several staff:

“Then there are the hours of marking which are never accurate either because you know you end up still having to do provide a lot of feedback, which if you use it fully online and type in, that can be quite time consuming. Then if you choose instead to – you’d probably have to have a special program – but if you choose instead to print and pen mark, which is quicker, then you’ve got to scan it – which takes longer, so you can’t win either way.”

### **Student assumptions or expectations**

Student expectations for personal or prompt responses to queries were correlated with the ease with which students could contact staff in an online environment, and the type of application used:

“One of the things about online is that people see it as a personal service. You say – yes, there’s the Blackboard discussions and so on. That means that every day you go into it and you service that Discussion group – every day. If I’m running a lecture group – like face-to-face stuff – I’m not servicing those classes every day. And then of course students then decide – oh well, they’re a bit diffident about putting up a stupid question, so they email you or ring you.”

### **Drivers to the move to online learning and teaching**

Responses to this question were coded into four themes and eleven sub-themes.

Theme 1 – Student drivers

- Enhances student learning
- Provides students with flexibility
- Student Expectations
- Social Justice and Inclusion

Theme 2 – Economical drivers

- Increase revenue by increasing student numbers
- To be competitive in the marketplace
- Work practice efficiency



- Increase the viability of a discipline or program
- Cost saving

#### Theme 3 – External drivers

- Federal government policy
- Reflection of online world

#### Theme 4 – Internal drivers

- University directive
- Reputation building

### **Student drivers**

A number of ACU staff (seven of 17) believed that the main driver was the need to provide students with flexibility, given their paid work activities, while three each believed the use of technology enhanced student learning, responded to student expectations, and was a method for enhancing social justice and inclusion: “People are time-poor aren’t they?”

### **Economic drivers**

Almost a quarter of staff across all interviewees (a total of 21, four at ACU) believed that the driver was pressure to cut costs. For ACU, with small class numbers in some disciplines spread across four states and a territory, online delivery was a pragmatic and strategic way of amalgamating classes into a viable cohort. Nevertheless, several staff were convinced that overall, online delivery, even with the savings due to larger classes, was ‘more expensive’ because of the larger number of staff that needed to be involved. Few ACU staff nominated any external driver as a major factor in driving the greater use of online technologies in teaching, and that was simply the pervasiveness of online environments: “it does knit very very closely with the way the world operates these days.” There were low numbers (9) across the four universities for external pressures overall.

### **Internal drivers**

Two staff believed that the main driver was internal mandating of an ‘online presence’ for all units: “I gather a lot of people do it because they have to”, “(it’s) coming from above, essentially.”

### **Cost-effectiveness**

Only nine people across the study stated explicitly that online was not cost-effective, and three of these were from ACU:

“Well, particularly if you were to add the extra hours that people – well, people like myself – do in terms of the online.”

“So in terms of time equalling a cost saving, I don’t think it is. If it were accurately – if I were to jot down all the extra things that I do that I would not have to do individually if I did them all in a face-to-face meeting, I think it would be a lot more.”

### **Online teaching tasks**

In terms of the types of tasks/applications used by staff, the Announcement functionality in the LMS was used by nine of the 15 teaching staff; 10 used online assessment; and 14, discussion boards. While the broadcast function of announcements is obviously a time saver, online assessment may or may not be, depending on the type of activity, and whether a pre-packaged quiz is available in a textbook. However, discussion boards were



the dominant online task for ACU staff, as they were overall, and as indicated in some of the quotes above, they took most time. Almost as many (11), used 'traditional learning resources', presumably some print resources or PowerPoint. Only one interviewee used 'new social media' in teaching, and four produced podcasts compared with 51 among total interviewees. This low level of 'early innovators' at ACU reflects the fairly recent emphasis on online technologies for all academics.

### **Allocated work hours for online**

Staff had mixed responses to the question of actual allocation of hours for online teaching, with six of 11 who responded replying that they had no hour allocation (46 among all interviewees), four responding that there was an allocation, and one saying that the model was linked to student numbers. Uncertainty about the model used was clearly evident in the responses: "I don't know". Another thought that for established online units, the allocation was one hour per week, with some allowance for the number of students. Only 'fully online' units at ACU attract an hourly allocation, so the requirement that staff produce blended units with complementary online resources is not considered separately in workload.

### **If there is a mismatch between the actual and the allocated workload, what would you need to change in your teaching to make the actual work match the workload allocation?**

Responses to this question were coded into six themes and eighteen sub-themes.

#### Theme 1 – Decrease

- Decrease involvement in non-teaching activities and roles
- Decrease online engagement
- Decrease quality of teaching interactions
- Decrease the number of courses having to teach into
- Decrease time spent on emails
- Decrease time spent on revision of course materials

#### Theme 2 – Increase

- Increase model allocations
- Increase number of academic staff available
- Increase use of electronic communication
- Increase access to non-academic support staff

#### Theme 3 – Change

- Set consultation times
- Adhere to the workload allocation
- Have technology that works
- Change when tasks are allocated in the model
- Change assessment
- Revise the model
- Better training
- Become more efficient



Theme 4 – Negative learning outcomes

Theme 5 – Couldn't change

Theme 6 – Don't know

### **Theme 1 – Decrease**

Asked about what they could change in their academic activities to reduce their workloads, fewer than half of staff (six of 15 who responded) felt they could practically reduce any element of their role; one reported that she had already ignored her research, as she was required to spend time on a course review, and had community obligations. Two responded that they could possibly delay any revision.

“It wouldn't get revised. It'd just have a few tweaks – you know, dates, maybe some stuff – but essentially it would stay the same. You'd just fix up the links.”

### **Theme 2 – Increase**

Two staff urged an increase in workload allocation for online teaching:

“The actual running of the unit itself I don't see as an issue, but the development of resources – if you're going to have something that's decent and is going to engage students, then it's going to take a lot of time to develop that.

Two had already increased their digital communication by using text messaging or emails instead of telephoning each individual on-campus student, as they used to.

### **Theme 3 – Change**

No strong pattern emerged regarding what changes staff could suggest, but one comment is pertinent: the matter of the timing of internal quality processes for online units and systems. At ACU, as at most distance education institutions, any moderation of units and their quality checks require submission of basic materials in the semester before delivery, or at the latest, four weeks before semester start. However, the timing of submission may increase the pressure on staff workload:

“It's that significant kind of preparation that you do in the middle of another semester to get ready for the following one. I think it's the timing of all that. Like that's all happening now, when we're drowning in the current semester that we're working in. And they're trying to get the next stuff – if they were teaching face-to-face, they're not actually preparing that now. They do that at a closer point to the actual delivery. It's kind of the overlap of getting something ready to deliver at the peak work time of the previous semester.”

Two staff suggested they could be stricter in limiting their time for consultation:

“I would probably give myself an allocated time a week and make sure that I stick to it. So you know, I'd say between two o'clock and four o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon. That is when I'm contactable. And the only time that I'm contactable.

However, the implications of this for student learning and quality made staff reluctant to restrict their teaching activities. Of the 12 staff across the study who foresaw negative learning outcomes if they changed their practice, four were ACU staff:

“So I've been wondering – and I've been listening to what other people do and I really would – I've been thinking about getting rid of discussion boards, as an assessable task. But then I'm really loathe to do that, because that's where the learning happens and that's where the students are supported by me. And questioned by me and challenged and challenged by each



other – other students – if you can really get that happening well, that’s really fantastic. And that’s where they learn.”

### **Revision of materials as a response to overload, and effects on quality**

Responses to this question were coded into four themes, and seven sub-themes.

Theme 1: Yes

- Why not

Theme 2: No

- Why revise

Theme 3: Don’t know

Theme 4: Outcomes

- Lack of currency in student knowledge
- Increases student confusion over content
- Decreases quality
- Disengages students
- No effect

In response to the question regarding non-revision of materials as a way of managing workload, nine staff responded that they believe this was a common response to overload, but that it had severe implications for quality. Most units, it was believed, were written for a three year period, with ‘minor tweaking’. The model discouraged revision:

“I think the workload policy discourages you from revising. So 80 hours for a new unit, but nothing for a unit you’ve been teaching.”

“They’re pushed to have a very strong research push – which I don’t have any problems with at all, but it does mean that you have to make a decision about what you can and can’t do. And that’s probably a driver for not revising.”

Staff saw the deleterious effects of lack of time for revision as related to ‘good teaching’, correctness of materials, and professional duty:

“Well, it’s just pressure, that’s all. Virtually – nearly every unit – as I’m going through the unit, inevitably – and it’s always more than once – I have moments when I think ‘damn, I didn’t check that as well as I should have – or I wish I had time to change that’.”

“I’m teaching in an area that lots of it hasn’t changed for a long time. I suppose when I’m reviewing I’m thinking about different ways of teaching it, rather than changing the content. How can I do it differently? How can I be more efficient? How can I help the students be more efficient?”

For one staff member, revision at the time of rollover of a unit was the driver: through the QA process, “there’s somebody watching over you”.

