



# OUT OF HOURS

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Funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council

# Symposium Structure

Part 1

Examining workload for  
web-based teaching

Part 2

Researching workload for  
web-based teaching

Part 3

Findings and conclusions  
regarding workload for  
web-based teaching

Part 4

USQ case study



# Part 1

Examining workload for web-based teaching

Professor Belinda Tynan

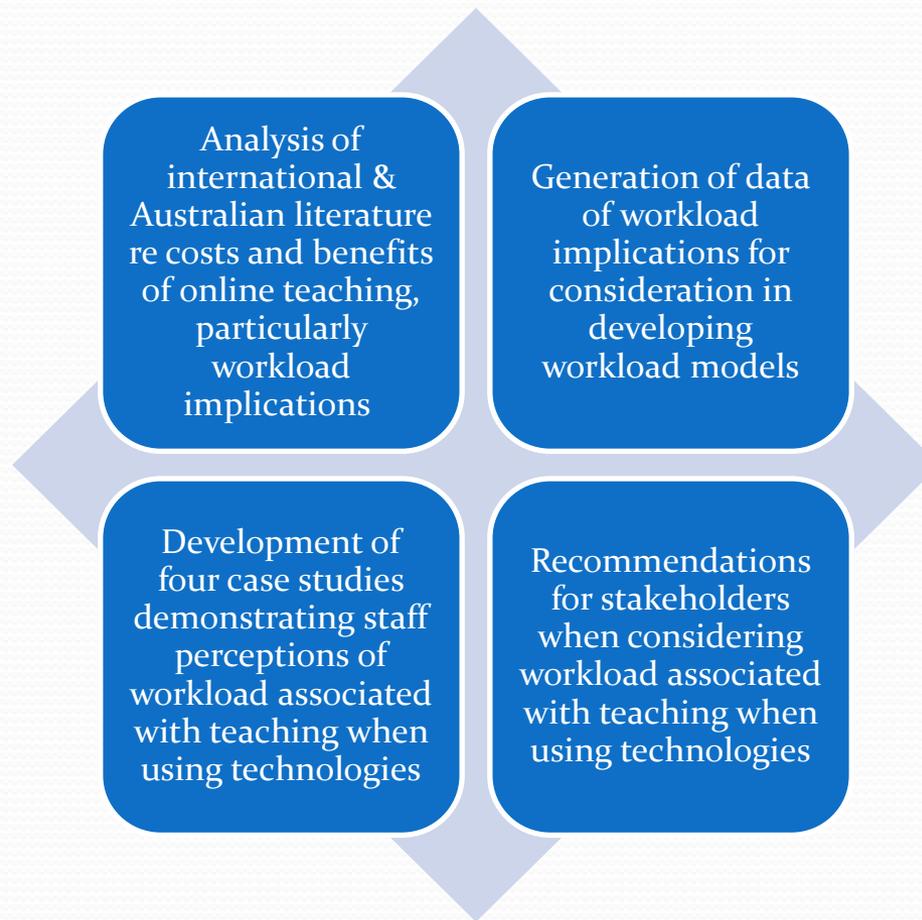
# Why this project?

- University teaching has altered in modality in the last few years without sufficient thought or research into the effects on staff and, ultimately student, workloads.
- Provides baseline information for informed decision-making about workloads associated with online/hybrid teaching, which could lead to improved online teaching, and thus enhanced student experience.
- There are a paucity of studies investigating the substantive topic area of workload associated with learning technologies.
- The findings are possibly relevant and transferable across education sectors.

# Overview

- A review of the literature 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 88 interviews across the four universities revealed that these institutions had poorly defined or understood policy frameworks for underpinning workload allocations related to teaching online or in blended modes.
- New technologies have the potential to enhance the learning experience of students; however, immediate consideration needs to be given to workloads related to teaching online or in blended modes.

# Key outcomes of the project





# Part 2

Researching workload for web-based teaching

Literature

Professor Yoni Ryan

# What does the literature say?



The academic role in transition
What's driving eteaching?
– student demand/expectations?
– staff commitment to elearning?
Does technology reduce cost?
Workload Allocation Models (WAMS)
Eteaching tasks

The academic role in transition

What's driving eteaching?

