

Forward Planning and Assessment Practices

The 2018 AGM passed the following Resolution:

"That this AGM instruct Council to investigate and report on models of current forward planning and assessment practices in local authorities and how they relate to workload."

The Resolution was referred to the Education Committee for action.

Action taken

To gather relevant information, the Committee consulted Local Association Secretaries in all 32 areas; brought the terms of the resolution for discussion to the HT and DHT Network meeting of January 2019; and extrapolated relevant details from the Value Education Value Teachers Member Survey. Findings from each of these sources are outlined below.

Local Association Feedback

LAs were asked by the Education Department to respond to and provide comment on a series of questions. 23 of the 32 Local Associations responded to the request as outlined below.

1a) Does your LNCT have an agreement/policy on forward planning?

11 Local Associations indicated that there were LNCT agreements in place covering forward planning. They were Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Highland, Moray, Perth and Kinross, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian.

Replying no to the question were 12 Local Associations: Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Fife, Inverclyde, Orkney, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire.

A couple of comments were provided by Local Associations which reflect a reluctance on the part of some local authorities to engage meaningfully or with any urgency in discussion on the issue of forward planning and its associated workload and bureaucracy.

Another comment provided indicated that whilst a discrete agreement on forward planning did not exist, the issue was being addressed specifically in the context of wider discussions related to the Tackling Bureaucracy agenda.

1b) If so, what are the key elements?

8 of the 11 Local Associations which indicated that there was a relevant LNCT agreement in place identified their significant elements summarised as follows:

- Clear allocation of time for forward planning within Working Time Agreements
- Completion of forward plans mainly within the collegiate time arising from WTAs
- Establishment of principles for forward planning in all Primary schools to take account of the requirement on LNCTs to take forward actions to reduce teacher workload by tackling unnecessary bureaucracy
- Planning formats which suit school context
- Whilst annual overviews and medium plans can be shared with SMT, weekly/daily plans are for the class teacher's own use and should not be submitted to the Headteacher for approval
- Identification within plans of what needs to be learned and assessed, with learners fully involved in planning learning.

These comments clearly reflect the need for a close relationship between forward planning approaches and WTA discussion, negotiation and final agreement, in the context of the continuing focus on tackling unnecessary bureaucracy.

Also evident in the comments is the importance of clarity and appropriateness of purpose within forward planning arrangements and formats, with schools being best placed to determine these through collegiate discussion.

The comments also reflect that teachers' shorter-term planning is captured in working documents which are primarily for their use, and therefore should be in a style and format which is self-determined and which best suits their needs as professionals working in the classroom context.

1c) If not, or if the agreement does not cover them, how has your LNCT sought to address matters in schools related to:

- **the correct use of forward plans as working documents to aid teachers' planning of sequences of lessons**
- **teacher workload?**

17 Local Associations provided feedback outlining a number of approaches being taken as follows:

- Tackling Bureaucracy as a standing LNCT agenda item, with the Teachers' Side highlighting issues as and when they arise, including excessive planning demands
- Discussions within general workload working groups and those set up to consider forward planning specifically
- Joint LNCT advice note on WTAs issued annually, including guidance on forward planning

- Agreed workload/ Tackling Bureaucracy questionnaires for all teachers, followed by results analysis with a view to agreeing advice on workload, including planning.
- Reiteration to schools and EIS members of LNCT messages re. the correct use of forward plans as working documents to aid teachers' planning of sequences of lessons
- Recirculation of agreed advice to Headteachers as necessary
- Sampling of school WTAs and calendars by LNCT members followed by reporting of findings to wider LNCT
- LA Secretary response to individual school concerns raised
- WTA Training to highlight good/poor practice and emphasise the use of the WTA as a mechanism for controlling workload
- Primary and Secondary Reps' Network meetings to share and consolidate understanding of key messages.

Again, the comments provided highlight the centrality of WTA processes and the Tackling Bureaucracy agenda to addressing workload associated with forward planning; the importance of discussions on workload featuring strongly on LNCT agendas; and the usefulness of close monitoring and sharing of experience of workload, including in relation to forward planning, at school level to inform TU action and LNCT discussion.

1d) Are members in your Local Association raising issues related to forward planning? If so, please outline how.

11 Local Associations indicated that members were raising issues directly related to forward planning, with comments pointing to a range of matters.

Most commonly, it would appear from the comments, issues have arisen where Headteachers have made inappropriate demands of staff, for example, requesting submission of daily/ weekly plans, or demanding an unnecessary level of detail which has resulted in excessive amounts of time being spent writing planning documents.

