



# Workload:

## Getting the balance right

ATL receives many calls from members concerned about their workload and asking how they can achieve a reasonable work-life balance. We believe staff are able to give their best if they have a reasonable work-life balance. This Q&A factsheet aims to inform members about their rights and advise what they can do both individually and collectively to get the balance right.

### Do I have the right to a reasonable work-life balance?

While ATL believes staff should have a reasonable work-life balance, there is no statutory right to this. Rather, any entitlement will depend on your terms and conditions of employment. For example, if you are a teacher employed under the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) then your head has a legal responsibility to try and ensure you have a reasonable work-life balance. However, if you are not employed under the STPCD or are a member of support staff, then this contractual obligation will not apply. Rather, it is likely that your terms and conditions will state you are employed to undertake any 'reasonable' instruction the employer may give. Clearly, 'reasonable' is an elastic word and its definition in terms of workload may differ between employer and employee. That said, it remains the starting point for many discussions between both parties.

### I have a really heavy workload but don't want to be seen as a 'moaner'. How should I raise this with my employer?

Ideally, you should discuss this with your ATL rep, if there is one. The rep can work with you to build a case and help you take it forward.\*

Once your case is prepared, you should request a meeting with management. They are likely to

question you, so have a written schedule that details your workload and illustrates why it is excessive. Also, be clear on what you want from the meeting. For example, if you believe your workload would be more manageable if certain responsibilities were removed or amended, then make the case for doing so. Show the benefits that could be achieved by making the changes. In short, sell your case to management.

Taking forward your workload concerns on your own can be daunting. Moreover, excessive workloads seldom occur in a vacuum. With this in mind, you could discuss the issue with colleagues and raise it collectively, preferably via your ATL rep, if you have one, or at a staff-management meeting. Again, make sure you are prepared to illustrate your workload concerns and input constructive ideas about how these can be addressed. Taking concerns forward collectively is likely to persuade management of their validity and result in a meaningful dialogue. For more on collective action on workload, see ATL's website's at: [www.atl.org.uk/workloadcampaign](http://www.atl.org.uk/workloadcampaign).

\*If you do not have an ATL rep, you may want to call a meeting of members to see if you can elect one. For further details, contact ATL at: [organise@atl.org.uk](mailto:organise@atl.org.uk).

## **My workload has caused me so much stress that I am having sleepless nights and have become anxious and irritable.**

### **What can I do?**

First, if you have any health concerns, see your GP. Second, raise your workload concerns, and their impact on your health, with your employer, preferably via your ATL rep if you have one. In doing so, be mindful that your employer owes you a duty of care (Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974) and should do all it can to ensure it meets this responsibility.

For ATL's factsheet on workplace stress and how to tackle it, go to: [www.atl.org.uk/stress](http://www.atl.org.uk/stress).

## **Am I entitled to a lunch hour?**

Not unless this is stipulated in your written terms and conditions. The only statutory entitlement is to a break of 20 minutes if you have been working continuously for six hours or more. The entitlement is to a 'break' and, as such, you should not be expected or directed to undertake the supervision of students during this time. If you are expected or directed to supervise students during this break, then you should raise this with the employer. This is likely to be a collective concern and, it should be raised as such, preferably via your ATL rep if you have one. This will give it added credibility and so increase the chances of reaching an agreement with management.

If you are a teacher employed under the STPCD, you are entitled to a break of 'reasonable length'. This is not defined, but ATL believes this should be for no less than 40 minutes.

Any additional break entitlements should be detailed in your written terms and conditions.

## **I have a disability that I feel is being aggravated by my workload. What can I do?**

If you have a recognised disability, your employer is legally obliged to consider making 'reasonable adjustments' – for example, to your workload – to help you undertake your role. You should ask for a meeting with your employer to discuss your concerns and, in doing so, perhaps request that a risk assessment is carried out and any reasonable adjustments made in line with its recommendations.

## **Does the employer have to provide a room where my colleagues and I can take our breaks away from students?**

No. And this can be very frustrating if you are trying to eat and relax during your break. This is likely to be a concern shared by colleagues, so you may wish to raise it collectively.

## **Am I entitled to any planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time or management time?**

If you are a teacher employed under the STPCD then you are entitled to 10 per cent of your timetabled teaching time for PPA purposes. This is increased by an additional 10 per cent if you are in your induction year. If you hold a managerial role, you are entitled to 'a reasonable amount of time during school sessions for the purpose of discharging those responsibilities'.

If you are not employed under the STPCD, then any similar entitlements should be detailed in your written terms and conditions.

## **I am a headteacher. Am I entitled to any headship time?**

Headteachers employed under the STPCD are entitled to 'a reasonable amount of time during school sessions, having regard for their teaching responsibilities, for the purposes of discharging their leadership and management responsibilities'.

Headteachers not employed under the STPCD should check their written terms and conditions to see if there are any entitlements to headship time.

## **I put in a lot of 'goodwill time' on top of my contracted hours. However, I feel this is now expected of me and not appreciated by management. Any suggestions?**

This is a common concern and one that should be raised with management, preferably with the assistance of your ATL rep if you have one.

Wise managers will recognise, welcome and celebrate any goodwill time worked by staff and, in doing so, help engender a positive workplace culture. If they don't, then those staff working the additional hours may decide not to.

## As a teacher, a lot of my time is taken up with administration. Do I have to do this?

If you are employed under the STPCD, you 'should not be required to participate in any administrative, clerical and organisational tasks which do not call for the exercise of a teacher's professional skills and judgement'.

If you are not a teacher employed under the STPCD, then whether you can be directed to undertake such tasks should be detailed in your written terms and conditions.

If you are a member of support staff then it would be reasonable for you to be directed to undertake these tasks and, again, this should be confirmed in your written terms and conditions and job description.

## I wish to reduce my working hours. How do I go about doing this?

For guidance, see the ATL factsheets *Flexible Working* and *Working Part Time after Maternity* which can be downloaded from ATL's website: [www.atl.org.uk/factsheets](http://www.atl.org.uk/factsheets).

## I work as a housemaster/matron in an independent boarding school and I'm 'on call' all hours of the day and night. Is there any legislation to protect me?

Yes. The Working Time Regulations 1998 have made a significant positive contribution to reducing working hours and providing adequate rest breaks. Further guidance can be found on pages 77 to 80 of our publication, *Working in the Independent Sector*, which can be accessed and downloaded on ATL's website: [www.atl.org.uk](http://www.atl.org.uk).

## In summary

ATL is here to help you address your workload concerns and we hope the above Q&A is useful. Where possible, collective representations are likely to have added credibility and substance, and will help achieve a speedy and satisfactory outcome. Please see our section on making collective representations on workload at: [www.atl.org.uk/workloadcampaign](http://www.atl.org.uk/workloadcampaign).

For more advice on tackling your workload check out [www.atl.org.uk/abouttime](http://www.atl.org.uk/abouttime).

Your first point of contact is the ATL rep in your workplace. Your local ATL district or branch are also available to help, or you can contact ATL's member advisers on 020 7930 6441, email [info@atl.org.uk](mailto:info@atl.org.uk).