

Dear Jackie,

As you know, UCU has been raising concerns for some time regarding working practices in your faculty. You, in turn, have claimed that there is a lack of evidence to sustain the allegations of overwork, unsustainable cover arrangements, and poor management practices. We have responded by conducting a survey. The results demonstrate the need for action on Workload within the school.

We welcome the discussions held between the Head of the School and UCU representatives, but we would like to see sustained change for this and forthcoming academic years. In short, we believe that the school has further to go to be compliant with the [2022 AWBM agreement](#).

The results of UCU's survey are summarised below:

1) Excessive Workload

- a) 51% responded that their workloads had been imposed and not discussed or agreed by consent.
- b) 56% of staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that their workload was manageable.
- c) 43% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they understand how my AWBM agreement works and how it should be populated.
- d) 66% responded that marking time was not adequate
- e) 60% said that prep time was not adequate

From the above there is clear evidence of unsustainable overwork, in the school of Nursing. These statistics also show a clear lack of compliance with the AWBM agreement which is part of members contracts and is university policy.

Below are some extracts from the qualitative data gathered from members showing the impact that the current approach to workload is having within the school. Where staff are overworked to this extent staff will not be able to take leave, develop their careers and to collaborate effectively.

'I have come in to cover sessions on my Annual Leave and I have come in to cover a session when I was sick (in fact I never even bothered to call in sick, I just came in with a chest infection because I knew there was nobody to cover the session).'

'...there is no time to mark, prepare to teach, do any CPD or research.'

'...feeling overwhelmed, unsupported, and not valued/feel set up to fail; I'm not sleeping or eating correctly due to worry, there is not time to get adequate breaks, no headspace/focus time.'

'...My colleagues are known for working in the evenings, on the weekends and on their annual leave. This creates a toxic environment as then everyone feels pressured to do the same.'

2) Teaching Cover

- a) 92% responded that they do not have the capacity to cover illness or absence.

And some of the qualitative comments included:

'Being regularly pulled in to cover teaching that is not related to my own groups and not being given enough time for admin (marking/ prep/ epads/ emails etc). I often stand in front of students feeling ill prepared which is having a negative impact on me and is not positive for the students.'

'When you receive subtle marching orders to undertake teaching under short notice, with no consideration about what you have scheduled for the time, under the guise that you are supporting the team.'

UCU acknowledges that flexibility and cover are required from time to time, under conditions of unforeseen emergencies. However, the approach currently implemented in the school is one of last-minute cover requests, forced cover and the failure to use the workload model to provide staff with sufficient headroom to enable cover to take place in good time. The proper planning of headroom, in place over the summer and in ready for the start of the academic year, along with better communication and strategic management of cover across a whole school would enable a less onerous cover procedure and one built on consent from academics.

3) Micromanagement

- a) I feel acknowledged at work: 34% answered strongly disagree or disagree
- b) I feel respected at work: 30% answered strongly disagree or disagree
- c) 51% of staff said they had either witnessed or experienced bullying in the workplace. This contrasts to the overall survey results where only 31.4% had experienced bullying and 39.1% had witnessed bullying.

Qualitative comments on this point included:

'I have been experiencing micro-managing, which has disregarded my autonomy and well-being.'

'We are micro-managed, which is bullying. We try to raise concerns, but they are not acknowledged, and we are just expected to get on with it'

All staff want to feel respected and acknowledged at work. Our members want to be part of a culture where their hard work and expertise are acknowledged and celebrated. This does not seem to apply to the current culture. Alongside this our survey finds a high prevalence of bullying. This all adds up to a school where staff are not supported and struggling with overwork.

69% of Nursing members said, 'they feel that they don't have the capacity to deliver a high-quality education for students.' Members want and do place students' needs first. But a

culture where workload is not managed effectively as agreed in the AWBM 2022 workload agreement, leads to poorer student experiences, which is hardly surprising when staff are exhausted and burnt-out. With colleagues taking VSS the workload of the remaining staff has risen further.

We welcome the positive discussions with members of the committee and head of school, with commitments to training for managers on the AWBM, and AWBM's being in place by no later than January 2026.

We would welcome a meeting to discuss the survey results and an appropriate way of resolving the concerns of all colleagues in Nursing in more detail.

Sincerely

ARU UCU