Complaints have also related to Headteachers returning plans to teachers with comments (sometimes written in red pen), or without relevant professional dialogue around their content, suggesting their treatment as mere bureaucracy.

A couple of the comments provided referenced lack of knowledge by Headteachers of existing agreements related to forward planning and what can reasonably be asked in the way of documentation. One highlighted lack of awareness among members of the existence of such agreements, whilst another suggested that even where staff are aware of LNCT agreements related to workload control of forward planning, there is a reluctance to abide by their terms and to resist the demands of the Headteacher.

2a) Does your LNCT have an agreement /policy on assessment?

5 Local Associations provided advice that their LNCTs have such agreements/policies. These were East Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde, Perth and Kinross, South Ayrshire and West Lothian.

2 Local Associations- Edinburgh and Glasgow- indicated that while discrete agreements on assessment do not exist, advice/guidance on assessment, in one case specific to SNSAs, provided by the local authority to schools, was drafted with the involvement of TUs.

Highland Local Association gave feedback that whilst there is no overarching agreement, elements of assessment-related policy are included within other specific agreements, such as the Moderation of Assessment.

Replying no to the question were: Aberdeen, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Fife, Moray, North Lanarkshire, Orkney and Stirling.

2b) If so, what are the key elements?

3 Local Associations provided comments in relation to the areas outlined below:

- Coverage of SNSA implementation, including scheduling of assessments according to school-based decision-making processes in line with existing assessment plans
- Agreement that other types of assessment/standardised testing were to have no provisions unless agreed at local level and within WTAs
- Intention to keep agreement/policy under review in the context of SNSA implementation
- Co-existence of strategic plans and teachers' personal plans
- Use of all assessment information to track children's progress.

2c) If not, or the key elements do not include them, how has your LNCT sought to address matters in schools related to:

- **avoidance of whole cohort standardised testing/assessment**
- **the discontinuation of other types of standardised/testing assessment since the introduction of SNSAS**
- **workload control and assessment-related activity.**

On the question of whole cohort standardised testing/ assessment using SNSAs, 7 Local Associations provided comment:

- Discussion with Head of Education in pursuit of EIS policy (adherence to Scottish Government guidance) re. SNSA implementation and active challenge of practice of setting deadlines for SNSA completion
- Some recent movement on the issue of administering standardised tests to whole cohorts since the introduction of SNSAs as a result of EIS pressure

- Working Group activity to create SNSA guidance which includes no whole cohort assessment
- Issuing of LNCT/ local authority advice on the avoidance of whole cohort standardised testing/ assessment (individual schools often ignore, reportedly in one areas, creating SNSA 'windows' because of practicalities in organising assessments)
- Reiteration of relevant messages by the local authority to Headteachers and by the EIS to members
- Review of SNSA implementation agenda item at LNCT with findings to be shared with EIS Reps.

On the matter of discontinuation of other types of standardised/testing assessment since the introduction of SNSAs, 6 Local Associations provided comment. In summary:

- TUs have engaged in discussion with Heads/ Directors of Education on the issue
- SNSA implementation resulting, in some areas, in the cessation of other forms of standardised testing such as PIPs and CEM assessments
- No firm direction from the local authority either to continue or discontinue other standardised testing- no expectation that they occur but left to individual schools to decide.

4 Local Associations gave feedback on the question of the usefulness of SNSAs or other standardised testing in helping identify next steps in learning, indicating that there had been little direct communication with them on this subject from members or detailed discussion within LNCTs. One LA Secretary had discussed SNSAs with Secondary Reps, receiving feedback that they had not seen the data produced from their S3 classes' SNSAs undertaken the previous session.

In relation to workload control and assessment-related activity, 9 Local Associations commented as summarised below.

- Focus of LNCT discussion
- Creation/ continuation of Working Groups to consider assessment-related workload
- Council and union advice forwarded to all Reps
- Alleviation of this type of workload since elimination of other/most forms of standardised assessment
- Recirculation of Scottish Government SNSA guidance
- Recirculation of Tackling Bureaucracy/ WTA advice and guidelines.

2d) Are members in your Local Association raising issues related to assessment? If so, please outline how.

2 Local Associations answered yes to this question, citing moderation of assessment, whole cohort assessment using SNSAs, and administering of SNSAs to P1 pupils as particular generators of teacher workload.