### **Personal interest in online teaching**

Ten of the 13 staff responding to this question reported a ‘high level’ of interest in online teaching (compared with 49 of total interviewees), with three at ‘medium’; none reported ‘low interest’, suggesting that there was no actual antipathy to the notion.



## Improving online teaching

Responses to this question were coded into four themes, and 13 sub-themes.

### Theme 1: Training and professional development

- Access to appropriate professional development
- Communities of practice
- Access to online education experts

### Theme 2: Workload

- Reasonable allocation for online teaching
- Clear timeframes for the development of unit materials

### Theme 3: Technology

- Access to appropriate levels of technology and resources

### Theme 4: Institutional Issues

- Allow academics to choose to work online or not
- Templates for course structure and activities
- Easier use of copyright
- Quality assurance guidelines or practices
- University wide general guidelines
- Appropriate levels of institutional investment
- Encourage working with other areas in the institution

Six of 13 interviewees to the issue of how to improve online teaching wanted access to 'appropriate professional development', with two believing it should be compulsory:

"They need to go to workforce capability development sessions where they obtain those skills, and we upskill our workforce by 2015 or 2020. Rather than adding it on and hoping that someone by osmosis will learn."

"And for it to be compulsory because there's a fair number of staff who will resist it until the end of time."

Others preferred School-based communities of practice. 'Sharing' and 'showcasing' were components of this: but at the institutional level, no ACU staff member mentioned Open Education Resources from other sources such as Merlot, MIT's OpenCourseWare, or UKOU's OpenLearn.

"I don't remember the last School meeting where we talked about online pedagogy or online preparation and development."

"We don't share."

Three staff wanted a template (in fact ACU does have templates) and a 'recipe book'.

## Conclusion

ACU staff interviewed were 'front -line teachers' with lived experience of the realities of incorporating online modalities into their workload. They were adamant that new technologies had increased their workload, and that the WAM did not reflect this, whether in fully online or hybrid/blended modes. All acknowledged the positive benefits of online technologies for enhancing flexibility for students, and as a reflection of the contemporary



world. Despite their workload increases, they strongly resisted the diminution of quality they felt would result if they decreased the amount of time they spent on online teaching. Almost all were unfamiliar with the details of the WAM model. However, clearly the nature of the academic role has changed in terms of expectations for teaching modes, and this is not yet reflected in institutional workload models.



## Case study 3: CQUniversity

Workload Agreement available at [http://www.cqu.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/5047/CQUniversity-Enterprise-Agreement-2009-FINAL-signature-version-v2-130111-changes-to-salary-rates.pdf](http://www.cqu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/5047/CQUniversity-Enterprise-Agreement-2009-FINAL-signature-version-v2-130111-changes-to-salary-rates.pdf)

### Context

Central Queensland University is known as CQUniversity Australia. In 2010 CQUniversity enrolled approximately 20,000 students into more than 100 programs. The cornerstones of CQUniversity are access and support and forging forward to become one of Australia's truly great universities. For more than 20 years, the university has made tertiary education possible for thousands of people who want to attend university but who may not have had the pre-requisite knowledge or skills to start a degree. Academic support for students has been described as amongst best practice by AUQA (the Australian Universities Quality Agency).

CQUniversity's engagement plan ensures that many programs (even those offered by distance education) provide students with one form or another of integrated workplace learning, in fields where practical experience is a major advantage for graduates entering the workforce. Through programs in partnership with hundreds of employers the university aims to equip students with the practical skills they need for their careers by involving them in simulated projects and/or immersing them in real-world situations and work environments. CQUniversity graduates have consistently demonstrated rates of positive graduate outcomes, good teaching, employment and starting salaries that are among the best in Australia. The curriculum in popular fields of study such as Health and Human Services, Nursing, Social Work, Environmental Sciences, Education, Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology is shaped by research conducted at CQUniversity. CQUniversity Research has taken an active leadership role in Central Queensland and the Asia-Pacific, conducting investigations in partnership with and supported by an extensive network of government, industry and private enterprises. Research Centres include the Centre for Environmental Management, the Centre for Plant and Water Science, the Centre for Railway Engineering, the Institute for Health and Social Science Research, the Institute for Resource Industries and Sustainability, the International Education Research Centre and the Learning and Teaching Education Research Centre.

According to the CQUniversity Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (2010):

"The university acknowledges that it is essential to make optimum use of its resources, both staffing and physical, over the full calendar year and recognises that to do this, careful planning and adequate resourcing is required. The Head of the appropriate organisational unit will develop, in consultation with academic staff of the unit, Academic Workload Guidelines (The Guidelines) for the allocation of academic workload and duties. The Guidelines will have as a central objective ensuring that staff have the time and resources to enhance scholarship. The Head of the appropriate organisational unit will ensure that the Guidelines include explicit provisions to encourage and resource research-informed teaching and provide access to adequate funded academic professional development focusing on such pedagogic issues as curriculum development and review, assessment practices and the teaching-research nexus. As part of the workload Guidelines development, where possible, the following information should be available to all academic staff in the Faculty (or equivalent): the annual budget and current financial report of the Faculty (or equivalent); student enrolments in all programs and courses; and, where known, workforce projections, plans, new positions and initiatives, and changes or additions to modes of delivery."



These statements are broad when trying to fully understand the implications of using technology-supported delivery of courses and programs; they also devolve responsibility for guidelines to the local level.

“Aggregate increases in workloads or work intensity will not occur without the necessary increases in resourcing including staffing. Adequate appropriate training and development (which includes appropriate opportunities to pursue postgraduate qualifications) is provided to staff members with a minimum of 2 per cent of the salaries budget of the work unit allocated overall to training and staff development in accordance with the needs of the unit. Workload allocation will be based on the academic duties of each staff member as appropriate for their individual career aspirations and the needs of the organisational unit. Quality of provision of services and activities is at an appropriate level. Adequate provision is made for the taking of recreation, long service and other forms of leave and for a staff member’s involvement in agreed workplace activities both within and outside the work unit. The ratio of academic staff to students is broadly consistent with higher education sector standards taking into account CQUniversity’s specific mix of academic disciplines, curriculum models and delivery modes. The reasonableness of the total workload for each staff member can be assessed and compared to ensure that the required duties can be completed in an indicative 1635 hours across the year and within an average of five days per week.”

Within these statements, workload, resourcing, quality, preparation and teaching of courses, and training and development are all areas of concern.

The guiding principles which form the basis of the Academic Workload Guidelines are:

“The planned level of academic activities can be performed within available staffing levels and with staff members having reasonable workloads. Relevant factors in developing workload Guidelines shall include: academic duties as well as a student staff ratio of no more than 25:1 (25 EFTSL = 200 students ÷ 8 courses) – this allocation will normally include teaching, marking and coordination, and where appropriate, an AIC allocation of  $\frac{1}{4}$  EFTSL (ie number of students divided by 8 courses times 0.25); teaching and coordination of no more than five courses in a given year. All academic staff will be afforded the opportunity over time to undertake academic duties and demonstrate performance in all of the areas. The actual duties in each of the areas will be appropriate for the career aspirations of individual employees and the needs of the unit. The guidelines will provide for resources that enable assignment of a minimum of 20 per cent of total staffing resources of a Faculty/Unit to the scholarship of teaching and research. Individual continuing and relevant fixed-term staff will be able to access the 20 per cent allocation for the scholarship of teaching and research and/or creative production where agreement can be reached through the PRPD (Performance Review, Planning and Development) process on anticipated outcomes for that allocation. A staff member will not be required to be involved in teaching and learning management delivery in more than two terms except where:

- (a) A staff member agrees to undertake a greater teaching load in a particular year as part of an arrangement for staff development planned over a period of two or more years; or
- (b) The only feasible way of allocating a reasonable individual workload involves teaching and learning management activities in three terms.

Workloads will be considered to be excessive and unreasonable where required duties cannot be completed without working excessive hours on a regular and systematic basis. A quantitative assessment of the academic workloads will be made for each organisational unit and will include the student to staff ratio as at the DEEWR census date for term 1 and term 2.”

Twenty-one staff at various levels were interviewed. Each of the interviewees represented a range of academic levels working as front-line teaching staff with varying years of university teaching experience. There were 15 junior lecturers, three senior lecturers and a professional staff member. Gender was skewed with sixteen female and five male interviewees. Nine had 1-5 years of e-teaching experience, seven had 6-10 years of e-teaching, three had 11-15 years of e-teaching experience, one had 16-20 years of e-



teaching experience and one had more than 20 years of e-teaching experience. Fourteen staff rated themselves as having a medium level of competence, and seven as having low competence. They were all interviewed by an independent interviewer about their perceptions of workload associated with teaching when working online.

### **Perception of workload associated with working online**

On the whole, staff indicated that the current workload model based on EFTSL did not represent accurately the workload undertaken.

“It’s kind of a rule of thumb stuff. We’re expected to teach approximately four courses a year. And somewhere in the region of 200 students a year, but....in term 1 I had 700 plus 186 plus 86 students in total.”

