WORK ALLOCATION MODELS

DR. EUGENIE HUNSICKER

LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

ATHENA FORUM

PHILOSOPHY: WHY USE A WAM AND WAM RESISTANCE

- Work allocation models provide a way to bridge the communication gap between academics and administration by constructing a clear and comprehensive picture of who is doing what and how much time they are dedicating to it (Perks, 2013)

- A resistance to this approach comes from a perceived loss of collegiality in the academic environment. (Hull, 2006)

- I also believe that people blame the introduction of a workload allocation model for overall increases in workload caused by external factors, or at least confound the issues.

ON "COLLEGIALITY"

- In a sociology study, Waters (1989) argued that expressions of collegiality, despite claims of equality, can be seen as an essentially self-interested means of sustaining elitism and class-based inequality within higher education. Collegiality merely maintains the *status quo* for privileged professionals – including those working in universities. (Hull, 2006).

- As pointed out by Hull (2006), the very concept of a WAM, of its introduction, "raises the question of the origins of unfair and unreasonable distributions of workloads – are people really suggesting that there was some golden, pre-managerial age of collegiality when academics shared the workload equally, when all discussion was open and consensual, and when disputes were resolved through open and democratic means? Is it not at least possible that this rosy picture of bygone collegiality is being constructed *post facto* as a rhetorical device, for whatever reasons?"

WAMS: THE GOOD NEWS AND THE BAD NEWS

- From perspectives both of good management and of EDI, there are major advantages to using a WAM over not using one.

- But that definitely does not mean it is easy, and there is not a perfect solution that everyone will love.

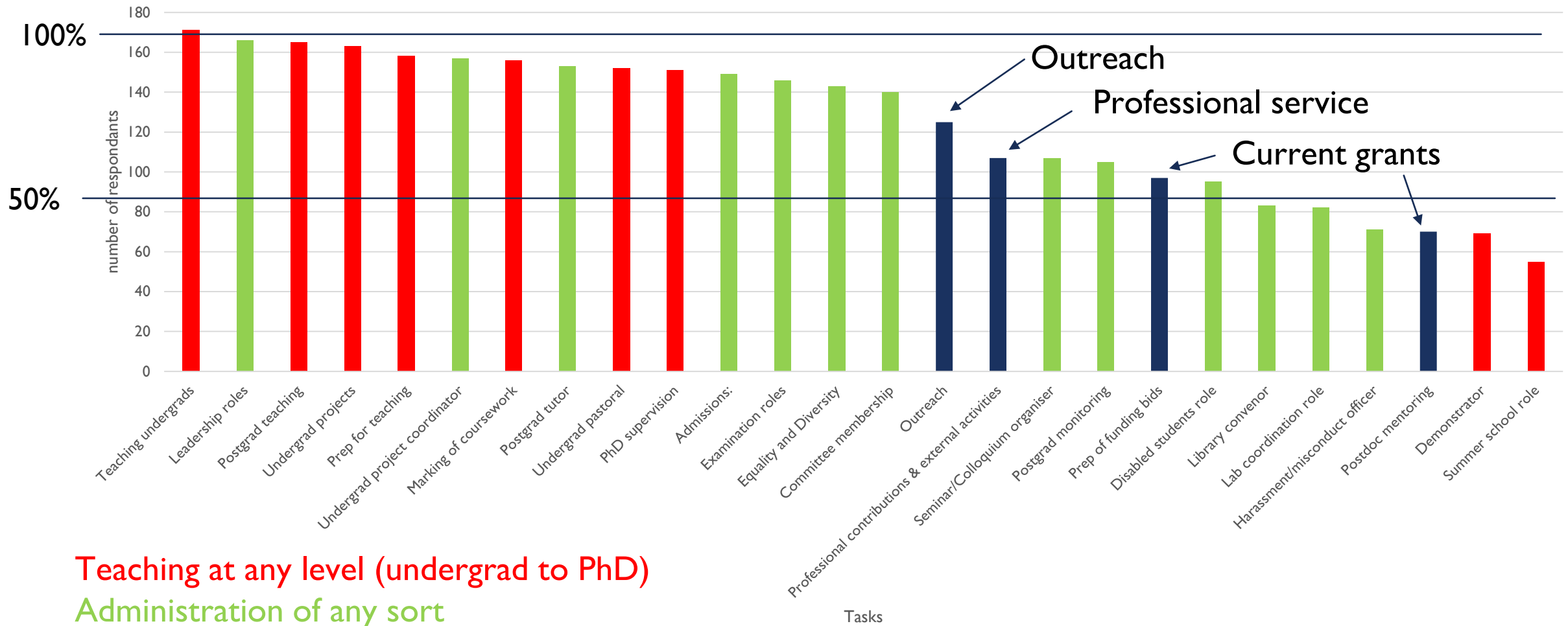- And it will also not take care of the problem of overload.