15 Local Associations commented to the effect that there had been little to no feedback from members on this issue. In some area, it was suggested, this may be down to teachers having no involvement in administering SNSAs.

Whilst the main thrust of the responses to the questions on assessment was focused on SNSAs, EIS members have previously reported spikes in assessment-related workload relative to senior phase course delivery and presentation for qualifications, for example, internal and external verification processes, and with regards to overly atomised approaches to the use of CfE Benchmarks for the purposes of assessment.

It is therefore important to stress the conclusions of the Tackling Bureaucracy Report, 2013:

'Assessment judgements, particularly within broad general education but also in the senior phase of CfE, should be based on evidence drawn mainly from day-to-day teaching and learning. Tracking pupil progress and moderation is important; however, there is no need to produce large folios of evidence to support this. Assessment within CfE is based on the exercise of professional judgement.'

Discussion by the HT and DHT Network

In its discussion of the Resolution, the Network was of the view that issues related to forward planning predominate in Primary, though planning issues can affect Secondary colleagues, also.

Members spoke about their experiences of forward planning from their respective local perspectives. In one local authority, the Tackling Bureaucracy agenda had been advanced sufficiently to result in a progressive policy on forward planning. It was felt that a culture of elaborate planning-related documentation had arisen in response to what were perceived to be sometimes 'whimsical' demands from Education Scotland inspection teams.

In another area, a Workload Control Agreement was reported to be in place, the terms of which require co-operation from all. Whilst Headteachers seek to abide by the terms, it was suggested that many teachers do not, giving more time to tasks than is asked for or needed.

Another attendee of the meeting spoke of significant variations in the level of expectation and therefore the experiences of teachers in relation to forward planning in different schools. There was a suggestion that 'professional shame' is intrinsic to the teacher psyche resulting commonly in a strong tendency to over-work.

A Secondary colleague highlighted the difficulties faced by teachers with responsibility for delivering Senior Phase qualifications which have been subject to ongoing, often unannounced and mid-session change. Such course alteration has made forward planning, albeit in a different format from that required by Primary colleagues, extremely challenging for this cohort of teachers.

On the topic of assessment, one member described a re-energised approach to assessment and moderation and the training of 'champions' in this field as part of an attempt to address elements of assessment-related workload.

Value Education Value Teachers Member Survey

The Survey conducted in December 2018 included a question on generic workload which revealed significant levels of members dissatisfaction with this aspect of their jobs as can be seen from the graph in Table 5. The Education Department had requested that certain themes, including assessment-related workload, be addressed in the VEVT Survey also. The results are summarised in Table 7.