Other interviewees were not clear on the formula calculation of workload, or the differentiation of delivery mode was identified as making it difficult to calculate work effort:

“We use a different type of formula. And that type of formula doesn’t accurately reflect my workload.”

A further consideration identified by interviewees was that the traditional span of hours (that is, from 0845–1645hrs) was now extended to accommodate student hours of study.

### **Staff explanations for workload disparity**

When asked ‘Why do you think that your academic workload allocation does not reflect what you do?’ three clear themes emerged which were further broken in seven sub-themes.

#### **Theme 1 – Underestimation of workload**

##### **Online environment**

Interviewees identified clearly that working online generated additional work especially in relation to the availability, effort and practice of teaching.

“I think that when you’re teaching online, it’s not just like standing up and teaching a class and answering questions. It’s about you’re **there**. You need to be **there** for them. There’s this perceived idea that you’re there 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

“They have a lot more interaction with us than in the old days when it was just distance ed.”

Other interviewees determined that the additional load was related to improving the quality of course delivery in an online learning environment.

“It is because moving from teaching totally face-to-face with no online component, to then teaching face-to-face with an online component – has added – while it’s added a quality dimension – for students – it’s added a huge workload dimension.”

The issue of preparation of teaching activities for face-to-face and online teaching was identified by interviewees:

“There’s absolutely no time. So it really – it’s just incredibly hard! But I do – I do feel that it requires a fair amount of – certainly more for the online courses. If it was a face-to-face course, I would not have to prepare – you’d only have to prepare your lectures the week before.”



## Problems with the general principles or assumptions of workload models

Interviewees indicated that the model itself was problematic in terms of adequately allocating workload. This was in terms of the general principles, assumptions, or general application aspects that underpin their particular workload model where these principles, assumptions or application aspects under-estimated actual lived work experiences.

“I also am on Academic Board – so that’s not accounted for. And one of the courses that I teach – Desktop Publishing – is actually a multi-campus, software course which requires a great deal of management in a number of areas, so that is not reflected really any way in terms of the standard model of teaching.”

“The workload models used do not take into account the different types of students and delivery modes especially in courses where there is a mixture.”

Calculating workload within an EFTSL model does not reflect the actual amount of effort for small or large student cohorts:

“Because there are lots of other things – other than just the EFTSL that you’re involved with. And also the EFTSLs are a hard measure which are used, because if you’ve got a small number there are a certain amount of things you have to do anyway – regardless of how many students you have. Similarly as the student class size grows, then that does give extra work because you have to answer more questions and have more interaction. So it’s not just a straightforward mapping.”

Further, the academic role is more than just teaching and so the model does not reflect nor calculate the other components within this workload:

“Because I think the rule is very complex ... and I think the EFTSU only calculates teaching. It doesn’t calculate the time spent on research – you know, we tend now to have this 20 per cent allocated, which is a drop in the ocean if you have to write a paper – far less do the research!”

“Without fail every week there’s a call to be involved in something else – which has not been calculated. And so not to be involved is not to engage with the school. And also too involved is then to increase your workload.”

It appears there is a disconnection between the workload model and performance review, planning and development (PRPD) where negotiation and consultation is required.

“I think is because the model that allocated those hours is often not undertaken in consultation with the academic and this has meant that quite often the workload that’s allocated to an academic is allocated on a basis of a perceived understanding of what that academic actually teaches, researches and gets involved with in terms of administration and human engagement.”

The calculation of workload within the model is understood by some interviewees as the minimum requirement. One has to perform above this measure if quality is not to be compromised.

“I think that there’s a lot of the tasks that we do actually require more time than is allowed in any sort of model that we have. So I think that, yes, to do the job well, I think you need to do more work than they think, yes. I think that if we stuck to the hours, then we wouldn’t be teaching well.”

## Teaching tasks

In the interviews, teaching tasks involved not only the soft skills of communication in online modalities; interviewees identified that interaction and connectivity to the students are an integral part of online teaching which took more time than was allocated.



“So where you’ve got flex students now because there’s an online component, and because we have email and things like that – they have a lot more interaction with us.”

“No, no. I do a lot more. Laugh. Yeah, I’m on email at nights and at weekends.”

Assessment as part of teaching practice highlights the nature of work effort being asynchronous and out the traditional span of working hours:

“As I said before, out of hours I do all my marking, some of my examination marking. I do all preparation of assignments and exams out of hours. I would work three hours a night weeknights, and probably at least six hours on a weekend staying on top of things.”

## **Theme 2 – No consideration of the workload involved in online teaching**

Within this theme there were four sub-themes: the impact of technology, course and work aspects and student assumptions or expectations in online teaching.

### **Impact of technology**

Within this theme no CQU interviewees commented on the impact of technology. It is probable that since the institution had undergone a large review and renewal of technology in the learning management system where processes to support academics were put in place and where academics were included in decision making and empowered to change and upskill, negative attitudes towards the general impact of technology were not an issue for staff. One can hypothesise that these issues were principally resolved.

### **Course and cohort aspects**

Interviewees identified that course differences and student characteristics actually require specific types of interactions and activities which were not identified nor differentiated within the workload model.

“I also have internship students, so the work required in supervising an internship student is probably more – definitely more than a standard – you know, 30 students in an advanced course. Because they require initial consultation in developing their proposal, feedback on their proposals, discussion with their supervisor, setting up their jobs – you know all that sort of stuff – so it’s quite an intensive one-on-one relationship. A bit more like supervising an Honours student, I suppose.”

Conversely, the types of students interviewees teach are challenging and also not considered within the workload allocation. There are also professional considerations that differ by course, requiring constant attention to legislation and changing professional association requirements.

“Care for students that have just come into the study of uni for the first time in many many years, or those who have had failure at school – you know, unsuccessful learning at school – and those coming into us as brand new youngsters. And we do often have to tailor our teaching to suit those people. You have to teach and talk to two different types of people – two different sets of thinking – two different philosophies on how they’re going to work.”

“I had four students last term – there was still a Moodle site that I had to develop. There were still resources I had to go and find. There were still questions that I had to answer. So, I don’t – while I do understand that big classes online do take up more time than small classes online, there’s still a fair amount of workload involved in developing a flexibly delivered course that does not relate to the number of students that you’ve got.”



## **Work aspects**

Interviewees indicated that the particular administrative roles or academic positions that they fulfil resulted in an inaccurate reflection of their workload.

“Because I’m the Head of program. So that has an additional workload. My job is multifaceted, in that I’m not just a lecturer. I’m also the coordinator of the program.”

Within a rapidly changing university environment, academics are often called upon to be involved. This has added to the work effort and is often not calculated in static workload allocations.

“Without fail every week there’s a call to be involved in something else – which has not been calculated. And so not to be involved is not to engage with the school. And also too involved is then to increase your workload.”

## **Student assumptions or expectations**

Interviewees indicated that student expectations of staff availability or access and interactions have resulted in an increase in their workload and that this expectation is not explicitly allocated or considered in their workload.

## **Theme 3 – Staff choice to do more**

Some interviewees indicated that the inaccuracy of workload calculation was because they made an informed choice to do more than what they were allocated in order to provide value.

“No, no. I do a lot more. I prepare lots of lecture videos and tutorial solution videos and walk-through videos and things. I do a lot more teaching – I’ve got 70 students – I do a lot more teaching with 70 students than it says I should.”

“Because I like doing extra – that’s the main reason. I like making sure students are getting very good value. I like the students, so ... you know.”

## **Theme 1 – Student drivers**

### **Enhances student learning**

Some interviewees made reference to one driver to online as being a way to provide students with enhanced learning experiences – this is both for on-campus and distance students.

“There’s a belief that we can service students better by offering them an online resources and experience.”

“Whether you’ve got face-to-face or not I think it’s a really important resource for the students to supplement the face-to-face teaching.”

### **Provides students with flexibility**

Some interviewees made reference that students need more flexible higher educational opportunities without having to conform to a institutionally determined day-to-day time-frame. An interesting note is that interviewees did not talk about staff flexibility. Perhaps this concept is a given.

“The drivers for my students to use online or distance ed reflects – would be most of my students who are full time working.”



## **Student expectations**

Interviewees made reference to students expecting an online experience:

“But it’s what the students want. They want everything online. The students demand it.”

## **Social justice and inclusion**

As part of the government reform agenda and the institution’s push to increase particular student populations, access via online to higher education opportunities was identified by some interviewees as a driver.

“And I think there’s also a driver to make the experience more equitable. So they might be 100 or 200 kilometres away – so physically it is not possible for them to come in and attend classes. But with this technology we can reach them wherever they are.”

## **Theme 2 – Economic drivers**

Within this theme, four sub-themes were identified by interviewees. Economic drivers like revenue raising, cost savings, market competitiveness, enhancing reputation and work practice efficiencies were raised as key drivers for the change both in the sector and within the university.

### **Internal economic drivers**

The internal economic driver for technology through teaching online is the perception that it is cost-effective to conduct online teaching. The link between the internal drivers and the economics of online teaching is apparent but not quantifiable in terms of the teaching reality. Many managers believe these two concepts are linked; however teachers are less convinced of this.