2016 ATHENA FORUM WAM SURVEY: WHAT DO OTHER PEOPLE DO?

- Undertaken by the Athena Forum during Oct-Nov 2016

- 1087 HODs for STEM departments contacted

- Survey Monkey survey with 25 multiple choice questions and 10 open ended comment sections

- 265 total responses (24%), of which 172 were complete

HOW COMMON IS USE OF A WAM?

- 174 out of 265 responding departments reported using a WAM
  - 80% of these at the department or school level
  - 20% of these at the university level
- 60 of remaining 91 departments had plans to implement one.
- *Informal evidence that staff viewed WAM as an improvement on previous (informal) systems for allocating workload.*
- *Views of the WAM were more positive when the WAM was implemented at the departmental or school level than when it was implemented at a university level.*

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN WAMS (NOT INCLUDING RESEARCH)?

Teaching at any level (undergrad to PhD)
Administration of any sort

RESEARCH AND WAM

80% of responding departments with WAMs included research. In 9% of these, the tariff was fixed. For the departments in which it was not fixed, the most common factors were

Factors	No. of responses out of 172
Numbers of PhD/PDRAs supervised	69 = 40%
Research income	66 = 38%
Grant success	58 = 34%
Number of outputs	38 = 22%
Grant applications	36 = 21%
Quality of outputs	28 = 16%
Academic Rank	11 = 6%

HOW ARE WAMS CREATED?

In 45% of cases the tariffs are discussed and agreed by everyone they affect

In 37% of cases the tariffs are set by senior management

Responses were more positive when everyone was involved in the WAM development than when they were not.

HOW ARE WAM RESULTS DISSEMINATED?

- 47% of departments share individuals' work allocations between staff so everyone can see what their colleagues' allocation are.

- 16% share the allocations anonymously, with some enabling staff to assess their allocation against average allocations of colleagues (broken down by grade and gender in one case) or against an anonymous summary for the whole department.

- 28% of departments keep the allocations confidential to each member of staff

- 9% did not reveal the allocations or were not sure of the answer to this question

- *Responses were more positive when all results were disseminated in either anonymised or named lists than when each individual saw only his or her own results.*

GENDER AND WAM

- 92% of models automatically included an additional allowance for career breaks and for new staff. *This was criticised when this allowance had to be covered by already overburdened colleagues.*

- 69% of cases, the reasons for reduced work allocations for some staff are not made publicly available.

- ASSET survey found opinions of gender bias in work allocation were dependent the gender of the respondent. Some women thought men were advantaged in the allocation of tasks relating to professional development and markers of esteem and other evidence showed that female respondents had more teaching, administrative and pastoral responsibilities compared with male respondents.

- 51% of responses said that they had already or were planning to test their WAM for gender bias.

GOOD PRACTICES CITED FOR WAMS

- transparency
- flexibility
- not too fine grained
- broad recognition of tasks (e.g. outreach, citizenship etc.)
- ability to balance of workload across years
- review of allocations during the year
- automatic additional allowances for parental leave, returners and new staff
- ability to audit bias (e.g. gender bias)
- account taken of individuals' preferences and skills
- giving staff ownership of workload
- highlighting of overload.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS CITED FOR WAMS

- too rigid and crude

- not flexible enough to accommodate changes

- promoting a 'bean counting' approach

- encouraging laziness in staff

- overly dependent on who implements the model

- unable to take account of differential working speeds

- disruption of model due to student factors

- university not responsive to repeated overload.

FOR THE FULL REPORT

The full Athena Forum WAM report is available online at:

https://athenaforum.org.uk/media/1144/athena-forum-wam-reportjanuary2018.pdf

FOR DISCUSSION

What are the main difficulties you have faced in implementing a WAM in your department?

- If/how to include research, external roles, outreach, etc?

- How to communicate results?

- How to arrive at tariffs?

- How to balance workloads among staff/over years?

- Other?