

**May 27<sup>th</sup> 2025**

## **SU4QE Campaign on Teacher Workload: Reduction in Class Contact the story so far....**

EIS members will be aware that on 9th May 2025 the national Council of the [EIS agreed to open a consultative industrial action ballot of its members](#), as COSLA and Scottish Government continue to fail to make any tangible progress on implementation of the manifesto commitment to reduce teacher workload by shortening the maximum class contact hours for Scottish teachers to 21 hours.

Fundamental to this concern is the unwillingness from COSLA and the Scottish Government, to meaningfully engage with the SNCT Teachers' Side and to evidence their commitment to addressing unsustainable workload by agreeing that the 1.5 hours freed up from class contact reduction be allocated for teachers' weekly "preparation and correction" time, despite the significant body of evidence pointing to the fact that teachers are spending hours and hours of their own time at evenings, weekends and even over holiday periods on 'preparation and correction' activities- planning and preparing learning, teaching and assessment, and preparing feedback for learners.

### **Years of delay and no progress**

It is now over four years since the manifesto commitment was made by the SNP ahead of the 2021 Scottish Parliament election. This was a commitment made following sustained campaigning from the EIS on workload.

Over the past four years, EIS negotiators, through the SNCT Teachers' Panel, have worked tirelessly in their attempts to push both COSLA and

Scottish Government to make progress on the reduction in class contact time. These efforts have been consistently met with delay and obfuscation, as well as a lack of willingness on the other two sides of the SNCT to ensure that the full reduction of time from teaching is properly re-allocated to address workload- that it is given to teachers for preparation and marking.

### **The EIS position on the use of time: Workload reduction essential**

Throughout four years of discussion at the SNCT, the EIS has maintained the position that the full reduction in class contact time must be used to increase weekly “preparation and correction” time by 1.5 hours, as a step forward in reducing what are intolerable levels of workload.

The SNCT Handbook sets out the [split of time within the contractual 35 hour working week](#) for teachers.

Currently, teachers have a maximum of 22.5 hours class contact time, with a maximum of a third of that time then being used for what is defined as “preparation and correction”.

The remaining five hours each week are afforded to “collegiate” whole school activities, that are agreed collectively through Working Time Agreements.

[Data obtained by the EIS](#) has shown that teachers in Scotland are spending multiple hours each week, unpaid and outwith their contractual hours, engaging in the tasks that it should be possible to undertake in “preparation and correction” time: tasks related to the planning and preparation of learning, teaching and assessment in the classroom.

Given this significant driver of unsustainable workload, and the fact that the majority of teachers in Scotland are habitually undertaking hours and hours of preparation and correction activities in their own time, to the detriment of their health and wellbeing, **the EIS is clear that any reduction in class contact time must be used in full to increase “preparation and correction” time.**

**To allocate the time any other way will simply make the workload crisis worse.**

This position has been adopted by all unions represented on the SNCT Teachers’ Panel. The unwillingness of the Scottish Government and COSLA to agree to use of time to reduce teacher workload forms the major part of the current formal SNCT dispute.

## **Over-promising and under-delivering**

An agreement was reached between the Scottish Government and COSLA in December 2024, which included a commitment that both would work together to make meaningful progress towards reducing class contact time.

At the same time, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills made a public statement in which she was clear that she wished to see progress made “at pace” on the issue.

In response to these public commitments and statements, the SNCT Teachers’ Panel resolved to give COSLA and Scottish Government one further chance to deliver progress. Taking account of previous disappointments on the issue, the Teachers’ Panel set a deadline, which was clearly communicated to COSLA and Scottish Government, of 12 noon on Monday 3rd February 2025. If the deadline was not met, the Teachers’ Panel agreed that a formal dispute would be lodged at the SNCT.

Despite Scottish Government assurances that the deadline would be met, no proposal for class contact time reduction was tabled on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025.

## **Formal dispute**

Following a further meeting of the SNCT Teachers’ Panel on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2025 to discuss the missed deadline, a formal dispute was lodged at the SNCT on two grounds:

- The lack of progress on the reduction of class contact time to 21 hours.
- The lack of agreement on the use of time within the contractual 35-hour working week.

The SNCT Teachers’ Panel also sought a swift meeting of the SNCT Joint Chairs, the SNCT space in which a way of resolving the dispute could be agreed.

Meetings of the SNCT Joint Chairs have failed to deliver any progress towards a resolution of the dispute. Instead, Teachers’ Side negotiators were informed of a joint Scottish Government and COSLA working group on reducing class contact time being established. Significant concern was expressed regarding the lack of representation from teaching trade unions in the work of this group.

During this time, the SNCT Teachers' Panel has written to both the Cabinet Secretary and the First Minister expressing its concerns; however, neither action has resulted in the COSLA/Scottish Government working group being reconstituted to include representation from teaching unions: the voice of the teaching profession.

### **The decision to open a Consultative Ballot for Industrial Action**

Following months of no progress, the EIS Salaries Committee met on 8<sup>th</sup> May and determined that the EIS had been left with no other option than to proceed with a consultative ballot for industrial action in the pursuit of an acceptable resolution to the SNCT dispute on reducing class contact time as a step towards workload reduction. At its meeting the following day, the national Council of the EIS agreed to take forward this decision of the Salaries Committee.

**A consultative ballot, for both Action Short of Strike (ASOS) and Strike Action, will **open** on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2025 and **close** on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2025.**

### **VOTE YES TWICE: IT'S TIME TO REDUCE WORKLOAD**

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

In doing so, the strongest possible message can be sent, to both COSLA and the Scottish Government, that agreement on implementing the reduction in class contact time to 21 hours must be reached, and that they must commit to materially addressing workload by ensuring that the full 1.5 hours is allocated as an increase in teachers' "preparation and correction" time.

It is time for EIS members to raise their voices on workload and demonstrate to the Scottish Government and COSLA how important it is for their past promises on workload to be kept.

In standing up for yourselves and for one another, and for healthier worklife balance, you will be standing up for quality education for our young people and for the thousands of teachers who can't get permanent work. The delivery of the commitment on class contact time of 21 hours maximum requires more teachers employed on permanent contracts.

## **Vote YES, YES from June 6th!**