“I think that my supervisor thinks it is economical to run and teach a course online. If only they knew how much time it takes. The initial outlay absolutely kills me in terms of my time and effort.”

### **Increase revenue by increasing student numbers**

Interviewees made mention that online is seen as a way to grow the financial situation of the institution because they can reach more students.

“The first one is the reach. Because we can reach more students that way [online]. Because we are in a regional area, and there’s also a financial incentive to actually increase student numbers.”

### **Cost saving**

Interviewees also made reference to online teaching as being a supposed cost-effective way of delivering education or as a way of the university saving money. It is perceived to be a management decision.

“It’s the cost-effectiveness. So pretty well – it’s as simple as that – it’s a cost – supposedly a cost-efficient way of delivering content to students.”

“Well, I’m thinking the main driver is an economic one. That the attitude I believe, of management, is that it’s a cheaper way of teaching because the workload allocations suggest that there’s an allocation for the development of online materials.”



Further to this observation, interviewees saw management decisions based on perceptions of cost savings which are deemed unrealistic by front-line teachers.

“I’ve done a little bit of research on this... I mean you don’t have to worry about space – lecturer space – you don’t have to worry about buildings and stuff like that, because it’s delivered online – you have to make sure you have a computer or something but it’s – I think that that’s actually inaccurate.”

### **University directive**

Some interviewees reported that having an online presence is mandated or expected by their university.

“I think it’s just the way we’ve done it for such a long time, it’s in our corporate memory. Therefore there is an expectation within certain areas that we will do distance teaching.”

### **Be competitive in the marketplace**

Interviewees made reference to the notion that if the institution does not have an online capacity it will lose competitiveness.

“I think the university initially did it because other universities are doing it and to be seen as a university in the 21st century, they thought that they had to do it.”

### **Reputation building**

Several interviewees believed that an internal driver to online education was to build and enhance existing reputation as an external provider.

“I think it is a good university and that it is important that we maintain our reputation. And I think the student has to be looked after. I mean I call the student a customer and they have to be looked after. And I think online teaching if we can get a good online presence somewhere, will contribute to the publicity and international recognition of the university.”

### **Work practice efficiency**

Some interviewees made reference to online expansion as a management response to increase efficiencies in terms of actual teaching work practices and administratively.

“Flex students have a place to get resources instead of having to contact the course coordinator all the time. I think there were, in the higher parts of the university, people who also said – ‘oh, it will cut down on workload’. Ha! Administratively and academically – I don’t think they really know!”

### **External drivers**

#### **Federal government policy**

Several interviewees made reference to one driver as being the institution’s reaction to federal government policy.

“Political agenda because we have to incorporate it. We have to incorporate it because there’s a big incentive financially for the university.”

#### **Reflection of online world**

A few interviewees made mention that the driver was a reflection of society’s use of online technology.



“And of course because everybody is using computers, you know, so this is where the available technology – everybody has a computer – everyone’s online – so why not use online to teach.”

### **Characteristics of online teaching**

The interviewees all responded that the institution has an established template structure for online courses. This is not only a mandated template: core elements of teaching online consist of a variety of communication tools and assessment methods used in the online format. This reflects the institution’s requirement for a consistent and visible approach to online teaching. Notably traditional learning resources such as pdf and Word documents still feature heavily as part of online teaching.

### **Allocation of hours in online teaching**

Although the workload allocation model is undertaken in EFTSL, questions were asked around hours allocated in online teaching. Fifteen interviewees responded that there was no allocation for online teaching. Four interviewees indicated there was an hourly allocation, perhaps congruent with casual staff work allocation, and three interviewees indicated that hours were linked to student numbers.

“I’m not sure that I’m allocated separate hours for online teaching. It’s just part of my teaching wherever it happens to be. So I don’t think that’s separate in our job description. I don’t know. I don’t know whether there’s any allocation at all. I’m not aware of anything that actually says, you know, you must put in three hours a week or whatever.”

“The workload model is based on flex students and numbers of flex students so ... and then you get an hour allocation based on your flex and your internal students, so how you then manage that time within that framework is – is the issue. And the issue is that you don’t get as much of a load for flex students as internal students, when it – clearly it’s almost more work to manage flex students than internal students.”

### **Hours for online teaching**

If hours were specifically allocated for online teaching, it was generally related to casual teaching guidelines:

“Hours for online teaching is based around casual employment contracts...it is paid as an hourly rate where I get allocated 70 hours for online delivery.”

### **Theme 1: Decrease activities to ensure appropriate workload**

Some interviewees suggested that decreasing time spent on non-teaching activities or other roles was a strategy to manage the mismatch between work done and allocated workload, but other components of the job are affected.

“Well, because I’m kind of doing two jobs at the moment is the only reason why my workload doesn’t match, like I’m doing more than what I should at the moment.”

“We cut down on our research Yes! Laugh. I’ve got a PhD thesis that I still haven’t written. You know, it’s been a – you know, I’d just about finished my PhD – my PhD scholarship came to an end and I started work here.”

Interviewees also suggested decreasing time spent in the online environment engaging with students was a strategy to manage the mismatch.



“Well, maybe not respond as quickly as I do. Maybe I could do just a bulk type response a couple of times a week. Maybe not provide – maybe provide a very minimalistic type approach to online.”

Interviewees commented that decreasing time spent on ensuring a quality product was a strategy to manage the mismatch, as well suggested decreasing time spent on course material revisions or making minimal course revision.

“To be honest, what I would have to do is to provide a sub-quality service. I’d probably do less quality assurance. One of the things that I’m finding takes more time than I would like is checking materials, checking. Well, that is a good one, because the first thing that came to mind was ‘care less’. In other words, be more sloppy in my teaching, and I would never do that, because my personal pride’s at stake. And also, if I go into a classroom and I’m less prepared than I am now, I would never be able to do that. Or care less.”

Interviewees also suggested reconsidering the number of courses that they teach into was a strategy to manage the actual and perceived workloads.

“I’d probably look at the number of courses that I’m involved with, I suspect. Because I wouldn’t try and cut off any aspect of my teaching. Yeah, so I think I’d just have to look at the number of courses I was involved in.”

Reducing email response was perceived as another coping strategy:

“I would have to possibly ignore a few student emails.”

## **Sub-theme 2: Activities to increase to ensure appropriate workload**

An increase in allocation to teaching was perceived to be a way to mitigate workload pressure.

“So, yes, I think it’s knowledge of the course. Knowledge of the technology. And time to actually prepare. So in fact, for me, working online, the bulk – I perceive – of my teaching should be allocated pre-course. Because I think there’s a lot of preparation time involved. And I go online every day to check for questions to answer. I think if the thing was prepared properly, there should be less of those.”

As well as increasing allocation, teachers felt that increasing the number of academic staff to undertake the work would help. However, this particular response was seen as unlikely. Change would need to be provided in areas of work practices especially in areas like email, student responses on discussion and so on. Teachers had already thought about what actions to take to cut down on excessive communication.

“Well, I possibly, if I was going to make changes, I would need to – maybe not respond as quickly as I do.”

Interviewees also felt that there was a lack of administrative staff support in order to deal with the workload

## **Theme 3 – Activities to be changed which would maintain appropriate workload**

Interviewees felt that they needed to make several changes in order to maintain an appropriate workload, but were unsure of what they could change.

“So they’re telling us to do all these things, but not giving us any guidance or training to help us achieve whatever it is that they want us to do. I think that would make our workload more manageable.”



#### **Theme 4 – Couldn't change or did not know how to change**

Some interviewees believed that they could not change anything in their teaching practices:

"I can't change anything in my teaching. Because there is so much that needs to be done. Whatever I do. So my teaching is fixed because those things need to be done."

#### **Question 15: What do you think would be an ideal standardised workload allocation for online teaching?**

Interviewees could not answer this question as 'standardised' was too variable a term and had multiple definitions.

#### **Question 16: Is there evidence that there is a tendency to not revise materials for online contexts, and if so, what effect does this have on course quality and learning outcomes?**

As in the previous questions asked, this question highlighted the need to revise if quality was not to be compromised. Interviewees highlighted that the effects of applying this as a work mitigation strategy would be a lack of currency in students' knowledge; increased student confusion over content; decreased quality; and disengaged students.

Evidence of lack of revision was seen as inappropriate but it was occurring.

"I revised what I did when I did it, but it's evident from the courses that I've inherited, that not everybody has done that. Students contact me and go – 'they're talking about due dates that were like from a year ago'. This isn't really my fault, it's somebody else. Because the person hasn't updated their course materials. Or hasn't had the time to update their course materials and has just brought them across from one term to the other. And yeah! So there is a tendency to not revise materials and the course – the students get really disgruntled."

A reason for not revising material was related to tight semester times between examinations, results and the commencement of the following term.

"There would be some courses where – there is obviously a bit of a time lag between when you set readings and then when you do a complete overhaul of reading – and that would be a sort of annual course review – but one course might be run three times a year, so to do a full review every time that course is run – is impractical."