Table 5: "How satisfied are you with your workload levels generally?" responses

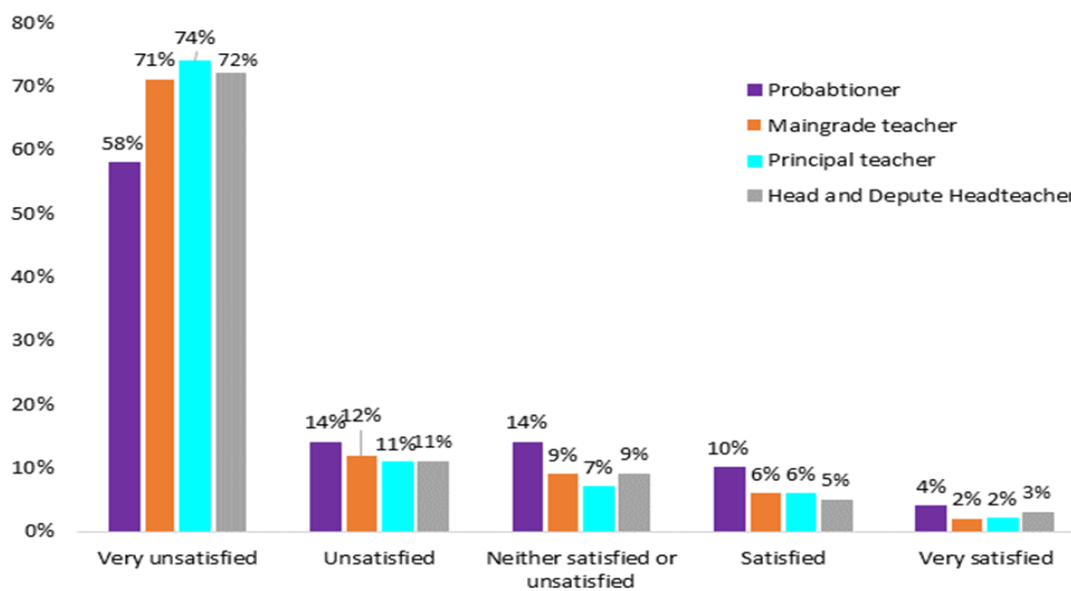
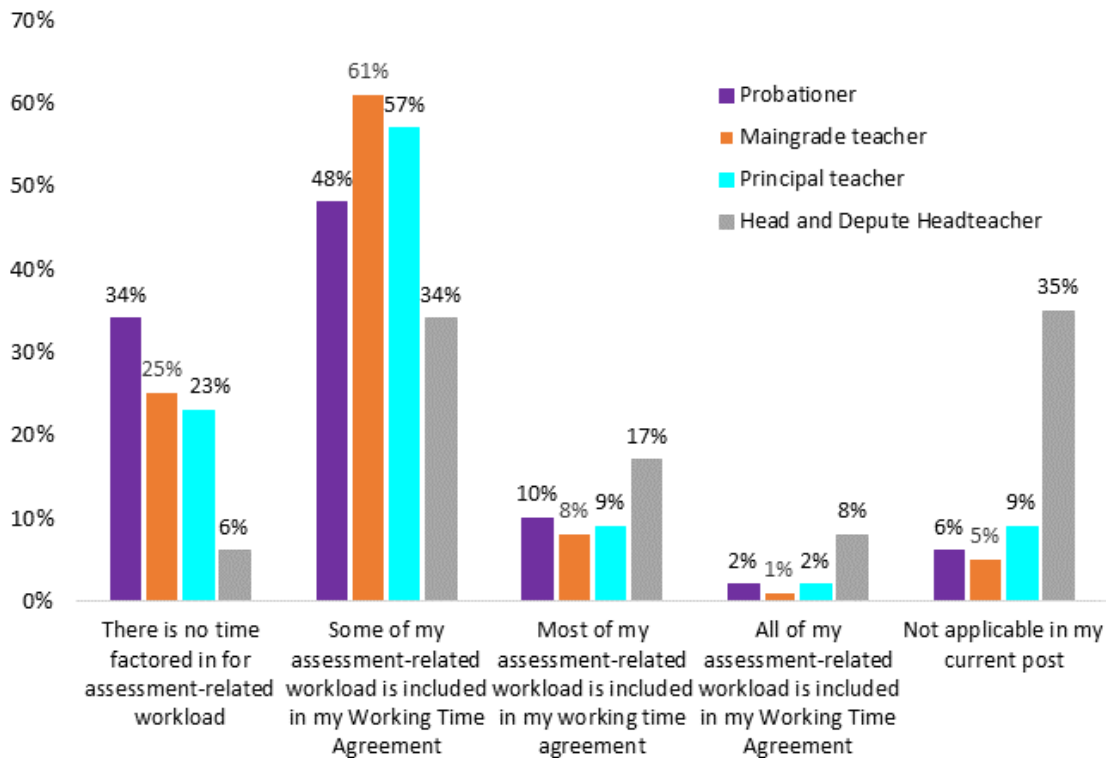


Table 7: "Assessment-related workload should be factored in to your school's Working Time Agreement. Which of the following best matches your actual experience?" responses



As can be seen from the bar graph, only very small percentages of teachers in any type of post who are involved in assessment of pupils report that all of their assessment-related workload is captured fully within Working Time Agreements.

The percentage reporting that most of this kind of work is included within WTAs does not exceed 10% except for HTs and DHTs who are likely to be teaching less. Therefore smaller allocations of time for assessment-related activity within WTAs may be more adequate for a greater number of HTs and DHTs with some class commitment, though 17% reporting to this effect, falls far short of what should be the case.

Even the more modest statement that 'some' assessment-related workload is included within WTAs was not strongly agreed by respondents. Main grade teachers were the cohort most commonly agreeing this statement though only 61% of them did so.

Worrying are the percentages of strongly class-committed teachers who report that WTAs omit time for assessment-related activity – more than a third of probationers, a quarter of main grade class teachers and almost the same number of Principal Teachers responding in these terms.

