

Policy: Core Meeting Hours in Schools

Effective from: 1 August 2017

A recent information gathering exercise amongst academic schools showed that most had established core meeting hours. This can help to allow those with family and/or caring commitments to be fully engaged with the life of the school on an equal basis. Building on this, we wish to move to common minimum standards for core meeting hours, and establish a target to aim for over the next three years.

The minimum standard for core meeting hours (Monday-Friday) is:

- No core school meeting shall start before 9:30 am
- No core school meeting shall finish after 4:30 pm

Our April 2020 target for core meeting hours (Monday-Friday) is:

- No core school meeting shall start before 10:00 am
- No core school meeting shall finish after 4:00 pm

Within each minimum standard (the current range and the 2020 target), some schools may operate more precise schemes based on local requirements.

To operationalise this, it is important to distinguish

1. What may fall under the heading of “core meetings”
2. What does not fall under the heading of “core meetings” but should nevertheless be thoughtfully managed
3. What is not covered under this guidance.

1. Core meetings

These are meetings within a school which may involve any member of staff. (In particular schools, this may include contract research staff and/or PhD students.) Such meetings may be standing small committees or meetings of the whole school. They include, for example:

- Meetings for the development or dissemination of policy and practice, such as Staff Councils.
- Academic process meetings, such as examination boards.
- Standing school committee meetings, such as teaching committee, research committee, equality and diversity committee and so on.
- School social and networking opportunities (lunch is the preferred time for these).
- Other meetings which may be specific to a particular school, but are considered to be essential for its governance and/or staff engagement.

Schools should: establish their own list of meetings which considered core through discussion at Staff Council; and establish whether their school needs to specifically include contract research staff and PhD students in the scope of this policy.

2. Non-core meetings that should be thoughtfully managed

Certain meetings are important for the intellectual participation and professional development of staff, such as teaching development workshops, research seminars and so on. For such meetings, there should be some effort to:

- Hold *some* of these meetings within core meeting hours, if it is not practical to include them all within these central times.
- Avoid scheduling all meetings of such types in the same repeated time slot outside of core meeting hours. For example, it would be inappropriate for all research seminars to be scheduled at, say, 5pm on Fridays.

In addition, where intellectual events are *necessarily* scheduled out of core meeting hours, we recommend that the school give a long notice period and consider how those with family and/or caring responsibilities might be supported.

3. What is not covered

This guidance has no bearing on the scheduling of teaching or research activities. Where it would be helpful we encourage schools to develop collaborative, team-based approaches to support flexibility in these areas.

Professor Garry Taylor
Master of the United College