



The Educational
Institute of Scotland

WORK LOAD

CONSULTATIVE — BALLOT —

**ORGANISING
CONVERSATIONS**



Organising Conversations

The EIS is moving to a consultative ballot for industrial action in pursuit of an acceptable resolution to the SNCT dispute on reducing teacher class contact time by 1.5 hours to 21 hours. After 4 years of procrastination by the Scottish Government and COSLA, we believe the only way to progress the dispute is to move to an industrial ballot of EIS members to put pressure on both.

We have campaigned strenuously to persuade the Scottish Government to deliver on its 2021 Manifesto promise to reduce weekly class contact time and the greater the turnout and support for industrial action in this ballot, then the greater the pressure on the Scottish Government to act. As EIS reps and activists, you have a key role in the consultative ballot. We would like you to talk to as many members as possible using an “organising conversation” template in order to encourage them to vote in this ballot.

The consultative ballot, for both Action Short of Strike (ASOS) and Strike Action, opens on 6th June 2025 and closes on 28th August 2025.

All EIS members are urged to vote YES, to both ASOS and Strike Action, in the upcoming consultative ballot.

Workload and the Stand Up for Quality Education

The EIS Stand Up for Quality Education (SU4QE) campaign acknowledges that the current workload of teachers is excessive and unsustainable, and needs to be addressed urgently.

SU4QE aims to bring teacher workload to a level manageable within the 35-hour working week - in the interest of fair work, to reduce stress and improve the health and wellbeing of our members. Our SU4QE Campaign's workload element has four aims:

- Increase teacher workforce numbers and roles
- Reduction in weekly contact and maximum class size to 20/20
- Eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy
- Teacher Agency within an “Empowered School System” – including WTAs (Working Time Agreements)

Why is the EIS campaigning to reduce workload: -

- EIS members have consistently identified workload as a key priority area that needs addressed.
- The current workload pressures on teachers across Scotland are unsustainable.
- EIS members work, on average, an extra 11 hours per week in addition to their 35 hour weekly contracted hours.
- Hours spent on ‘Preparation and Correction’ activities are habitually being undertaken in members’ own time, to the detriment of their health and wellbeing.
- Excessive bureaucracy & paperwork continue to exacerbate workload pressures.
- Workload is cited as the main reason for leaving the profession by our members.



- There is insufficient staffing across Local Authorities which only intensifies workload pressures.
- We have qualified teachers who have no jobs or who are on temporary contracts and are seeking permanent work. Extra teachers to deliver a reduction in weekly class contact would mitigate workloads for all teachers.
- Reducing the workload of teachers has a positive impact on learning – including ASN support.
- An additional 1.5 hours for ‘Preparation and Correction’ is needed to tackle excessive workload generators. The time must be in teachers’ control and not for collegiate/whole school activities.
- Workload burden leaves teachers feeling stressed within all aspects of their lives and we want to see an improvement to teacher stress & wellbeing levels.

Organising Conversations with Members

Organising conversations are structured, one-to-one conversations with colleagues to build relationships, strengthen workplace branches and inspire members to get involved in the union and particularly, to vote in this dispute.

The 5-steps below set out a template for a conversation with a member with the focus being to vote in the ballot:

INTRO – ISSUE – INJUSTICE – VISION – COMMITMENT

“These are examples – but please feel free to edit to your own conversational style.”

1. THE INTRODUCTION

introduce yourself and let the member know who you are and why you are speaking with them.

“Hello, I’m taking time, as the EIS rep/activist, to get round the school and chat with branch members about the EIS consultative ballot that has just opened as part of our national workload dispute.

I’m trying to speak to as many members as possible. It would be good to hear your views on the ballot or if you have any questions around it.”

2. THE ISSUE

try and draw out any questions the member may have around the current dispute but also any wider issues they are experiencing at work. The key here is to give the member an opportunity to speak and start with an open-ended question.

“What have you heard about the national workload dispute and the consultative ballot?”

“Last year’s EIS facilitated Independent Research found that members are working on average an extra 11 hours per week for free. This year’s national member survey backed this up. I know members in our school have raised their concerns around their workload. How do you manage your workload?”

“What have you seen change in your day-to-day work since you began teaching and what impact has this had on you?”

3. THE INJUSTICE

use the issues the member has raised and frame the injustice around excessive levels of teacher workload – with the blame lying on the Scottish Government.