– student demand/expectations?

– staff commitment to elearning?

Does technology reduce cost?

Workload Allocation Models (WAMS)

Eteaching tasks

Online only tasks	Hybrid online/class tasks
<b><i>Prepare for class</i></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>	✓

Online only tasks	Hybrid online/class tasks
<i>coordinate with instructional design/QA staff</i>	✓
<i>read materials</i>	x
<b><i>Present information</i></b>	
<i>monitor &amp; contribute to discussion board</i>	✓
<i>post material (if required)</i>	x
<i>post discussion questions</i>	✓
<b><i>Practice and guidance</i></b>	
<i>answer emails</i>	✓
<i>post to discussion boards</i>	✓
<i>online live sessions (if used)</i>	

Online only tasks	Hybrid online/class tasks
<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><i>Testing and assessment</i></b>	
<i>grade assignments</i>	✓
<i>setup online tests</i>	✓
<i>grade tests (automatic)</i>	✓
<i>provide feedback on assignments</i>	✓

Online only tasks	Hybrid online/class tasks
<i>develop test content</i>	✓
<i>develop exams</i>	✓
<i>assess messages in online discussions</i>	✓
<i>test online testing process</i>	✓
<b><i>Provide feedback</i></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>	✓



# Part 3

Findings and conclusions of workload for web-based  
teaching

Dr Andrea Lamont-Mills

# Design: Grounded Theory & Thematic Analysis

## Semi-structured interviews

- 18 questions relating to perceptions of workload allocations and policy
- Interviews were digitally recorded, then transcribed verbatim
- All checked for accuracy of transcription before analysis began
- Interview data managed using QSR NVivo 8

# Design: Grounded Theory & Thematic Analysis

Inductive  
Thematic  
Analysis (Braun  
& Clarke, 2006)  
using aspects of  
Grounded  
Theory

- Initial open coding - Descriptive / invivo codes (R<sub>1</sub>)
- Checked using Grounded Theory method of constant comparison (R<sub>1</sub> & R<sub>2</sub>)
- Semantic level thematic analysis (R<sub>2</sub>)
- Each theme was reviewed and judged for internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity as per Patton's (1990) criteria for judging categories/themes (R<sub>2</sub>)
- R<sub>1</sub> reviewed the themes and sub-themes for inconsistencies and clarity
- Themes were checked again (R<sub>1</sub> & R<sub>2</sub>)
- Agreement reached themes and data were presented to the other three researchers for validation

# Demographics

- Purposive sampling, N = 88
- Academic level
  - A = 9, B = 46, C = 19, D = 8, E = 4, Professional Staff = 2
- Discipline
  - Cluster 1 = 6, Cluster 2 = 16, Cluster 3 = 5, Cluster 4 = 38, Cluster 5 = 9, Cluster 6 = 2, Cluster 8 = 11, Unassigned = 1
- Gender
  - F = 55, M = 31, Unassigned = 2
- Type of student taught
  - PG/UG = 30, UG = 50, PG = 5, Not teaching = 3
- Years eteaching
  - 0-5 = 45, 6-10 = 28, 11-15 = 10, 16-20 = 1, 21-25 = 1, Unassigned = 3
- Years teaching
  - 0-5 = 12, 6-10 = 22, 11-15 = 23, 16-20 = 7, 21-25 = 11, 25+ = 11 Unassigned = 2
- Numbers of students taught
  - Ranged from approximately 5 to 1000
- Teaching
  - Blended = 76, Online only = 11, unassigned = 1
- LMS
  - Blackboard = 37, Blackboard/Sakai = 5, Moodle/WebCT = 44, unassigned = 2

# Workload Policy

## Questions

- What is your institution's policy on online teaching?
- Does your school have workload policy/guidelines to cover online teaching?
- Does the workload policy/guidelines, or lack of, reflect the amount of time you spend teaching and interacting with students?