Some interviewees took revision very seriously and felt that it was important element of quality in their teaching practice and their view of course maintenance.

"I can't speak for other courses, but certainly the ones that I'm involved with we do take that very seriously. Well, we are strongly encouraged – we are advised to revise every term. I'm probably guilty of that myself. Having spent so much time building up this website, I'm going to maximise the use of it next year and the year after."

Quality and currency were also seen as further reasons for revision; otherwise there would be further issues with students.

"And I think students feel a little bit let down when things aren't as current as what they could be."

"I'm getting all the questions and students don't understand what's expected, and so learning outcomes I think are minimised. So the effect of having the course quality – the students go – this teacher hasn't even looked at this and you know – yes – it does affect the course quality. It



doesn't present a very good front on our part – and students tend to not want to put in very much effort because the lecturer hasn't put in much effort.”

“I think it alienates students a little because they can see that dates and things that are specific to one term don't match up with other dates. You know when the material's been used again.”

### **Question 17: What is your level of personal interest in online teaching?**

A clear majority of interviewees had a high level of personal interest in online teaching.

**Table 3A – Level of personal interest in online teaching**

Level of personal interest	Total cohort of interviewees	CQU
High	49	13
Medium	25	6
Low	8	2

### **Question 18: What would you like to see in the guidelines for Schools and their staff in achieving enhanced online teaching and in developing materials?**

Interviewees felt that training and development was required to enhance online teaching and development of materials, communities of practice, and access to online experts.

“And whoever then wants to use it, can then access on time or in-time training – which I know is an inefficient way to do it, but really it's the only way that it's ever really going to work.”

Interviewees also wanted choice to teach online or not. They felt that workload allocation needed to be reasonable and that clear and realistic time frames were required for the development of course materials. In terms of technology, interviewees felt that access to appropriate levels of technology and resources would be required for optimum teaching and material development.

“Talking about the new technologies and the things that you could use – I think it would be really good to have more of those and to have more support adding interesting things to the courses.”

Overarching these professional requirements, institutional issues were highlighted. It appeared that greater choice of working online was needed; use of online templates, easier copyright rules, informative quality assurance guidelines and practices, university guidelines in online teaching, appropriate university investment in online, and cross-department collaborations. These institutional issues appear to be areas not really well understood but still are felt needs.

“I absolutely think everyone should be given the choice as to whether they teach online or not.”

“Guidelines would be – make sure your course is designed well, especially the assessment. And scaffolding. And I think there isn't a one fix fixes all courses. But I do think the educational designer's got a role. And should be able to assist and support people in that. More standardisation. Students – you know, I've got students in my course who – this term even – they've been at CQU for two and a half years and they say I'm the only person that's provided them with videos, I'm the only person who – yes, so it's not very standard across CQU courses and it needs everyone to be doing it.”

Self-reflection time was felt by some interviewees as a requirement of revision which would improve the quality of the course:

“Some free time to actually just concentrate on that. I think we don't get enough time to actually do that.”



Overall, it was felt that workloads needed to be more realistic and congruent with the nature of the work being undertaken. Academic work consisted of asynchronous activities and was often after business hours. As well, academics felt passionate about their teaching, their students and the quality of what they produced but the concept of workload was poorly understood. These narratives speak to the issue of being 'out of hours'.



## Case study 4: University of Southern Queensland

Workload Agreement available at: <http://www.usq.edu.au/hr/empcond/ea2010>

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) has long been regarded as one of Australia's leading distance education providers: approximately 75 per cent of its student body study via distance or online. USQ has three campuses located in southern Queensland, these being Toowoomba, Fraser Coast, and Springfield. Given USQ's distance education focus, it has a diverse domestic and international student population. Currently international students from more than 100 countries study at USQ with most remaining offshore. Besides having a culturally and geographically diverse student population, a large number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds are able to take advantage of USQ's online and distance programs and as a result USQ has a significant number of Indigenous, lower socio-economic and first generation university students.

As a leading online university, USQ is well equipped to adapt to relevant domestic and global trends. This is reflected in a number of degree programs such as the Bachelor of Construction, the Bachelor of Arts majoring in Indigenous studies, and the Bachelor of Science majoring in Environment and Sustainability. Further, in response to changing higher education policies and funding arrangements, USQ has made a concerted effort to increase the research outputs and profiles of its staff, starting with the Year of Research in 2010. The university is also home to a number of leading Australian research centres including the Australian Centre for Sustainable Catchments (ACSC), the National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture (NCEA) and the Centre of Excellence in Engineered Fibre Composites (CEEFC).

USQ states that its mission is "to enable broad participation in higher education and to make significant contributions to research and community development". In order to achieve this, USQ has focused on offering educational opportunities that are flexible and borderless, and offer all students a fulfilling learning journey. Whilst this focus on student educational opportunities is commendable, the recent U Count 2010 Staff Survey revealed that USQ management may need to focus on ways to ensure that USQ staff have the opportunity to engage in similar fulfilling working journeys. The survey revealed that workloads were an ongoing issue across all three campuses for both academic and professional staff. This coupled with perceptions of inadequate training and ICT support, high workload allocations, and an increase in administrative tasks for academics make workload issues a key area of action for USQ as it seeks to establish itself in a post-2012 higher education environment.

Whilst each faculty has its own workload allocation model, as is required under the Certified Agreement, academic staff have continued to express their discontent with the allocations and/or fundamental principles upon which these workload models or formulas are based. In 2008-2009 USQ underwent a major restructure which resulted in a number of staff being made redundant. Given this, most faculties have adopted a budget-driven approach to developing and implementing workload models. At the same time USQ has embarked on a marketing drive where students are portrayed as 'Heroes', and led to believe that they can achieve their learning goals in their own time and place and at their own pace. This has created a disjuncture between what academic staff are expected to deliver to students to fulfill the USQ marketing promise and the allocated time academic staff are given to achieve this.

Given the high proportion of distance education students at USQ, it appears that workload allocations do not capture the lived working experiences that are necessary to enhance external student learning or indeed even on-campus learning.



According to the Certified Agreement USQ is:

“... committed to providing for all employees a stimulating, supportive and safe work environment. The equitable and transparent distribution of work allocations among employees and ensuring work allocations are fair and reasonable are fundamental to this commitment. Supervisors and managers will take all reasonable steps to ensure that employees do not work unreasonable or excessive hours; consult with employees in planning and reviewing annual work allocations; recognise the importance of a balance between working life and family/social responsibilities; provide reasonable funds for employee development activities to ensure access by all employees and in recognition of the importance of ongoing employee development for individual and organisational growth; and ensure that employees can take annual leave and long service leave in a timely manner so that employees have adequate breaks from work.”

Implementation of this is to be achieved as follows:

“Academic work allocation encompasses activities in any or all of the following three areas: teaching and teaching related activities; research and scholarship; and service to the university, community and profession. Each Faculty has a Work Allocation Model that recognises the nature of the academic work within the Faculty and covers the factors listed in the USQ Work Allocation Guidelines for Academic Employees. There is an expectation that the Work Allocation Model will be reviewed periodically to ensure that the Model meets the needs of the Faculty/Department and academic employees in the Faculty/Department. Individual work allocations will be determined in consultation with the employee’s manager/supervisor and will be transparent, equitable and consistent with the work allocation model of the Faculty/Department. To ensure that the work expected and required of academic staff is fair and reasonable, the work allocation across the three areas for individual academic employees will not exceed the standards of reasonable work allocations prescribed in the USQ Work Allocation Guidelines for Academic Employees as at 18 June 2010.”

### **Results from academic staff interviews**

Twenty-five USQ staff members were interviewed. The interviewees represented a range of academic levels with varying years of university teaching experience and all worked as front-line teaching staff. Further, each USQ campus was represented by at least one interviewee. There were 17 junior Lecturers (Levels A-B), six senior Lecturers (Level C), and two Professors (Level D-E). There were 14 female and 11 male interviewees. Sixteen interviewees had between 1-5 years of online teaching experience, five had 6-10 years, and four had 11-15 years. In terms of perceived competence in using technology, 11 staff rated themselves as having a high level of competence, 12 as medium, and two as low. All interviewees were interviewed by the same interviewer about their perceptions of workload associated with e-teaching.

### **Perceptions of workload allocations**

The first question of the interview asked whether academic workload allocations were an accurate reflection of working realities. On the whole, USQ interviewees perceived that their current allocated workload was not an accurate representation of their day-to-day lived workload experiences. This disparity was seen to occur across all teaching modalities:

“No, I don’t think it does. Either online or face-to-face.”

“No! AHH! Too high. It’s ridiculous!”

USQ responses are similar to non-USQ interviewees’ perceptions of their allocated and actual workloads: overwhelmingly interviewees in this study perceived that there was a negative disparity between their workload model allocation and their lived working experiences.



