

QTU Position Statement

Workload

The Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) defines workload as the composite of the amount and the complexity of work that is undertaken by an individual employee or group of employees. This includes workload arising from the duties and responsibilities outlined in the employee's role description and other duties that are assigned either with or without consultation. **Excessive workload in Queensland state schools means unreasonable hours of work and increasingly complex work is undertaken by members of Queensland's teaching profession who are employed as:**

- **teachers** (including, but not limited to, classroom teachers, instrumental music teachers/instructors, specialist teachers, special education teachers, teacher-librarians, O&EEC teachers, advisory visiting teachers, education officers (special duties), teachers seconded for special duties, highly accomplished teachers, lead teachers, and coaches)
- **heads of program** (including heads of department (curriculum), heads of department, heads of special education services, guidance officers, senior guidance officers, and regional school sport officers)
- **school leaders** (including deputy principals, heads of campus, and principals).

Excessive workload occurs when Queensland's teaching profession routinely works an unreasonable number of hours every week. The QTU recognises that members of the teaching profession will often undertake additional and flexible hours of work beyond their (full-time equivalent) rostered 25 hours per week. **The QTU also recognises the professional autonomy of Queensland's teaching profession and the right of teachers, heads of program and school leaders to make decisions that balance work and life.**

The benchmark for unreasonable hours is a Queensland public servant who works for 36 $\frac{1}{4}$ hours per week for 46 weeks, excluding annual leave and public holidays. To work the same number of hours over 40 teaching weeks, excluding public holidays and student free days, a teacher, head of program or school leader would work 41.7 hours. To be clear, there is no requirement for any members of Queensland's teaching profession to work for 41.7 hours per week, or to work during school holidays or on public holidays, but the QTU believes **excessive workload occurs when members of Queensland's teaching profession routinely perform work for more than 42 hours per week.**

The QTU further asserts that excessive workload is exacerbated by increasing the level of complexity of work that is performed, drawing on higher levels of an employee's cognitive, physical, and/or emotional labour. Examples of increased complexity can be observed and measured in both classroom and schoolwide settings, whereby complexities are increased by factors of educational disadvantage, rising student populations, increases in the ranges of ability and ages of students, and resource availability. Duties and responsibilities of the teaching profession that increase administrative complexity can also draw on higher levels of cognitive and/or emotional labour and adversely impact on employee wellbeing.



Measuring the workload of Queensland's teaching profession

The escalation of workload in schools has been reported in jurisdictions throughout the OECD. In Queensland, the teaching profession has witnessed successive national and state governments fail to adopt measures that will abate escalations of workload.

The QTU recognises a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methods through which workload in schools can be observed and measured. The QTU asserts those methods that embed the perceptions and the voices of Queensland's teaching profession are the most reliable. Methods that support understanding of workload include, but are not limited to: documented hours of work (both rostered duty time and additional duties undertaken); descriptive reporting of the complexity of a duty or responsibility; documenting the number of duties and responsibilities that are to be completed over a period of time; the level of risk and/or accountability associated with duties and responsibilities; and observed or reported levels of cognitive, physical, and/or emotional labour required to undertake duties and responsibilities.

The QTU's [Queensland Teacher Workload](#) (2018) survey, supported by findings from other educational and industrial research, indicates that **teachers work an average of 44 hours per week and school leaders work an average of 62 hours during a typical week**, with school leaders increasing to an average of 82 hours per week during Term 3.

The QTU will continue to partner with researchers in the fields of education and industrial relations to collect and collate qualitative and quantitative data from QTU members and report on workload. The QTU will use this research to inform continued campaign action.

Sources and levels of workload

The QTU recognises that excessive workload is generated from multiple levels, which include multiple sources. The QTU identifies the levels as:

- national
- state
- regional
- community
- school
- individual.

National

Education policy created at the national level by agencies like the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), the Australian Curriculum Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA), and Education Services Australia (ESA) are a source of workload, especially when such policy is agreed to by the Education Council without the commitment of necessary increases in funding. The teaching profession must be included on the governance bodies of national agencies like AITSL, ACARA, and (ESA) to ensure that downward pressure on workload is applied in all education policies generated at the national level. Programs like NAPLAN and learning progressions are both educationally unsound and contribute to excessive workload. The terms of the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA), agreed to by Education Council, fail to allocate sufficient funding to state schools. Under the NSRA, no state school in Queensland will receive the full amount of the schooling resource standard, the payment schools require if they are to address factors of educational disadvantage. This means increased hours of work and complexity of work for Queensland's teaching profession.