Members responded additionally to this question with a range of comments, almost 700 in total, some of which cited difficulties in utilising WTAs to control assessment-related workload. Among the specific issues raised were:

- Lack of discussion of the WTA with staff
- Inadequacy of WTAs to realistically capture the entirety of teachers' work
- The absence of protected time within WTAs for assessment activity

- Variations from year to year in the amount/ nature of assessment activity
- Lack of earmarked time for the preparation and recording of holistic assessment
- Differing priorities of school management and teaching staff with an imbalance of time being given over to activities less directly related to learning, teaching and assessment from the teacher perspective
- Mis-match of WTA to what should be the pro-rata working week of part-time staff.

Members commented within the Survey, also, on lack of time to carry out assessments. Specifically, comments touched on issues related to:

- The entirety of the assessment demand outweighing the availability of hours within WTAs
- The complexity of assessment tasks- marking, provision of feedback to pupils/students, collation of information, as well as benchmarking progress
- Large class sizes
- Inaccessibility of SQA assessment guidance
- Continuation of unit assessments within National Qualifications
- Dual presentation of candidates for National 4/SCQF Units and National 5 qualifications
- Marking of internal assessments as part of SQA courses
- Prelim marking
- Folio marking
- Increasing number of assessments of pupil wellbeing
- Quality assurance demands leading to school management encouraging/ demanding written comments on all pupil work rather than verbal feedback for some activities/assignments.

Conclusions and recommendations

Forward planning

Whilst forward planning was reported to be an issue raised by members in less than half of the Local Associations who provided feedback, in the majority areas, it features strongly in LNCT discussion and activity in recognition of the potential of forward planning to be a significant driver of teacher workload.

In light of this, it is recommended that Local Associations continue their efforts to reach/ ensure implementation of agreements in relation to forward planning, either through discrete policy/agreements or more generic Tackling Bureaucracy/ workload control agreements which specifically reference the parameters of forward planning. Both the 2013 Tackling Bureaucracy Working Group Report and the 2015 Follow Up Report continue to be useful reading and can be accessed here: <https://www2.gov.scot/resource/0043/00438617.pdf>

<https://news.gov.scot/resources/cfe-report-162>

It would appear from the comments provided, both by Local Associations and the HT and DHT Network, that regular reference to existing agreements and

reiteration of agreed messages in relation to forward planning, including its relationship to WTAs, is required- by local authorities to Headteachers and by Local Associations to EIS Reps and members in schools.

Taking account of the renewed commitment by the Scottish Government and COSLA to address teacher workload and in the context of the developing Empowering Schools Agenda, it is recommended that the Education Committee shares the contents of this report with the Executive Committee accompanied by a memo recommending that:

- (a) the EIS representatives who will be involved in the forthcoming negotiations and joint working with the Scottish Government and employers on teacher workload, should ensure a strong focus on addressing workload issues related to forward planning demands and/or actual practice;
- (b) consideration is given to the provision of training for Local Association Secretaries and School Reps on workload control using Working Time Agreements, including the allocation of time for planning therein.

Assessment

From the information provided by Local Associations, it would appear that it is a minority of LNCTs which have agreed policy on assessment. It is recommended that Local Associations whose LNCTs do not have agreed policy in place should seek to open discussions in this area with the local authority.

Whilst only two Local Associations indicated assessment-related workload to be a matter being raised by members, responses to the VEVT Survey, paint a different picture, suggesting that assessment-related workload is not sufficiently controlled by existing mechanisms.

This would suggest the need for further relevant discussion within LNCTs; the inclusion of workload control measures within any agreed assessment policy; and for consideration of the extent to which WTA training which includes clear focus on assessment-related activity, is available to and undertaken by EIS members locally.

Finally, it is recommended in light of the renewed commitment by the Scottish Government and COSLA to address teacher workload, and in the context of the developing Empowering Schools Agenda, that the Education Committee includes in its aforementioned memo to the Executive Committee, recommendations that

- c) the EIS representatives who will be involved in the forthcoming negotiations and joint working with the Scottish Government and employers on teacher workload, ensure a strong focus on assessment-related workload in both the Primary and Secondary contexts, and in Nursery and Special education, covering such areas as moderation, recording of assessment, appropriate models of holistic assessment, and workload associated with the delivery of SQA qualifications;
- d) consideration given to the provision of training for Local Association Secretaries and School Reps on workload control using Working Time

Agreements includes a focus on the allocation of sufficient time for assessment-related activity therein;

- e) a clear action plan to ensure the revival of the Tackling Bureaucracy agenda locally and to stimulate appropriate LNCT discussion and agreement on controlling all aspects of teacher workload, including that generated by forward planning and assessment, is drawn up once the conclusions of national negotiations around workload are known.
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