## Observation

- Responses not analyzed
- Differences between school/faculty and Institution policy were often confused
- Participants confused policy resulting from institutional decisions and guidelines with policy and implementation decided on at a school or faculty level

# Estimates of Time Questions: How much/many

## Questions

- additional time do you spend learning to use any new technologies you incorporate in your teaching, or overcoming any problems with the LMS functionality?
- time do you spend on preparation of your online unit/course before term commences? Is this considered in your workload?
- time do you spend on maintenance of your online unit/course during term? Is this considered teaching?
- hours do you estimate you actually spend teaching, learning the technologies, and interacting with students

## Observations

- Quantifying how much time was actually spent on key aspects of online teaching was a difficult task for participants and the perceived time spent on these activities is wide ranging

# Examples

“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 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 and ready to put it up”

# Do your eftsl/hours accurately reflect your workload?

Theme 1  
Yes

“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”

Theme 2  
No

“No. Definitely not”

Theme 3  
Unable to  
answer

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

# Observation

- Overwhelming participants indicated that workload allocation and their lived realities did not match



# Why do you think your workload allocation does not reflect what you do?



Theme 1  
Underestimation  
of workload

“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.”

# Why do you think your workload allocation does not reflect what you do?

Theme 2 No  
consideration  
of work

“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 ... And then research isn’t taken into account at all.”

# Why do you think your workload allocation does not reflect what you do?

## Theme 3 Staff choice to do more

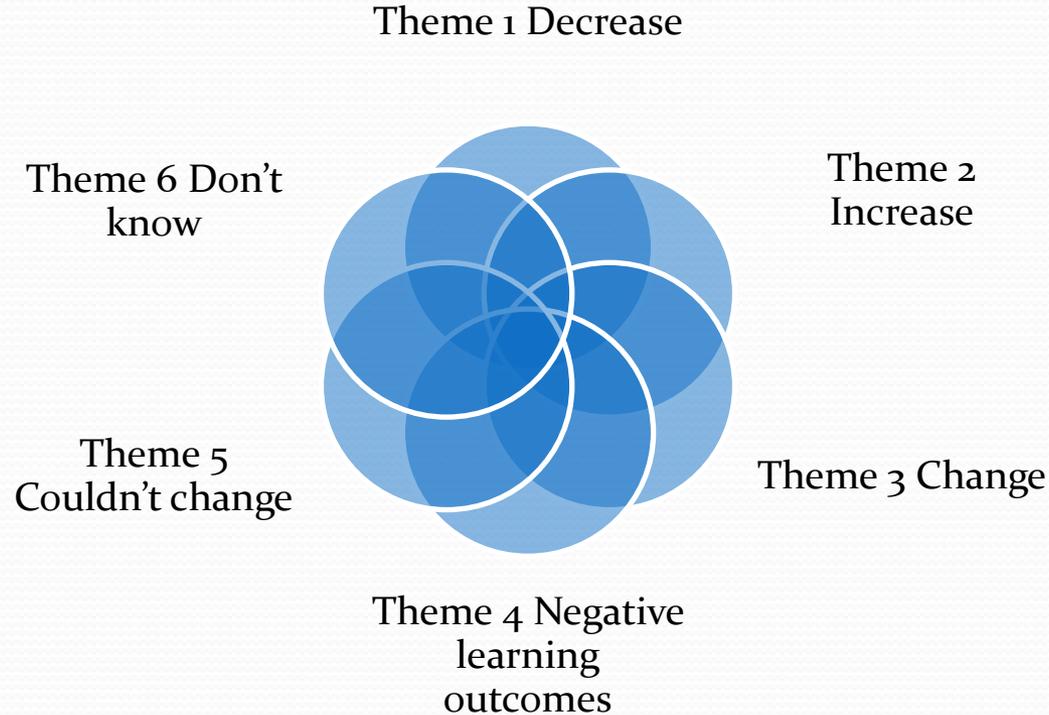
“And if you’re trying something new – like I was trying with the blogging that was a huge demand. Because – it was self-created demand – because you’ve got to keep on top of what you’re doing there. You’ve got to visit their sites, their comments and so on and so forth. I can’t blame the university for 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.”