State

Queensland's teaching profession is employed by the Department of Education. The department develops procedures to enact policies of the state government (including those arising from national agreements and state legislation), to comply with legislation, and to enact policies developed by statutory authorities including the Queensland Curriculum Assessment Authority (QCAA) and the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT). Examples of procedures include, but are not limited to, annual performance review, buildings and maintenance, curriculum implementation and the development and implementation of individual curriculum plans, finances, health safety and wellbeing, ICT, managing student behaviour, and school excursions. **All new or revised Department of Education procedures must include a workload impact statement and be the subject of consultation with the QTU. New and revised procedures at central or regional level must include the reduction of workload in their design.**

Regional


The Department of Education consists of seven regions: Central Queensland, Darling Downs and South West, Far North Queensland, Metropolitan, North Coast, North Queensland, and South East. Each region consists of a regional director (RD) and assistant regional directors (ARD). **To mitigate incremental workload creep, the QTU calls on central office of the Department of Education to ensure that variations or additions to Department of Education procedures prescribed by regions are developed in consultation and agreement with the teaching profession and the QTU at the local level.** Examples of regional decisions that increase the workload of Queensland's teaching profession include, but are not limited to: adopting a pedagogical framework or model of collegial engagement; adding steps in processes specific to managing student behaviour; establishing regional priorities specific to the collection of data sets like QCE attainment, PAT testing or student attendance; reallocating staffing resources that are in place to meet the diverse learning needs of students; and redesigning or amending moderation processes beyond the P-12 Curriculum Assessment Reporting Framework.

Any regional priorities and/or interpretation of Department of Education procedures must be undertaken in accordance with the industrial instruments, including the [joint statements between the Department of Education and the QTU](#). Regional priorities and/or interpretations of Department of Education procedures must only be actioned after a workload impact statement has been developed and been subject to consultation with the QTU.

Community

State schools and the teaching profession are an essential part of the social and democratic fabric of Queensland communities. Parents and citizens associations may be formed to foster community interest in education matters. Where a state school has established a school council, the functions of the council will support the strategic decisions of the school leaders only. The school council will not interfere with the school principal's management of the day-to-day operations of the school on matters including, but not limited to, curriculum, the use of teaching and learning resources at the school, or the individual teaching style/s used.

The Department of Education must provide support to enable state schools to manage community expectations in light of the limits that are placed on the operations of state schools and Queensland's teaching profession by the department's allocation of buildings and facilities, curriculum resources, human resourcing and access to professional development, school funding, and technology. This list is not exhaustive.



Where community events transpire that require state schools and the teaching profession to provide additional support for their community, the Department of Education must allocate additional funds and professional development, and should support the health and wellbeing of the teaching profession.

School

Decisions made at the local level that will impact on workload of the teaching profession should be referred to the local consultative committee (LCC). **The LCC is the key mechanism for managing workload issues at the school level.** Teachers are represented on the LCC by their QTU Workplace Representatives. The QTU can support LCCs with training for both management and QTU representatives, and the QTU has developed a suite of resources that can support decision making (e.g. *Back to basics EB implementation; Consultation; Education leaders; and Timetabling issues for teachers*).

Individual

The QTU reaffirms the right of all of members of Queensland's teaching profession to make decisions that take into account work-life balance. The QTU recognises some excessive workload is caused by the individual pressures to which members of the teaching profession succumb. Some school communities have allowed a culture to emerge that looks disparagingly at members of the profession who pursue work-life balance, set boundaries to manage their workload, and reject excessive workload. This culture sometimes manifests as an expectation that other people's wellbeing (including students') is more important than that of the member of the teaching profession. Elsewhere, this culture reveals itself through promotional processes that prize data and its collection over team morale and wellbeing. Many QTU members have experienced this culture of disparagement. The QTU rejects such disparaging views of our profession.

Professional autonomy


Queensland's teaching profession is best placed to make the professional decisions that underpin teaching and learning in their schools, as well as delivering effective workload management.

The QTU urges the Queensland Government to foster a culture throughout the seven regions of the Department of Education that will streamline workload imposts in schools, including but not limited to data collection, ensure sustained funding allocations that support professional autonomy, and provide time and/or resources for teachers, heads of programs, and school leaders to collect and compile evidence to inform teaching practice.

