The University of Waterloo is fortunate to have staff who take great pride in achieving a high standard of excellence in the work they do. However, maintaining excellence can create stressors which, if not handled, could become unmanageable, and requires regular and ongoing examination of the “way we work”. While the timing of this memo might suggest that workload issues are only a concern during times of stress, workload issues have been identified as a concern for some time now and have been an ongoing item of discussion by the Staff Relations Committee for more than one year.

Executive Council wishes to commend staff and acknowledge that in some areas, the need for a better way to manage workload is necessary. While the financial situation is outside our control, and reducing our drive toward excellence is not an option, there are options that should be examined to assist in managing workload. The options identified below, which are strongly endorsed by Executive Council, are important to keep in mind on a regular basis, but even more so when there is an increase in stressors.

With a view to offering some assistance in managing workload, the Staff Relations Committee has identified a suite of options for consideration by staff, managers and unit heads. The committee recognizes that not all options will be suitable for all staff or all units, but encourages staff, managers and unit heads to seriously consider them (or modifications of them) in managing workload.

1. Flextime

   Flextime is a system of scheduling work hours based on the premise that employees will make responsible judgements in adjusting their working hours to handle both job and personal demands. Flextime is also based on an expectation that employees will work the normal number of hours in a four-week period. Adjustment of working hours takes place within a band width of acceptable working hours and within a “core” period (hours when all staff are expected to be in attendance at their jobs unless taking vacation or agreed time off). Departments determine the maximum number of hours that can be “banked” for future use or “made up” in the next four-week cycle. Some of the advantages of flextime are: job gets done with enhanced cooperation and cross training; employees are empowered because they manage their own workload (peaks and valleys); allows employees time to manage personal appointments/commitments; service can be provided over longer periods than standard work hours because of differing time commitments and preferences of staff; additional hours worked during a peak in workload, for example, can be taken during less critical times. Disadvantages include the fact that not all departments and jobs are suited to flextime; positions that are time related in the service they provide (e.g., shift operations) are not suited to flextime, nor are small departments where there is only one person to provide service during standard hours; additional hours are “lost” if they exceed the maximum bankable hours.

Members of Executive Council endorse and support flextime as an important tool in managing workload, empowering employees and dealing with work-life balance. Departments should consider implementing this tool wherever possible. Further details are available at [www.hr.uwaterloo.ca/staff/flex%20guidelines.pdf](http://www.hr.uwaterloo.ca/staff/flex%20guidelines.pdf) and Human Resources is available for assistance.
2. **On-going and Regular Review of Priorities**
   Taking time from busy schedules to evaluate priorities is a always a good idea yet one that often takes a back seat to other pressing demands. The committee suggests that taking time to do this critical evaluation will more than make up for the time it takes to do. The committee encourages managers to conduct a review of priorities one on one with their staff and with the department as a whole to establish core departmental priorities. With respect to the latter, the Office of Organizational & Human Development is pleased to assist in facilitating such an exercise.

3. **Establishing Service Standards (or Effective Timelines)**
   Electronic communication and information technology have exponentially increased the ability to respond to requests in record time. While this has many advantages, it has created an environment whereby instantaneous responses are expected regardless of the urgency of the issue. The committee suggests that departments/units examine the type of requests they receive on a regular basis and implement service standards where appropriate.

4. **Communication**
   In times of heavy workloads, communication is often unintentionally neglected. Unfortunately, it is during this time that communication takes on even more importance and can make the difference between an efficient and effective unit or one where it appears that the “right hand doesn’t know what the left is doing.” Find methods of communicating that will work within and outside your unit and make it a priority.

5. **Celebrate Successes**
   Make time to recognize achievements.

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