## Staff explanations for workload disparity

Interviewees were then asked to account for this perceived workload disparity. Perceptions that teaching in the online environment takes less time were questioned by USQ interviewees: they felt that their lived online working experiences made for more rather than less work. USQ interviewees typically experienced a large disparity between allocations and real practice:

“I actually sat down and wrote down how many hours I worked for each thing. I also wrote down next to it how many hours I was supposed to have worked. And they’re at least double each time.”

“I think there is a lot more put onto the online environment than what we’re actually given credit for.”

“And so they’ve used the same formula – and assuming that you don’t have face-to-face teaching, that it will – I don’t know – that it’s somehow less – that it requires less time – and it absolutely doesn’t. I think that there’s a bigger commitment of time to do online teaching.”

USQ interviewees explained this disparity by drawing upon specific online teaching activities and then comparing these to similar face-to-face activities. Online activities were perceived to take more time than comparable face-to-face activity. What is of note is that a number of interviewees also referred to the **absence** of temporal boundaries or properties associated with online teaching tasks as being problematic compared to the temporal nature of student interactions in face-to-face classes or consultation spaces.

“Consultation with students online is far more time consuming than consultation with students on-campus. I mean, you will have an occasion when a student will come into your office and take half an hour of your time. But you’re constantly – if you’ve got discussions on StudyDesk you’re constantly participating in and engaging in. It’s almost like you know my 100 students off-campus are really another four tutorials. In terms of the work that’s required to engage in that participation.”

“Because I think people underestimate the amount of time that you’ve got to do when you work online. If I work in a face-to-face mode – let’s say I have a lecture, a two hour workshop and times available. So it’d be a one hour lecture, two hour workshop say – so that’s three hours. I would probably be available three – maybe three/four hours a week. When you work online, you’re available – they expect you to be available 24/7.”

The actual foundations of USQ workload models were also perceived as being at the core of workload disparity. That is, the premises upon which workload models were built were seen as being inadequate or not capturing the varied and changing aspects of online teaching activities. What appears to underpin many of the USQ responses is the inability of models derived predominately from face-to-face teaching to transpose into models that appropriately reflect online teaching requirements:

“I think we’re still stuck in this Faculty in the on-campus face-to-face mode of understanding what teaching is. My experience would tell me that demand and just the general time load required to teach online and when it’s done as well and that’s the other thing: it doesn’t fit neatly into a eight to five day working day; it just doesn’t translate. So, that old model of seeing workload according to face-to-face teaching hasn’t translated nicely. So we’re just sort of shoehorning the model into it, and hence we get those disparities between what is actually done and what’s required and what’s being paid for.”

“The difficulty is that the system we’re using at the moment doesn’t really take too much account of what people are doing. There’s a flagfall figure for most courses, and then a per student amount, so this doesn’t account for the fact that there is some stuff which isn’t terribly



sensitive to the number of students – and other stuff that is – but it doesn't take account of the specific work. Work gets distributed across campuses – but the hours currently tend mostly to stay with the campus. Again, that's open for negotiation in the course team, so – a good part of it once an allocation is made to the course team, comes down to how the course team deals with that in terms of dividing the credit for the work."

What also emerged was a concern that particular workload allocations or numbers were not grounded upon justifiable or quantifiable data:

"There is no definitive objective data which justify the numbers that are in the workload model."

"And I mean it's a magical number that, you know, Deans set. And it's not always – it's not as meaningful."

Interviewees across the data set also used examples of specific allocations for individual teaching tasks to elaborate. For the USQ interviewees, StudyDesk interactions were the focal point of disparity. Given the somewhat individualistic or isolated nature of the online learner, where the absence of normal communication cues can lead to misunderstandings, StudyDesk interactions were seen by interviewees to be particularly time consuming above and beyond what was the model's allocations:

"When it comes to things like taking care of questions, monitoring, consultations no. Only because I think it takes a lot longer for me to form a suitable reply online than it does for me to just spit out an answer. Cause I spend a lot of time thinking 'how should I say it? what should I say? have I said that OK?. Is someone going to take that the wrong way? Should I re-write that?' And I'll spend half an hour on a five minute question."

"When you're communicating in an electronic medium, it is so easy to just dash off a note that can be very easily misunderstood, so I think that because I've got a large – or have been teaching a large course of students who do have a reasonably high level of anxiety, I tend to think very carefully about what I write. So that it's not misunderstood."

Interviewees at each institution tended to feel that workload models underestimated the time taken to perform various teaching tasks or that certain workload activities were not even considered in the model. Thus USQ responses were not anomalous.

### **Perceptions of what is driving the move to online teaching**

Interviewees were also asked for their thoughts on what may be behind the drive to online teaching. In the USQ data, the majority of responses were coded at two themes. Given USQ's history as one of Australia's premier distance education providers, and therefore focused on student accessibility, it is not surprising that students were seen as the major driving force behind the move to online teaching in both the sector and at USQ. In particular, perceptions that online teaching allowed students to study in a way that best suited their flexible and dynamic lives was a clear thread throughout the USQ data.

"I think it's recognising that our learners don't live in a world of 9 to 5. They don't live in that physical classroom any more. They don't live in that temporal classroom any more. They have – learning is now not something I do in blocks of my life, but occurs at different times in my life. And therefore I need to be able to access it if and when I want to do it."

The ability of universities to provide online programs to students who would not normally be able to access higher education due to a variety of social, geographical and economic circumstances was also highlighted under the Student Driver theme. USQ's regional location was mentioned by a number of interviewees as being critical in providing educational experiences to those who may otherwise miss out:



“So there’s a whole set of features around and its regional position which makes this an attractive option for local people and for people within the area who may not have the same social advantages that you would find around a metropolitan university.”

“I think it’s because people – we’ve got a lot of – I call them mature students. And they’re not necessarily those who did really well at school. An automatic college or uni progression. And they’ve got to a certain level, smartened up, individually not intellectually, and realised, ‘if I really want to get on, I’ve got to have bits of paper’. So some of them are really quite dedicated. And I think that’s one of the drivers – picking up the slack in the educational system.”

Across the USQ data set, interviewees also recognised that economic considerations were a key driving force behind the sector and USQ’s use of emerging technologies. In particular, USQ interviewees believed that maintaining competitiveness and keeping pace with other institutions was a key economical driver for both the sector and USQ:

“I think maybe in general I think it probably is about competition to try and attract students... And I suppose here at USQ, probably is competitiveness. Because I suppose – maybe before my time – once upon a time, we were maybe unique – very unique perhaps – but now there’s probably more providers that do similar things to us so we have to keep being I suppose more flexible and more advanced.”

“And it’s also about marketing. And competition.”

Most responses across the data set were coded at the same two themes, Student Driver or Economic Driver. All interviewees saw providing students with flexible study options as being a central Student Driver, with USQ and UNE staff in particular perceiving that competition was a central Economic Driver.

### **Perceptions of actual online teaching numbers and practices**

Interviewees were asked to provide information on the number of distance or online students that they taught. Responses to this question were unclear, as many interviewees taught the same course in both face-to-face and online modes and gave a total response rather than a response demarcated by mode of delivery or semester. Given that this information can be accessed from the institution itself, this question was not analysed in the data set.

### **What sort of online teaching do you do? eg discussions, chat, podcasting, posting online content etc. List all of these.**

A thematic analysis was not conducted on this question given its intent was to generate a list of online teaching activities. Instead responses were placed into stand alone categories. For USQ interviewees, using asynchronous StudyDesk discussions, placing traditional learning resources (eg lecture slides) online, setting online assessment activities (eg Moodle quizzes), and podcasting were the four major online teaching activities for USQ interviewees. This list is the same for UNE and CQU, with ACU only differing in that announcements rather than podcasting of lectures was considered as a key online teaching activity.

### **Perceptions of the actual time spent on particular online teaching practices**

Interviewees were asked to provide quantitative information on the time taken to engage in online teaching practices. Across the data set the majority of interviewees had difficulty in quantifying the time they spent on particular tasks. Further, the wide ranging responses that emerged made coding the data into meaningful themes and sub-themes impractical. The critical analytic observation that emerged was that quantifying how much time an academic actually spends on key aspects of online teaching was a difficult task for



interviewees. That the perceived time spent on these activities is wide ranging is clear from the following comments.

“A couple of hours a week maybe.”

“I can’t tell you. It might come under, it might come under updating of materials which is a general line item in our workload policy.”

“Well, it depends what you mean by maintaining. All the time I’m running the course, I’m changing the materials.”

“With 170 students, I’m probably spending in excess of 14 hours a week plus with the students, answering their queries.... I probably spend a probably good five to 10 hours the week before the semester starts... So I tend to find in the first year subject timeframes for developing their critical thinking is – you know, it can be up to 8, 10 hours a week doing that.”

### **How many hours are you allocated for online teaching?**

Whilst the issue of quantifying hours also ran across this question what emerged from the responses is that there appears to be no standard hour or EFTSL allocation for online teaching in institutional or faulty workload models. For the USQ interviewees, hours appears to be the primary base unit by which online teaching is allocated. Those USQ interviewees who indicated that hours were used as the allocation base gave elaborate hour responses as can be seen in the following responses. The perception of the disparity between allocation and teaching reality was again threaded throughout the USQ responses.