Governments and departments of education at all levels can reduce workload by investing in professional autonomy and respect for the teaching profession and diminishing the extent to which governments allow forces that are external to schools and classrooms to influence education policy.

The QTU recognises a distinction between the actual total amount of work reasonably associated with the duties and responsibilities of a teacher, head of program, or school leader, against perceptions of expectations of work. Examples of this include, but are not limited to, undertaking duties and responsibilities:

- that are not adequately resourced
- that are outside of the scope of the employee's role description
- without the requisite training, skill, knowledge, career or professional development
- without consideration of wellbeing and work-life balance
- which are increasingly complex without removing other professional duties and responsibilities
- that contribute to chronic occupational fatigue
- that are the teaching professional's choice.



All QTU members who are teachers, heads of program, or school leaders have the right to reject work that is outside of their duties and responsibilities, or for which they do not have the requisite training, experience, or sufficient resources to undertake.

The QTU views with alarm the rise in work intensification that can be attributed to incremental workload creep. Decision makers at central and regional levels are accountable for ensuring that the implementation of new initiatives does not adversely impact on the workload of Queensland's teaching profession. **All central and regional officers of the Department of Education must view any new policy or procedure, and/or revised policy or procedure, through the lens of a workload impact statement and ensure no diminution of employee wellbeing and work-life balance** is caused by increases in hours of duty or increases in complexity of duties and responsibilities.

The workload of Queensland's teaching profession has cyclical rhythms that cause levels of intensification to vary across a week, term, semester, academic year, or longer. **Central and regional offices of the Department of Education should support practices of effective workload management that include forecasting peaks in intensification of particular duties and responsibilities and adjusts other duties and responsibilities to even the workload across a given period.**

The QTU supports the Queensland teaching profession's autonomy to make choices that contribute to its school community by providing additional opportunities that improve learning outcomes and support wellbeing. The QTU also supports the right of Queensland's teaching profession to modify or cease such work when it is additional work undertaken beyond the hours of duty of a teacher, head of program, or school leader.

Safe work environments and safe work practices


Effective workload management requires the maintenance of safe work environments and safe work practices. The QTU calls on the department to:

- develop procedures that support school-based decision making without increasing administrative burdens
- enforce its zero-tolerance stance towards occupational violence
- implement measures that mitigate the impact of student behaviour on employees' wellbeing
- implement measures that mitigate the impact on employees of occupational violence resulting from the behaviours of parents and carers.

Excessive workload created by unreasonable hours of work and increased complexity of work can contribute to employee fatigue in the short term and, in the longer-term, teacher and school leader burnout. The primary responsibility for ensuring health and safety at work rests with the Department of Education. Accordingly, **the QTU calls on governments at all levels to urgently enact policies that reduce workload to support the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's teaching profession and secure the long-term future of the teacher and school leader workforce.**

School leaders

Successive federal and state government education policies have led to the devolution of decision-making to schools but without a commensurate increase in the allocation of resources. The result is a considerable escalation in the workload of Queensland's school leaders. A direct consequence has been a decrease in hours of duty available to undertake duties and responsibilities aligned with curriculum leadership and an increase in both the hours of duty and complexity of decision making related to legislative requirements, accountability mechanisms, financial management and human resourcing.



There is an urgent need for the Department of Education to review the increasing number of policies and procedures for which a school principal is listed as the accountable officer. The QTU is alarmed that, in many cases, the increases in accountability are without the provision of appropriate professional development for the principal or an additional allocation of resources to the school. Further, **the Department of Education must audit the capacity of schools to allocate sufficient time for school leaders to undertake these duties and responsibilities in accordance with their relevant role description.**

The Department of Education consistently fails in its duty of care in providing support to the wellbeing of all employees, especially school leaders, who are required to manage traumatic situations but for whom access to quality debriefing is seldom available.

The QTU expresses concern with the Department of Education's obsession with the reporting of data, which is often neither fit-for-purpose nor of benefit to school leaders and their communities and creates unnecessary workload burdens on school leaders. **The QTU reaffirms support for the [Joint Statement on the Purpose and Use of Data in Queensland State Schools](#) and calls on Department of Education at both regional and central level to comply with the commitments agreed to in the joint statement.**

External stakeholders


The QTU recognises the complex role that schools and education services perform for their wider communities. The QTU acknowledges the benefits to students and the families of integrated levels of community services, which can include family services, justice, health such as therapists and paediatricians, National Disability Insurance Scheme providers, and other agencies external to government. **The Department of Education must adequately fund schools to ensure that Queensland's teaching profession can support students and their families within rostered duty time and at no additional cost.**

Technology

The QTU celebrates the innovative pedagogical practices of Queensland's teaching profession that embrace the use of technology. **Queensland schools' response to the COVID-19 health pandemic highlighted the outstanding professionalism of Queensland's teachers, heads of program and school leaders, and the limitations of the Department of Education's technology and ICT infrastructure.** For many QTU members, the resolution between these two elements was an extreme escalation in workload.