# Observation

- Large number of participants believed that the root cause of discrepancy between work allocation and their actual workload was inadequate workload models



# What would you need to change in your teaching to make the actual work match the workload allocation?



# Theme 1 Decrease

“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”



# Theme 2 and 3 Increase and Change

“... some of the things I’ve changed have been the face to face stuff – like this year – say for example, I used to try and phone every student to check on various things – this year, I’m much more into sending text messages. I think because we’ve got free-text, so I’m sending text messages, to organise meetings or to check out bits of information. I find that a lot quicker. And I also send emails to students” (Theme 2)

“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.” (Theme 3)



# Theme 4 Negative Learning Outcomes

“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”



# Theme 5 and 6 Couldn't Change and Don't Know

“So it comes back to the allocation. Because you're not – a change in my teaching – 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.” (Theme 5)

“I don't know how I could change my teaching, that would mean I'm not seeing students.” (Theme 6)



# Observation

- No clear pattern of how participants would 'solve' their increased workload
- A number of participants indicated that change to their own working practices would be required but that students would suffer if they reduced their time

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



Theme 1 Training and professional development
Theme 2 Workload
Theme 3 Technology
Theme 4 Institutional issues

# Theme 1 Training and Professional Development

“... encourage staff to engage in staff development in pedagogy generally, reflective teaching, scholarship of teaching and learning, to participate in conferences, participate in research into their own teaching, general reflective practice, and to make opportunities available for them to learn about the pedagogy of online teaching”



# Theme 2 & 3

## Workload

“I think the time that people do spend online teaching and developing stuff – needs to be recognised in your workload”

## Technology

- “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

“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”

## Observation

- Participants saw training and professional development and better alignment between workload allocations and actual work as critical aspects of any school/faculty guidelines



# Part 4

USQ case study of workload for web-based teaching

# Demographics

- Twenty-five staff members
- Each USQ campus was represented
- 17 junior Lecturers (Levels A-B), six senior Lecturers (Level C), and two Professors (Level D-E)
- 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
- Perceived competence in using technology, 11 staff rated themselves as having a high level of competence, 12 as medium, and two as low

# Perception of workload associated with working online

- Current allocated workloads were not an accurate representation of day-to-day lived workload experiences

“No, I don’t think it does. Either online or face-to-face.”

“No! AHH! Too high. It’s ridiculous!”

# Staff explanations for workload disparity

- Perception that teaching online takes less time was questioned

“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.”

# Staff explanations cont.

- Compared specific online teaching activities to similar face-to-face activities = online activities taking more time
- Reference 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

“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.”

# Staff explanations cont.

- USQ workload models were seen as being at the core of workload disparity
- Inability of models derived predominately from face-to-face teaching to transpose into models that appropriately reflect online teaching

“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.”

# Staff explanations cont.

- 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.”

# Staff explanations cont.

- StudyDesk interactions were a focal point of disparity

“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.”

# Teaching online - allocations

- No standard hour allocation for online teaching in faulty workload models

“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.”

# Modifying work practices

- Decrease the amount of time spent on particular teaching activities
- Cut back on the amount of time they spent engaging in StudyDesk interactions

“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.”

# Revision of online materials

- Online course materials were not being revised

“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.”

# Outcomes of non-revision

- Students would not have up to date knowledge of their subject area and overall course quality would decrease

“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.”

# Online guidelines

- Access to communities of practice or similar 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

“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.”

# So what?

- Sense that USQ staff have positively embraced online teaching
- But = increased workloads and this has impacted negatively on ways of working
- Recognition that change is required in their own and others' practices and faculty-based workload allocation models
- Clear that USQ interviewees perceive their allocated workload and what they actually do as being different
- That is, what they actually do in terms of online teaching is not understood or adequately recognized within current workload allocation models
- Clear that current USQ institution workload allocation models on the whole provide inadequate allocations for online teaching activities
- Clear that change across all levels at USQ was required now

# ACU

- 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.

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

# Activity

- Do these findings resonate with your experience? If so, what rings true and why? If not, why not?
1. How can these results be used to inform workload practices in your faculty?
  2. How can we share our time saving practices?
  3. What can you do about the workload model in your faculty?

# Conclusion

Workload associated with online and blended teaching is ill-defined and poorly understood

As more new technologies impact on the sector it is critical to reconsider and audit practices to ensure future innovation and sustainability of work practices

For more information

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# Thank you – now we are out of hours

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Funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council