“No online classes is 0.417 hours per student. So that’s 20 minutes. For online classes, it’s half an hour. And it’s – you think half an hour per student. I would easily spend half an hour on one student in one day.”

“We currently work off a 3.6 hours per student basis. So enrolments – it’s a really messy thing – Enrolments still work off the EFTSL model but in terms of how we see or perceive students as the rank and file staff here is by the hourly basis. Now it used to be 4.1 hours. It shifted down to 3.5 at one point. It’s now 3.6. It was 3.8 at some other point; you know, it’s all over the place. And that’s on-campus where regardless. So again, we’re still stuck in terms of seeing teaching as an on-campus mode style.”

When compared with the other institutions, interviewees at UNE and CQU typically perceived that their workload models contained no allocation for online teaching, while only a quarter of USQ staff believed this.

### **Perceptions of how staff could modify their work practices to better match workload allocation**

Interviewees were also asked for their thoughts on what they could change in their working practices to better align their working reality to their workload allocation. The most common perception for USQ interviewees was that they would have to decrease the amount of time they spent on particular teaching activities. In particular, interviewees indicated that they would need to cut back on the amount of time they spent engaging in StudyDesk interactions in order to achieve an allocation and reality match:

“I think I’d have to reduce my online – because I can’t reduce my actual teaching face-to-face stuff. I think I’d have to reduce my online participation with students. You know – as I said, I tend to go in and be involved in their discussions a lot. And I think I’d have to sit back and say, well, this needs to be left up to them’. I’m trying to do that a little bit more this year and get the other colleagues more involved... But I think it would be a matter of saying, to myself ‘right, I don’t need to be on there every day like some academics aren’t’. But like I said I do check it



every day and I go in and have a look – get involved and talk to the students. Because I think that's our main contact base now. Rather than face-to-face in classrooms.”

“Students – I just basically wouldn't check – I'd minimally check the – I wouldn't be able to read all the posts that go up on StudyDesk, which is where the students are learning and learning how to express what they understand about the course material.”

Cutting back on the time spent engaging with students was seen as the key teaching change that would need to be enacted by staff at all the participating institutions.

### **What is an ideal standardised workload allocation for online teaching?**

Across the data set, most interviewees had difficulty in responding to this question. Many interviewees made suggestions about how they would change their practices or they outlined the difficulties that they have with their current workload rather than their thoughts on an ideal allocation. Further, even if an interviewee did make a response on what they thought this ideal allocation should be, the responses were so varied that no meaningful theme of 'X number of hours' or similar could be captured from the responses. However, what did emerge from the data is that most interviewees felt that changes should be made to the current workload allocation for online teaching even if no agreed ideal allocation was forthcoming.

For USQ interviewees, responses centred around making an allocation based on a set number of hours. This can be seen by the following responses.

“I think if you could come in and you knew that you only had to be at the computer at least four hours a day that would be plenty.”

“If I'm doing an extra 10 hours – 10 to 12 hours working on this, then you'd want to say, well, I want 10–12 hours in my workload during semester to maintain the online environment and work with students.”

### **Revision of online materials**

Interviewees were asked if there was a tendency at their institution to not revise materials used in online courses. For USQ interviewees, there was a perception that online course materials were not being revised. What is interesting is USQ interviewees often justified why they thought this revision was not occurring even though this was not asked. Further, whilst workload was often cited as a reason for not revising course materials, the advantages of using certain technologies were seen as negating the need for revision, as was discipline area in that some areas (eg foundation accounting) were seen as not needing constant updating.

“Yes, there is (a tendency to not revise). Because the workload is so low for it.”

“The beauty of having recorded lectures means that you effectively only need to look at them every say second or third offer, just to make sure currency's there. And in general it doesn't mean you have to through the whole suite of lectures. You might need to update one or two each time. So there's sort of a rolling renewal that goes on.”

“Anecdotally, I think there's evidence, but nothing that's objective. And basically – in some courses it doesn't really matter. I mean, you know if you do introductory accounting, it doesn't matter all that much if you're just teaching you know transactions and blah blah blah. But I would think in something like management or economics or in the arts, or something like that – or maybe in IT – you need to be much more up to date. Much more up to date. In my courses, I have to be right up there. Because it's systems, it's forensics – there's always new techniques. There's always new ways of doing things. There's always new cases. All that sort of stuff.”



UNE was the only institution where interviewees thought there was a tendency to revise online materials rather than not revise.

The question also asked for interviewees' perceptions on what they thought the outcomes would be if non-revision was to occur. USQ interviewees perceived that students would not have up to date knowledge of their subject area and so overall course quality would decrease. Some USQ interviewees noted that this would have a significant impact on the student after they graduated from university not just while they were studying.

"Whereas you're not going to get a lecturer or even someone else to do that if you don't workload it. And the downfall of that – which I have seen in a couple of subjects – is the students are learning something that's 10 years out of date. Or 5 years out of date, depending on how long it's been since it's been revised. And when they get into the profession, it's useless!"

"So the course quality definitely goes down. The graduate quality definitely goes down. The ability for them to be employed becomes very difficult and they end up resenting their university degree. Because they spent all the money. They spent all the time and then came out the other side with something that's substandard. And I definitely disagree with that. I believe that our course material should be up to date. And should be revised every year. And like I said simply because of our change in technology is so fast."

USQ interviewee responses were consistent with responses from other institutions.

### **Interest in online teaching**

Interviewees were asked to indicate their interest in teaching in the online environment. What is interesting across the entire data set is that most interviewees indicated a high and positive personal interest in online teaching, that is, there was an enthusiastic embracing of online teaching.

"I actually love online teaching."

"I'm very interested in it actually, because coming to it at the end of my career, it has re-fired my interest in pedagogy."

### **Thoughts on guidelines in relation to online teaching and material development**

This question asked for interviewee perceptions on what they would like to see in online teaching faculty guidelines that were not currently in place. Unlike previous questions, interviewees were able to articulate at times quite detailed thoughts on recommended guidelines. At other times, interviewees responded in ways that indicated the need to better link guidelines to actual workload models.

USQ interviewees felt that having access to communities of practice or similar where they were able to share and connect with other academics teaching online, having reasonable workload allocations for online teaching activities that included material development, and quality assurance guidelines were central.

"I think we need to share what we've done a lot more. Like in a community of practice. I found that really advantageous to see what other people are doing."

"I think the guidelines have to reflect truly the practice. That not only should be put out there, but what is actually going out there, and how that lines up with the amount of work that we actually need to get a really good product."

"I think we do need to have a look to standards. And I think we need to also have a look at – not just what noisiest students are asking for as far as what sort of technology we want available."



Or what formats we want the material in. I think we have to be careful about intellectual property.”

Having a reasonable workload allocation was a constant across all interviewee responses. However USQ stood out in terms of considering communities of practice as critical to training and professional development. Interestingly, having templates for course materials and online teaching activities was seen as more of an issue at ACU, CQU, and UNE than at USQ.

## **Conclusion**

This case study has outlined the perceived experiences of staff at USQ. In general there is a sense that staff have positively embraced online teaching. However they are cognisant of the increased workload this has brought about, and the negative impact this has had on their own ways of working. In that respect they recognise that change is required in their own and others’ practices, as well as with faculty-based workload allocation models. In fact many interviewees were clear that change across all levels at USQ was required now. USQ interviewees have made suggestions of what might help them and others as they continue to work in the online environment. Like interviewees at the other participating institutions, it is clear that USQ interviewees perceive their allocated workload and what they actually do as being different. Perhaps most importantly, they perceive that what they actually do in terms of online teaching is not understood or adequately recognised within current workload allocation models. Most spoke of their desire to produce high quality learning experiences for students and of wanting to continually improve on what they are doing. USQ interviewees were clear that current USQ institution workload allocation models on the whole provide inadequate allocations for online teaching activities. As with the other universities in this project, it is clear that the academic role has changed in terms of expectations for teaching modes, and this is yet to be reflected in institutional workload allocation models.



## Part 6: Conclusions and recommendations

### Conclusions from the investigation

Our main conclusion is, unsurprisingly, that workload associated with online and blended teaching is ill-defined and poorly understood. As more new technologies impact on the sector more generally, it is timely to reconsider and audit practices to ensure future innovation and sustainability of work practices.

### Recommendations to the higher education sector in Australia

If teaching online is to become sustainable, attention needs to be paid urgently to how staff workloads are constructed. It is no longer possible to work in ways that belong to a transmission era of university teaching. As access and connectivity penetrate deeply into our personal, transactional, work and learning lives, interactivity and constructivist pedagogies must be considered routine, not 'add-ons' in teaching, and must therefore be reflected in prospective workload models which recognise the higher quantum of teaching tasks associated with e-teaching, and students' needs for a teacher to 'be there'.