The Queensland's teaching profession's response to the COVID-19 pandemic included re-engineering education delivery from classroom-based delivery to remote learning with very little notice. To anyone with any understanding of teaching and the operations of schools, this was an amazing professional feat which demonstrates the importance of reliable access to technology and ICT infrastructure.

Prior to the health pandemic and since, **the QTU has been alarmed at the correlation between changes in technology and increased workload.** A school's online presence involves collecting and reviewing content to upload, maintaining the currency of documents and links on the school's website, and managing comments on social media pages. **The volume of daily emails received by teachers, heads of program, and school leaders creates a distraction from their core business of teaching and learning.** The Department of Education's use of email or OnePortal notifications as a mechanism for providing information and updates (e.g. Schools Update) demonstrates a failure to understand the workload pressures facing Queensland's teaching profession. The QTU will support any school community that establishes a communications protocol that reduces workload.



The affordability of technology and the rise of programs like “bring your own device” means that teachers, heads of programs, and school leaders are increasingly managing issues like pornography, revenge-porn, and cyberbullying that occur not only in school time, but also out of school. Some of these issues have severe criminal consequences, but the Department of Education has demonstrated an inadequate level of understanding of the issues, which impacts on its ability to provide the support needed by schools. **The sheer volume of time consumed by monitoring, investigating and responding to use of technologies, exacerbated by programs like “bring your own device”, is a significant additional workload impost.**

Change management

The QTU recognises that change occurs in schools, but strongly asserts that change in work practices must be accompanied by authentic consultation, open and transparent decision making, and equitable distribution of workload. At the school level, the QTU recognises the central role of the local consultative committee (LCC) in change management. The QTU reaffirms that change arising from new or revised policies at regional or central level should not be enacted in schools until a workload impact statement has been provided to the QTU for consultation with relevant members. Examples of regional and central change management includes, but is not limited to, the introduction of new curriculum, changes to financial disclosure processes, and new behaviour management procedures.

Workload impact statements should detail:

- the specific legislative, regulatory, policy and/or procedure that will be changed and/or updated
- the likely impact of the change on teachers, heads of program and school leaders
- implementation timelines for the proposed change
- the anticipated increases in workload for teachers, heads of program and school leaders during each phase of the change implementation
- the costs to individual workplaces and/or employee cohorts
- the additional resources that will be deployed to offset costs including, but not limited to, funding for the release of teachers, heads of program, and school leaders to undertake the requisite professional development
- a commitment to no disadvantage throughout any phase of implementation of the change
- the agreement given by the relevant QTU officers and/or elected branch and workplace QTU delegates.

Industrial processes to address workload

All QTU members are covered by industrial instruments, negotiated by the QTU with and on behalf of our members and that members have democratically voted to endorse. The industrial coverage includes clauses dealing with workload management, consultative mechanisms, and dispute resolution procedures.

Workload management

The QTU recognises the role of both employees and managers in effective workload management. The QTU affirms the right of QTU members to reject increases in workload, as well as affirming the right of QTU members to negotiate workload at the local level through the LCC.

There should not be an aggregate increase in workload or complexity of work without an equivalent reduction of the duties and responsibilities of an employee or cohort of employees.

Consultation at the local level

The QTU reaffirms that the LCC is the key mechanism for managing workload issues at the workplace level. All QTU members can refer workload matters to their local consultative committee.



Dispute resolution procedures

The QTU has a proud 130-year history of standing up for the professional, industrial and legal rights of our members. The QTU will continue to ensure dispute resolution procedures are included in all of the industrial instruments that are negotiated with and on behalf of QTU members, as well as ensuring that these instruments can be applied to matters related to workload. Dispute resolution procedures include the power to refer matters of dispute, including those related to workload, to the relevant industrial tribunal and/or court, in accordance with industrial legislation of the relevant jurisdiction.