“We’re being asked to do more with less time and resources. There are increasing problems and a huge amount of unmet demand – especially around ASN. If we continue down this road then our health and wellbeing is going to suffer. How can we prioritise teaching and learning when we have so little time to do everything else? We have some of the highest teaching times in the OECD, and one of the lowest ratios of preparation time relative to teaching time. We need to hold the Scottish Government to account on promises made during an election period but subsequently failed to deliver when elected to govern.”

4. THE VISION

explain how the only way for us to take steps in addressing workload is to vote YES YES in the ballot. Explain options available if we deliver a strong mandate for action- e.g. leverage in negotiations to move discussions forward and resolve the dispute.

“As part of the Stand Up for Quality Education campaign, we want to see a reduction to weekly class contact time and maximum class size as a way of addressing workload pressures we experience – to our aim of 20 hours weekly contact and a maximum class size of 20. Our national representatives have been working tirelessly to persuade the Scottish Government to make progress on their manifesto commitment of reducing weekly class contact time to 21 hours. The 1.5h hour reduction won’t solve all our workload problems but it’s a step in the right direction.

To increase pressure on the Scottish Government and COSLA to commit to this reduction, it is important that we deliver a strong mandate for action in this current ballot. The Scottish Government and COSLA need to believe that teachers will take action to persuade them to implement their manifesto commitment. The only way to progress our aims to reduce workload is for members to stand firmly together and vote overwhelmingly in this consultative ballot.”

5. THE COMMITMENT

ask the member to commit to voting as soon as possible and once voted to encourage other colleagues to vote too. Follow up with the member to ensure they have voted.

“Have you had a chance to vote in the ballot?”

Yes? “Can you please encourage all your colleagues to do the same.”

No? “That’s okay, there’s still time to vote but we’re encouraging all members to vote as early as possible so we can maximise the turnout.”

“EIS members are being asked to vote YES for Action Short of Strike and YES for strike action. Whatever way you decide to vote, it is essential that everyone takes the time to vote. We want the Scottish Government and COSLA to know how strongly members feel about workload and a big ballot turnout gives our negotiators a stronger negotiating position.”

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RESISTANCE

Some members may not be convinced of the need for industrial action to reduce weekly class contact or may oppose it. This is to be expected at times, and we respect all members' views. In trying to maximise turnout, however, we suggest the following responses to some potential issues.

"Reducing class contact time won't make a difference (to me)."

"Reducing weekly class contact reduces workload by reducing the number of hours taught every week and transferring it to additional teachers. The gain is magnified if we then take the 1.5 hours released and use it as "Preparation & Correction" time."

"Our national survey of members indicates that the three activities that consume by far the largest time commitment outside contracted hours are planning and preparing lessons, preparing resources, and marking and feedback for pupils i.e. 'Preparation & Planning'. These core activities are consistently reported as the main drivers of workload that cannot be accomplished within contractual hours."

"Of course, as teachers we enjoy our teaching contact with pupils, and I appreciate some may prefer to change other things to reduce workload instead of reducing class contact. But at the moment, there is no other significant opportunity to reduce teacher workload."

"I don't want to vote for strike action."

"For several years we have been highlighting the workload pressures on teachers across Scotland and nothing has worked – industrial action is our last resort. The outcome of this consultative ballot is important because it may be enough to persuade the Scottish Government and COSLA to resolve the dispute without the need to progress to industrial action."

"Why is Action Short of Strike being considered?"

"It's important we consider all options when deciding on the next steps in this dispute. Different forms of collective action will allow us to escalate our action further if necessary. Strike action stops all teaching and learning. Our ASOS actions removes actions that do not impact on teaching and learning, whilst putting pressure on the Scottish Government."

"We have teacher shortages in some areas/ subjects, so a reduction in class contact seems unrealistic if we can't get the staff".

"One of the key aims of our national Stand Up for Quality Education campaign is to see an increase in teacher workforce numbers and roles. We have qualified teachers who have no jobs or who are on temporary contracts who can undertake this extra teaching on a permanent basis. Only 13% of the last probationers' cohort have permanent posts. We can find a way to implement a reduction in class contact and help our colleagues without work."

Additional Information

- This is a consultative ballot therefore all EIS members will receive an electronic ballot via the email address we have for them.
- If the consultative ballot result fails to shift COSLA and the Scottish Government then we will move to a statutory ballot for strike action in pursuit of this dispute.
- Members should ensure their contact information is up to date by logging into MyEIS on the EIS website- <https://www.eis.org.uk/>
- If members do not receive their electronic ballot on Monday 9th June, then they should email ballot@eis.org.uk.



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