The project team developed the following propositions and recommendations for the sector:

**Proposition:** Teaching online and in blended modes creates different types and numbers of work activities that require consideration when developing workload models.

**Recommendation:** Acknowledge that 'flexibility' costs, and will impact fixed, variable and opportunity costs.

**Proposition:** Staff are generally supportive, even enthusiastic, about teaching online. They have concerns about appropriate feedback to students, changing technologies, adequate infrastructure, professional development, access to support staff, large classes and assessment. At times they are not sure if what they do 'online', in the time that they allocate or over-allocate, is good enough to support quality learning outcomes. Some academics do not have the time to update materials, develop innovative approaches to learning, take up professional development opportunities, or attend to research demands.

**Recommendation:** Staff should be enabled to participate actively in their professional development and have their work recognised and valued within performance assessment, development and review. Institutions should ensure business processes and infrastructure are adequately resourced.

**Proposition:** Workload models are not well-understood by staff teaching online and not adequately broken into specific components, nor implemented transparently and consistently across school areas. Workload models do not reflect what staff perceive they do. Many staff do more than is required and are not prepared to compromise quality of materials or interaction.

**Recommendation:** Institutional management perceptions of teaching online should be more closely aligned with the reality of the workload as perceived by teaching staff within current workload models. Staff require more transparent participation and negotiation about appropriate workload models.



**Proposition:** Staff perceptions are that EFTSL is not a clear measure for allocating workload when teaching online. These workload formulas fail to take into account variable costs, for example, multimedia delivery formats; other support such as educational development, IT equipment (software and hardware); additional staff; staff development; opportunity costs (early adopters and innovation); diverse student cohorts; the advent of Work Integrated Learning; committee work; the plethora of additional 'coordinator tasks' such as 'Study Abroad Convenor'.

**Recommendation:** DEEWR in tandem with Universities Australia and other agencies should initiate a multi-level audit of teaching time and WAMs. This would accurately identify the roles and responsibilities of teachers, and their actual time using various applications and their perceived cost-benefit, in order for universities to develop more appropriate yet efficient workload models.

**Proposition:** The appropriation and use of technology into curriculum requires a recasting of the role of academics within universities.

**Recommendation:** Since almost all staff are involved in teaching online, appropriate selection criteria, probation criteria, performance indicators and a commitment to professional development in e-teaching by institutions and their staff are imperative.

**Proposition:** Teaching online has numerous definitions and perceived understandings. There is an inconsistent terminology and staff cannot articulate or communicate the multitude of issues involved in their teaching.

**Recommendation:** Define clearly what it means in each program to teach online for staff, learn online for students and manage staff allocation within higher education institutions so that all stakeholders as well as Finance Officers can participate in workload model development.

**Proposition:** 2011 has seen a surge of concern about the impact of online purchasing (especially from overseas) on the Australian economy, with bricks and mortar businesses being threatened. Many see this as a precursor to online services supplanting physical service industries, including higher education; among these are some Vice Chancellors (*Campus Review*, 27 June 2011) and the majority of IT executives, including Bill Gates.

Others are more sanguine, envisaging a future where the campus still attracts school leavers seeking a vestigial 'university experience', through a blended education of independent learning online plus some face-to-face interactions, but where the majority of adults transact their learning 'at a distance'. For the moment at least, the blended model remains the predominant 'delivery' mode in higher education, despite an increasing number of fully online programs.

**Recommendation:** Develop Workload Allocation Models (WAMs) which acknowledge the greater number of tasks associated with a blended pedagogy, as indicated in table 1 in Part 2, reproduced below.

- a) **If and until** a wholly disaggregated model of academic work (separating the discrete tasks of content expert, educational developer, multimedia designer, graphic designer, tutor and marker) is adopted (as is suggested by successful models such as in the OUUK), institutions must acknowledge in their workload models the greater number of tasks associated with online and blended development and delivery. Teaching workloads need to be adjusted to acknowledge the greater number of tasks associated with new technologies being incorporated into education systems.



- b) Greater use should be made of multimedia resources which have already demonstrated their efficacy for teaching complex/threshold/key concepts, so that individual teachers do not have to develop resources on core concepts in their discipline. However, the work involved in locating these resources, and then contextualising them to particular professional and institutional programs should not be under-estimated. A one size unit on Statistics 101 does not fit all programs. For example, of the universities involved in this study, ACU subjects **must** contain a specific community engagement or social justice component, so any 'core unit' curriculum must be adapted.

Our research has investigated a topic that is of concern to numerous stakeholders. The approach taken in this project is robust and the conclusions and recommendations fairly represent the voices of staff across four institutions who experience online learning as a key aspect of their work. While some may argue that these universities are not representative of the sector, the findings will no doubt ring true to many. As the higher education sector moves toward an increasingly competitive market place, the inclusion of more diverse students and the increasing use of technology to serve student learning, online workload needs to be reconsidered. The team hopes that this study goes in part to contribute to the debate and we believe others could build on the work presented here.



**Table 2: Task profiles for online only and hybrid/mixed model/web-enhanced teaching**

<b>Online only tasks</b>	<b>Hybrid online/class tasks</b>
<b>Prepare for class</b>	
<i>design course for on-line presentation</i>	✓
<i>edit/revise material</i>	✓
<i>upload content to LMS/submit to QA staff before upload and respond to QA queries</i>	✓
<i>research for updated information</i>	✓
<i>ensure that ancillary materials are mailed (if required)</i>	x
<i>create discussion questions</i>	✓
<i>write netiquette</i>	✓
<i>set up CMS</i>	✓
<i>prepare students for on-line study (orientation)</i>	✓
<i>coordinate with instructional design/QA staff</i>	✓
<i>read materials</i>	x
<b>Present information</b>	
<i>monitor &amp; contribute to discussion board</i>	✓
<i>post material (if required)</i>	x
<i>post discussion questions</i>	✓
<b>Practice and guidance</b>	
<i>answer emails</i>	✓
<i>post to discussion boards</i>	✓
<i>online live sessions (if used)</i>	
<i>provide technical support</i>	✓
<i>provide practice quizzes</i>	✓
<i>deal with conflicts promptly</i>	✓
<i>model effective online interaction</i>	✓
<i>monitor progress &amp; encourage lagging students</i>	✓
<b>Testing and assessment</b>	
<i>grade assignments</i>	✓
<i>setup online tests</i>	✓
<i>grade tests (automatic)</i>	✓
<i>provide feedback on assignments</i>	✓
<i>develop test content</i>	✓
<i>develop exams</i>	✓
<i>assess messages in online discussions</i>	✓
<i>test online testing process</i>	✓
<b>Provide feedback</b>	
<i>email</i>	✓
<i>class announcements</i>	✓
<i>discussion question responses</i>	✓
<i>automated responses to study quizzes</i>	✓
<i>create feedback rubric for common questions</i>	✓



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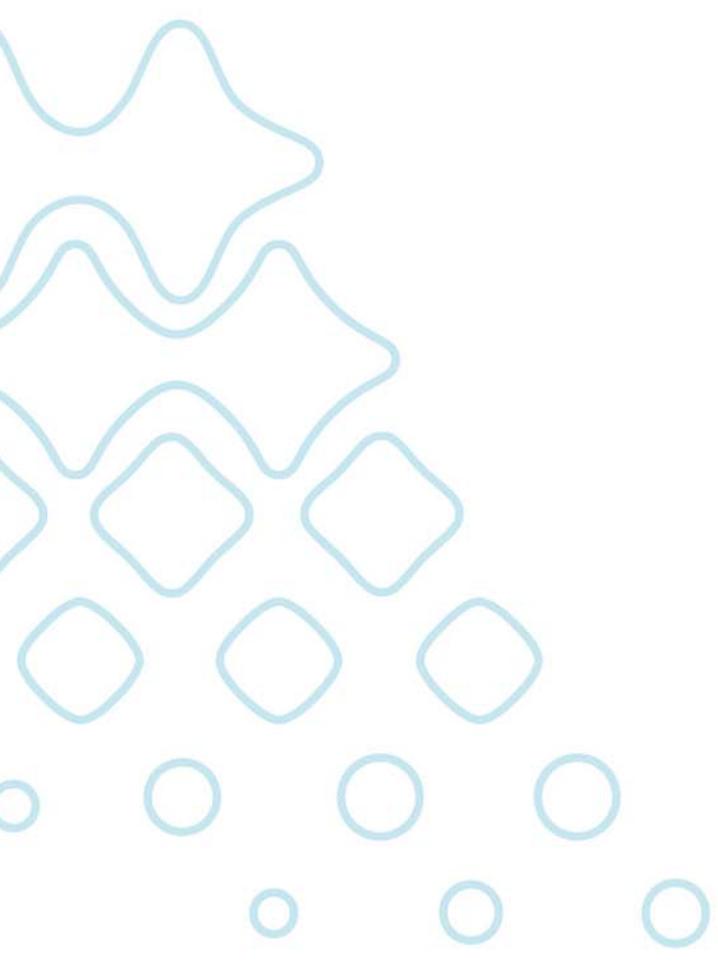
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